

Church of Christ Scientist

A Truth Seekers Study for Broadman Baptist Church

First presented Sunday, July 12, 2009

History, Structure and Basic Beliefs

1. The Church of Christ Scientist was founded in 1879 in Boston, Massachusetts, USA, by Mary Baker Eddy, author of the book *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, which offered a unique interpretation of Christian faith. Christian Science teaches that the reality of God denies the reality of sin, sickness, death, and the material world. Accounts of miraculous healing are common within the church, and adherents often refuse modern medical treatments. The church, headquartered in Boston, with branches around the world, currently has a membership estimated at 100,000 to 400,000.
2. The Church of Christ Scientist is the legal title of The Mother Church and administrative headquarters of the Christian Science Church. The complex is located in a 14-acre (57,000 m²) plaza alongside Huntington Avenue in the Back Bay neighborhood of Boston, Massachusetts.
 - a. The church itself was built in 1894, and an annex larger in footprint than the original structure was added in 1906. It boasts one of the world's largest pipe organs.
 - b. The Mary Baker Eddy Library for the Betterment of Humanity is housed in an 11-story structure originally built for The Christian Science Publishing Society constructed between 1932 and 1934.
 - c. Branch churches of The Mother Church may take the title of First Church of Christ, Scientist; Second; but the article The must not be used.
3. Branch Christian Science churches and Christian Science Societies are subordinate to the Mother Church.
 - d. They are self-governed in the sense that they have their own constitutions, bank accounts, assets, etc., but in order to be recognized must abide by the practices that Mary Baker Eddy laid out in the *Manual of The Mother Church*.
 - e. Church services, along with every other aspect of church government, are regulated by the Manual.
4. The Christian Science Board of Directors is a five-person executive entity created by Mary Baker Eddy to administer the Christian Science Church under the terms defined in her "*Manual*" Its functions and restrictions are defined by various by-laws throughout the Manual.
 - f. The Board also includes functions defined by a Deed of Trust written by Eddy (one of several, in fact) under which it consisted of four persons, though she later expanded the Board to five persons, thus in effect leaving one of its members out of Deed functions. This later bore on a dispute during the 1920s, known as the Great Litigation in CS circles, pivoting on whether the CSBD could remove trustees of the Christian Science Publishing Society or whether the CSPS trustees were.
 - g. While Eddy's Manual established limited executive functions under the rule of law in place of a traditional hierarchy, the controversial 1991 publication of a book by Bliss Knapp led the then Board of Directors to make the unusual affidavit during a suit over Knapp's estate.
 - h. Basically it states that neither acts in publishing the book violate the Manual, nor acts refraining from required action, constituted violation of the Manual.
 - i. A traditionally-minded minority held that the Board's act in publishing Knapp's book constituted a fundamental violation of several by-laws and its legal trust, automatically mandating the offending Board's resignations.
 - j. Another minority believed that Eddy intended various requirements for her consent to effect the church's dissolution on her passing, since they could no longer be followed literally.
 - i. Ironically, one of the stronger arguments against this position came from an individual highly respected by their theological quarter, Bliss Knapp, who

claimed that Eddy understood through her lawyer that these consent clauses would not hinder normal operation after her decease.

Mary Baker Eddy

1. Born **Mary Morse Baker** July 16, 1821 – December 3, 1910) was the founder of the Christian Science movement. Deeply religious, she advocated Christian Science as a spiritual practical solution to health and moral issues. She wrote *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*.
2. She started several periodicals including The Christian Science Monitor.
 - a. She took the name **Mary Baker Glover** from her first marriage and was also known as **Mary Baker Glover Eddy** or **Mary Baker G. Eddy** from her third marriage.
 - b. She did much spiritual teaching, lecturing, and instantaneous healing.
 - c. She claims to have been healed of an injury "that neither medicine nor surgery could reach..." According to her personal accounts, when she appeared to be near death, she called out for her Bible. She turned it to Matthew 9:2, which is the story of Jesus healing a man who was sick with palsy, and after pondering the meaning of the passage, found herself suddenly well and able to get up.
 - d. She called this experience "the falling apple" that led to her discovery of how to be well and of Christian Science. She was convinced that: "The divine Spirit had wrought the miracle — a miracle which later I found to be in perfect scientific accord with divine law." She spent the next three years investigating the law of God according to the Bible, especially in the words and works of Jesus.
 - e. Experimenting and praying to discover if the experience was repeatable and if there were knowable laws that governed it. She claimed that she was able to heal others and began to be called out to the bedsides of those whom the medical faculty had not been able to help.
 - f. The Bible and Eddy's textbook on Christian healing, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, are together the church's key doctrinal sources and have been ordained as the church's "dual impersonal pastor"
 - g. A doctor attending a severe case in New Hampshire is said to have witnessed her healing one of his patients and asked if she could explain her system. At the time, she said only that God did it. But he urged her to write about it and soon she began her main work explaining her system of Christian healing.
 - h. Soon others began to ask her to teach her healing method and she claimed that her students were able to approximate her ability to heal. The readers of her book gathered into an organization and gradually developed into a church, with Mary Baker Eddy as its pastor.

