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ARTICLE

Manhood and Mary Baker Eddy: Muscular Christianity and Christian Science

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Abstract

On first examination, "muscular Christianity"—with its emphasis on manly vigor and physical strength—positions itself well afield of Christian Science teachings on the non-physical basis of existence, as propounded by founder Mary Baker Eddy. Nonetheless, both movements arose in the nineteenth century with a deep commitment to revitalizing Christianity and its practical value in an increasingly scientific and secular age, especially regarding bodily well-being. Both Eddy and advocates of muscular Christianity defended their respective systems on scientific and religious grounds, focusing on questions of health. At a time when the Young Men's Christian Association was a leading exponent of muscular Christianity, Eddy saw fit to give it significant philanthropic support. While her gift reflected civic goodwill as opposed to a close relationship with the Association, I argue that it was not anomalous to Eddy's overall values and vision for Christian Science. Like muscular Christians, Eddy was calling for a progressive Christianity that met the criteria of a pragmatic age. In giving attention to issues around manhood, Eddy was signaling the necessity as well as potentiality of Christian spirituality to be a source of health and empowerment for modern man.

In 1892, Mary Baker Eddy received an unusual donation. It came from followers of the new religion called Christian Science that she had founded, formally established as a church in 1879 in Boston, Massachusetts. The gift was an ornamental fishpond to be constructed on the grounds of her home in New Hampshire, named Pleasant View, where she had recently moved after numerous years directing the Christian Science movement in Boston.[1] In recognition of the gift, Eddy composed an article called "Pond and Purpose." In it, she wrote, "The advancing stages of Christian Science are gained through growth, not accretion; idleness is the foe of progress. And scientific

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[1]For an account of the donation, see Robert Peel, *Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Authority* (Boston: Christian Science Publishing Society, 1982), 9–10.

growth manifests no weakness, no emasculation, no illusive vision, no dreamy absentness, no insubordination to the laws that be, no loss nor lack of what constitutes true manhood."[2]

In this passage, Eddy directly associated Christian Science and its "advancing stages" with concerns of "muscular Christianity"—a movement that exerted itself in American Protestant religious culture in the latter half of the nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth. In asserting that "scientific growth" in her system of belief resulted in neither "loss nor lack of what constitutes true manhood," Eddy was contending that Christian Science fulfilled masculine ideals and purpose within the conditions of modernity. Just as the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) saw its mission and programming during the Progressive era as integrating deep-seated Christian conviction with scientific enlightenment, so, too, did Eddy regarding the "scientific growth" that she felt was inherent to Christian Science. While the YMCA during this period consciously allied with muscular Christian values and objectives in its emphasis on a holistic and empowering symbiosis of mind, body, and spirit, Eddy approached this ontological relationship differently, assigning ultimate sovereignty to spirit as the basis for healing and understanding creation in her belief system. Still, her spiritual vision also emerged from and oriented around questions of bodily and mental well-being. Eddy's insistence on Christian Science as supportive of and conducive to the development of qualities of strength and clarity of purpose in manhood implied a similar influence across genders. Noting "the right of woman to fill the highest measure of enlightened understanding and the highest places in government [as] inalienable," Eddy added that, "Woman should not be ordered to the rear, or laid on the rack, for joining the overture of angels."[3]

Citing a high percentage of females as adherents and official practitioners of the faith—along with its origins in the writings and leadership of a woman of the Victorian era—many observers have classified Christian Science as a woman's religion.[4] Moreover, the stereotype of the ethereally minded Christian Scientist—most often caricatured as a woman—gained traction among commentators as the movement grew in the first decades of the twentieth century. In his book, *The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life,* Stephen Gottschalk, himself a Christian Scientist, acknowledged the presence of people of this spiritual disposition as "not uncommon in the Christian Science movement, though they were far from a majority."[5] In the

[2]Mary Baker Eddy, "Pond and Purpose," *Miscellaneous Writings 1883–1896,* in *Prose Works other than Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (Boston: The First Church of Christ, Scientist, 1924), 206.

[3]Mary Baker Eddy, *No and Yes*, in *Prose Works Other Than Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (Boston: The First Church of Christ, Scientist, 1925), 45, 46. First published in 1891.

[4]See Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 237–238. The authors cite a 1926 census on religious membership in the United States in which the breakdown by gender for Christian Science is 75.5 percent female in comparison to a statistic of 55.7 percent female for overall church membership in the United States. A 1906 census, as published in *Religious Bodies: 1906,* vol. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910), gave a gender breakdown for the Church of Christ, Scientist, in the United States as 72 percent female. I conducted a gender analysis of the Christian Science Practitioner (healer) listing in the December 1910 issue of *The Christian Science Journal.* My results gave a rough figure of 89 percent female for Christian Science practitioners as authorized by the Christian Science Church at this time: the month and year of Eddy's decease.

[5]Stephen Gottschalk, *The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 218. While Gottschalk identifies such a Christian Science persona

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estimate of muscular Christian authority Clifford Putney, "Christian Science women tended to view muscular Christianity with disfavor."[6] Such a perspective overlooks evidence in Eddy's writings and actions that presents physical strength and ability as compatible with, and even enhanced by, Christian Science spirituality, as indicated by the testimony of many of its followers—both male and female. While muscular Christianity was primarily a men's movement, the assumption that Christian Science and muscular Christianity necessarily occupied opposite poles of religious identity ignores how both movements were deeply engaged in an examination of how the life and works of Jesus—and the message of the Bible—were translatable to modern scientific thought in the fields of health and medicine.[7]

My intention in this article is to demonstrate how Eddy's writing in "Pond and Purpose" on issues relating to spirituality, health, and empowerment, inclusive of her statement on manhood, reflected a discernible and repeated thrust in her writings and actions to extend the reach of Christian Science thought and practice beyond the sheltered sphere of nineteenth-century feminine religiosity into the proving grounds of the public realm. In her explanations and advocacy of Christian Science, Eddy consciously incorporated concepts and terminology that represented pragmatic perspectives.[8] The paper examines how muscular Christianity and Christian Science each addressed the relationship of physical, mental, and moral well-being. It explores how both systems were responding in religious terms to a general cultural call for a renewed and revolutionary vitalism for the modern age. In examining Eddy's thinking about and experience of the relationship of health and spirituality in this context, what emerges is a more varied and complex understanding of how she viewed both bodily and other expressions of strength and power than is typical in critical assessments of Christian Science.

A close reading of her "Pond and Purpose" text in connection with her other writings and in relation to how she positioned Christian Science in the world contests myriad portrayals of Eddy as a matron of a type of feminine spirituality that was ill at ease with the body, preferring instead a more ethereal conception of existence. While Eddy identified spirituality as representing the true basis of human existence, her deep commitment to physical healing through Christian Science and her founding of *The Christian Science Monitor* news source placed the body and civic or social concerns as foundational to her religious vision. Communicating about how *The Christian Science Monitor* functions as a secular newspaper while based in a religious organization, the paper's long-serving editor, Erwin Canham (1941–1974), portrayed the synthesis as rooted in an approach to journalism that had always been "dedicated to a crusading,

as representative of only a minority of Christian Scientists, his analysis indicates its prominence in perceptions of Christian Science culture. For example, he also remarks in the same paragraph that "some of the more ethereal of Mrs. Eddy's followers affected a high-pitched, superficially sweet tone of voice—so that Ezra Pound, for example, could readily identify a woman he referred to in a letter as having a 'Christian Science voice.'" See D. D. Paige, ed., *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907–1941* (New York: 1950), 17, cited in Gottschalk, *The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life,* 218.

[6]Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 144.

[7]Beginning with the landmark fiftieth edition of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (1891), Eddy included a new chapter, titled "Science, Theology, Medicine," in which she systematically discussed Christian Science in relation to these disciplines.

[8]Gottschalk has argued that "Christian Science is best understood as a pragmatic interpretation of Christian revelation." Gottschalk, *The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life*, 278.

reformative approach to human affairs."[9] Throughout her writings, Eddy underscored Christian Science as promotive of both physical and moral soundness, recognizing its applicability for meaningful and successful engagement with and in the world—a vision coordinate with the motivations and ambitions of muscular Christianity.

