

MARY BAKER EDDY THE FOUNDER OF CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

Christian Science is an American cult based on the claims of Mary Baker Eddy that she could give the real teachings of Christianity. She ended up claiming that there is no matter or sin and that sickness like them is an illusion. You pray to the God of love and that cures all ills and raises the dead. Going to the doctor is a sin. The Bible and Eddy's book, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* are considered to be the word of God. In practice though the Bible is an accessory with all the teachings coming from her book.

This is an examination of Eddy from a Catholic viewpoint. We are using the work, *What is the 'Christian Science' Religion* by Fr Rumble of Radio Replies a series of defences of the Catholic faith. We are simply quoting it from now on.

9. No one can say that Mrs. Eddy did not live an edifying life. She is idealized by her followers.

It may be true that she is idealized by her followers. But the real Mrs. Eddy does not correspond with their ideal. Let us glance at her life. She was born Mary Baker in 1821, and brought up as a Congregationalist. She was a high-strung child, of a very nervous temperament. Arguments with her father about religion when she was but twelve often reduced her to a bed of illness, and on one occasion her mother cured her by quiet mental suggestion where the doctor had failed.

At the same age of twelve, she says that she refuted the Elders in the Congregational Church at Tilton, New Hampshire, but records show that she was not connected with that Church until the age of seventeen. She declares that her brother Albert taught her Hebrew, Greek, and Latin; but he entered college when she was nine, residing away from home, and left home for good when she was only thirteen. She, who claimed to teach truth, had no particular love for that virtue, as we shall see again in a moment.

In 1843 she married a Colonel Glover, who died of fever six months later. After his death a son was born whom she disliked intensely, to the expressed disgust of her relatives. She could not bear the child near her, and as a matter of fact, did not see him nor wish to see him from the age of six until he was thirty-four - a period of twenty-eight years. As a mother she was not a success, and lacked those gentler traits which most become the noblest of women.

In 1853 she married a dentist named Daniel Patterson, but later divorced him for desertion and infidelity.

In 1862 ill-health and neurasthenia drove her to consult a Dr. Phineas Quimby, who told her that he did not believe in drugs, but relied on correcting mental error and supplanting it by truth. He sent her into a mesmeric sleep, and she recovered consciousness cured. Mrs. Patterson congratulated him, and told him that his mesmerism had not cured her, but his deep understanding of the Truth brought by Christ.

The teachings and practices of Dr. Quimby she later developed into her own system of religious metaphysics. Yet she wrote in after years, "It was after Quimby's death that I discovered in 1866 the momentous facts relating to mind and its superiority over matter, and named my discovery Christian Science." If there was one thing she learned from Dr. Quimby it was the doctrine of the superiority of mind over matter, yet she insisted, after Quimby's death, that he had never mentioned mental healing to her! She even tried to persuade a Mrs. Sarah Crosby to swear that "Dr. Quimby had learned his thoughts and language from Mrs. Eddy." Mrs. Crosby rightly refused to sanction this untruth.

In 1866 Mrs. Patterson fell on the ice at Lynn, Mass., and was "miraculously" cured of her injuries. This is the basic miracle of Christian Science, and has acquired the title of "The Miracle Fall at Lynn." According to her account, "Dr. Cushing found her insensible, suffering from severe internal injuries, inducing spasms and internal sufferings." She was removed in a very critical condition. "Dr. Cushing pronounced my injury incurable, and that I could not survive three days." Dr. Cushing was still living in 1907, and when consulted about this statement remarked, "I never made any such statement. I found her very nervous, partly unconscious, semi-hysterical, and complaining of severe pain in the back of the head and neck. I treated her, and was not surprised at her recovery. At the time there was no talk of a miracle cure."

After her cure, she began to teach her Christian Science methods, charging three hundred dollars for seven lessons. "I was led to name three hundred dollars," she writes, "by a strange Providence. God has shown me in multitudinous ways the wisdom of this decision." She died leaving nearly three million dollars in 1910.

In 1875 she embodied her teachings in a text-book, *"Science and Health, with Key to the Scriptures."* A year later she founded the first Christian Science Association.

In 1877 she married a Mr. Asa Gilbert Eddy, an agent for sewing-machines, and conferred upon him the title of Doctor, thus

becoming Mrs. Dr. Eddy. Though she was fifty-six, the marriage license records her age as forty.

For over thirty more years she worked on with incredible energy. The death of Mr. Eddy in 1882 was a sore trial to the Church. How could he fall ill? And why could not Mrs. Eddy herself cure him? Yet fall ill he did, and Mrs. Eddy called in Dr. Noyes, one of the leading physicians of Boston. He diagnosed heart disease. Mrs. Eddy denied it, and said that he was poisoned by arsenic, caused by the evil minds of enemies. Dr. Eddy died. A post-mortem examination showed valvular trouble of the heart, and no trace of arsenic. Mrs. Eddy denied even this finding, and said that Dr. Eddy had assured her that he could see it through, and that she, being busy, had allowed him to try, awaking to the danger when it was too late.

