

Understanding Mary Baker Eddy

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The keepers of the scholarly gates at Harvard responded with uncharacteristic skittishness when a promising graduate student in 1935 proposed a doctoral study examining the "intellectual and literary development" of the founder of Christian Science.¹ The student's proposal occasioned "really anxious thought," confessed the renowned literary scholar George Lyman Kittredge, who had himself been teaching at the University since Mary Baker Eddy's years as a relatively obscure pastor in Boston in the 1880s. "Theoretically, there can be no doubt that the subject is quite proper as pertaining to 'American literature'," he wrote to his English Department colleague Kenneth Murdock. "Practically and politically, however...," Kittredge continued, "there is great danger that we should burn our fingers badly if we accepted" the subject, which he believed could involve the University "in an unpleasant religious row."² Murdock conveyed this rejection to the student with a touch of embarrassment, but observed that the decision "does not prevent you from going ahead with the work on Mrs. Eddy independently...." The good professor added: "I am very sorry that the situation is what it is...."³

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The student eventually did go ahead independently with his work on the controversial Mary Baker Eddy. Robert Peel never finished his doctorate at Harvard; the Second World War and a vigorous life outside the University intervened. But his long scholarly effort to sort through the enormous tangle of evidence relating to Eddy's life and, more profoundly, to understand this complex religious leader in her own terms and in the context of her own time and culture, is surely part of the reason that an essay which seeks to examine the subject seriously today is no longer considered unacceptable in a scholarly setting.

Peel's three-volume, 1250-page biography, written over a period of two decades and finally completed in 1977, was widely recognized as the first genuine scholarly examination of her life.⁴ It was also the first study based on comprehensive access to the archives of Eddy's Church. "At last," said the noted religious historian Martin Marty in a *New York Times* review of the final volume, a biographer "has begun to break the barriers between apologists and critics."⁵ If the facts of her life, her character, and her significance as a historical figure remain as intensely controversial in 2002 as in 1935 – and a glance at recent academic writing on the Christian Science leader readily confirms the point – it is now at least possible, as an earlier *Times* reviewer put it, to approach the subject on "a level of humane scholarship."⁶ That reviewer, another of Peel's Harvard mentors, was the greatest historian of New England's religious culture, Perry Miller.

This essay examines the ways in which Eddy has been both understood and misunderstood since the days when learned

professors in Cambridge eyed her narrowly as an uncredentialed religious upstart – a woman, no less! – who had set up shop across the Charles River. The misunderstandings which have been projected are in some ways as revealing as the facts which have been grasped. These misunderstandings have reflected not only limiting institutional agendas but also much larger and more powerful cultural assumptions about religion, gender, human possibilities, the nature of truth itself. With “truths so counter to the common convictions of mankind to present to the world,” as she once described her teaching, it is not surprising that Eddy became a lightning rod for wider antagonisms in the culture, or that depictions of her even in respectable academic sources over the past century often disclose as much about the depicter’s attitudes and angle of vision as they do about the woman herself.⁷

The perceptions of both followers and detractors have been filtered through one-dimensional notions of personal sainthood to which Eddy did not conform. “Apotheosis invites iconoclasm,” a recent biographer of Abraham Lincoln has written.⁸ In Eddy’s case, the impulse to tear down an iconic figure has been as irresistible as the temptation to turn her into one. Biographers on both sides have tended to read the evidence with conceptual blinders on – presuppositions strong enough to prevent them from considering, and often even from seeing, evidence that would call their cherished interpretations into question. Almost lost in the schizoid division between the reverent and the skeptical, at least until the work of historical recovery begun by Robert Peel, has been Eddy’s humanity – a term I take to encompass the full range of her contradictions as well as strengths, her capacity for change

and growth, her anguish, and yes, her authentic religious experience, without which there is no possibility of understanding her and little reason to try.

1

The professors at Harvard had plenty of reason to be skeptical in 1935. The previous half-dozen years had seen the publication of a series of damning biographical portraits, each purporting to present the real Mary Baker Eddy to a generation newly schooled on Freud and impatient with the religious past.

The most famous – or notorious, depending on the reader's vantage point – was Edwin F. Dakin's *Mrs. Eddy: The Biography of a Virginal Mind*, first published in 1929 and explicit in claiming the perspective of "the psychologist and the neuro-pathologist."⁹ Pretending to an objectivity "beyond the little human labels of 'good' and 'evil,'" Dakin presented Eddy as morally bankrupt, a monster of selfishness and self-delusion: "ignorant, distraught, fearful – lustful of power and glory – tortured by self and the universe – eager for wealth and grandeur...."¹⁰ With the hint of titillation in its title, the book rose to the best-seller list amid charges that Eddy's Church was trying to suppress it. The Church disputed the charge and in 1930 brought out a competing biography by an Episcopal clergyman named Lyman Powell. But Powell's presentation, as the young Robert Peel noted in his doctoral proposal, was "consistently eulogistic" and lacked scholarly credibility. Thus Dakin's was through the middle decades of the century the first source on Eddy to which historians

typically turned.

As early as 1937, two years after the rejection of his doctoral proposal, Robert Peel wrote candidly to officials of the Church of Christ, Scientist, about the need for a more discerning and, indeed, more truthful understanding of the denomination's founder. He was writing "out of a heartfelt conviction of the superlative importance of this issue," he explained to the Church's Board of Directors. A devoted Christian Scientist himself, he nevertheless saw the "common attitude of Christian Scientists to Mrs. Eddy" at that time as a "stumbling block" to thoughtful believers as well as non-believers.¹¹ The letter cited the example of a recent Christian Science lecture which had put "constant emphasis on Mrs. Eddy's personality...described at great length in terms of human perfection...." Peel went on: "The picture [the lecturer] left was a vague one of a thrilling figure set utterly apart from the rest of humanity. The result was that many of the audience were swept off their feet in a wave of ardent emotion; several others confessed to me afterwards that they boiled with indignation throughout the lecture." Neither result, said Peel, speaking more as Christian than scholar, would "ground the hearers more firmly on the Rock, Christ."

