

WORLD RELIGIONS

Christian Science

Lesson #17

Christian Science or the Church of Christ, Scientist is one of the many cults raised up in the world by Satan to deceive people and lead them to hell. The Christian Science cult is really an oxymoron for it is neither Christian nor scientific. The core beliefs of Christian Science came from P. P. Quimby, a “mesmerist” or mental healer. Mesmerism is positive thinking applied to medicine. Mary Baker was supposedly healed by Quimby and used much of his material in her book, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, published in 1875. From the Christian Science cult came two other cults, first, the Unity School of Christianity and secondly, Religious Science (Science of Mind). All share the same core beliefs, though they differ in various details. For this lesson we will focus on the Christian Science cult, surveying their history and teachings.

I. GROWTH OF THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CULT

Mary Baker’s book, *Science and Health*, was published in 1875. The cult was officially established by Baker in 1866 and grew to about 200,000 followers by 1900¹ and 270,000 by 1936.² Thankfully the cult has seen a decline in recent years and can only boast about 100,000 members, though it has tens of millions of dollars in holdings and boasts no debt.³

People are attracted to Christian Science teachings because Christian Science preys upon people’s fear of sin, sickness, death, and disease. They also promise prosperity and health along with a form of moralism which appeals to people who do not want to face up to their sin, their unworthiness before a holy God, and their need of salvation.

II. HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

The history of Christian Science focuses around Mary Baker. Therefore, we will use her life and especially her marriages as an outline of her life and the history of the Christian Science cult. It should be noted that the Christian Science

¹Kenneth Boa, *Cults, World Religions, and You* (Weaton: Victor Books, 1981), 83.

²USA Today online edition, “Christian Science Church Aims for Growth amid Struggles,” http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2006-06-25-christianscience_x.htm.

³Ibid.

movement has attempted to rewrite Mary Baker's history in order to conceal the truth about her true character and practices. Ken Boa writes:

Biographies of Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science, fall into two basic categories: official and unofficial. Early biographies written by her contemporaries have been suppressed by the Church of Christ, Scientists because they reveal too much about her real character and life. The church has attempted to destroy these books and to rewrite Mrs. Eddy's history. Nevertheless, the best documented books and the facts of history reveal that her life and practices contradicted the teachings she promoted.⁴

- A. **Mary Ann Morris Baker's Early Childhood** – Mary Baker was born in 1821. She grew up in a Congregational Church. She had poor health as a child and struggled with many illnesses. This led to her fascination of healing accounts in the Bible and also the rejection of her parents' faith at an early age.

- B. **Mary Baker Glover** – In 1844 Mary married a businessman named George Washington Glover and a year later he died of yellow fever. Mary was pregnant with their child and the child was born in 1845. Her physical ailments, the loss of her husband, and being a single mother of a newborn baby affected her mental stability. She gave up her child at an early age to boarding school and to be raised by relatives.

- C. **Mary Baker Glover Patterson** – In 1853 Mary met and married a dentist by the name of Daniel M. Patterson. It was an unhappy marriage which increased her mental and emotional problems.⁵ After 13 years of a troubled marriage, Patterson abandoned his wife. After seven years of separation they were legally divorced in 1873. It was during this time that she sought out French mesmerist, Phineas Parkhurst Quimby, for healing of her spinal problems. Mary claimed to be cured by Quimby who died shortly after. Mary became a disciple of Quimby by diligently studying his teachings and techniques. In 1866, after a fall on an icy sidewalk, Mary claimed that a doctor had told her that her injury was incurable. After reading Mt. 9:2 she said she was miraculously healed. Later, the doctor

⁴Kenneth Boa, *Cults, World Religions, and You* (Weaton: Victor Books, 1981), 81.

⁵Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1985), 127.

who supposedly claimed she had an incurable injury, denied under oath that he had said any such thing. He also said that Mary continued to come to him four more times to treat her injuries which were not healed miraculously. Mary even wrote another disciple two weeks after her fall that she had not recovered, though the miracle supposedly had already taken place.

She eventually published her own book, *Science and Health*, in 1875, taking much of her material from Quimby and adding to it her own twisted form of Christianity, merging mesmerism, positive thinking, and false Christianity into what would later be known as Christian Science and its followers, Christian Scientists.

