

# ANDREWS' AMERICA

Notes on Our Times by John K. Andrews, Jr. \* Special: February 1997 \* Reissued: January 2011

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## ON COMING TO THE CROSS And Ceasing to Edit God

Faith in the Almighty matters greatly in my America, and it should in yours. American society and government are built on the supreme sovereignty of the God of the Bible. This is historical fact, however much contemporary culture may deny it.

The Bible, along with the writings of Mary Baker Eddy and the founding documents of our country, has been my own life's cornerstone from boyhood. Over the years, however, I saw the need to choose between following Mrs. Eddy as a Christian Scientist, and being Christ's man according to Scripture.

I chose the Cross. My decision is explained in these materials, written at different times over the last few years as the need arose. The collection is not intended for general circulation, but rather offered in response to the interest of friends.

Regardless of whether the reader is connected with, or even acquainted with, the Christian Science religion, I believe there is relevance in the story told here. This hesitation between some system of self-salvation and the gospel of salvation by grace is a universal choice, and a fatal one.

The record is plain: both for individuals and for civilizations, the presumption of editing God to our own satisfaction, or trying to bargain with Him for terms, soon degenerates into the perversion of excluding God utterly from our lives.

This is the seduction of liberalism, whose grievous consequences engulf our nation today. I know of no solution but ceasing to edit Him, and bowing once again to His authority as the Founders did.

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## **ON THE DAMASCUS ROAD**

On a July day in 1980 at Round-Up Ranch in Buena Vista, I met the risen Christ in much the same way as Paul had met him on the Damascus road. It changed my life completely. From then on I was less concerned with following my Leader, Mrs. Eddy, and more concerned with glorifying and serving Jesus my Savior.

I constantly prayed as Paul did, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The answer that came, for a long time, was to bloom where I was planted; to stay and work for Jesus in the church I was raised in, the Christian Science church.

But at last, in 1992, a different answer came. I decided it would be more honest and more beneficial to associate myself with churches that put the Cross, the Gospel, and the whole Christian tradition at the center in a way that Mary Baker Eddy's church does not. Only then, a dozen years after my Damascus experience, did I take steps to change my membership.

[Good Friday, April 1995 - Note to a family member]

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## **BEYOND RELIGION TO RELATIONSHIP**

Dear ----- I enjoyed our talk about religion at lunch yesterday. I respect your desire to find your own approach to these things, since you don't feel satisfied by the teachings of any church, including the one we grew up in. That church no longer satisfies me either, as I told you. But one thing we didn't talk enough about was the old, never-improved-upon approach I have accepted instead. It's not a religion but a relationship. Please listen and think on this:

I believe that God wants to have a direct and intimate relationship with you – a close, constant, personal, and private relationship. He offers you this through all the commands and promises of the Bible, completed in Jesus Christ. I think it saddens him to see you passing up the chance to live as your Father's dearly loved child, instead searching far afield to get in touch with some kind of angels, or to know yourself as an angel.

I think it troubles God when any of us sets out alone to invent our own new way of defining him and relating to him, as if we knew better than the clear instructions of Scripture and the example of devout people across 40 centuries.

Still he loves you so much that nothing you do, nothing, can lessen his desire to be in relationship with you or end your chance for it. He proved how great that desire is by coming among us in human form as Jesus, the Savior, and by sacrificing himself on the cross to free us from sin and death.

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When I finally accepted God's offer of relationship a few years ago, it was like being born all over again as the gospel promised. And I found that the new John who had surrendered was a person I could respect a lot more than the old John who thought he could make it on his own. The turning point was when I just said, "Yes, Lord, I want to be all yours. I bow and place you on the throne of my life."

People who do that and really mean it, begin to experience all kinds of changes for the better. Our accepting the relationship opens the way for God to provide satisfying answers to the many religious questions that come up. He shows us how to pray and study, where to worship and join, what teachings and rules to live by.

On our knees, surprisingly, we can see much farther than we could on our feet. I know this is true, because it has happened to me. Nor can I agree with what you said at lunch -- that such a Father-child relationship might be "true for me" but not universally true -- for the whole weight of Christian history shows otherwise.

That is, I'm saying that Christ Jesus was exact in speaking of himself not as "a way" to the Father, but as the way. No one could have struggled harder or longer against that teaching than I did, but by giving in to it at last, I gained the inexpressible peace of spiritually coming home. My heart aches at seeing you and other precious family members restlessly seeking for home, and I can't keep from telling you what a tremendous feeling it is to have *found* it.

