The Birth of the Christian Science Movement and Its Social Background : Mrs. Eddy's Quest in the Gilded Age

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> *EDDY, Mary Morse Baker, 1821-1910*. American founder of the Christian Science Church. As an invalid, she sought many types of healing; after exhaustive trial of physical methods she investigated mental healing; helped by and became student of Phineas P. Quimby (from 1862); later (c.1866) turned to the Bible during recovery from the effects of a severe fall and discovered the spiritual and metaphysical system known as Christian Science. Completed *Science and Health* (1875) explaining this system; chartered (1879) "Church of Christ, Scientist" and (1881) Massachusetts Metaphysical College; followers multiplied and spread her teachings; publishers of *The Christian Science Monitor* (from 1908), etc.
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> —*Webster's New Bibliographical Dictionary* (Springfield: Merriam-Webster Inc., 1987).

I

Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of the Christian Science Church, was a fragile, sensitive person who suffered from an unstable emotional condition through most of her life. Due to her ill health, she had virtually no formal education. She was poor and friendless. From her early 20s to her late 50s she had to struggle for her own livelihood. And like most of her contemporary countrymen, she went through the upheavals of the changing moral and material values of the "Gilded

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Age." Yet, from this insecure, seemingly hopeless condition, she gave birth to a new church. The Church of Christ, Scientist — as the Christian Science Church was officially known — was one of America's few indigenous religions, and was to teach mental and material ways to "heal oneself" to the people of her time and thereafter. Mary Baker Eddy's teachings would save people who, like her, were insecure, statusless and poor.

Mary's lifetime (1821-1910) spanned the years of heroic American capitalism. Newly emerging industry was changing the world order. Cities were created and idyllic rural America was changing into a closely knit nation of mushrooming urban centers. In place of home-made goods, factories were beginning to provide mass-produced products. Master cobblers or clocksmiths were losing business and status as an artisan in competition with factory-made merchandise. With the prospect of "conspicuous consumption" and a flood of new ways of life, the old, established customs were losing their hold. How to speak to parents, what kind of vocation to pursue, where to put sofas, how to eat, what to read, how to behave at parties and other such nagging uncertainties were creeping into the American mind.[1]

Another disturbing phenomenon of the time was the march of scientific discoveries, especially Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. The scientific approach toward the origin of the world and human beings was casting a shadow of doubt on the authority of the Bible and its account of creation. Confronted with this emerging skepticism toward the authority of the Bible, most Protestant churches adopted a refurbished version of the old doctrine of predestination and held that "evolution is God's way of doing things." Yet, the personal God of Calvinism could not easily be reconciled with the world of natural science for the serious thinkers of the Gilded Age. In face of this duality, some thinkers were proposing the philosophy of Transcendentalism, which united nature, God, and man.

Besides religious thinkers and Transcendentalists, other serious philosophers of the time were trying to find ways to explain the puzzling world. For instance, William James was, in the early 1870s, proposing Pragmatism with faith in the scientific method, experimentation, progress, and empirical values as a way of life. Observing these new

trends and the diminishing faith in orthodox Protestantism, a poetess in New England wrote:

> The religion of our fathers overhung us children like the shadow of a mighty tree against the truth of which we rested, while we looked up in wonder through the great boughs that half-hid and half-revealed the sky. Some of the boughs were already decaying, so that perhaps we began to see a little more of the sky than our elders . . .[2]

In response to this decaying faith, some Protestant leaders were trying to adjust traditional religion to fit into a new mold of thought. Some were even trying to incorporate industrial society into their Protestantism in the form of the Social Gospel Movement.

Yet for the common people of the Gilded Age, the world around them was simply unfathomable. It was as if modern civilization typified by noise, railway travel, buying on margin, rapid turnover of ideas, steam power, the popular press, and the social activities by women — was overloading the circuits of tradition.[3] Living in the midst of this period as one of the underprivileged, Mary experienced these uncertainties and was one of those uncomfortable with the rapid changes in society.