I. Muscular Christianity

The term "muscular Christianity" originated in Great Britain in response to the novels of clergymen Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes, whose plots and characters presented a robust version of Christian conduct intended to appeal to the male spirit. Hughes's popular work, *Tom Brown's Schooldays,* was influential on both sides of the Atlantic. In 1870, when Hughes gave a talk on his work and beliefs before students at Harvard College, "a hearty 'three times three Harvard' cheer was given."[10] While the movement had romantic attraction for young men, its deeper purpose sprang from a core theological conviction that a more muscular Christianity was needed to resurrect Protestant religious culture from a condition of "weak pietism" and "identification of Christianity with escape, sickliness, or lack of courage."[11] In America, thought leaders in religion, politics, medicine, education, and sports enthusiastically adopted the muscular Christian cause and mantle. Among its most committed American advocates were the United States' first PhD in psychology and Clark University president G. Stanley Hall; Boston clergyman and social reformer Thomas Wentworth Higginson; evangelist Dwight Moody; physician and physical education pioneer Luther Gulick, MD; legendary athlete and college football coach Amos Alonzo Stagg; and "Rough Rider" president Theodore Roosevelt.

While muscular Christianity was never formalized into an institution of its own, it significantly influenced the mission and programming of numerous national and international organizations that rose to prominence in this period, notably the Young Men's Christian Association, the Boy Scouts, and numerous boys' schools and camps, extending eventually to include women's organizations as well, such as the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA).[12] Its social, philosophical, and religious purpose aimed at reawakening masculine energy in America's spiritual life. As Clifford Putney has observed, "In the forty years before 1920, an extraordinary amount of talk within Protestant churches focused on the need to rescue American manhood from sloth and effeminacy."[13]

Muscular Christians supported theories and activities intended to reform and reinvigorate the relationship of mind, body, and spirit within Protestant culture. They

[9]Erwin Canham, *Commitment to Freedom: The Story of The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958), xvi. Canham held the following editorial positions at *The Christian Science Monitor:* managing editor (1941–1944), editor (1945–1964), and editor-in-chief (1964–1974).

[10]"Mr. Thomas Hughes And His Address," *Harvard Advocate Supplement* 10, no. 1 (Cambridge, Mass., October 14, 1870).

[11]William E. Winn, "*Tom Brown's Schooldays* and the Development of 'Muscular Christianity,'" *Church History* 29, no. 1 (March 1960): 73, https://doi.org/10.2307/3161617.

[12]See Brett McCay and Kate McCay, "When Christianity Was Muscular," in *Muscular Christianity: The Relationship Between Men and Faith* (Jenks, Okla.: Semper Vigilis, 2018), chap. 3, Kindle. They note that "the Muscular Christianity movement was never officially organized, or headed by a single person, but was instead a cultural trend that manifested itself in different ways and was supported by various figures and churches—predominantly those of the liberal, mainline Protestant variety."

[13]Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 7.

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challenged theological attitudes that cast the body into a netherworld of shame or as irrelevant to the divine purpose. Instead, they championed bodily vitality as being in harmony with fulfilling one's Christian mission, aiming to inspire a new generation of spiritually and physically charged Christian men. Luther Gulick, MD, described as the "greatest of YMCA philosophers," enshrined the concept of "Mind, Body, Spirit" into the institution's logo.[14] In his design, each of the three terms occupied a separate side of an inverted triangle, with "Spirit" positioned along the top. Framed inside the triangle was an image of a Bible opened to John 17:21 ("That they all may be one: as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us"). In an article in the YMCA publication, *Young Men's Era,* Gulick cited numerous biblical passages as the inspiration and "authority" for the logo design, among them Deuteronomy 6:5 ("And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might") and Matthew 22:37 ("Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind").[15] For Gulick, the work of unifying the physical, mental, and spiritual had biblical sanction and inspiration and was in harmony with modern scientific methodologies. "The scientific grounds for this belief are as certain and well formed as the scriptural," he argued.[16]

Gulick combined the Christian missionary commitments of his family upbringing with his work as a physical education advocate and innovator: "He graduated with a degree in medicine in the spring of 1888, but he warned his parents in advance of his graduation that he might not use his degree to become a missionary doctor. Rather than doing the Lord's work overseas, he told them he felt drawn to do the Lord's work in America, spreading the gospel of fitness for the YMCA."[17] For Gulick, modern psychological methods provided a window into seeing a spiritual bond between mind and body. "The modern psychology," he wrote, "is all in the line of showing that mind and body are not two separate and individual essences, but that each is so wedded to the other that it is impossible for us to see where one begins and the other ends, or for us to trace anything which, affecting the one, does not also affect the other."[18] He singled out the YMCA as "the only great institution of the world which, in a large way, is putting this belief into actual practice. It aims at the salvation and upbuilding of the whole man to a greater extent than does any other institution in the world."[19]

Gulick played a defining role in shaping YMCA identity along muscular Christian lines in the Progressive era. As Putney has noted, "It was in connection with the YMCA that Gulick most directly advanced the cause of muscular Christianity. Before Gulick, the 'Y' had kept gymnastics subordinate to evangelism. After him, it held

[14]See Putney, *Muscular Christianity,* 69–70.

[15]Luther Gulick, "What The Triangle Means," *Young Men's Era,* January 18, 1894.

[16]Gulick, "What The Triangle Means."

[17]Clifford Putney, "Luther Gulick: His Contributions to Springfield College, the YMCA, and 'Muscular Christianity,'" *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 39, no. 1–2 (Summer 2011): 158. Luther Gulick's grandfather, Peter Gulick, took up the Christian missionary cause in the 1820s, accepting an appointment in 1827 from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) to serve in the Kingdom of Hawaii. Subsequent descendants of Peter Gulick also took up careers and posts as missionaries in foreign lands.

[18]Gulick, "What The Triangle Means."

[19]Gulick, "What The Triangle Means."

physical fitness, no less than religious conviction, responsible for leading men to Glory."[20] The notion of health as a focus for glorifying God and creation was deeply embedded in Gulick's vision and in muscular Christian thought more broadly. Likewise, Eddy extolled expression of physical well-being through spiritual healing as illustrative of a vital connection between the divine and the human. Quoting the Apostle Paul, Eddy encouraged her followers to "Glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."[21] While Gulick and Eddy approached the relationship of spirituality and health differently, they were both committed to redressing visions of the body that had disconnected and alienated it from the life of the mind and spirit.

As discussed later in the paper, Eddy's support of the Boston YMCA at a time when its embrace of muscular Christianity was in full flower suggests that the founder of Christian Science was, at the least, comfortable with the Association's ethos and programs as guided by Gulick. Moreover, it exemplifies that for Eddy, as well as for followers of her religious system, there existed a natural compatibility between civic engagement and the practice of Christian Science.

II. Christian Fitness in Christian Science

In *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880–1920,* Putney has identified Christian Science as belonging to a category of belief systems alien, if not antagonistic, to muscular Christianity.[22] In labeling Eddy as a "latter-day gnostic," Putney has connected Eddy and Christian Science to a longstanding strain of religious scholarship that sees rejection of the temporal world and the body as a governing concept in Eddy's beliefs.[23] For example, religious historian Peter Williams has framed Eddy's metaphysics as based in denial, explaining:

> If both the microcosmic physical body and the macrocosmic social bodies were problematical and the sources of aches and anxieties, she would deny their very existence. . . . Death and sickness were simply illusions, which could be overcome neither through prayer nor medicine but through a new source of *gnosis,* a new method of interpreting Christian scripture which produced hitherto unrealized insights about the true nature of the metaphysical realm and its application to immediate human problems.[24]

Considering that Eddy laid the groundwork for her chief work, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures,* with an introductory chapter on "Prayer" in which she examined prayer's centrality to the practice of Christian Science, Williams's analysis is both striking and revealing in its narrow reading of Eddy's thought. Still, Williams's vision of Eddy and Christian Science aligns with a steady stream of scholarship, much of it

[20]Putney, *Muscular Christianity,* 72.

[21]Mary Baker Eddy wrote this in a passage on "Testimonials" for the *Manual of The Mother Church, The First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, Massachusetts* (Boston: Christian Science Publishing Society, 1895), 47.

[22]See Putney, *Muscular Christianity,* 150–153.

[23]See Mary Farrell Bednarowski, *New Religions and the Theological Imagination in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 34. While Bednarowski has observed that viewpoints of Christian Science as gnostic are "misleading," she also has acknowledged their preponderance.

