

# Christian Science

By Dr. James Bjornstad

Christian Science was founded by Mary Baker Eddy [nee Mary Ann Morse Baker], who was born in Bow, NH on July 16, 1821.

## History

Several major factors influenced the formation of her theology. The first major influence was Mary Baker Eddy's illness. One either accepts the reality of one's illness and seeks some form of treatment or one denies the reality of one's illness. Mary Ann Morse Baker chose the latter. She was a nervous child afflicted with a spinal weakness that caused spasmodic seizures, followed by prostration, which resulted in a complete nervous collapse.

Because of her spinal weakness, she committed herself to the care of Phineas Parkhurst Quimby in October 1862. Quimby was a "mental healer" who believed that illness and disease could be cured through positive thoughts and healthy attitudes, by changing one's beliefs about the illness. She believed herself to have been healed by him on November 7, 1862. The inauguration of Christian Science, however, did not occur until February 1866, when Mrs. Eddy claimed to have had a near fatal fall on an icy pavement. She said she was instantly healed when "the healing Truth dawned upon my senses." (Miscellaneous 24; Science 107)

A second major influence was the doctor, Phineas Parkhurst Quimby. Convinced that his ideas were correct, Mrs. Eddy borrowed much from them in formulating her theology (see Horatio Dresser's The Quimby Manuscripts). For example: Quimby spoke of his system as the "Science of the Christ" and even called it Christian Science in February 1863; Mrs. Eddy called her system "Christian Science." Quimby called his ideas "Science of Health"; Mrs. Eddy entitled her book Science and Health. Mrs. Eddy reworded and incorporated sections of Quimby's "Science of Man" into her textbook Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures

The next factor which influenced Mary Baker Eddy's theology was her dislike for Calvinistic theology, and therefore Christian theology. Her father, Mark Baker, was a stern Calvinist. While in her teens, she often disagreed with him on such points as predestination, the final judgment day, and eternal torment. For example: Mrs. Eddy related that her worry about predestination made her ill, that her father kept stressing this and other doctrines which she disliked, but that her mother told her to lean on God's love. Listening to her mother, she said her fever soon was gone and "the 'horrible decree' of predestination—as John Calvin rightly called his own tenet—forever lost its power over me." (Retrospection 13-14).

Mrs. Eddy wrote of her dislike for Calvinism in Science and Health. For example: She mentions "the practically rejected doctrine of the predestination of souls to damnation or salvation." (Science 150) She says "this teaching is even more pernicious than the old doctrine of foreordination—the election of a few to be saved, while the rest are damned." (Science 38)

Finally, Mrs. Eddy's theology was influenced by her association with Ann Lee and the Shakers. Like Ann Lee, Mrs. Eddy recognized the Deity as masculine and feminine, "Our Mother-Father God;" allowed herself to be represented as the equal and successor to

Christ and was so revered by her loyal followers; wanted to be called “Mother” [“Mother Eddy”]; and stressed silent prayer.

## Theology

### A. Initial premise and logical deductions

1. Christian Science begins with a pantheistic view of the nature of God. “All is infinite Mind and its infinite manifestation, for God is All-in-All.” (Miscellaneous 21)
2. Since God is “All-in-All,” anything that is not God does not exist. “Nothing possesses reality nor existence except the divine Mind and His ideas.” (Science 331)
  - a. If God is Spirit and God is all, then non-Spirit [matter] does not exist.
    - (1) Syllogism
      1. God is All-in-All.
      2. God is Good. Good is Mind.
      3. God, Spirit, being all, nothing is matter.” (Science 113)
    - (2) “Spirit is the real and eternal; matter is the unreal and temporal.” (Miscellaneous 21)
  - b. If God is Life and God is all, then non-Life [death] does not exist. “If it is true that man lives, this fact can never change in Science to the opposite belief that man dies . . . Life is real, and death is the illusion.” (Science 427-8)
  - c. If God is healthy and God is all, then non-healthy [sickness] does not exist. “Man is never sick, for mind is not sick and matter cannot be.” (Science and Health 393)
  - d. If God is Good and God is all, then non-Good [evil] does not exist.

