

# **An Annotated Bibliography of Academic and Other Literature on Christian Science**

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An Annotated Bibliography of Academic and Other Literature  
on Christian Science

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# INTRODUCTION

For many decades, scholars have requested better access to information on the Christian Science movement and its history. In 1948, Henry Steiger remarked, “Even if we expect a scholar to pass correct judgment on a subject within his field of investigation, we cannot expect him to gather this information without assistance. The Christian Science movement cannot expect fair treatment of its doctrine unless from its own ranks efforts are made to lay the necessary groundwork.”<sup>1</sup> Thirty-four years later, Martin Marty tried again: “Until Christian Science leaders open their archives, they will have to content themselves with speculative works of this sort.”<sup>2</sup>

Finally, in 2002, over ninety years after the (1910) death of Mary Baker Eddy, the leader of the Christian Science movement, the Archives of the Christian Science Church were made available to the public with the opening of The Mary Baker Eddy Library.

And yet again, about five years ago, Dr. J. Gordon Melton, Distinguished Professor of American Religious History of the Institute for Studies of Religion at Baylor University, suggested to us that it was still difficult to find a broad range of academic research and resource material on the history of Christian Science. “Biographies on Mary Baker Eddy are plentiful,” he said. “But the history of Christian Science is still obscure and difficult to track down. An annotated bibliography would enable scholars to find appropriate resources for their research, and this scholarly research would accomplish much toward a better understanding of this important religious movement.”

We can’t presume to know how Mary Baker Eddy would have wanted to celebrate her bicentennial. But 2021 is her bicentennial year. She publicly proclaimed, “This is the natal hour of my lone earth life...”<sup>3</sup> Privately, she wrote to one student, “This is my birthday, a day of such moment to the

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<sup>1</sup> Henry W. Steiger, *Christian Science and Philosophy*. (Philosophical Library, 1948), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Martin Marty, “Mary Baker Eddy: An Interpretive Biography of the Founder of Christian Science by Julius Silberger,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 12, no. 4 (1982), 740.

<sup>3</sup> Mary Baker Eddy, *The First Church of Christ, Scientist and Miscellany* (The Christian Science Board of Directors, 1913), 158. (From July 16, 1903 corner-stone at Concord).

race.”<sup>4</sup> And to another, on another occasion, she wrote, “This is my birthday according to the calendar of error.”<sup>5</sup> There has always been more than one side to her story and her Church, even according to her own reckoning.

This *Annotated Bibliography* bookmarks 200 years since Eddy’s birth. It is our contribution to the ongoing effort to understand the multiple dimensions of the life of Mary Baker Eddy and her Church. It presents a large index of literature in a central location to help jumpstart scholarly research.

Furthermore, the investigation of the meaning of the religious, historical, and cultural location of a religious leader (and movement) is, as Bruno Latour notes, “much better *after* having let the actors [Eddy] deploy the full range of controversies in which they are [she is] immersed.” He continues outlining the more profitable method of “tracing connections *between* the controversies themselves rather than try to decide how to settle any given controversy.”<sup>6</sup> This *Annotated Bibliography* aids scholars in tracing those connections.

## Compilers and Annotators

The three compilers and primary annotators are:

**Shirley Paulson**, PhD in Religion and Theology at the University of Birmingham (UK), worked for The First Church of Christ, Scientist, Boston, MA in the capacities of Regional Monitor Circulation Manager, Committee on Publication for Illinois, Board of Lectureship, Head of Ecumenical Affairs, and Christian Science practitioner. She has published book chapters and articles in academic journals, and a book is forthcoming in 2021.

**Linda Bargmann**, Christian Science researcher, is a retired Certified Public Accountant who has been involved with Bible study organizations for Christian Scientists for 30 years. She has researched early Christian Science history since The Mary Baker Eddy Library opened, giving

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<sup>4</sup> *In My True Light and Life: Mary Baker Eddy Collections* (Boston: The Writings of Mary Baker Eddy, 2002), 428.

<sup>5</sup> 7/16/1887 Eddy to Edward A. Bailey re. “your most excellent article ‘Intelligent Religion’” (Mary Baker Eddy Library Collection), V03480.

