

How Did We Get Here?

by Don and Joy Velnot

Many a driver has had the experience of driving along, listening to music, and losing oneself in thought, and then “waking up” to the realization they are on a different road than they had been on. Wait a minute! How did I get here? That’s easy to answer. You drove quite a few miles while lost in reverie, made some turns, passed some stoplights, and were basically oblivious to all the scenery flying by.

Christians today sometimes look up from our busy lives and have a similar feeling. How did we get here? How did it happen that babies can be partially born and then heinously murdered and their bodies harvested for “parts?” How can people be seriously debating such unthinkable issues (at least as compared to a few years ago) as homosexual marriage or human cloning? When did children start murdering children? When did they start teaching out and out pagan philosophy in our schools? When did it become wrong to say anything is wrong? And that’s just our culture.

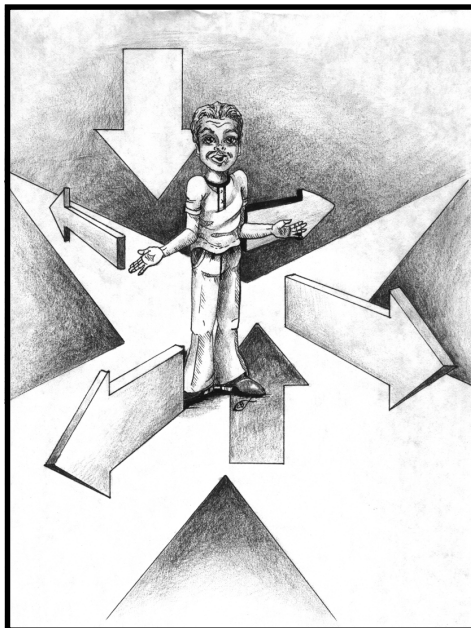
We also can become startled when we suddenly notice what is going on in the church. Divorce rates are high, homosexual ministers are being ordained, many people are chasing after emotional experiences without seeming to care that Christian doctrine is under attack at every turn, political scoundrels are excused and even sometimes defended by supposed men of the cloth. What is going on? *How did things change so quickly? How did we get here?*

And of course, the answer is that it didn’t happen suddenly at all. We made some turns, we passed some stoplights, and we didn’t notice the scenery changing as time sped by. In this article, we are going to try to identify some of the markers we may have missed on our journey to the here and now.

How Secular Humanism Took Over America

Dr. Norman L. Geisler has an excellent message titled, “How

Secular Humanism Took Over America.” In it, he chronicles the birth of our nation and certain events which have led us to today’s culture. An element Dr. Geisler does not address in his message, which is pertinent to our study, is where was the church through all of this? With his permission, I will use his outline and add the other side of the equation that has brought us to where we are today.



In 1776, the United States of America’s *Declaration of Independence* was ratified and signed. In the second paragraph it reads,

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”

With these important 35 words, America’s “birth certificate” affirms we are all created beings (which assumes a Creator) and acknowledges the rights we have come from Him.

It should come as no surprise that reason and faith were intimately woven together in the lives of America’s founding fathers.

Christians traditionally have been the great thinkers, artists, musicians, poets, scientists, etc., throughout Christian history, and the influence of this tradition was felt in the late 1700s as well. Intellectual and spiritual pursuits went hand in hand. Public and private prayer were as important as public and private debate.

The Age of Reason

But this doesn’t mean the United States of America was necessarily founded as a “Christian” nation. Christianity had a strong influence among the founders, even though some of them were deists who denied the miracles of Scripture. While they believed God created everything that exists, and that we would ultimately stand before Him to

(Continued on next page)

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"... Get Here" (Continued from page 1)

account for our actions, a few went so far as to speak out against the Bible (e.g., Thomas Paine's book, *The Age of Reason*). The new government secured and protected freedom of worship partially because of the oppressiveness of the European state church system, but also because voices already were being raised questioning whether Christianity was the only true faith.

Despite the propaganda of recent myth-makers, the period extending from the American Revolution to the beginning of the nineteenth century was, in reality, a period of steep decline for the church in both North America and Europe. Church attendance was at an all-time low, and many churches that survived were in the process of abandoning their commitment to the Scriptures. The corrosive influence of Enlightenment philosophy pervaded America's institutions of higher learning, turning thousands of young minds against the Gospel. Public morals had reached low-ebb, and some even wondered out loud whether Christianity itself would survive much longer.

Spiritually speaking, this new nation started down a very unsteady and uncertain course that would require divine intervention and correction. Fortunately, God remembered the spiritual faithfulness of the early colonial settlers and sent the Second Great Awakening in the early 1800s. If He had not intervened, today's America would look very different indeed from the one with which we're familiar.

We can be thankful God's mercy and the Christian roots of American culture helped her weather these early storms. But seeds of Secular Humanism were sown during that period and would bear bitter fruit in our times.

History has taught us to expect such a great revival as the Second Great Awakening would be followed by a period of spiritual chaos, as Satan vigorously countered the move of God with a move of his own. Hence the nineteenth century gave birth to many false "Christian" movements propagating many newly minted false gospels.

Cult Explosion

It was a period marked by the "democratization" of religious belief—a time of folks doing spiritually what was right in their own eyes and following whatever spiritual fads and gurus that appealed to them. Indisputably, there was much "spiritual" fervor during this period, but "spirituality" does not necessarily have anything to do with the Christian faith. The schools of the higher critics had begun "demythologizing" the Scriptures—separating the faith from "the book" that had

acted as its anchor throughout the centuries. Mystical pied pipers were more than willing to fill the void left by a gradual abandonment of the fundamentals of the faith.

In 1830, a young Occultist, treasure seeker, and teller of tall tales by the name of Joseph Smith published a book now known as the *Book of Mormon*. Spiritism, although condemned in the Bible, had become popularly accepted, so Smith's claims of visits from "Heavenly Father" and Jesus were received without difficulty by some.

A few years later, in 1843, a Baptist minister by the name of William Miller believed he had discerned the actual date for the return of Christ. Many of Miller's followers (known as *Adventists*) sold their possessions and awaited Christ's arrival at the predicted time. It didn't happen. Miller then "realized" his calculations had been "off" by a year, so he and most of his followers geared up for the new date of Christ's arrival—which passed without incident. This false prophecy became known as "The Great Disappointment" for obvious reasons.

Out of the ashes of "The Great Disappointment" came yet another new sect. A young Adventist woman by the name of Ellen Harmon (later to become Ellen G. White) claimed she had received a revelation from God to the effect that Miller's date had been correct after all—only the expected event was wrong! According to White, 1844 was the date Christ entered and cleansed the sanctuary. Though she offered no proof for her assertion, many of the "greatly disappointed" attached themselves to her. This movement became known as the Seventh-day Adventist Church and had its formal beginning in 1863. Ellen White had also "received revelation" that Sunday worship was the "mark of the beast" and true Christians must keep the Sabbath and worship on Saturday.

The Adventist movement, started by William Miller in the 1840's, continued to split into numerous competing sects. Charles Taze Russell founded one of these Adventist "cousins" in the 1870's. He broke with his Second Adventist mentor, Nelson Barbour, and began publishing *Zion's Watchtower* in 1879. He had already rejected much of the Christian faith and claimed—as Joseph Smith and Ellen G. White had claimed before him—that he was "restoring" the true Christian faith. He was a religious eclectic who borrowed doctrines from various Occult thinkers of his day and mixed them all together with run-of-the-mill Adventism to create his new "Bible Student" movement. He adopted such Occult/pagan ideas as pyramidology,

phrenology (purporting to prove a man's character by the shape of his brain), and various other mystical and occult teachings. He also predicted the year of Christ's return (1914) which, of course, failed and proved Russell was a false prophet. Russell believed and taught *he* was God's channel, and that it was necessary to study his books to gain a true understanding of spiritual things. Today, the group Russell founded has been splintered into hundreds of different sects. Of these, the largest is the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, popularly known as Jehovah's Witnesses.

A New Age of Age-old Mysticism

In 1875, a metaphysical movement called the Theosophical Society was founded by Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. This mystic taught God's wisdom is found in all religions—with the possible exception of biblical Christianity. Her disdain of Christianity is very apparent in this statement,

"The name has been used in a manner so intolerant and dogmatic, especially in our day, that Christianity is now the religion of arrogance, par excellence, a stepping-stone for ambition, a sinecure for wealth, sham, and power; a convenient screen for hypocrisy."¹

Science and Health, by Mary Baker Eddy (another religious mystic), was also published in 1875. Eight years later, in 1883, the *Key to the Scriptures* was added. Essentially, Eddy taught Hinduism using Christian terminology. She taught life is an illusion—that there is no physical world—and, therefore, no such thing as sickness. Any symptoms of illness one experienced were merely a problem in thinking. Of course, it was claimed this teaching came from God—that Eddy was merely a channel of the information to mankind. The Church of Christ, Scientist (a.k.a. Christian Science) was founded in 1879 in Charlestown, Massachusetts.

Another "mind-science" group began in 1889. Called simply Modern Thought, it was started under Charles and Myrtle Fillmore and borrowed heavily from New Thought and Christian Science. In 1890 the name was changed to *Christian Science Thought*, then simply to *Thought* in 1891, and renamed in 1895 as *Unity*, and is now known as the *Unity School of Christianity*. Hence, there is good evidence they gave a lot of *thought to their name*, if nothing else.

