

Christian Science

Comparing World Religions Study

ELM GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH

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History and General Information

- Christian Science arose out of the religious and intellectual ferment of the 19th century
- Mary Baker Eddy (born 1821) founded the religion, claiming to have found the healing methods of Jesus after surviving a serious accident in 1866
- Eddy began publicly teaching her method of healing in 1870, founding her church in 1879
- Mrs. Eddy died on December 3, 1910, at age 89
- The Christian Science movement has faced crisis in the last few decades, including the deaths of many children who were offered only spiritual care and prayer for various diseases; many of the parents have been charged with crimes in these cases
- Ironically, Christian Science is one of the few religions in the world that contains a core teaching that is often deadly when put into practice

Basic Beliefs

- According to www.christianscience.com
 - Christian Scientists believe in one, infinite God who is All and all-good. They believe that God is not distant and unknowable, but that God is all-encompassing and always present, and that each individual is loved by God, cared for by Him, and made in God's image—spiritual, not material.
 - Christian Scientists believe in the Bible and in Christ Jesus as the Son of God, or promised Messiah. And they believe that Jesus' teachings and healing work expressed scientific Christianity, or the application of the laws of God—laws which are still practical and provable today, by anyone, anywhere. Christian Scientists consider the Commandments, as well as Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, to be central to their lives and practice of Christianity.
- The reality of life is found in the spiritual realm, not the physical realm
- Focusing on the physical life is self-deceptive and ultimately flawed
- According to the Christian Science worldview, there is no reality to the physical world; therefore, it is only a small step to the conclusion that evil, sin, disease, sickness, and death are simply illusions of the mind
- Because "it's all in your mind," material medicine is unnecessary
- Christian Science teaches that all varieties of healing are available through the practice of prayer
- They avoid prescription drugs, hospitals, surgeries, and other related medical matters
- Christian Science also teaches:
 - The Bible should not be interpreted literally
 - Sin and evil are not real
 - Birth and death are illusions, as a reflection of the illusion of the physical life; death itself can be overcome by defeating the mortal mind

- God is revered as both father and mother, not from a physical sense, but in the sense that God presents both masculine and feminine spiritual characteristics
- “Jesus” refers to the physical man born of the Virgin Mary. “The Christ” is his spirit reality
- The Trinity of Christian Science consists of God the Father-Mother, Christ (spiritually representative of sonship to God), and the Divine Science
- Frequently Asked Questions, according to www.christianscience.com:
 - Christian Science is the same as Scientology, right?
 - No. Other than a similarity in name, the two have nothing in common.
 - Why is it called Christian *Science*?
 - It’s Science because it’s based upon a set of spiritual principles—laws relating to the nature of God and His creation—that can be applied with expected, consistent results.
 - Why do you call yourselves Christian?
 - Because Christian Science is based on the Bible, and Christian Scientists follow the teachings and ministry of Christ Jesus. In fact, the virgin birth, the crucifixion, the resurrection and ascension of Christ Jesus, and so on, are all central to Christian Science theology.
 - Is it true that Christian Scientists don’t take medicine?
 - Generally, a Christian Scientist’s first choice is to rely on prayer for healing, and in most cases, this means that a medical remedy is unnecessary.
There is no biblical or church mandate to forgo medical intervention, nor do Christian Scientists believe that it’s God’s will that anyone suffer or die. A Christian Scientist’s decision to rely on prayer comes from trust, not blind faith, in God, and from a conviction that God’s care continues under every circumstance.
 - What do you do in the case of communicable disease?
 - Christian Scientists care about their neighbors and fellow community members and gladly abide by city and state laws or mandates regarding quarantines, vaccinations, and the like. *The Christian Science Journal*, *Christian Science Sentinel*, and *The Herald of Christian Science* also contain documented healings of communicable diseases and show the role prayer can play, not just in protecting and healing individuals, but in helping communities as well.
 - An adult choosing prayer and not medical help is one thing, but how can you make that decision for a child?
 - Christian Science parents are like any other parents—they love their children and want the very best care for them. They also know they’re under a moral and legal obligation to ensure that their children receive this care. Parents who choose Christian Science treatment for a child do so because they’ve seen the effectiveness of this treatment in their own lives.
 - Why do you lobby for exemptions to health laws that allow you to keep your children from going to doctors?
 - Christian Scientists aren’t seeking exemptions from the law, but accommodations within it. Meaning, they’re trying to ensure that laws provide every citizen a choice of healthcare, including the system of spiritual prayer that Christian Scientists have found to be effective.

