

WHAT IS THE 'CHRISTIAN SCIENCE' RELIGION? By Rev. Dr. L. Rumble M.S.C.

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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 its healing claims 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.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

1. Why do people who profess to be Christians object to Christian Science?

Because they know that, despite its name, Christian Science is a denial of the religion of Christ. The religion of Christ, according to the Bible, is the one, true, complete, and final revelation of God to man. Christian Science claims to be another and further revelation given by God to Mrs. Eddy, higher and better than that given us by Christ Himself. Such a denial of the fulness of the Christian Faith as given by Christ no loyal Christian can accept.

2. Does not Christian Science claim to explain the real meaning of Christianity?

It makes that claim. But, whilst it uses terms that are Christian, it does not use those terms in a truly Christian sense at all. It uses them to express other doctrines altogether. The Christian religion teaches that Christ is the Eternal Son of God who became man for our salvation, who suffered death on the Cross to expiate our sins, who rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven, having established His Church to teach all nations in His name till the end of the world. All that is denied by Christian Science.

3. The fact is that people do become Christian Scientists without abandoning their belief in Christianity.

Such people may still profess belief in Christianity, but they do not believe in Christianity as it really is. Christianity and Christian Science are two utterly different religions, in origin, beliefs, practice, and purpose. No one can actually belong simultaneously to both.

4. You have the problem of reconciling suffering with the existence of a good God. But Mrs. Eddy shows us that there is no such problem. If pain and suffering are not real at all, it's only a question of realizing this truth.

Both the existence of a good God, and the existence of suffering, are facts. They are not, therefore, incompatible, even though we may not see completely how to reconcile them both. But to deny the existence of God, as does the atheist; or to deny the existence of suffering, as does the Christian Scientist, is to shirk the problem, not to solve it. When Mrs. Eddy herself had to have a tooth out, she gladly availed herself of an anaesthetic to deaden the pain and spare herself unnecessary suffering. Ridiculed for her inconsistency, she explained that the dentist's belief in the drug employed was a mental force which combined with her own to produce a painless extraction!

5. The idea that suffering cannot be helped, and that we should be glad to suffer with Christ, is simply defeatism. Christian Science teaches us that it is our own fault if we suffer, and urges us to overcome ourselves.

The very opposite is the case. Christian Science urges us, not to endure, but to escape suffering. But its theories are both futile and harmful. The idea that suffering is unreal, a mental mistake, and that people wrongly think they are suffering, violates common sense, leaves people suffering unnecessarily, and dries up the well-springs of human sympathy. Genuine Christians refuse to deny the reality of suffering. But they say that love of God will give peace in the midst of suffering, and that this alone can do so. Genuine love of God always means happiness. It does not always mean pleasure. It is as much at home with pain as with pleasure, for it proves itself by self-sacrifice. Christians see the love of Christ choosing great suffering for them on the Cross, and their love for Him makes them glad to share in His sufferings, blending their pain with His. And that gives the peace of Christ in their souls, a peace the world can neither give nor take away from them.

16. The reason why you cannot accept Mrs. Eddy's explanation is because, by your theological training, you are taught to look for the evil in mankind.

That is not true. Without any theological training, all men with common sense know that - and physical evils are a reality in this world. Training in philosophy teaches that - and physical evils are a negation of the good, presuppose the good, and can be explained only as the absence of a good that should be present, but is not. Training in theology teaches one to look, not for the evil in mankind, but, admitting it, for the principles by which it can be reconciled with God's Providence, for the lessons we ourselves may learn from our painful experiences, and for the means by which - evil may be repaired.

17. The Christian Scientist, who sees the real image of God reflected in man, looks only for the good in mankind.

The real image of God is reflected in man's soul, which is spiritual, intelligent, endowed with free will, and immortal. Every Catholic is taught to keep this fact in mind, and to realize that his soul is of supreme importance. The words of Christ are ever before him, "Fear you all, not them that are able to kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." Obviously, for Christ, body and soul are equally realities. But for Mrs. Eddy man's body is not a reality. In her book *Science and Health*, when trying to explain how man is made in the image of God, she expressly denies the reality of man's body, and defines him as an "idea," and "that which has no separate mind from God." In other words, she teaches a pantheism quite opposed to the doctrines of Christ, and forfeits any right or title to the description of her system as "Christian." Mrs. Eddy, it is true, indignantly rejects the charge of pantheism; but, whilst rejecting the word, she again and again teaches the doctrines for which that word stands.

20. Do you not think that, as a religion, Christian Science should be looked at religiously, and not in the cold light of reason only?

