

Christian Science

Christian or Cult? (NOTE: When reviewing the points#1 – 13 below, please remember that these are the positions of the Christian Scientists and are not Biblical.

The movement known as Christian Science is a religion "emphasizing divine healing as practiced by Jesus Christ." It is officially known as *The Church of Christ, Scientist* (CCS) (with headquarters in Boston, Massachusetts), founded in 1879 by the much married Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy (1821-1910). It is one of the more sophisticated modern cults, attracting many intellectuals. Estimated membership was about 350,000 in the 1930s with approximately 2,500 branch churches, societies, and college organizations in more than 50 countries worldwide. Estimates suggest that membership has fallen to well under 100,000 at the present time. While the branches are democratic in government, they all conform to the rules laid down in Mary Baker Eddy's *Manual of The Mother Church* (1895); church affairs are now overseen by a self-perpetuating board of five people.

Under the leadership of Board of Directors Chairman Virginia Harris, the CCS has embarked on an aggressive, multi-faceted marketing program designed to mainstream itself and to attract new members. For example, the CCS is finding new ways to promote itself in light of our society's current interest in self-awareness, spirituality, mind/body connections, alternative medicine, and women's issues. The CCS's weekly magazine has been redesigned to include quotes from [New-Age](#) proponent Oprah Winfrey. Church representatives are also turning up at medical conferences and other places.

Mrs. Eddy was chronically sick growing up, with many ailments including paralysis, hysteria, seizures and convulsions. At 22, she

married her first of three husbands, George Glover, who died within 6 months from yellow fever. Following Glover's death, she began to be involved in mesmerism ([hypnosis](#)) and the occult practices of spiritualism and clairvoyance (Ruth Tucker, *Another Gospel*, p. 152). Still ill, she married Daniel Patterson in 1853, a dentist and [homeopathic practitioner](#). It was during this time she met mental healer Phineas P. Quimby (1802-1866), whose influence would shape her belief of Christian Science. Quimby believed that illness and disease could be cured through positive thoughts and healthy attitudes, by changing one's beliefs about the illness. She claimed that Quimby cured her; she suddenly improved, but later the symptoms returned (*Another Gospel*, p. 155).

After Quimby's death in 1866, Mrs. Eddy determined to carry on his work. She had developed a "psychic dependence" on Quimby, drawing on his spiritual presence, claiming even visitations by his apparition. Eddy "reached the scientific certainty that all causation rests with the Mind, and that every effect is a mental phenomena." Eddy took Quimby's teachings one step further, claiming that sickness, death, and even our physical bodies do *not* exist, but are only *imagined*. Based on this absurdity, Mary Baker Eddy formulated her unique interpretations of Scripture upon which Christian Science was founded (and recorded in Eddy's 1875 book, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. [HJB] (In 2001, the ten millionth copy of *Science and Health* was sold). In essence, Christian Science is a revival of ancient Pantheism. [Eddy later published 16 other books, including *Retrospection and Introspection* (1891), which tells of her own experience of discovering, practicing, and teaching the "science" of Christian healing.] [The CCS recently announced plans to build (at a cost of \$25 million) the Mary Baker Eddy Library for the Betterment of Humanity. Scheduled to open in 2002 in Boston, the library will house over 500,000 unpublished documents and artifacts related to Mrs. Eddy. It will also allow the CCS to secure another 45 years of copyright protection for the writings under new U.S. copyright laws that take effect at the end of 2002.]

The event that Mrs. Eddy claimed as the inauguration of Christian Science occurred in February of 1866. She claimed to have had a near fatal fall on icy pavement, but was instantly healed when "the

healing Truth dawned upon my senses," and the divine healing ministry was born (*Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 24; *Science and Health*, p. 107). Testimony from her attending physician as well as other correspondence from Mrs. Eddy at the time strongly dispute Mrs. Eddy's "official" version of those events (Anthony Hoekema, *Christian Science*, pp. 12-13).