- D. **Marry Baker Glover Patterson Eddy** – In 1877 Mary Baker Glover Patterson married a salesman named Asa Gilbert Eddy. The name of her newborn cult was changed to the Christian Science Association and later in 1879 it was changed again to the Church of Christ, Scientist. Asa Eddy became what was to be called the first “Christian Science Practitioner.” Mary moved to Boston, establishing the Massachusetts Metaphysical College, where she taught until 1889. In 1882 Asa Eddy died of a heart attack, which was confirmed by an autopsy. Mary denied the findings of the report and said that Asa died of “arsenic poisoning mentally administered.”⁶ She found a doctor who supported her claim, but it was later discovered the so-called doctor was a fraud, had no medical credentials, was performing many abortions, and after being discovered, was tried and sent to prison for 10 years for illegally running a medical college.⁷ Though Mary taught in *Science and Health* that no Christian Science person should be involved in or consent to an autopsy for a loved one, she violated her own teaching.

Mary grew rich from her new religion. She told people they had to purchase her book and purchase any new revision of it, even if the changes were slight. She died in 1910 with a fortune of over 3 million dollars and she left none of it to charity.⁸

⁶*The Boston Post*, June 5th, 1882. See also Albert B. Olston, *Facts and Fables of Christian Science* (Copyright 1912), 85.

⁷Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1985), 127.

⁸Kenneth Boa, *Cults, World Religions, and You* (Weaton: Victor Books, 1981), 83.

After her death it was determined by a board of directors that there would be no replacement for Mary but that the authority of the Christian Science cult would remain with a five-man board of directors.

III. TEACHINGS OF CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

A. Christian Science Teachings about the Bible and Revelation

1. Mary claimed that the *Science and Health* was inspired and received by direct revelation from God. This is a staggering claim as it contradicts the inspired Word of God in many places and the first published edition had many grammatical errors.
2. *Science and Health* also claims to present the only correct interpretation of the Bible. Though Mary claimed the Bible as her only authority, she also said that the Bible contained thousands of mistakes and therefore was not to be trusted. She said the creation account of Genesis 2 was a lie. She rejected all passages as false which showed her beliefs as wrong.
3. When interpreting the Bible, Mary ignored the literal interpretation and spiritualized the text so that it matched up with her teachings. Thus *Science and Health* is considered to be more authoritative than the Bible because *Science and Health* contains no mistakes while the Bible supposedly contains many.

B. Christian Science Teachings about God

1. Christian Science teaches a *pantheistic* view of God. Pantheism teaches that God is the universe or everything that is created is God. Thus God is impersonal. He is not the Creator, but the creation itself is God. God does not have a mind; He is Mind, Principle, Life, Intelligence, Spirit, Substance, and Mother. God was, in Mary's view, attributes of man and not a person.
2. *Christian Science denies the Trinity* saying that the triune God consisted of Life, Truth, and Love. God is a Father-Mother and Christ the spiritual idea of son-ship.⁹

⁹*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, 331-32.

3. Since everything is God and God is mind, therefore matter does not exist, only mind exists.¹⁰

C. Christian Science Teachings about the Holy Spirit

1. Mary taught that the Holy Spirit is Christian Science itself.

D. Christian Science Teachings about Christ

1. Mary denied the deity of Christ. Jesus was merely a man. Christ was the impersonal divine idea who came upon Jesus, but not fully.
2. Jesus was not literally born a virgin but Mary, the Mother of Jesus, had a spiritual idea named Jesus. Jesus, therefore, was the offspring of Mary's self-conscious communion with God – the universe.¹¹
3. Jesus didn't physically heal people but merely showed people the reality that there was no disease.
4. Jesus did not die on the cross to atone for the sins of mankind. In fact, Jesus' death was an illusion, but an illusion that teaches us about the affection and goodness of God to man.¹²
5. There was no bodily resurrection. Jesus only appeared to have a body after the resurrection in order to accommodate His disciples immature ideas because Jesus was on a higher spiritual plane.¹³
6. Mary Baker Eddy said, "If there had never existed such a person as the Galilean Prophet, it would make no difference to me."¹⁴

¹⁰ *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, 468:9-15.

¹¹ *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, 473.