[24]See Peter Williams, *Popular Religion in America: Symbolic Change and the Modernization Process in Historical Perspective* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 132.

grounded in Sydney Ahlstrom's situating of Christian Science in the camp of "harmonial religions" within the landscape of American religious history.[25] For Ahlstrom, "harmonial religions" expressed in different ways and through varying points of emphasis a common vision that "spiritual composure, physical health and even economic well-being . . . flow from a person's rapport with the cosmos."[26] Certain scholars have contested this view, including Catherine Albanese and Steven Gottschalk. Albanese has argued that "the easy identification of Christian Science as a species of what Sydney Ahlstrom called 'harmonial religion' is problematic" and that "it misreads the evidence on almost all counts."[27] Gottschalk also has noted that "Eddy's ideal of the Christian life, however, could not be more sharply at variance with the purpose of furthering these harmonial human aims." In Gottschalk's view, Eddy "placed a far higher value on spiritual striving than on spiritual composure."[28]

Still, a tendency to interpret Christian Science as gnostic has persisted in academic literature, defining the faith's outlook as essentially otherworldly. As Putney's lens on the faith has adapted to this point of view, it is not surprising to find in his writings the assumption that Christian Science thought and practice would eschew expressions of physical effort, vigor, and manliness, presuming its attraction to be chiefly for women who preferred a more rarefied experience:

> Women who opposed the Strenuous Life and who objected to the masculinization of mainline Protestantism had several options. They could remain in the churches to fight for retention of feminine iconography, or they could leave the establishment to join such newly founded, women-led religions as Christian Science (founded in 1875 by Mary Baker Eddy), Theosophy (founded in 1875 by Russian émigré Madame Blavatsky), and the Church of the Higher Life, a Boston organization headed by Helen Van Anderson that was instrumental in the spread of New Thought.[29]

Putney's connecting of Christian Science with Theosophy and New Thought would have dismayed, though not surprised, Eddy. She repeatedly sought to disassociate Christian Science from these spheres of thought, which she saw as allied with dubious mental practices. Eddy noted "a great gulf between Christian Science and theosophy," and she denounced the teachings of New Thought pioneer, Emma Curtis Hopkins, who had previously studied Christian Science with her, and had worked for a brief time as a writer and editor for her publications.[30] In the same Christian Science periodical in which Eddy had

[25]See Sydney Ahlstrom, "Harmonial Religion since the Later Nineteenth Century," in *A Religious History of the American People,* 2nd ed. (1st ed. 1972; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004), 1019–1036. Ahlstrom identifies "harmonial thought" as an important tendency in American religiosity. Still, he singles out "Christian Science," "New Thought," and "Positive Thinking" as "major modes" of this spiritual orientation.

[26]Ahlstrom, "Harmonial Religion since the Later Nineteenth Century," 1019.

[27]Catherine Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007), 295.

[28]Stephen Gottschalk, *Rolling Away The Stone: Mary Baker Eddy's Challenge to Materialism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 364.

[29]Putney, *Muscular Christianity,* 150.

[30]Eddy, *Manual of The Mother Church*, 41, advised: "When it is necessary to show the great gulf between Christian Science and theosophy, hypnotism, or spiritualism, do it, but without harsh words." On Helen Van Anderson as "one of Hopkins's star missionaries," see Beryl Satter, *Each Mind a Kingdom:*

formerly employed Hopkins, Eddy answered the following question about her erstwhile student: "Emma Hopkins tells her students that Mrs. Eddy teaches mesmerism. Is that true?" Eddy responded, "If one half of what I hear of Mrs. Hopkins's teachings on the subject of Christian Science is correct, she is deluding the minds she claims to instruct. She took a Primary Course at my College, but was not permitted to go farther. She . . . is not qualified to teach Christian Science, and is incapable of teaching it." Eddy equated Hopkins's teachings with the "demonology of mesmerism."[31]

In her passage on "what constitutes true manhood," Eddy separated Christian Science from what she saw as esoteric spiritual practices that had no real kinship with her belief system, except through misidentified spiritual commonality. In stating that there is "no illusive vision," "no dreamy absentness," and "no insubordination to the laws that be," Eddy was calling out that Christian Science did not include the "illusive visions" inherent in Spiritualism or in the speculations of Theosophy; that it did not lend itself to the "dreamy absentness" of someone placed in a magnetic sleep through hypnotic or mesmeric suggestion.[32] In her penultimate statement in this passage that there is "no insubordination to the laws that be," before her assertion that there is "no loss nor lack of what constitutes true manhood," she was, I maintain, conveying that empowerment in Christian Science stemmed not from a promiscuous manipulation of spirituality but derived from a fuller and deeper integration with God's law—allowing for a commensurate deeper fulfillment of manhood. Moreover, certain accounts from the period portrayed Christian Science womanhood as very much at home with robust physicality. For example, in this newspaper story on the 1895 dedication ceremonies for The First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, or The Mother Church, the reporter observed that "two-thirds of the vast congregations which attended the dedication yesterday were women, strong, healthy, muscular women. They were not slow in speaking of this fact as a proof of the value of Christian Science being a gospel of health."[33]

The muscular Christian movement placed a premium on the development of physique as a desirable and vital component of Christian manhood. For Eddy, the path

American Women, Sexual Purity, and the New Thought Movement, 1875–1920 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 116; and see Charles Braden, *Spirits in Rebellion: The Rise and Development of New Thought* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1963), 140–141. According to Braden, Hopkins took instruction in Christian Science from Mary Baker Eddy in December 1883. Beginning in September 1884, she served as an editor of *The Christian Science Journal* and subsequently "was dismissed as editor in October 1885." Also, for a biographical entry on Hopkins, see accession nos. 550.58.010–550.58.027, The Mary Baker Eddy Papers, accessed November 11, 2020, https://marybakereddypapers.org. It reads in part that Hopkins "was a student of Mary Baker Eddy's, taking Primary class instruction in December 1883," and that she "joined the Christian Scientist Association (CSA) in 1884 and was briefly the acting editor of *The Christian Science Journal*."

[31]Mary Baker Eddy, "Questions Answered," *The Christian Science Journal* 5, no. 1 (April 1887): 25.

[32]For an analysis of the relationship of Spiritualism and Theosophy, see Stephen Prothero, "From Spiritualism to Theosophy: 'Uplifting' a Democratic Tradition," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 3, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 197–216; and see Robert Ellwood and Catherine Wessinger, "The Feminism of 'Universal Brotherhood': Women in the Theosophical Movement," in *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions: Exploration Outside the Mainstream,* ed. Catherine Wessinger (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 69. They write that Theosophical Society founders Helena Blavatsky and Henry Steele Olcott "believed that if the nonsubstantial realities of which Spiritualism hinted could be penetrated and joined with the science of the progressive spirit of the day, then the unity of life might again be grasped."

[33]*Boston Daily Globe,* January 7, 1895.

was different: spirituality was primary in providing for physical well-being. Eddy's personal experience and formation as a religious thinker and innovator demonstrated a deep commitment to liberating the body from compromised states. The body mattered very much to Eddy. One sees it in the almost constant, sometimes desperate, and disappointing search for health that defined the first half of her life. And then, in contrast, it became a central focus in her commitment to effectual Christian healing after her own healing in her mid-forties, experienced after sustaining serious injuries from a severe fall on the ice in February of 1866. Eddy would describe her first decades as representing "a lifelong invalidism," from which her healing ushered in "the change to health and usefulness."[34]

As the Progressive era took hold in American culture in the late nineteenth century, the religious and social activism of the YMCA increasingly identified with a muscular Christian ethos. Its programming and mission undertook to develop Christian men equipped to succeed in the modern secular world. In his 1901 book, published in commemoration of the first fifty years of the Boston Association of the YMCA, L. L. Doggett, first president of the YMCA Training School (later to become Springfield College), articulated the work of the Boston YMCA in this way: "In its plan of operations it embodied the modern religious ideal of development as contrasted with the ascetic ideal. It recognized that all human powers should be developed to their utmost capacity and consecrated to God's service. It agreed with modern science in denying the separation between the sacred and the secular, and it recognized with the new psychology the unity of man in body, mind and spirit."[35]

In an early edition of *Science and Health,* Eddy similarly remarked on Christian Science's value in the secular sphere. She noted, "Men of business have said that metaphysical science is important from a secular point of view; that it enhances their physical and mental powers, enlarges their perception of character, gives them aptness, comprehensiveness, and ability to act beyond their normal capacity in business. The mind imbued with the science of Life is more elastic, capable of more endurance, and its body requires less repose."[36]

Whether intentional or not, Eddy was claiming for Christian Science characteristics that, even if not in total harmony with the vision of muscular Christianity, resonated with important underlying convictions in the movement. Eddy rejected the idea that weakness and passivity provided greater sensitivity for a closer relationship with God, that there was a hidden sacredness in these states to be honored and cultivated, or what was perceived as a feminized approach to Christianity in this period. As Ann Douglas has observed, cultural acceptance of this kind of "feminized" spirituality was linked to a general softening of religious consciousness in American Protestant culture, in which the rigors of Calvinist thought were surrendering to moral and social values based in sympathy and sentimentality.[37] Within this context a deleterious physical, psychological, and spiritual bargain played out in which, Douglas has argued, "strength, as essential to genuinely feminine as to genuinely masculine social and intellectual structures, is absent," and where "weakness itself, no matter how unintentionally, is finally

[34]See A10835B, The Mary Baker Eddy Collection, The Mary Baker Eddy Library.

