

## Christian Science

Christian Science is neither Christian nor scientific. It emphasizes physical healing through prayer and recognition that matter and illness do not exist.

The Church of Christ, Scientist — the official name of the organisation — was founded by Mary Baker Eddy. Mrs Eddy, devoted her life to the recovery of the healing emphasis in early Christianity after claiming to have been healed herself. In 1875 she published her book “Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures.” In 1879, she established and became chief pastor of the first Christian Science church — the Mother Church in Boston. The main influence on her thinking was Phineas Quimby who taught her the power of hypnosis and autosuggestion

Christian Science only has, at most, 400,000 adherents worldwide. Its danger lies in the way it, quite convincingly, portrays itself as a Christian denomination. Its followers use Christian terminology with which we are familiar but which they understand in an entirely different way.

### God

Christian Science teaches the existence of one all-powerful God. Mrs. Eddy described Him with the alternative names: Principle, Soul, Mind, Spirit, Life, Truth, and Love. In fact, the Christian Science view of God is pantheistic — God is everything and everything is God.

Christian Scientists also refer to God as "Father-Mother," since He is believed to encompass both male and female.

They teach that Jesus is divine but not God, and that His human nature is a separate entity from the divine Christ.

"Jesus Christ is not God, as Jesus himself declared, but is the Son of God"

Science and Health, 361:12 – 13

"Jesus is the name of the man who, more than all other men, has presented Christ, the true idea of God, healing the sick and destroying the power of death"

Science and Health, 473:10 –17

The Holy Spirit is equivalent to "divine Science" or the teachings of Christian Science. To receive the Holy Spirit is to understand and receive those teachings. Similarly the return of the Lord Jesus is interpreted as the time in 1866/67 when Mrs Eddy discovered Christian Science.

Mrs. Eddy rejected the traditional doctrine of the Trinity, saying that it suggests polytheism.

### Creation

The fundamental distinctive teaching of Christian Science is that creation is entirely spiritual and perfect and that matter does not exist. Sin, sickness and death also do not exist; we only think they do.

"The only reality of sin, sickness, or death is the awful fact that unrealities seem real to human belief, until God strips off their disguise"

Science and Health, 472:27 – 29

According to Christian Science, humans are subject to the laws of matter only so long as they believe they are real. So just as in *The Matrix* Neo could mentally bend a spoon by realizing "there is no spoon," so Christian Scientists can heal themselves spiritually by realizing illness does not exist.

## **Man**

Christian Science teaches that man has no physical body. To believe otherwise is an error of the mortal mind. Indeed man has no separate existence from God: he is part of God.

## **Man's Problem**

Sin and evil, like matter, are unreal. When we think we sin or see others sinning we are being deluded by our mortal minds. Since man then is not a sinner, salvation is not necessary. Christian Scientists speak of salvation but understand it to mean deliverance from false belief.

## **The Solution To The Problem**

According to Christian Science a person is saved when he stops believing that there is such a thing as sin. Mrs Eddy defined salvation as, "Life, truth, and love understood and demonstrated as supreme over all; sin, sickness and death destroyed"

It is acknowledged that man is saved through Christ, but it is through the truth demonstrated by Him in healing the sick and overcoming sin and death. The crucifixion and resurrection save by helping us to understand eternal life, the "allness" of spirit, and the nothingness of matter.<sup>1</sup>

## **The Final Outcome**

Death too is an illusion. The mind continues for ever and even after death errors in thinking remain. Heaven and hell are not places but states of mind. Heaven is a state of perfection in thinking reached by those who continue to progress after death. It is a state of mental harmony and bliss. Hell is to continue in a state of error; lust; remorse; hatred; revenge; sickness; and suffering. Those who continue in error will ultimately be "self-annihilated."

## **How Do We Know These Things Are True?**

The main texts of Christian Science are the Bible and Mrs Eddy's Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures. Both are read in Sunday services and studied in private devotions. The Bible is acknowledged as the inspired word of God and a "sufficient guide to eternal life." However it is also taught that it contains errors whereas the writings of Mrs Eddy, by which it is interpreted, are "unerring and divine."

## **Distinctive Practices**

Spiritual healing, both for its own sake and as evidence of redemption from the flesh, is a central focus of Christian Science. Most members refuse medical help for disease. However, Christian Scientists encourage cooperation with legal requirements to be vaccinated and report communicable diseases and leave decisions on seeking medical treatment to each individual.

There is no ordained clergy. Members engaged in full-time healing ministry are called Christian Science practitioners and services are conducted by elected Readers. Sunday services are based on readings from the Bible, Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures and Lesson-sermons developed by the Mother Church.

Christian Scientists do not observe the sacraments. They understand them in spiritual terms.

"Our baptism is purification from all error. Our Eucharist is spiritual communion with the one God. Our bread, which cometh down from heaven, is Truth. Our cup is the cross. Our wine the inspiration of Love, the draught the Master drank and commended to his followers"

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<sup>1</sup> The teaching that Jesus died to atone for sin is considered abhorrent. Indeed Jesus did not actually suffer or die. His death was only apparent and there was no physical resurrection or ascension.