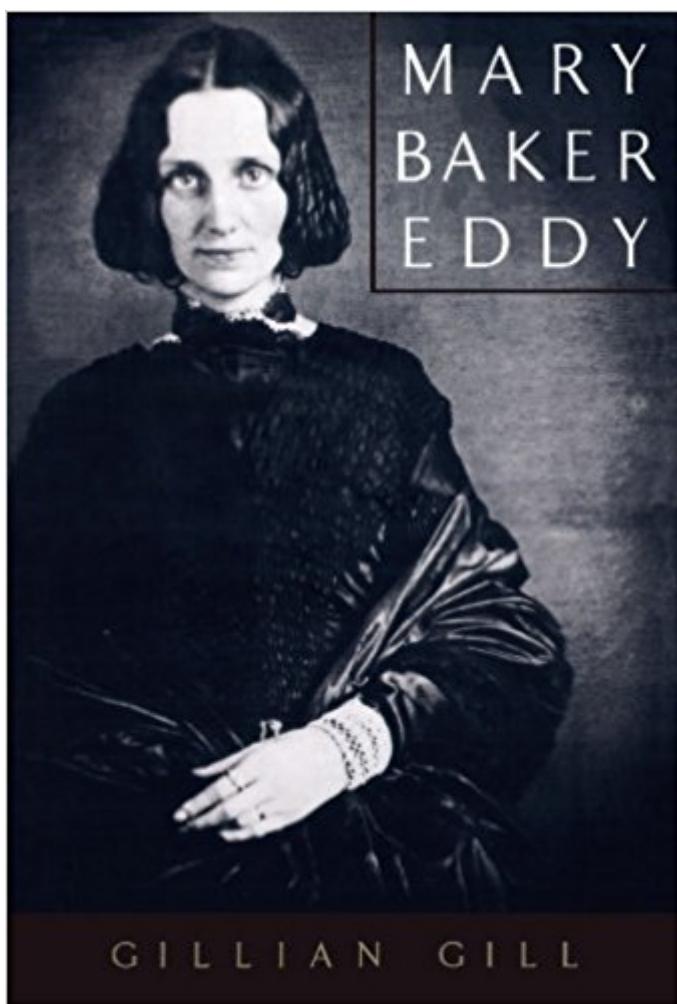


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Mary Baker Eddy (Radcliffe Biography Series)



Synopsis

In 1866, a frail, impoverished invalid, middle-aged, widowed and divorced, rose from her bed after a life-threatening fall, asked for her Bible, and took the first steps toward the founding of the Christian Science Church. Four decades later, she was revered as their leader by thousands of churches in the U.S. and Europe, had founded a national newspaper, and had become probably the most powerful woman in America. Who was this astonishing woman, the mother of the Mother Church? How did she prepare for her illustrious career during her years of obscurity, and what was her inspiration for the healing practices and doctrine of Christian Science? Gillian Gill, a non-Christian Science Scientist scholar, who managed to win unparalleled access to the Church archives, offers here an entirely new look at Mary Baker Eddy. For the first time readers will see the extraordinary leadership skills exercised by Mrs. Eddy despite the repressive forces facing women in her time. For the first time we learn the full story of the bizarre attack on Mrs. Eddy by Joseph Pulitzer and his New York World—alleging that she was at least senile and possibly not even alive. In this enthralling biography, we rediscover Mary Baker Eddy as a radical Christian thinker, pioneer in the recognition of mind/body connections, survivor of scandal, and target of both admiration and scorn from such eminent contemporaries as Mark Twain. Gillian Gill's sense of drama, her critical acumen, and her delicious wit bring to life a brilliant religious leader whose message has new meaning in our time.

