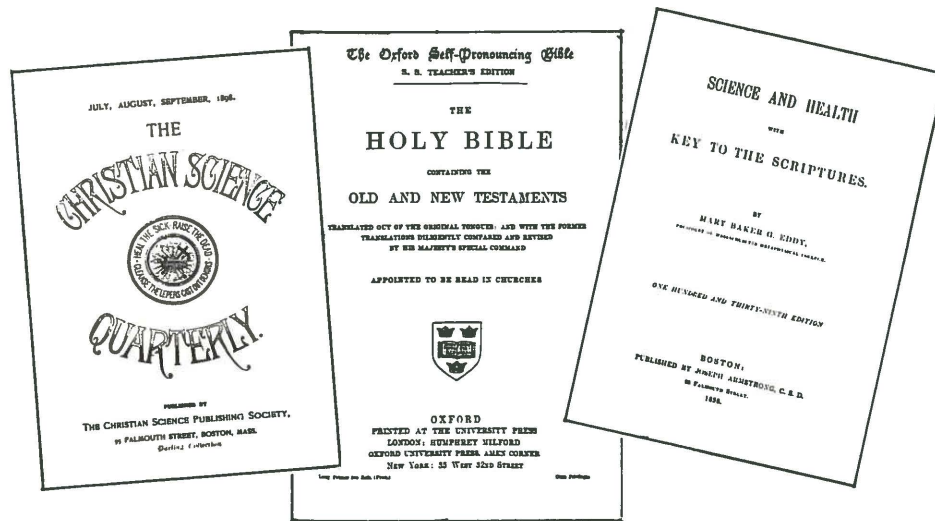


“A PLANT OF STURDY GROWTH”: The History and Development of the Christian Science Weekly Bible Lessons



Cover of the July–September 1898 issue of the *Christian Science Quarterly* and inside title pages of the Bible and *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (139th ed., 1898) by Mary Baker Eddy, publications used in the daily study of the weekly Bible Lessons

As Mary Baker Eddy's student, and member of The Christian Science Bible Lesson Committee at various times from 1898–1927, Irving C. Tomlinson observed, “viewed historically, the [Christian Science] Bible Lessons are a plant of sturdy growth.”¹

This article considers some of the aspects of the evolution of these Bible Lessons, including the interdenominational Uniform Series of the International Sunday-School Bible Lessons and the twenty-six Bible lesson topics later designated by Mrs. Eddy for her church. Of those twenty-six Bible Lesson subjects, Tomlinson notes that Mrs.

Eddy received them “through inspiration.”² William P. McKenzie, also a student of Mrs. Eddy and member of The Christian Science Bible Lesson Committee from 1896–1917, further informs us that “it was understood that these topics covered the course of instruction given by her [Mrs. Eddy] in [Christian Science] class teaching.”³

It then is perhaps no small matter to consider the historic context in which these weekly Bible Lessons emerged, since Mrs. Eddy, herself, has written of them as “... a lesson on which the prosperity of Christian Science largely depends.”⁴

tion of a long series of experiments with systems of biblical study.”⁵ Most acknowledge that this experimentation began in the 1780's with Robert Raikes in England. Raikes faced the task of teaching reading, writing and church catechism to criminals and the



Robert Raikes.

The Origin of the International Bible Lesson Series

As one noted author has written on this subject: “The system of International Lessons did not spring up in a night ... The plan was the culmina-

poor in England. His system, which gathered the poor and uneducated together each Sunday to be instructed by women teachers, provided both the stimulus and inspiration to more widespread education — secular and religious — for those in England and America.

From 1800 to 1825 the focus of religious education in America largely centered on the strict memorization of Bible verses. This methodology proved less than fully adequate, so that by 1825 a new system known as the "limited lesson" or the "selected lesson" was launched. These new Bible lesson plans were designed for use in Sunday-schools (which included both adults and children) and centered around "... a course of scriptural selections extending through five years, of forty lessons each year, and including 'the principal facts and truths of the Bible.'"⁶ By 1827, various publishers, including the American Sunday-School Union (organized in 1824), produced a wide array of annual lesson books designed to encourage, over a number of years, the study of the whole Bible in chronological or subject-organized portions. Yet the very multiplicity of publishers, arrangements, approaches and selections meant that these lessons were still very far from the hoped for ideal of either national or international unity in Scriptural study. This period of development in the International Bible Lessons has been very aptly termed the "Babel Series." After all, "each denomination and prominent Sunday-school publishing house put forth a scheme of lessons of its own, putting emphasis upon its creed, or planned to suit its constituency."⁷

Such separatism was overcome, gradually, starting with what had been learned from the tragic experiences of the American Civil War of the 1860's — that division was perilous to society and religion. Added to this was a ground swell of requests at Sunday-school teachers' institutes, held from 1862–1869, for a uniform topic of study. Edward Eggleston, of *The National Sunday-School Teacher*, expressed, in 1869, the growing need:

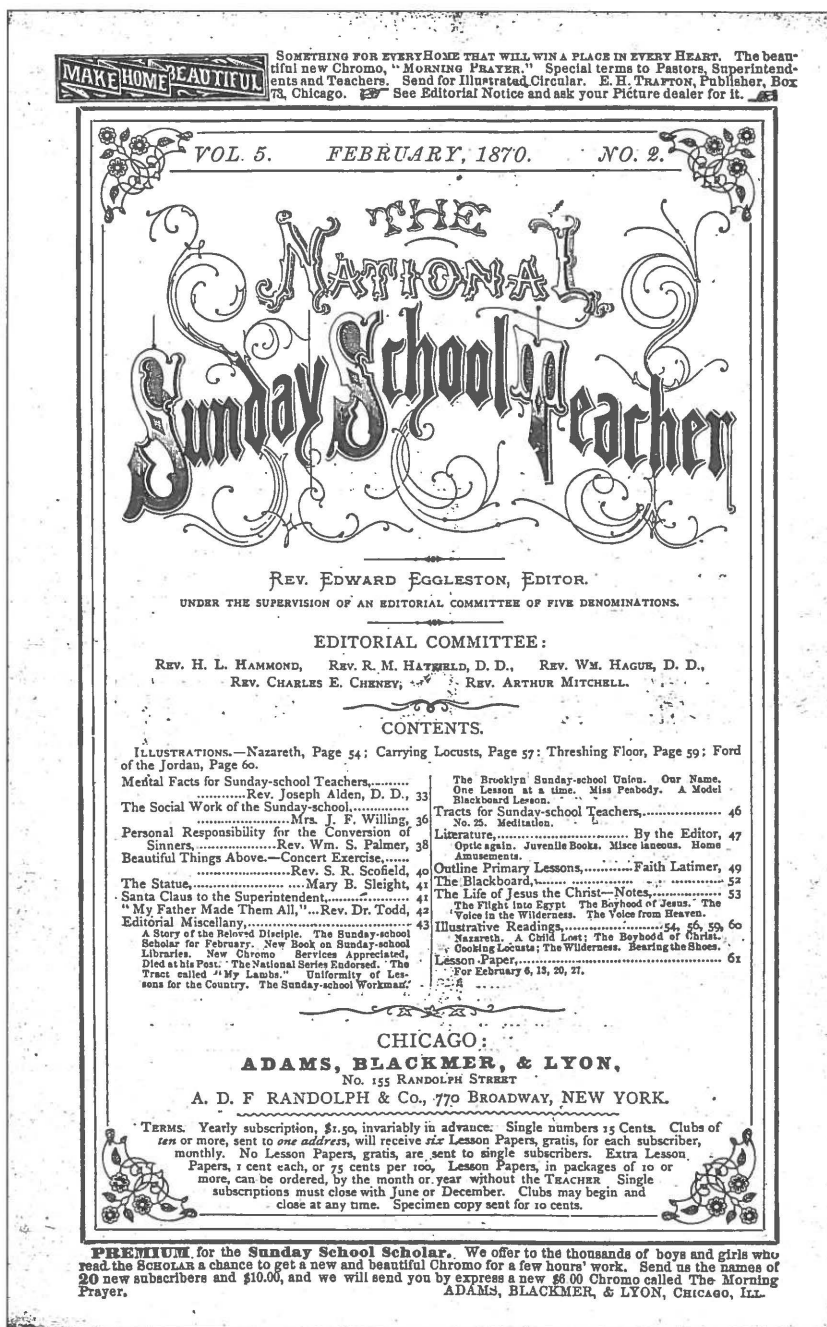
"One lesson for the school — the same in the Bible classes, the main school and the infant class, but adapted by teachers to the capacities and wants of each, is ... the foundation for all true

advancement. It gives concentration, oneness, heart, life, success. ... Without a uniform lesson there can be no teachers' meeting ... unity of thought in hymns and prayer is out of the question; the moral power of a large number studying the same passage is destroyed. There can be no such thing as an effective school without a uniform lesson of some kind."⁸

Dr. Henry Clay Trumbull, Secretary of the Executive Committee for the National Sunday-School Convention, noted the problems that beset this desired goal of a uniform Bible lesson

plan and the means by which success in this endeavor was finally reached in these words:

"... Apparently no publishing society or house was originally desirous of the experiment [of a uniform Bible lesson series]. Most of the prominent Sunday-school men of the nation doubted both its feasibility and its desirability. It was the common people of the United States — the great mass of Bible students through the length and breadth of the land — who pressed for it, creating a public sentiment in its behalf not easily resisted."⁹



Front cover of *The National Sunday-School Teacher* for February 1870

Due to such a popular outcry, the Executive Meeting of the National Sunday-School Convention held on July 10, 1871, endorsed the view that, "the Sunday-school cause in our country would be greatly promoted if the publishers of Sunday-school lessons would unite on a uniform series of topics for the [Bible] lessons of 1872."¹⁰ A committee of five was appointed to prepare a trial set of topics for the Uniform Bible Lessons. The committee's membership included: Edward Eggleston of *The National Sunday-School Teacher*; Richard Newton, Editor for the periodicals of the American Sunday-School Union; John H. Vincent of the Methodist Episcopal Sunday-School Union; Henry C. McCook of the Presbyterian Board of Publication; and B. F. Jacobs, a Baptist from Chicago.

The committee published their selections for the Uniform Sunday-School Bible Lessons in the October

1871 issue of *The Sunday-School World*. These committee-selected subjects and Bible citations left each religious group and their respective publishing houses free to package these lessons with its own explanations, questions, or other helps on each lesson. This freedom of presentation enabled the lessons to meet the specific needs of most Protestant churches. After all, the purpose of the committee on the Uniform Lessons was to insure uniformity in weekly subjects and the Bible verses selected for each lesson topic only and not to attempt to enforce uniformity among the churches in doctrine or methods of instruction.

Evidently, the first set of subjects proved sufficiently promising so that by the fifth National Sunday-School Convention, held in Indianapolis in 1872, the following resolution was passed that established the permanent foundation for the Uniform Series of

the International Sunday-School Bible Lessons:

*"Resolved: That the convention appoint a committee, to consist of five clergymen and five laymen, to select a course of Bible lessons for a series of years not exceeding seven, which shall, as far as they may decide possible, embrace a general study of the whole Bible, alternating between the Old and New Testaments semi-annually or quarterly, as they shall deem best; and to publish a list of such lessons as fully as possible, and at least for the two years next ensuing, as early as the first of August, 1872; and that this convention recommend their adoption by the Sunday-schools of the whole country; and that this committee have power to fill any vacancies that may occur in their number by reason of the inability of any member to serve."*¹¹

The first committee on the Uniform Lessons consisted of representatives from the Baptist, Congregational, Episcopal, Methodist, and Presbyterian Churches. The committee selected a cycle of lessons for seven years in a general chronological order from both the Old and New Testaments.¹² By this method, some 31,173 verses (about one-sixth of the Bible) were studied in the first seven years (1872-1879) of the International Series. Lesson texts for each week were composed of ten to twenty verses per lesson, and there were forty-eight lessons per year (the last Sunday in every three months being for review, or a lesson selected locally by each Sunday-school). By 1874, "Golden Texts" (later to be known as the "Key Verses") were added to the format of the International Bible Lesson Series.

The new system of uniform Bible lessons found instant popularity in the United States as an important means of promoting Scriptural study. In 1875, these new uniform lessons had found acceptance in nineteen nations, so that by 1905, approximately twenty-six million adults and children were studying the Uniform Series of the International Sunday-School Bible Lessons (or as they were more simply known, the "International Series").