<sup>6</sup> Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 23.

presentations on the culture of the Christian Science movement to Christian Science churches across the country. Her collection of about 2,000 books provided a foundation for this *Annotated Bibliography*.

**Helen Mathis**, MA, Biblical Studies and Christian History, Pacific School of Religion (part of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA), spent three years as Director for the Center for Scriptural Studies in Manchester Center, VT followed by three years teaching religion at Principia College. She was also the managing editor of a Bible study curriculum project and has actively presented Bible workshops around the country for the past 20 years.

All three of us grew up within the Christian Science community and knew the blessings of Christian Science through our individual healing experiences. We have committed much of our lives to serving the cause of Christian Science. We have also faced disappointments and challenges in our work with the culture associated with the Church, which was sometimes more insular than ecumenical, more eager to give advice than to receive it. Even though the three of us have broad backgrounds and experiences, what we read for this project surprised and changed us. For this reason, we are convinced that the literature on Christian Science we have annotated will be beneficial and insightful not only to scholars, but to Christian Scientists themselves. For the past five years we worked steadily together to complete the project.

It was good to work as a team because we needed to challenge each other and help each other with points of difficult history we had not known before. We finished our work on this book with:

- a greater appreciation for the struggles Mary Baker Eddy faced in the context of her nineteenth-century life;
- a better understanding of the challenges facing the first leaders of the Church after Eddy's death;
- a greater realization of the impact of the so-called 'Great Litigation' on subsequent Church history;
- a retrospective view of the courage, as well as the apparent mistakes, of the Christian Science Board of Directors;
- a detection of a major shift for the better in scholarship and types of research that occurred with the opening of The Mary Baker Eddy Library; and

- a greater awareness of the struggles with and among the so-called 'Independent' Christian Scientists who represented ideas about Christian Science that did not comply with the official interpretation from the Board of Directors.

When Dr. Melton mentioned that it would help religion scholars to have access to an annotated bibliography on Christian Science, it was the three of us who understood immediately why it was true. Shirley Paulson in particular had represented the Christian Science Church in a number of public venues, and had studied religion in the field of New Religious Movements. These experiences made her acutely aware of how difficult it can be for scholars to find available materials.

We have reviewed and annotated the majority of published books and articles on Mary Baker Eddy and Christian Science that we believe would be most useful for researchers. Some of the material we have discovered is outstanding, especially that published by various scholars having access to The Mary Baker Eddy Library. We are delighted to make this material better known to scholars and to the general public, as it covers new topics, such as the rhetoric of Eddy's teachings and writings, music in the churches, and some feminist and philosophical perspectives.

## Contributors

We are exceedingly grateful for the many individuals who provided one or more annotations from their areas of expertise:

Bonnie Abiko, PhD	William Marquand, AIA
Richard Davenport, MTS	Madelon Maupin, MTS
Alan Galt, PhD	Keith McNeil
Michael Hamilton, PhD	Mark Montgomery, MA
Barry Huff, PhD	Carolyn Petersen
Susan E. Humble, PhD	Stan Scott, PhD
Susan Jostyn, MTS	Philip Smith, PhD
Julia Lunn	

We deeply appreciate Sharon-Lee (Sher) Orpen for bringing her expertise, patience, and perseverance to the very complex work of formatting, organizing, and editing the extensive material in the *Bibliography*. We would also like to offer special thanks to colleagues who helped us proofread and search for consistency in the almost 400 pages of the *Bibliography*. Alan

# THE BIBLE, RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY, THEOLOGY, AND SCIENCE

*This category includes writings focused on the theological meaning and practice of Christian Science in conversation with biblical studies, philosophies, theologies, and the physical sciences from Eddy's day until now. Because 'Science'—as understood in Christian Science—is a theological term, it falls into this category.*

## Highlighted Excerpt

Although separated in time by five hundred years, there are remarkable similarities in the theologies of Julian of Norwich and Mary Baker Eddy. ... But the women resemble each other in ways other than their theologies. For example, both women were seriously ill at the time of their revelatory experiences and as a result of which they were healed, with no periods of recuperation recorded. Healing for these women was profound as Eddy had been an invalid for almost all her 45 years, and Julian confessed to a readiness to die at the time of her visions. And yet these two women went on to live well into old age.