The 1937 letter is a remarkable prologue to Peel's biographical labors over the next forty years. Though "probably meant as a 'defense' or 'reply' to attacks...," he stated, "a lecture of this sort only makes more imperative an answer which will face squarely, fairly, and explicitly the serious questions raised" in critical works. "The authorised biographies...fail miserably to answer" those

questions, he told the church Board. "I can sympathize with the difficulties of those honest outsiders who...are baffled and exasperated by the disparity between the claims made by Christian Scientists for Mrs. Eddy and the apparent evidences to the contrary brought forth by her critics and for the most part ignored by the Church." Peel concluded by questioning "the customary attitude of high-handed disapproval" toward those who remain skeptical of Eddy, when "the charges against her" had not been "specifically and logically disposed of." The later Peel volumes would be reproached by some as *too* concerned with defending their subject, but none could deny the need for such a painstaking review of the evidence or the fact that, as historian Sydney Ahlstrom rather grudgingly acknowledged in 1971, Peel does "deal with the major critical issues."¹²

The charges against Eddy dated for the most part from her own time. She was the target of voluminous attacks from the various constituencies she or her movement offended: ministers and priests in the existing denominations; physicians; males of all backgrounds who resented her violation of gender roles; social elites in cities like Boston and New York; a flood of mind-cure enthusiasts who resented her vehement insistence that she was not one of them. Mark Twain's savaging of Eddy in 1903 was deeply entwined with issues of gender and class. A vocal handful of disaffected students used public accusation and legal harassment to settle scores. When the explosive growth of her church catapulted her into wealth and fame, the paparazzi of the *New York World* and other suddenly high-minded defenders of the public morals pursued the octogenarian leader with an intensity

later reserved for youthful princesses. Even the tolerant William James, who defended the right of the Christian Scientists to pursue their practice of spiritual healing, distanced himself from Eddy with an ugly epithet in explaining his position to colleagues.¹³ When she complained of being the target of attack, critics without consciousness of irony accused her of having a persecution complex.

The point is not that the whole of what her critics said was untrue, or that she necessarily handled the criticism well. But it is obvious in hindsight that the charges generated in this environment cried out for vastly more careful cross-examination – more simple questioning – than they received.

The first major biography of Eddy, published in installments by the muckraking *McClure's* magazine in 1907, was intended from the start as an exposé of a figure presumed to be in need of exposing.¹⁴ The writer under whose name the work was brought out, a minor journalist named Georgine Milmine, is described in the book as an “unprejudiced historian,” but the basic narrative took its cues directly from the attacks of the previous two decades. The book’s portrayal of Eddy differed little from Mark Twain’s: a pathetic religious charlatan, incapable of original thought or serious reflection, whose only real talent was for self-aggrandizement and the marketing of religion as a commercial enterprise. While later disparagers like Dakin, the professional biographer Ernest Sutherland Bates, or the psychiatrist-biographer Julius Silberger would add certain nuances to this picture, they accepted Milmine’s sources uncritically for the most part, and all

followed her example religiously in professing to be unprejudiced by virtue of the fact that they were not zealots of Eddy's faith.

The Milmine work is now generally considered to have been substantially written by *McClure's* staff, especially the novelist Willa Cather, then a young and unknown subeditor on the magazine several years away from writing her moving fictions of the American West. What has not been fully recognized is that the figure of Mary Baker Eddy presented in the book was also essentially a fictional construct – not a character fabricated out of whole cloth, to be sure, but very much an *imagined* creation drawn from the same stock of small town characters and character types which would populate Cather's later stories.¹⁵ *McClure's* "Mary Baker Eddy" was the vain belle who "rouged and powdered" her cheeks, a sure sign of moral turpitude among the "good and decent" townsfolk. She was the uppity neighbor who put on airs of superiority without the hard cash to support her pretensions; the bad mother with "strange lack of a sense of maternal duty" and an "aversion" to her only child; the hardened church member whose false piety was only another form of vanity, masking an "artificiality" which "spread over all her acts." "In no relation in life," continues the writer, "did she impress even her nearest friends or her own family with genuine feeling or sincerity" – a fiction that is breathtaking, given the totality of the evidence available even in 1907.¹⁶

Dakin two decades later would describe Milmine as a heroic researcher who "tramp[ed] up and down New England" over a period of years, resolutely knocking on "strange doors" and

exploring “unknown streets and country roads” in the quest for the historical Mrs. Eddy.¹⁷ It is now clear that a great deal of the material retailed by Milmine/Cather came not directly from sources on the ground but from a handful of apostate students, whose shaping influence on the narrative is most obvious in the invariably flattering adjectives with which they are described.¹⁸ These students are pictured as being everything Eddy was said not to be: “an idealist,” noted for “uprightness, kindliness, and purity of character,” by “nature sincere and free from self-seeking,” one whose “amiability” was “proverbial,” “practical, and blessed with a warm enjoyment of the world,” “clever, self-confident,” “adventurous.” The *McClure’s* writers applied the latter trio of adjectives to one of the most influential anti-Eddy publicists with whom they were in contact, Mrs. Josephine Woodbury, who had been dropped from church membership after an extra-marital affair produced a child she claimed was immaculately conceived. So strong was the debunking agenda that the book manages to find fault with Eddy for lacking the “romantic” imagination to see in Woodbury a second holy mother.¹⁹

Scholars are in a position today to see that, to whatever extent Milmine or other *McClure’s* researchers did knock on the doors of Eddy’s former neighbors or associates, they systematically neglected those who would not tell the stories that *McClure’s* wanted to hear. Obvious as this point now appears, few serious historians at the time or for many decades thereafter thought to question either the provenance or the distorting bias of the evidence offered. The most prominent exception to this pattern

was the German religious historian and Reformation scholar Karl Holl, who in a 1916 essay noted that many of the book's accusations were based on evidence "readily recognizable as gossip and slander."²⁰ Much of the evidence crucial to the picture drawn consisted of anonymous second- or third-hand recollections of people and events forty or fifty or sixty years before. Some rested even more vaguely on unattributed "traditions" about Eddy "which abound" in the New Hampshire villages in which she lived. Readers are urged to trust the "writer's" reporting and judgments on these recollections and traditions, though the reporter on whose notes and judgments these passages were based was deemed incompetent by her publisher to write the book published under her name, and the actual authors never spoke with these informants at all.²¹

Karl Holl was among the cluster of major German scholars at the beginning of the century – Harnak, Bultmann, Otto, Weber, and Troeltsch, among others – whose work reshaped modern views of the historical role and study of religion. His experience in studying the controversial new religious movements of an earlier time gave him unusual perspective on the need for sifting more objectively the polemical debris surrounding such movements. Despite his strong theological objections to Christian Science, his essay on the subject was almost unique in acknowledging a genuine religious impulse in Eddy's life, grounded in the God-centered Puritan faith she early embraced and always insisted she "never left."²² The essay, published only in German during the World War, had little wider influence then, but is useful today in pointing to an understanding of Eddy that

neither sentimentalizes profound religious involvement nor reduces it to the manifestation of a neurosis. Regarded as the initiator of modern studies on another complex religious innovator, Martin Luther, Holl recognized that even what was legitimate in the evidence produced by Eddy's detractors could be interpreted in radically differing ways.