These were just several among scores of strange new religious movements, aberrations and cults that either sprang from America's own spiritual soil or opportunistically invaded it from overseas during the nineteenth century. Christians were not the only ones concerned about some of these movements. Samuel Clemens (a.k.a. Mark Twain), for example, expressed alarm at the growing financial and political clout of Christian Science. And early Illinois residents rose up against the misdeeds² of their Mormon neighbors. Joseph Smith was jailed and eventually killed in an exchange of gunfire with an enraged mob.

Atheism Goes Mainstream

On the philosophical front, in 1848, the *Communist Manifesto*, by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, was published. These individuals took an essentially materialistic view of life. In their view, man is really in control of his own destiny and had made remarkable progress in controlling the forces of nature and growing toward his creative potential. It was a well-constructed view and Marx, a formidable polemicist, argued his points with vigor.

In 1859, eleven years later, Charles Darwin published his work—*On the Origin of Species*. The first printing sold out the first day of publication. At this juncture, the religious and scientific communities began to part ways. Naturalistic materialism was displacing the Biblical account of origins. Suddenly, faith and reason seemed to be mutually exclusive ideas. Darwin applied his view to humans in 1871, and

Darwinian Evolution rocked the world. For many, it utterly changed the view of our place in the world, and indeed, our place in the universe, and the hereafter.

Friedrich Nietzsche, although an Atheist himself, realized the moral implications inherent in a universe without God. In his work *The Gay Science* (sec. 125), he penned the words,

"God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him! How shall we console ourselves, the most murderous of all murderers? The holiest and the mightiest that the world has hitherto possessed, has bled to death under our knife - who will wipe the blood from us?"

Nietzsche realized if there is no God to Whom we are accountable and to Whom we owe obedience, then all things are permissible. There really is no right or wrong, good or evil in such a universe—there is just predator and prey.

Dis-harmonic Convergence

As we have already pointed out, this was also a period when theological liberalism and spiritistic occultism were competing with Christianity for the allegiance of mankind. The Scriptures had been under attack by the schools of higher critics for some time, and more and more they were being viewed as myth and fable to be believed only by the uneducated and fearful.

Perhaps if it had been Atheism alone, or Occultism alone, or Liberalism alone, or the explosion of religious cults alone that the church had to face, it may have put up a better fight. But with the convergence of all of these at the same point in time, vast inroads were made against the truth of the Gospel. When the light of the Gospel grows dim in any society, darkness takes over. Little could anyone have imagined, however, that these nineteenth century religious and secular philosophies would leave their bloody footprints all over the twentieth century.

Christians occasionally defended their faith against these new religious movements and atheistic philosophical ideas that were proliferating, but the response of the Church was largely haphazard and uncoordinated. By the end of the nineteenth century, Christians had managed to forge many interdenominational alliances in such important areas as evangelism (e.g., D.L. Moody's ministry) and youth work (e.g., the YMCA). Yet, any major united efforts among Christians to "***earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints***" (Jude 3) was, perhaps, 50 to 60 years away from being realized. Meanwhile, major historical events were on the horizon — events many Christians would misinterpret as a signal to withdraw from interaction with society and culture altogether and complacently await the Second Coming.

Ushering in the Kingdom

As the nineteenth century came to a close, times were good. Many people both inside and outside the church believed the world was witnessing the dawn of a "Golden Age." They could point to marvelous technological advances—railroads, steamboats, electric motors, the telegraph and telephone, refrigeration, the light bulb—and a host of other inventions that were beginning to greatly raise the standard of living. Everyone became convinced even greater marvels were right around the corner. The 1800s had given birth to mass communication, rapid transit, and the domestication of electricity for human use. It gave us breakthroughs in astronomy, medicine, physics, and just about every science you can name. Why would anyone doubt that soon cures for every disease would be found along with solutions for the age-old problems of poverty and war?

The general optimism of the age fueled the popularity of "postmillennialism"—the belief (held by many Christians) the church

(Continued on next page)

“... Get Here” (Continued from page 3)

would soon usher in the long-awaited Millennium followed by Christ's return to accept His Kingdom. Liberal Christians carried aloft by that same optimism believed the twentieth century would be “the Christian Century” in which their “gospel” of the “universal fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man” would spread throughout the world, resulting in global peace and harmony. They even began publishing a magazine named *The Christian Century*, which has somehow survived the twentieth century's global wars and holocausts and is published under that same name today. The “Christian Century” produced atrocities on a scale never imagined by these hopeful humanists. To say their optimism about human nature was misplaced would be an understatement indeed.

Christians in Retreat

Nevertheless, beneath the surface of all this burgeoning and near-delirious optimism, there was ample reason for concern among Bible-believing Christians. Far from a global embracing of the Christian Gospel, the world was rapidly turning to mysticism and the Occult to fill its spiritual need. The Scriptures were being further undermined by the higher critics. The Christian doctrine of origins was under attack by the scientific community. Atheistic philosophers had become the intellectual elite. Schools of higher learning, such as Harvard, Yale, and others—originally founded to train ministers—had long since abandoned the Christian faith and, indeed, seemed hell-bent to destroy it. Christians generally had no well-developed intellectual response to defend their faith against these challenges and so gradually began retreating from culture.

In 1893, the first Parliament of the World's Religions was held in Chicago. It was predominantly a Christian event, but a very articulate individual from India by the name of Swami Vivekananda made quite a favorable impression upon the assembly. East met West as Hinduism had now officially made its way to America. Vivekananda captured the minds and hearts of those attending. Hinduism and Darwinian evolution (which was being more commonly accepted) are very compatible belief systems. Darwinism asserts *physical evolution* through change and adaptation from lower forms of life to higher forms of life; Hinduism asserts *spiritual evolution* from lower forms of life to higher forms of life through reincarnation.

In an effort to address these attacks on the faith, R.A. Torrey edited a five-volume work published in 1909 titled simply, *The Fundamentals*. Christians who rejected theological liberalism and affirmed the cardinal truths delineated in these books came to be known as “Fundamentalists.” In its early days, Fundamentalism was a broad-based movement of generally well-educated pastors, theologians, and lay people from a variety of denominational backgrounds. They disagreed over many things, but they shared a high view of the Bible as God's inerrant Word and a willingness to engage secular culture on issues essential to the Christian faith.

While *The Fundamentals* contains some flawed essays, it also preserves evidence that at the dawn of the twentieth century, there were still conservative Christians who could think deeply and articulate clearly on intellectual matters important to the Gospel. It was also a hopeful sign Christians could unite to carry out the biblically mandated defense of the faith.

Postmillennialists may have taken this as yet another hopeful sign that the Millennium was imminent—error was now being refuted! However, with the incredible destruction, carnage, and human suffering brought about by the Great War (known today as World War I) only a few years later (1914-18), the postmillennial hopes of both conservative and liberal Christians were dashed. Europe—the continent with the world's most concentrated assortment of “Christian nations”—had

slaughtered 10-million of its own in a four-year bloodbath in which every invention that supposedly heralded the Millennium had been pressed into murderous service. Plowshares had been beaten into swords; pruning hooks into spears. By the time the U.S. had entered the fray, words like “atrocious,” “trench warfare,” and even “genocide” had already become familiar words in the American vocabulary.

The Ascension of Dispensationalism

By 1920, the optimistic, classic theological liberalism of the nineteenth century was dead, but so was optimistic, conservative Christianity. While dejected liberals turned to such fresh theological developments as Karl Barth's “Neo-Orthodoxy,” many conservative Christians (by now sometimes called Fundamentalists) turned away from postmillennialism and toward the premillennial view which denied the church would ever usher in the Millennium. Sobered by the lessons learned of the depths of human evil, many now believed things would only get worse and worse until Christ Himself came to intervene in a global Armageddon. Most who held this view called themselves “dispensationalists.” Prior to the catastrophe of World War I, postmillennialists had scoffed at dispensational premillennialists for their pessimistic outlook. Not anymore—the tables had turned.

One of the things postmillennialists feared would happen if dispensationalism spread throughout the church was that Christians would give up trying to improve the world around them and withdraw from society in general. Such isolationism was by no means an essential feature of dispensationalism, but some of the more extreme elements in that movement displayed those tendencies and justified the fears of the postmillennialists to an unfortunate extent.

A considerable number of dispensationalists, though certainly not all, reasoned if society was only going to deteriorate until Christ returned, why waste time, energy, and resources to effect only limited, short-term betterment? Why get involved in civic affairs such as the public school system? Why dirty our hands in the political arena or run for public office? Why debate with Atheists or try to reach out to cultists with an apologetic for the faith? The ship was going down. So, as far as some were concerned, dispensationalism had provided for many a theological basis for complete withdrawal from “this present evil age.”

Of course, not all conservative Christians, dispensational or otherwise, were convinced this was the right path to take, but in the mid-1920s, a media event would cause most Fundamentalists to beat a hasty retreat from engagement with society in the cause of the Gospel.

A Pivotal Event

By this juncture, Darwinian Evolution had made great strides in science and education and was moving quickly into every aspect of cultural thinking. To stem the tide and protect its young people from this anti-Christian notion, the state of Tennessee passed a law forbidding the teaching of evolution in school. The ACLU—ever the champion of the “oppressed”—advertised to find a teacher willing to step forward and challenge the law in court. A part-time teacher, John Scopes, took the step. Looking back, the 1925 trial was probably more hype than anything else and served primarily to get the town of Dayton, Tennessee on the map. The textbook John Scopes was using would be an extreme embarrassment to enlightened Humanists of our day, teaching as it did that blacks are the lowest form of evolved humans while Caucasian Europeans were the highest forms of humanity. Today, such blatant racism is in ill repute.