She was born in a small, two-story farmhouse at Bow, near Concord, New Hampshire. It was a typical agricultural community in the New England area. The Eddy home was located on an isolated hill rising from the valley of the Merrimac River. She was to live in this pastoral setting for her first 15 years. Her father, Mark, was a New England Congregationalist who had a deep-seated piety and lived in the world of Jonathan Edward. One neighbor, who lived miles away, called him "Squire Baker" and the younger members of the community called him "uncle." In other words, he was a typical father figure from the world of the past: pious, well-respected, hard-working, and a tiller of the soil. Mary later recollected that he was a strong supporter of moral principles and that his opinions were always colored with the tone of authority.

Mary's father lived in a steady, sure world but Mary herself grew

up to be a frail and uncertain girl. Any disturbance around her would cause her almost unbearable pain. A nearby loud voice would make her physically ill. One reason she did not go to school was the noise other children made. Because of this fragile condition, Mary was treated as a special child. She was excused from many of the house chores which her two elder brothers and one elder sister had to perform. Even observance of the Sabbath was relaxed in the family because Mary could not stand to listen to the Bible all day.

As Mary grew, she became even more sensitive. In her teens she would react physically to unpleasant situations, often falling into a near-coma or "fit". This happened so often that it became almost a weekly incident at the Eddy's. When a fit seized her, the whole family would become intensely anxious and try to correct the situation, whatever it was, in order to soothe her nerves. Usually, she gave no trouble so long as she got her way. That was why her family tried to make sure her wishes were honored at any cost.

Upon examination, Dr. Ladd, a family physician, diagnosed her condition as "hysteria mingled with bad temper" and recommended the family not worry about her. He even suggested Mary be left alone even if she "dropped lifeless on the ground." In spite of this recommendation, the family continued to treat Mary as a fragile flower. Being brought up in this manner, she seemed to have developed a peculiarly self-centered consciousness. Her occasional schoolmates commented that she appeared to be assuming a "very superior air." One of the students complained that Mary loved "to impress us with fine stories about herself and her family."[4]

In a more stable period, Mary's protected world probably would have continued intact. But the dissonant sound of the age of enterprise was reaching the family and causing disturbances in the old way of life. Mark's sons declared that they did not want to till the hostile New England soil after the fashion of their ancestors. The eldest brother, Samuel, went to Boston to learn the mason's trade. Albert, the second son, entered Dartmouth College. They were to pursue lifestyles quite different from that of their father from then on.

After the departure of the brothers, the family also had to move. Confronted with economic hardships, Mary's aging father decided to

relocate to a larger community to try his luck in 1836. In contrast to Bow, the town of Sanbornton to which they moved was a lively manufacturing center that was growing at a rapid rate. Typically, when it was time to leave Bow, both Mary and her mother became ill. This delayed the departure of the family, but the move was eventually carried out regardless of their wishes.[5]

Mary's fragile health continued to be a problem in the new town. Besides the fits she threw so often, Mary developed the habit of screaming loudly when confronted with unpleasant situations. She continued to be a difficult, uncertain person. Yet, when she became 26 years old, Mary seemed to have found a ray of hope to get herself out of her predicament of a strongly paternalistic family, the prospect of becoming an old maid, comparative poverty, and the noise and commotion of the town of Sanbornton. She found a man to marry. He was a stone mason by the name of George Baker. However, the marriage lasted only six months before George died. It was a major tragedy for Mary because this meant she had to go back to her family and her old way of life, a combination which brought back her bouts of illness.

Mary returned to her parents' home. There she delivered George's child. The baby boy, who was to become Mary's sole consolation during this period, was named George Washington Baker. This safe refuge for Mary at her parents' home did not last long, either. Mary's mother died in 1849 and her father remarried the next year. This situation made it increasingly difficult for Mary to stay at home. Although her new mother-in-law was kind to her, her father made it clear that his home was not a place for Mary and her son. Soon Mary moved to the home of her sister, Abigail Tilden, who was married to a wealthy industrialist in Sanbornton.

