



Mary Baker Eddy

Aaron Erhardt

Mary Baker Eddy was a nineteenth century religious leader. She claimed to discover “Christian Science” and founded the Church of Christ, Scientist. She believed that illness existed in the mind, not in reality, and could be healed through prayer and proper belief.

Mary was born on July 16, 1821, in Bow, New Hampshire. Her parents were named Mark and Abigail Baker. She was the youngest of six children. Mary’s older brother, Albert, graduated from Dartmouth College and studied law with Franklin Pierce, who later became the 14th President of the United States. Albert was elected to the New Hampshire State Legislature and ran for Congress, before his death in 1841. Albert had mentored Mary, teaching her moral science and natural philosophy.

Mary’s family was very religious. Her parents emphasized prayer, church attendance, and Bible study, which included reading the Westminster Catechism. She was raised in the Congregational Church.
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Mary had a hard life. From childhood, she suffered from physical illness and emotional anxiety. She was prone to attacks of hysteria, which some of the neighbors unsympathetically called “tantrums,” and claimed to hear voices (*Retrospection and Introspection*, p. 8). Her ailments interrupted her formal education, though she did extensive reading and writing at home. She loved poetry. Sadly, things did not get easier as she aged. In addition to illness, there were periods of tragedy, desertion, and poverty.

In December of 1843, Mary married George Glover. She was 22 years old. (The families were already connected through the marriage of Samuel Baker, Mary’s brother, to George’s sister). George was a building contractor and Mason. They moved to the Carolinas, where he died of yellow fever the following June. Mary was six months pregnant. She would later lose custody of the child, whom she named George.

In June of 1853, Mary married for the second time. His name was Daniel Patterson. He was a traveling dentist, whom she divorced in 1873. Their marriage was characterized by financial instability and Patterson’s frequent absences.²

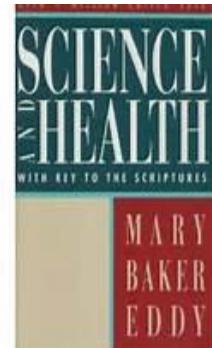
In October of 1862, Mary was struggling with back problems and made her first visit to Phineas Quimby, a popular healer in Portland, Maine.³ He was known for his “medicine free” techniques, which involved manipulation of the mind. His treatment of Mary was effective and she became an ardent admirer. She praised Quimby for discovering the healing method of Jesus.

On one occasion, Mary went to stay with a friend, Sarah Crosby, and talked incessantly of Quimby. She suggested that they go out into the world teaching Quimby’s “Science.” The two women also dabbled in communication with the dead during their visit.⁴

Mary was clearly dependent upon Quimby for many of her thoughts. She spent hours discussing and exchanging ideas with him, and publicly endorsed his healing method. However, she would later claim that he had nothing to do with her discovery of Christian Science.⁵

In February of 1866, Mary slipped on icy pavement and suffered severe injuries. She was taken to a nearby house and not expected to survive. (Quimby had died just a few weeks earlier). However, Mary claimed to have been suddenly made well after reading accounts of Jesus' healings.⁶ That was when the "healing Truth" dawned upon her sense (*Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 24), and led to the discovery of Christian Science.⁷ Mary believed that the Lord's miracles were natural and repeatable.

In 1875, Mary published *Science and Health*. It is considered an authoritative and inspired source by Christian Scientists, which they use to properly interpret the Bible. To date, it has sold more than 10 million copies. (We will examine the teachings of this book below).



Perhaps we should allow Mary to give her own estimation of the book. She wrote, "I should blush to write of 'Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures' as I have, were it of human origin, and were I, apart from God, its author. But, as I was only a scribe echoing the harmonies of heaven in divine metaphysics, I cannot be super-modest in my estimate of the Christian Science textbook" (*The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*, p. 115).⁸

She also declared, "No person can take the individual place of the Virgin Mary. No person can compass or fulfill the individual mission of Jesus of Nazareth. No person can take the place of the author of Science and Health, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science...The second appearing of Jesus is, unquestionably, the spiritual advent of the advancing idea of God, as in Christian Science" (*Retrospection and Introspection*, p. 70).

Though Mary tried to conceal any links to Quimby, we should note that the name of her book is quite similar to the name of Quimby's healing system, "The Science of Health."

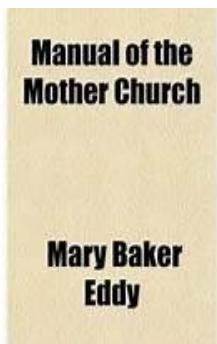
In 1877, Mary married for the third time. His name was Asa Eddy. He was one of her students and a sewing machine salesman. He died in 1882. (Mary believed that he died of arsenic poisoning mentally administered).