The theatre of the event was the main attraction to the masses—it was billed as a clash of titans. William Jennings Bryan came to town to defend the law; Clarence Darrow to argue the law was unconstitutional. In reality, of course, this battle was not really fought over science or law. It was fought over competing faiths—

the Darwinist's faith in the Theory of Evolution versus the Christian's faith in God and the Bible, and the stakes were high. The ultimate winner would be the one to set (or upset) the moral boundaries for the nation and the world. For approximately 1700 years, Christianity had been the predominant worldview, but the world was about to witness "the changing of the guard."

Ironically, during the Scopes trial, Clarence Darrow argued it would be sheer bigotry to teach only one view of origins—ironic in light of the fact Darwinists today demand we only teach one view of origins—theirs. But that's another subject for another day.

The Christian "side" prevailed in the trial, but the battle for the minds of the succeeding generations was only beginning, and the church was ill prepared for the fight. The young would be the target; "intellectual acceptance" would be the bait. In the course of time, many young people who were raised in Christian or nominally Christian homes were sent to the universities, where they were taught to *abandon* the faith in which they were raised and embrace the "thinking man's" faith of Secular Humanism and Darwinian evolution.

Phillip Johnson in his excellent book, *The Wedge of Truth*, tells of one such individual, Philip Wentworth, who entered Harvard in 1924. Johnson points out that in 1932 the *Atlantic Monthly* published Wentworth's essay *What College Did to My Religion*. Johnson himself entered Harvard in 1957 and writes,

"We both encountered an institution that had long ago abandoned its origins as a seminary for Christian ministers and was pursuing its current naturalistic faith with at least as much confidence as the seventeenth-century Puritans had once had in the providence of God. Wentworth says he came to Harvard with a strong Christian faith, which was then (to his surprise) undermined by the education he received there."³

Christians Leave Academia

Despite the fact old-line theological liberalism was in disarray and decline after World War I, it retained its hold on American institutions of higher learning by effectively shutting conservative views out of higher education. Fundamentalists responded in kind to protect their flock, differing only in technique. What liberals had accomplished through the political manipulation of the academy, Fundamentalists accomplished through sheer authoritarianism. Christian young people would be kept "safe," not by training Christian youth to respond intellectually to the liberal arguments, but by keeping them out of liberal universities. Thus, liberal views simply would not be heard except as they were filtered through Fundamentalist polemics. Certainly no dialogue between the two camps would be encouraged.

As a result, the 1930s witnessed the isolation, intellectual stagnation, and ideological hardening of the "Fundamentalist Movement." What began as an attempt to bring Christians back to the fundamentals of the faith and stem the tide of apostasy, now forsook altogether the notion of challenging culture and answering the attacks on the faith. Christians, having abandoned the institutions of higher learning, started a sort of "Christians only" college and university system called the Bible College Movement. Over the next 10-15 years, about 200 Bible Colleges were founded. Frequently, these schools merely indoctrinated Christian young people, teaching them *what* to think instead of *how* to think. By and large they abandoned academic scholarship and replaced intellectual pursuit with an authoritarian approach to higher education.

And Then Along Came John

Just as Fundamentalists were climbing down into their cultural manholes and pulling the covers over their heads, seeds of radical

social change were being sown. In 1933, John Dewey authored the *Humanist Manifesto*. In it, he argued there is no Creator, no creation, and no moral absolutes. This was a sharp departure from the birth certificate of the nation—the *Declaration of Independence*—which affirmed belief in all three. In 1934, Dewey authored the book titled, *A Common Faith*, in which he further argued for abortion, euthanasia, and for the aggressive teaching of these views.

Social Darwinism was flourishing, largely unchecked by the Christian community. Social Darwinists believed the human race could be perfected through genetics and selective breeding. Adolph Hitler was a Social Darwinist who loathed Christianity as a religion of the weak and hoped to help evolution produce the ideal man through "purifying the gene pool," murdering both physical and racial "inferiors" to allow the superior Aryan "superman" to evolve. Many Americans do not realize eugenics (as this "selective breeding" program is called) was not really a new idea in the 1930's, nor was it confined to evil Nazis in Germany. The Nazis had the ruthless leaders with the power to turn these ugly and evil ideas into legally sanctioned murder, but the German eugenicists borrowed the theory from America and England where these ideas were born.

American Feminist leader Victoria Woodhull, who in 1872 became the first woman to be nominated for president by a political party, stated,

"Thus society, while expending millions in the care of incurables and imbeciles, takes little heed of or utterly ignores those laws by the study and obedience of which such human abortions might have been prevented from cumbering society with their useless and unwelcome presence. Grecian and Roman civilizations were, it is true, deficient in the gentler virtues, the excess of which in our day is hindering the progress of the race rather than helping or ennobling it. They, by crushing out the diseased and imperfect plants in the garden of humanity, attained to a vigor and physical development which has never been equated since. And in so doing they were entirely in accord with nature, whose mandate is inexorable, that the "fittest" only shall be permitted to live and propagate. She is a very prodigal in her waste of individual life, in order that the species be without sport or blemish.

Not so our modern civilization, which rather pets its abortions and weaklings, and complacently permits them to procreate another race of fools and pigmies as inane and useless as themselves."⁴

Margaret Sanger, greatly honored today as the founder of Planned Parenthood, pushed the eugenics idea even further than had past adherents. As a devout Humanist and evolutionist, she advocated the elimination of "inferior" human beings such as the poor and minorities. Their problems, in her view, weighed down society and held back the superior human stock—the wealthier and supposedly more highly evolved white race.

"She bluntly defined 'birth control,' a term she coined, as 'the process of weeding out the unfit' aimed at 'the creation of a superman.' She often opined that 'the most merciful thing that the large family does to one of its infant members is to kill it,' and that 'all our problems are the result of overbreeding among the working class.'

Sanger frequently featured racists and eugenicists in her magazine, the *Birth Control Review*. Contributor Lothrop Stoddard, who also served on Sanger's board of directors, wrote in "The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy" that "[w]e must resolutely oppose both Asiatic permeation of white race-areas and Asiatic inundation of those non-white, but equally non-Asiatic regions inhabited by the really inferior races."⁵

(Continued on next page)

“... Get Here” (Continued from page 5)

“Roots” of Black Liberal Theology

It would be wonderful to report racial discrimination and segregation were not a problem within the church—that God’s people would never have allowed such obviously (to us) unchristian and patently unfair thinking and practice to hold uncontested sway in their midst, but sadly, they did. It is always easy (and usually unfair) to judge the ignorance of the past by present-day enlightenment. It was, it would seem, a blind spot rather than a consciously malicious way of thinking. We dare not harshly judge those who were of another time, because, for all we know, we may be judging people who were, in many ways, better persons than we are. But we can judge what took place. The ignorant and virulent racism that stains our past was cruel and immoral—a dark seed sown that has reaped the whirlwind both socially and within the church, doing terrible damage to the wonderful Christian unity that might have been, should have been, but may never be. How tragic—what a waste! Blacks were excluded from the “Christian only” Bible colleges and universities that had shamefully turned out to be for “white Christians only.” A few years later, blacks who were to be trained for the ministry went to the schools that *would* accept and even provide scholarships to them—the liberal institutions which had been utterly abandoned by the church and which were in the business of destroying the true faith. This gave birth in the 1960s to a new black liberal theology, or as Dr. Jerry Buckner puts it, “The Cult of Black Liberal Theology.” This development has not turned out to be any better for society or the church than the racial segregation of old, since it has become another seemingly insurmountable wall of division among those who should be working in harmony to preach the Gospel to a lost world.

The Neo Harold

By the late 1940s, several Christians came to realize the previous two decades of an increasingly narrow brand of Fundamentalism had produced a very rigid, inflexible, and academically poor church. They realized, not only hadn’t they reached the world for Christ, the church was steadily losing influence. Eventually, as many Fundamentalists publicly identified themselves with questionable issues such as opposition to new Bible translations or became vocal supporters of racial segregation, tensions began to rise within Fundamentalism. Many who originally identified with the movement either abandoned it or kept very quiet about their affiliation. The promising start Fundamentalism exhibited at the beginning of the twentieth century was now becoming intellectually backward and academically ingrown as the movement steadily marginalized itself within society.

Many conservative Christians felt there were only two choices: stay where they were and endure parochialism (and even paranoia) or compromise their convictions on Scripture by joining a liberal church.

In 1947, Harold Ockenga (pastor of Park Street Church in Boston, MA) preached a sermon titled, “A New Evangelicalism.” His desire was to bring the church out of the fortress mentality in which they were now trapped by recovering the spiritual dynamic of the evangelical movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Even though these new evangelicals still considered themselves Fundamentalists, Fundamentalist hard-liners almost immediately began accusing this new group of compromise and disdainfully labeled them “neo-evangelicals.”

Keepers of Rules

By 1950, conservative Christians had become more defined by a particular set of “do’s” and “don’ts” than by answering the “what’s” and “why’s” of their beliefs. Their world had become neatly divided into “the black hats” and “the white hats”—the good folks and the bad.

The anti-intellectual faith of the Christian community had pretty much been distilled into a set of dress and behavioral codes. “The rules” stated clearly Christian men must have short hair, women must always wear dresses. No one could listen to music with a “jungle beat” or go to movies. And of course, no good Christian would “drink, smoke, chew, or date girls that do.” These issues are primarily external and represent a very Americanized form of Christianity. The Biblical teaching that a Christian should be salt and light in a dark world had largely been eroded from the faith.