Life in her sister's home was also difficult for Mary. Her mental condition deteriorated further. At night, she would often alarm the household with sudden screams for help. Staring wildly, she would rush about the room. At bedtime, someone in the household had to hold her and rock her to sleep. By 1850, she had so many attacks that she was virtually an invalid. Later her son George, unable to tolerate the family condition and his mother's sickness, decided to leave. To lose her son was another tragedy that aggravated her condition.

Having no steady source of income, Mary had to borrow money constantly from her sister Abigail. Mary knew she could not continue this indefinitely. In idle times she dreamed of being financially independent by acquiring some skill such as piano instruction. Yet at the same time she was looking for someone like her father who could be relied on for both emotional and financial support. Mary wrote to her friend:

> I feel as if I must begin something this summer, if my health is sufficient. I am weary working my way through life from the middle to the end. I want to learn to play on a piano so that I can go south and teach. This is all I shall ever be able to do, and this once accomplished and I am independent . . . . Oh, how I wish I had a father that had been ever willing to let me know something.[6]

This conflicting dream of being independent and dependent almost came true in 1853. Without becoming a piano instructor and without going back to her father, Mary found a third way in the person of Daniel Patterson, a self-appointed dentist, who proposed marriage in that year. The marriage was another chance to get out of the home of her sister with an income and companion to depend on. With the prospect of a better life, her condition gradually improved. She had fewer attacks and her screaming fits disappeared.

Unfortunately for Mary, this happiness also proved fleeting. After a few months of marriage, the couple started to argue. She fell back into the habit of staying in bed all day and reading books and newspapers. At first, Patterson sought relief by prolonging his business trips. Finally, however, he volunteered for the medical corps of the Northern army in the Civil War. He left Mary without money or protection. When he finally came back from the war, violent quarrels developed again. Patterson then left her permanently, with an empty promise of monthly alimony of $200.

Without means to support herself, Mary had to seek the kindness of others again. She often became a house guest of her acquaintances. Frequently, She had no home to return to after the "scheme of visits" had served its purpose. Her sister, Abigail, was not willing to take

Mary back after some violent scenes. Now, Mary had no more family ties to rely on.

In fact, she had been stripped of everything that seemed to make life dear. Her health was gone. Her son was lost in the West. She often wrote in this period as if life seemed to have lost meaning. Furthermore, as the life expectancy of women of her generation was 37 years,[7] she had passed this age of "statistical death" long before. Indeed, thoughts of death often appeared in her writings of this period. She wrote in her scrapbook in 1857:

> Mother waits me in the far beyond! And through the discipline, the darkness and trials of life, I am walking into her.[8]

Despite her growing desperation, Mary still had to have a night's sleep before the next day dawned. In search of comfort and a place to lay her head, Mary embarked on an odyssey that took her to the homes of numerous spiritualists, Quakers, and other kindhearted people. She knocked, for example, the door of a certain Mrs. Hary Webster. When Mrs. Webster answered and asked what the visitor wanted, Mary said that she needed lodging and that the spirits had told her to come there. "Glory to God," exclaimed Mrs. Webster, "come right in." After a few weeks or months, Mary would stand again on the street, looking for a place to stay.[9]

II

When Mary went to Phineas Parkhurst Quimby in 1862, she was in the depths of despair. She had only a few dollars left in her pocket. Her health condition was deteriorating further and she was experiencing constant attacks and fits again. She visited many doctors and was declared to be incurable. As a poor, sick and difficult woman, to find a lodging was increasingly difficult. Under such circumstances, she was to meet a man who promised healing. Quimby would not propose marriage nor give her a night's lodging. But he would promise her a miracle—a cure for her illness.

Quimby was a spiritual healer who was fairly well-known in New

England at that time. He had a good reputation for treating many patients who came to him as a last resort. Hearing of his reputation, Mary visited Quimby in Maine. After one week of treatment, Mary was able to climb the 180 steps that led to the dome of the City Hall of Portland, Maine. She wrote to Quimby that she had "a splendid appetite" and that she was "cheerful, and felt like an escaped prisoner."[10]

Although this was but one of Quimby's successful treatments, many people wanted to hear the story of Mary's cure directly from the woman who experienced it. So Mary carried her good news of healing to every household where she was allowed to stay. She would talk about her amazing experience at the dinner table as she traveled back and forth between Maine and Massachusetts. Her hosts were usually factory workers. They were not sophisticated or rich, but were glad to listen to the story of Mary's "miracle."