I hope you don't hear any note of judgment or preaching in this letter. It's just written with a great deal of brotherly caring for you, and with a feeling of humble gratitude that has to pour out. We can talk more one of these days, or not. I'm content either way. With blessings and love -----

[February 1996 - Letter to a contemporary of mine in the family]

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## SHEPHERD, WASH ME CLEAN

Dear ----- Your kind letter touched me deeply. Thank you for caring. I have told my story to very few Christian Scientists; a genuine willingness to listen, such as I feel from you, seems rare among them.

A great deal could be said, from various perspectives, but here is a beginning. When you speak of "joining a conversation," that is probably quite accurate since several exchanges may be needed to air the whole matter. Following is what I penned in the wee hours after midnight two days ago, the day your letter came:

One day in July 1980, at the age of 36, after a testimony meeting at Adventure Unlimited, I gave up trying to govern my own life and resigned its government to Jesus Christ.

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From the Bible I had become convinced that Jesus was much more than the departed exemplar portrayed by Christian Science. I now gave myself to him utterly as God incarnate, my living savior and reigning king.

This was easily the most important decision I have ever made or will ever make, as long as I live. Intellectually, culturally, and spiritually it brought full and final satisfaction to my deepest hunger. Morally and practically it liberated and invigorated me. Truly I did feel born again.

Carried away with joy and zeal, I tried to tell my branch church about what I had seen, but only succeeded in getting myself removed as First Reader and effectively exiled, though retained on the membership roll.

For a number of years I sought ways of witnessing inoffensively of my faith to fellow Scientists, and searched Mrs. Eddy's writings for proof that it was only her followers, not she herself, who had hidden our Lord's divinity from me for so long. Both efforts were fruitless.

It was a long, lonely, difficult time for me. I finally realized that the isolation and ceaseless theological wrestlings were souring me spiritually. Something had to give.

I could no longer go on without the fellowship of a church that put the Cross at the center and held Scripture to be its own key. Nor could I in good conscience any more remain "unequally yoked together with unbelievers." While some good friends may interpret that text otherwise, this seemed its plain meaning for me.

Consequently, in November 1992, I withdrew from membership in The First Church of Christ, Scientist, Boston, and Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist, Denver. At Easter 1993 I received baptism from an Episcopal priest with whose congregation I had been worshipping for some time. In early 1995 my wife and I were admitted to membership in Wellshire Presbyterian Church, Denver.

Today, at 52, I still often pray in Mrs. Eddy's words as a practitioner taught me at 5: "Shepherd, show me how to go... Shepherd, wash [me] clean." However I now do so addressing the Lord Jesus, in grateful confidence that he has answered and continues answering this petition.

Thank you again for asking about this. Obviously it is of surpassing importance to me. If I thought a debate were in the offing, I would have deflected your inquiry. But a dialogue I gladly welcome. Let this be a start, or the end of it, just as you like. Warmly -----

P. S. Looking over my bookshelf, I find the following have been especially valuable to me over the years, roughly in order of importance as listed:

*The Everlasting Man* - G. K. Chesterton  
*Mere Christianity* - C. S. Lewis  
*Unspoken Sermons* - George MacDonald  
*Your God Is Too Small* - J. B. Phillips

*Apologia Pro Vita Sua* - John Henry Newman  
*Jesus Rediscovered* - Malcolm Muggeridge  
*Who Is Jesus?* - R. C. Sproul  
*More Than a Carpenter* - Josh McDowell

## FIDELITY TO THE REAL

In a recent publication I dissociated myself from certain theological points of the church I grew up in. Several friends have kindly questioned whether I was accurate, fair, or constructive in doing so. My respect and affection for them prompt this reply.

The exact reference was to Christian Scientists as "followers of Christ Jesus devoted to healing as he did, but holding that he was not really God incarnate, did not really die on the cross to save us sinners, and that man is not really a sinner anyway, rather we are already perfect." I said that I now stand with orthodox Christians in "affirming precisely the opposite, which I have concluded fits better with Scripture and experience."

First, as to accuracy, the three statements after "holding" are quite clearly supported in the Christian Science textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, at pages 361:12, 44:28, 475:31, respectively.

Then as to fairness, although my correspondents have cited passages in Mrs. Eddy's writings which lean the other way, I still believe it is fair to say that most of her followers hold to the positions I described.