[35]L. L. Doggett, *History of the Boston Young Men's Christian Association* (Boston: Young Men's Christian Association, 1901), 72.

[36]Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health*, vol. 1, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: University Press, 1881), 233 (hereafter cited as *Science and Health* [1881]).

[37]See Ann Douglas, "The Loss of Theology: From Dogma to Fiction," in *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1977), 121–164.

extolled."[38] In contrast, Eddy's vision and experience testified to an expectation of spiritual practice that was emboldening and fortifying for engagement with the world. "Citizens of the world, accept the 'glorious liberty of the children of God,' and be free! This is your divine right," she declared in *Science and Health*. "The illusion of material sense, not divine law, has bound you, entangled your free limbs, crippled your capacities, enfeebled your body, and defaced the tablet of your being."[39]

As in Eddy's theology, muscular Christians embraced a view of Christian spirituality as conducive to nurturing salutary and emboldened conditions of mind and body. While Eddy viewed the strengthening stimulus as primarily spiritual and mental, she rejected bodily mortification as either a necessity or desirable in advancing spiritual growth. Rather, she averred that "neither the Old nor the New Testament furnishes reasons or examples for the destruction of the human body, but for its restoration to life and health as the scientific proof of 'God with us.'"[40]

In his *History of the YMCA in North America* (1951), Charles Howard Hopkins traced the significance of Luther Gulick in inculcating a muscular Christian ethic into the "Y." In a chapter titled "The Foundations of Y.M.C.A. Physical Work (1875–1900)," Hopkins observed drolly that "so pervasive was his influence that this chapter might well be divided into two sections, before and after Gulick."[41] Hopkins provided this account of Gulick's articulation of a therapeutic theology for the Young Men's Christian Association:

> [Gulick's] basic thought crystallized rapidly and may be found almost fully developed in an address before the Convention of 1891, entitled "The Distinctive Features of the Physical Work in the Association." The work of the Y.M.C.A. is a unit, he began, and all its departments, including the physical, are based upon simple fundamentals, the first of which is "man's essential unity, body, mind and spirit, each being a necessary and eternal part of man, he being neither one alone, but the three," a "wonderful combination of the dust of the earth, and the breath of God." Christ was a perfect man "body, mind and spirit; he worked for the whole man, body, mind, and spirit, and he saves the whole man, body, mind and spirit."[42]

While Eddy's belief system was far from at one with Gulick's theological formulations in identifying body with the "dust of the earth," she did advocate for Christian healing that encompassed the whole person. She insisted on what she named a "*whole* salvation," addressing issues of soul as well as body that, in her words, "includes man's redemption from sickness as well as from sin."[43] Both Gulick and Eddy recognized human redemption as embracing mind, body, and spirit.

[38]Douglas, "The Loss of Theology," 124.

[39]Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (Boston: Christian Science Publishing Society, 1934), 227 (hereafter cited as *Science and Health* [1934]).

[40]Mary Baker Eddy, *The First Church of Christ Scientist and Miscellany* (Boston: First Church of Christ, Scientist, 1913), 218.

[41]Charles Howard Hopkins, *History of the Y.M.C.A. in North America* (New York: Association Press, 1951), 246.

[42]Hopkins, *History of the Y.M.C.A. in North America*, 254–255. Gulick read this talk at the twenty-ninth international convention of the Young Men's Christian Associations, Kansas City, Missouri, May 9, 1891. See *Young Men's Era,* November 26, 1891.

[43]Mary Baker Eddy, "Christian Science in Tremont Temple," *Miscellaneous Writings, 1883–1896*, in *Prose Works Other Than Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (Boston: The First Church of Christ, Scientist, 1925), 96.

III. The Salutary Strenuousness of Christian Science Baptism

In "Pond and Purpose," Eddy gave a detailed disquisition on baptism from a Christian Science point of view, which she followed with the above noted observations on Christian Science manhood. That her vision of manhood should occur in this context suggests that Eddy understood the requirements and outcomes of baptism as correlating with qualities associated with the achievement of manhood. This is not to imply that Eddy viewed baptism as applying more to male than female experience. Still, in building a vision of baptism as an ongoing internal process of purification and empowerment that related to "what constitutes true manhood," she was setting Christian Science apart from alternative spiritual systems in which the role of women was significant and controversial in nineteenth-century America. Commonly held cultural perspectives viewed the mental and physical constitutions of women as more passive and hypersensitive than those of men and, as such, as more adept in channeling and experiencing psychic influence. As a result, women attracted both veneration and fascination but also condemnation as spiritualist mediums, as recipients and communicants of mesmeric mental influence, and in the practice of Theosophy.[44] This version of feminine spirituality eschewed expression of physical power and muscularity as inhibiting to interaction with immaterial forms and energies. This depiction, as given in the Spiritualist newspaper *Banner of Light,* represented such a viewpoint: "Women in the nineteenth century are physically sick, weak and declining . . . the functions depending on force and muscle are weak . . . the *nerves* are intensely sensitive. . . . Hence sickness, rest, passivity, susceptibility, impressionability, mediumship, communication, revelation!"[45]

For Eddy, the baptismal process in Christian Science entailed a spiritual journey that was at cross-purposes with notions of weakness, susceptibility, or passivity. For Eddy, baptism required intensity of focus and consciousness, even stress and strain, to achieve its benefits and blessings. While this process culminated in surrender to the divine, the means by which one arrived at this point of spiritual transformation necessitated striving against and triumphing over self-limiting behaviors and perspectives: overcoming the kind of "illusive visions" or "dreamy absentness" that Eddy outlined as antithetical to manhood.

Eddy deconstructed baptism into three progressive phases. The first phase followed what Eddy biographer Robert Peel has described as "show[ing] its author's debt to the tough-minded Calvinism of her girlhood teachers," referencing Eddy's upbringing in rural New Hampshire in the early 1800s.[46] For Eddy, purification involved a penitential struggle, what she perceived as "a stricken state of human consciousness, wherein mortals gain a severe view of themselves; a state of mind which rends the veil that hides mental deformity." This "rending" revealed a state of human consciousness that "seems a monster, a dark, impenetrable cloud of error."[47] In order to redress this deep-seated state of alienation from the divine, baptism depended upon summoning mental and spiritual energy to "neutralize and destroy" erroneous states of mind and being.

[44]The Theosophical Society's early emphasis on Spiritualism made it attractive to women in the Spiritualist community. See "Theosophy," in June Melby Benowitz, ed., *Encyclopedia of American Women and Religion,* 2nd ed. (Santa Barbara, Cali.: ABC-CLIO, 2017), 597.

[45]*Banner of Light,* November 10, 1866, p. 2, cited in Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 83.

[46]Peel, *Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Authority,* 10.

[47]See Eddy, "Pond and Purpose," 203–204.

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While Eddy understood baptism as ultimately leading to serenity and a heavenly confidence in one's "divine nature," the words with which she painted the baptismal struggle were stark, imposing, and threatening. One was grappling with "a monster." Eddy's understanding of the necessity of a fight with the self in order to achieve the requisite spiritual dominion and strength for authentic communion with the divine resonated more with William James's psychological call to arms in the finale to his celebrated lecture, "Is Life Worth Living?," than with any model of nineteenth-century womanly "passivity" and "susceptibility."

Interestingly, James first delivered "Is Life Worth Living?" in 1895 at the YMCA at Harvard University, where he brought his talk to its heady summation with an appeal to see the energy of mental and psychological striving as capable of penetrating through the miasma of existential and religious doubt into authentic spiritual belief. James contended that answering the question of the "maybe" of the existence of God or the "maybe" of an eternal dimension to life demanded activism at the innermost depths of human thought to bring these spiritual concepts out of the shadows of "maybe" into lived experience. In describing the passion and energy behind this human yearning, James declared, "It *feels* like a real fight; as if there were something really wild in the Universe which we, with all our idealities and faithfulnesses, are needed to redeem. And first of all to redeem our own hearts from atheisms and fears."[48] Aspects of Calvinism and James's Pragmatism informed Eddy's baptismal vision. For Eddy, God's omnipotence and omnipresence were assured; what was not assured was humanity's capacity to align correctly with the divine presence. She did not endorse ritualistic practice as either sufficient or recommended for restoring human connection with the divine. Instead, like James, she envisioned an activist struggle, or a personal moral and spiritual proving: "a fight," akin in quality and purpose with James's pragmatic understanding of lived religion.