- Do Christian Scientists carry health insurance or life insurance?
 - Some have health insurance, and most probably have life insurance. Every Christian Scientist makes his or her own financial and health decisions.
- Is Christian Science the same as a positive thinking?
 - No. Positive thinking relies on the human mind to think or effect a good result. Christian Science starts with God and the conviction that God's goodness embraces each of us, all the time.
- Is Christian Science faith healing?
 - No. Christian Science does not involve pleading with God to heal the sick and then accepting His will, good or bad. Nothing in Christian Science theology says it's God's will that anyone suffer, be sick, or die. Christian Science shows God to be entirely good, and therefore His will for each individual is only health and life.
- Is Christian Science a cult?
 - No. There is no brainwashing, mind control, or blind following of a leader. Christian Scientists do have a deep respect and appreciation for the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy, but they do not worship her.
- There aren't very many of you, are there? Isn't Christian Science pretty much dying out?
 - It's true that there has been a decrease in membership over the past several decades, a widely reported trend in many denominations. At the same time, there's been an increase in dialogue about the power of prayer and a greater interest in spirituality, which is noteworthy—and promising.
- How can you claim "thousands of healings" when in most cases there's no medical diagnosis?
 - There have been many Christian Science healings of conditions that have been medically diagnosed, and many medical confirmations of those healings. However, one does not need a medical diagnosis to know a person was ill and then healthy.
- What would you do if you broke your leg?
 - Many Christian Scientists would tell you that they would instinctively turn to God for healing because they'd seen the effectiveness of this approach in the past. This, however, does not prevent them from having a bone set if they so choose.
The Christian Science Journal, Christian Science Sentinel, and The Herald of Christian Science also contain documented healings of broken bones.
- What is a Christian Science practitioner?
 - Christian Science practitioners are individuals who are self-employed, who have completed a course in spiritual healing given by an authorized teacher of Christian Science, and who devote themselves full time to helping and healing others through prayer. While practitioners do not offer counseling, diagnosis, prognosis, or any physical manipulation or treatment, they do offer Christian Science treatment—as explained in Mary Baker Eddy's book, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*.

- What's involved in Christian Science treatment?
 - Christian Science treatment is the application of spiritual principles—who and what God is and what that means for each individual—to the specifics of any given situation. These spiritual principles, applied, have a tangible effect—restored relationships, financial well-being, physical healing, and so on.
- What do Christian Science nurses do? What are their professional skills and qualifications?
 - Christian Science nurses provide skillful, non-medical physical care for anyone relying on Christian Science for healing. This care includes bathing, dressing wounds, assistance with mobility, feeding, and so forth. Preparation for the professional practice of Christian Science nursing often includes coursework provided by Christian Science nursing organizations, one-to-one training from an experienced Christian Science nurse, and/or experience with facility or private-duty Christian Science nursing.
- Do you believe that Jesus is the same as God?
 - No. But Christian Scientists do believe that Jesus stands alone in his mission and purpose as the promised Messiah. Christian Science teaches that Jesus embodied the divinity of God but that he himself was not Deity—in keeping with Jesus' own words that he was not the Father, and that God, the Father, alone should be worshiped.
- What is the Christian Science view of God?
 - You'll find a thorough answer to this question in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. But, just for example, you might hear Christian Scientists refer to God as Father-Mother, as divine Love, or as infinite Mind.
- How do you explain all the suffering going on in the world?
 - The desire of every Christian Scientist is to see the suffering in the world alleviated, and Christian Scientists take encouragement from Jesus' example in healing even the most extreme suffering. He overcame poverty, hunger, severe weather, even incurable mental and physical maladies—and he promised his followers they could do the same.
- Do Christian Scientists believe in heaven and hell?
 - Not as places or as part of an afterlife, but certainly as a state of mind. Christian Science theology does not include a final judgment day. Every day each individual can make a new choice that determines the path he or she is on—a path away from God or towards Him.
- What is the Christian Science view of homosexuality?
 - Christian Science sets out a high moral ideal when it comes to human relationships and sex. It accepts the Ten Commandments and teachings of Christ Jesus on these subjects. The book that explains Christian Science says that sex should be limited to marriage, and that marriage is “the legal and moral provision for generation among humankind.” At the same time, Christian Science acknowledges that all of us have a lot of growing to do to reach the standard of pure spiritual love that Christ Jesus taught and lived. It encourages us to be as free as possible from judging each other, while still supporting each individual's moral and spiritual progress. Christian Science affirms the spiritual identity that we all have from God. We believe this can bring healing to individuals and to society as a whole.