She was not the refined Victorian she sometimes tried too hard to be. She was not someone who necessarily fit easily into the small town sewing circles, especially in the difficult years of her early womanhood when illness, poverty, disintegration of her family circle, and the frustration of unfulfilled personal longings took their toll. The very facets of her nature that some responded to and admired, others saw as arrogant or worse. She could be difficult, lose her temper, struggle with bitterness and despair. She would later write that physical torture is easier to bear than the "leaden weight" of the world "crush[ing] out of a career its divine destiny."²³ She carried the baggage from this period into her years of establishing a church, so it is not surprising that she was not the mild and unconflicted exemplar of piety many of her followers imagined and expected her to be. Even in theological terms, after all, she saw the Christian regeneration of individual character as a lifelong and sometimes bumpy process.

On the other hand, the letters and papers extant from her early life as a private citizen no less than from the later decades in which she emerged as a public figure reveal a person of ardent religious feeling. Whatever the limits of her education and culture, she was also, even in her early years, a dogged thinker whose

wrestlings over the discontinuities of her experience and destiny inevitably took a religious form. Compared to religion, she wrote in 1853 to the suitor who later became her second husband, "other things...are but a grain to the universe."²⁴ That was not how the suitor felt about religion, however, and even in church-steeped New England villages of the 1850s, it was not how most of her neighbors felt.

Both the ardor of her nature and the intensity of her religious questionings set her apart. If the young Willa Cather's portrayal of Eddy was mostly fiction, the English novelist Mary Ann Evans, a.k.a. George Eliot, may have come closer to truth in the course of describing one of her own fictional characters: Each of the "great originators" in history, Eliot wrote, "had to walk on the earth among neighbours who perhaps thought much more of his gait and his garments than of anything which was to give him a title" to later fame. "Each of them had his little personal history sprinkled with small temptations and sordid cares...." An agnostic with religious longings and an almost exact contemporary of Eddy's, Mary Ann Evans was also acutely conscious of the stiflings of larger promise in women's lives: Many a Saint Theresa has been born only to "a life of mistakes," she observed, a "foundress of nothing," whose struggles "to common eyes...seemed mere inconsistency and formlessness," and whose "heartbeats and sobs after an unattained goodness tremble off and are dispersed among hindrances instead of centring in some long-recognizable deed."²⁵

When those words were published in *Middlemarch* in 1872, the

description fit as much as anyone a lonely fifty-one year-old living on a shoestring in Lynn, Massachusetts.

2

The Christian Scientists' response to the vilification of their foundress often contributed to the inclination of others to believe the worst of her. Even before the *McClure's* series, officials of the young Boston church had themselves begun tramping the by-ways of New England to collect primary documents, reminiscences and in some cases affidavits from Eddy's past acquaintances. These along with the glycerine copies made of her own letters as early as the 1890s were the start of the historical collection that later became the denominational archives. This evidence no less than that gathered by Eddy's foes needed "careful sifting," as Robert Peel would point out in his eventual published biography.²⁶ The adoring were as prone as the recreant to garble events and conversations in retelling them, to report gossip as gospel, and to project their own personalities and motives into their interpretation of Eddy's. The latter would become a source of division in the movement in subsequent decades, when some of her followers used such historical revisionism to claim for her a divine status which she had rejected in her lifetime.²⁷ But for Church officials in the first decade of the century, circling the wagons in defense of a beloved religious teacher, the sifting of these tares and wheat was not a high priority, and only a few saw the need. Thus the collection mixed the historically valuable with much that was historically problematic.

The earliest church-authorized biography, by a convert to Christian Science named Sybil Wilbur O'Brien, reflected a convert's enthusiasm – "sycophantic" is recent biographer Gillian Gill's word for its style.²⁸ Following almost immediately on the *McClure's* series, the book was readily dismissed by critics as an attempt to sanitize the life so severely and apparently effectively uncovered by Milmine and her collaborators. In his entry on Eddy in the prestigious *Dictionary of American Biography*, published in 1931 in the wake of the Dakin controversy, historian Allen Johnson voiced the judgment of his profession in brushing aside the "official biography" as having "little historical value."²⁹ Few bothered to consider closely and comparatively the specifics of the evidence brought forward in it, or saw any reason for questioning the conclusions of the more compelling critical biographies. The result of this lack of questioning could be embarrassing, as when a Protestant minister a few years later claimed to have found a "source manuscript" from which Eddy "purloined" important parts of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, her first and most widely-read book. Despite conspicuous evidences of fraud in the claim, academic historians automatically accepted and repeated the accusation, only much later to learn that the manuscript had been forged in an unsuccessful scheme to extort a blackmail payment – \$50,000 was the original asking price – from Eddy's Church in Boston.³⁰

The perceptions of scholars were ruled not by a tyranny of facts but by a tyranny of preconceptions. In a marvelous account of recent transformations in the understanding of evolution, the late paleontologist and science writer Stephen Jay Gould has

explained how the grip of widely-held preconceptions led members of his own profession to drastic misreadings of long-familiar fossil evidence which persisted over a period of many decades. Science as ordinarily practiced, Gould observed, “is a complex dialogue between data and preconceptions.” No scientist approaches his subject with complete objectivity, but the necessity of sustained attention to the evidence – of letting the evidence “talk back,” as Gould puts it – serves as a crucial reality check on the influence of bias and false assumption. The dialogue breaks down when scientists fail to give this kind of attention to the whole of the evidence, and especially when preconceptions so condition perceptions that they fail to see the need. The danger in such a “one-way flow from preconception to evidence” is that scientists may miss anomalies in the data, contradictions between facts and accepted positions that would enable them to see the reality more clearly and with fresh insight.³¹ To paraphrase Eddy herself, they may see only what they believe and then believe that what they see is all that is there.³²

Resolute humanist that he was, Professor Gould might have been bemused to see his shrewd observations on the study of natural history applied to the study of religious history. But in both of these very different contexts, prevailing attitudes operated to obscure obvious as well as not so obvious realities. For the better part of a century, the gulf separating the views of Eddy’s followers from those of the bulk of the religious and academic communities largely foreclosed the kind of “dialogue” between evidence and preconceptions that might have yielded fresh insight into her life and work. Neither side allowed the full evidence to

talk back.