The second phase in Eddy's progressive approach to baptism built upon the foundation of the first phase's penitential struggle. Here, we witness human effort meeting divine agency to bring about tangible vitalizing results. As Eddy explained, "The baptism of the Holy Ghost is the spirit of Truth . . . giving mortals new motives, new purposes, new affections, all pointing upward." What emerges out of this trajectory is a "mental condition [that] settles into strength, freedom, deep-toned faith in God. . . . It develops individual capacity, increases the intellectual activities, and so quickens moral sensibility that the great demands of spiritual sense are recognized, and they rebuke the material senses, holding sway over human consciousness." Through this process, Eddy observed "a purifying [of] human thought" that "brings with it wonderful foresight, wisdom, and power" and "gives steadiness to resolve, and success to endeavor."[49]

The third, ultimate stage of baptism led to "final immersion of human consciousness in the infinite ocean of Love." In this state, Eddy envisioned identity that "reflects only Spirit, good, whose visible being is invisible to the physical senses: eye hath not seen it, inasmuch as it is the disembodied individual Spirit-substance and consciousness termed in Christian metaphysics the ideal man—forever permeated with eternal life, holiness, heaven."[50] While Eddy's emphasis on the non-material, especially in the final phase of her baptismal vision, conflicted with muscular Christianity's focus on development of

[48]William James, *Is Life Worth Living?* (Philadelphia: S. Burns Weston, 1896), 61.
[49]See Eddy, "Pond and Purpose," 204.
[50]Eddy, "Pond and Purpose," 205.

the physique, nonetheless, the outcome resulted in empowerment, as well as purification, gained through intentional concentrated effort to be a fit receptacle for the divine.

In the next paragraph in "Pond and Purpose," Eddy elaborated upon the impact and practical benefits of baptism with references to Progressive era developments: in this case, connecting spiritual transformation with state-of-the-art technology of her time. She wrote, "Mortals who on the shores of time learn Christian Science, and live what they learn, take rapid transit to heaven."[51] Rapid transit systems were fast emerging in major European and American cities around this time.[52] In the 1890s, Boston went on to develop the nation's first subway system, using the invention of the electric motor as the means for the transportation of its underground cars. For Eddy, spiritual progress was consonant with temporal progress. Together they formed "the hinge on which have turned all revolutions, natural, civil, or religious, the former being servant to the latter, —from flux to permanence, from foul to pure, from torpid to serene, from extremes to intermediate."[53]

Eddy finished the essay with an invitation and instruction. "Drink with me the living waters of the spirit of my life-purpose," she wrote, "to impress humanity with the genuine recognition of practical, operative Christian Science."[54] For Eddy, "genuine recognition" meant appreciation of the operation of Christian Science as a healing and remedial agent for mind and body.

For the pioneering educational psychologist G. Stanley Hall, Jesus's healing work was also a matter of importance and relevance to modern consciousness. Hall's study of adolescent psychology complemented his advocacy of muscular Christianity. Hall identified qualities in male adolescence that he felt required liberation and cultivation for the purposes of generating not only healthy mindedness but also expansiveness of spirit.[55] Hall saw Jesus's healing power as having roots in the primal energies of youth, which he interpreted as deeply soulful. "The adolescence of Jesus must have been a magnificent processional of the highest human evolution," he theorized.[56] In Hall's view, this formative stage was key to the profound spiritual enlightenment attained by Jesus. In this sense, Jesus's baptism by John the Baptist symbolized the transformation from the vitalities of youth into spiritually endowed maturity. Hall reflected that "unlike Jesus, John was uncouth, laconic, with a simpler and more incessantly repeated message. John did no healing, Jesus no baptizing."[57] Although Eddy did not apply a psychological lens to Jesus's spiritual development and mastery, she did agree with Hall that Jesus's healing work was fundamentally soteriological, in which resolution of physical ills played a

[51]Eddy, "Pond and Purpose," 205–206.

[52]*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Merriam Webster, 1991) dates the origin of the term "rapid transit" to 1873.

[53]Eddy, "Pond and Purpose," 206.

[54]Eddy, "Pond and Purpose," 207.

[55]See Donald Meyer, "The Scientific Humanism of G. Stanley Hall," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 11, no. 2 (October 1971): 201–213. Meyer notes, "In 1904 Hall revealed the wider dimensions of his 'higher anthropology' when he published his greatest work, *Adolescence*." Meyer describes Hall's view of adolescence as "an especially crucial time in a person's growth because, in this period, the higher sensibilities develop and the ideals of love and service take form." Meyer, "The Scientific Humanism of G. Stanley Hall," 209.

[56]G. Stanley Hall, *Jesus, the Christ, in the Light of Psychology*, vol. 1 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page, & Co., 1917), 30.

[57]Hall, *Jesus, the Christ, in the Light of Psychology*, 1:293.

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necessary role.[58] Hall wrote, "While Jesus certainly preferred to heal the soul rather than the body, he perhaps accommodated to the demands of those about him to be healed of diseases, because of a growing insight on his part into the closeness of the bond between the psyche and the soma."[59] Eddy averred, Jesus's "history is emphatic in our hearts, and it lives more because of his spiritual than his physical healing. His example is, to Christian Scientists, what the models of the masters in music and painting are to artists."[60]

IV. Mind, Body, Spirit in Eddy's Healing Journey

Putney has noted that "muscular Christians are undoubtedly best known for their celebration of bodies."[61] While Eddy did not celebrate the body in her theology and writings, she offered a spiritual vision that was liberating and fortifying to mind and body. In *Science and Health,* she commented upon the case of one Caspar Hauser to illustrate the dangers of estrangement from a salutary relationship of mind, body, and spirit. For the first seventeen years of his life, Hauser apparently had known only the environment of a dungeon or dark cave and a diet of hard crusts of bread. Upon introduction to sunlight and more varied nourishing foods, his response was the opposite of normal human conditioning. In Eddy's account, he found life unbearable outside the cave, and requested return to isolation and meager conditions of living.[62] In citing the Hauser story, Eddy equated escape from the world as inconsistent with progressive spirituality. She argued that a strong moral and spiritual life removed one from benighted consciousness and regressive behavior, as exemplified by Hauser's extreme example, and instead provided for a salutary mental and physical experience. She explained that "the less thought or said of physical structure or law material, and the more that is uttered and depicted of the moral and spiritual, the higher is the standard of manhood, and the further removed from imbecility of mind and body."[63]

While Eddy valued physical and mental vitality and strength as expected outcomes of a sound and active spiritual life, she challenged anti-modernist stances as the means

[58]Hall analyzed Jesus's healing work in a chapter titled "The Miracles" in *Jesus, the Christ, in the Light of Psychology*, vol. 2 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1917), 592–676. For the most part, Hall assumed the healing accounts to be exaggerated and more legendary rather than objective and factual. Nonetheless, for Hall, they carried deep significance as testaments to Jesus's evolved spiritual nature and as an example of human potential. He asserted, "The lesson and moral of the miracles, therefore, is the higher powers of man. . . . They show that there is nothing in his real life not possible to us, according, of course, to our gifts of insight, feeling and endeavor; for all his powers differ from ours only in degree and not in kind." Hall, *Jesus, the Christ, in the Light of Psychology*, 2:674–675. Eddy came to view Jesus's healing ministry as not miraculous in the sense of defying natural laws but as revelatory of divine law that was applicable to human and temporal conditions. She wrote, "The miracles recorded in the Bible, which had before seemed to me supernatural, grew divinely natural and apprehensible; though uninspired interpreters ignorantly pronounce Christ's healing miraculous, instead of seeing therein the operation of the divine law." Mary Baker Eddy, *Retrospection and Introspection*, in *Prose Works Other Than Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (Boston: The First Church of Christ, Scientist, 1925), 26. First published in 1892.

[59]Hall, *Jesus, the Christ, in the Light of Psychology*, 2:601.

[60]Mary Baker Eddy, *Rudimental Divine Science*, in *Prose Works Other Than Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (Boston: The First Church of Christ, Scientist, 1925), 3. First published in 1891.