The success of these Bible lessons had a great deal to do with the specific and simple set of instructions adopted by the Indianapolis Sunday-School



Front cover of *The Sunday-School World* for October 1871

Convention in 1872 for the first and subsequent lesson committees. Those instructions are as follows:

- “1. Alternation each year between the Old and New Testaments.
2. Beginning with Genesis, to select from the Old Testament in chronological order.
3. To spend part of each year in studying the life and ministry of Christ, beginning with Matthew and passing in order through the other Gospels.
4. To follow with lessons on the apostles, the planting of the Church, and the doctrines of the New Testament, as contained in Acts and the Epistles.”¹³

It has been said that, “so intelligently and thoroughly were the selections of the first Lesson Committee made that they have been the landmarks of succeeding committees...”¹⁴

Despite the excellence, popularity, or practical utility of the Uniform Series of the International Sunday-School Bible Lessons, they have been criticized as being too fragmentary and not allowing enough latitude for specific denominational study or emphasis. Yet on the whole, those who adopted them felt they had been educated to a more comprehensive knowledge of the Bible, provided a basis on which unity of study and instruction was possible, and given access to a whole new range of tools to aid them in Scriptural study encouraged by the International Series (a series that has stood the test of time, and is still published and used today by some 40 million Christians worldwide). It is perhaps these very positive and helpful aspects of the International Series that paved the way for it to be used from August 1888 to March 1899 by the Christian Science Church. After all, it must be remembered that the new members to the fledgling Christian Science Church were largely coming from American Protestant churches where they had seen how useful the International Series could be in promoting unity in Scriptural study and teaching.

The Use of the International Series by Christian Scientists

In the June 1888 issue of *The Christian Science Journal* there was an article stating that beginning in July¹⁵ there would appear “Notes on the International Sunday-school Lessons, written from a Christian Science

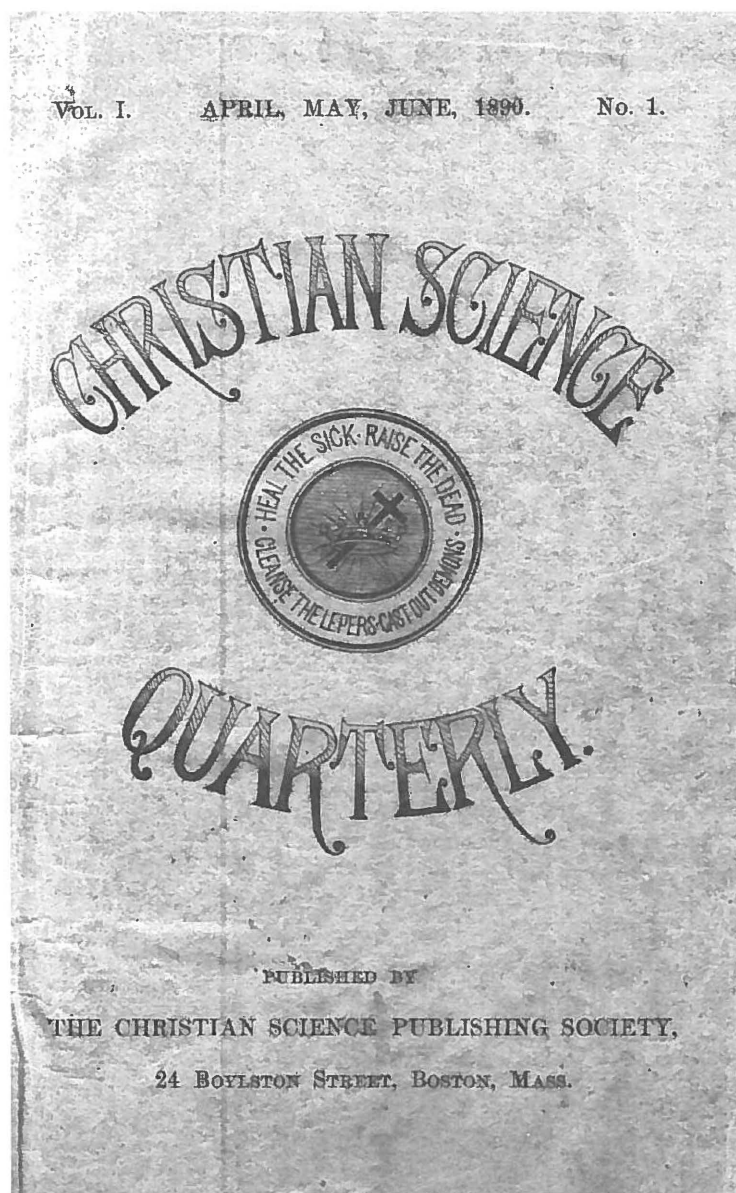
standpoint, by Frank E. Mason, C.S.B., assistant pastor of the Church of Christ (Scientist), Boston.” The notice, written and signed by Mason, goes on to say: “These notes are issued at the request of our beloved Teacher and Pastor, Rev. M.B.G. Eddy. The object is to avoid conflict of ideas, and establish unity of thought.” Furthermore, “the full interpretation of the lessons will not be attempted; but a general line of thought will be indicated, which can be enlarged by each reader for himself. ... We must think for ourselves. ... A few moments of solid thought will work wonders toward unfolding the spiritual interpretation of the Scriptures.”¹⁶

These notes continued to be included in the *Journal* on through the March 1889 issue. While there was an interruption of two months (in April



Frank E. Mason

and May), they appeared again in June 1889, but were not published in July. When published in August it was with a change in format, and with the new title of “Christian Science Bible Lessons (International Series).” These continued on through November



Cover of Volume 1, Number 1 of the *Christian Science Quarterly*

LESSONS FOR THE QUARTER.	
1. LAW OF LOVE.	Luke 6: 27-38.
2. DIVINE COMPASSION.	Luke 7: 11-18.
3. FORGIVENESS AND LOVE.	Luke 7: 36-50.
4. THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.	Luke 8: 4-15.
5. RAISED FROM THE DEAD.	Luke 8: 41, 42, 49-56.
6. FEEDING THE MULTITUDE.	Luke 9: 10-17.
7. THE TRANSFIGURATION.	Luke 9: 28-36.
8. THE COMMISSION TO CHRIST'S DISCIPLES.	Luke 10: 1-16.
9. LOVE IS THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW.	Luke 10: 25-27.
10. THE PERFECT PRAYER.	Luke 11: 1-13.
11. DECEITFULNESS OF EARTHLY POSSESSIONS.	Luke 12: 13-21.
12. TREASURES IN HEAVEN.	Luke 12: 22-34.
13. DEVOTION TO PRINCIPLE.	Daniel 1: 8-17.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE BIBLE LESSONS.