Healing became a major distinctive of Christian Science. According to Eddy Baker, the central fact of the Bible is the superiority of spiritual over physical power. The spiritual superiority is evident in other ways than healing. Telepathy is practiced in Christian Science treatment, and may be considered a form of psychic healing. Christian Science claims to prove through the healing of disease and other difficulties that the understanding of God and his spiritual creation is as effective now as it was in Jesus' time. Its adherents, therefore, rely on "divine law" in times of sickness instead of resorting to medical and other material means. Christian Scientists do not use doctors, medicine, or immunizations. Christian Science Practitioners are used to "help people through the false reality of illness." Instead, proper prayer and training are employed to battle the "non-reality" of illness. (The right of Christian Science parents to withhold medical treatment from their children has many times been challenged in court.)

During the formative stages, the church saw many rivalries, scandals, and dissident movements. One of the dissidents was Emma Hopkins, who as an independent Christian Science leader, taught Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, who later founded the [Unity School of Christianity](#) (another "mind-science" cult). Because Mrs. Eddy wanted to spread Christian Science, especially to the upper class, she increased her control over all aspects of the movement and would not tolerate any disloyalty (Georgine Milmine, *The Life of Mary Baker G. Eddy*, p. 234 ff). Publications of the Christian Science Publishing Society include the *Christian Science Quarterly*, containing Bible lessons for daily study; *The Christian Science Journal*, a monthly magazine; *Christian Science Sentinel*, a weekly magazine; *The Christian Science Monitor*, a daily newspaper; and *The Herald of Christian Science*. In the 1980s, the group expanded into other media, producing both radio and television news programming. Their venture into cable-television operations was ended in 1992, when it

was discovered "that the church had secretly transferred \$46.5 million from endowments and pension funds to help cover huge losses on the 'Monitor Channel,' which had lost over \$325 million" (*Chicago Tribune*, 1/27/93, p. 2). [Additionally, there were losses of \$36 million and the resulting termination of *World Monitor*, a newspaper begun in 1988. *The Christian Science Monitor* is said to be losing \$13 million annually (Martin Gardner, *The Healing Revelations of Mary Baker Eddy*, p. 218).]

Instead of preachers (the CCS has no ordained clergy), Christian Science's Sunday services consist mainly of prescribed readings from the Bible, followed by interpretive readings from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (which Eddy thought was divinely inspired -- "I should blush to write of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* as I have, were it of human origin and I apart from God its author; but [since] I was only a scribe echoing the harmonies of heaven in Divine Metaphysics, I cannot be super-modest of the Christian Science Textbook."). Eddy's "Scientific Statement of Being" (read every week from every Christian Science pulpit) begins with, "There is no life, truth, intelligence, nor substance in matter," and ends with, "Therefore, man is not material; he is spiritual." Wednesday meetings include testimonies of healing from the congregation. Readers, both men and women, are elected from the membership to conduct the services. Practitioners, also both men and women, devote full time to the work of "spiritual healing."

Mrs. Eddy presented Christian Science as a scientific system of healing based upon spiritual laws God (allegedly) had revealed to her. She taught these laws must be followed -- without deviation -- if a believer wishes to practice Christian Science with consistent success. She taught Christian Science cannot be mixed with any other doctrine or spiritual healing system, and, thereby, it is incompatible with medicine. Eddy also believed in "Malicious Animal Magnetism" (MAM), which is negative mental energy or power, on the level of black magic. "Reading Rooms" are local Christian Science libraries where members go to read Eddy's works to aid their spiritual evolution.

Christian Scientists call themselves Christians, but their beliefs deviate from Biblical Christianity on nearly every central Doctrine.

Below are the highlights of what Christian Scientists believe concerning their source of authority, the Godhead, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Resurrection, sin and salvation, heaven and hell, man's destiny, and disease and death: **1. Source of Authority.** Mary Baker Eddy claimed the Bible was her "only textbook" and "only authority." Yet she also said the Bible has thousands of errors -- 30,000 in the Old Testament and 300,000 in the New Testament. Christian Scientists believe that Mrs. Eddy's discovery of Divine Science is the "final revelation" from God. They claim *Science and Health* is divinely inspired (even though it has been proven to contain numerous plagiarisms and revisions). -- *Science and Health* is the "first book" which has been "uncontaminated by human hypothesis" (*The First Church of Christ, Scientist and Miscellany*, p. 115; *Science and Health*, pp. 99, 139, 456-457). [HJB] One is only supposed to read the Bible if they have Eddy's "key" in hand, so as to find out what a passage means. The implication is that God couldn't make Himself plain, but has to have Mary Baker Eddy interpret what He says. With this in mind, the world was, in effect, left to grope in darkness until Mrs. Eddy came on the scene.**2.**