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Customer Reviews

The feminist perspective of historian Gillian Gill (author of a previous biography of Agatha Christie) adds three-dimensionality to the life story of the controversial, charismatic founder of Christian Science. Neither unblemished saint nor unscrupulous manipulator, Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910) emerges in this substantive reassessment as a powerful woman so constrained by conventional notions of femininity that she suffered decades of frustration and ill health before liberating herself with radical new ideas. Her emphasis on spiritual healing and women's empowerment made enemies virtually from the first publication of *Science and Health* in 1875; the schisms and lawsuits that plagued her church gave Eddy's opponents ammunition. In her thorough coverage of such touchy matters, Gill doesn't deny her subject's imperiousness and tendency to paranoia, but her sympathetic analysis stresses Eddy's gifts as a religious leader, administrator, and propagandist. The author gained access to the closely guarded Christian Science archives without ceding editorial control, and her scrupulous effort to freshly judge every issue justifies this trust. Gill's dry wit and first-person presence in the text's opinions ensure that her lengthy, exhaustively documented narrative doesn't feel unduly daunting or academic. --Wendy Smith --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Gill (Agatha Christie: The Woman and Her Mysteries, LJ 1/92) writes about the amazingly resilient founder of the Christian Science Church, a woman who weathered indigence, a life-threatening fall, three marriages, various defections of students, and legal challenges. Gill, who was given access to church archives, provides an unbiased portrait of an extraordinary woman who exercised spiritual leadership at a time when women's concerns were supposed to be in the home, not the public arena. Unlike earlier biographers, Gill does not make Eddy into a saint or a devil?she sees Eddy's successes as an expression of her talents, making this book of interest to feminists and historians as well as those interested in Christian Science. Recommended for all libraries.?Carolyn M. Craft, Longwood Coll., Farmville, VA
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Such clear writing, taking a controversial subject and making it easy to understand - especially her way of recognizing all the different sources and previous bios of MBE. Read her book of Florence Nightingale, and really appreciated the feminist perspective she brought to that subject, and her perspective for MBE was especially appealing to me. Too often, I think, we guys do not understand what women, and especially 19th women went through.Her description of the steps she took to get

(almost full) access to the archives of the Mother Church, really had the feel of investigative journalism. I knew of her, from my youth, but being told she may have been the most powerful women in the early 20th Century really amazed me, but, with 800,000 followers and a (relative) fortune, I can see it. Gillian Gill captured, I believe, her drive, cantankerousness, philosophy, but, more important, she told one hell of a great story. One needs no background in Christian Science to really enjoy this book.

This is a 700-plus page book! I've read about 200 pages and am loving it so far. This is the third book by Gillian Gill that I have read -- she is quite a wonderful story teller. I'm having a great time with Mark Baker Eddy, but again, I have another 500 pages to go. Gill provides tremendous details about Eddy's childhood, her failed marriages, and her myriad health issues. This provides the context one needs to understand what drove Mary Baker Eddy to begin her church. So far, so good!

This is an extraordinary, insightful biography about one of the greatest women leaders in America. I was impressed by the detail given to events and circumstances providing both sides of issues and presenting the many facets of Mary Baker Eddy's character and her undeniable achievements.

Loved this book. Hardback is hard to find. Price was good. Delivery was fast. Book in perfect condition!

Biographers of Eddy have assumed she was an ordinary woman in possession of an astonishing achievement and success. This strikes Gill as an absurdity. Surely her talent must account for her achievement. Mary Baker Eddy's freedom from domestic care was won at enormous cost when she was separated from her six year old son. She lived with her second husband, Daniel Patterson, in North Groton, New Hampshire between 1855 and 1860. After 1862 she began a transition. By 1875 she was active and independent. She first consulted Quimby, a healer, in 1862. Both Quimby and Mary Baker Eddy were autodicts. Mary Baker Eddy suffered from life-long loneliness. During the Civil War Daniel Patterson had the look of a fool and a failure because he was captured by the rebel forces while he was, remarkably, sight-seeing. The situation encouraged Mary to take an independent stand. For such an undertaking good health was requisite. Under the ministrations of P.P. Quimby she was healed. She became a Quimby disciple and publicist. She made several visits to Portland, Maine between 1863 and 1865. Quimby published nothing in his lifetime. He was barely literate. The Quimby papers were, in all probability, transcriptions of Quimby dictations. Quimby died