At the supper table, surrounded by the tired but curious family, Mary would vividly present the way in which she was cured, and then the talk would gradually shift into higher things. She would talk about the essence of science, the way God ruled the world, and the relationship between the human spirit and God's way of being. After two hours or so, leaving the impressed family at the table, she would retire into her attic room to "write a book."

Indeed, this task of "writing a book" was one of the few thin threads Mary clung to in seeking a purpose for her existence. Until the book was finished, she believed she could not die. To be a writer was a respectable thing, and for the factory workers who offered accomodations, the existence of an authoress in the house was a gratifying phenomenon. Occasionally, she would bring down the manuscript and read it aloud to her hosts. The book, like her supper table presentations, was to show the way to wholesome health by spiritual healing in a great synthesis of science and the way of God.

Meeting with Quimby was the main source of inspiration for Mary. Quimby claimed that the knowledge of "Christ Science" would destroy diseases. According to him, disease was the result of false thinking. One did not see the world in a correct manner due to one's prejudices and lack of knowledge. But if one learned the principles of

science and the way of Christ, all the distortions and wrong notions would disappear, to form human existence into a full and wholesome single entity, thus eliminating sickness from one's body.[11]

While trying to grasp the essence of Quimby's teachings, Mary regained her health. By establishing the cornerstones for Mary's health, Quimby became Mary's spiritual father. Quimby's teachings gave Mary the confidence to overcome her illness and keep on living in a difficult time. His teachings served as an answer to the riddles of the times. They allowed Mary to accept scientific thinking without losing her Christian faith and find ways to explain the meaning of personal loss of status without denying thc revolutionary changes brought by industrialization.

By this time Mary felt she owed much of her mental and physical existence to Quimby. Yet, she was not immersed solely in his teachings. One can find many echoes of the fashionable language of the Gilded Age in her thinking. Mary's manuscript and the evening lectures incorporated themes from the religious, philosophic and therapeutic literature of 19th century America. Besides Quimby's notes, she included excerpts from the writings of Andrew Johnson Davis, a leading spiritualist, and of Carlyle, Amiel, Ruskin, Kingsley and others.[12] Eighteen lines from Lindley Murray's *English Reader* were taken without change for her book. *Philosophic Nuggets*, a collection of short philosophical utterances, was another gold mine of ideas for her.[13] About this contemplative effort, she later observed:

> I sought knowledge from the different schools—allopathy, homeopathy, hydropathy, electricity, and from various humbugs. . . .[14]

The power of science that loomed so heavily in the 19th century mind was not to be disregarded, either. In 1876, she wrote a poem titled *Hymn of Science*.

> Saw ye my Savior? Heard ye the glad sound?
> Felt ye the power of the world?
> 'Twas the Truth that made us free,

And was found by you and me,
In the Life and Love that are God[15]

Throughout her writings she would use such words as "know," "realize," "discern," and "affirm" to indicate man's approach toward the truth. This was actually taken from the prestige-ridden terminology of science. Yet her approach to science was different from that of William James, Andrew Dickson or John Fiske. She thought that if rationally verifiable laws were the essence of science, then universal law should be stretched to include the law of healing by Jesus. In other words, if one would be healed by God from physical ailments, science ought to be able to explain it.

