

= The Life of Mary Baker G. Eddy and the History of Christian Science =

The Life of Mary Baker G. Eddy and the History of Christian Science was published in November 1909 in New York by Doubleday , Page & Company . The book is a highly critical account of the life of Mary Baker Eddy (1821 ? 1910) , the founder of Christian Science , and the early history of the Christian Science church in 19th @-@ century New England .

The material first appeared in McClure 's magazine (1893 ? 1929) in 14 installments between January 1907 and June 1908 , preceded by an editorial in December 1906 announcing the series . The articles were the first major examination of Eddy 's life and work , published when she was 85 years old , and became a key primary source for most independent accounts of the church 's early history .

The magazine 's publisher and editor @-@ in @-@ chief , S. S. McClure (1857 ? 1949) , assigned five writers to work on the articles : Willa Cather (1873 ? 1947) , who won the 1923 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for one of her novels ; researcher Georgine Milmine (1874 ? 1950) ; managing editor Will Irwin (1873 ? 1948) ; Burton J. Hendrick (1870 ? 1949) ; Mark Sullivan (1874 ? 1952) , who became a well @-@ known political columnist ; and briefly Ida Tarbell (1857 ? 1944) . The original byline on the book and articles was Milmine 's , but it later emerged that Cather , who had joined McClure 's as an editor in 1906 , was the principal author .

The Christian Science church purchased the manuscript shortly after the book 's publication , and it was soon out of print . It was republished by Baker Book House in 1971 after its copyright had expired , and again in 1993 by the University of Nebraska Press , this time naming both Cather and Milmine as authors .

= = Synopsis = =

The material was published by McClure 's when Witter Bynner (1881 ? 1968) was an assistant editor and briefly managing editor . It first appeared under Georgine Milmine 's byline in 14 installments between January 1907 and June 1908 as " Mary Baker G. Eddy : The Story of Her Life and the History of Christian Science . " The text of the articles was revised and updated for the book , where it was presented in 26 chapters .

The articles were preceded by an unsigned , seven @-@ page editorial in December 1906 , explaining why the series was being published and discussing the difficulties of the investigation . The author of the editorial wrote : " The Christian Science mind is unfriendly to independent investigation . It presupposes that anything even slightly unfavorable to Mrs. Eddy or to Christian Science is deliberate falsehood . " The publication got off to an unfortunate start by reproducing a photograph on page two of the editorial that purported to be of Eddy , but was in fact of someone else .

The criticism of Eddy is considerable . She is portrayed as deceitful , someone who regularly revised her life story , and who was interested only in making money . The authors reproduce witness statements from Eddy 's childhood of her having repeated fainting spells as a way of gaining attention or avoiding punishment , particularly from her father , and say that she developed a habit of appearing to be seriously ill only to recover quickly .

Eddy was widowed when she was 22 years old and pregnant , after which she returned to live in her father 's home . Her son was raised there for the first few years of his life , looked after for at least some of the time by domestic staff because of Eddy 's health issues . The articles allege that she allowed him to be adopted by one of the staff when he was four , then failed to maintain a relationship with him until he was in his thirties , though they lived near each other . (Eddy has written that she was unable to prevent the adoption , but McClure 's implied otherwise .)

Her next two marriages , lifelong poor health , and the numerous legal actions she was involved in ? including lawsuits against her students and a criminal case in which her third husband was accused of conspiracy to murder one of them (an allegation that was never proven) ? are examined in detail . The authors also allege that Eddy 's major work , Science and Health (1875) , which became Christian Science 's main religious text , borrowed heavily from the work of Phineas Parkhurst

Quimby (1802 ? 1866) , a New England faith healer . Quimby had treated Eddy in the years before his death and had given her some of his unpublished notes .

Eddy replied only to the early installments in McClure 's by challenging its description of her father , early family life , and some of the issues surrounding her marriages . McClure 's had said that the Bible was the only book in the house when she was growing up ; on the contrary , she wrote , her father was a great reader . Her statement described the educational and professional achievements of her family to counter McClure 's claim that her childhood home had provided a " lonely and unstimulating existence . " She offered as an example of her own kindness (in response to McClure 's view of her as bad tempered) that a housekeeper of the family 's had resigned because Eddy allowed a blind girl , who had knocked on the door and was unknown to the family , to stay with them .

= = Authorship = =

= = = Editorial team = = =

Georgine Milmine was born in Ontario , Canada . Before joining McClure 's as a researcher , she worked for the Syracuse Herald in New York . She had been collecting material about Eddy for years , but lacked the resources to research and write it up herself , so she sold it to McClure 's .