Despite her doctrine that there is no death, Mrs. Eddy herself died in 1910. Not her life, but her death, detached her from her three million very material dollars; her ideal of truth seems wanting; she lacked human sympathy in a marked degree; whilst her spirit of humility is strangely absent in her written estimate of herself in her book "Retrospection and Introspection", "No one can take the place of the Virgin Mary; the place of Jesus Christ; the place of the author of Science and Health - the discoverer of Christian Science." p. 70.

Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, Warden of New College, Oxford, in his book "Our New Religion," sums up her life as follows, "She was a sincere, though quite uncritical, student of the Bible; the wife of three husbands, who wrote a Best Seller . . . and died leaving nearly three million dollars, all made out of religion."

10. Is what Mrs. Eddy said and did so very important?

It is, because Christian Science does not exist apart from her. She identifies it with herself. She demanded a faith in herself equal to one's faith in Christ, and a belief in her book equal to a Christian's belief in the Bible. To lose faith in her is to lose faith in her religious system, just as to lose faith in Christ is to lose faith in the Christian religion. She was no St. John the Baptist, who said of Christ, "He must increase", and of himself, "I must decrease." She provided that she herself would forever hold the first place wherever Christian Science might be established. She forbade anyone to preach in the Church, insisting that only passages from the Bible and from Science and Health be read, without any comment or explanation other than her own; and that each time her name must be announced as the author of the latter book. "Wherever a Church of Christian Science is established", she wrote, "its Pastor is the Bible and my Book." Miscellaneous Writings, 1897, p. 383.

11. Such a belief in her mission does not necessarily cast a reflection on her character.

It would be a self-deception, if she were sincere, amounting to mental-derangement. And that she was not normal in many ways, however sane in some things, fits in with her whole history. She was a neurasthenic from childhood, and grew into a vain, loquacious, untruthful, domineering and avaricious woman.

Quite early in her career, as Mrs. Glover, she went to stay with a Mr. and Mrs. Wentworth, and tried unsuccessfully to persuade the latter to abandon her husband in order to travel about with her practising the Quimby treatment. Upset by her failure, she would pound on the floor above the room of Mr. Wentworth, who was ill, in order to annoy him; and she wrecked her apartment to give further vent to her anger before leaving.

In 1870 Richard Kennedy, a former student of hers, entered into partnership with her, putting into practice the mental healing of which she taught the theory. After two years, tired of her jealous and exacting ways, he left her and set up for himself. She bitterly denounced him as practising "malicious mesmerism."

In 1879 she organized the First Church of Christ Scientist, in Boston, with herself as pastor, only to be deserted by many followers who accused her of "bad temper, love of money, and hypocrisy."

According to her, all her opponents were evil people guilty of "malicious animal magnetism." Her continual talk of Love was rather a mockery in the light of her bitterness towards, and hatred of, all who differed from her.

And when she herself in the end felt that death was inevitable, she exacted on oath from one of her followers, a Mr. Dickey, that after her death he would swear that she had been "mentally murdered." The death certificate declares that she died of pneumonia. But she wanted to keep up the pretence, if possible, that she was not subject to any merely natural death as others.

These things, and many other episodes in her life, make it impossible to rank her with the Prophets and Apostles, and it is blasphemy to compare her with Christ.

12. Even if she did not live up to her own teachings, her basic philosophy could be quite sound.

It is true that the value of her philosophy is not dependent upon her having lived up to it. It is possible for one who does the wrong thing to teach the right thing. But let us look at her philosophy in itself. She began by denying the reality of matter. "There is no life, truth, intelligence, or substance in matter," she declares. "All is Infinite Mind." Whence, then, comes

matter, of whose existence men are so firmly convinced? It is "an erroneous belief of mortal mind." What is mortal mind? "Mortal mind is nothing." Then does "nothing" produce at least a "real" erroneous belief? She has no answer to that. Yet on this flimsy basis she argues that sin and suffering have no real existence, and can be banished by a process of "right-thinking." "Obesity," she declared, "is an adipose belief." How the weighing machine is affected by that belief she does not explain. "We have no evidence of food sustaining life except a false evidence," she asserts. History does not record that she neglected her own meals.

19. To understand Christian Science one must put it into practice.

As a complete system, no one can put it into practice. Mrs. Eddy herself did not do so. Nor do her followers. Christian Scientists live just as others do, owning their own homes, automobiles, material goods of all kinds including money, in the usual matter of fact way. Mrs. Eddy never followed her own theories to their logical conclusion. As I have already shown, she denied that food preserves life, yet regularly took her meals. She denounced medicine and drugs, yet made frequent use of them. She declared that death is an illusion of mortal mind, and that we should not believe in its reality. According to her teaching, death cannot happen to anyone who does not believe in its reality. Yet she died. According to her own principles she herself must have believed in its reality, and her declaration that death is unreal was against her own beliefs.

22. Have you anything against the religious teachings of Christian Science?

Yes. It is to the credit of Christian Science that it insists on justice, charity, and all normal standards of decent behaviour. But other religions equally do that. Such standards are not proper to Christian Science. What is proper to Mrs. Eddy's system is its complete denial of nearly all specifically Christian teachings. In his book, "Mrs. Eddy's Christian Science," Dr. Pullan was quite justified in remarking, "If Christian Scientists lead good lives and resist temptation, it only proves that natural - ity and the remnants of a Christian tradition are stronger than the philosophy of Mrs. Eddy."