[61]Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 45.

[62]See Eddy, *Science and Health* (1881), 1:160–161.

[63]Eddy, *Science and Health* (1881), 1:161.

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for their attainment. "The simple food our forefathers ate we are told helped to make them healthy, but that is a mistake: their diet would fail to cure dyspepsia at this period," she observed. Instead she counseled, "The effeminate constitutions of our time will never grow robust until the individual opinions improve, and their beliefs lose somewhat of error."[64] For Eddy, the prescription for mental and physical soundness and strength penetrated to a deeper level, calling upon the activation of clarifying spiritual and mental energies to liberate human consciousness from what she saw as its tendency to Hauser-like self-imprisonment, or what she would name "the burial of mind in matter."[65]

Both in the issues it addressed and in featuring the image of the cave, Eddy's treatment of the Hauser story bore striking parallels with portions of Thomas Wentworth Higginson's celebrated essay, "Saints and Their Bodies," which came to be seen as America's version of a muscular Christian manifesto.[66] For Higginson, America's spiritual men or its "saints," as represented by the ministry, had become marginal figures in the nation's life through over attention to the otherworldly and inadequate attention to the life of the body and the world. He compared them to one Chittagutta, a Buddhist saint, who lived in a cave for 60 years, oblivious to the beautiful paintings of the life of the Buddha that surrounded him on the cave's walls. As Higginson observed, "In this non-intercourse with the visible world there has been an apostolic succession from Chittagutta, down to the Andover divinity-student."[67] He began his essay with this arresting comment: "Ever since the time of that dyspeptic heathen, Plotinus, the saints have been 'ashamed of their bodies.' What is worse, they have usually had reason for the shame."[68] Higginson then described a contemporary example: "One of the most potent causes of the ill-concealed alienation between the clergy and the people, in our community, is the supposed deficiency, on the part of the former, of a vigorous manly life. It must be confessed that our saints suffer greatly from this moral and physical *anhoemia,* this bloodlessness, which separates them, more effectually than a cloister, from the strong life of the age."[69]

For Eddy, participation in "the strong life of the age" necessitated pursuit of better health in the open, diverse, and largely unregulated medical marketplace of nineteenth-century America. In a chapter titled "Medical Experiments" in her autobiography, *Retrospection and Introspection,* she recalled this period as one in which she "wandered through the dim mazes of *materia medica"* and "sought knowledge from the different schools, —allopathy, homoeopathy, hydropathy, electricity."[70] While these pursuits may not have illuminated a path to permanent health for her, in exploring these "schools" and their approaches to healing, Eddy immersed herself in an emerging landscape of alternative spiritual and philosophical thought that challenged American Protestant orthodoxy. Although "dim" and "maze-like," they engaged the mind in a quest for mental and physical liberation.

[64]Eddy, *Science and Health* (1881), 1:161.

[65]Eddy, *Science and Health* (1934), 35.

[66]Higginson wrote his "manifesto" after introduction to the writings of the British clergymen and novelists Kingsley and Hughes, which endorsed a call for "manly" Christianity.

[67]Thomas W. Higginson, "Saints, and Their Bodies," *Atlantic Monthly* 1, no. 5 (March 1858): 583.

[68]Higginson, "Saints, and Their Bodies," 582.

[69]Higginson, "Saints, and Their Bodies," 584.

[70]Eddy, *Retrospection and Introspection,* 33.

While Eddy would eventually move away from these mind-body health approaches, she made serious forays into the transplanted continental European ideas of homeopathy and mesmerism or animal magnetism that proliferated in nineteenth-century America. The experiments of the German father of homeopathy, Samuel Hahnemann, and those of the Austrian Franz Anton Mesmer and his eponymous theory, suggested that beneath sensible physical reality there existed deeper fields of energy, which had the potential and power to affect and benefit consciousness and health. These alternative medical sects or sectarians offered a therapeutic spirituality that was radically different from the all-powerful but alien and unknowable God that characterized Eddy's Calvinist heritage. Notions of an invisible "vital force" provided the basis and explanation for homeopathic healing as well as for the concept of the electric transference of magnetic fluid in mesmeric healing. Both practices understood their curative outcomes as stemming from connecting or reconnecting the minds and bodies of patients with the therapeutic flow of invisible energy fields.

Practices such as homeopathy and mesmerism, with their emphasis on mental, psychic, and spiritual means for transformation and healing, offered Eddy touchstones for understanding her discovery of a more satisfactory and compelling sphere of metaphysical healing—one based in Christianity and the spiritual import of the Bible. While Eddy separated the spiritual insight she gained through her healing in 1866 from the alternative spiritualities she had previously been exploring, she recognized in her discovery of Christian Science as a healing methodology the attainment of the kind of physical and mental vitalization and liberation she had been seeking in these other philosophies and methods. What was key for Eddy was that her healing experience and discovery united the spiritual meaning and authority of scripture with support and advancement of bodily well-being.

In a recollection recorded by her personal secretary, Calvin Frye, Eddy remembered encountering her minister who had anticipated her decease after her fall and injury in 1866:

> The clergyman asked to know what it all meant. [Eddy] replied "After you left me I asked for the Bible. The shadows of the dark valley gathered around me but I could barely see enough to trace a scriptural passage which I regret to say I cannot recall but it changed the scene. The midway between Life & Death was illumined the Christ seemed to have come to the flesh & quickened me into newness of life strength & vigor that I never before knew. I rose & walked into an adjacent room. . . .
>
> From that hour dawned upon my consciousness the vision of Christian Science.[71]

For Eddy, spiritual revelation had profound meaning for mind and body—and in her understanding of Jesus's healing ministry. In noting that "the Christ seemed to have come to the flesh & quickened me into newness of life strength and vigor that I never knew before," she was seeing Jesus in entirely different terms from what Paul Carter has described in *The Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age* as "the sweet and ineffectual Jesus of American Protestant churchianity."[72] For muscular Christians, this vision of Jesus amounted to a sentimentalized caricature that was undermining Protestant Christianity's relevancy and potency in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century culture.

[71]A11029, The Mary Baker Eddy Collection, The Mary Baker Eddy Library.

[72]Paul Carter, *The Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971), 69.

For Eddy, Christianity required a similar bold revolution of values and vision in which humanity could discover, or rediscover, its capacity to at least approximate a measure of Jesus's expression of divine power. "May the Christians of to-day take up the more practical import of that career!" she counseled, emphasizing a version of spirituality that did not result in a distancing from the world but allowed for transformational power within it. She concluded, "It is possible, —yea, it is the duty and privilege of every child, man, and woman, —to follow in some degree the example of the Master by the demonstration of Truth and Life, of health and holiness."[73]

Eddy's thought and experience contributed to what Heather Curtis has described as a "pursuit of health in this period [that] occasioned both explosive creativity and sharp contestation in the realms of Christian doctrine and practice."[74] In contending for a dynamic spirituality that addressed core human needs in mind and body—as opposed to minimizing or looking beyond them—Eddy was making the case that Christian Science was at the vanguard of advancing Christian mission and purpose. This led Eddy to articulate points of connection with the reformist concerns of muscular Christianity, as detailed in her passage on manhood in "Pond and Purpose." In so doing, Eddy distinguished Christian Science from spiritual movements of the time that were seen as non-Christian, pagan, or of an occult nature. Equally, Eddy saw her religious system as an expression of revitalized Christianity that both addressed the therapeutic aims of practices such as homeopathy and mesmerism and superseded them. In this sense, Eddy was a witness to religious experience and revelation born out of deeply world-centered and body-centered concerns and crises.

For Eddy, the practical benefits of Christian Science did not obviate charitable attention to the world. Her philanthropy extended to a wide array of causes and concerns. It included support for education, hospital care, immigrants, temperance reform, victims of natural disasters, and a host of other causes: for example, a significant contribution in 1906 "to the relief fund for victims of the San Francisco earthquake," financial support for the American Federation of Labor, a sizable donation to the Newton Hospital in Massachusetts to help eliminate its budgetary deficit, and a noteworthy contribution toward a memorial for philanthropists Baron and Baroness de Hirsch, well known for their support of dispossessed Eastern European Jewish immigrants.[75] A letter from Eddy in tribute to de Hirsch was published in the January 1, 1901, evening edition of New York City's *The Mail and Express*.[76] Eddy's civic engagement and philanthropy also embraced the YMCA, which in her time had become a model of muscular Christianity. As the cultural historian T. Jackson Lears has observed, "By the 1880s, muscular Christians were sweeping across the land, seeking to meld spiritual and physical renewal, establishing institutions like the Young Men's Christian Association."[77]

[73]Eddy, *Science and Health* (1934), 37.