PUBLISHED BY CHRISTIAN SCIENCE PUBLISHING SOCIETY, BOSTON, MASS.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

APRIL, 1890.

LESSON No. I. APRIL 6. Luke vi. 27-38.

INTRODUCTORY. — Our Master having done many mighty works, the Scribes and Pharisees were filled with madness and commended one with another what they might do to him. He went up on to the mount, i. e., he rose in the strength of Spirit and continued all night in prayer until the light of the eternal day dispelled the darkness of error (see day, S. & H., p. 531), and the twelve listened to the most wonderful of all sermons. They were taught the love which knows no hate, the good that overcomes every claim of evil, the forgiveness which blesses its enemies in the destruction of sin. This sermon was to all that hear (understand). Do Christians of to-day understand the full import of these words? This understanding only comes when we are ready to listen as little children and testify in our daily life that we love one another as he loved us. Governed by divine Love, we are the children of the Highest and our reward will be great.

Subject: LAW OF LOVE. Golden Text: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another." — John xiii. 34. Footnote: I. Unselfishness of Love. II. Omnipotence of Love. III. Demonstration of Love.

LESSON TEXT. Rec. Ver.

27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you,
28 Bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you.

Journal that commencing in January 1890 the Christian Science Bible Lessons (International Series) would be prepared by a number of Christian Science workers, rather than a single individual, and would contain "copious references to passages of SCIENCE AND HEALTH illustrative of the Scripture text under consideration."²⁰ Mrs. Eddy actually appointed the committee herself that would undertake this work, the members being Julia S. Bartlett, William B. Johnson, Ira O. Knapp, and Rev. Lanson P. Norcross.²¹

An editorial in the January 1890 *Journal* makes the following observation of what this significant step meant for the individual student of Christian Science and for the progress of the movement:

"The first instal[l]ment of the CHRISTIAN SCIENCE BIBLE LESSONS for 1890 marks a new departure in this line of work. Just enough of the spiritual sense of the Scripture text is given to outline the thought; abundant references to the Bible and SCIENCE AND HEALTH enable every student to complete it by his own research. The lessons are like the outline map of a continent; the learner must supply the boundaries of countries, the location of rivers and mountains, towns and cities, and the descriptions that give life, color, and individuality. Several persons have collaborated in bringing together these lessons; but the leaven of personality is wholly absent...

The old forms of worship will in due time follow the organizations; no one can prescribe the

Inside cover and first page of Volume 1, Number 1 of the *Christian Science Quarterly*

1889. It was during this period that the Christian Science Bible Lessons were first issued, by request, as leaflets for distribution (June 1889), in the same size as the *Journal*.¹⁷

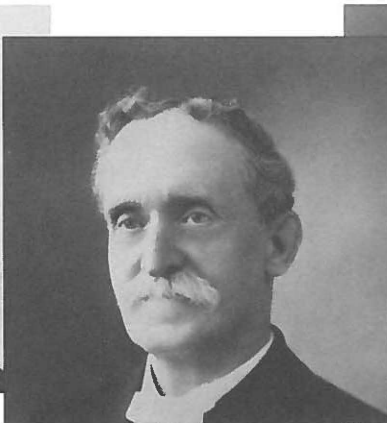
Another unfolding step was announced in the August 1889 *Journal*: "The demand for the Christian Science Bible Lessons is such that it has been found necessary to issue them as a regular serial. ... All who hold Sunday services are earnestly recommended to make a study of these Lessons a feature of their meetings, and to commence with the first of the Series."¹⁸ The idea continued in another notice on the following page:

"The Christian Science Bible Lessons should be ordered by every group meeting for Sunday services. It will be better for all Classes to commence with No. 1 ... to follow the development of the thought. These lessons are based on the same Scripture Texts as the *International Series*, but there is nothing else in common. They are *Christian Science Bible Lessons*, pure and simple. ... They will doubtless form one of the standard publications of the Publishing Society ..."¹⁹

As further assurance of keeping interpretation of the Scriptures impersonal in Bible study among Christian Scientists, it was announced in the



Julia S. Bartlett



William B. Johnson



Ira O. Knapp



Rev. Lanson P. Norcross

Members of the first committee to select references from *Science and Health* to illustrate the topics and Bible citations in the International Series

new forms. Our Leader recommends our dropping old forms as fast as we are ready to do so, but the new forms must be the growth of the new life. ...

The Bible Lessons for 1890 are in this line of growth... ”²²

These new committee-prepared lessons were less like personal sermons, consisted mainly of introductory comments and expository notes for reference work, and were published in January, February, and March of 1890, the same page size as, but separate from, the *Journal*. In April 1890, however, the publication became a quarterly one, in a slightly smaller size with tan cover, and titled *Christian Science Quarterly*.

Somewhat simultaneously, an interesting experiment was taking place to meet the need for sermons in Christian Science services where there was no trained speaker. Mrs. G. P. Noyes writes for *The Christian Science Journal* of May 1890: “Recognizing that SCIENCE AND HEALTH is both our Teacher and Healer, we resolved to take it into our pulpit and make it our Preacher also, by reading selections from it, together with appropriate passages from the Scriptures in place of a sermon. This plan we adopted as an experiment, believing it would result in unity of thought and exclusion of error. The result has exceeded our most sanguine expectations. In two months both church and Sunday school have doubled in number. This large body of regular attendants is united in the opinion that a complete and satisfactory public Sunday service, in this way, has been compassed.” She goes on to describe choice of subjects and citations and then observes, “The reading of these beautiful and inspiring passages to a large body of listeners brings out unity

and harmony, and largely divests the service of a sense of personality.”²³

An immediate retort to Mrs. Noyes’ article appears in the same *Journal* issue, in the “Editor’s Note Book” section. The writer points out that although the article is “rich in practical suggestiveness ... if our services be modelled on those described by Sister Noyes, will they not degenerate into routine? Collated passages of the BIBLE and SCIENCE AND HEALTH are undoubtedly more instructive than a ‘sermon.’ But these could be repeated from a phonograph, and the

ence.”²⁴ It should be noted here that in 1889 the Friday evening meetings of the Boston church had moved in that direction, consisting of “an address, relation of experiences, and discussions on inquiries from the audience.”²⁵

By February of 1891, though, as noted in the *Journal*, there is evidence of informal groups coming together, not yet regularly organized as churches, and using sermons written or read from *Science and Health*, and Bible Lessons from the *Quarterly*. There is also evidence of organized

ORDER OF CHURCH SERVICE.

TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST (SCIENTIST), BOSTON.

Beloved Brethren :—I recommend that you lay aside all that is ceremonial even in appearance in our Church, and adopt this simple service.

Before the sermon read one hymn, sing once. Read selection from a chapter in the Bible, and, if agreeable to pastor and Church, a corresponding paragraph from SCIENCE AND HEALTH. Repeat alternately the Lord’s Prayer, the pastor repeating the first sentence and the audience the following one. Unite in silent prayer for all who are present, Close with reading hymn, singing, silent prayer, and the benediction.

Yours lovingly in Christ,

MARY B. G. EDDY.

NOTICE.

THE “Order of Church Service,” as reprinted over my signature in the October issue of this JOURNAL, was originally indicated by a student, and I consented to it. That there be uniformity among Christian Scientists in their Church services, I submit the following Order of Exercise:

Anthem.

Pastor announces that he will read from the Bible, and from SCIENCE AND HEALTH.

Reading.

Lord’s Prayer and Spiritual Version repeated alternately.

Pastor commences the first line of the Prayer, and repeats it with the Church; then he responds to it with the version. Next, the Church repeats the second line of the Prayer and Pastor responds, and so on to the end.

Pastor reads Hymn.

Singing.

Sermon.

Collection.

Pastor reads Hymn.

Singing.

Benediction.

MARY B. G. EDDY.

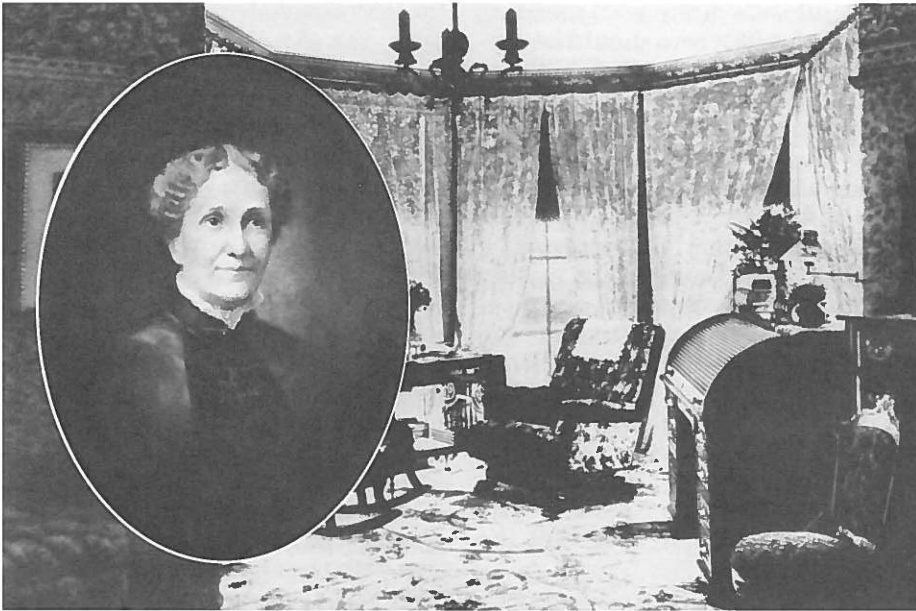
“Order of Service” published in the October 1891 issue of *The Christian Science Journal* (top) and “Notice” published in the December 1891 issue of the *Journal* which revised the order (bottom)



Mrs. G. P. (Caroline) Noyes

element of personality would be still further eliminated, and the service would hardly be more mechanical.” The writer goes on to suggest that the coming together of students of Christian Science to praise God would best be focussed on the “living epistle” of lives demonstrating Christian Sci-

ences (other than the one Mrs. Noyes wrote of) using readings from the Bible and *Science and Health* in place of sermons.²⁶ One grateful comment seems to express the feelings of a growing number of appreciative students: “What a wonderful help the Quarterly Bible Lessons are! They



(Inset) painting of Mary Baker Eddy by Robert Duane Haley based on a circa 1886 photograph, and interior of her study at Pleasant View, circa 1893 that was published in *Pleasant View, Twenty Plates of the Home Surroundings of Rev. Mary Baker Eddy, Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science* by J. F. Gilman and H. E. Carlton, 1894

seem to be the link connecting SCIENCE AND HEALTH and the BIBLE — uniting them as one — the Word of God.”²⁷

A simple “Order of Church Service” was consented to by Mrs. Eddy and published in the October 1891 *Journal*, in which it was at the option of the pastor (where there was one) and church whether or not to read correlative paragraphs from *Science and Health*.²⁸ In the *Journal* for the following month, the report of the October 1891 meeting of the Alumni Association of the Massachusetts Metaphysical College²⁹ stated: “Much was said in favor of the Bible Lessons, of how much they had accomplished in the Sunday services...”³⁰ However, as announced in the *Journal* just two months later, Mrs. Eddy instituted a further development, stating that reading from *Science and Health* and the Bible, as well as a sermon, be included in the Order, and “that there be uniformity among Christian Scientists in their Church services.”³¹

Significantly, it would be three years later, in December 1894, that Mary Baker Eddy would do away with personal preaching altogether for her church in Boston, by ordaining the Bible and *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* pastor over The Mother Church.³² In the new scheme, the Lesson-Sermon was to be read from the two books by two “Readers.”

A student, Daisette McKenzie, later related what Mrs. Eddy had said regarding this action:

“My students were preaching and were sending me copies of their sermons. They grew worse and worse. Finally one came which was so great a mixture that if I had not known the fact, I should not have been able to tell whether the writer were a Christian Scientist, a spiritualist or theosophist. I said to myself, ‘Something must be done and at once.’ I withdrew from all other work, and in solitude and almost ceaseless prayer I sought and found God’s will. At the end of three weeks I received the answer, and it came to me as naturally as dawns the morning light. ‘Why, of course, the Bible and *Science and Health*.’”³³

Student Irving C. Tomlinson later recalls his own reaction to the change:

“... could this startling innovation ... prove a success? Could a church replace an eloquent preacher with two readers and still continue to grow and prosper? These questions disturbed many, including myself, who having but recently left the ranks of the clergy was accustomed to a personal preacher. But they did not disturb the Founder of the Christian Science movement. She asked only: What is God’s direc-

tion? And as true as the needle to the pole, so true was she to the divine voice.