The Times, They Are a’Changin’

Little did these Christians know they were riding the cusp of a huge societal rebellion, a rebellion that would shake their isolated world. Their moral, ethical, and behavioral rules, largely respected and somewhat emulated by even the secular society of the 1950’s, came to represent “the establishment” that had to be toppled, and the rules that had to be broken in a quest to create “the perfect world.”

To say Fundamentalists mounted no serious concerted response to these monumental cultural paradigm shifts is an awesome understatement. Many were too busy fighting the bogey of encroaching Modernism to notice the vast changes that were about to burst on the scene, that their children and grandchildren would be facing when they came of age. They would not, however, be able to keep their heads in the sand much longer. Along with the skyrocketing birthrate of the “Baby Boom” came mounting fears about a generation that was being raised in a “permissive society” and seemed to be getting out of control.

At this point, Darwinism and Secular Humanism had dominated education in the universities for nearly 30 years. The educators graduated attorneys, judges, politicians, not to mention teachers, and university professors who were fairly well schooled in Socialism and intent on creating a new Utopia for mankind. Over the previous 30 years, the country had lived on the borrowed capital of Christian morals or what has been called a Christian hangover. The “hangover” was about to wear off.

In 1961, the Supreme Court ruled Secular Humanism a religion. Indeed, it is a religion—one in direct conflict with the founding document of the United States. In 1962, after a 300-year tradition, the Supreme Court banned prayer from the public classroom. In 1968, the Supreme Court ruled the teaching of evolution *could not* be banned from school. These decisions rocked the Christian community—the world they had wanted to ignore was invading their sanctuary, forcing them to pay attention. From the Christian perspective, all went downhill from there. The explosive Roe vs. Wade decision (that legalized abortion) would be handed down in another five years.

The early 1960s brought The Beatles from England. After becoming the most successful rock musicians in the western world, they went east in search of spiritual enlightenment. They were quite instrumental in popularizing Hinduism and eastern thought with the current crop of college students. And there were a lot of college students—by 1967, fully one-half of the U.S. population was less than 21 years old—and, by 1968, it had become frighteningly obvious during the anti-war protests how much damage these youths could do! The assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Robert F. Kennedy, as well as the notorious crimes like the “hippie” Manson murders added to the social turmoil and to the fears of traditional and law-abiding Americans. The decade of the 1960s became the crossroad intersection with no stop signs where the competing worldviews and philosophies were about to collide.

Generational Conflict

It would be unfair to caricature the whole of the '60s as one, long, hippie love-in. In the early '60s, youth rebellion had pretty much been limited to the occasional street and motorcycle gang. With a president who mirrored their own youthful idealism, this generation exchanged their Mickey Mouse ears for membership in the Peace Corps, and the future was full of hope. Young people believed they were able to isolate American political demons and send Freedom Riders to exorcise them. But, with the President John F. Kennedy assassination, youthful idealism began to fade, and with the troop buildup in Vietnam, it seemed ready to disappear altogether.

It helps to remember the discovery of the German concentration camps and the Jewish Holocaust was only about 20-years old back then. And the post-World War II, Nuremberg, war-crimes trials had left the world to ponder the haunting refrain that was used to justify more than ten-million, savage murders: "We were only following orders." In light of this monumental horror, it was only natural the next generation should recoil from the dangers of unquestioned authority.

Added to this was the rediscovery of America's own heritage of civil disobedience for the cause of liberty and justice—which re-established a place of honor for protest and the confrontation of seemingly abusive authority in American life. The previous decades of cultivation in the institutions of higher learning were able to witness the maturing of their views. By all accounts, the "Free Speech Movement" on the campus of Berkeley [CA] University in 1964 (a symbol of student protest in the '60s) was almost a religious experience for those in attendance. The violence that later came to characterize the '60s can be seen as youthful idealism turned angry.

The vast majority of these young people of the '60s were among "the best and brightest" of their time and would have been so in any generation before or since. But, their parents reasoned, if tomorrow's leaders were brawling with the local "fuzz" in Chicago, blowing up college buildings, burning draft cards, inciting riots, taking drugs, challenging traditional sexual morality, listening to raucous music, and making a general nuisance of themselves, what hope was there for the future? Shaking off the vestiges of society's "Christian hangover," all traditional moral values were questioned by the young and summarily discarded in favor of the new moral values spurred on by youthful idealism and Marxist philosophy. While the WW2 generation was thrown completely off guard and didn't know what to think about their offspring's radical bent, the younger generation judged the older generation's "morality" by their new "enlightened" moral system. How could "the older generation" make a claim of morality (the thinking went) when they allowed materialism, racism, sexism, and all those other evil "-isms" to flourish without protest under their watch? New "sins" rapidly replaced the old. Sex before marriage, for example, couldn't be a sin, since it "didn't hurt anybody." But war—for whatever "good" reason—was obviously a SIN!

The older generation's problem in defending their culture was similar to the churches' problem of the past century when their Christian faith began to be challenged by emerging philosophies. Even though the Bible commands believers to be prepared to give a reasoned defense for their faith (1 Pet. 3:15), they had no idea of how to defend it because never in their wildest dreams did they imagine they would *have* to. The walls were high, the fortress was impenetrable. In the same way, the WW2 generation felt American culture and values were safe—they had just recently rescued the world from Nazi Germany, and life was good. In their minds, the superiority of American culture, morals, and worldview was self-evident. Certainly, they never expected to be confronted and condemned by their own children for whom they had

sacrificed and to whom they had handed the world on a platter.

Like A Bad Dream

The 1970s witnessed the fruit of the secularization of the culture over the previous 40 or 50 years. The anti-establishment youth were busy shaking off the shackles of morality and responsibility. Timothy Leary (proponent for the drug "LSD") and others had educated them to reject such Victorian ideas. The judiciary, which had been educated in the secular institutions, decided human life was less valuable than previously believed and passed *Roe vs. Wade*. On the religious front, young folks were busy embracing Eastern Mysticism. The Jesus Movement was born. Calvary Chapel was evangelizing the youth culture on the beaches of California. Bands of roving "Jesus People" traded in suits, ties, and church organs for sandals, tie-dye shirts, and guitars. A new group called The Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts skyrocketed in attendance as founder Bill Gothard taught about the need for authority. Pastor/Professor Gene Getz wrote about the *Measure of the Church* and *The Measure of a Man*. Other churches and pastors were seeking just the right program to stop the hemorrhaging of the pews. Seeing Getz' success, they bought leisure suits, overhead projectors, and barstools. Training Christians to defend the faith and preparing them to confront the culture intellectually was but a distant memory. Instead, the response to the rapidly sinking culture was the founding of the Moral Majority under the Reverend Jerry Falwell. Mark Noll, in his book *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, noted that,

"When faced with a crisis situation, we evangelicals usually do one of two things. We either mount a public crusade, or we retreat into an inner pious sanctum."⁶

We are not saying it is necessarily wrong to mount a crusade concerning public morals, nor are we casting aspersions upon individual piety. We are saying that not enough emphasis is being placed upon the value of truly understanding and *effectively* communicating the faith to the lost in our circle. We need far more teaching on how to make a reasoned defense of the faith, not with placards, but with sound responses to specious arguments against what we believe.

Through the 1980s and 1990s, the new trend was church-growth models. How could we convince the increasingly sophisticated and self-centered populace to come back to the churches? Proper marketing techniques were stressed. Many pastors were trained to be like corporate CEOs—whose job it was to broaden the market base. The "seeker-sensitive" and "purpose-driven" church was born. Again, there is nothing wrong with the church seeking to be "relevant" to the needs of the people in the community or to "meet them where they are." But, if we try too hard not to offend the unchurched, we will have to cloak or "water down" the Gospel, which is, by its claim to be the only way of salvation, highly offensive in our politically correct culture.

Then there is our emphasis on feelings. Too often in the modern church, the idea of loving the Lord your God with all your *mind* has been given the back seat to feeling good about God. There has been a 180-degree turn from, say, the Puritans of the mid-nineteenth century to the third millennium. As J.P. Moreland (Professor of Philosophy, Talbot School of Theology) points out in his excellent book, *Love God With All Your Mind*,

"While generalizations can be misleading, it is safe to say that from the arrival of the Pilgrims to the middle of the nineteenth century, American believers prized the intellectual life for its contribution to the Christian journey. The Puritans were highly educated people (the literacy rate for men in early Massachusetts and Connecticut was between 89 and 95 percent) who founded colleges, taught their children to read and write before the

(Continued on page 14)



CHRISTIAN SCIENCE: Attempting a Comeback

by Linda S. Kramer

Suzanne Buckingham was eaten alive. It began over 20 years ago when a tiny spot appeared on her face. As a member of the Church of Christ, Scientist (CCS), Suzanne believed she could heal the spot by understanding her “true” nature as the perfect, spiritual idea of God. She faithfully held to this idea as the spot grew into a lump and finally developed into a huge, cancerous tumor that engulfed her left eye and part of her mouth. The cancer spread throughout her body, eating her from within as well as consuming much of her face. She spent the last months of her life in bed, clinging to her Christian Science faith as a series of practitioners (professional Christian Science healers) “treated” her with Christian Science prayers and told her that nothing was wrong with her.