The publisher assigned five writers to the story , including Milmine , Willa Cather , Burton J. Hendrick , political columnist Mark Sullivan , Will Irwin and for a short time Ida Tarbell . Cather had started working for McClure 's as an editor in 1906 when she was 32 years old . She and Sullivan spent time traveling in New England seeking confirmation of the material about Eddy 's early life . The journalist Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant (1881 ? 1965) wrote in 1953 :

Startling material relating to a leading religious leader and romantic personality of that time ? Mary Baker G. Eddy ? had been brought into McClure 's by one Georgine Milmine . S. S. McClure was always interested in biography ... and he was always interested in novelty . Thus he saw in Mrs. Eddy a " natural " for McClure 's , for her personal origins and idiosyncrasies , her marital history , the psychological and factual background of her ideas and her " message " in Science and Health had not then been publicized . The material was touchy , and would attract a world of readers both of the faithful and the doubters . It must , however , be carefully verified , and Willa Sibert Cather , with four other members of McClure 's staff , was chosen for this job

The job seemed to her a little infra dig , not on the level where she cared to move . But she inspired confidence , had the mind of a judge and the nose of a detective when she needed it She was quickly fascinated by the psychological implications of her material , and made long stays in Boston to edit it . But the book that ensued was largely written in the McClure 's office , and was a composite , not Willa Cather 's personal work .

Witter Bynner , a McClure 's assistant editor at the time of publication , signed a copy of the book on February 12 , 1934 , writing : " The material was brought to McClure 's by Miss Milmine , but was put into the painstaking hands of Willa Cather for proper presentation , so that a great part of it is her work . " In 1935 a copy of the book listed for sale by Philip Duschnes , a New York bookseller , contained a photostat of an editor 's note identifying Cather as the author . David Stouck , professor emeritus of English at Simon Fraser University , writes that the Christian Science church 's Mary Baker Eddy Library holds the original manuscript of the book and that Cather 's handwriting is evident on it , in notes and edits for the typesetter . Several of Cather 's later characters were reportedly modeled on her portrait of Eddy , including Mrs. Cutter in *My Ántonia* (1918) .

= = = Cather 's letters = = =

Cather denied that she was the main author in letters to Genevive Richmond in 1933 and Harold Goddard Rugg in 1934 ; she told them she had only helped to organize and rewrite the material . According to Stouck , she minimized her role in part because she wanted to distance herself from

journalism , and in part because the Christian Science church and Eddy were angered by the articles . Brent Bohlke writes that Cather regarded the book as poorly written ; he adds that it contains some excellent writing and character analysis , but that it is not well @-@ structured . He attributes this to poor editing that failed to rid the book of the serialized nature of the original McClure 's pieces .

Cather identified herself as the author in a letter to her father in December 1906 ; she told him the articles beginning February 1907 (at that time written , but not yet published) were hers . She also referred to her authorship in a letter to S.S. McClure in June 1912 .

She acknowledged her authorship fully on November 24 , 1922 , in a letter to Edwin H. Anderson (1861 ? 1947) , director of the New York Public Library and an old friend of hers . She told him that she had written the entire book except for the first chapter . S.S. McClure had purchased Milmine 's research , Cather wrote , including newspaper articles from the 1880s , court records , and a first edition of Science and Health , all of which were hard to obtain . Apparently when McClure 's was sold , the new publisher threw away the research , including the first edition .

Cather told Anderson that Burton J. Hendrick had written the first installment , but that it had been largely based on rumor . S.S. McClure asked her to complete the series because she was regarded as impartial . For the rest of the installments , she wrote that no expense was spared in verifying Milmine 's material , and that S. S. McClure had promoted her to managing editor on the basis of her work on the articles . She ended the letter by asking Anderson to regard the information as confidential . She wrote that she had not told the truth about it to anyone previously , Bohlke writes , but that she felt someone ought to know the true story . Cather 's letter to Anderson can only be paraphrased , not quoted , because she left a clause in her will forbidding the publication of her letters and private papers . The correspondence will enter the public domain in 2017 , 70 years after her death .

= = Reception = =

= = = Church response = = =

Peter Lyon wrote in Success Story : The Life and Times of S.S. McClure (1963) that when the articles first appeared , three Christian Science officials arrived at the McClure 's offices and asked McClure to allow them to edit the rest of the articles before publication . When he refused , they said he would soon notice a loss of advertising .

The church purchased the original manuscript of the book and there were rumors that the plates had been destroyed . In June 1920 the church also purchased some of McClure 's research notes from a New York manuscript dealer . There were stories that Christian Scientists were buying and destroying copies of the book , and removing them from libraries to keep them out of circulation . Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant wrote in 1953 that copies had become scarce even in libraries . The book 's copyright expired 28 years after publication . Baker Book House , a Christian publishing house , republished it in 1971 " in the interest of fairness and objectivity , " according to its back cover .