‘The word of God, not human views, should preach to humanity,’ Mrs. Eddy once said to me. Ever seeking to meet the need of her church more perfectly, she had in mind a still further step in the ordination of the impersonal pastor, a step destined to bring greater blessing to mankind. It was an education to observe this great woman as she obediently followed the leading of divine Mind in the spiritual evolution of the divine plan.”³⁴

The change for branch Churches of Christ, Scientist came in April 1895 with this statement from Mary Baker Eddy in a *Journal* article: “Humbly, and as I believe, Divinely directed — I hereby ordain, that the Bible, and Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures, shall hereafter be the only pastor of the Church of Christ, Scientist, throughout our land, and in other lands.”³⁵



Irving C. Tomlinson

An astute observation regarding the change was made in an 1896 *Journal* article:

“One of the grandest features of Christian Science is that it inculcates that the acme of true living is in the hearing and obeying of God’s Word *directly*...”

The recent change in our Church service, in the nature of things, works greatly to bring this thought uppermost.”³⁶

In the January–March 1897 issue of the *Quarterly* the first “Explanatory Note” appeared, with the recommendation that it be read as a preface to each lesson in the *Quarterly*:

"These lessons are prepared by a Committee of Christian Scientists, but as to their number and the Scripture constituting each lesson, they follow the International Bible Lesson Series.

The lesson-text of each of these lessons is supported by selections from the Bible, and the Christian Science textbook, 'Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures,' by the Rev. Mary Baker G. Eddy; the purpose being to emphasize, corroborate and explain the lesson-text in its spiritual import, and its application to the present and future, as well as the past."

A revised version, much more similar to what is in use today, was published in the July–September issue, with a notice in the April 1897 *Journal* that: "All the churches of our denomination are respectfully requested to have the first Reader, read the following, at the opening of the Bible Lesson on Sunday. Mary Baker Eddy"³⁷ The explanatory note as it appeared in the July–September *Quarterly* read:

"Friends: — The Bible, and the Christian Science text-book are our only preachers. We now will read scriptural texts, and their correlative passages from our denominational text-book, — these comprise our sermon.

The canonical writings, together with the word of our text-book, corroborating and explaining the Bible texts in their spiritual import and application to all ages, past, present, and future — constitute a sermon undivorced from truth, uncontaminated and unfettered by human hypotheses, and *authorized by Christ*.

The number of our Sunday lessons and the Scripture they contain in the lesson-text follow the International Series."³⁸

Mrs. Eddy's 26 Bible Lesson Subjects

With the July–September 1898 issue of the *Christian Science Quarterly*, Mrs. Eddy introduced twenty-six new subjects³⁹ on which to base the lessons for Sunday morning services. These lessons were printed right along with the International Series, which was used for the afternoon or evening services, until discontinued in April 1899. After having been presented with an additional set of twenty-six

lesson subjects from well-meaning workers who felt there should be separate subjects for each week of the year, she turned them down, saying "the original subjects were given of God — they are sufficient, and they will remain forever."⁴⁰ Referring to a series of four articles on "The Christian Science Sermon" that appeared in the March 1899 issues of the weekly *Christian Science Sentinel*, one biographer observes that "It was Mrs. Eddy's desire that Christian Science pulpits teach of God in God's way. The subjects she named covered, as she saw them, the essentials of Christianity, and followed the order she employed in teaching her classes."⁴¹ The first of these articles describes the lesson-sermons thusly:

"As these discourses are made up wholly of passages from the Bible and the Christian Science text-book, they contain nothing of human opinion; they are devoid of man-made theories. They have no guesses at the future, no conjectures regarding the past, and no rudimentary exhortations about the present. They are free from sensationalism, and they make no effort to please the fancy or foster the pride of mortals."⁴²

the International Series, were dropped with the April–June issue of the *Christian Science Quarterly*, and the *Quarterly* took on a format more like the one that is being published today.

William P. McKenzie, a student of Mary Baker Eddy, began serving on the Bible Lesson Committee in 1896, when there were six members of the committee working on the preparation of the lessons. At a point in 1905 when he needed to make an extensive trip for his Christian Science lecturing engagements, his wife, Daisette, was proposed as a suitable substitute for him on the Bible Lesson Committee. Upon being asked about this, Mrs. Eddy replied in a letter to the McKenzies, giving her view on the preparation of the Lesson-Sermons:

"... Select with much study and care the correlative Scripture for the Sunday lessons. The field needs most the lines between Christian Science and scholastic theology drawn not too tight at first — but drawn distinctly, wisely, lovingly. ..." ⁴⁴

Makeup and Continuing Utility of the Lessons

Irving C. Tomlinson once wrote regarding the Bible Lessons: "The



Daisette and William McKenzie

A further change was made in 1899, and was announced in the February 23 issue of the *Sentinel*: "The subject of the Lesson-Sermon in the morning services of the Mother Church, and of the branch Churches of Christ, Scientist, shall be repeated at their second service on Sunday. ... The subject given in the International Series shall be discontinued."⁴³ Accordingly, the separate set of lessons for Sunday afternoons, based on the subjects of

Lesson-Sermon is not a human, material structure. Like 'the tree of life,' it has its main trunk, or subject, which subdivides into six branches, upon which ripens 'the fruit of the Spirit,' and where grow the leaves of the tree 'for the healing of the nations.' "⁴⁵

He was speaking of the actual layout, or structure, of the lessons. The main "trunk," or subject, is contained in the Golden Text, followed by a responsive reading which deals with

the same subject. According to Mr. Tomlinson, "the same Golden Text or Responsive Reading is not used oftener than once in three years; and no Bible or Science and Health passage is ever repeated on successive Sundays." Of the six branches, or subtopics, each "has its own individuality; but they are all vitally connected with the trunk or main subject, as well as vitally connected one with the other." He goes on, "Although, naturally, the first section introduces, the last concludes, and the intermediate sections amplify the subject of the Lesson-Sermon ... there is no formula, no rigidly fixed order for these footsteps."⁴⁶

In a 1941 *Journal* article that was based upon the March 1899 *Sentinel* articles, the Christian Science Bible Lesson Committee serving at the later date shared these thoughts on the Christian Science Lesson-Sermons:

"... every Christian Science sermon is intended to be a healing sermon and to present definitely and clearly some aspect of the broad subject of spiritual healing — the healing of sin, perhaps, or of faults of disposition, or the healing of fear, ignorance, or limitation."⁴⁷

Because of the spiritually evolved and impersonal nature of the Christian Science Bible Lesson-Sermon, the same comment made in a 1928 *Journal* article can still be made today: "The type of Lesson-Sermon used when Mrs. Eddy was here leading her church is still in use; and these sermons are equal in their exact statement of Christian Science to those published in the *Christian Science Quarterly* when she was personally among us."⁴⁸

Thomas C. Proctor
Cheryl P. Moneyhun

1. Irving C. Tomlinson, "The Christian Science Bible Lessons," *The Christian Science Journal*, Mar. 1923, Vol. 40, p. 484.
2. *Ibid.*
3. William P. McKenzie, "Preaching Impersonal and World Wide," *The Christian Science Journal*, Apr. 1916, Vol. 34, p. 8.
4. Mary Baker Eddy, *Manual of The Mother Church*, 12th ed. (Boston: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 1899), p. 24, Art. IV, Sect. 1.
5. Edwin Wilbur Rice, *The Sunday-School Movement, 1780-1917 and the American Sunday-School Union, 1817-1917* (Philadelphia: American Sunday-School Union, 1927), p. 294.
6. *The Development of the Sunday-School, 1780-1905: The Official Report of the*

Eleventh International Sunday-School Convention, Toronto, Canada, June 23-27, 1905 (Boston: Executive Committee of the International Sunday-School Association, 1905), p. 38.

7. Edwin Wilbur Rice, *The Sunday-School Movement, 1780-1917*, p. 295.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 297-298.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 298.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *The Development of the Sunday-School, 1780-1905*, pp. 42-43.
12. The second cycle of lessons (1880-1886) followed the original plan of alternating between the Old and New Testaments with the special feature of a consecutive year-long study of the Gospel of Mark in 1882. The third cycle of lessons (1887-1893) included a special year-long study of the Gospel of Luke in 1890. By the fourth cycle of lessons (1894-1899) a greater proportion of the lessons came from the New, rather than the Old Testament.
This general emphasis, somewhat more on the New rather than the Old Testament, has been continuous with the Uniform Series of the International Sunday-School Bible Lessons that are still published today by a range of publishers and in varying formats. (One current example is: *The International Lesson Annual*, published by Abington Press of Nashville, Tennessee. In this present-day edition of the International Bible Lessons, the lessons begin with September of one year and go to August of the following year. Lesson themes are arranged quarterly and within these themes are supporting weekly lesson subjects that include: Key Verse(s) [or as earlier termed in the International Series the Golden Text(s)] from the Bible that focus on the subject for the week; Lesson Texts from the Bible that expand upon the lesson subject as spotlighted by the Key Verse(s); Background, commentary, and questions designed to encourage thoughtful study through the week and fruitful Sunday-school classes for the purpose of developing better practicing Christians.)
13. *The Development of the Sunday-School, 1780-1905*, p. 44. cf. Mary Baker Eddy's statement in the *Manual of The Mother Church*, 12th ed. (Boston: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 1899), p. 36, lines 14-16: "The correlative Biblical texts in the Lesson-Sermon shall extend from Genesis to Revelation."
14. *The Development of the Sunday-School, 1780-1905*, p. 44.
In explaining how the work of the International Uniform Bible Lesson Committee was conducted, John Potts, D.D., wrote in 1905: "The specific work in relation to each lesson is the selection of a topic, memory verses and Golden Text. Hardly ever is an item of the above accepted until we have reached a substantially unanimous decision." (*Ibid.*, p. 48.)
15. This new addition to the *Journal* actually was deferred to August due to events surrounding the Chicago convention of the National Christian Scientist Association in June.
16. F.E. Mason, "Bible Lessons," *The Christian Science Journal*, June 1888, Vol. 6, pp. 152-153.

17. See: "Editorial and Other Notices," *The Christian Science Journal*, June 1889, Vol. 7, p. 157.
18. "Editorial and Other Notices," *The Christian Science Journal*, Aug. 1889, Vol. 7, p. 275.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 276.
20. "Editor's Note Book," *The Christian Science Journal*, Dec. 1889, Vol. 7, p. 461.
21. See: Norman Beasley, *The Cross and The Crown, The History of Christian Science* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1952), p. 549.
22. "The Bible Lessons," *The Christian Science Journal*, Jan. 1890, Vol. 7, pp 500-501.
23. Mrs. G.P. Noyes, "Church Service," *The Christian Science Journal*, May 1890, Vol. 8, pp. 65-66.
24. "Editor's Note Book," *The Christian Science Journal*, May 1890, Vol. 8, p. 84. The writer of the article and Editor of the *Journal* at this period was Joshua P. Bailey. In *Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Trial*, Robert Peel characterizes Mr. Bailey's approach as one of "excessive zeal." [See: Peel, *Years of Trial* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), pp. 264, 266, 278-281, 284, 290-291.]
It is also interesting to note that Bailey's comments in the May 1890 *Journal* elicited further response as published in the June 1890 *Journal*, in a piece by "Mrs. G.W." on page 120; and on that same page are further comments from the "Editor" (Bailey).
25. See: "Editor's Note Book - Notice of a New Departure," *The Christian Science Journal*, May 1889, Vol. 7, pp. 100-101.
For more information on the evolution of midweek meetings of the Church of Christ, Scientist, see: Clifford P. Smith, *Historical Sketches From the Life of Mary Baker Eddy and the History of Christian Science* (Boston: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 1941), pp. 187-189. See also: p. 126.
26. See: "Notes From the Field," *The Christian Science Journal*, Feb. 1891, Vol. 8, pp. 494-496.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 495.
28. Mary B.G. Eddy, "Order of Church Service," *The Christian Science Journal*, Oct. 1891, Vol. 9, p. 284.
29. The Massachusetts Metaphysical College was chartered by Mary Baker Eddy on January 31, 1881 and was located on Columbus Avenue in Boston until its dissolution, at the height of its prosperity, on September 23, 1889. The purpose of the college at first was to prepare students for the practice of Christian Science. In August of 1884, however, Mrs. Eddy taught a Normal Class in the college, thereby preparing others besides herself to be teachers of Christian Science.
30. "Editor's Note Book - College Association," *The Christian Science Journal*, Nov. 1891, Vol. 9, p. 350.
31. Mary B.G. Eddy, "Notice," *The Christian Science Journal*, Dec. 1891, Vol. 9, p. 365.
32. See: Robert Peel, *Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Authority* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977), pp. 72-73.
33. *We Knew Mary Baker Eddy* (Boston: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 1979), p. 123.
34. Irving C. Tomlinson, *Twelve Years With Mary Baker Eddy* (Boston: The Christian Science Publishing Society, 1945), p. 143.