Another subject to which she gave serious consideration was the trend of New Theology. She herself was by no means a Biblical literalist. By rejecting what she called her father's "relentless theology" and adopting the New World view proposed by "science," she approached near to the thought of New Theology.[16] To the New Theologian, God was not an arbitrary being who intervened in human affairs at his pleasure. He was a spiritual power present in nature and human history. The Holy Spirit had to be reappraised as an agent bringing humanity back to Christianity. Mary also rejected the Calvinist conception of God and defined him as a spirit too abstract to interfere with human affairs.[17]

Other resonant voices of the time to reach her were those of Emerson, Thoreau, Melville and Whitman. In his controversial speech at the Harvard Divinity School in 1838, Ralph Waldo Emerson said that Jesus was not a person. He declared, "The soul knows no persons. It invites every man to expand to the full circle of the universe." Echoing William E. Channing, a breakaway Unitarian, the Transcendentalist suggested that science cast doubt on the existence of matter. Emerson observed, "He that has never doubted the existence of matter, may be assured he has no aptitude for metaphysical inquiries."[18]

Transcendentalists also found that the human mind could be identified with mystical nature and was not a product of total depravity. Mary incorporated these Transcendentalist ideas. In the first edition of her book, *Science and Health*, she showed a profound

knowledge of the Transcendental manner of writing:

> The wakeful shepherd tending his flocks, beholds from the mountain's top the first faint morning beams ere cometh the risen day. So from the Soul's loftier summits shines the pale star to the prophet shepherd, and it traverses night, over to where the young child lies...[19]

Since Transcendentalism was influenced by Oriental religion, Mary's teachings included many traces of Eastern mysticism. She quoted in some early editions of *Science and Health* from Hindu and Buddhist texts. In the first edition of this book she remarked that Buddhism was an embodiment of the "truer idea of God."[20] Pointing out the similarity of Indian philosophy and Mary's writings, Swami Vivekananda, who attended Chicago's World Parliament of Religion in 1893, said, "They have picked up a few doctrines of the Advaita and grafted them upon the Bible. And they cure diseases by proclaiming... I am He. I am He. . "[21] Indeed, America of this period was eager to read about Eastern religions. James Clarke's *The Great Religions* and Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*, a life story of Buddha, were circulating widely in the country.

Mid-19th century America was host to numerous schools of mental healing. Among the questions which loomed large in Mary's life, none was more pressing than the problem of health. Against such orthodox methods as being bled in a barbershop or giving a large dose of calomel or mercurous chloride to a patient, the new mental cures seemed to offer an effective alternative. For instance, Annie Call, a popular healer in New England, was advocating the Swedenborgian idea of "controlling passive body by active mind with divine influx" as being more effective than the letting of blood.[22]

In Germany, Samuel Hahnemann was saying that diseases were the immaterial alterations of an impalpable principle and must be combated by forces of the same kind. His book on homeopathy was translated into English in the 1840s and had a wide following. Mary possessed a copy of *The New Manual of Homeopathic Practice*, edited by A. G. Hull. The book was an American adaption of Hahnemann's ideas.

According to her biographer, this book constituted her chief reading beside the Bible during the 1850s.[23] This peculiar combination of physical cure and man's relationship to God, a belief common to all these schools of thought, was to become an important backbone for Mary's teachings.

Americans were investigating yet another area of psychic phenomenon—spiritualism, or occultism. Occultism was widely accepted and aroused great interest between 1840 and 1880. Mary was deeply involved in this spiritual experimentalism. Often she talked about mysterious psychic events that happened to her. Indeed, her first follower, Hiram Crafts, had been a spiritualist. She clipped out articles extensively from the *Banner of Light*, a spiritualist periodical. One article in this publication in 1869 said, as if to represent her opinions, "How to drive away error with truth is the highest practical teaching; and such teaching in its own nature is a direct emanation from the Divine Mind."[24]

In writing a book in a search for happiness and health, Mary combined many of the conventional wisdoms that were available. She did not segregate serious philosophical efforts from popularly held notions, thus combining the New Theology with a rationalism inspired by science. Transcendentalism was to coexist with the belief of mental healing as well as occultism. By combining these available wisdoms, she reached her version of a synthesis by the end of the century. She came to regard "all cause and effect as mental, not physical." According to her, this view shows "the scientific relation of man to God, disengages the internal ambiguities of being, and sets free the imprisoned thought."[25] In her book *Retrospection and Introspection*, published in 1891, she elaborated her points:

