

## 7 Christian Science

*In 1866, I discovered the divine laws of life, truth, and love, and named my discovery Christian Science.*

The *Church of Christ, Scientist* – the official name of the organization that is usually known as *Christian Science* – claims to be the restoration of the true church established by Jesus Christ. According to Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of the Church, true Christianity means understanding the fundamental law by which Jesus Christ brought healing towards mankind. This law, until it was revealed to her, has been lost since the time of Christ.

*Our Master practiced Christian healing, but he left no definite rule of healing and preventing disease. This rule remained to be discovered by Christian Science.*

Studying the word of God under the guidance of Mrs. Eddy's writings is therefore the central duty of a Christian Scientist. Consequently, the *Church of Christ, Scientist* did not set up houses of worship where the word is preached, but *Reading Rooms* – that is local Christian Scientist libraries – where the members go to read Mrs. Eddy's works to aid their spiritual development. The reading rooms are complemented by various magazines published by the Mother Church in Boston, such as the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *Christian Science Journal* and a few others.

### 7.1 History

The central aspect of *Christian Science* is *spiritual healing* – the healing of diseases without medicine. This is easy to understand if one considers the personal history of Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy. Born into a devoutly religious family, she suffered from chronic illnesses and experienced a good deal of unhappiness. Her first husband died a few months before her first child was born, her second husband was unfaithful, and she did not find any cure for her diseases.

During that time she met a man named Phineas P. Quimby, who claimed to heal sicknesses without medicine and called his system "*the Science of Christ*". Quimby believed that illness and disease could be healed through positive thoughts and healthy attitudes – by changing one's beliefs about the illness. Since healthy attitudes do in fact have some positive influence on the healing process, Mrs. Baker's health suddenly improved – although only for a while – and she was convinced that he had discovered the methods of healing practiced by Jesus Christ. Later, however, she repudiated any indebtedness to Quimby, claiming to have gradually discovered the truth through divine power.

In 1866, a short time after Quimby's death, she began a healing ministry and taught her system to pupils for a fee of \$300.-, which was a lot of money at the time. In 1875 she completed the book "*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*" which

now is considered to be *the* main reference for the Christian Scientist. 4 years later she founded the *Church of Christ, Scientist* in Boston, Massachusetts. The church grew quickly and reached its peak membership in the early 1970's. But because of controversies, financial mismanagement, and the failure of its now elderly members to attract younger people, the membership shrunk to about 150,000 today.

## 7.2 Major Doctrines – where are the differences?

*Christian Science* is a strange, often contradictory and – for the outsider – confusing system that mixes Hindu beliefs with Christian terminology and is based on two fundamental principles, which are “*God is All-in-All*” and “*God, Spirit, being all means nothing is matter*”. This, according to Mrs. Eddy, is the cardinal point in Christian Science: matter and evil – including sin, disease, and death – are *unreal*. In other words, the spiritual world is all there is. Matter is only an illusion and so is sin, sickness, death. The only problem of mankind is the false belief that these things really exist. Christ came to set us free from these false beliefs by his teaching and example and by understanding his teachings correctly we can be truly healed.

It is quite obvious that these foundations of *Christian Science* can hardly be called “*Christian*”. The Bible clearly states that God is a personal being who **made the world and all things therein (Acts 17:24)**. Although God is *omnipresent* he is not a pantheistic “All-in-All” but distinct from his creation. Matter is not an illusion, but was created by God and pronounced “good” (**Genesis 1:31**). Sin, sickness, and death are real as well. They came into the world because of man's willful choice to rebel against God (**Romans 3:23, 5:12–14**).

### 7.2.1 Sources of Authority – anything but the Bible?

Since the Bible is so clear about these issues, how can a church who claims to be based on the Word of God hold on to such unbiblical principles? Let us take a closer look at the true sources of authority in *Christian Science*.

According to Mary Baker Eddy, Christian Scientists “*take the inspired Word of the Bible as their sufficient guide to eternal life*”. But as in so many other seemingly Christian cults, the Bible is made subject to interpretation and explanation. The Bible as we have it, they say, is unreliable.