Variations on Suzanne’s story have been played out over and over in Christian Science homes, although usually with less obvious drama since most diseases remain hidden within the body. Nevertheless, quiet carnage is a part of the Christian Science culture and has undoubtedly contributed to the mass exodus experienced by the CCS over the past fifty years. While CCS membership stood at over a quarter million during the 1930’s, estimates suggest it has fallen to well under 100,000 at the present time.¹

Why should Christians be concerned about Christian Science if its membership is in decline? There are two compelling answers to this question. First, the Church of Christ, Scientist is trying very hard *not* to expire. Under the leadership of Board of Directors Chairman Virginia Harris, the CCS has embarked on an aggressive, multi-faceted marketing program designed to mainstream itself and to attract new members. One result of the marketing program is that, in 1999, approximately 200,000 copies of *Science and Health* (the Christian Science “textbook”) were sold or distributed – a startling increase over the usual 50,000 to 70,000 copies sold per year.²

A second reason not to ignore Christian Science is that tens of thousands of people have been, or are still being, affected by this religion. An alarming number of former members remain emotionally and spiritually wounded, even as people newly attracted to this religion are being shown only its beautiful side and are usually unaware of its dangers. As Christians, it is important to understand Christian Science so we can minister to the wounded. It is also important to understand both the attractions and pitfalls of the

religion so we can guide seekers away from Christian Science and toward a healthier, biblical set of beliefs.

What Christian Scientists Believe

Christian Scientists identify closely with two verses from the first chapter of Genesis,

“So God created man in his own image ... And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.” (Genesis 1: 27a, 31a, KJV)

Mary Baker Eddy (the founder of Christian Science) interpreted these verses to mean that man is the perfect, spiritual reflection of God. Matter, sin, disease, and death do not exist. Mrs. Eddy’s “Scientific Statement of Being” (read every week from every Christian Science pulpit) begins with,

“There is no life, truth, intelligence, nor substance in matter,” and ends with, “Therefore, man is not material; he is spiritual.”³

A Christian Scientist’s goal is to fully understand both his spiritual nature and the unreality of matter. As he comprehends these “truths,” his experience reflects this understanding in the form of healings and in the overcoming of life’s challenges. Christian Science never really explains where the belief in matter came from or why it seems to exist – it just does (apparently), and therefore, it must be challenged at every turn as it constantly tries to convince us that what we feel, hear, taste, see, and touch are real.

Mrs. Eddy presented Christian Science as a scientific system of healing based upon spiritual laws God (allegedly) had revealed to her. She taught these laws must be followed – without deviation – if a believer wished to practice Christian Science with consistent success. She taught Christian Science cannot be mixed with any other doctrine or spiritual healing system, and that it is incompatible with medicine.

To the Christian Scientist, the vast misconception that matter exists is summed up by the term “mortal mind.”⁴ We live, receive pleasure, and suffer from the illusory laws of mortal mind as long as we believe they are true. Sooner or later we must all learn that mortal mind is an illusion, but we suffer from its apparent effects until we learn the lesson. Death does not excuse us from learning the lesson, but simply represents a phase through which we pass as we continue to believe in our mortality. We will suffer on the next “plane [s] of existence”⁵ (i.e., state(s) of consciousness) until we

The cancer spread throughout her body, eating her from within as well as consuming much of her face. She spent the last months of her life in bed, clinging to her Christian Science faith as a series of practitioners (professional Christian Science healers) “treated” her with Christian Science prayers and told her that nothing was wrong with her.

learn we are sinless, spiritual ideas of God. (This is not considered to be reincarnation, since reincarnation involves a physical body and returning to the same plane of existence.) All will be “saved”⁶ as we gradually leave our material beliefs behind and realize our true spirituality. In Christian Science, our “salvation” is not from eternal damnation, but from our belief in materiality.

Christian Scientists call themselves Christians, but their beliefs deviate from biblical Christianity on nearly every central doctrine. To the Christian Scientist, Jesus Christ is a “duality”⁷ consisting of Jesus “the human man”⁸ and Christ the “divine idea.”⁹ Heaven and hell are states of mind rather than real places.¹⁰ The Holy Spirit is Christian Science and not a member of the Godhead.¹¹ Jesus’ “seeming”¹² death on the cross was not intended to pay for our sins, but to prove the unreality of sin, disease, and death. The Bible is full of mistakes. Jesus’ words were recorded by “dull disciples ... in a decaying language,”¹³ and must be spiritually interpreted through Christian Science.

The Attraction

Christian Science offers some real enticements – a “spiritually scientific”¹⁴ method for healing, victory over life’s circumstances, and guaranteed salvation. All one has to do to receive these blessings is to study Mrs. Eddy’s writings and obey them to the letter. She was God’s messenger to this age and her writings are considered infallible. Just obey her teaching, and learn to think as she thought, and you will be victorious.

The Trap

Achieving Eddy’s Utopian promises is not as easy as it sounds. Aside from its spiritual perils, Christian Science subjects its adherents to a host of emotional and physical dangers. From an emotional standpoint, Christian Scientists face a disparity between what their physical senses tell them and what they “know” to be true. Consciously or unconsciously, they go through life denying the reality of their bodies and reinterpreting both their emotions and circumstances to fit this false view of life. This mental juggling act can be especially harmful to children who have an instinctive need for their hurts and feelings to be validated. Many of them suffer emotional neglect as their parents lovingly tell them that their pain is not real.

The physical dangers of Christian Science are obvious. Since they are taught that learning about their bodies is spiritually harmful, Christian Scientists are ill equipped to understand the symptoms of illness. They often suffer needlessly from treatable ailments and neglect life-threatening conditions that could be cured if treated in their early stages.

Do Christian Scientists recognize the trap in which they live? Most of them do not. Convinced their religion represents God’s perfect and complete truth, they assume anything that disagrees with Christian Science must be incorrect. Failed healings, skepticism over Christian Science doctrine, and claims that Christian Science contradicts the Bible – all of these are blamed on a poor

understanding of Christian Science and not on any fault with the religion itself. Christian Science is *always* right – even if you don’t quite understand it and even if people are dying around you.

Mainstreaming the Church

The CCS is finding new ways to promote itself in light of our society’s current interest in self-awareness, spirituality, mind/body connections, alternative medicine, and women’s issues. The CCS’s weekly magazine has been redesigned to include quotes from unlikely figures like New-Age proponent Oprah Winfrey.¹⁵ Church representatives are also turning up at medical conferences and other astonishing places. Consider a few activities the CCS has recently sponsored or in which it has participated:

- In December of 1999, Virginia Harris spoke at a symposium entitled “Spirituality and Healing in Medicine” sponsored by Harvard Medical School and the Mind/Body Medical Institute, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Boston. At the symposium, Harris discussed “The Future of Medicine – and the Medicine of the Future.”¹⁶

- The CCS recently participated in at least two conferences regarding child-abuse prevention. Maryland churches co-sponsored and provided two moderators for a conference entitled, “Faith Community Response to Child Abuse.” At a California conference, CCS representative Brian Talcott sat on a panel discussing the subject, “Building Bridges with Religious Communities in Child-Abuse Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment.”¹⁷

- The CCS recently announced plans to build the Mary Baker Eddy Library for the Betterment of Humanity. Scheduled to open in 2002, the library will house over 500,000 unpublished documents and artifacts related to Mrs. Eddy.¹⁸ According to the CCS directors, the library’s purpose is, “to further the universal

quest for spirituality and the science of being – and their effect on health and human progress.”¹⁹

(It will also allow the CCS to secure another 45 years of copyright protection for the writings under new U.S. copyright laws that take effect at the end of 2002.) The library will be located at the CCS headquarters in Boston and will be modeled after presidential libraries with exhibits and meeting facilities for academic and public discussion of subjects like “women’s issues, spirituality, religion and wellness.” The CCS has gathered an impressive group of advisors for the project, including Dr. Ann Braude, Director of Women’s Studies in Religion Program, Harvard Divinity School; Dr. Herbert A. Benson, Associate Professor, Harvard Medical School and Founder and Director of the Mind/Body Institute; and Dr. David Hufford, Director, The Doctors Kienle Center for Humanistic Medicine, Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine.²⁰ As part of the \$50-million project, a satellite library is planned for Seneca Falls, New York – site of the first Woman’s Rights Convention.

- In the fall of 1999, Larry King interviewed Virginia Harris on his prime time television show, *Larry King Live*. King is sympathetic to

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(Continued on next page)

“Comeback” (Continued from page 9)

the CCS; what resulted was an hour-long commercial for the religion that presented its Utopian side while blatantly misrepresenting its drawbacks. (For example, when King asked about children who have died under Christian Science care, Harris responded,

“the few cases that have been publicized are the only ones.”

Having talked with some former Christian Scientists who lost siblings in this religion, I know that Harris’ statement was either patently false or hopelessly naïve.)

The activities listed above suggest the CCS is trying to project a new image by portraying itself as actively involved in the important issues of our day – women’s issues, child-abuse prevention, alternative healthcare, and spirituality, to name a few. But, with the exception of women’s issues, this new image is deceptive. As stated on the CCS’s official web site,

“The fundamental teachings and practice of Christian Science do not change, nor will they change.”²¹

This means that, no matter how much the CCS identifies itself with the alternative-healthcare movement, its basic tenants will always prevent mixing Christian Science with any form of alternative healthcare. And even as the CCS speaks out against child abuse, its basic doctrines still result in emotional and physical neglect as parents lovingly tell their children that their hurts and pains are not real.