The key word in those positions is "really." Since the very core of Christian Science metaphysics is the distinction it makes between what really is and what seems to be, Mrs. Eddy writes on more than one level and her works are thus fraught with apparent (but according to her most devoted students, not actual) self-contradiction. So exchanges of quoting and counter-quoting can go on indefinitely and not be conclusive.

But one can conclude, from looking at the consensus of belief among adherents of her church, that Christian Science today "really" does discount the Trinity, the Cross, and the Fall in just the way I said. This is simply an observation, not an attack, and I am truly sorry if anyone has been hurt by perceiving it otherwise.

Was it constructive, though, to have made the observation in print? Doctrinal controversy is not customary among Christian Scientists, and when a former Christian Scientist disregards the custom it may seem he has gratuitously aimed a parting shot for no good purpose.

Yet the drawing of distinctions, if done civilly so as to generate light and not heat, may help establish truth -- which should be welcome to every student of Mrs. Eddy, who called herself a truth-seeker, and every disciple of Christ Jesus, who called himself Truth. Assuming our standard is fidelity to the real, fuzziness and avoidance are not so constructive as clarity and candor.

The sharp theological contrast between orthodox Christianity and Christian Science is too often overlooked by adherents of both, with adverse consequences to our spiritual walk. Where a bright line can be drawn, it should be, for the benefit of all.

Christian Scientists respectfully differ with orthodoxy in both its briefer statements such as the Nicene Creed and its longer ones such as Lewis's *Mere Christianity*, while persons confessing these respectfully differ with *Science and Health*. When the difference is candidly acknowledged clearer thinking is fostered. Yes, both read the same Bible, but they derive from it quite

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different answers to humanity's anguished question: Why this life of struggle; what help, what hope is there?

Orthodoxy presents not just a description but a drama, a story: God created man, man chose to rebel against God, God was born and died in human form to offer salvation, man can now choose to accept that offer and be reconciled to his Father -- or reject it and remain forever alienated from Him.

Christian Science, on the other hand, presents not a dynamic narrative but a static picture in three layers: God and man eternally coexisting in perfection, man (seemingly) suffering in mortality because he (seemingly) tends to forget God, yet capable of recovering the (never really lost) perfection by remembering his (never really forgotten) immortal identity.

The two accounts are not the same at all and cannot be combined. They produce quite different results in the way we regard ourselves, treat others, and live our lives. Each of us must decide which one is "really" true, which one "fits better with Scripture and experience."

Having reached my decision, after a decade of wrestling and several years of quiet transition, I was at last impelled to make it known. I believe it is always constructive to be who you are and to witness for what you cherish. Our world needs more forthrightness. Circumstances have brought it about that my example matters to a good many people. I didn't feel I should withhold it on a subject of this importance.

The forceful and repeated warning of the New Testament is against valuing Jesus too little, not too much. "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven," seems to me a stern word it were unwise to ignore. Insisting as we do that reality is not relative, subjective, approximate, or multiple, why not earnestly engage one another over its precise, objective nature? Otherwise, how devoted to reality can we claim to be?

[August 1996 - Replying to three Scientists who had written to me about the previous month's issue of *Andrews' America*]

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## THE VERDICT IS IN

After 130 years the verdict is in. The supposedly revolutionary doctrine and movement launched by Mary Baker Eddy in 1866, known as Christian Science, stands discredited by its own tests. Eddyism, as a non-adherent might fairly call it, has failed. It is over.

The founder aimed for her teaching to rename Christendom, recast theology, rewrite Biblical interpretation, and dethrone Jesus from the Godhead. It has not. Instead it is traditional, evangelical, fundamental Christianity that is thriving, as hers and the other liberal revisionist varieties languish.

She predicted the new system presented in her textbook would replace medicine, revive marriage and morality, and reform society. It has not. To the extent any of that is occurring, *Science and Health* is not demonstrably part of the reason.

It is true that since the late 19th century the practice of Christian Science has benefited many thousands of people, accomplished countless remarkable cures, and sustained a staunch and upstanding, if small, church body.

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But this is to be expected from any way of life that steeps its adherents in Scripture, prayer, worship, and good works; enjoins them from social and medicinal drugs; and inculcates self-responsibility and disciplined thinking. I conclude that it has occurred more in spite of, than because of, Mrs. Eddy's core doctrines: the denial of matter and evil, the rejection of the Trinity, and the semi-deification of herself.