Mundane problems relating to the accessibility of evidence also hindered the chances for such dialogue. Eddy's Church had no department equivalent to an archive before 1932, and only spottily-organized historical files for some years afterward.³³ In 1919 a member of the Church's Board of Directors, John V. Dittmore, took with him a large body of documentary materials following his dismissal in a dispute with the other Directors. Five years of divisive litigation followed. After losing his case, the embittered Dittmore left the Church and sold or circulated copies of the materials he had taken. In 1932 he teamed with a more experienced writer who had been recommended to him, Ernest Sutherland Bates, to produce another in the line of astringent biographical exposés, *Mary Baker Eddy: The Truth and the Tradition*.³⁴ Bates wrote the bulk of the book, but Dittmore seems to have contributed a note of special scorn for the credulity of his former church brethren. Stung by internal disaffection and distrustful of the bias of academic historians, the principal gatekeeper institution in this story, the Church of Christ, Scientist, was inclined to guard rather more warily the gates to its extensive historical collections, then and now by far the most important source of primary materials on the subject.

Even in the 1930s, however, the Church was never quite the monolithically closed institution that some assumed it to be. As a graduate student in 1935, Robert Peel informed his Harvard professors that "after protracted negotiations with the Board of Directors" of Eddy's Church, he had been "promised access" to

the full range of “unexploited material” in the Church’s historical files that would be necessary to the study he proposed. The Board had placed no limits on his access to the Christian Science leader’s letters, he related, “save those on which definite restrictions have been placed by Mrs. Eddy or by their individual donors,” some of whom were then still living.³⁵ Peel’s was undoubtedly a special case, since he had gained the trust of Church officials, but his intentions as stated to both the Church and the University were by no means sycophantic. Professor Kittredge acknowledged the potential scholarly significance of this grant of access in his reluctant rejection of the proposal, stating that Peel’s “scheme is so interesting, and the material which he commands is so valuable, that I felt tempted to say, ‘Go ahead with my blessing!’”³⁶

It is one of the ironies of Christian Science scholarship that, had Harvard given its blessing to the project, the Church might decades sooner have begun to open its archives to serious scholarly use. As it was, there were longrunning differences within the denomination’s administration over whether and how much to make the materials available to historians. The official who first urged Peel’s access was Clifford Smith, a former judge who headed the Church’s Bureau of History and Records when it was organized in 1932. Smith sometimes found himself at odds with Miriam Loveland, the fiercely protective custodian of the documents for many years who oversaw with devout meticulousness the mammoth task of transcribing typed copies of Eddy’s letters. Both represented a generation for whom Eddy was a living memory. Their contrasting perspectives on the legitimate

uses of the historical records were related less to academic concerns than to what in their estimation would most do justice to *her*. Such differences persisted as archival procedures were professionalized over the next generation – Dr. Lee Z. Johnson became the Church’s first archivist with scholarly training in 1962 – and as growing portions of the holdings were opened to inquiring individual scholars after the publication of the Peel volumes. A specially-convened committee of Christian Scientists from several disciplines urged “the need for a more credible archival policy,” as Johnson later recounted, in a report to the Church’s Directors in 1964.³⁷

Some in the denomination felt that release of documents which put Eddy’s vulnerabilities on display would do her a disservice and undermine the faith of church members. Others felt increasingly that the image of Eddy often encouraged among members, the glorified figure of religious legend, was itself part of the problem, diminishing what they regarded as her hard-won spiritual insights and the nature of her discipleship. The latter view was analogous to that urged by the Lincoln scholar quoted earlier, William Lee Miller, who suggested that the Lincoln “legend” – the “mythic picture” of the great president as an almost sainted figure risen up miraculously free from the shortcomings of more ordinary mortals – “may have, ironically, a perversely damaging effect on our understanding of Lincoln as a real human being in a real world. If his instant and constant wonderfulness is stipulated in advance, taken for granted from the outset...,” Miller states, “then his actual moral achievements are discounted,” and we may miss “the ways in which he may

actually have become" a person of moral stature.³⁸ The notion that Mary Baker Eddy might have had "actual moral achievements" remains a rather novel proposal outside the ranks of her followers, but that conviction was what prompted them to gather and preserve the archival documents in the first place.

3

In 1885, the two-year-old *Journal of Christian Science* carried a short but lavish encomium to its founder excerpted, as the heading indicated, "From Private Letter." "So wonderful is the healing power of Mrs. Eddy, the discoverer of C.S.," the excerpt began, "that people are cured of life-long diseases by simply hearing her speak. To read a page of her writings has cured many a hopeless invalid, and even her printed name in the *Journal of Christian Science* lifts people from sick beds. So potent is the power of a mind consecrated wholly to the salvation of the world!"³⁹ The founder responded in the next month's issue in a sharp statement, unsigned but unmistakably hers, entitled "False Praise": "In our last issue and under caption of 'From Private Letter,' some silly bombast about healing appeared, which had better remained *private*, if, indeed, such extravagant claims had ever been made by a sane person." She continued tautly: "Fustian never graced a fact, and the inflated style of imagination is not adapted to descriptions of what actually occur."⁴⁰

In the years since the Peel trilogy, Eddy's church has had a mixed record in the commitment to serious history suggested by her strong rebuke. In 1991 the Christian Science Publishing Society

announced plans to reissue earlier biographical works by Sybil Wilbur O'Brien, Lyman Powell, and others as part of a "Twentieth-Century Biographers Series," described as "a major shelf of works" for "all those who, now and in the future, want to know more about this remarkable woman, her life, and her work."⁴¹ One of the first books to appear in the series was *The Destiny of The Mother Church*, a half-memoir, half theological tract written a half-century before by Bliss Knapp, the son of one of Eddy's students, and presenting her as specifically selected by God before her birth to an "assignment" comparable to that of Jesus.⁴² The Church's Directors in earlier years had deemed the book unchristian and contrary to Eddy's teaching, refusing to publish it despite the enticement of a legacy that would come from the estate of Knapp's wife if the Church did. Church officials at the time denied that the decision to publish it in 1991 had any connection to the legacy, which had by then grown to \$100 million and was due to expire.

The "Twentieth-Century Biographers Series" in effect re-mythologized Eddy's life. Some books in the Series largely abandoned the standards of evidence and historical seriousness toward which the denomination had been reaching in the previous decades, offering a haloed version of her life without the hint of contradictory evidence or complicating facts.⁴³ The same incongruity has permeated the Church's announcements of a new institution to house her papers, the "Mary Baker Eddy Library for the Betterment of Humanity," slated to open in September 2002. The Church has hired outside scholars to the Library's advisory board and promises unhindered access to most of the material in

its collection.⁴⁴ “Humanity has a right to know Mary Baker Eddy,” stated one top official.⁴⁵ But the Eddy presented by Church officials to members in promoting the multimillion dollar facility has been the familiar iconic figure to be piously acclaimed, not the more difficult and unsettling foundress whom it is the task of genuine scholarship to examine and understand.