¹² *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, 332:19.

¹³ Kenneth Boa, *Cults, World Religions, and You* (Weaton: Victor Books, 1981), 86.

¹⁴ Mary Baker Eddy, *First Church of Christ Scientist and Miscellany*, 318-19.

E. Christian Science Teachings about Salvation

1. Since there is no sin and evil, there is no need for salvation or a Savior. Man, as God's idea, is already saved with everlasting salvation.¹⁵
2. Christian Science denies the sufficiency of salvation by grace, through faith, in Jesus Christ, claiming, "*There is no other way into the kingdom of heaven except through the practice of Christian Science as it was divinely revealed to Mrs. Eddy.*"¹⁶

F. Christian Science Teachings about Worship

1. The ordinances of the Lord's supper and baptism are sometimes symbolically practiced in Christian Science but no elements are used.
2. The Bible and *Science and Health* are read alternately in worship services, but the true source of authority is *Science and Health*.
3. Christian Science trains people to become "practitioners" who supposedly are able to heal people using "mind science," attempting to convince people they are not really sick at all.

G. Miscellaneous Christian Science Teachings

1. *No Pastors* other than the Bible and *Science and Health*.
2. *There is no evil, Satan, or demons*. Evil is nothing more than incorrect thoughts from mortal minds. The reason mortal thoughts exist is the presence of "Malicious Animal Magnetism." Thus when people suffer from disease or injury, they are really suffering from MAM. To Mary, MAM was like a demon that stalked her. Later in life she frequently changed residences in order to avoid being caught by MAM.

¹⁵*Miscellaneous Writings*, 261.

¹⁶*Christian Science Journal*, vol. 98, no 4, April 1980, 186.

3. *Sin, disease, and death* are merely illusions of the mortal mind and do not exist.¹⁷ Man is incapable of sin, sickness, and death. Sin is merely mental insanity. To get rid of sin, you deny its reality.¹⁸
4. Christian Science claims to be *the only true church*. Mary wrote that she founded Christian Science to “reinstat primitive Christianity and its lost element of healing.”¹⁹
5. *Angels* are nothing more than thoughts from God and since God is the universe, angels are thoughts arising from creation.
6. *The history recorded in the Bible* is no more important to our well being than any other history.²⁰
7. *There are many logical fallacies and inconsistencies in Christian Science beliefs*. If God is everything then there cannot be such things as “Malicious Animal Magnetism,” mortal mind, or the illusion of evil, yet Christian Science teaches that these things must be overcome. Christian Science encourages their followers to deny their five senses in relation to sickness and death. Once a person is able to overcome the senses and mortal mind, they supposedly will never die. Yet Mary herself used doctors, medications²¹, and was unable to prevent her own death! Not only that but every follower of Christian Science either has died or will die.
8. *Marriage* is nothing but a temporary state that people continue in until they reach a higher state of spiritual awareness.
9. *Prosperity, health, and success* are promised to those who strictly follow Christian Science teachings.

¹⁷ *Miscellaneous Writings*, 27.

¹⁸ *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, 339.

¹⁹ *Church Manual*, 89th ed., 17, quoted by H. Wayne House, *Charts of Cults, Sects, & Religious Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 166.

²⁰ *Miscellaneous Writings*, 1896, 400. Original edition available at <http://books.google.com>.

²¹ Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1985), 127.

10. “The sinner makes his own hell by doing evil, and the saint his own heaven by doing right.”²²
11. *Every major doctrine of Christianity is denied by the Christian Science cult.*

When one steps back and looks at the Christian Science cult as a whole and the teachings of Mary Baker Eddy, it becomes apparent that Mary’s early childhood, her pain and suffering from illnesses, her fear of sin and death, the death of her first husband, and failed marriages, led her to attempt to escape from her pain and trials by denying reality. She latched on to mesmerism and redefined Christianity, Christ, and God to comfort herself. She was taught about sin and judgment growing up, but these doctrines made her fearful. Maybe she was suffering because of her sin? How could she trust a God who would let her suffer so much and who refused to rescue her from her pain and sickness? Thus she was an easy target for Satan, who used Mary to invent her own religion, a religion of denial and hyper positive thinking in an attempt to escape the truth.

²²*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, 1914 ed., 266.