Caroline Fraser writes that the church tried to stop the University of Nebraska Press from republishing the book in 1993 . The university was interested in doing so , with a new introduction by David Stouck , because the articles and book were Cather 's first extended work , and therefore important in her development as a writer . According to Fraser , the head of the church 's Committee on Publication (its media office) called the Nebraska Press and told them the reprint might damage the church 's and Eddy 's reputation . The Press said the church representative " felt it was his responsibility to try to bully us into stopping publication or into saying that the book was worthless . "

Stouck made clear his view in the book 's preface that Willa Cather was " indisputably the principal author of The Life of Mary Baker G. Eddy and the History of Christian Science . " But , according to Fraser , there were fears for the jobs of the church researchers who had helped make the Cather ? Milmine manuscript available for examination . Stouck therefore agreed to add a statement to the

book :

Since the re @-@ issue of *The Life of Mary Baker G. Eddy and the History of Christian Science* went to press new materials have come to light which suggest that Eddy 's enemies may have played a significant role in organizing materials for the " Milmine " biography . New information about Georgine Milmine , moreover , suggests that she would have welcomed biased opinion for its sensational and commercial value . The exact nature of Willa Cather 's part in the compiling and writing of the biography remains , accordingly , a matter for further scholarly investigation . "

The " enemies " Stouck refers to relate to the so @-@ called " Next Friends " lawsuit , which was being prepared during the McClure 's serialization . The lawsuit was brought by Eddy 's relatives , who said that she was unable to manage her own affairs ; had it succeeded she would have lost control of the church and her fortune . According to Fraser , the suit was organized in 1907 by Joseph Pulitzer (1847 ? 1911) , owner of the New York World (1860 ? 1931) ; his motive was to engineer a story about Eddy to rival that of McClure 's . Gillian Gill , in her *Mary Baker Eddy* (1998) , wrote that the New Hampshire Historical Society holds documents that show the McClure 's journalists were in touch with the litigants and that both sides were feeding each other information .

According to Fraser , an official from the church 's Committee on Publication made the following statement at its 1993 annual meeting :

A major corrective opportunity this year involved the rerelease of one of the earliest malicious biographies of Mrs. Eddy , *The Life of Mary Baker G. Eddy and the History of Christian Science* by Georgine Milmine . Dating from the yellow journalism period , this book was published in an attempt to discredit her . The current publisher , after much correspondence with our office , instead issued a statement accurately characterizing its bias . The book has received almost no attention in the public , proving if Truth isn 't spoken , nothing is said .

= = = General reception and influence = = =

The articles and book became key primary sources for most of the biographies of Eddy that have been published independently of the church . Gill wrote that in any publication not written by a Christian Scientist , the material is regarded as the single trustworthy source on Eddy , especially on the first half of her life . It influenced Edwin Franken Dakin 's *Mrs. Eddy : The Biography of a Virginal Mind* (1929) , Ernest Sutherland Bates and John V. Dittmore 's *Mary Baker Eddy : The Truth and the Tradition* (1932) , Martin Gardner 's *The Healing Revelations of Mary Baker Eddy* (1993) , and Caroline Fraser 's *God 's Perfect Child* (1999) .

The New York Times wrote in 1910 that the book " ranks among the really great biographies ? or would were its subject of more intrinsic importance " :

Since this Life first appeared in McClure 's Magazine not one important statement as of fact in it has been disproved or even seriously questioned . It is a product of much and highly intelligent labor , and were Christian Scientists open to argument or amenable to reason the wretched cult would not have survived its publication for a single month . It is unanswerable and conclusive , and nobody who has not read it can be considered well @-@ informed as to the history or nature of Eddyism .

Gill disagreed that the book offers an accurate portrayal of Eddy . She argued , for example , that the story of Eddy having " fits " as a child to get her own way , or rather the way McClure 's described them , was " invented more or less out of whole cloth " by McClure 's journalist Burton Hendrick , and that the accounts of her as " hysterical " were misogynist . (That Eddy would fall and lose consciousness as a child is supported by Robert Peel (1909 ? 1992) , who worked for the church and wrote a sympathetic three @-@ volume biography of Eddy .)

The journalist Adela Rogers St. Johns (1894 ? 1988) , who was a minister in the Church of Religious Science (a closely related belief system to Christian Science) , wrote in 1974 that Cather was " a fine ? maybe our finest ? American woman novelist , " but that she was a " lousy unscrupulous reporter . " She argued that Cather had " stirred with grim fancy the most vicious and inaccurate of all the attacks on Mrs. Eddy . " David Stouck , in his introduction to the University of Nebraska Press edition , wrote that Cather 's portrayal of Eddy " contains some of the finest portrait sketches and reflections on human nature that Willa Cather would ever write . "

= = Publication details = =

" Editorial announcement " , McClure 's , December 1906 , introducing the series .

Georgine Milmine , " Mary Baker G. Eddy : The Story of Her Life and the History of Christian Science " , McClure 's , January 1907 ? June 1908 (14 installments) .

Georgine Milmine , The Life of Mary Baker G. Eddy and the History of Christian Science , Doubleday 1909 ; also at archive.org.

Georgine Milmine , The Life of Mary Baker G. Eddy and the History of Christian Science , Baker Book House , 1971 (introduction by Stewart Hudson) .

Willa Cather and Georgine Milmine , The Life of Mary Baker G. Eddy and the History of Christian Science , University of Nebraska Press , 1993 (introduction by David Stouck) . ISBN 0 @-@ 8032 @-@ 6349 @-@ X