Secular scholars, meanwhile, have continued to present images of Eddy that are as wildly and irreconcilably conflicting as those which circulated in her lifetime. Peel’s labors notwithstanding, only a few appear to have let the available evidence on both sides “talk back” – actually challenge or confirm their preconceptions in specific and tangible ways. Yet that must be the first criterion for credible biography no less in Eddy’s case than in that of other, more easily categorized religious figures, whether the resulting portrait is approving or reproving or a combination of the two. It is perfectly within the rights of an author to declare his or her contempt for Eddy, as the former *Scientific American* columnist Martin Gardner forthrightly does in a self-described “lambasting” published in 1993,⁴⁶ or as the literary critic Caroline Fraser does not have to in two blisteringly articulate more recent essays in *The New York Review of Books*.⁴⁷ But contempt for *evidence*, or for the conscientious processes through which it can be assessed, betrays the values to which scholars have committed themselves. If the Christian Scientists have no excuse for basing the conclusions they draw of her on impressions now known to be dubious or apocryphal, scholars have even less.

At the same time, as Karl Holl suggested long ago, the

preconceptions with which scholars must contend in any seriously-intentioned study of Eddy may present special challenges for entering into her view of life sufficiently to grasp her own perspective or motivation – what *she* thought she was about – in the controversies which confronted her. The two most seriously-intentioned biographies published in the past decade, Robert Thomas's 1994 psychoanalytically-oriented study ⁴⁸ and Gillian Gill's feminist depiction four years later, both grew out of considerable engagement with the primary sources, including materials at the Church of Christ, Scientist. Thomas in particular was caught in the crossfire of administrative change at the Church; after researches in the archives over a period of years, new administrators in the early 1990s refused permission for him to quote from Eddy's letters in his published work. Gill was granted such permission and has since become a consultant in the Church's efforts to publicize an image of Eddy as a forerunner of modern advocates for women. While the interpretations offered in both the Thomas and Gill books were shaped – many on either side of the debate would undoubtedly say, skewed – by their differing preconceptions, both authors allowed the evidence to talk back on a range of factual issues.

Despite insights in both biographies, the central dynamic of Eddy's life, what she once called the "inmost something" which gave purpose to her considerable energies over many decades – her *religion* – remains largely hidden in them.⁴⁹ The effect is rather like a portrait with a shrouded face: We see the clothes of the woman, the size and shape of the body, but we do not get a real glimpse of *who she was*. We can only surmise whether the face

behind the shroud has a scowl or an expression of beatific love. Eddy told her followers that the way to know her was through her writings, but at the distance of a century, separated from her world by vast cultural changes, most readers bring their own set of refracting filters – attitudes, assumptions, stereotypes, misconceptions – to their encounter with her words. The historian's challenge, much like that which confronted Perry Miller in his monumental studies of the Puritan ethos, is to clear away those distorting filters so that the meaning – and the woman – can be seen and understood in something like their original resonance.

The prophetic nature of Eddy's religion adds to this challenge. She eschewed the popular connotations of the term "prophet" and in her writings avoided its application to herself. Her followers also avoided referring to her by the term, and when critics referred to her as a "prophetess" the label was usually sarcastic. But she was an exponent of prophetic religion in at least one sense: She insisted that the heart of Christian faith and life lay in the direct experience of the divine. She saw this experience as drastically overturning customary perceptions of the world, even to the point of calling into question, as she wrote, the "atheism of matter."⁵⁰ Biographers like Ernest Bates could barely restrain themselves from calling such views crazy: She "undermined the laborious conquest of centuries," he stated, by "discredit[ing] the habit of rational inference from physical observations."⁵¹ Those inclined to take her spiritual perspective more seriously, and patient enough to wrestle with the language in which she labored to convey it, saw something more akin to what the secular writer

George Steiner described in the radical twentieth-century French convert to Christianity Simone Weil: "intimations of a common thirst for light on the other side of reason, but rationally urged and somehow communicable, sensible to human thought and discourse...."⁵²

The problem of prophetic religion has always been how to live it in the resistant circumstances of ordinary life. Eddy was a "firsthand experiencer," in the words of Martin Marty, but she was not an antinomian ready to withdraw from the broader society or call down indiscriminate judgment on its institutions. She believed that all Christians should be firsthand experiencers, and as a teacher she sought to make firsthand experiencers of shoe factory workers and housewives as well as theologically-trained ministers of the Gospel. Like most Protestants, she held that any genuine experience of God must have tangible outward effects, beginning with regeneration from sin. Her teaching that these effects could more systematically include healing of the body was soul-stirring for some, beyond the pale of respectable religion for many others.

In that gulf lies the biographer's most difficult, uncertain, but worthwhile terrain. The great interest of her life comes from her struggle to realize prophetic religion in the practical realm, in the always perplexing relation between ideals and human nature. "'When first I learned my Lord,'" she wrote in her eighties to a young correspondent, "I was so sure of Truth, my faith so strong in Christian Science as I then discovered it, I had no struggle to meet....But behold me now washing that spiritual understanding

with my tears!"⁵³ The same struggle confronted her in the effort to organize a church embodying the Christianity of firsthand experience in institutional forms that would not themselves operate to quench the life of the Spirit they were intended to nurture and support. The astonishing assumption that her life can be understood without thoroughly engaging the spiritual concerns that preoccupied her may be a residue of religious and gender-related biases long repudiated by historians in other contexts.

4

In the nearly seven decades since Robert Peel's doctoral proposal at Harvard, the situation of Eddy's church has dramatically changed. This change has inevitably influenced historical perspectives on the Christian Science leader.

The 1930s were a period of vigorous if somewhat slowing growth for the denomination. Despite concerns voiced by some members that fewer Christian Scientists appeared to have the unreserved spiritual commitment that Eddy had drawn out in many of her early followers, there was a general confidence within the church that its best days lay ahead. By the late 1970s, the number of Christian Science congregations had begun to decline. The membership wrestled with the challenge of sustaining spiritual ardor in conditions of material affluence, even as Eddy's movement sought to adjust to a new cultural situation in which the value of serious religious faith was being widely challenged. Many in the denomination increasingly looked back to earlier supposed "golden days" (as one author titled a

children's biography of Eddy in 1966) when the church's prospects – at least in the glow of hindsight – appeared brighter.