> It is well to know, dear reader, that our meterial, mortal history is but the record of dreams, not of man's real existence, and the dream has no place in the science of being. It is 'as a tale that is told,' and 'as the shadow when it declined...'[26]

In one sense this was a denial of the empirical world. Once convinced that this world was a shadow, it did not matter to a believer

what happened within the shadow. Misery, sickness and insecurity were not real. There could be no conflict between religion and science, for the whole perceptual sense of physical world was an illusion. Thus Darwinism was not a threat to the Bible. Emerging scientific thinking was not opposed to God because both of them were illusions. This was Mary's version of having the last word on Christianity, science and the troublesome world.[27] Ironically, by denying the senses, she regained the confidence necessary for a healthy life. Because misery was a mere shadow, nothing would stand in her way toward complete happiness. She organized a formula to dodge the tragic happenings in this world. Interestingly, this formula, her way to complete happiness, was a distant echo of the "fits" she experienced in her youth. Confronted with unpleasantries, Mary used to pass out and would not face them. With her newly formulated philosophy, she could disregard unbearable situations by saying they were not real.

III

Mary Baker Eddy developed her religious doctrines along the line of the denial of the senses. According to Mary, God was represented by the synonyms of Light, Truth, Love, Mind, Spirit, Soul and Principle. God was not the Calvinistic personality. God was conscious and infinitely existent.[28]

Man was actually an individualization of God. As part of the divine existence, man was also wholly Mind. God did not infuse life in man, but man was life itself, and so was God. As part of this Mind, man was perfect, eternal, unlimited, immortal, all-intelligent, incapable of sin and free from disease or death. The physical and mortal man we see in this world was not the real man, but a counterfeit caused by man's distorted view of himself. Because of his false perception, he invited his own limitations and sin, sickness, poverty and other miseries.

Like man, the world as we see it is a counterfeit. Creation was also purely spiritual. According to Mary, the first story of creation in Genesis was true but human beings distorted the truth with their deformed minds. Creation was interpreted wrongly as a materialistic

creation while truth itself was spiritual. Therefore, erroneous creation arising from mistaken perceptions had to be denied continuously.[29] On the other hand, if we perceive the world correctly, we deserve a happy condition. She said, "The sinner makes his own hell by doing evil, and the saint his own heaven by doing right."[30]

To be saved from this self-inflicted trap of misery, man had to look to Jesus as a guide. He was the first man to understand the truth of divine science. It was not his Crucifixion and Resurrection that saved us; real redemption was in the message he conveyed to us that we are "whole" beings. Man's redemption also would mean healing from his material or physical sickness. By recognizing his true nature, he could also prevent ill health, accident or misfortune. Mary wrote:

> Admit the existence of matter, and you admit that mortality has a foundation in fact. Deny the existence of matter, and you can destroy the belief in material conditions.[31]

A dark force in her spiritual world was "malicious animal magnetism." It was evil thought, created by someone thinking ill of another person. It could work from a distance but this magnetism had power only as long as its power was believed in. Mary took this belief seriously as a significant part in her understanding of science. She later instructed the Board of Directors of the Christian Science Church to set up a secret committee which would protect the church from these vicious forces.[32]

Mary did not deny the value of success in this materialistic world. Since the change from a false sense of the world would bring the individual into greater harmony with the world, one could control it easily. If we could live a whole existence, we naturally had the power to move part of the whole. This power would bring business success or good employment if one set one's mind on it. Because of this positive attitude toward material success, Christian Science periodicals often quoted success stories. Since "demonstrable teaching" was considered to be important, success in business was a suitable topic.[33] At the same time, this emphasis on practical success coincided with prevailing American values of the Gilded Age.

VI

By the end of the 1860s, Mary's spiritual world was taking shape. Her health was improving. She was ready for a wider audience.