35. Mary Baker Eddy, "Church and School," *The Christian Science Journal*, Apr. 1895, Vol. 13, p. 1.
36. James F. Gilman, "God's Word," *The Christian Science Journal*, Jan. 1896, Vol. 13, p. 411.
37. Mary Baker Eddy, "Notice," *The Christian Science Journal*, Apr. 1897, Vol. 15, p. 25. The original manuscript for this "Notice," and her hand-written editing of the proof page of this "Notice" prior to publication in the *Journal*, are preserved in the collections of Longyear Museum.
38. With only very slight changes from the 1897 wording, and an adjustment to reflect the discontinued use of the International Series in April 1899, today's version can be found in each issue of the *Christian Science Quarterly Bible Lessons*:

"Friends:

The Bible and the Christian Science textbook are our only preachers. We shall now read Scriptural texts, and their correlative passages from our denominational textbook; these comprise our sermon.

The canonical writings, together with the word of our textbook, corroborating and explaining the Bible texts in their spiritual import and application to all ages, past, present, and future, constitute a sermon undivorced from truth, uncontaminated and unfettered by human hypotheses, and divinely authorized.

The afternoon (or evening) service is a repetition of the morning service.*

*To be omitted where there is only one service."

39. The subjects and order at that time were as follows:

God; Life; Truth; Love; Spirit; Soul; Mind; Christ Jesus; Man; Substance; Matter; Reality; Unreality; Are Sin, Disease, and Death real?; The Doctrine of Atonement; Probation after Death; Everlasting Punishment; Adam and fallen Man; Mortals and Immortals; Soul and Body; Ancient and Modern Necromancy; or, Mesmerism and Hypnotism; God the only Cause and Creator; God the Preserver of Man; Sacrament; Is the Universe, including Man, evolved by Atomic Force?; Christian Science.

Some small changes were to come to the original plan. The first was when the place of "Sacrament" in the sequence was adjusted due to Communion Sunday in branch churches being changed from June and December to January and July. To make the adjustment, the lesson on "Sacrament" was omitted from the October–December 1903 issue of the *Quarterly*, and inserted after the one on "Life" in the next issue, January–March 1904. This sequence continued until January 1908, when "Sacrament" was placed after the lesson on "God." Mrs. Eddy made the final change in October 1910, when *alias* was substituted for "or"

and "denounced" added at the end of "Ancient and Modern Necromancy; or, Mesmerism and Hypnotism" thus reading "Ancient and Modern Necromancy, *alias* Mesmerism and Hypnotism, Denounced."

40. Tomlinson, *Twelve Years With Mary Baker Eddy*, p. 145.
41. Beasley, *The Cross and The Crown*, p. 549.
42. "The Christian Science Sermon," *Christian Science Sentinel*, Mar. 2, 1899, Vol. 1, p. 5.
43. "Notice," *Christian Science Sentinel*, Feb. 23, 1899, Vol. 1, p. 15.
44. This letter from M.B.G. Eddy to Mr. and Mrs. McKenzie dated Nov. 4, 1905, is in-

cluded in an article by William P. McKenzie, "Mrs. Eddy's Plan For Public Services and Bible Teaching," *The Christian Science Journal*, Aug. 1941, Vol. 59, p. 245.

45. Tomlinson, "The Christian Science Bible Lessons," *The Christian Science Journal*, Mar. 1923, Vol. 40, p. 485.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 485–486.
47. "Divinely Inspired Sermons," *The Christian Science Journal*, Oct. 1941, Vol. 59, p. 363.
48. William Lyman Johnson, "The 'Christly Method,'" *The Christian Science Journal*, May 1928, Vol. 46, p. 61.

CHRONOLOGY: History and Development of the Christian Science Weekly Bible Lessons

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| 1780's | England — Robert Raikes develops a system to teach reading, writing, and church catechism to criminals and the poor. |
| 1860's | Need for uniform topic of study becomes a theme at Sunday-school teachers' institutes in the United States. |
| 1872 | Permanent foundation established for the Uniform Series of the International Sunday-school Bible Lessons, to be used by Protestant churches. |
| 1888 | <i>The Christian Science Journal</i> first includes Notes on the International Sunday-school Lessons written from a Christian Science standpoint, by Frank E. Mason, C.S.B., assistant pastor of the Church of Christ (Scientist), Boston. |
| 1889 | The <i>Journal</i> contains an announcement that the Christian Science Bible Lessons are in such demand that they will be issued as a regular serial, and recommended to be featured in Sunday services.
Mrs. Eddy appoints a committee of four to prepare the Christian Science Bible Lessons, rather than one individual. |
| 1890 | (April) <i>Christian Science Quarterly</i> begins with the April–June issue.
(May) Article appears in the <i>Journal</i> describing a successful experiment using selections from <i>Science and Health</i> and the Bible in place of a sermon. |
| 1891 | For uniformity among Christian Scientists in their church services, Mrs. Eddy submits an Order of Exercise which included reading from <i>Science and Health</i> and the Bible as well as a sermon. |
| 1894 | (December 14) Mrs. Eddy ordains the Bible and <i>Science and Health</i> as pastor for The Mother Church. |
| 1895 | (April <i>Journal</i>) The Bible and <i>Science and Health</i> ordained as dual pastor for all Churches of Christ, Scientist. |
| 1897 | The first "Explanatory Note" appeared in the January–March <i>Quarterly</i> . |
| 1898 | Mrs. Eddy's twenty-six lesson subjects introduced in the July–September <i>Quarterly</i> . |
| 1899 | (April–June <i>Quarterly</i>) Separate set of afternoon or evening lessons based on the International Series was discontinued. |

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Corrections to Quarterly News:

Vol. 29, No. 2, 1992, page 441, column 1, line 22 — should correctly read "Chapter thirty-nine."

Vol. 31, No. 1, 1994, page 481, column 1, line 33 — should correctly read "in 1937."