Along with its new image, the CCS is avoiding the appearance of having “policies” (most notably a written policy on mixing Christian Science and medicine). This is a *profound deception*, since the *very foundations* of Christian Science preclude this combination. Mrs. Eddy’s writings repeatedly warn *against* trying to combine medicine with Christian Science as does the CCS’s official web site:

Question on web site: “Why not mix Christian Science with medical treatment?”

Answer: “Christian Science treatment and medical treatment proceed from opposite standpoints...To try to heal from opposite systems may be unfair to the patient and could be counterproductive to healing.” (www.tfccs.com 2-5-01)

While the answer attempts to appear non-dogmatic with its use of words like “may” and “could,” the CCS’s policy of not mixing Christian Science with medicine is clearly revealed by the question itself and is consistent with how the CCS has operated throughout its history.

Two examples will illustrate how the CCS is attempting to veil its policy regarding medicine. The first example involves Virginia Harris’ interview on *Larry King Live*.

To King’s question, “Why couldn’t you have prayer and aspirins?”

Harris replies, “Well, people can do whatever they want to.”

To his later question, “... why not prayer and the antibiotic?”

She responds, “... people do that, Larry. People are free to do whatever they want to.”²²

What Harris neglects to say is, *if* a person chooses the aspirin or the antibiotic, they are *not* free to use Christian Science treatment at the same time. If they are under the care of a Christian Science practitioner and choose to take the medicine, the practitioner is supposed to drop their case. What Harris should have said is, “You can do whatever you want, *as long as you don’t mix Christian Science with medical treatment.*”

The second example involves an editorial statement that originally appeared in the December 1999, issue of *The Christian Science Journal*. In the article “The Standpoint of Christian Science Treatment,” the editors wrote,

“It has not proved helpful to combine Christian Science treatment with material methods of cure,” (this statement is entirely consistent with historical CCS practice).

Then, in an unprecedented move, the editors recalled the December *Christian Science Journal* and reissued it with the comment,

“[The editors] regret that the original December issue of *The Christian Science Journal* included a statement that might have been taken by readers as policy ... This was not intended as a policy statement to govern an individual’s practice of Christian Science.”²³

(The CCS avoids written policies, presumably because several of its members have been taken to court when children died under the care of Christian Science practitioners.)²⁴

The editors then presented a “correction” saying no one needs to feel guilty for receiving “temporary [medical] help.” The correction emphasizes the *Christian Science Journal* includes testimonies of

healing of people who turned to Christian Science after *initially* using medicine – and felt no guilt.

While the editors’ “correction” is attempting to reinforce the CCS’s “people-are-free-to-do-whatever-they-want” façade, it does nothing to help the sincere Christian Scientist. The “facts” remain: Medical care is inferior to Christian Science; relying on medical care is spiritually damaging; you must choose between your religion and medicine as they are at odds with each other; if you are under the care of a practitioner, you will lose that support if you consult a doctor. Ironically, three pages after its “correction,” the December 1999 *Christian Science Journal* carried an article that stated, “to try to mix spiritual and material means has the effect of weakening trust in the all-power and all-presence of God.”²⁵

The CCS’s “do-as-you-wish” façade appears to be attracting new followers. I am in contact with several people who are intrigued by the Utopian promises offered by Christian Science, but who think they can combine them with their current religious beliefs and/or with medicine. They are accustomed to the “pick-and-choose” attitudes of our day and apparently have not seen or comprehended such statements by Mrs. Eddy’s as,

The physical dangers of Christian Science are obvious. Since they are taught that learning about their bodies is spiritually harmful, Christian Scientists are ill equipped to understand the symptoms of illness. They often suffer needlessly from treatable ailments and neglect life-threatening conditions that could be cured if treated in their early stages.

"If the student goes away to practice [Christian Science] only in part, dividing his interests between God and mammon and substituting his own views for Truth, he will inevitably reap the error he sows. Whoever would demonstrate the healing of Christian Science must abide strictly by its rules, heed every statement, and advance from the rudiments laid down."²⁶

Suzanne Buckingham "could" have sought medical treatment. But as a mature and dedicated believer, could she *really* choose the medical option? She was sure Christian Science could heal her if only she understood it well enough. She believed her practitioner could help her achieve that required level of understanding. She knew going to a doctor would damage her spiritual life and deprive her of any Christian Science care. And she had been taught to deny the physical evidence in front of her and to emotionally minimize her physical situation. *No, Suzanne could not go to a doctor*; she was trapped in an emotional and spiritual box that prevented her from considering *any care* other than Christian Science treatment.

What did the Christian Science Church do to help Suzanne? Essentially ... *nothing*. In August of 2000, Suzanne's daughter, Bryn Calderon, wrote a letter to officials of the CCS both at the Boston headquarters and in her home state of California.²⁷ The letter described Suzanne's condition and referred to the "horrendous situation"²⁸ in which the illness had placed her family. Bryn told the CCS that, if her mother died, she would aggressively publicize the death and its link to Christian Science. To prevent Bryn's action, all the CCS officials had to do was to have Suzanne's practitioner allow her to see a doctor.

The CCS's response was predictable – Suzanne's practitioner simply told her,

"We just want you to know that you're free to do whatever you think is best."²⁹

And with that, the issue apparently was over in the eyes of the CCS. The practitioner (who is also a Christian Science "teacher," placing him among the religion's most elite class of healers) continued to "treat" Suzanne until, at his urging, she switched to a practitioner closer to her home. (The teacher lives over an hour from her house – an irrelevant point since, as in Suzanne's case, practitioners usually treat their patients over the phone.) Suzanne's new practitioner then took up the project, speaking with her up to 50 times per month, in one- to two-minute segments, as Suzanne repeatedly sought relief and healing. With each conversation, the practitioner told Suzanne she was the spiritual idea of God and nothing was wrong with her. Suzanne died in April 2001, eight months after her daughter's letter to the CCS and still under the "care" of her practitioner.

Responsible healthcare providers recommend alternative treatment when their own efforts are unsuccessful. But Suzanne's situation suggests that Christian Science does not allow its practitioners to be responsible healthcare providers, even when the CCS's reputation is at stake. Advising Suzanne to go to a doctor was something her practitioners and her church were not willing to do.

Christian Scientists seem like happy, healthy, spiritually minded people. They are actively offering their religion to a world that is searching for answers. As seekers inquire about this beautiful-sounding religion, let us be ready to guide them away from a path will lead them into spiritual, physical, and emotional danger.

Witnessing to Christian Scientists

When you are witnessing to Christian Scientists, remember the following:

Devout Christian Scientists have a deep love for God, Jesus, and the Bible (as they understand them). Address them with sensitivity and respect, and with an appreciation for their devotion.

Christian Scientists often sound quite knowledgeable about the Bible. Remember, much of their Bible knowledge consists of partial verses taken out of context and assigned new, "spiritualized" meanings. Ask them to define their terms when they quote the Bible. ("What do you mean by the word 'atonement'?") When they quote verses out of context, challenge them to look at those verses along with the verses before and after them.

Most Christian Scientists hold Mary Baker Eddy in very high esteem. They have been taught to dismiss negative information about her as lies and ignorance. Avoid joking about her or making accusations you cannot clearly support. If you don't appreciate wisecracks about Jesus, don't make them about Mary Baker Eddy.

Suggestions for witnessing to Christian Scientists:

Ask sincere, respectful questions designed to help the Christian Scientist evaluate his or her beliefs. For example:

- Ask the question, "Which book do you hold in higher esteem – *Science and Health* or the Bible?"

The answer will probably be "both books" or "the Bible."

Then say, "Mrs. Eddy wrote the Bible contains,

'manifest mistakes in the ancient versions ... 30,000 different readings in the Old Testament, and ... 300,000 in the New [Testament] ...'³⁰

"She also stated the disciples were 'dull.'³¹

"On the other hand, she stated her own writings – including *Science and Health* and even the *Manual* (the By-Laws of The Mother Church) – are,

'[God]-inspired and infallible.'³²

"How, then, can you esteem the Bible as much as you do Mrs. Eddy's writings?"

- Christian Scientists are taught Mrs. Eddy discovered Christian Science after being healed from a serious fall on the ice in February of 1866. She was expected to die, but rose from her bed on the third day, healed and free.³³ Ask, "If she was really healed, why did she try to sue the city for damages? Court records show that, during the summer of 1866 (several months after the accident), she requested money from the city on the grounds she was 'still suffering.' " (In a CCS-authorized biography, Richard Nenneman records a portion of Mrs. Eddy's petition to the mayor of Lynn as preserved in the court records of Essex County, Massachusetts. Mrs. Eddy's petition states,

"Having suffered much, and still suffering from the effects of that fall, she earnestly petitions your Honor for the recompense of justice in a pecuniary point, so far as that may atone for her injuries and loss.")³⁴

- People who become disenchanted with Christian Science are sometimes reluctant to leave their religion because it still has many good points ("its people have such a positive attitude and are so friendly ..."). Point out that the good parts of Christian Science are also in biblical Christianity. Find out what virtues they don't want to leave, and give them examples of how these "good things" can also be found in a Christian church.

- Christian Science is supposedly validated by its healings. Believers undoubtedly will tell you about a healing they or a loved one have experienced and may point to over 50,000 "authenticated"³⁵ healings published in Christian Science literature. Several responses may be helpful:

(Continued on page 15)

GIANT Lie

by Keith Graham

Now the Evolutines gathered their armies together to battle, and were gathered together in the name of Science, which rightly belongs to God; they encamped between Science and Mythology in Cyberspace and elsewhere.