- Does the Church have a position on abortion?
 - The Church trusts its members' humble, soul-searching prayers to guide them to the steps that are nearest right for them in this situation. In most cases, Christian Scientists approach issues regarding their bodies and health with prayer instead of seeking medical solutions. Women and men who face such a difficult decision deserve compassion and support. For society as a whole, the tragedy of so many unwanted pregnancies outside of marriage can point to the need for a deeper acceptance of the moral precepts that protect human happiness and stabilize society. Christian Scientists hold a deep conviction that the more we understand life to be wholly spiritual, the more we'll find healing answers to even the most challenging personal and social problems, including this one.
- Do you pay any attention to problems like poverty, racism, genocide, famine, etc?
 - These are terrible problems that need addressing, and this is the reason Mary Baker Eddy founded the newspaper *The Christian Science Monitor*—to alert the world to these problems and to invite solutions. *The Christian Science Journal*, *Christian Science Sentinel*, and *The Herald of Christian Science*, along with Churches of Christ, Scientist, regularly offer healing responses to these problems as well as ideas to help each individual address them through prayer.
- Where is your church?
 - The First Church of Christ, Scientist, also known as The Mother Church, is located in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. There are over 1,700 branch churches and societies throughout the world.
- What are your church services like?
 - Many people attending a Christian Science church service for the first time will recognize many familiar elements—hymns, prayer, readings from the Bible, a warm sense of fellowship. One unique feature is that we don't have personal preachers or pastors conducting the services. Instead, two lay readers conduct services that are based on Bible Lessons published in *The Christian Science Quarterly*. These lessons are made up of passages from the Bible and *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* and address topics such as God, Christ Jesus, and so forth. There is a simplicity to the services that is very much in keeping with the earliest Christian gatherings where love and healing were at the heart of worship.
 - There are also mid-week testimony meetings held every Wednesday when the congregation meets for an hour to pray, share readings based again on the Bible, and to give thanks for the blessings and healing experiences that have resulted from their prayers and from their study of Christian Science.

Sacred Texts

- Eddy's book *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* is the authoritative text in Christian Science, though Christian Science claims to be in line with the Bible

- Christian Science says that the Bible must be interpreted through the higher and final revelation of Eddy's *Science and Health*

Jesus

- Christian Science does not believe that Jesus is God
- Eddy tried to make a distinction between "Jesus" and "The Christ" as if they were two separate entities
- Christian Science agrees with the traditional Christian teaching that Jesus was born to a virgin named Mary and that Jesus was resurrected from the dead
- However, Christian Scientists hold the position that the resurrection of Jesus is evidence of a person's ability to overcome the deceptions of the physical life, most aptly demonstrated in the illusion of death
- Christian Science rejects the doctrines of sin, evil, and, by extension, the need for Jesus to atone for the mistakes of all people
- Jesus did not die as the appointed Messiah
- Jesus died because the human condition is given to the illusion of physical death
- However, he is worshiped as "the Christ" because his resurrection represents the ideal that is possible to all people

Heaven, Hell, Salvation, the Soul

- Since to the Christian Scientist there is no such thing as sin, salvation in the biblical sense is totally unnecessary
- There is really no harmonious teaching in Christian Science concerning salvation (Eddy is actually quoted as saying that salvation is "sin, sickness, and death destroyed," but also claims these things don't really exist)

A Response

- Christian Science is not Christian because every important doctrine of historic Christianity is rejected by Christian Science
- Mainline Christianity teaches that every person is born to earthly parents, and will die at a time established beforehand by God
- The physical life is real, just as the spiritual life
- Christianity worships Jesus as the Christ not because of his idyllic representation, but because he is God in flesh and died to satisfy God's angry judgment against the sin of all people
- When Jesus was resurrected, he overcame death and demonstrated his power to forgive the offenses of all people who would believe
- Christianity teaches that hope is found not in the prayer to overcome physical deceptions like sickness and death, but in trusting by faith that Jesus overcame them with his death on a cross and offers eternal life to anyone who would believe in him

- Christian Scientists claim that healings using Christian Science methods “prove” that Christian Science is authentic. Compare Exodus 7:11-12, 22 and Matthew 7:22-23, which clearly show that false prophets could perform miracles and lead people away from God
- The Bible clearly states that Jesus is God
- Christian Science denies the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus, whereas the central truth of the gospel is that Jesus died and was raised as a substitute and an atonement for the world
- Christian Science and Christianity are not at all the same
- Eddy said, “the sick are not healed merely by declaring there is no sickness, but by knowing that there is none.” However, the Bible teaches that sickness—both physical and spiritual—is very real, and Christ is the great physician (Mt. 4, Lk. 4)

Sources:

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The Kingdom of the Cults by Walter Martin

www.christianscience.com