
Mary Baker Eddy

1821-1910

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Mary Baker Eddy was a teacher, author and religious leader whose ideas about spirituality and health were set out in a book published in 1875 titled *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. Her approach was called Christian Science. Four years after its publication she founded the Church of Christ, Scientist, a new denomination which has grown worldwide. She began and the denomination continues to publish *The Christian Science Monitor*, now a leading and highly respected international newspaper. She describe its purpose was “to injure no man, but to bless all mankind.”

She was born in New Hampshire, raised in a religious Congregational family. While still young she rejected the Calvinist principle of predestination, and sought guidance through prayer and Bible study.

She married in 1843 and was widowed the following June when six months pregnant. This resulted in her return to her parent’s home. She married a second time in 1853, but it was an unhappy relationship and he abandoned her in 1866 and they divorced in 1873 on the grounds of desertion.

She had health problems all her life. Chronic illness and personal losses made her preoccupied with health issues. The physicians of her day administered remedies which caused additional suffering with limited, if any, meaningful relief. She studied homeopathy and investigated a variety of new approaches to medical care. She subjected herself to new “cures” to see if things ranging from hydropathy to placebos, even mental suggestions (hypnosis) would help. While doing so she continued to study the Bible.

She sustained a serious injury in 1866 from a fall, and while convalescing and studying her Bible she read about a miraculous healing, and found it suddenly likewise healed her. This was when she discovered Christian Science. After nine years of study, she published her *Science and Health*

with Keys to the Scripture to attempt to set out the principle of Christian healing. She believed Jesus performed healing using a natural, and repeatable, system. She explained, “During twenty years prior to my discovery I had been trying to trace all physical effects to a mental cause; and in the latter part of 1866 I gained the scientific certainty that all causation was Mind, and every effect a mental phenomenon.” Her system was eventually widely taught and hundreds of men and women established successful healing practices based on her work.

When other denominations refused to welcome her system, she obtained a charter for the Church of Christ, Scientist in 1879 “to commemorate the word and works of our Master, which should reinstate primitive Christianity and its lost element of healing.” While she did not want to start a church, rejection of the things she believed to be true led her to this inevitability. Her organization is local, that is congregationally organized and democratically run by the participants.

She advocated practical steps to improve mankind: “Sin makes its own hell, and goodness its own heaven.” “True prayer is not asking God for love; it is learning to love, and to include all mankind in one affection.”

She is regarded as one of the 100 Most Influential Americans of All Time.