It is true that Christian Science, with its set of peculiar beliefs, strange services, prayers, and organized congregations, is offered to us as a new religion. But religion does not dispense us from the demands of reason; and a system that claims to be scientific invites the criticism of genuine science. On both counts, Christian Science must be ranked as a superstition, and not as a religion in the proper sense of that word. Mrs. Eddy herself cannot be excused from a belief in witchcraft. She taught that a mind turned from God could, even from a distance, do immense harm to others by vindictive thoughts. Primitive pagans, who dread the power of their witch doctors to cast evil spells upon them, entertain similar beliefs. True religion excludes such pagan superstitions.

24. The First of the Six Tenets of Christian Science says, "As adherents of the Truth, we take the inspired Word of the Bible as our sufficient guide to eternal life."

That is another instance of talking the traditional Protestant language whilst in practice departing from all that it implies. If the inspired Word of God is the sufficient guide to eternal life, why is her own book absolutely necessary, as she declares? "A Christian Scientist," she writes, "requires my work *Science and Health* for his text-book, and so do all his students and patients." (*Science and Health*, p. 456.) As a matter of fact, she herself maintains that the Bible does not, by itself, give sufficient information at all. She writes, in "The Precious Volume," as follows, "Even the Scriptures give no direct interpretation of the scientific basis for demonstrating the spiritual Principle of healing, until our Heavenly Father saw fit, through the Key of the Scriptures in *Science and Health*, to unlock this 'mystery of godliness'." According to that, Christians had to wait till 1875 for Mrs. Eddy to tell them what the Bible really meant, and she admits that what she has to say could never be guessed from the Bible! How can she speak of it as a sufficient guide?

26. Never does Mrs. Eddy repudiate Christianity.

She would have been much more honest had she done so. But living in a Christian civilization, she knew that she must obtain recruits from among professing Christians. It was important, then, that they should not feel that they were giving up Christianity. Hence her clever title "Christian Science." Yet it remains true that, whilst retaining the name 'Christian,' her doctrines reject all that Christianity really implies.

27. She insists on belief in God, and every page of her book is stamped with this conviction.

A reading of her book shows that she continually speaks of God. In fact, according to her, there is nothing in existence but God. She denies the reality of the whole of creation. "God is all-in-all," she writes. "God is good. God is Mind. God, Spirit, being all, nothing is matter." (*Science and Health*, p. 113.) But, from her maze of words, it stands out clearly that her God is not the Christian God who created heaven and earth, who is by nature distinct from all lesser and created things, and who is essentially personal. She defines God as the "Principle of divine metaphysics." (*Science and Health*, p. 112.) She makes God as impersonal as a principle in mathematics. That is not the God of Christianity.

28. The Second of the Six Tenets says, "We acknowledge and adore one supreme and infinite God. We acknowledge His

Son, one Christ; the Holy Ghost as Divine Comforter; and man in God's image and likeness." Is not that the Christian doctrine of God, and of the Holy Trinity?

It could be; but not if interpreted in the light of Mrs. Eddy's metaphysical principles. She seems to have had no idea of the logical consequences of her teachings. In *Science and Health*, p. 332, she writes of "God, the Father-Mother; Christ the spiritual idea of sonship; divine science, the Holy Comforter." So her "Holy Trinity" is a God who is both masculine and feminine in gender, and idea of sonship, and Christian Science! On p. 517 of *Science and Health* she writes, hesitantly, "If God is personal, there is but one person." On p. 256, "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." No one can reconcile such assertions with belief in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

29. As Christians we say, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth." Mrs. Eddy distinctly says, "God creates and governs the universe, including man." *Science and Health*, page 295.

Mrs. Eddy does not mean what Christians mean by those words. If she uses Christian terms she uses them only to explain them away. For her, what we call the universe is but an illusion of mortal mind. Temporal things are unreal. "Matter seems to be, but is not." (*Science and Health*, p. 123.) Mortal mind itself is a fiction. She defines it as "nothing claiming to be something." (*Science and Health*, p. 591.) Where the first chapters of Genesis declare of each thing created by God that "He saw that it was good," she declares it illusion, evil, and error. Yet those first chapters as far as 2:6, she acknowledges as containing absolute truth.

30. Besides the visible universe, we acknowledge also the existence of the angels, some of whom became evil under the leadership of the devil.

The principles of Christian Science exclude belief in created intelligent and personal spiritual beings, of whom the good are known as angels, and the wicked as devils. No Christian could accept a description of angels as "exalted thoughts," (*Science and Health*, p. 299); or of the devil as "a belief in sin, sickness and death; animal magnetism or hypnotism; the lust of the flesh." (*Science and Health*, p. 584.)

31. Christian Scientists look for the real image of God in man, not the unreal image so-called orthodox Christians imagine.

Christians, with the vast majority of sensible human beings, take man as he really is. Man is a composite of body and soul. Both are equally realities, the body material, the soul spiritual. And it is the soul that is made in the image of God. Christian Scientist, theoretically, refuse to admit the reality of the body, and even of the soul. For, according to Mrs. Eddy, "Man is not matter; he is not made up of brain, blood, bones, and other material elements." (*Science and Health*, p. 475.) As for the soul, "Soul or Spirit signifies Deity and nothing else. There is no finite soul nor spirit." (*Science and Health*, p. 466.) This denial of both body and soul denies the existence of man at all. It is Christian Science which ignores the real man, and takes refuge in an unreal world of delusions.

