

Inquiry Activity: Why was Mary Baker Eddy controversial?

In this inquiry students will examine contrasting primary source accounts and form their own conclusions about Mary Baker Eddy.

Document A: The Science and Health

To those leaning on the sustaining infinite, to-day is big with blessings. The wakeful shepherd beholds the first faint morning beams, ere cometh the full radiance of a risen day. So shone the pale star to the prophet shepherds; yet it traversed the night, and came where, in cradled obscurity, lay the Bethlehem babe, the human herald of Christ, Truth, who would make plain to benighted understanding the way of salvation through Christ Jesus, till across a night of error should dawn the morning beams and shine the guiding star of being. The Wisemen were led to behold and to follow this daystar of divine Science, lighting the way to eternal harmony.

The time for thinkers has come. Truth, independent of doctrines and time-honored systems, knocks at the portal of humanity. Contentment with the past and the cold conventionality of materialism are crumbling away. Ignorance of God is no longer the steppingstone to faith. The only guarantee of obedience is a right apprehension of Him whom to know aright is Life eternal. Though empires fall, "the Lord shall reign forever."

A book introduces new thoughts, but it cannot make them speedily understood. It is the task of the sturdy pioneer to hew the tall oak and to cut the rough granite. Future ages must declare what the pioneer has accomplished...

The first edition of Science and Health was published in 1875. Various books on mental healing have since been issued, most of them incorrect in theory and filled with plagiarisms from Science and Health...

The physical healing of Christian Science results now, as in Jesus' time, from the operation of divine Principle, before which sin and disease lose their reality in human consciousness and disappear as naturally and as necessarily as darkness gives place to light and sin to reformation. Now, as then, these mighty works are not supernatural, but supremely natural...

During seven years over four thousand students were taught by the author... Meanwhile she was pastor of the first established Church of Christ, Scientist; President of the first Christian Scientist Association, convening monthly; publisher of her own works; and (for a portion of this time) sole editor and publisher of the Christian Science Journal, the first periodical issued by Christian Scientists.

Eddy, Mary Baker. Science and health, with Key to the Scriptures. Boston: Pub. by the Trustees under the will of Mary Baker G. Eddy, 1934.

Source

1. Who wrote this document?
2. When was this document written?

Document

3. Does it surprise you that she was the sole pastor of this new church?



4. What are some principles of her new church, recorded in the first chapter of her book?

Why do you think Mary Baker Eddy might be controversial?

Document B: Mark Twain

MONOPOLY OF SPIRITUAL BREAD

Very properly, the first qualification for membership in the Mother-Church is belief in the doctrines of Christian Science.

But these doctrines must not be gathered from secondary sources. There is but one recognized source. The candidate must be a believer in the doctrines of Christian Science "according to the platform and teaching contained in the Christian Science text-book, 'Science and Health, with Key to the Scriptures,' by Rev. Mary Baker G. Eddy."

That is definite, and is final. There are to be no commentaries, no labored volumes of exposition and explanation by anybody except Mrs. Eddy. Because such things could sow error, create warring opinions, split the religion into sects, and disastrously cripple its power. Mrs. Eddy will do the whole of the explaining, Herself—has done it, in fact. She has written several books. They are to be had (for cash in advance), they are all sacred; additions to them can never be needed and will never be permitted. They tell the candidate how to instruct himself, how to teach others, how to do all things comprised in the business—and they close the door against all would-be competitors, and monopolize the trade:

"The Bible and the above—named book [Science and Health], with other works by the same author," must be his only text-books for the commerce—he cannot forage outside. Mrs. Eddy's words are to be the sole elucidators of the Bible and Science and Health—forever...

THE LORD'S PRAYER-AMENDED

This is not in the By-laws, it is in the first chapter of Science and Health, edition of 1902. I do not find it in the edition of 1884. It is probable that it had not at that time been handed down. Science and Health's (latest) rendering of its "spiritual sense" is as follows:

"Our Father-Mother God' all-harmonious, adorable One. Thy kingdom is within us, Thou art ever-present. Enable us to know—as in heaven, so on earth—God is supreme. Give us grace for to-day; feed the famished affections. And infinite Love is



reflected in love. And Love leadeth us not into temptation, but delivereth from sin, disease, and death. For God is now and forever all Life, Truth, and Love." ...