in 1866. Eddy's healing in 1866 after a fall on the ice, as her marriage was collapsing, was produced through Bible reading. It was a turning point. Between 1866 and 1870 Mrs. Eddy moved nine times. She was penniless. Hiram Crafts was MBE's first student. While living with Mrs. Webster she met Richard Kennedy and Sarah Bagley. In 1870 MBE and Richard Kennedy moved to Lynn. Kennedy was a healer and MBE a teacher. The early students, except for Putney Bancroft, were a source of endless trouble to Eddy. By 1872 Kennedy had declared his independence. Nearly all of the Eddy-Kennedy correspondence has disappeared. SCIENCE AND HEALTH appeared in print in 1875. Many revisions took place in the foundational text, finally issued for posterity in 1907. MBE underwent social ostracism and cultural and intellectual isolation. She was writing alone in a cultural vacuum. Gill characterizes the work as the loneliest book she has encountered. The author of the biography functions as a sort of counsel to the defense as she evaluates MBE's essential integrity and authenticity. She separates the strands of the rival schools of biographers, Milmine-Dakin-Dittemore versus Peel-Wilbur. Asa Gilbert Eddy and Mary Baker Glover, (after separating from Patterson she resumed using the Glover surname), were married January 1, 1877. Gilbert proved to be very useful. He died June 3, 1882. In August 1882 Calvin Frye was offered employment by Mrs. Eddy at her Massachusetts Metaphysical College. His employment with her extended to the end of her life in 1910. Calvin Frye had grown up in the shadow of his mother's insanity. Mrs. Eddy's religion succeeded as she created a persona appealing to both the rich financier and the aspiring artisan. John Wilson, University Press, became the printer of SCIENCE AND HEALTH to the great betterment of the book in its subsequent editions. Between 1885 and 1891 some editorial services were provided by James Henry Wiggin, a Unitarian minister. Gill argues that SCIENCE AND HEALTH is a flawed but fascinating and radical work. Mary Baker Eddy was unschooled but brilliant. By the end of the 1880's Christian Science was a religious force. It was challenged by the New Thought Movement. In 1889 Mrs. Eddy moved from Boston to New Hampshire and thereafter appeared in public infrequently. She closed the Metaphysical College and other Christian Science institutions underwent reorganization. In 1892 the Mother Church was established. The building of the church on Norway Street was completed in eight months. Joseph Armstrong wrote interestingly of the building of the church and the extension. The directors supplied on-site supervision of the work. Part of Mrs. Eddy wanted to be entertained and adored. There was, for example, her adopted son Ebenezer Foster. Unfortunately Foster exploited his influence. This biographer identifies one of the problems in Mrs. Eddy's dealings with others is that she hated noise. Pleasant View was a garden and a farm. In her first decade at Concord she enjoyed relative anonymity. In the nineteenth century New Hampshire was a tourist mecca. A rigid household routine

enabled Mrs. Eddy to cope with uneven progress in Christian Science affairs. In her pursuit of domestic perfection Mrs. Eddy may have been a little mad. Household workers learned to fear her anger. Mrs. Eddy taught her last Christian Science class in 1898. Students received special invitations to join the gathering in Concord. In 1906 the New York WORLD reported that Mrs. Eddy was more dead than alive. Her reclusiveness puzzled friends and family. The citizens of Concord were prepared to combat the press attacks. After the Next of Friends law suit Mrs. Eddy moved to Chestnut Hill, (to a great barn of a place, she said). Within three weeks the rooms were reduced to the dimensions of those at Pleasant View and the dwelling became more tailored to Mrs. Eddy's needs. In the end Mrs. Eddy and her followers dealt with Josephine Woodbury and Augusta Stetson, errant leaders of the movement. Gillian Gill finds that Eddy was not an hysterical, a drug-addict, or deficient in maternal feelings. Acts to change the structure of the religion undertaken subsequent to 1889 are called amusingly the great disestablishment by Gill. Notes, source book descriptions, and an index follow the epilogue in this accomplished and judicious retelling of the life of Mary Baker Eddy.

Many biographies have been written about Mary Baker Eddy, the discoverer and founder of Christian Science and The First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston Massachusetts. She also established the world-renowned Christian Science Monitor. This contemporary biography reexamines the more controversial issues surrounding Eddy's life in an objective way, because Gillian Gill, the author, is not a member of the church. Her research is thorough and footnotes copious. I'd recommend this to anyone who would like to know about the subject from an unbiased point of view.

Heavy going

Excellent condition.

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