Historian though he was, Robert Peel had little nostalgia for a past that he recognized had never been particularly idyllic. Like Perry Miller, Peel was sobered by the experience of the World War and its aftermath, and he followed Miller's example in suggesting that the questions with which religious figures such as Eddy wrestled have enormous contemporary meaning even in a secularized environment. "In the late twentieth century," stated the epilogue in the final volume of his trilogy, "questions that were once considered to be metaphysical luxuries have become sharply relevant to the survival of the human race."⁵⁴

The epilogue made the case for understanding Eddy in the larger context of the history of Christianity and the modern crisis of faith. Peel acknowledged that the jury on her place in that history was still out, but was clearly convinced that she *has* a place which would ultimately be recognized. Momentarily dropping the historical narrative, he predicted that "how seriously she would be taken" in the future would largely depend on the lives of her followers and the spiritual credibility of her church – not "its size or prestige but the quality of the Christianity demonstrated by its members."⁵⁵

Two decades later, the case for Eddy's significance seemed to many more problematic. From Gillian Gill's perspective as a non-religious outsider, the chief interest of Eddy's history lay in the light it sheds on the experience of other women of her time, not in

any spiritual purpose or insight notable enough to matter beyond the small body of her followers a century later. Tellingly, Gill's epilogue made no effort to assess Eddy's place in any larger history, but concerned itself with the details of her death, funeral, and the legal disposition of her property.

The focus of the Gill biography was not Eddy's lifework but her personal story, which, said the book, "rewrites the female plot and offers new ways to strive and achieve."⁵⁶ The substance of Eddy's achievement in this portrayal was her unlikely success in rising to fame and building a considerable organization. The figure who emerges is an eccentric minor celebrity, in some ways to be admired, in some ways not, but hardly someone whose life carried more elemental meanings for history.

Numerical decline, internal turmoil, and various legal and medical challenges to Eddy's organization in the past quarter century have also affected perceptions of her among her followers. The epilogue in Richard Nenneman's 1997 biography *Persistent Pilgrim: The Life of Mary Baker Eddy*, likened "great leaders" to "large ships plying the deep waters, leav[ing] a wake behind them." The image implied that Eddy's "wake" or influence would only fade with time: "As the wake broadens, it also becomes weaker, mixing with the other currents around it."⁵⁷ Given the source – Nenneman is a former official of the Christian Science Publishing Society – the image suggests that the most serious challenge confronting the denomination may be a loss of confidence within its own membership in the future of the Church of Christ, Scientist, as Eddy constituted it.

For Christian Scientists and historians alike, however, the situation also presents an opportunity to move beyond the agendas which have skewed perceptions of Eddy in the past and take a fresh, inclusive look at a leader who even in the midst of controversies seems herself to have had little doubt as to the verdict that “honest history” – her phrase – would ultimately render on her work or her life. “It is self-evident,” she declared with typical finality, “that the discoverer of an eternal truth cannot be a temporal fraud.”⁵⁸ Commitment to honest history will inevitably bring new perspectives. A fresh look at her life requires not only the shedding of outdated myths but, on both sides, a fuller coming to terms with the live core of her spiritual legacy – what Professor Marty in a discussion of Peel’s work once called the “dynamite” in religious tradition which “has power...can break apart encrustations, loosen what was hardened, make room for new flow, new growth.”⁵⁹

While new assessments of Eddy will inevitably flow from the large body of newly available evidence, her significance for a new generation may derive less from conventional readings of her life as a late nineteenth-century entrepreneurial female success story than from her profound dissent and nonconformity in a culture increasingly disconnected from its own professed values.

On one level, she hungered for a respectability denied through much of her adulthood and not easily compatible with the radical nature of prophetic religion. “As regards her minor half, she is as commonplace as the rest of us,” Mark Twain

observed in mocking the evidences of this hunger in her writings.⁶⁰ Ever ambivalent about his own aspirations to higher status in society, Twain mocked the more because his humor masked the same hunger for respectability in himself. In her case no less than his, however, the minor half was just that – a part of her, but the lesser part.

The impoverishment and indignities of her middle years painfully accentuated her sense of the precariousness of her own identity. Unlike her sisters who married more successfully, she lived a marginalized existence through several decades, largely without means and always in danger of slipping from any semblance of middle-class respectability. Unlike Twain, she had little access as a woman to the opportunities for establishing a more secure condition that he took as an American birthright for men. The experience of living on the margin left her sensitive to the snubs of the established churches as well as the wider society in later years. Like someone protecting a wound not fully closed, she sometimes compensated by highlighting slender evidences of respectability or muting vulnerable elements in her past.⁶¹ But the same experience that rendered her status so precarious through many years also moved her beyond religious conventionality and the often deadening encasement of spiritual experience in outwardly respectable forms.

While the wrenching dislodgements of her twenties, thirties, and forties do not “explain” the direction her life ultimately took, it is unlikely that she would have broken from more ordinary religious paths without those dislodgements – if, say, she had

been the successful literary figure she hoped to be, or if her experience of marriage and domestic life had been more fulfilling, or even if she had simply been financially self-sufficient and to that extent freed from downward social pressures.⁶² The very circumstances which seemed crushing in her life became a driving force behind her break with theologies which held at arm's length (or so it seemed to her) the immediacy of the divine reality. "We are hungry for Love...," she wrote in a Christmas message in the 1890s; "we are tired of theoretic husks...."⁶³

She spoke specifically of "being driven...by my extremity" to the new perspective on healing that gave her movement its distinctive character. The statement occurs in an unpublished personal note on her relation with her mentor in the first half of the 1860s, a non-medical healer from Maine named Phineas Quimby. The latter practiced a form of healing through persuasion, combining shrewd if primitive psychotherapy with a strain of Yankee idealism that appealed to Eddy's own. Twain and a host of biographers have attributed to Quimby whatever of substance they acknowledged in her teaching, but for Eddy, it was precisely the substance of her teaching that separated genuine Christian healing from forms of psychological cure. "They talk of my letters to Quimby, as if they were something secret, they were not, I was enthusiastic, and couldn't say too much in praise of him...," she recounted in the note. The point being missed, she felt, was the gradual but fundamental transformation in her view of the nature of healing. Nothing less than the living spiritual union with God which she believed to be at the center of biblical Christianity would "answer the cry of the human heart for succor,

for real aid...."⁶⁴

This message pervades her nontraditional meditations on traditional Christian themes, including "Atonement and Eucharist," the chapter in *Science and Health* which Eddy pronounced to be a key to understanding her own spiritual history. The chapter presumes a great gulf between the "God-inspired" discipleship taught by Jesus and "the world's religious sense" embodied in patterns of piety increasingly accommodated to human customs and conceptions: "To suppose...that Christianity is at peace with the world because it is honored by sects and societies, is to mistake the very nature of religion."⁶⁵ The chapter also presumes the multi-faceted humanity that is missing from most of the Eddy biographies. For all her emphasis on the "human ability to reflect divine power," the religious life extolled in "Atonement and Eucharist" is hardly one of smooth self-affirmation. Salvation "is not reached through paths of flowers." Spiritual progress is "attended with doubts and defeats as well as triumphs." Love of sin must be quenched by, if nothing else, "sufficient suffering."⁶⁶