CHAPTER VII

"We consciously declare that Science and Health, with Key to the Scriptures, was foretold, as well as its author, Mary Baker Eddy, in Revelation x. She is the 'mighty angel,' or God's highest thought to this age (verse 1), giving us the spiritual interpretation of the Bible in the 'little book open' (verse 2). Thus we prove that Christian Science is the second coming of Christ-Truth-Spirit." – Lecture by Dr. George Tomkins, D.D. C.S.

There you have it in plain speech. She is the mighty angel; she is the divinely and officially sent bearer of God's highest thought. For the present, she brings the Second Advent. We must expect that before she has been in her grave fifty years she will be regarded by her following as having been herself the Second Advent. She is already worshiped, and we must expect this feeling to spread, territorially, and also to deepen in intensity.

Particularly after her death; for then, as any one can foresee, Eddy-Worship will be taught in the Sunday-schools and pulpits of the cult...

*Twain, Mark. Christian Science. First published 1907. Retrieved from Gutenberg Press
https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3187/3187-h/3187-h.htm#link2H_PREF.*

Source

1. Who wrote this document?
2. When was this document written?

Document

3. What are some claims made about Mary Baker Eddy?

According to this document, why was Mary Baker Eddy controversial?

Document C: Mary Baker Eddy

It is a fact, well understood, that I begged the students who first gave me the endearing appellation 'mother' not to name me thus. But, without my consent, that word spread like wildfire. I still must think the name is not applicable to me. I stand in relation to this century as a Christian discoverer, founder, and leader. I regard self-deification as blasphemous; I may be more loved, but I am less lauded, pampered,



provided for, and cheered than others before me. And wherefore? Because Christian Science is not yet popular, and I refuse adulation.

My visit to the Mother Church after it was built and dedicated pleased me, and the situation was satisfactory. The dear members wanted to greet me with escort and the ringing of bells, but I declined, and went alone in my carriage to the church, entered it, and knelt in thanks upon the steps of its altar. There the foresplendor of the beginnings of truth fell mysteriously upon my spirit. I believe in one Christ, teach one Christ, know of but one Christ. I believe in but one incarnation, one Mother Mary, and know I am not that one, and never claimed to be. It suffices me to learn the Science of the Scriptures relative to this subject. " Christian Scientists have no quarrel with Protestants, Catholics, or any other sect. They need to be understood as following the divine Principle. God, Love and not imagined to be unscientific worshippers of a human being.

In the aforesaid article, of which I have seen only extracts, Mark Twain's wit was not wasted in certain directions. Christian Science eschews divine rights in human beings. If the individual governed human consciousness, my statement of Christian Science would be disproved, but to understand the spiritual idea is essential to demonstrate Science and its pure monotheism? One God, one Christ, no idolatry, no human propaganda. Jesus taught and proved that what feeds a few feeds all. His life-work subordinated the material to the spiritual, and he left this legacy of truth to mankind. His metaphysics is not the sport of philosophy, religion, or Science; rather it is the pith and finale of them all.

I have not the inspiration or aspiration to be a first or second Virgin-Mother. Her duplicate, antecedent or subsequent. What I am remains to be proved by the good I do. We need much humility, wisdom, and love to perform the functions of foreshadowing and foretasting heaven within us.

Eddy, Mary Baker G. "Mrs. Eddy Replies to Mark Twain." Originally published in the New York Herald. Retrieved from Christian Science Sentinel, <https://sentinel.christianscience.com/issues/1903/1/5-21/mrs.-eddy-replies-to-mark-twain>.

Do you find Eddy's self-defense convincing?



Document D: Susan B. Anthony

"What of Mrs. Eddy? No man ever obtained so large a following in so short a time. Her churches are among the largest and most elegant in Boston, Chicago, and other cities. But it is only during the last half century that woman has been permitted by man even to offer a prayer aloud in public. The great Apostle Paul enjoined her to keep silence in the churches. For nineteen hundred years since the dawn of Christianity, man has been much occupied establishing faiths and formulating creeds for woman to follow. Since she found her voice and her tongue, fifty years ago, she has been too busy rising to her own level and adjusting her life to new conditions to do more than recognize the great need of humanity – fewer creeds and more of the divine Spirit. When woman does write her creed, it will be one of right actions, not of theological theories."

Anthony, Susan B. "The Work of Mrs. Eddy," *Christian Science Sentinel*, December 14, 1899, <http://sentinel.christianscience.com/shared/view/a7xx05h7cu?s=t>.

Source

1. Who wrote this document?
2. When was this document written?

Document

3. Why do you suppose she doesn't talk about Eddy directly?

According to this document, why was Mary Baker Eddy controversial?