*The thirty thousand different readings in the old Testament, and the three hundred thousand in the New, these facts show how a mortal and material sense stole into the divine record.*

*Students who strictly adhere to the right, and make the Bible and Science and Health a study, are in no danger of mistaking their way.*

So the book *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* is considered necessary for a proper understanding of the scripture. It contains the true knowledge a Christian

should have and “*neither pen nor tongue can overthrow it*”. So, the source of authority for the Christian Scientist are the writings of Mary Baker Eddy, and not the Bible. This becomes quite obvious when we consider the fundamental “truths” taught by *The Church of Christ, Scientist*. The two principles *God is All-in-All* and *matter and evil are unreal* must ever be in mind. All subsequent study *must* relate to these absolutes. Although they are in clear conflict with the Word of God that we find in the Bible, a Christian Scientist is not to dispute them.

### 7.2.2 God

*We acknowledge and adore one supreme and infinite God. We acknowledge His Son, one Christ; the Holy Ghost or divine Comforter; and man in God’s image and likeness.*

That sounds quite orthodox. But this statement has to be read in the context of the principle *God is All-in-All*. *Christian Science* emphasizes over and over again that God is all that *really* is. Whatever is not God, is unreal, nonexistent, and the result of “mortal error”. *Christian Science* demands that men give up their “false” beliefs that there are other realities or individual beings separate from God.

In her writings, Mrs. Eddy oscillates between a personal and an impersonal view of God. “*God is individual and personal ... in a scientific sense, but not in any anthropomorphic sense*”. She does not care to explain what the scientific sense should be. God sees, hears, and knows, but he is also “*the divine principle of all being, the ever-present I AM that fills all space, including mankind*”.

So the concept of God is a very hazy one. But it is clear that it is not one of God the Creator who has a loving interest in his creation. The trinity is also openly denied:

*The theory of the three persons in one God suggests polytheism, rather than one ever-present I AM. . . . . Life, Truth, Love constitute the triune Person called God. They represent a trinity in unity, three in one, the same in essence, though multiform in office: God the Father-Mother; Christ the spiritual idea of sonship; divine Science or the Holy Comforter.*

In other words, because God is All-in-All, he cannot be three persons. So, although she denies it, Mrs. Eddy clearly teaches the Pantheism that we find in the Hindu scriptures. It is no wonder, that her doctrines about Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are far from orthodox.

### 7.2.3 Jesus Christ

*Jesus is the human man, and Christ is the divine idea; hence the duality of Jesus the Christ. The spiritual Christ was infallible; Jesus, as the material manhood, was not Christ.*

*We acknowledge Jesus' atonement as the evidence of divine, efficacious Love, unfolding man's unity with God through Christ.*

*Christian Scientists* have a very peculiar explanation for Jesus Christ being God and man at the same time. They simply say, that we have to distinguish between Jesus, the man, and the divine Christ. For them, Jesus was *not* the Christ but only the man, who *demonstrated* the Christ, that is the divine idea of salvation from evil. “*Jesus was not one with the father – only the spiritual idea, the Christ, dwells forever in the bosom of the father*”.

Actually, at this point Mrs. Eddy's teachings mix Hinduism and Gnosticism and thus become somewhat confusing. She claims that God is all-in-all and that nothing material exists, but at the same time she writes about Jesus as if he were a corporeal, material being and that he has to be distinguished from the divine idea, which – as we were just told – is all there is.

However, later on she writes, that Jesus was not born physically, because matter is just an illusion, and that Mary's conception was purely spiritual. For the same reason, Jesus' death on the cross – like all death – was an illusion. He was alive in the tomb and his resurrection was just the “*spiritualization of a higher idea of immortality*”. By this and by his healing miracles, Jesus thus showed the way into truth, life, and love.

*We acknowledge that the crucifixion of Jesus and his resurrection served to uplift faith to understand eternal Life, even the allness of Soul, Spirit, and the nothingness of matter.*

So the whole purpose of Jesus' coming to earth was to demonstrate that the power of the spirit overrules material sense, which, according to *Christian Science* is all we need to understand to get “saved”.

It is clear that these teachings have nothing to do with the Jesus Christ of the Bible. His birth, life, death, and resurrection, his person and his atonement – it all has been twisted beyond recognition. The Bible is very clear about Jesus Christ being fully God and Man at the same time.

For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

says **Colossians 2:9**. **John 14:6** points out that Jesus is the only way to God

I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me

**John 1:1-3,14** and **Philippians 2:6-7** also show that Mrs. Eddy's teachings about Jesus Christ have nothing to do with the Word of God.

#### 7.2.4 The Holy Spirit

*This Science of God and man is the Holy Ghost, which reveals and sustains the unbroken and eternal harmony of both God and the universe.*

For the *Christian Scientist*, the Holy Spirit is just the unfolding of the thoughts and mind of God, the *Divine Science*, but by no means a person on its own.