In 1879, Mary established the Church of Christ, Scientist.⁹ She was appointed pastor. She then established the Massachusetts Metaphysical College in 1881. She closed the college in 1889, but retained her charter and reopened it in 1899 as an auxiliary to the Church.

A contentious dispute with one of her students, Edward Arens, over who had really come up with the ideas in *Science and Health* ultimately led to a lawsuit. Arens claimed that Mary had derived the material from Quimby's manuscripts. However, he was unable to produce the manuscripts in court and she won the suit.

Though he refused to get involved at the time, Quimby's son later said, "That she got her inspiration and idea from father is beyond question. In other words, had there been no Dr. Quimby there would have been no Mrs. Eddy."

Mary was also influenced by the Shakers, whom she had come in contact with as a teenager. This influence can be seen in the concept of a father-mother God, a woman leader who is called "Mother," the "Mother Church," the emphasis on healing, no audible prayers, etc. ¹⁰



In 1888, the first Christian Science Reading Room opened in Boston. That was also the year of the first known presumably preventable deaths among Christian Scientists, when Eddy herself oversaw a birth that left both mother and child dead.

In 1894, The Mother Church was built in Boston. The Bible and *Science and Health* were ordained as its pastor. The next year, they were ordained as pastor for all Churches of Christ, Scientist. 1895 is also when a church manual was published, which set forth guidelines for the church. It is still followed today. It is called "Manual of the Mother Church."

There were a number of periodicals put out by Mary and the Christian Science Publishing Society, including *The Christian Science Monitor* in 1908. Today, it is a weekly magazine.

Mary became increasingly paranoid as she aged, and believed that 50,000 people were trying to kill her by projecting their evil thoughts. She died on December, 3, 1910, and was buried at Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts. At that time, Mary was recognized as one of the most influential women in America. ¹¹ She is still revered by Christian Scientists and others. ¹²

What Mary Baker Eddy Taught

As we begin our examination of Mary Baker Eddy's teachings, we must note that she did not hold to a literal interpretation of the Bible. She made a distinction between the "material" and "spiritual" rendering of Scripture. Everything is redefined, as can be seen in the "Glossary" of *Science and Health*.

It is also important to note that Mary Baker Eddy did not see Jesus as "the Way," but as "the Way-shower." That distinction becomes clear as she denies that Jesus is God, the Christ, or even a necessary component of salvation. In fact, she once declared, "If there had never existed such a person as the Galilean Prophet, it would make no difference to me" (*The First Church of Christ Scientist, and Miscellany*, pp. 318-319).

Below is a list of 20 false teachings of Mary Baker Eddy. The quotes are taken from *Science and Health* and can easily be verified.

- (1) **Jesus is not God:** "Jesus Christ is not God, as Jesus himself declared, but is the Son of God" (S&H, p. 361). ¹³
- (2) **Jesus is not eternal:** "By these sayings Jesus meant, not that the human Jesus was or is eternal" (S&H, pp. 333-334).
- (3) **Jesus is not one with the Father:** "not that the corporeal Jesus was one with the Father" (S&H, p. 334).
- (4) **Jesus Christ is a duality:** "Jesus is the name of the man who, more than all other men, has presented Christ...Jesus is the human man, and Christ is the divine idea; hence, the duality of Jesus the Christ" (S&H, p. 473). ¹⁴
- (5) **There is no 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" (S&H, p. 256). ¹⁵
- (6) **God is the Father-Mother:** "God the Father-Mother...Father-Mother is the name for Deity...the eternal Father-Mother, God" (S&H, pp. 331-332, 335).
- (7) **Jesus did not reflect the fullness of God:** "A portion of God could not enter man; neither could God's fullness be reflected by a single man" (S&H, p. 336).
- (8) **Jesus did not die:** "His disciples believed Jesus to be dead while he was hidden in the sepulcher, whereas he was alive...Jesus' students, not sufficiently advanced fully to understand their Master's triumph, did not perform many wonderful works, until they saw him after his crucifixion and learned that he had not died" (S&H, pp. 44, 46).
- (9) **The Holy Spirit is Divine Science:** "This Comforter I understand to be Divine Science...God the Father-Mother; Christ the spiritual idea of sonship; divine Science or the Holy Comforter" (S&H, pp. 55, 331). ¹⁶
- (10) **There is no devil:** "devil...is not Truth, but error, without intelligence or reality" (S&H, p. 469).
- (11) **There is no sin:** "A sinner is not reformed merely by assuring him that he cannot be a sinner because there is no sin. To put down the claim of sin, you must detect it, remove the mask, point out the illusion, and thus get the victory over sin and so prove its unreality" (S&H, p. 447).