Neither Eddy's nor Julian's experiences were consistent with "male church Teaching" (Crisp, Beth R. "Seeking the Feminine: An Exploration of the Spiritual Writings of Hildegard of Bingen and Julian of Norwich," *Pacifica* 10, 1997, 314). And yet it is at the very points of divergence from church teachings that the women's theologies meet and promote transformation and healing. The crucial points of agreement between the theologies of these two inspiring women are the wholly loving and never angry nature of God, the insubstantial nature of sin, rejection of a "father" only image of God, and an emphasis on our "Godly" rather than sinful nature. These aspects of Julian's and Eddy's theology is explored in detail in this paper, as it is my contention that each is critical to the practice of Christian healing as recorded in Scripture.

From: "Julian of Norwich and Mary Baker Eddy" by Deidre Michell, © November 2000.

Reprinted with permission of Deidre Michell, and *Colloquium: The Australian and New Zealand Theological Review (ANZAT)* 33, no. 2. pp. 201, 203.



## BIOGRAPHIES AND CHRONOLOGIES

Numerous biographies of Mary Baker Eddy and other workers in the movement have been written throughout the history of Christian Science, and most of these studies were based on secondary sources or speculation (at best) before the opening of the Mary Baker Eddy Library. One of the few exceptions is Gillian Gill's biography, excerpted below. The annotations in this category include a sampling of the most influential or significant biographies that give researchers historical context.

### Highlighted Excerpt

When, finally, I [Gill] forced myself to sit down and read the 1875 edition of *Science and Health*, my central, and unexpected, conclusion was that both Christian Scientist loyalists and their opponents have attacked and avoided the book because it was too radical. The real issue is the author's audacity, her daring to think that a woman like her, with her resources, could write, not the expected textbook on mental healing techniques, not the comfortable compendium of healing anecdotes, but a book that takes on the great questions of God and man, good and evil, and that rejects orthodox verities.

From: *Mary Baker Eddy* by Gillian Gill, © 1998.

Reprinted by permission of Da Capo Press, an imprint of Hachette Book Group, Inc.

**Bancroft, Samuel Putnam. *Mrs. Eddy as I Knew Her in 1870*. Boston: Press of Geo. H. Ellis Co., 1923.**

Bancroft's story of Eddy's life between the years 1870 and 1875, 'as [he] knew her,' represents an unusual mix of profound admiration, tempered with an honest critique of her strengths and weaknesses at that time. "Beyond a question, there is no woman of the present time about whom so many unkind things have been said and written ... from my statements, the manuscripts from which I studied and her letters to me, you may form your own opinion of her" (5). This is the period in which Eddy completed the first edition of *S&H*, and which is not otherwise well documented. These were formative years for Eddy, and Bancroft affirms that his collection does not reflect her mature work. He raises a few topics warranting special attention, because they shed light on Eddy's personality and growth: her attitude toward her own birthday (a desire to be better

## CHRISTIAN SCIENCE AFTER 1910

*After Eddy's death in December 1910, Church leaders relied on her writings, especially her Church Manual, to guide them. Controversy over interpretations of the Church Manual erupted in the beginning of the second decade. The history of the Church since 1910 demonstrates its effort to balance the needs of each passing generation with the continuity of its core teachings.*

### Highlighted Excerpt

It has been over one-hundred twenty years since Mary Baker Eddy set up a new and inspired version of practical Christianity. Our movement has had spectacular spiritual success realized through the building of churches world-wide and the healing revitalization of hundreds of thousands of individual lives through understanding of the eternal Christ. And yet, we are now a diminishing group, beset by declining membership, church closings and financial challenges. ... I believe that although the path of really honest self-examination is not easily trod, it is one we must take.

From: *Open the Doors of the Temple: The Survival of Christian Science in the Twenty-first Century*, by Nancy Niblack Baxter, © 2004.