[74]Heather Curtis, *Faith in the Great Physician: Suffering and Divine Healing in American Culture, 1860–1900* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 18.

[75]"Charitable Activities of Mary Baker Eddy," a handout compiled by The Mary Baker Eddy Library, updated September 2002.

[76]The letter, which accompanied Eddy's donation of $500 in 1901 (equal to $15,000 in 2020), was published as part of an article titled "All Races United: To Honor the Memory of the Baron and Baroness de Hirsch." Eddy's words read in part, "The movement to erect a monument to the late Baron and Baroness de Hirsch enlists my hearty sympathy. They were unquestionably used in a remarkable degree as instruments in the Divine Love." *Mail and Express,* January 1, 1901.

[77]T. Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877–1920* (Harper Collins, 2009), 102.

V. Mary Baker Eddy and the Boston YMCA

In 1909, the Boston Young Men's Christian Association initiated a very public building fund drive to take place over a two-week period. A large money clock was placed outside where people could see how the effort was advancing in raising the needed $500,000 for new quarters. One turning point in the drive came with Mary Baker Eddy's contribution of $1,000, estimated at about $30,000 in today's money.[78] The *Boston Traveler* gave this account: "Mary Baker Eddy, head of the Christian Science Church, was announced as one of the contributors of $1000 to the Y.M.C.A. building fund at the early afternoon luncheon today. When the members of the committee had recovered from the surprise occasioned by the announcement, a round of cheers was given."[79] Eddy's donation spurred other contributions from local Christian Scientists. The *Boston Journal* reported, "After Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy had subscribed $1000 to the fund for the new building of the Young Men's Christian Association, a meeting was called of the business men of the Christian Science Church. It was expected that about a dozen would put in an appearance, but 136 responded. A good deal of interest was manifested, and 1500 pledge cards were asked for. As a result of the efforts of these men a considerable increase to the fund may be expected."[80] Readers of Eddy's *Christian Science Monitor* gave generously as well.[81] The Boston YMCA's educational director, Frank Palmer Speare, who would go on to become Northeastern University's founding president, wrote to Eddy in thanks for her gift, noting the "support of the Monitor and Church members."[82]

While Eddy's decision to support the fund drive may have had more to do with a desire to extend respectful public relations to an institution dedicated to Christian service rather than specifically to endorse its physical education programs, nonetheless, the YMCA's adoption of a muscular Christian ethos was well established and well known by this time.[83] In the case of the Boston YMCA, by the 1870s physical education was deeply embedded in its mission. Doggett noted that "while the Boston Association was not the first to introduce a gymnasium, it is admittedly true that it led the whole Association in the physical work during this early period." Doggett added that the committee for the Boston Association viewed it as "one of the best and most complete gymnasiums in the country."[84] With regard to the Boston YMCA's new building, Speare wrote in his thank you to Eddy "that it was felt from the outset . . . that this great

[78]For an account of the fundraising drive in 1909 for the new Boston YMCA building, see William B. Whiteside, *The Boston Y.M.C.A. and Community Need: A Century's Evolution, 1851–1951* (New York: Association Press, 1951), 138–139. He notes, "Newspapers gave ample dramatic coverage, and also large sums of money: $1,000 each came from the *Herald, Globe, Post,* and *Transcript.* The *Monitor* solicited several thousands from its readers, and Mrs. Eddy, the founder of Christian Science, personally contributed one thousand dollars."

[79]*The Boston Traveler,* Oct. 25, 1909, The Mary Baker Eddy Collection, The Mary Baker Eddy Library.

[80]*Boston Journal,* Oct. 29, 1909, The Mary Baker Eddy Collection, The Mary Baker Eddy Library.

[81]On November 1, 1909, *The Christian Science Monitor* published the "Names of Contributors to the Y.M.C.A. Fund." Numbers of *Monitor* reader donors run well into the hundreds (est. 400), with about one-third of the donations at $100 or more, including many at the $500 level.

[82]Letter to Mary Baker Eddy from F. P. Speare, Educational Director of Boston Young Men's Christian Association: October 26, 1909, L17787, The Mary Baker Eddy Collection, The Mary Baker Eddy Library.

[83]Eddy also generously contributed to the YMCA in Concord, New Hampshire, during the years 1902–1906, when she was a resident of that community, and to the Newton, Massachusetts, YMCA in 1909, when she was living in that community. See "Charitable Activities of Mary Baker Eddy."

[84]Doggett, *History of the Boston Young Men's Christian Association,* 48.

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organization and its efforts to erect a new building would appeal to you, and your gift shows that this opinion was well founded."[85]

Eddy's donation also spurred the Boston press to opine on Christian Science as a pragmatic faith. The *Boston Times* wrote:

> That $1000 gift from Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy to help forward the Y.M.C.A. movement in our midst must serve to endear this woman to the hearts of the Boston public. . . . Christian Science is not a religion of words. It is the founder of deeds, and the wise and able leader of Christian Science, now as always, leads the followers of Christian Science along this way. Truly has it been said that the "fruits of Christian Science prove it to be of immense value to mankind. Its divine origin is attested in its works."[86]

Considering her prolific writings, Eddy may not have wholly concurred that "Christian Science is not a religion of words," but her emphasis on practical and demonstrable outcomes from those words did align with the editorial comments of the Boston newspaper. Like muscular Christians, Eddy sought to move Christianity away from the theoretical, imagined, and otherworldly to the practical, tangible, and immediate. While radical in its spiritual claims, Eddy saw the effects of Christian Science as leading "from extremes to intermediate."[87] Her belief system mediated the spiritual and the worldly in ways that spoke to a progressive vision for religion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Just as YMCA historian L. L. Doggett saw the work of the "Y" as in "[agreement] with modern science in denying the separation between the sacred and the secular,"[88] so, too, did Eddy see Christian Science as revealing a holism between the spiritually real and the scientifically real.

In *Healing the Nation: Literature, Progress, and Christian Science,* Ashley Squires has argued that the Christian Science movement understood itself as a "modernist narrative," that its revelation of a dynamic spirituality underlying human experience and the universe was in keeping with modern commitments to "the turning back of a bygone era in favor of a new one." Squires has noted that Christian Science was part of a story of "competing forces contend[ing] over *who had ownership* over the fundamental narratives of modernity."[89] For Eddy, advances in human achievement derived their force and inspiration through progressive shifts in spiritual consciousness—whether or not there was a general recognition of this relationship.

In a chapter titled "Physiology" in *Science and Health,* Eddy explicitly engaged with the concept of muscularity as a form of consciousness with theological relevance. Beginning with a contemporary reference, she described muscles as "thought-forces" in accounting for the French acrobat Charles Blondin's ability to traverse "Niagara's abyss of waters" on a tightrope.[90] In the ensuing paragraph, she further probed the theme in describing the trajectory of Judeo-Christian spirituality from its pagan predecessors. "When Homer sang of the Grecian gods," she wrote, "Olympus was dark, but

[85]Letter to Mary Baker Eddy from F. P. Speare, October 26, 1909.

[86]*Boston Times,* October 30, 1909, The Mary Baker Eddy Collection, The Mary Baker Eddy Library.

[87]Eddy, "Pond and Purpose," 206n53.

[88]Doggett, *History of the Boston Young Men's Christian Association,* 72n35.

[89]See L. Ashley Squires, *Healing the Nation: Literature, Progress, and Christian Science* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 4.

[90]See Eddy, *Science and Health* (1934), 199.

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through his verse the gods became alive in a nation's belief."[91] In this sphere the muscular predominated as a vital force, eventually superseded by mental and spiritual ascent into the monotheism of Judeo-Christianity. "Pagan worship began with muscularity, but the law of Sinai lifted thought into the song of David," Eddy explained. "Moses advanced a nation to the worship of God in Spirit instead of matter, and illustrated the grand human capacities of being bestowed by immortal Mind."[92] For Eddy, this existential leap into "the grand human capacities of being" did not represent a repudiation of muscularity so much as its repositioning within a larger mental and spiritual universe.

Earlier in the chapter on "Physiology," Eddy noted that the "feats of the gymnast prove that latent mental fears are subdued by him."[93] As with muscular Christians, like Gulick, Eddy saw a connection between physical dominion and mental and spiritual development, and she was attentive to their inner workings and interrelation in human achievement and expression. For both muscular Christians and Eddy, the body needed a change of focus in Christian thought. While Eddy did not emphasize therapeutics for the body as did muscular Christians, she recognized that it was in relation to the dynamics of mind, body, and spirit that Christianity could—and should—prove its relevance to modern man.

