

# *A brief history of Mary Baker Eddy's Church*

## COLLEGE AND CHURCH

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In 1867 I introduced the first purely metaphysical system of healing since the apostolic days. I began by teaching one student Christian Science Mind-healing. From this seed grew the Massachusetts Metaphysical College in Boston, chartered in 1881. No charter was granted for similar purposes after 1883. It is the only College, hitherto, for teaching the pathology of spiritual power, **alias** the Science of Mind-healing.

My husband, Asa G. Eddy, taught two terms in my College. After I gave up teaching, my adopted son, Ebenezer J. Foster-Eddy, a graduate of the Hahnemann Medical College of Philadelphia, and who also received a certificate from Dr. W. W. Keen's (allopathic) Philadelphia School of Anatomy and Surgery, - having renounced his material method of practice and embraced the teachings of Christian Science, taught the Primary, Normal, and Obstetric class one term. Gen. Erastus N. Bates taught one Primary class, in 1889, after which I judged it best to close the institution. These students of mine were the only assistant teachers in the College.

The first Christian Scientist Association was organized by myself and six of my students in 1876, on the Centennial Day of our nation's freedom. At a meeting of the Christian Scientist Association, on April 12, 1879, it was voted to organize a church to commemorate the words and works of our Master, a Mind-healing church, without a creed, to be called the Church of Christ, Scientist, the first such church ever organized. The charter for this church was obtained in June, 1879, \*1 and during the same month the members, twenty-six in number, extended a call to me to become their pastor. I accepted the call, and was ordained in 1881, though I had preached five years before being ordained.

\*1 Steps were taken to promote the Church of Christ, Scientist, in April, May, and June; formal organization was accomplished and the charter obtained in August, 1879.

When I was its pastor, and in the pulpit every Sunday, my church increased in members, and its spiritual growth kept pace with its increasing popularity; but when obliged, because of accumulating work in the College, to preach only occasionally, no student, at that time, was found able to maintain the church in its previous harmony and prosperity.

Examining the situation prayerfully and carefully, noting the church's need, and the predisposing and exciting cause of its condition, I saw that the crisis had come when much time and attention must be given to defend this church from the envy and molestation of other churches, and from the danger to its members which must always lie in Christian warfare. At this juncture I recommended that the church be dissolved. No sooner were my views made known, than the proper measures were adopted to carry

them out, the votes passing without a dissenting voice. This measure was immediately followed by a great revival of mutual love, prosperity, and spiritual power. The history of that hour holds this true record. Adding to its ranks and influence, this spiritually organized Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, still goes on. A new light broke in upon it, and more beautiful became the garments of her who "bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace."

Despite the prosperity of my church, it was learned that material organization has its value and peril, and that organization is requisite only in the earliest periods in Christian history. After this material form of cohesion and fellowship has accomplished its end, continued organization retards spiritual growth, and should be laid off, - even as the corporeal organization deemed requisite in the first stages of mortal existence is finally laid off, in order to gain spiritual freedom and supremacy.

From careful observation and experience came my clue to the uses and abuses of organization. Therefore, in accord with my special request, followed that noble, unprecedented action of the Christian Scientist Association connected with my College when dissolving that organization, - in forgiving enemies, returning good for evil, in following Jesus' command, "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." I saw these fruits of Spirit, long-suffering and temperance, fulfil the law of Christ in righteousness. I also saw that Christianity has withstood less the temptation of popularity than of persecution. (Retrospection and Introspection p.44)

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#### From a report by the Clerk, at the Annual Meeting, 1906

On September 8, 1882, it was voted that the church hold its meetings of worship in the parlors of Mrs. Eddy's home, 569 Columbus Avenue, Boston. The services were held there until November, 1883, and then in the Hawthorne Rooms, at No. 3 Park Street, the seating capacity of which place was about two hundred and twenty-five. At a meeting October 22, 1883, the church voted to wait upon Mrs. Eddy, to ascertain if she would preach for the society for ten dollars a Sunday, which invitation she accepted. After establishing itself as a church in the Hawthorne Rooms, the number of attendants steadily increased. The pulpit was supplied by Mrs. Eddy, when she could give the time to preach, and by her students and by clergymen of different denominations, among whom was the Rev. A. J. Peabody, D.D., of Cambridge, Mass..