- (12) **Good and evil are not real:** “The notion that both evil and good are real is a delusion of material sense, which Science annihilates” (S&H, p. 330).
- (13) **Sin, sickness, and death are not real:** “The sick are not healed merely by declaring there is no sickness, but by knowing that there is none...the only reality of sin, sickness, or death is the awful fact that unrealities seem real to humans, erring belief, until God strips off their disguise...sin, sickness, and death must be deemed as devoid of reality” (S&H, pp. 447, 472. 525).
- (14) **The sacrifice of Jesus was not sufficient to cleanse sin:** “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” (S&H, p. 25). ¹⁷
- (15) **Evil beliefs are hell:** “The evil beliefs which originate in mortals are hell” (S&H, p. 266). ¹⁸
- (16) **No final judgment:** “No final judgment awaits mortals” (S&H, p. 291).
- (17) **Heaven is a state of mind:** “Heaven is not a locality, but a divine state of Mind in which all the manifestations of Mind are harmonious and immortal” (S&H, p. 291).
- (18) **Christ came to destroy belief of sin:** “Christ came to destroy the belief of sin” (S&H, p. 473).
- (19) **Lazarus did not die:** “Jesus restored Lazarus by the understanding that Lazarus had never died” (S&H, p. 75).
- (20) **Disease is caused by a mistaken belief:** “The cause of all so-called disease is mental, a mortal fear, a mistaken belief” (S&H, p. 377).

This is not an exhaustive list. There are other false teachings that could be mentioned. However, the honest heart can see the point. She presumptuously created her own church, her own standard of authority, and her own system of beliefs. She should be placed in the same category as Joseph Smith Jr., Ellen G. White, and Charles Taze Russell. And as for her followers, they are neither “Christian” nor “Scientists.”

Footnotes

- (1) Mary was admitted into the Congregational Church in 1838, though she rejected Calvinistic predestination and did not pinpoint an experience of conversion. She remained connected with the Congregationalists until she started her own church.

- (2) Patterson spent time in 1862 as a prisoner of the Confederates.
- (3) Phineas Parkhurst Quimby (1802-1866). Mary took great interest in Quimby, studying his essays and submitting her own for correction or approval.
- (4) The two women claimed to have communicated with Mary's dead brother, Albert.
- (5) There were countless allegations made against her for plagiarism, and we know that the expression "Christian Science" had been used by Quimby on at least one occasion.
- (6) Though she claimed to be healed, she later sought damages from the city on the grounds that she was "still suffering." Also, testimony from the attending physician disputes the "official" version of events.
- (7) The "discovery" actually started when she met Quimby. If she was the mother of Christian Science, he was the father.
- (8) Mary's view of the Bible was not nearly as flattering. She said that Jesus spoke to "dull disciples" in a "decaying language" (Miscellaneous Writings, p. 100), and that ancient versions were full of mistakes (S&H, p. 139).
- (9) The Church of Christ, Scientist, is headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts. It is governed by a board. Interestingly, there is a set curriculum followed by all congregations of Christian Scientists, which includes passages from the Bible and *Science and Health*. Men and women are allowed to be public readers. Their meetings on Wednesday allow for personal testimonies of healing.
- (10) The Shakers referred to their woman leader as "Mother Ann," just as Mary's followers called her "Mother Eddy."
- (11) Major newspapers ran tributes to Mary, including the Boston Globe.
- (12) In 1995, Mary was elected to the National Women's Hall of Fame. In 2002, the Mary Baker Eddy Library opened in Boston.
- (13) An editorial in the *Christian Science Sentinel* of December 22, 1934, reads: "Christian Science is doing much to clarify the thoughts of men regarding the great Way-shower. Among other things, it is correcting THE FALLACY THAT JESUS IS GOD" (p. 330).
- (14) She taught that Jesus was just a man; Christ was divine consciousness.
- (15) She taught that "Life, Truth, and Love constitute the triune Person called God" (S&H, p. 331).
- (16) She taught that the Holy Spirit was an impersonal Principle — Divine Science — not an actual divine person.
- (17) She taught that "one sacrifice, however great, is insufficient to pay the debt of sin" (S&H, p. 23).
- (18) She defined "hell" in the Glossary as "mortal belief" (S&H, p. 588).