And King Compromise and the men of spiritual Israel were gathered together, and they encamped in the Valleys of Dayage, Gaptheory, and Metaphora, and drew up in battle array against the Evolutines. The Evolutines stood on a mountain on one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side, with a valley between them.

And a champion went out from the camp of the Evolutines, named Piltdown, from Untruth, the letters after whose name were six and then some. He had brazen, a priori assumptions in his head, and he was armed with a coat of error made from the fabric of observed phenomena, and the cut of the coat revealed 5,000 mistakes. Moreover, he had liberal theology as armor on his legs and an edited Bible between his shoulders. Now the stuff of his spiel was interwoven with great hubris, and his peer-reviewed articles weighed-in heavily with biased minds; and professed Christianity went before him like a shield.

Then he stood and cried out to the armies of Israel, and said to them, "Why have you come out to line up for battle? Am I not an Evolutine, and you the servants of King Compromise? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. If he is able to debate with me and overcome me, then we will abandon the dogma of evolutionism. But if I prevail against him and overcome him, then you shall admit that all your talk of a glorious Redemption in Jesus is nothing more than religious myth, like the story of Eve being made of Adam's rib, Methuselah's life span, all the miracles of the prophets, Christ, and the apostles: and, in fact, all of your fairy tale Book."

And the Evolutine said, "I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together."

When King Compromise and all Israel heard these words of the Evolutine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

Now Rev. Kriatid was a nobody in the world's eyes, who fed his

Father's sheep by the grace of the Chief Shepherd, Who had been born at Bethlehem. And the Evolutine drew near and presented himself 40 days, morning and evening. So Rev. Kriatid rose early in the morning, and he came to the camp as the army was going out to the fight and shouting for the battle. For Israel and the Evolutines had drawn up in battle array, army against army. And Rev. Kriatid came and greeted his brothers.

Then as he talked with them, there was the champion, the Evolutine of Untruth, Piltdown by name, coming up from the armies of the Evolutines; and he spoke according to the same words. So Rev. Kriatid heard them.

And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were dreadfully afraid. So the men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel; and it shall be that the man who overcomes him, the King of Kings will enrich!"

Then Rev. Kriatid spoke to the men who stood by him, saying,

"What shall be done for the man who vanquishes this Evolutine and takes away the reproach of compromise from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Evolutine, that he should defy the Armies of the Living God?!"

And the people answered him in this manner, saying the King of Kings would greatly enrich the conqueror of the Evolutine.

Now when the words which Rev. Kriatid spoke were heard, they reported them to King Compromise; and he sent for him. Then Rev. Kriatid said to King Compromise, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and proclaim Gospel truth to this Evolutine."

And King Compromise said to Rev. Kriatid, "You are not able to go against this Evolutine to fight the good fight against him; for you are merely a Biblical preacher, but he is wondrously educated in evolutionism from his youth."

But Rev. Kriatid said to King Compromise, "Your servant pastors

And King Compromise and the men of spiritual Israel were gathered together, and they encamped in the Valleys of Dayage, Gaptheory, and Metaphora, and drew up in battle array against the Evolutines. The Evolutines stood on a mountain on one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side, with a valley between them.

his Father's sheep, and when cultic doctrine or heresy comes and takes a lamb out of the flock, I go out after it and strike it, and deliver the lamb from its mouth; and when it arises against me, I catch it by its twisted doctrine, and strike and expose it, as per Ephesians 5:11. Your servant has rescued those trapped both in cultic doctrine and heresy; and this uncircumcised Evolutine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God!"

Moreover Rev. Kriatid said, "The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the cultist and from the paw of the heretic, He will deliver me from the hand of this Evolutine."

And King Compromise said to Rev. Kriatid, "Go, and the LORD be with you!"

So King Compromise offered Rev. Kriatid a panoply that was much like Piltdown's, trying to put similar a priori assumptions into his head, and trying to clothe him with a similar coat of error.

However, Rev. Kriatid saw that his sword, the Sword of the Spirit, was not well complemented by that armor, which would hinder his teaching and his walk, for he HAD tested them. And Rev. Kriatid said to King Compromise, "I cannot walk with these, for I have tested them and found them wanting." So Rev. Kriatid left them before King Compromise.

Then he took his Shield of Faith in his hand; and he chose for himself five smooth stones from the joyfully bubbling Brook of Living Water:

1. The Holy Spirit's Full Inspiration of Scripture,
2. The Divine, Ultimate Authority of Scripture,
3. The Inerrancy of Scripture — and that on all matters,
4. The Infallibility of Scripture, as Jesus mentions at John 10:35,
5. The Cohesive Unity of all the Parts of the 66 Books of Scripture,

and put them in his shepherd's bag, in a pouch that he had, and his unredacted Bible was open, in his hands. And he drew near to the Evolutine.

So the Evolutine came, and began drawing near to Rev. Kriatid, and his Shield of Professed Religion went before him. And when the Evolutine looked about and saw Rev. Kriatid, he disdained him, for he was only a Biblical preacher (and not very good-looking).

So the Evolutine said to Rev. Kriatid, "Am I from a less-enlightened age, that you come to me with a dusty old book and its outmoded ideas?" And the Evolutine cursed Rev. Kriatid by his gods, Evolvogon and the Baal of Galapagos. And the Evolutine said to Rev. Kriatid, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the archaeopteryxes of the air (?) and the wolf-whales of the field (!)"

Then Rev. Kriatid said to the Evolutine, "You come to me with devilish wisdom, with overweening arrogance, and with pseudoscience. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of Hosts,


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the God of the Armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take from you your ability to deceive. And this day I will give the carcass of the dogma of evolution to the specially created birds of the air and the specially created wild beasts of the field, that all the Earth may know there is a God in spiritual Israel. Then all this assembly shall know the LORD does not promote true faith with the compromising words of the smarmy army; for the battle is the LORD's, and He will give you into our hands!"

So it was, when the Evolutine arose and came and drew near to meet Rev. Kriatid, that Rev. Kriatid hastened and ran toward the army to meet the Evolutine. Then Rev. Kriatid put his hand in his bag and took out a stone; and he slung it! He made a direct hit on the Evolutine's hard head full of error, so that the truth sank in, and Piltdown repented with his face to the Earth.

Thus in love, Rev. Kriatid prevailed over the Evolutine with Scripture rightly divided, which struck the former Evolutine champion, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, discerning the thoughts and intentions of his heart, and soundly converting him. But there was no compromising weapon in the hand of Rev. Kriatid.

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ ..."(Cf. 1 Samuel 17, 2 Corinthians 10:4,5) 

(Continued on Next Page)

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get
Answers!

“... Get Here” (Continued from page 7)

age of six, and studied art, science, philosophy, and other fields as a way of loving God with the mind. Scholars like Jonathan Edwards were activists who sought to be scholarly and well informed in a variety of disciplines. The minister was an intellectual, as well as spiritual authority in the community. As Puritan Cotton Mather proclaimed, ‘Ignorance is the Mother not of Devotion but of HERESY.’”⁷

Let Me Entertain You

According to pollster George Barna, currently 67% of Evangelicals are relativists. This is an astounding statistic, yet you will find this view in just about every church if you ask the right questions: Do you believe Jesus Christ is the *only* hope of salvation for mankind? Is He the *only* way to the Father, or are other religious paths equally true for other people as long as they are sincere? The divorce rate inside the church is higher than outside the church. The church has embraced psychological theories and precepts almost as if they were sacred Scripture, and self-esteem has become far more important than the way of the cross. Two out of three young people raised in the church will abandon the church, at least in lifestyle when they graduate high school. Is this because Christians, pastors and other church leaders don’t care? We think, rather, they are perplexed and uncertain how to reverse the trend. We have spoken with pastors who have lamented that they would love to teach the fundamentals of the faith and challenge their congregations to equip themselves to confront the culture with the claims of Christ, but their churches won’t accept it. In a recent conversation with Pastor Mark Simpson⁸ (who in addition to his pastoral duties also ministers overseas) said,

“It is so refreshing to go overseas and teach. I can give the milk and meat of the word, challenge their heart, mind, and soul. In turn, they evangelize and challenge the culture and their churches grow. When I come back to America, the churches are not interested in the milk and meat of the Word. I have to compete with cakes, tea, and circuses.”


Indeed, this is the problem. By abandoning the Christian mind, we have become, in large part, the Church of the Ignorant Brethren. Many Christians seem to be always looking for a new experience and always following the latest fad regardless of what heresy is being promoted. We have become pragmatists. Gwen Shamblin (Weigh Down Workshop) denies the doctrine of the Trinity and teaches salvation by works, but hey, people lose weight. “Faith healer” Benny Hinn proclaimed during one of his church services that God revealed to him there are nine persons in the Godhead. Hinn also supposedly throws around the Holy Spirit, and performs (with emphasis on the word *perform*, as in performance) spurious “healings,” but he packs out stadiums because he makes people “feel” close to God. The supposed Brownsville Revival has hit upon hard times, and the crowds are dwindling so a new “Second Wind” is proclaimed, which is still led by the same false prophet. The 1980 Gallup Poll on Religion noted,

“We are having a revival of feelings but not of the knowledge of God. The church today is more guided by feelings than convictions. We value enthusiasm more than informed commitment.”