She suggested of Jesus himself that "the human element in him struggled with the divine...." The chapter's vivid descriptions of those struggles – his "bitter experience," public "shame," "human yearning," "the sweat of agony which fell in holy benediction on the grass of Gethsemane," the "last supreme moment of mockery, desertion, torture" on the cross – are strikingly at odds with the common impression of her teaching as a sunny-minded gospel of health, prosperity, and success.⁶⁷ They

also belie readings of her character which have grown from that mistaken impression. For Eddy, the spirituality of Jesus represented a deepening of human sensibility, not a sentimental take on life, and not the prim exercise in the psychology of denial that critics and sometimes followers made of her interpretation of Christian theology. Daughter of Puritanism that she was, she saw in Jesus' character a window on the nature of God. "The divinity of the Christ," she stated in "Atonement and Eucharist," "was made manifest in the humanity of Jesus."⁶⁸ She broke with Puritan orthodoxy in suggesting that the humanity of Jesus also presented a window on "true humanhood" – the essential selfhood, however obscured, of every individual in the image of God.⁶⁹

It was a perspective she found as relevant to biography as to theology. Eddy's conviction that the experience of the divine reveals the core of human identity was pivotal and transforming in a life long conspicuous only for disappointment and failure. It meant that human beings are not finally defined by their histories, circumstances, or even the contradictions of their own personalities – in the more traditional language of Calvinism, their sins. Nor was this to her a merely rhetorical or abstract position; Eddy took it not only as a source of personal liberation but as an elemental truth quite larger than herself. For biographers, this may be a key to reconciling the vulnerable woman who confessed readily to being "the weakest of mortals" with the prophetic religious initiator who in the next breath could declare with outrageous conviction that "as the discoverer and founder of Christian Science, I am the bone and sinew of the world."⁷⁰

Notes

1. Robert Peel, "The Intellectual and Literary Development of Mary Baker Eddy," undated doctoral thesis proposal. Robert Peel papers. This and other documents cited from the Peel papers are used by permission of the Robert Peel estate. Law firm of Hill & Barlow, Boston, Massachusetts.

2. George L. Kittredge to Kenneth Murdock, 26 February 1935. Peel papers.

3. Kenneth B. Murdock to Robert Peel, 27 February 1935. Peel papers.

4. *Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Discovery, The Years of Trial, and The Years of Authority* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston; 1966, 1971, 1977).

5. Martin E. Marty, *The New York Times Book Review* (March 12, 1978).

6. "Out of New England, a New Faith," *The New York Times Book Review* (July 13, 1958): 4. Miller was reviewing Peel's *Christian Science: Its Encounter with American Culture* (New York: Henry Holt, 1958) and Charles S. Braden's *Christian Science Today: Power, Policy, Practice* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1958).

7. Mary Baker Eddy, *Message to The First Church of Christ, Scientist, or The Mother Church, Boston, June 15, 1902* (Boston: The First Church of Christ, Scientist; 1902), p. 14.

8. William Lee Miller, *Lincoln's Virtues: An Ethical Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), p. xiv.

9. Edwin Franden Dakin, *Mrs. Eddy: The Biography of a Virginal Mind* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), p. ix.

10. Dakin, *Mrs. Eddy*, p. viii.

11. Robert Peel to the Christian Science Board of Directors, 9 January 1937. Peel papers.

12. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, "Eddy, Mary Baker," in *Notable American Women, 1607-1950: A Biographical Dictionary*, eds. E.T. James et al (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press; 1971), p. 560.

13. *The Letters of William James*, II, ed. Henry James (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1920), pp. 66-73. William James testified before the Massachusetts Legislature in the 1890s in opposition to several medical bills aimed at suppressing Christian Scientists' practice of healing. His son Henry was somewhat defensive about his father's action, reporting William's remark that "X— personally is a rapacious humbug" in reference to one of the healers "who had a very large following." The unnamed "X—" is almost surely Eddy. Henry may have omitted giving the

name in deference to his sister-in-law, who was by then a member of First Church of Christ, Scientist, Cambridge.

14. Georgine Milmine, *The Life of Mary Baker G. Eddy and the History of Christian Science* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1971), p. 80.

15. The University of Nebraska Press in 1993 went so far as to publish the book as Willa Cather's, omitting Milmine's name entirely from the cover and title page. That probably overstates her role, at least on the evidence of Cather's own testimony in her later years. In a letter to an inquirer in 1933, she minimized her contribution to the book: "To credit me with authorship is incorrect....I had no interest in it beyond making it as presentable for the magazine as possible – presentable, I mean, from purely a technical point of view, as a readable narrative." (Peel, *Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Authority*, p. 472.) If by then Cather did not wish the book to be considered part of her literary legacy, there's little doubt that she did help make it a much more "readable narrative" than it otherwise would have been.

16. Milmine, *The Life of Mary Baker G. Eddy*, pp. 31, 26, 32.

17. Dakin, *Mrs. Eddy*, p. ix.

18. See the discussion of Milmine's sources in Gillian Gill, *Mary Baker Eddy* (Reading, Massachusetts: Perseus Books, 1998), pp. 563-568

19. Milmine, *The Life of Mary Baker G. Eddy*, pp. 158-159, 223, 428.

20. "Szientismus," in Karl Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1921-1928), pp. 450-479. From an unpublished translation.

21. Milmine, *The Life of Mary Baker G. Eddy*, pp. 15,39.

22. Mary Baker Eddy, *Message to The Mother Church for 1902*, p. 2.

23. Mary Baker Eddy, *No and Yes* (Boston: The First Church of Christ, Scientist; 1936), p. 34. The full sentence reads: "Physical torture affords but a slight illustration of the pangs which come to one upon whom the world of sense falls with its leaden weight in the endeavor to crush out of a career its divine destiny."

24. Letter to Dr. Daniel Patterson, March 1853. The Mary Baker Eddy Collection. L08903. The Mary Baker Eddy Library, Boston, Massachusetts.