VI. "Champion Athlete Attributes Great Success to Faith in Christian Science"

The above heading references a headline in the January 3, 1908, sports section of the *New York American*. A clipping of the article appears in one of Eddy's scrapbooks.[94] The subject of the article is one Harry F. Porter, who at the time was competing for the Irish American Athletic Club in New York City. A graduate of Cornell, Porter would go on that year to set an Olympic record in the high jump, winning a gold medal for the United States at the 1908 Olympics in London, England.[95] Porter also contributed several articles to Christian Science periodicals. One in particular stands out in relation to his view on the relationship of mind, body, and spirit. Written originally for the *Toronto Star* in conjunction with his joining the Irish-Canadian Athletic Club, Porter addressed and rebutted points made in the somewhat sensationalized *New York American* feature story on him, which claimed that he "scored special victories without special training." Porter corrected this view, stating:

> As to the problem of training, the writer's understanding of Christian Science has not led him to abandon training or to be indifferent to practice, an idea as absurd as it is false. Nothing is ever accomplished without hard, faithful work and personal sacrifice, and the athlete who would perform well and grow in excellence must prove every step of the way by intelligent, conscientious effort, and the hoped-for goal is never attained until in thought and action entire harmony is realized.[96]

Porter became acquainted with Christian Science after graduating from Cornell. He described the first year of post-collegiate life as deeply unsettling to him, "manifest[ing] itself in poor health and low spirits." For Porter, engagement with and commitment to

[91]Eddy, *Science and Health* (1934), 199–200.
[92]Eddy, *Science and Health* (1934), 200.
[93]Eddy, *Science and Health* (1934), 199.
[94]Scrapbook (SB018), The Mary Baker Eddy Library Collection, The Mary Baker Eddy Library.
[95]See Morris Bishop, *A History of Cornell* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962), 416.
[96]Harry F. Porter, "Selected Articles," *Christian Science Sentinel* 10, no. 23 (February 8, 1908): 447. First published by *Toronto Star* (Ontario).

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Eddy's writings reinvigorated his life and his desire for sport. "I felt returned, as it were, to my boyhood days, when I romped and played in sheer abandon to the joy of living," he wrote. "My fondness for athletics returned with force. I longed again to don the simple attire and sport on the field and track, and with greater keenness than ever before."[97]

In an article printed in *The Christian Science Journal* in 1911, Porter addressed the question of manhood. "Character is the flower of manhood," he noted. "It is the perfect conformity of the will of man to the will of God, the coincidence in human experience of Principle and practice." At the close of the piece, he identified Jesus as "he . . . in whom manhood blossomed at its brightest bloom"[98]—a concept that would have resonated at the deepest levels of muscular Christian purpose and vision.

VII. Conclusion

While the question of health was central to muscular Christianity and Christian Science, in neither case was its pursuit an end in itself. Muscular Christianity was not simply "a celebration of the body" in order to be more physically robust as an effectual servant of Christ. In Christian Science, the body was not simply a problem to be avoided in order to achieve a more sanctified spiritual state. At issue for both movements was how a renewed or even revolutionized understanding of how spirituality worked in relation to bodily well-being reconfigured in its totality the relationship of the human and divine. For Luther Gulick and his close friend G. Stanley Hall, organizations like the Young Men's Christian Association were making Christianity relevant both to the individual and the collective in revealing how vitalization of the mind, body, and spirit led to experiencing health as a pragmatic representation of holiness. As Hall stated in his two-volume work, *Jesus, the Christ, in the Light of Psychology*, "The very word 'health' means wholeness or holiness." In the same passage, Hall referenced Eddy's system in his appraisal of the Messiah's healing purpose, commenting that "in the Kingdom all sickness is driven away, and the fond dream-wish of the folk-soul to be completely and superlatively well is realized in a way beyond the wildest dreams of modern Christian Science."[99] For Eddy, bodily health was a divine right, wherein she understood Jesus's healings not as miracles but as revelations of how core spiritual identity provided strength and wellness to mind and body. "These mighty works are not supernatural, but supremely natural," she wrote. "They are the sign of Immanuel, or 'God with us,' —a divine influence ever present in human consciousness and repeating itself, coming now as was promised aforetime."[100]

Christian Science and muscular Christianity emerged at a time when science and secularization were engendering new questions about the role and relevance of religion. Both movements emphasized practical outcomes as essential to proving their validity. They saw the demands of the public square as an opportunity for spiritual development based in the world. Eddy's founding of *The Christian Science Monitor* as a secular "real" newspaper served this objective.[101] The Boston YMCA in the late nineteenth century

[97]Harry F. Porter, "Selected Articles," *Christian Science Sentinel* 11, no. 39 (May 29, 1909): 767. First published by *Cornell Era*.

[98]Harry F. Porter, *The Christian Science Journal* 29, no. 6 (September 1911): 347.

[99]Hall, *Jesus, the Christ, in the Light of Psychology*, 2:614.

[100]Eddy, *Science and Health* (1934), xi.

[101]Canham noted, "In a broad, nontechnical and nonlegal sense, the *Monitor* is not a religious newspaper. Down through the years, from the very outset, the *Monitor* was designed to be a 'real newspaper' as its first editor, Archibald McLellan, defined it before it was ever issued." Canham, *Commitment to Freedom: The Story of the Christian Science Monitor,* xvi. For today's readers, the news source gives this account on its

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saw that its "work must be helpful to young men along every line of their lives—spiritual, social, mental, physical, and business."[102] As someone who developed strong business acumen in the management of her personal finances as well as in the shepherding of her church, Eddy also recognized the merits of demonstrating the utility of religious thought within business culture.[103]

When Eddy wrote in "Pond and Purpose" that "the advancing stages of Christian Science are gained through growth, not accretion," she was signaling that this religious practice aligned with the spirit of science, that it was progressive, requiring ongoing exploration, discovery, and proof. For Eddy, this had broad implications for Christian Science as a transformational agent in the world and in relation to people's minds and bodies. Likewise, muscular Christianity was advancing the idea that new scientific perspectives—often based in the science of the mind or psychology—demonstrated not a division between body and spirit but a holism within them. While they differed in their respective emphases on the body, both Eddy and muscular Christians saw the pursuit of health or physical well-being as not only a part of Christian outreach or care for the world but as inherent to Christian spiritual practice and progress. In Christian Science and muscular Christianity, Christ Jesus's works and character invited deep exploration into how spirituality and the divine worked as an emboldening influence on life and health. In this respect, Eddy made a point of representing how Christian Science addressed the practical needs and idealism of manhood as part of its overall healing and redemptive mission.

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website about its religious underpinnings and affiliation: "The Monitor has built a reputation in the journalism world over the past century for the integrity, credibility and fair-mindedness of its reporting. It is produced for anyone who cares about the progress of the human endeavor around the world and seeks news reported with compassion, intelligence, and an essentially constructive lens. For many, that caring has religious roots. For many, it does not. The Monitor has always embraced both audiences." *The Christian Science Monitor*, "What is The Christian Science Monitor?," accessed February 27, 2020, https://www.csmonitor.com/About.

[102]Doggett, *History of the Boston Young Men's Christian Association,* 74.

[103]See "What was Eddy's Approach to Business?," The Mary Baker Eddy Library, updated April 29, 2016, https://www.marybakereddylibrary.org/research/eddys-approach-business. It states, "When her husband, Daniel Patterson, deserted her in 1866, [Eddy] was nearly penniless; by 1907 she had a net worth of over $1,000,000 (about $25,000,000 in today's money)." According to the piece, Eddy was a capable investor and she earned income from "royalty payments from her books, such as *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*." For Eddy's oversight of her intellectual property, see Andrew Ventimiglia, "Authorship and Authority in Intellectual Property: The Copyright Activism of Mary Baker Eddy," in *Copyrighting God: Ownership of the Sacred in American Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), chap. 3, DOI 10.1017/9781108349444. Ventimiglia points out that "the acute attention she paid to her intellectual property rights, particularly the ownership rights in her central religious text *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, allowed Eddy to achieve key organizational objectives within the Christian Science Church (minimizing threats to her authority, limiting divergent interpretations of her work) while also helping her articulate an investment in both the ethics and economics of ownership in the religious domain." Ventimiglia, *Copyrighting God*, 115.

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