Basic Beliefs

1. The First Church of Christ, Scientist, is widely known for its publications, especially *The Christian Science Monitor*, a daily newspaper published internationally in print and on the Internet. Skeptics consider the church to be controversial due to its emphasis on healing through prayer when others would likely choose modern medicine. There have also been periodic tensions with other Christian denominations who reject the idea that Christian Science is a Christian denomination because of what some consider to be unorthodox tenets.
 - a. "We acknowledge Jesus' atonement as the evidence of divine, efficacious Love, unfolding man's unity with God through Christ Jesus the Way-shower; and we acknowledge that man is saved through Christ, through Truth, Life, and Love as demonstrated by the Galilean Prophet in healing the sick and overcoming sin and death."
 - b. *The Christian Science Monitor* (CSM) is an international newspaper published daily online, Monday through Friday, and weekly in print. It was started in 1908. As of March 31, 2008, the print circulation was 56,083.
 - i. The CSM is a newspaper that covers international and United States current

- events. The paper includes a daily religious feature on the "The Home Forum" page, but is not a platform for evangelizing
- ii. In October 2008, citing losses of \$18.9 million per year versus \$12.5 million in annual revenue, the *Monitor* announced that it would cease printing daily and instead print weekly editions starting in April 2009. The *Monitor* continues to offer daily news online on its website and via email. Online readership is estimated to be 25 million.
2. Although she had little formal education, Mary Baker Eddy spent much of her youth reading the Bible, as well as works in natural philosophy, logic, moral science, she had investigated a number of common healing methods of her day, including the conventional medicine of the day, homeopathy, and hydrophathy. However, it was her experience as a patient of P.P. Quimby that was to have the most controversial effect on her religious development.
 - c. **Ontology** is the philosophical study of the nature of being, existence or reality in general, as well as of the basic categories of being and their relations.
 - d. Traditionally listed as a part of the major branch of philosophy known as metaphysics, ontology deals with questions concerning what entities exist or can be said to exist, and how such entities can be grouped, related within a hierarchy, and subdivided according to similarities and differences
 3. However, Christian Science practice does not resemble Quimby's healing system, nor are their respective theologies remotely similar. Eddy biographer Gillian Gill, who is not a Christian Scientist, acknowledges that Quimby "had a profound influence on" Eddy, but also notes that her religion was quite different from his.
 - e. Eddy's insistence on revelation aligned Christian Science more strategically with evangelical Protestantism as represented by Edwards and Wesley and with Seventh-day Adventism"
 4. In *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Eddy argues that given the absolute goodness and perfection of God, sin, disease, and death were not created by Him, and therefore cannot be truly real.
 - f. She bases this reading on Genesis 1, calling that the true record of creation in contrast to Genesis 2, the false record of creation obscuring the true (which occurred when "a mist went up from the face of the ground").
 - g. Rather than being ontologically real, in Christian Science evil and its manifestations are instead terrible lies about God and His creation. This, it contends, is what Jesus meant when he said that "the devil is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44).
 - h. The demand for Christians, therefore, is to "unmask" the devil's lies through Christ, revealing the true and eternal perfection of God's creation. Eddy therefore called evil "error" and felt it could be remedied through a better spiritual understanding of one's relationship to God. She contended that this understanding was what enabled the biblical Jesus to heal and accords with the Scripture: "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." (I John 4:6)
 5. This teaching is the foundation of the Christian Science principle that disease – and any other adversity – can be cured through prayerful efforts, made possible only by God's grace, to fully understand this spiritual relationship. It is encapsulated in *Science and Health* as "The Scientific Statement of Being". It is read aloud in churches and Sunday schools at the end of every Sunday service, along with I John 3:1-3 and a biblical benediction:
 - i. *There is no life, truth, intelligence, nor substance in matter. All is infinite Mind and its infinite manifestation, for God is All-in-all. Spirit is immortal Truth; matter is mortal error. Spirit is the real and eternal; matter is the unreal and temporal. Spirit is God, and man is His image and likeness. Therefore man is not material; he is spiritual.*
 6. This belief in the unreality of imperfection, stemming from the allness of God, Spirit, is the basis of Christian Scientists' characteristic reliance on prayer in place of traditional medical care, often with the aid of Christian Science practitioners.
 7. Christian Science practitioners are listed in the Christian Science Journal, with the permission of the church's Board of Directors, their only form of official recognition by the church and among the Christian Science laity. (Some "unlisted" practitioners maintain active practices as well, but