Reprinted with permission of Nancy Baxter and Hawthorne Publishing. Preface.

**Baxter, Nancy Niblack. *Open the Doors of the Temple: The Survival of Christian Science in the Twenty-first Century*. Carmel, IN: Hawthorne Publishing, 2004.**

Baxter's analysis of why people are no longer attracted to the CS Church is grounded in her fifty years as a member of the CS Church. She cites a century of mostly unwarranted publicity, but feels some objections raised by the press clearly need examining. Baxter zeroes in on the Church's singular focus on healing. Troubled by decades of ill health, Eddy and her early Church engaged in a single-minded pursuit of physical healing through prayer—a mission that attracted thousands desperate to avoid risky medical practices. However, Baxter sees Eddy evolving over the years to a deeper spiritually-scientific understanding, and broader Christian mission—the overcoming of sin as well as sickness, and the healing of nations. But the Church's continued focus on a 'do or die' approach to healing in a time of medical advancements has limited its mission,

## CHURCH BUILDING, GOVERNANCE, AND LEGAL ISSUES

*This category includes mostly historical records of the building of The First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, MA (The Mother Church) and branches in various parts of the world. Some of the resources include metaphysical and philosophical considerations for the building of the churches and their polity.*

### Highlighted Excerpt

Church architecture, or any architecture for that matter, embodies and reveals meanings important to those who erect and live with the buildings. In the selection of size, massing, materials, style, function and arrangement of interior rooms, ornament and furnishing, those who erect church buildings articulate innumerable ideas, from notions about theology and worship practice to positions on political situations, social practices, entertainment, and family organization. The contrasting architecture and ornamentation of these two Christian Science churches [the Original Mother Church and its Extension in Boston], erected a mere twelve years apart, by the same organization, headed by the same individual, indicate that disparate ideas were embodied in the buildings and thus suggest that a significant transformation in the ideas of those who built them occurred during the few years which separated them.

What were those ideas? Why did such a distinctive shift occur?

From: "Material Expression and Maternalism in Mary Baker Eddy's Boston Churches: How Architecture and Gender Compromised Mind" by Jeanne Halgren Kilde, © 2005.

Reprinted with permission of *Material Religion* 1, no. 2. p. 168.

**Abiko, Emi. *A Precious Legacy: Christian Science Comes to Japan*. Boston: E. D. Abbott Company, 1978.**

Abiko's book is a personal account of the introduction and development of CS into Japan and its development through her first-hand experiences as eldest daughter of one of the pioneers. This is not a primer on CS, nor does Abiko write as a historian; rather she draws from deep resources of memory, feeling, and a life of loving and living CS. Her bilingual and bi-cultural background informs her with authoritative insight into the

## FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

*This research examines Eddy and the Christian Science movement using the tools of feminist scholarship and analysis. These perspectives provide a rich backdrop for studying the various influences on Eddy and the movement, as well as how the movement in return affected gender issues.*

### Highlighted Excerpt

Significantly, the ways in which Eddy chose to negotiate the complicated issues surrounding women's bodily well-being offered a comprehensive and empowering view of women. *Science and Health* stands as an alternative both to the sentimental valorization and political limitations of the invalid woman and to the medical discourse, which objectified women as essentially faulty, uterine-driven bodies. Eddy proposes the valorization of health and the valorization of women as spiritual, not biological, beings. By rewriting the discourses of sentimental invalidism and medicine, she brings herself forward as a major reformer and a major public voice . . . Eddy's revisioning of the female body in *Science and Health* both secured her fame and presented a complex and effective rewriting of dominant 19<sup>th</sup>-century discourses.

Eddy's message of corporeal transcendence emphasized life and health for women rather than sickness and death. This central premise of *Science and Health* allows Eddy to practice healing and undercut key aspects of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century ideology of womanhood.

By presenting God through masculine and feminine metaphors, Eddy undercuts the patriarchal biases of Protestant Christianity as it was practiced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. She speaks of God in terms that are truly inviting to women as well as men, including women in the divinity, which suggests both that women contain divinity, being created in that image, and that women are or can be, like men, creators and rulers. Eddy frequently employs the language of sentiment to assert the womanhood of God, as when she asserts, "Father-Mother is the name for Deity, which indicates his [sic] tender relationship to His spiritual creation" (*S&H*, 332).