This is completely contrary to Jesus’ own words,

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”⁹

In an article such as this, there is always the hazard of sounding too harshly critical of our fellow Christians and the church. Please friend, that is not what we intend to convey. We are not saying there is nothing right with the church, or that every Christian has fallen prey to

ignorance or apathy. *Many* Christians are quietly leading lives of dedication to God and are accomplishing *great* things. Recently, a missionary wife and her infant were killed in Peru on their way to spread the Gospel to people who need desperately to hear it. For this dedication, and for every Christian who fights the good fight, we are so grateful. We *are* saying the church, as a whole, could be doing much better. The first-century church didn’t own any buildings, possessed no financial wealth, owned no television or radio stations to get out their message, and yet, the Scriptures and history record they turned the world upside down! Today, the church owns grand buildings, radio and television networks, magazines and publishing houses but, sadly, has lost most of its salt. The first-century church took Jesus’ words seriously and lived out their faith—they acted as if they really believed what they said they believed. In the process, they out-thought and out-debated the pagan culture that surrounded them. Instead of reading *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill, we need to *think* and grow spiritual by the Word of Jesus Christ. Jesus loves the church, warts and all, and so do we. But if there ever was a time for a *true* revival, the time is now. 

Endnotes

¹ Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *Handbook of Today’s Religions* (Campus Crusade for Christ, 1983), p86.

² Mormon Founder Joseph Smith, as Mayor of Nauvoo, Illinois, ordered the *Nauvoo Expositor* to be destroyed. The newspaper had printed an affidavit that exposed Smith’s “doctrine of a plurality of wives.” Smith recorded in *History of the Church*, page 432 of vol. 6, under the date of June 10, 1844: “I immediately ordered the Marshal to destroy it without delay.”

³ Phillip Johnson, *The Wedge of Truth* (InterVarsity Press, 2000), p19. Johnson goes on to say that Wentworth was probably only a Christian in a cultural sense. He had a belief that good works will merit God’s blessing in this and the future life; whereas as bad works will bring about God’s judgement in this and the future life — a kind of “Jesus-plus” plan of salvation. Although Phillip Johnson may be right about Wentworth, it is certain many true Christians were experiencing the same difficulty.

⁴ Woodhull & Claflin’s *Weekly “Upward & Onward”* Nov. 15, 1873.

⁵ Steven W. Mosher, “The Repackaging of Margaret Sanger,” *Wall Street Journal*, (Dow Jones & Co., Inc., 1997).

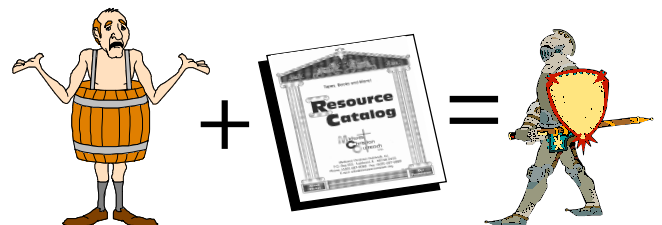
⁶ Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Eerdmans, 1994), p141.

⁷ J.P. Moreland, *Love Your God With All Your Mind* (Navpress, 1997), p22.

⁸ Pastor of Joliet Christian Fellowship, Joliet, Illinois and an occasional contributor to the *Midwest Christian Outreach Journal*.

⁹ Matthew 22:37, NASB.

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Editor’s Note


In the last issue of the Journal, we neglected to give credit to **Christy Bobo** for the cover illustration. Christy is also the illustrator for this issue’s cover art. We would like to take this opportunity to say “Thanks, Christy,” for your contribution to this publication.

"Comeback" (Continued from page 11)

*Agree with them that God does heal, but point out healings occur even in non-Christian Science churches – including those that do not emphasize "faith healing." Healings do not *prove* one religion is the truth because healings occur in many religions.

*Point out the Apostle Paul did not consider healing to be a sign of his spirituality. "**Three times**" he asked God to heal his "**thorn in the flesh**" (2 Cor. 12:8-9), and he then was content to trust God's sovereignty when God denied his request. Paul also suggested Timothy "**use a little wine**" (1 Tim. 5:23) for medicinal purposes. If insufficient "spiritual understanding"³⁶ had caused Timothy's ailment, Paul would have encouraged him to pray more about the situation instead of prescribing some wine.

*Don't be intimidated by the "more than 50,000 authenticated testimonies of healing."³⁷ When compared to estimated membership numbers, this figure represents roughly *one* documented healing per *ten* Christian Scientists per *lifetime*!

• *Listen* to what the Christian Scientist has to say, but be ready to give calm, clearly stated challenges to biblical errors. Nothing is quite as disarming as a calm, assured, response. 

Linda Kramer spent 30 years in Christian Science before leaving for doctrinal reasons and then fighting a long battle for emotional freedom. She now ministers to the spiritual and emotional needs of others touched by this religion both through private correspondence and through her work with *Christian Way*, an evangelical outreach to Christian Scientists. Dr. Kramer authored the book, *The Religion That Kills*, which uses Christian Science writings and secular mind control theory to examine how Christian Science attracts, controls, and harms its followers. Dr. Kramer is a wife, mother, and an adjunct professor of chemistry.

Endnotes:

¹ Rodney Stark, "The Rise and Fall of Christian Science," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 13(2) (1998): 189-214. Although membership figures are confidential, their continuing downward trend can be assumed from the declining number of churches and practitioners listed monthly in *The Christian Science Journal*.

² "Christian Scientists Expand Presence In Cyberspace," *The Christian Science Monitor* electronic edition www.csmonitor.com (6 June 2000).

³ Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (Boston, MA: Published by the Trustees under the Will of Mary Baker G. Eddy, 1934), 468:8-15. Throughout this bibliography, this work will be cited as "S&H."

⁴ *Ibid.*, 591:25-592:10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 77:9-11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 593:20-22.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 473:10-17.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 587:25-588:4, 266:20-21.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 55:27-29. This reference is best understood by noting that the Bible refers to the Holy Spirit as the comforter (John 14:16-17) and that Christian Science uses the terms Christian Science and Divine Science interchangeably (S&H 127:9-12).

¹² *Ibid.*, 44:28-45:13.

¹³ Mary Baker Eddy, *Miscellaneous Writings 1883-1896* (Boston, MA: Published by the Trustees under the Will of Mary Baker G. Eddy, 1924), 100:1-6

¹⁴ Mary Baker Eddy, S&H, 138:9-11. For a concise statement of this spiritual "science," see the "scientific statement of being" (S&H 468:8-15).

¹⁵ For example, see *The Christian Science Sentinel* (20 Nov. 2000), 4.

¹⁶ Report on talk given by Virginia S. Harris, C.S.B., "The Future of Medicine – and the Medicine of the Future," *The Christian Science Sentinel* (March 2000).

¹⁷ "Faith Community Response to Child Abuse" Conference, Columbia, MD, 12 October 2000. "San Diego Conference on Responding to Child Maltreatment," San Diego, CA, 22-26 January 2001.

¹⁸ Michael Paulson, "A Mary Baker Eddy Showcase," *The Boston Globe, Metro Region Section* (6 June 2000).

¹⁹ Press release by The Christian Science Board of Directors, PRNewswire, Yahoo! (6 June 2000).

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Partial answer to the question, "Is your religion changing with the times?" on the official web site of The First Church of Christ, Scientist, www.tfccs.com (5 February 2001).

²² Virginia Harris interview on CNN's *Larry King Live* (30 September 1999).

²³ The Christian Science Board of Directors, "Compassion and Healing in the Twenty-First Century," *The Christian Science Journal* (December 1999), 16.

²⁴ See web site for CHILD, Inc. (Children's Healthcare is a Legal Duty, Inc.), www.childrenshealthcare.org

²⁵ Jean Stark Hebenstreit, "The Uniqueness of Christian Science Healing" *The Christian Science Journal* (December 1999), 19-21.

²⁶ Mary Baker Eddy, S&H, 426:9-15.

²⁷ The letter was sent to Gary A. Jones, Manager of the Committees on Publication for the Christian Science Church and to Robert Coe Gilbert, Committees on Publication for Southern California.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Linda Kramer private conversation with Bryn.

³⁰ Mary Baker Eddy, S&H, 139:16-19)

³¹ Mary Baker Eddy, *Miscellaneous Writings 1883-1896* (Boston, MA: Published by the Trustees under the Will of Mary Baker G. Eddy, 1924), 100:1-6.

³² Quote of Mary Baker Eddy in John Lathrop, "Reflections of Mary Baker Eddy," *We Knew Mary Baker Eddy, 1st series*, (Boston: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 1943), 22.

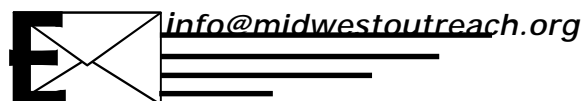
³³ Yvonne Cache von Fettweis and Robert Townsend Warneck, *Mary Baker Eddy: Christian Healer* (Boston, MA: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 1998) xiii, 33-35.

³⁴ Richard A. Nenneman, *Persistent Pilgrim: The Life of Mary Baker Eddy*, (NH: Nebbadoon Press, 1997), 86-88.

³⁵ Answer to "What is your record of success with Christian Science healing?" in Questions and Answers section of "The official home page of The Church of Christ, Scientist," www.tfccs.com (15 May 2001).

³⁶ Mary Baker Eddy, S&H, 14:25-30, 442:19-22.

³⁷ Op. cit. (endnote 35).



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IN THIS ISSUE!

How Did We Get Here? Page 1
 Don and Joy Veinot

Christian Science: Attempting a Comeback Page 8
 Linda Kramer

GIANT Lie Page 12
 Keith Graham