- they do so without the prestige that a *Journal* listing brings. Additionally, medical insurance plans that cover Christian Science treatment generally only cover treatment provided by Journal-listed practitioners).
8. Practitioners treat patients, in Christian Science parlance, through prayer. Such treatment often, though not always, is for health-related problems, and a practitioner's patient may request help for personal problems as well, such as relationships, problems of employment or housing and so on.
 - j. Practitioners generally charge a modest fee for their services since this is their only form of employment.
 - k. Christian Scientists believe that through scientific study of the inspired word of the Bible, especially Jesus' words and works, one can learn to heal. Healing is understood not as an end in itself, but a natural result of drawing closer to God. Healing sin is particularly important. Eddy called this the "emphatic purpose" of Christian Science, writing that it is also sometimes more difficult than healing sickness, because "while mortals love to sin, they do not love to be sick".
 9. Christian Scientists celebrate the sacraments of baptism and eucharist in an entirely non-material way. "Our baptism," wrote Eddy, "is purification from all error...Our Eucharist is spiritual communion with the one God. Our bread, 'which cometh down from heaven,' is Truth. Our cup is the cross. Our wine the inspiration of Love, the draught the Master drank and commended to his followers.
 10. The only ritual in the Christian Science church is voluntary kneeling at the Sacrament service twice a year, while repeating the Lord's prayer.
 - l. Marriage is not a sacrament of the Christian Science church, but marriage does hold a special place in Christian Science as the moral and legal institution within which a man and woman can partner to help one another grow into a fuller "demonstration," or lived understanding, of their spiritual completeness as expressions of the Father-Mother God. The church's by-laws require a legal, religious ceremony for marriage: "If a Christian Scientist is to be married, the ceremony shall be performed by a clergyman who is legally authorized."
 - m. Christ Jesus is both "Way-shower" and savior in Christian Science theology. Eddy distinguished between the corporeal Jesus, the human man in the flesh (the Son of Man), and the incorporeal Christ (the Son of God). According to Christian Science, Christ is "the divine manifestation of God, which comes to the flesh to destroy incarnate error"
 - i. *The Christ was Jesus' spiritual selfhood; therefore Christ existed prior to Jesus, who said, "Before Abraham was, I am." Jesus, the only immaculate, was born of a virgin mother, and Christian Science explains that mystic saying of the Master as to his dual personality, or the spiritual and material Christ Jesus, called in Scripture the Son of God and the Son of man — explains it as referring to his eternal spiritual selfhood and his temporal manhood.*
 - ii. *The invisible Christ was imperceptible to the so-called personal senses, whereas Jesus appeared as a bodily existence. This dual personality of the unseen and the seen, the spiritual and material, the eternal Christ and the corporeal Jesus manifest in 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, taking away the sins of the world, as the Christ has always done, even before the human Jesus was incarnate to mortal eyes*
 - n. Christian Science teaches that Christ Jesus was sent by God and that his history is factual, including the virgin birth, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the ascension
 - o. Because of his special status due to the virgin birth and his pure, unselfish nature, Jesus voluntarily faced his struggle in Gethsemane, death, resurrection, and ascension to show humanity that no phase of mortal existence was beyond God's redeeming love. Eddy wrote: "Jesus of Nazareth taught and demonstrated man's oneness with the Father, and for this we owe him endless homage".
 - p. Christian Science teaches that we are not Christians until we "go and do likewise," until we in some degree "come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," as it