25. George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (New York: New American Library, 1964), pp. 147, vii-viii. Eliot/Evans was referring to Saint Teresa of Avila, the sixteenth-century religious reformer and spiritual writer.

26. Peel, *Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Trial*, p. 334.

27. The most influential example may be Bliss Knapp, *The Destiny of The Mother Church* (Boston: The Christian

Science Publishing Society, 1991). Knapp reports his own long-after-the-fact recollection of one of his father's anecdotes to justify his theological assertions. Neither the anecdote nor the secondhand reporting of it are supported by actual evidence closer to the fact.

28. Gillian Gill, *Mary Baker Eddy*, p. 570.

29. Allen Johnson, "Eddy, Mary Morse Baker," in *Dictionary of American Biography: Vol. VI*, eds. Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), p. 14.

30. The book was Walter Haushalter's *Mrs. Eddy Purloins from Hegel: Newly Discovered Source Reveals Amazing Plagiarisms in Science and Health* (Boston: A.A. Beauchamp, and London: Rationalist Press, 1937). For a history of the entire episode, see Thomas C. Johnsen, "Historical Consensus and Christian Science: The Career of a Manuscript Controversy," *The New England Quarterly* 53 (March 1980): 3-22.

31. Stephen Jay Gould, *Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989), p. 244.

32. Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (Boston: The First Church of Christ, Scientist; 1906), p. 86. Eddy's statement reads: "Mortal mind sees what it believes as surely as it believes what it sees."

33. Interview with Lee Z. Johnson, February 7, 2002. Author's notes. Johnson served as the denomination's archivist from 1962 to 1991. The facts relating to the institutional history of the Church's archives in this section are drawn from this interview.

34. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1932. During his last illness in 1937, Dittmore recanted his earlier positions, including the view of Eddy presented in his book with Bates, writing to the Church's Board of Directors that he had "come to the humble conclusion that [he] made a great mistake in allowing personal differences of opinion and the feelings that developed therefrom, to influence me to the extent which they evidently did...." The letter is quoted in full in Peel, *Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Authority*, pp. 509-510.

35. Robert Peel, "The Intellectual and Literary Development of Mary Baker Eddy."

36. Kittredge to Kenneth Murdock, February 26, 1935.

37. *Marlène Johnson Memorial Fund for Scholarly Research on Christian Science* (Boston: Marlène Johnson Memorial Fund, 2002), p. 9. The "Study Group on Scholarly Relations" convened at the request of the Church's Board of Directors in 1963. The participants, all church members, included professors at Harvard, Cambridge University in England, and the University of California at Los Angeles as well as a number of academically-trained Christian Scientists who were serving

in church posts at the time.

38. Miller, *Lincoln's Virtues*, pp. xii-xiii.

39. "From Private Letter," *Journal of Christian Science* 3 (October 1885): 135.

40. "False Praise," *Journal of Christian Science* 3 (November 1885): 154.

41. "Introduction: Twentieth-Century Biographers Series," in Bliss Knapp, *The Destiny of The Mother Church*, pp. vii-ix.

42. Knapp, *Destiny*, pp. 223, 260.

43. Yvonne von Fettweis and Robert Warneck, *Mary Baker Eddy: Christian Healer* (Boston: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 1998).

44. Lesley Pitts, "Welcome to the archives....," *The Christian Science Journal* 120 (April 2002): 37.

45. Virginia Harris, "Mary Baker Eddy: '...in my true light, and life....,'" *The Christian Science Journal* 120 (April 2002): 17.

46. Martin Gardner, *The Healing Revelations of Mary Baker Eddy: The Rise and Fall of Christian Science* (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus, 1993), p. 10.

47. Caroline Fraser, "Mrs. Eddy Builds Her Empire," *The New York Review of Books* (July 11, 1996); and "Overachiever," *The New York Review of Books* (April 27, 2000).
48. Robert Thomas, *"With Bleeding Footsteps": Mary Baker Eddy's Path to Religious Leadership* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994).
49. Mary Baker Eddy, *The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany* (Boston: The First Church of Christ, Scientist, 1941), p. 133.
50. Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (Boston: The First Church of Christ, Scientist, 1971), p.580.
51. Bates and Dittmore, *Mary Baker Eddy: The Truth and the Tradition*, p.194.
52. George Steiner, "Bad Friday," *The New Yorker* (March 2, 1992), p. 88.
53. Quoted in Peel, *Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Authority*, p. 237.
54. Peel, *Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Authority*, p. 365.
55. Peel, *Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Authority*, p. 366.
56. Gill, *Mary Baker Eddy*, p. xviii.

57. Richard A. Nenneman, *Persistent Pilgrim: The Life of Mary Baker Eddy* (Etna, N.H.: Nebadon Press, 1997), p. 347.

58. Eddy, *The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*, p. 143.

59. Martin E. Marty, "The Dynamite in Tradition," *Bulletin of the Park Ridge Center* (July/August 1988): 1,11.

60. Mark Twain, *Christian Science* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1907), pp. 79-80.

61. Cf. the recently published manuscript "Footprints Fadeless," which Eddy assembled "in 1901-2 to answer the accusations then being circulated by one of her most vehement critics. Probably wisely, she chose not to bring out the manuscript. Jana K. Riess describes it as "a defensive, wary document" in her introduction to the recent edition. *Mary Baker Eddy: Speaking for Herself* (Boston: The Writings of Mary Baker Eddy, 2002), pp. xli.

62. The prominent Congregationalist minister Horace Bushnell preached a sermon entitled "Spiritual Dislodgements" to his Hartford, Connecticut church in the 1850s. Drawing on an old Christian theme, the sermon could in some ways describe the course of Eddy's life at the time: "We need...to be shaken out of our places and plans, agitated, emptied from vessel to vessel....We cannot be refined on our lees, or in any course of life that is uniformly prosperous and secure....But when great changes or

calamities come, our crust is broken up, and the freshening breath of the Spirit fans the open chamber of the soul....”

Horace Bushnell, *Sermons for the New Life* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1858), pp. 417,423.

63. Eddy, *Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 369.

64. Quoted in Peel, *Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Discovery*, p. 183.

65. Eddy, *Science and Health*, pp. 53,41,28.

66. *Science and Health*, pp. 52,22,39,36.

67. *Science and Health*, pp. 33,32,36,48,50.

68. *Science and Health*, p. 25.

69. Mary Baker Eddy, *Unity of Good* (Boston: The First Church of Christ, Scientist; 1887), p. 49.

70. Quoted in Peel, *Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Authority*, p. 326.