In 1868, she put an advertisement in a spiritualist newspaper, soliciting students who wanted to study her method of mental healing. By 1870, she had a watchmaker's assistant, a box factory hand and two unmarried women as pupils. They listened to her lectures for six weeks for the fee of $100 each. As her reputation spread, this tuition was soon raised to $300 per head—one-third of a shoemaker's annual income.

Her school turned out to be a remarkable succcss. She impressed numerous students as a healer-philosopher. She found a receptive audience in many of the factory towns in New England. Her students were courted in many places. One of her early students, Richard Kennedy, the former box factory worker, also became famous as a healer-philosopher. Upon opening an office of his own, his healing business thrived and "Dr." Kennedy paid Mary $1,744 after one year's practice as a commission. With this kind of success, Mary was finally on her way to financial independence.[34]

The town where Mary and Kennedy originally operated as healers was Lynn, Massachusetts, a well-known manufacturing center of shoes for the entire nation. Like many of the manufacturing centers in America, the town was originally a small village. Started by John Pagyr, a Welshman famous for his ladies' shoes, manufacturing grew gradually in Lynn. In 1795, the town employed 200 master workmen and 600 journeymen and apprentices in the shoe business. By the time of the Civil War, the town was the biggest shoe manufacturing center in the U.S., with more than 300,000 pairs of shoes being shipped to the Southern market monthly.[35] The population of Lynn grew by 33.9% from 1850 to 1860. In the following 10 years, it grew another 48%. Within two decades the population had doubled. This rapid growth was to continue until the turn of the century.[36]

Mary took her message to the ever-growing population of factory workers in Lynn. Among the 11,807 workers in town, 69% were employed in the shoe industry. Reflecting the national trend of an

influx of immigrants, about 35% of the inhabitants of Lynn were foreign-born, according to the 1870 census.[37] Women were working in large numbers, accounting for 27% of the work force in 1880.[38]

Increasing factory workers, an expanding number of immigrants, large numbers of working women—these were not the only changes the town was experiencing. Lynn was also seeing the appearance of slums. Dirty brick buildings, rows of gray-white ramshackle houses, pale, tired faces and other signs of human misery were easily observed in the city.[39]

More significantly, the old master craftsmen were losing ground due to the incessant substitution of unskilled labor and machinery. One contemporary observer remarked on this trend:

> So ingenious are the contrivances of modern mechanics that children and untaught persons take the places and do the work of those who have learned their craft by long apprenticeship.[40]

This was the challenge of the machine age to the ways of the old world. Mary drew her students for the most part from this drastically changing community. Sibyl Wilbur, an official biographer of Mary, described her humble followers:

> The students who were drawn together were workers; their hands were stained with the leather and tools of the day's occupation; their narrow lives had been cramped mentally and physically...[41]

Indeed, all of her early followers were inhabitants of the less privileged class of society. Calvin Frye, Mary's secretary until her death in 1910, was a machinist and had only an elementary school education.[42]

Although factory workers were Mary's largest group of followers, another kind of person eagerly sought her teachings. This group largely consisted of urban, middle-class, married women. These female followers complained to Mary that they were suffering from ill health, poverty, undesirable personal traits or some vague sense of unhappiness. Some complained about their depressed state of mind or family

discord.[43] Mary, who had gone through these agonies herself, was always sympathetic. She listened carefully to the grievances and "cured" many of the ailments.

As we have noted, Mary's teachings were well-received in Lynn: this was the town where she was able to establish herself as a healer-philosopher. In that sense, it was a special place for Mary. Yet Lynn was not a particularly unique town in America at that time. It was in the process of industrialization, but so were the rest of the towns in America. It had a large population of factory workers, but this was also true wherever factories operated. Many people were suffering from poor health, but this was not especially limited to Lynn. And a large number of people, especially women, were puzzled by the rapid changes in society. Their old status was being threatened, but again this was true for most people living at that time. In other words, if Mary's ideas were popular in Lynn, they had the potential to be popular throughout the country.