The annual report of the business committee of the church, for the year ending December 7, 1885, contains some very interesting statements, among which is this: "There was a steadily increasing interest in Christian Science among the people, even though the continuity of thought must have been very much broken by having so many different ones address them on the subject. When our pastor preached for us it was found that the Hawthorne Rooms were inadequate for the occasion, hundreds going away who could not obtain entrance; those present enduring the inconvenience that comes from crowding, for the sake of the eternal truth she taught them." The **Boston Traveler** contained the following item: "The Church of Christ, Scientist, had their

meeting Easter Sunday at Hawthorne Rooms, which were crowded one hour before the service commenced, and half an hour before the arrival of the pastor, the Rev. Mary Baker Eddy, the tide of men and women was turned from the door with the information, 'No more standing-room.' "

On February 8, 1885, communion was held at Odd Fellows Hall, and there were present about eight hundred people. At this time the Hawthorne Rooms, which had been regarded as the church home, were outgrown. During the summer vacation, different places were considered, but no place suitable could be found that was available, and the Sunday services were postponed. There was an expectation that some place would be obtained, but the desire for services was so great that the Hawthorne Rooms were again secured. A record of this period reads, "It should be here stated that from the first of September to our opening, crowds had besieged the doors at the Hawthorne Rooms, Sunday after Sunday." On October 18, 1885, the rooms were opened and a large congregation was present. It was then concluded to engage Chickering Hall on Tremont Street. In the previous consideration of places for meeting it had been decided that this hall was too large, as it seated four hundred and sixty-four. The first Sunday service held in Chickering Hall was on October 25, 1885. Mrs. Eddy preached at this service and the hall was crowded. This date is memorable as the one upon which the Sunday School was formed. Meanwhile it was felt that the church needed a place of its own, and efforts were made to obtain by purchase some building, or church, in a suitable location. Several places were considered, but were not satisfactory; yet the thought of obtaining a church edifice, although given up for a time, was not forgotten. In the mean time, not only was the attendance rapidly growing in this church in Chickering Hall, but the Cause itself was spreading over the land. September 1, 1892, Mrs. Eddy gave the plot of ground on which The Mother Church now stands. On the twenty-third day of September, 1892, twelve of the members of the church met, and, upon Mrs. Eddy's counsel, reorganized the church, and named it The First Church of Christ, Scientist. This effort of Mrs. Eddy was an inspiration to Christian Scientists, and plans were made for a church home.

In the mean time Sunday services were held in Chickering Hall, and continued there until March, 1894, and during the last year the hall was crowded to overflowing. In March, however, the church was obliged to seek other quarters, as Chickering Hall was to be remodelled. At this time the church removed to Copley Hall on Clarendon Street, which had a seating capacity of six hundred and twenty-five, and in that place Sunday services were held until The Mother Church edifice was ready for occupancy, December 30, 1894. During the months that the congregation worshipped in Copley Hall there was a steady increase in attendance.

Twelve years ago the twenty-first of last month, the corner-stone of The Mother Church edifice was laid, and at that time it was thought the seating capacity would be adequate for years to come. Attendance at the Sunday service gradually increased, until every seat was filled and many stood in the aisles, and in consequence two services were held, morning and afternoon, the latter a repetition

of the morning service. The date of the inauguration of two Sunday services was April 26, 1896. It was soon evident that even this provision was inadequate to meet the need, and it was found necessary to organize branch churches in such suburbs of Boston as would relieve the overcrowded condition of The Mother Church; therefore three branch churches were organized, one in each of the following named places: Cambridge, Chelsea, and Roxbury.

For a while it seemed that there would be ample room for growth of attendance in The Mother Church, but notwithstanding the relief that the organization of branch churches had given, the number of attendants increased faster than ever. From the time that the three foregoing named churches were established, the membership and the attendance at them and at The Mother Church steadily grew, and more branch churches were established in other suburbs, members of which had formerly been attendants at The Mother Church. In the spring of 1905 the overcrowded condition of the morning service showed that still further provision must be made, as many were obliged to leave the church for the reason that there was not even standing-room. Therefore, beginning October 1, 1905, three services were held each Sunday, the second and third being repetitions of the first service.