### 7.2.5 Man

Given the principle that matter is unreal, how does one have to understand creation and the fact that man was created in God's image? What is man? *Christian Science* gives the following explanation.

*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 moral error. Spirit is real and eternal; matter is the unreal and temporal. Spirit is God, and man is his image and likeness. Therefore, man is not material, but is spiritual.*

According to Mrs. Eddy, man – being made in the image of God – is entirely spiritual, the reflection of God or Mind – perfect and eternal. In the view of this, man is incapable of sin, sickness, and death. The only problem of mankind is that we believe in the *illusion* of individuality – which is in strong opposition to the principle *God is All-in-All*. Since the concept of an individual soul is an illusion, sickness and death must be an illusion as well. After all, we reflect God and God cannot be sick. If we realize this truth, we shall be healed. This is how **John 8:32** is understood:

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

It is this approach to healing diseases that made *Christian Science* attractive to many people. As a matter of fact, the idea is not entirely wrong. We know that there are quite a few diseases where your attitude and desire to get well plays a major role in the healing process. Placebos, for instance, are proven to work well in some cases, which shows that there is in fact a process of inner healing, even if the disease is of physical nature. But that does not mean that the disease did not exist in the first place.

Furthermore, we do not live in a purely imaginary world like in a big computer simulation. Matter is real and was created distinct from God, who pronounced it “good” (**Genesis 1:31**). Sin, sickness, and death is not an illusion but the result of man's rebellion (**Genesis 3:22-23**) and certainly real.

The sad consequence of this false teaching is that true *Christian Scientists* never consult a doctor. There have been numerous lawsuits against parents who allowed their children to die by neglecting medical treatment in favor of “spiritual healing”, which raised the question to what extent the government has the duty to interfere with one's right to exercise religious beliefs in order to protect minors from serious damage.

### 7.2.6 Salvation

Since for the *Christian Scientist* sin is just an illusion, the term *salvation* gets an entirely different meaning. After all, we are not responsible for any trespass against

God, Satan does not exist as well – so who is to be saved from what?

*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.*

So God has already destroyed sin but we still need to realize that our belief in sin is a mortal error. As long as we believe in sin, we will suffer the consequences. So salvation does not come through faith in Jesus Christ but by understanding the truth.

*Final deliverance from error, ... is not reached ... by pinning one's faith without works to another's vicarious effort.*

*In Christian Science it is plain that God removes the punishment for sin only as sin is removed ... hence the hope of universal salvation. ... To lose the sense of sin we must first detect the claim of sin; hold it invalid ... sin disappears, and its unreality is proven.*

This more or less says it all. Jesus came only to destroy the belief in sin. His death on the cross and his resurrect was only meant to open our eyes for the truth. But putting our faith in Christ is *not* the way to get saved. We must make sin disappear by proving that it does not exist. Only then we will be free of its consequences. From a Christian perspective, this whole concept of salvation in *Christian Science* simply does not make any sense but rather looks like a futile attempt to use Christian terminology as cover for doctrines that rather look like Hinduism and have nothing to do with the Bible. **1. John 1:8** and **Ephesians 2:8–9** make this very clear.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

### 7.2.7 Things to come

Eschatology has little place in *Christian Science*, since heaven and hell are not real places. Heaven is the state of harmony, the reign of the Spirit. Hell is just a mortal belief, suffering and self-destruction, self-imposed agony, a great error. The fires of hell will be a bitter reality for those who have been taught that it does not exist. Since there is no physical death there can also be no bodily resurrection. We simply exist eternally. Death is just the means to get into another phase of our life with the chance to make progress by understanding that material life is just an illusion. The concept of a final judgment is denied. Universal salvation rests on progression and probation until one is free from false beliefs.

### 7.3 Summary

Although the *Church of Christ, Scientist* claims to be the only true Christian Church, it is impossible to view it as biblical Christianity. There is not a single facet of the Word of God that has not been distorted or denied. *Christian Science* is so foreign to the Bible that — if it didn't use words like Jesus, Love, Grace, Sin, Christian, etc. — you would never suspect it had anything to do with the Word of God at all. In fact, it is a Hindu philosophy, with its teaching of truth-realization, absorption into the infinite, and freedom from the bondage of illusion and ignorance, which has found a revival under a new name, *Christian Science*, which is more acceptable to the Western World.