Document E: Peter Wallner, Historian

The headline in the Sunday, October 28, 1906, *New York World* read, "Mrs. Mary Baker G. Eddy Dying; Footman and 'Dummy' Control Her." The lengthy exposé that followed went on to claim that the reclusive eighty-five-year-old founder and leader of the Church of Christ, Scientist, was dying of cancer and that another woman "impersonate(d) her in the Streets of Concord," New Hampshire, where the most famous woman in America had lived since 1889. According to the article, Eddy was under the control of her "Secretary-Footman" Calvin A. Frye, who, along with her "coterie," also controlled her fortune, estimated at \$15 million, with an annual income of \$1 million.

Two reporters from the *World*, Slight and Lithchild, had interviewed Eddy on October 15 at her home, Pleasant View, in Concord. They claimed that Eddy braced



herself, “her hands on the edge of a heavy table,” that she appeared “more dead than alive,” and that she “was a skeleton, her hollow cheeks, thick with red paint, and the fleshless, hairless bones above the sunken eyes penciled in jet black.” She appeared “pitifully emaciated,” and “her weakness was pathetic.” It was obvious to the reporters “that the unfortunate old woman had been doped and galvanized (with a battery) for the ordeal of identification.” The reporters noted, “But it was equally clear that the utmost stimulation could not keep the tortured woman upon her feet much longer.” The reporters brought a neighbor of Eddy’s with them to help identify her. The old woman greeted the neighbor, but he professed to be “astonished at her feebleness.” The reporters stated, “She is a living corpse.”

The intrepid reporters also determined to prove that it was not the feeble Eddy who appeared each day to the residents of Concord on an afternoon carriage ride through the capital city. The reporters posted themselves along the usual route, and as the carriage passed by, one stepped to the right to look through the window. Immediately, the passenger in the carriage pulled a parasol over to block the view. At that moment the other reporter drove by in a carriage and had a clear view of the rider’s face through the other window. The two men stated, “The woman in the Eddy carriage was younger than the aged founder of Christian Science by many years.” They determined that the impersonator was Pamela J. Leonard of Brooklyn, New York, a Christian Science reader who had been called to Pleasant View by Eddy several years before.

More charges were made in the multipart article. Questions were raised about Eddy’s wealth. According to the reporters, she had an annual income of \$1 million, but no one knew where the money was. Supposedly, it was dispensed to various charities, but no record of these charities could be found. Finally, it was claimed that Eddy was under the care of a Boston physician, a cancer specialist. This was possibly the most damning charge of all, in that everyone knew that Christian Scientists disdained medical treatment, believing solely in the power of mental healing. If it could be proved that the founder and leader of the religion was receiving medical treatment from a worldly physician, what would it mean to the faithful who ascribed to the tenets of the religion? In all of their investigations, the World’s reporters had faced obstruction from the citizens of Concord, “this most conservative of New Hampshire cities,” which was “absolutely dominated by the aged occupant of Pleasant View and her man Frye.” To every question about Eddy, Concord citizens responded, “She is alive and hearty. You can see her every day in her carriage.” According to the World, anyone who would tell the truth about Eddy was “sure to lose his job.” Even the police claimed they would arrest anyone who “tried to take a picture of Mrs. Eddy’s carriage.”

The fact that none of the charges made by the World were remotely true was of little concern to Joseph Pulitzer and the editors of the paper. In the age of yellow journalism, their one goal was to sell newspapers. With a daily circulation of over seven hundred thousand, the World had brought wealth and power to the paper and its owner through the sensationalism that characterized its contents. But attacking a little old lady living quietly in a remote corner of New England proved to be an abuse that would come to mark the beginning of the end of what Stephen J. Diner has called “the frenzy for journalistic revelations” that characterized the age of muckraking and yellow journalism. As the truth about Mary Baker G. Eddy was revealed over the next year, the



public's tolerance for sensationalism "declined quickly after 1907," according to Diner, and the "public's interest in scandal seemed sated."