This continued growth, this continued overcrowding, proved the need of a larger edifice. Our communion services and annual meetings were overcrowded in The Mother Church, they were overcrowded in Tremont Temple, in Symphony Hall, and in the Mechanics Building, and the need was felt of an auditorium that would be of great seating capacity, and one that would have the sacred atmosphere of a church home.

In Mrs. Eddy's Message to the church in 1902 she suggested the need of a larger church edifice, and at the annual meeting of the same year the church voted to raise any part of two millions of dollars for the purpose of building a suitable edifice. The labor of clearing the land was begun in October, 1903, and the corner-stone was laid July 16, 1904.

The first annual meeting of the church was held in Chickering Hall, October 3, 1893, and the membership at that date was 1,545. The membership of this church to-day is 40,011. The number of candidates admitted June 5 of this year is the largest in the history of the church and numbers 4,889, which is 2,194 more than the hitherto largest admission, that of June, 1903. The total number admitted during the last year is 6,181. The total number of branch churches advertised in **The Christian Science Journal** of this June is 682, 614 of which show a membership of 41,944. The number of societies advertised in the **Journal** is 267.

Shortly before the dedication of The Mother Church in 1895, the **Boston Evening Transcript** said: "Wonders will never cease. Here is a church whose Treasurer has sent out word that no sums except those already subscribed can be received. The Christian Scientists have a faith of the mustard-seed variety. What a pity some of our practical Christian folk have not a faith approximate to that of these impractical Christian Scientists."

The fact that a notice was published in the **Christian Science Sentinel** of last Saturday that no more funds are needed to complete the extension of The Mother Church, proves the truth of the axiom, "History repeats itself." These are the evidences of the magnificent

growth of this Cause, and are sufficient refutation of the statements that have been made that "Christian Science is dying out."

The majesty and the dignity of this church edifice not only shows the growth of this Cause, but proclaims the trust, the willingness of those who have contributed to the erection of these mighty walls.

This magnificent structure, this fitting testimonial in stone, speaks more than words can picture of the love and gratitude of a great multitude that has been healed and purified through the labor and sacrifice of our revered Leader and teacher, Mary Baker Eddy, the one through whom God has revealed a demonstrable way of salvation. May her example inspire us to follow her in preaching, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," by healing the sick and reforming the sinful, and, as she has done, verifying Jesus' words, "Lo, I am with you always."

(The First Church of Christ, Scientist p.52 - 58)

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### The Christian Science Journal, January, 1895 - extract

The Mother Church edifice - The First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, is erected. The close of the year, Anno Domini 1894, witnessed the completion of "our prayer in stone," all predictions and prognostications to the contrary notwithstanding.

Of the significance of this achievement we shall not undertake to speak in this article. It can be better felt than expressed. All who are awake thereto have some measure of understanding of what it means. But only the future will tell the story of its mighty meaning or unfold it to the comprehension of mankind. It is enough for us now to know that all obstacles to its completion have been met and overcome, and that our temple is completed as God intended it should be.

This achievement is the result of long years of untiring, unselfish, and zealous effort on the part of our beloved teacher and Leader, the Reverend Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science, who nearly thirty years ago began to lay the foundation of this temple, and whose devotion and consecration to God and humanity during the intervening years have made its erection possible.

Those who now, in part, understand her mission, turn their hearts in gratitude to her for her great work, and those who do not understand it will, in the fulness of time, see and acknowledge it. In the measure in which she has unfolded and demonstrated divine Love, and built up in human consciousness a better and higher conception of God as Life, Truth, and Love, - as the divine Principle of all things which really exist, - and in the degree in which she has demonstrated the system of healing of Jesus and the apostles, surely she, as the one chosen of God to this end, is entitled to the gratitude and love of all who desire a better and grander humanity, and who believe it to be possible to establish the kingdom of heaven upon earth in accordance with the prayer and teachings of Jesus Christ. (Pulpit and Press p.84)

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