Through the 1870s and 80s, her followers steadily grew in number. By the mid-80s her teachings had spread to San Francisco, Denver, and Cleveland. She was on her way to national fame. Wherever she went, local newspapers reported on the "whirl of Eddy." The culminating triumph for Mary came in the form of the National Christian Science Association Convention held in Chicago in 1888. The participants gave an enthusiastic ovation when she appeared.[44]

In the 1890s, Christian Science became an object of nationwide interest. William James remarked:

> The mind-cure principles are beginning so to pervade the air that one catches their spirit at secondhand.[45]

The "magazine revolution" that started around 1890 also contributed to the popularization of Christian Science. Editors of new magazines quickly discovered that Mary's articles made salable copy.[46]

With all this increasing publicity, her theology and healing were scrutinized and criticized. Strong opposition came from established organizations such as churches and the medical profession. Doctors especially regarded Mary's methods to be extremely absurd. Concerted

efforts were made by orthodox physicians to eliminate the emerging healers from their market. The difficulty was that there was no clear-cut distinctions between the medical science of the time and other methods of healing such as mind-cure or homeopathy. Furthermore, the 1830s and 1840s brought the repeal of America's earlier medical license laws. Until then, anyone who considercd himself capable was able to call himself "doctor" and open an office. This was the result of Jacksonian Democracy that opposed all monopolistic legislation. The granting of licences was considered to be an official sanction of monopoly. By 1871, however, reaction to this liberalism was gathering force. In February 1872, the American Medical Association adopted a resolution which stated that those who joined a sectarian organization could not be recognized as medical practitioners.[47] The medical profession had officially condemned Mary's methods.

The condemnation did not stop there. Orthodox forces were pushing governments in various parts of the country to prohibit the mental healing. In 1884, after four years of bitter struggle, the Massachusetts Legislature passed a law requiring every practitioner of medicine to take a state examination. This was regarded as the final victory for orthodox medicine. It was reported that the only way for "quackery" to survive was to escape to the West.[48]

Mary's answer to this persecution was not escape. Instead, she found her refuge in religion. In 1879, when New Hampshire passed a medical license law, her organization became a religious establishment. It was registered officially as the Church of Christ, Scientist. As a religion, no one could bother her since her activities were protected under the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religious belief. Another sanctuary in America was education. Mary was alert enough to recognize this. When discussion of legislation against "quackery" heated up in other parts of the country, she founded the Massachusetts Metaphysical College in 1881.

In spite of attacks from orthodoxy, medical and religious, the Christian Science Church was to persist. By 1885, Mary had 140 healers in her organization and the number increased many fold as time passed by. The headquarters of her church called the Mother Church now stands solidly in the middle of Boston without any hint of its

humble origin in Lynn.

In retrospect, Christian Science, one of the few American-born religions, was a typical product of the Gilded Age. It taught the way to business success and healed sickness. In this sense, it was immensely pragmatic. At the same time, it tried to provide answers to the nagging philosophical and cultural questions of the time. Christian Science also reflected the influences of contemporary thought, ranging from New Theology to occultism.

Her religion tried to provide practical answers to the common problems of the day. Yet, the most significant aspect of the founding of the church was that it tried to face the question of insecurity, a feeling that many Americans had at that time. The founder herself lived an extremely unsteady life. She had no wealth and was not blessed with lasting marriages. Her health was fragile. Confronted with these unstable conditions, Mary proposed a remarkable formula to see this world as an illusion. Thus she provided a theoretical framework to combat her sense of insecurity.

Most of Mary's followers were like their leader. They had no money, no status and not much education. They were constantly threatened by mechanization at factories, the arrival of new immigrants and changing social values. Yesterday's way of life was not acceptable and many people were puzzled when confronted by these changes. It was natural that her teachings were well-received by people who were more or less suffering from similar circumstances. Christian Science offered, at least to believers, the means to survive through this rough and tumble period in American history. They took comfort in an unconventional dogma to combat a world which was itself becoming increasingly unconventional, yet still ruled by conventional forces.

Mary Baker Eddy, a fragile lady from New England, thus left a lasting legacy in the Gilded Age — not for the rich and sophisticated of the time, but for the poor and common people.

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