Those doctrines, the unique essence of Christian Science, have achieved nothing close to the universal transformative effects which their originator prophesied they would by the late 20th century. Their influence will nonetheless probably linger for decades among a devout few. But no further evidence is needed. Eddyism is over, and it has failed.

[September 1995 - Reflecting on my former zeal for what Scientists like to call their "spiritual revolution"]

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### **O COME, LET US ADORE HIM**

In the churches where I worship, Jesus is adored in the highest.

He is thanked, praised, and prayed to -- aloud.

He is reverently addressed by his titles -- Lord, Savior, King.

His cross is worn, carried, preached, venerated, bowed low to and placed on high -- over altars, atop steeples.

His shed blood is talked of, wondered at, gloried in, and appropriated for salvation.

The days of his birth, crucifixion, and resurrection are celebrated with affection and awe surpassing all other days in the year.

His New and Old Testaments are believed above all other books.

His bread and wine are partaken as he instructed: "This do in remembrance of me."

His followers are contrite as he instructed: "God have mercy on me a sinner."

I never found these things to be the case in any of the churches where Mary Baker Eddy's students worship. Not in a single one. Not ever.

I have no condemnation or animosity toward Mrs. Eddy, her teachings, her organization, any of her students, or the churches they constitute.

But since I do adore Jesus in the highest, what choice have I but to worship obediently with others who do the same, and to part ways amicably with those who exalt him less?

[July 1996 - Replying to the letter of a Scientist friend who insisted his church exalts Christ Jesus no less than other churches do]

## WHERE IS YOUR FAITH?

Q: You were raised as a Christian Scientist, following in the steps of your great-grandparents in the Andrews and Hutchinson families from before 1900. You devoutly lived by that upbringing until close to the age of 50. Are you a Christian Scientist today?

A: I am not. I am merely a Christian as were the disciples at Antioch who first bore that name in the Book of Acts. I love the Christian Scientists, but I can no longer agree with them in acknowledging Mary Baker Eddy as leader, her textbook as the final revelation, her church as the true one, or her way of life as the best.

Q: Who influenced you to this change of heart?

A: Jesus Christ. I believe that his is the only name by which I can be saved. Mrs. Eddy I treasure, despite my disagreements with her, as one of numerous holy seers through the centuries who have witnessed for him in ways that encourage the rest of us to higher discipleship.

Q: What is your evidence for all this?

A: The Bible. As God's inspired word, it is our sufficient guide to eternal life. Scripture needs no key or interpreter, rather it is the final arbiter and interpreter of all other writings. *Science and Health*, insightful as it may be in places (and woefully mistaken in other places) could not have brought to humanity the Comforter or Holy Spirit, since he came at Pentecost as Jesus had promised and he has indwelt each believer ever since.

Q: Are you making a distinction between the church that was established at Jerusalem by the apostles on Pentecost and the one founded in Boston by Mrs. Eddy in 1879?

A: With sadness, yes, I am. The one holy, catholic, apostolic church proclaims Jesus as Lord and Savior, fully God and fully man, the Lamb that was slain for our sins. It glories in the Cross, keeps the Eucharist, and struggles at staying knit together as the undivided body of Christ through the ages and across the denominations. It both confronts the believer's sinfulness and cherishes his humanity. The various Christian congregations with whom I now worship are known by these signs. The Church of Christ, Scientist, is not. It was for this reason that I resigned in 1992, though countless blessings had come to me during 33 years of membership and though many of the members walk more humbly with God than I have yet learned to.

Q: Obviously you have come to a very basic rethinking of the Christian Scientists' revelator, their revelation, and their organization. Does this mean it is all gone for you? What remains?

A: Only the Gospel, which Christian Science was my schoolmaster in finding and which is all I could ever want anyway. I feel like the Catholic girl Mrs. Eddy mentions, the one who lost her crucifix and said now she had nothing left but Christ. What has fallen away is not my house of faith but simply its scaffolding; the house stands stronger than ever and I find it a lighter, warmer place to live. Nothing is left me but a wonderful way of life: the Eddy and Boston way in a degree, for a rethinking is not an outright rejection; but in fullest measure the Bethlehem and Calvary way, the way of Rome and Wittenburg and Geneva and Canterbury, the way of Chesterton and Lewis and Graham. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.