### B. Doctrines, following from the initial premise and the application of Mrs. Eddy’s meta-physical view.

1. The Trinity – “Triply divine Principle.”
  - a. The Godhead does not consist of three Persons. (Science 256)
  - b. The Trinity is “a triply divine Principle.” “Life, Truth, and Love constitute the triune Person called God—that is, the triply divine Principle, Love. They represent a trinity in unity, three in one—the same in essence, though multiform in office: God the Father-Mother; Christ the spiritual idea of sonship; divine Science or the Holy Comforter. These three express in divine Science the threefold, essential nature of the infinite.” (Science 331)
2. The creation – Since no allowance is made for the reality of matter, God could not have called a material universe into being. Mrs. Eddy understands the creation narrative found in Genesis 1 as simply referring to “the unfolding of spiritual ideas and their identities” in the mind of God. (Science 503)
3. Jesus Christ
  - a. He is not God. “The Christian who believes in the First Commandment is a monotheist . . . [He] recognizes that Jesus Christ is not God as Jesus Himself declared, but is the Son of God.” (Science 361)
  - b. He is Jesus the Christ. “Jesus is the human man, and Christ is the divine idea; hence the duality of Jesus the Christ.” (Science 473)
  - c. He was conceived by the Virgin Mary’s spiritual thoughts. “Jesus, the Galilean prophet, was born of the Virgin Mary’s spiritual thoughts of life and its manifestations.” (The First Church 361)
  - d. He was fallible. “[Jesus] knew the mortal errors which constitute the material body, and could destroy those errors; but at the time when Jesus felt our infirmities, he had

not conquered all the beliefs of the flesh or his sense of material life.” (Science 53)

e. His ministry consisted of correcting erroneous beliefs.

“Jesus cast out devils, mediating between what is and is not until a perfect consciousness is obtained. He healed disease as He healed sin; He treated them both, not as in or of matter, but as mortal beliefs to be exterminated.” (No 40-41)

f. His death was not real, only apparent. “Our Master fully and finally demonstrated divine Science in his victory over death and the grave . . . Jesus’ students, not sufficiently advanced to understand fully their Master’s triumph, did not perform many wonderful works until they saw Him after His crucifixion and learned that He did not die.” (Science 45, 350-351)

g. He did not atone for our sin by shedding His blood on the cross.

(1) “The real atonement—so infinitely beyond the heathen conception that God requires human blood to propitiate His justice and bring mercy—needs to be understood.” (No 34)

(2) “The material blood of Jesus was no more efficacious to cleanse from sin, when it was shed upon ‘the accursed tree,’ than when it was flowing in His veins, as He went daily about His Father’s business.” (Science 25)

h. He did not rise physically from the dead. (Science 339)

i. He did not ascend into heaven. “The eternal Christ and the corporeal Jesus manifest in the flesh, continued until the Master’s ascension, when the human, material concept, or Jesus, disappeared, while the spiritual self, or Christ, continues to exist in the eternal order of divine Science.” (Science 334)

j. He is not returning physically to earth.

(1) “The second appearing of Jesus is, unquestionably, the spiritual advent of the advancing idea of God, as in Christian Science.” (Retrospection 70)

(2) “It is authentically said that one expositor of Daniel’s dates fixed the year 1866 or 1867 for the return of Christ—the return of the spiritual idea to the material earth or antipode of heaven. It is a marked coincidence that those dates were the first two years of my discovery of Christian Science.” The First Church 181)

k. He is the “Way-shower.” “Jesus taught the way of Life by demonstration. There is but one way to heaven, harmony, and Christ in Divine Science shows us the way.” (Science 242)

l. He is relatively unimportant to Mrs. Eddy. “If there had never existed such a person as the Galilean Prophet, it would make no difference to me. I should still know that God’s spiritual ideal is the only real man in His image and likeness.” (The First Church 318-319)

4. Salvation is by correcting erroneous beliefs. “To get rid of sin through Science, is to divest sin of any supposed mind or reality, and never admit that sin can have intelligence or power, pain or pleasure. You can conquer error by denying its verity.” (Science 339)

#### 5. The Bible

a. The Bible has been corrupted. “The manifest mistakes in the ancient versions; the 30,000 different readings in the Old Testament and the 300,000 in the New – these facts show how a mortal and material sense stole into the divine record, darkening, to some extent, the inspired pages with its own hue.” (Science 33)

b. Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures is the “first book” which has been “uncontaminated by human hypothesis.” (The First Church 115; Science 99, 139, 456-457) Christian Scientists feel that her book offers the complete spiritual meaning of the Bible.