From: "Woman Goes Forth to Battle with Goliath: Mary Baker Eddy, Medical Science and Sentimental Invalidism" by Alison Piepmeier, © 2001. Reprinted with permission of *Women's Studies Journal*, an imprint of Taylor & Francis Group LLC, pp. 320-323.

## FOCUS ON HEALING

*Eddy's evolution as a healer and founder of the Christian Science Church took place within a historical context of many competing healing practices. As one among many, Eddy strove mightily to distinguish her Christian Science. The profusion of scholarship on the subject of healing and healthcare during the nineteenth- and twentieth-century period includes social and religious contexts, such as the tendency for men to subsume the private healing practices of women.*

*Research on the legal, constitutional, and philosophical aspects of Christian Science healing practices extends well into modern times. For a comprehensively researched and referenced work on the profound legal, religious and moral questions surrounding this topic, we recommend Elena Kondos's "The Law and Christian Science Healing for Children: A Pathfinder."*

### Highlighted Excerpt

Eddy, under the influence of Quimby's mind cure methods, initially linked health with divine presence. However, over years of refining her world view, she came to a much more exalted understanding of well-being as an expression of an indivisible connection between God and human beings. As noted by Gottschalk, the resolution of the Quimby dispute lies at neither of the extreme positions taken by the New Thought or Christian Science apologists. He writes:

It lies in a clarification of a fundamental issue which has often been obscured in the course of the debate: the differing religious characters of Christian Science and of Quimby's thought. Christian Science is a religious teaching and only incidentally a healing method. Quimbyism was a healing method and only incidentally a religious teaching. (Gottschalk, 1973, 130.)

Christian Science, following Eddy's healing and her decade-long focus on overcoming illness as scientific proof of the efficacy of Christianity, did, indeed, focus on healing. ... Only after several editions of *Science and Health* and years of reflection did Eddy articulate Christian Science as Christianity in its fullness. ... Good health was a positive side effect of religious certainty, not the primary reason why one married her religion.

From: "Christian Science," by John K. Simmons, in *Introduction to New and Alternative Religions in America*, eds. Eugene V. Gallagher & W. Michael Ashcraft, © 2006  
Reprinted with permission of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc. p. 107.

## INDEPENDENTS

Those categorized as 'Independents' are people who sincerely found value in Christian Science and then felt a need to keep moving in some way that did not fit with the specific trajectory of the Christian Science Church. The wide variety of their writings indicate how broadly Christian Science has influenced thinkers, healers, and religious communities, especially the English-speaking world. There has always been tension within the Church between the need to conserve the integrity of Eddy's vision and to provide creative space for its members to innovate, including alternative interpretations of the Bible and Eddy's writings.

### Highlighted Excerpt

An effective definition of church is necessarily non-denominational. It defines the universal Church that serves the Creator. Wherever someone is standing for what is right, giving of himself to help others, striving to make a better world, there is Church.

The purpose of a church organization, then, would be to recognize where Church is and to provide support for Church in whatever way it can. Mary Baker Eddy, an American woman, Founder of Christian Science, gave a definition that extends beyond denominational boundaries. "Church. The structure of Truth and Love; whatever rests upon and proceeds from divine Principle" (*Science and Health*, 583).

The church that shows the individual his relation to God is the church that encourages the individual to think freely for himself. There is no way for an individual to learn his relation to the infinite Mind without the freedom to reason on his own, to challenge and be challenged, to worship what he understands to worship, and to worship when and where he feels a usefulness in his worshipping.

To encourage the individual relationship with God, a church itself must be free of hierarchal domination. It must encourage free exchange of ideas, even dissent. If a hierarchy cannot stand the challenge of open discussion and dissent, it demonstrates by its unwillingness to permit or encourage such challenge that its usefulness is waning.

