

THE MARY BAKER EDDY LIBRARY

FOR THE BETTERMENT OF HUMANITY

Source Material on the Life and Work of Mary Baker Eddy

Primary Sources

With the opening of The Mary Baker Eddy Library in September 2002, the papers of Mary Baker Eddy became open to the public. This vast collection includes approximately 20,000 letters, articles, sermons, and other manuscript materials written by her; nearly 8,000 letters written by her secretaries on her behalf; letters sent to her by approximately 7,000 different correspondents; over 800 reminiscences written by people who knew her; and substantial historical documentation on the Church of Christ, Scientist, and the Christian Science movement. This wealth of primary materials allows researchers to explore the life and writings of Mary Baker Eddy for themselves instead of having to rely on secondary sources. For more information on the Library, go to www.mbelibrary.org.

Mary Baker Eddy's published writings include: *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*; *Church Manual of The First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, Massachusetts*; *Christ and Christmas*; *Poems*; *Miscellaneous Writings 1883-1896*; *Retrospection and Introspection*; *Unity of Good*; *Pulpit and Press*; *Rudimental Divine Science*; *No and Yes*; *Christian Science versus Pantheism*; *Messages to The Mother Church for 1900, 1901, 1902*; *Christian Healing*; *The People's Idea of God*; *The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*.

Some Secondary Sources

The first major biography of Mary Baker Eddy was Georgine Milmine's *The Life of Mary Baker Eddy and the History of Christian Science* (1909). A mix of some fact with a lot of fiction, the book was based on a series published in *McClure's Magazine* in 1907-1908. The writing was largely the product of *McClure's* editorial staff, including Willa Cather. Milmine cites the recollections of people who knew Mrs. Eddy, but her reliance on Eddy's opponents makes the book decidedly one-sided. Milmine's inaccuracies have been reproduced in a number of Eddy biographies.

Edwin Franden Dakin's *Mary Baker Eddy: The Biography of a Virginal Mind* (1929) is another source for many of the myths and misrepresentations about Eddy that continue to be repeated today. Dakin appears to fictionalize some events; he provided detailed thoughts and motivations for his subjects that he was in no way privy to and gives moment to moment descriptions of events in which he was not a participant. The lack of documentary evidence makes his work more of a sensational novel and less of a reliable biography.

Kingdom of the Cults (first edition, 1965; latest edition, 2003) by Walter Martin is largely based on the work of Milmine and Dakin and, as a result, is full of inaccuracies. Like these two authors, Martin also offers testimony from Eddy's opponents as the sole evidence to support his charges against her. His assessments of her leadership style and theological teachings are often

drawn from statements taken out of context. Martin's text offers a refutation as opposed to a survey of Eddy's doctrine.

Robert Peel's trilogy on Mary Baker Eddy (1966, 1971, 1977) is considered the most comprehensive and detailed record of her life, based on the simple fact that he was given complete access to the archives of The First Church of Christ, Scientist, long before they were ever open to the public. The first volume of *Mary Baker Eddy*, subtitled *The Years of Discovery*, charts Eddy's life up through the publication of *Science and Health* in 1875; volume two, *The Years of Trial*, documents her tribulations and successes in the intervening years up to the early 1890s; the last installment, *The Years of Authority*, covers 1892 to Eddy's passing in 1910. Some opponents of Christian Science have dismissed Peel's work out of hand because he was a Christian Scientist, but many other critics have praised its scholarly rigor and foundation in documentary evidence. The publication of Peel's three volume work caused some sensation in parts of the Christian Science community because he does not shy away from discussing Mary Baker Eddy's struggles in an open and frank way.

Gillian Gill, Ph.D. in her biography, *Mary Baker Eddy* (1998), methodically moves through the standard criticisms of Eddy's life prominent in many previous biographies. Through careful analysis of documentary evidence, she offers a fresh picture of Eddy that is rooted in original material as opposed to a rehashing of suspect secondary sources. Based on her research, Gill unequivocally refutes the claims that Eddy was a hysteric as a child, that she was an unloving mother, that she plagiarized Phineas Parkhurst Quimby, and a host of other false charges long filed against Eddy. Gill is not a Christian Scientist and has no interest in Christian Science. Her work is useful for its careful consideration of Eddy's life and times, but it offers little analysis of her ideas. The Appendix of Gill's biography provides a helpful survey of published books on Eddy.

Stephen Gottschalk, Ph.D. in *Rolling Away the Stone: Mary Baker Eddy's Challenge to Materialism* (2006) takes a thematic approach to Eddy's life, focusing on its last two decades, as opposed to a chronological one. Using her relationship with Mark Twain as a frame, Gottschalk places Eddy within the context of her time and analyzes her efforts to forward a religion based on the premise of a spiritual as opposed to a material reality. Like Robert Peel, Gottschalk was a Christian Scientist, but he is also regarded as a credible independent historian. His work is noted for the broader cultural perspective his explanations bring to the theology of Christian Science. *Rolling Away the Stone* is the first biography to incorporate material from the newly-opened Mary Baker Eddy Library.

February 2007