says in the Scriptures (Ephesians 4:13). We never become Christ, but we are called upon to become fully Christly or Christ-like, to emulate our Master's great words and works in some measure. This was Eddy's understanding of Jesus' saying: "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12). No one's ministry, however, can equal that of Christ Jesus in Christian Science. Eddy even stipulated in her Church Manual that "careless comparison or irreverent reference to Christ Jesus is abnormal in a Christian Scientist and is prohibited"

Worship Service

1. Churches worldwide hold a one-hour service each Sunday, consisting of hymns, prayer, and currently, readings from the *King James Version* (KJV) of the Bible and *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*.
 - a. These readings are the weekly Lesson-Sermon, which is read aloud at all Sunday services in all Christian Science churches worldwide, and is studied by individuals at home throughout the preceding week. The Lesson, as it is informally called, is compiled by a committee at the Mother Church, and is made up of alternating passages from the Bible and Science and Health.
 - b. There are 26 set topics for the Lesson-Sermon, selected by Eddy herself. The topics follow each other in an unchanging, predetermined order, and the progression starts over mid-year so that every week in the year has a topic devoted to it. In years in which there are 53 Sundays, the topic "Christ Jesus" occurs a third time, in December. There is also a Lesson-Sermon for Thanksgiving Day.
2. Because there are no clergy in the church, branch church Sunday services are conducted by two Readers: the First Reader, who reads passages from Science and Health, and the Second Reader, who reads passages from the Bible. First Readers determine the beginning "scriptural selection", hymns to be sung on Sundays, and the benediction. The vast majority of the service is the reading of the weekly Bible lesson supplied by the Mother Church, and order of service set out by the Manual. To be elected the First Reader in one's branch church is one of the highest and most prestigious positions the lay Christian Scientist can aspire to.
 - c. Churches also hold a one-hour Wednesday evening testimony meeting, with similar readings and accounts of healing from prayer by those attending. At these services, the First Reader reads extended passages from the Bible and Science and Health. They may choose alternate Bible translations at these services

Controversies

1. Today, the most publicized controversies are still over the issue of medicine. While church members point out that followers are free to choose to seek conventional medical treatment, most rely exclusively on healing by prayer. Christian Scientists distinguish their method from "faith healing." To a Christian Scientist, "faith healing" is something that relies merely on blind faith in miraculous cures. Christian Scientists see themselves as practicing a well-defined process with a proven track record by means of the spiritualization of thought through prayer aimed at shedding the false beliefs of the mortal mind that manifest themselves as physical ailments.
2. This issue is most controversial regarding children. In a number of nationally publicized cases in the early 1990s, prosecutors charged parents belonging to the Christian Science church with murder or manslaughter after their children died of likely curable ailments without being medically treated. The best-known of these was the Twitchell Case in Massachusetts, in which parents David and Ginger Twitchell were convicted in 1990 of involuntary manslaughter in the death of their two-year-old son Robyn, who succumbed to a bowel obstruction.^[12] In other cases, parents have been legally exonerated — often because of exemptions in state laws to taking legal action against people who relied on religious cures. Such cases are also controversial inside the Church. Many members believe that the parents involved received poor guidance from church leaders, while others contend that the process of healing through Christian Science wasn't done correctly.
3. There have also been tensions over theological and religious concerns. While members of the Christian Science church claim their religion is based in, reconcilable with, and part of Christianity (being based upon the teachings of Jesus), there are Orthodox Christian theologians and others who disagree. These critics state that Mary Baker Eddy's interpretation of Christian scripture

diverges too greatly from basic tenets of Christianity. They often cite the faith's views on the nature/existence of evil or sin, the divinity and resurrection of Jesus, the trinity, and a few others as meaning that the faith can no longer be considered a Christian denomination. In response, Christian Scientists say that Jesus never claimed to be God and that even implicitly denied it in Matthew 19:16-17.

¹⁶Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"

¹⁷"Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments."