

**SESSION OBJECTIVE: CHRISTIAN SCIENCE**

To learn more about the history and beliefs of Mary Baker Eddy's *Christian Science*.

"There is no life, truth, intelligence, nor substance in matter. All is Infinite Mind, and its infinite manifestation, for God is all in all. Spirit is immortal truth; Matter is mortal error." (*Science and Health*, Mary Eddy Baker)

The Church of Christ, Scientist

The Church of Christ, Scientist, or more commonly referred to as Christian Science, is a cult started by Mary Baker Eddy in Boston, Massachusetts in 1879. The central text of the movement is Eddy's book, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, published in 1875.

OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS

Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures (1875), *Miscellaneous Writings* (1883-1896), *Retrospection and Introspection* (1891), *The Manual of the Mother Church* (1895)

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

The original founding church in Boston serves as the headquarters and is governed by a board of directors. All other churches are considered "branches" of the "Mother Church." Christian Science doesn't have preachers, but instead has readers that read a prescribed passage each week followed by an interpretive reading from *Science and Health*. There are also various "Reading Rooms" where adherents can go and center themselves on the readings for that week.

UNIQUE TERMINOLOGY

- Practitioners: Those who pray for the sick
- Malicious Animal Magnetism: Negative mental energy or power on the level of black magic
- Reading Rooms: Libraries where members can go to read Eddy's works to aid their spiritual evolution
- Matter and Spirit: The distinction between what is real and what is false

History

The Church of Christ, Scientist was founded by Mary Baker Eddy, who was born in Bow, New Hampshire in 1821. She was raised in a staunch Calvinist home and attended a Congregationalist church beginning at the age of 17. She was chronically sick growing up with ailments such as seizures, paralysis, hysteria, and convulsions. At the age of 22, she married her first of three husbands, George Glover, who died within 6 months of yellow fever.

Following Glover's death, she became interested and involved with mesmerism (hypnosis), and varying occult practices of spiritualism and clairvoyance (although this is contested by Christian Scientists today). She married her second husband, Daniel Patterson, in 1853 while still suffering from various sicknesses. During this time, she met P. P. Quimby, who was a fundamental influence in her life. Quimby believed that illnesses and diseases could be cured through positive thinking. By changing one's beliefs, healing could be achieved. Eddy felt connected to Quimby through something she called, "psychic dependence," drawing on his spiritual presence and even claiming to be visited by apparitions. After his death in 1866, she resolved to continue his work.

In 1866, the event that allegedly inaugurated the Christian Science movement occurred. Eddy claimed to have a near fatal fall on some ice, but was instantly healed when, "the healing Truth dawned upon my senses." Testimony from her physician as well as other correspondences during that time from Eddy herself strongly dispute the claims in the "official" recalling of the story.

Despite internal problems in the earliest stages (Emma Hopkins being one of the primary dissidents, who later taught the couple who founded the Unity School of Christianity), Christian Science began to grow. It went from one 50-member church in 1882 to 2,466 churches and 350,000 members by 1932. In 1972 they had grown to 3200 churches. Part of the monetary success of the church came from its own respected, published newspaper, *The Christian Science Monitor*.

However, it has declined greatly since. Due to several publicized criminal and civil lawsuits brought against Christian Science parents who allowed their children to die of very curable causes because of a neglect of medical treatment in favor of, "spiritual healing," people began to move away from the movement. These cases caused complications with the government's infringement on those who were exercising religious liberties. In 1992, more problem arose when it was discovered that the church had transferred 46.5 million dollars from endowments and pensions to help cover losses from their own Monitor TV, which had lost over 325 million dollars in total. Currently, the newspaper is said to be losing 13 million dollars annually.

Yet, more controversy arose in 1993, with the publication of *The Destiny of the Mother church*, written by a former president of the church, Bliss Knapp. The book purported that Mrs. Eddy was the fulfillment of the coming Holy Spirit in John 16, the literal manifestation of God and the prophesied second-coming of Jesus Christ. He also claimed that Mrs. Eddy affirmed these teachings herself. Though put forward by the publishing

house for the church, it is considered by many to be heresy, and roughly 20% of the individual Reading Rooms refuse to carry it.

Doctrine

The Church of Christ, Scientist hold a variety of doctrines that strongly contradict orthodox Christianity. Below is a brief breakdown.

THE TRINITY

God is not a trinity, but is more pantheistic in nature: "God is all in all, God is good, God is mind, God is Spirit, being all, nothing is matter." They outright deny the doctrine of the Trinity: "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." "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."

GOD THE SON

Jesus is not God incarnate, and He does not have two natures in His one person; fully God and fully man. It is a Gnostic approach to Jesus: "The spiritual Christ was infallible; Jesus as material manhood was not Christ." "The Christ is incorporeal, spiritual, while the corporeal Jesus was human only." "Matter is mortal error... matter is the unreal and temporal." So, in actuality, the incarnation of Jesus is actually an illusion to Christian Science.

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is not a person, but, "the unfolding of the thoughts and infinite mind of God."

MAN'S DESTINY

Man's destiny is to understand through the teachings of Christ that nothing that is real exists outside of the spiritual realm. The penal, substitutionary atonement of Christ is denied. "The material blood of Jesus is 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 daily went about the Father's business."

MEDICAL HELP

No Christian Scientist should ever receive medical help. Sickness and disease or illusory, the product of false belief and not actual sin.

SCRIPTURE

Even though the Bible is claimed to be the only Scripture, it can only rightly be understood in agreement with Science and Health.