The church that opens its heart to all who are trying to live a good life will find it including more and more of humanity. The church that governs its members by dogma will find itself excluding more and more of humanity. The true Church is bristling with fresh, new ideas, attended by individuals ready, willing, and free to share their ideas, and to demonstrate in good works what they know or believe.

From: *The Caring Church, Call for a Humane Christianity* by Carl J. Welz, © 1985. pp. 62-64.

# POLEMIC LITERATURE

## AND SAMPLE RESPONSES

*Ever since Mary Baker Glover began to write and teach the discovery of what she termed the Science of Christ in the mid-nineteenth century, her words and works have been controversial. The writings of antagonists and the response to them comprise part of the history of Christian Science. Most of the polemic literature is incorporated into the other categories in the bibliography, but this section is where the compilers have assembled a sampling of the more angry and provocative opposition to Eddy and her Church. These annotations are followed by a few examples of responses to the polemical views.*

### Highlighted Excerpt

Almost as soon as Christian Science took institutional form and gathered speed, as a legitimate, if controversial, NRM [New Religious Movement] in the United States, biographers cast Eddy in the role of mediocre metaphysician or Christ-like prophet. When it comes to Christian Science and this NRM's beloved or embattled founder, there is no neutral territory to be found. One Christian Science author, a church member for more than 50 years, laments, "Christian Science became a hugely successful religious phenomenon in the first four decades of existence, but it grew to be a world-wide movement only through controversy, skeptical opposition and downright ridicule." (See Baxter, 2004, 13.)

Conflict and controversy can, however, be instructive when analyzing a given NRM. If this is the case, then Christian Science provides a fertile intellectual field indeed. In fact, as Marcus Borg and N.T. Wright have demonstrated in their book *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions*, dialogue between scholars who also happen to be believers harboring opposing interpretations generates historical clarity and actually increases our understanding of the motivation and intent of a religion's founder. What we gain by analyzing Christian Science and Eddy is a window into the personal and organizational dilemmas that inevitably arise with the institutionalization of any powerful spiritual insight.

From: "Christian Science," by John K. Simmons, in *Introduction to New and Alternative Religions in America*, eds. Eugene V. Gallagher & W. Michael Ashcraft, © 2006  
Reprinted with permission of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc. p. 102.

## SOCIAL AND CULTURAL STUDIES

*These books and articles analyze how Mary Baker Eddy, individual Christian Scientists, and the Church have interfaced with the evolution of culture and society. The works in this category help the scholar appreciate how Eddy and her Church have influenced and been influenced by society, and consider why there was thought open to what Eddy had to offer as well as heated resistance.*

### Highlighted Excerpt

Is Mary Baker Eddy's history that of a typical power-frustrated 19<sup>th</sup>-century woman who found satisfaction through commercial status and power? Or, because the match between the traditional portrait of Mary Baker Eddy and the stereotype of the public woman is so close, might this portrait of her be grounded in defensiveness rather than in fact? To extend a question Carl Degler raised in 1974 [in his lecture before the University of Oxford], is there a history of women who have contributed useful insights to the history of ideas, and is Mary Baker Eddy one of them?

From: "Mary Baker Eddy and the Nineteenth-Century 'Public' Woman": A Feminist Reappraisal" by Jean A. McDonald, © 1986.

Reprinted with permission of *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 2.1, Spring, an imprint of Indiana University Press Material. p. 111.

**Armer, Gina R. M. "Mary Baker Eddy's Contribution to Adult Education: An Historical Biography." PhD Dissertation, University of Idaho, 2009.**

Armer claims that her study "demonstrates that Mary Baker Eddy's contribution to the field of Adult Education is so significant she should be called the Mother of Adult Education" (iv). Her unique contributions were made to a field not even distinguishable until 25 years past her death. The focus of Armer's study is on Eddy's college—the Massachusetts Metaphysical College. Armer analyzes her motives in establishing a college before a church and why she closed it so soon after its founding, at the height of its success. Primarily, Eddy needed to turn her attention to larger public concerns and could not find a suitable qualified replacement for herself. She also indicated it was a God-directed move to turn from forms of human organization. In the process of continuously modifying her