32. The Third Tenet of Christian Science says, "We acknowledge God's forgiveness of Sin in the destruction of Sin, and the spiritual understanding that casts out evil as unreal; but the belief in Sin is punished so long as the belief lasts." That cannot be called unchristian.

The whole genius of Christianity is built on the fact that Christ died on the Cross to redeem us from sin. Yet Mrs. Eddy tells us that "man is incapable of sin, sickness and death." (*Science and Health*, p. 475.) "Evil," she says, "has no reality. It is neither a person, place, nor thing, but is simply a belief, an illusion of material sense." (*Science and Health*, p. 71.) If that were so, and sin could be destroyed by ceasing to believe in its existence, then the redemptive sufferings of Christ were quite unnecessary and the height of folly. It is comforting, of course, to be told that sin is merely a mistake and an illusion; but that is not Christian doctrine. Nor did Mrs. Eddy in practice take so mild a view of the conduct of her opponents. Indignantly she accused them of "malicious mesmerism," holding that they were quite capable of sin, that their evil dispositions were very real indeed, and that they were no mere illusions on her part.

33. The Fourth Tenet of Christian Science acknowledges that "Man is saved through Christ."

According to the Bible, to save humanity from sin, "God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son." (Jn., 3:16.) The Eternal Son of God became man, being born of the Virgin Mary. As St. John puts it, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us." (Jn., 1:1-14.) All this Mrs. Eddy denies. According to her, Jesus was neither God nor man. She explains the Incarnation by saying, "The Virgin-mother conceived the idea of God, and gave to her ideal the name of Jesus." (*Science and Health*, p. 29.) Nor does her teaching regard Jesus as truly man. She speaks of Him as "wearing in part a human form (that is, as it seemed to mortal view)." (*Science and Health*, p. 315.) In her own Christmas hymn she writes, "Dear Christ . . . no mother's tear to thee belongs! Thou God-idea! The Bethlehem babe was but Thy shade."

No one who really believes in Christ could accept that.

334. In that same Tenet "we acknowledge Jesus' Atonement as the evidence of Divine efficacious love." And in the Fifth Tenet we acknowledge His crucifixion and resurrection.

Words are of no value when all that they really signify is excluded. If sin is not a reality, but an illusion, it cannot be said that Jesus expiated our sins. If there is no suffering and death, Jesus endured no passion, and was not crucified. And Mrs. Eddy expressly says of the Atonement, "the theory is man-made." (Science and Health, p. 23.) Nor does she teach Our Lord's resurrection from the dead. St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "For I have delivered unto you first of all, which I also received; how that Christ died for our sins, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." (1 Cor., 15:3, 4.) But Mrs. Eddy says, "His disciples believed Jesus to be dead while He was hidden in the sepulchre, whereas He was alive." (Science and Health, p. 44.) Afterwards, she declares, His disciples "learned that He had not died." (Science and Health, p. 46.)

335. Believing in all these things, we Christian Scientists work for a better world.

But the teachings of Christian Science never transcend this world. The Bible tells us that Christ will come again in all His Majesty and Glory to judge mankind. The Apostles were told, "This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into heaven." (Acts 1:2) Mrs. Eddy, in her book "Retrospection and Introspection," p. 96, says, "The second appearing of Jesus is unquestionably the spiritual advent of the advancing idea of God in Christian Science." And she dares to say, "No final judgement awaits mortals." (Science and Health, p. 291.)

336. In all things we follow the ordinances of Christ.

Why, then, is there no place in Christian Science for the Sacraments, and above all for that of the Holy Eucharist?

Mrs. Eddy says of the Last Supper that it "closed forever Jesus' ritualism or concessions to matter." (Science and Health, p. 333.) In 1908 she abolished the celebration of Holy Communion with the elements of bread and wine, substituting a communion service of "silent thought." Yet Christ insisted that the rite He instituted at the Last Supper was to be continued in the Church just as He instituted it. "Do this," He said, "for the commemoration of me . . . for as often as you shall eat the bread and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until He come." (1 Cor., 11:24-26.) One can understand that Mrs. Eddy, who denied the reality of death, would not want a perpetual reminder of the death of the Lord. But she has no right to call her religion Christian.

337. The highest ideals of Christian marriage are to be found only in Christian Science.

Mrs. Eddy's principles degrade the idea of marriage altogether. She regards it as a reluctant concession to erroneous ideas of a material body. "Until it is learned," she writes, "that God is the Father of all, Marriage will continue." (Science and Health, p. 64.) Her own three marriages can only mean that she herself never learned the truth she commends to others.