Language. Christian Scientists have given Bible terms allegorical, metaphysical definitions that are completely different from normal usage. Everything is spiritualized to the point that the physical no longer exists. New meanings have also been assigned to many traditional theological doctrines. (For example: "Adam was not an actual person who was created by God and fell into sin. 'Adam' means error; a falsity; the belief in 'original sin,' sickness, and death; evil; the opposite of good.") [HJB] **3. Trinity.** Christian Science clearly repudiates the Trinitarian Godhead: "The theory of three persons in one God (that is, a personal Trinity or Tri-unity) suggests polytheism, rather than the one ever-present I Am" (*Science and Health*, p. 256). Instead, "Life, Truth, and Love constitutes the triune Person called God ... God the Father-Mother; Christ the spiritual idea of sonship; divine Science or the Holy Comforter" (*Science and Health*, p. 331-332). Christian Science teaches that the Biblical concept of the Trinity suggests "heathen gods" (*Science and Health*, p. 152). God is thus viewed as an impersonal "Divine Principle," a conception of one's mind (*Science and Health*, pp. 361, 469). On page 465 in another of Mrs. Eddy's "authoritative" books, entitled *Miscellaneous Writings*, she wrote: "God is incorporeal, divine, supreme, infinite, mind, spirit, soul, principle, life, truth, love," but

devoid of any personality. [HJB] [To the contrary, the Bible teaches that God is a triune, personal, transcendent Being who created "the world and all things in it" (Act 17:24). He is not a pantheistic all-in-all. He is holy and just, as well as love. God created and governs the universe, including man (Acts 17:24-27).]

4. Jesus Christ. Christian Science denies that the incarnation of Christ was the fullness of deity dwelling in human flesh, denies the perfection of the man Jesus, and attempts to explain away the historical death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ (*Science and Health*, pp. 336, 29, 332, 53, 398, 313, 593; *Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 201) Christian Science believes that Mary's conception of Jesus was spiritual -- on pages 332 and 347 of *Science and Health*, the virgin birth of Christ is described and explained: "Jesus was the offspring of Mary's self-conscious communion with God. ... Mary's conception of him was spiritual." Christian Science believes that the names "Jesus" and "Christ" do not refer to the same person -- that Jesus is the human man and Christ is the "divine idea" (i.e., "dualism"). They teach that the spiritual (good) cannot dwell in material bodies because they are evil; thus Jesus could not have been both God and man. [To the contrary, the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is not the divine idea of God but was God uniquely manifested in the flesh, truly God and truly man, one divine Person with two indivisible natures, who is the only Savior and the only truth and Lord (John 1:1-3,14; Col. 2:9; Phil. 2:6-7; John 14:6).] Christian Science believes that Jesus was *not* God and the only way to heaven, but only the "wayshower" (cf. Jn. 20:31; I Jn. 4:2,3).

Christian Science not only denies that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, it also denies that Jesus is one Person with two natures -- fully God and fully man. Christian Science presents Jesus Christ in terms of a Gnostic duality: "The spiritual Christ was infallible: Jesus as material manhood was not Christ" (*Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 84). "Christ as the true spiritual ideal, is the ideal of God now and forever ..." (*Science and Health*, p. 361). "The Christ is incorporeal, spiritual ..." while, "The corporeal [physical] man Jesus was human only" (*Science and Health*, p. 332). Yet "matter is mortal error ... matter is the unreal and temporal" (*Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 21). So what Christian Science actually concludes is that the physical humanity of Jesus was an illusion, "as it seemed to mortal view" (*Science and*

Health, p. 315).