Church leaders and the citizens of Concord came immediately to Eddy's defense. On the day the World's article appeared, Sunday, October 28, attempts were made to refute the "facts" contained in the story. Concord mayor and probate court judge Charles H. Corning recorded the day's events in his diary as "a remarkable & red marked day" in his life, commenting, "Yet I wonder if I appreciate the full meaning of it all." Bombarded all day with questions about Eddy from reporters investigating the "big scoop," Corning received a visit around 3:30 p.m. from H. Cornell Wilson, a member of the Christian Science Publication Committee, "with a request to go out to Pleasant View & see with (Corning's) own eyes the lady herself." Corning had never met Eddy, and a short time later Wilson returned "in a public hack" with Eddy's attorney Frank Streeter to escort Corning to Eddy's home. At Pleasant View, Corning asked to see Pamela Leonard, whom the World accused of impersonating Eddy on her daily carriage ride...

After spending a half hour with Eddy, Corning recorded his final impressions.

She is 85 years old & she shows her years, face sharp, form slight, hands veined but warm in shaking hands, her wrinkles & age lines are prominent, she is naturally tremulous & I noticed a shaking of the head. She is slightly deaf & said so, her false teeth grate at times & her hands indicated age. But considering her years & her life's work & the work to be done daily I saw a woman who surprised me. . . . That she rides out daily I have no doubt. . . . She had returned from her drive & wore a beautiful grey waist embroidered and attractive & hanging from her neck was a locket studded with diamonds or pearls. Her skirt was black & had evidently been changed on her return.

Streeter had Corning write "quickly what (he) had to say," which was immediately sent off to the press. Corning then went to the Christian Science Church on State Street in Concord, where he addressed a packed house. He noted hostility to the World's reporting: "The excitement is lively & non scientists (non-Christian Scientists) are worked up over this contemptible performance." For the next twenty minutes, Corning addressed the crowd about his visit to Pleasant View "amid a hush such as [he had] never experienced."...

The next day, October 29, 1906, newspapers all over the country carried the statements of Corning, Streeter, Wilson, and others attesting to Eddy's mental and physical wellbeing. In Concord, the Evening Monitor headline read "Cruel Falsehoods Promptly Refuted." The Monitor's editorial lambasted "a certain section of the American press" for publishing "grossly fantastic and entirely false statements concerning the personality of the Rev. Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science." The World claimed its story was the result of long investigation in Concord. The Monitor denied this possibility: "No honest investigator could have stayed here even so short a time as a single day without learning from indisputable sources that Mrs. Eddy is alive - and very keenly alive - to all that takes place in the world, and that she is constantly alert and thoughtful to do good to everybody, especially to the city of Concord." The editor of the Monitor, George Higgins Moses, added his personal testimony by writing that he had known Mrs. Eddy for ten years and had seen her "within a very short time."

The World published all of the denials but emphasized that the many representatives of the press in Concord, including the Associated Press and reporters



from New York, Boston, and New England, had been denied access to Eddy. It was clear to those around Mary Baker Eddy that more needed to be done to completely refute the World's story...

To Eddy's staff, it was apparent that the only way to counteract the story in the World was to make Eddy available to the press, at least in a limited way. The problem with this strategy was that she had met with the World reporters, Slaughter and Lithchild, but they had entirely disregarded what they had learned about her from that interview... They arranged for the large number of reporters in Concord to see Eddy at Pleasant View, on October 30, as she left for her daily carriage ride. The brief, carefully orchestrated, interview would be conducted by Sybil Wilbur of the Boston Herald, who had previously written a laudatory piece on Eddy, based on personal interviews. Wilbur would ask Eddy four prearranged questions as Eddy descended the stairs on her way out the front door to her carriage.

...The pressure of the moment and long years of abuse from the press seemed to strike the eighty-five-year-old, and her hands shook as she confronted the reporters. Wilbur dutifully asked the first question: "Are you in perfect bodily health?" Eddy responded, "Indeed I am." Wilbur asked, "Have you any other physician than God?" Eddy made a sweeping gesture: "No physician but God. His everlasting arms are around me, and that is enough." Wilbur then asked "Do you take a daily drive?" Eddy replied, "Yes," and with that Eddy turned away toward the carriage without waiting for the fourth prearranged question: "Does anyone besides yourself administer your property or attend to your business affairs?" The interview failed in its intended purpose, as it was too short and too carefully orchestrated and as Eddy did, in fact, appear very frail and unsteady under intense scrutiny.

Excerpt from Peter A. Wallner's book "Faith on Trial: Mary Baker Eddy, Christian Science and the First Amendment." Plaidswede Publishing: Concord, NH, 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.concordmonitor.com/Archive/2014/11/faithontrial-cmforum-113014>.

Source

1. Who wrote this document?
2. When was this document written?

Document

3. What primary source evidence is presented in this document?

According to this document, why was Mary Baker Eddy controversial?