They believe that this full meaning could not have been available to them without Mrs. Eddy's discovery." (George Channing)

### **Witnessing to Christian Scientists.**

Avoid attacking Mrs. Eddy in your witness. Anything said negatively against her will be rejected as "mortal mind resistance to the Truth" or "persecution." If you develop a good relationship with a Christian Scientist, encourage him or her to consider the truth about Mrs. Eddy by reading Edwin Dakin's Mrs. Eddy or Georgine Milmine's The Life of Mary Baker G. Eddy and the History of Christian Science.

Help Christian Scientists to see that the major premise [assumption] and the logical deductions from that premise taught by Mrs. Eddy and Christian Science are false.

1. The Bible clearly presents the true God as personal, not impersonal as Mrs. Eddy teaches. God performs acts that only a personality is capable of. For example, He is a cognizant reflective ego (Ex 3:14), He hears (Ex 2:24), He sees (Gen 1:4), He knows (2 Tim 2:19) and He has a will (1 Jn 2:17).

2. The Bible also presents a real material creation that is distinct in essence from God (Ps 33:6; Ps 148:1-5). Therefore, God is not all and all is not God as Mrs. Eddy teaches.

3. If the premise that God is all and all is God is false, then so are the logical deductions drawn from it (the denial of matter, sickness, evil, and death). Contrary to what Mrs. Eddy taught,

a. Matter is not an illusion, but is real and was created distinct from God. He pronounced it "good" (Gen 1:31).

b. Sin, sickness, and evil are not an illusion, but a result of man's willful choice to rebel against a Holy God.

c. Death, both physical and eternal separation from God, is the result of sin (Rom 3:10, 23; 5:12-14).

Focus on the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. Contrary to Mrs. Eddy's teaching,

1. Jesus Christ is God (Jn 1:1; Col 2:9)

2. Jesus Christ added to His divine nature a human nature in coming to earth (Jn 1:14; Phil 2:7-8). He became the God-man (Jn 1:18)

3. Jesus is the Christ (Mt 16:13-20; Mk 8:27-29; 14:60-62; Lk 2:11; Jn 11:27; 20:31; Acts 17:3).

4. Jesus Christ is far more than one who shows the way ["the Way Shower"]; He is the Way (Jn 14:6)

5. Jesus Christ died on the cross (Rom 8:34; 1 Cor 15:3; Mt 27:58-60; Jn 19:33). His blood paid the price for all our sins (Ex 12:3-7, 13-14; Lev 16; Jn 1:29; Heb 9:11-14; 10:4-12; 1 Pet 1:18, 19).

6. Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead (Lk 24:36-39, 46; Jn 20:24-29), ascended into heaven (Acts 1:11), and is returning to earth one day (Rev 1:7)

7. Salvation is by grace alone through faith in His blood and efficacy to cleanse from all sin.

Encourage Christian Scientists to read the entire Bible for themselves. For example:

1. Help them to consider those passages in the Bible which clearly contradict Mrs. Eddy's teaching. For example:

a. Mrs. Eddy wrote "There is no sin." (No 35). Have them read 1 Jn 1:8-10.

b. Mrs. Eddy taught that Jesus is not the Christ. Have them read Mt 16:13-20 and Jn 20:31. Note also that Christ was born (Mt 2:4), and that Christ died and was resurrected

from the dead (1 Cor 15:3-4).

1. Ask them to read the entire passage in the Bible whenever an ellipsis [ . . . ] is used in a quote from the Bible in any Christian Science literature. For example, note how Mrs. Eddy omits the reference to Jesus Christ in each of the following:

a. "Believe . . . and thou shalt be saved." (Science 23). Have them read Acts 16:31.

b. "These signs shall follow them that believe . . . they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover." (Science 38). Have them read Mk 16:17-18).

If necessary, explain to Christian Scientists the inherent contradictions in their theology. For example:

1. If none of our physical senses can be trusted, then how can we trust our eyes when we read Science and Health or hear the "truths" of Christian Science with our ears.

2. If God is Good and God is all, as Mrs. Eddy teaches, where did the idea (or illusion) that there is such a thing as Evil, the opposite of Good or God, originate, since from Good only Good can come?

a. Either this "illusion [of evil]" is ontologically real, or it is just a phantom of the mind that has no existence.

b. If the "illusion" is ontologically real, then Christian Science affirms the reality of evil (the evil of the illusion). There is no difference between having a leg amputated in reality or the illusion of one being amputated.

c. If the illusion has no real existence, why send out practitioners to cure an illusion? As Elton Trueblood once said, "If all Evil, whether moral, natural, or intellectual is truly illusory, we are foolish indeed to fight it. It would be better to forget it."

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