Concerning the blood atonement of Jesus Christ: "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 ..." (*Science and Health*, p. 25). Christian Science teaches that the death of Jesus Christ for sin was a "man-made" theory, and that Jesus was alive in the tomb, demonstrating the "power of Spirit to overrule mortal, material sense" (*Science and Health*, p. 44). Eddy states, "Christ was not crucified ... Jesus, being the man who possessed the Christ consciousness, was the one who went to the cross and who appeared to die." Thus, according to the theology of Christian Science, the Bible only appears to say that Jesus died on the cross and His body was laid in the tomb; it must instead be understood that Jesus actually never died, but was rather in the tomb denying death's reality!

5. Holy Spirit. Christian Science denies that the Holy Spirit is a personal being. It teaches that the Holy Spirit is Christian Science. -- "This Comforter I understand to be Divine Science" (*Science and Health*, p. 55). It is the unfolding of the thoughts and infinite mind of God (pp. 502-503). [cf. Jn. 16:13-14] Thus, God, the Holy Spirit, cannot indwell a person (*Science and Health*, p. 336).**6. The Resurrection.** It is obvious that if Jesus never physically died on the cross to atone for sins that mankind cannot commit (*Science and Health*, pp. 45-46), then the resurrection must also have a unique meaning in Christian Science. Eddy explains, "When Jesus reproduced his body after its burial, he revealed the myth or material falsity of evil; its powerlessness to destroy good and the omnipotence of the Mind that knows this: he also showed forth the error of nothingness of supposed life in matter, and the great somethingness of the good we possess, which is of Spirit, and immortal" (*Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 201). Jesus resurrection was thus the manifestation of the error of evil. He demonstrated that sin and death are illusions and that if one wishes to rid themselves of these illusions, they only need to deny their reality.**7. Sin.** Christian Science denies the existence of all matter, including man's physical body. They say that man is "incapable of sin, sickness, and death." They claim sin, sickness, and death are the "effects of error," thereby denying the reality of sin. [HJB] Bottom line, to Christian Science,

there is no sin (*Science and Health*, p. 447). This is a consistent deduction and fundamental principle of the Christian Science system -- namely, God is all and God is good, and since the real man has never departed from his original state of perfection, he is not in need of salvation. He is saved now and reposing in the bosom of the Father. He has always been saved -- that is, as God's idea of the expression of the mind, man is forever held in the divine consciousness. And since sin and evil have no reality, all ideas of sin and evil are illusions. They are the product of the mortal mind. Hence, it is a sense of sin which is sinful because of the illusory product of the mortal mind. They say that man's real problem is the *belief* of sin, and that "Christ came to destroy the belief of sin." [Eddy writes in *Miscellaneous Writings* in the question and answer section: "If there is no sin, why did Jesus come to save sinners?" She answers, "Jesus came to seek and to save such as believe in the reality of the unreal; to save them from this false belief; that they might lay hold of eternal Life ..." (p. 63). In other words, Jesus came to save mankind from the false belief that sin is real! Jesus saving work was to exemplify the fact that death is unreal, that sin is only an illusion or false belief, and that to deny its existence is the ultimate task of each person.] **8. Salvation.** Since Christian Scientists do not believe that sin is real, they, therefore, see no need for salvation in Jesus Christ. Notwithstanding, Christian Scientists still teach a salvation based on works -- and contrary to even their own teachings, a salvation through victory over *suffering* and *temptation*. **[HJB] 9. Hell.** Christian Science denies the existence of hell and eternal punishment, and, therefore, there is no devil (*Science and Health*, p. 469). Hell is defined as "mortal belief; error; lust; remorse; hatred; revenge; sin; sickness; death." They believe that hell is a self-imposed "mental anguish," emanating from the guilt of one's *imagined* sin. **[HJB]**

10. Man's Destiny. Christian Science teaches that since God is all good and nothing that is real exists outside God, then sin, sickness, and death are mortal error or an illusion. Christ, as the Truth, therefore came to set man free from these false beliefs by His teachings and example (*Science and Health*, pp. 473, 475, 108). Christian Science denies the penal, substitutionary atonement of Christ, saying, "The material blood of Jesus was no more efficacious to cleanse from sin when it was shed on 'the accursed tree,' than

when it was flowing in his veins as he went daily about His Father's business" (*Science and Health*, p.25). "Jesus taught the way of Life by demonstration. There is but one way to heaven, harmony, and Christ in Divine Science shows us this way" (*Science and Health*, p. 242). "Universal salvation rests on progression and probation ... No final judgment awaits mortals ..." (*Science and Health*, p. 291)

11. Disease and Death. Christian Scientists claim that since organic disease does not exist, "the cause of all so-called disease is mental" [i.e., 'the belief in sin is thereby the cause of it'], "a mistaken belief" (*Science and Health*, p. 377). They say that since our physical bodies do not exist, disease and death are only illusions (*Science and Health*, pp. 348,386). [To the contrary, the Bible teaches that sin, sickness, and evil are not an illusion, but a result of man's willful choice to rebel against a Holy God, and death (both physical and the spiritual eternal separation from God) is the result of sin (Rom. 3:10, 23; 5:12-14; 1 John 1:8-10).] They believe they have restored Christ's principles of divine healing through their practices of mental healing; i.e., the healing performed by Christian Science involves helping a person to deny the reality of his illness, and thereby, any failure to heal is due to a person's inability to overcome his belief. Mary Baker Eddy claimed to have this power of healing (called Divine Science), though she never provided any tangible proof of it. [HJB] [Whereas the Christian Science approach to healing may help psychosomatic illnesses, it has been scientifically demonstrated that it is not effective with real illness. In fact, studies comparing the cumulative death rates of practicing Christian Scientists with control groups have shown significantly higher death rates among the Christian Scientists (*Journal of American Medical Association*, September 22/29, 1989, pp 1657-58; and *Morbidity Weekly Report*, August 23, 1991, pp. 579-582).]

12. The "Gospel" of Christian Science. Jesus, who possessed the Christ consciousness as do all men to a lesser extent, went to the cross, not to bring about forgiveness of sin, for sin is an illusion, but rather to demonstrate that death is an illusion. On the morning of the resurrection, the supposed physical body of Jesus was reproduced in its original illusionary form, for all matter is illusion, and thereby demonstrated to mankind that all could do the same by denying the reality of sin and death.

Jesus' "seeming" death on the cross was not intended to pay for our sins, but to prove the unreality of sin, disease, and death. The Bible is full of mistakes. Jesus' words were recorded by "dull disciples ... in a decaying language," and must be spiritually interpreted through Christian Science. To put it another way: "Jesus was laid down as the result of apparent death, into a fictitious tomb, in an unreal body, to make an unnecessary atonement for sins that had never been a reality and had been committed in an imaginary body, and that He saves from non-existing evil those headed toward an imaginary hell, the false fancy of an erroneous Mortal Mind" (J.K. VanBaalen, *The Chaos of Cults*).

13. Conclusion. Christian Science offers some real enticements -- a "spiritually scientific" method for healing, victory over life's circumstances, and guaranteed salvation. All one has to do to receive these blessings is to study Eddy's writings and obey them to the letter. She was God's messenger to this age and her writings are considered infallible. Just obey her teaching, and learn to think as she thought, and you will be victorious.

The physical dangers of Christian Science are obvious. Since they are taught that learning about their bodies is spiritually harmful, Christian Scientists are ill equipped to understand the symptoms of illness. They often suffer needlessly from treatable ailments and neglect life-threatening conditions that could be cured if treated in their early stages.

* Unless otherwise cited, six primary sources were used for this report: (1) *Grolier's 1995 Multimedia Encyclopedia*; (2) *Funk & Wagnall's Encyclopedia*; (3) "Christian Science, Attempting a Comeback," *MCO Journal*, Spring 2001, pp. 8-11, 15; (4) "[Christian Science](#)," Craig Branch (Watchman Fellowship Profile, 1997); (5) *Examining & Exposing Cultic & Occultic Movements*, Jack Sin, "Christian Science Examined," April 2000, pp. 26-31; and (6) *What They Believe*, Harold J. Berry [HJB], BTTB:1990, pp. 29-49.