



## Rolling Away the Stone: Mary Baker Eddy's Challenge to Materialism (Religion in North America)

*By Stephen Gottschalk*

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This richly detailed study highlights the last two decades of the life of Mary Baker Eddy, a prominent religious thinker whose character and achievement are just beginning to be understood. It is the first book-length discussion of Eddy to make full use of the resources of the Mary Baker Eddy Collection in Boston. Rolling Away the Stone focuses on her long-reaching legacy as a Christian thinker, specifically her challenge to the materialism that threatens religious belief and practice.

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**By Stephen Gottschalk Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #800817 in Books
- Published on: 2011-02-23
- Released on: 2011-02-23
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.25" h x 1.04" w x 6.12" l, 1.53 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 504 pages

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Gottschalk, an independent historian and author of *The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life*, completed this significant intellectual biography of Mary Baker Eddy before his death earlier this year. As with that earlier work, Gottschalk distinguishes himself by placing Christian Science in the larger context of American religion, rather than examining it as a mere curiosity or one-off sect. Eddy, he argues, should be taken seriously as a religious innovator whose radical theological teachings were intended not only to start a new religious movement, but also to reform all of Christianity from within. The biography focuses on the last two decades of Eddy's life, when the "retired" leader spent her seventies and eighties overseeing the construction of the Mother Church in Boston, revising *Science and Health*, battling external critics and internal dissension, and founding the *Christian Science Monitor*. Gottschalk, who was a Christian Scientist himself and once worked for the denomination, shows a clear pro-Eddy bias at times, especially when he is turning the tables on bombastic critics like Mark Twain or Joseph Pulitzer, but in general the book demonstrates copious and painstaking research. In fact, this is the first major biography of Eddy to be published since the opening of the denomination's archives to researchers a few years ago, and its command of primary sources sheds new light on Eddy's life and work.

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### Review

"Gottschalk's account is well told and enriched by fresh material now available from the Mary Baker Eddy Library for the Betterment of Humanity." *Christian Science Monitor*

"Gottschalk does a superb job of providing historical context for the chaotic events of Eddy's final decades. He analyzes frequently oversimplified disagreements between Eddy and Mark Twain, deftly highlighting the many points of agreement and parallel thinking that led Eddy and Twain to very different conclusions. Finally, Gottschalk makes accessible Eddy's mature theology, the product of controversy as well as deep reflection: a thoroughgoing rejection of all materialisms affirmed by her contemporaries (scientific, medical, ecclesiastical, spiritual) in order to seek 'something higher and better than matter, and apart from it.'" *Choice*

Mary Baker Eddy (1821, 1910) has had more than her share of biographers: admirers, detractors, scholars, and members of her church. In this posthumous work, Gottschalk, who belongs in the last two categories, accepts the daunting task of examining the years between Eddy's 1889 move from Boston to Concord, NH, and her death. This period, ostensibly her retirement from active leadership and public life, was punctuated by acrimony, lawsuits, and highly publicized conflicts over Eddy's physical and intellectual/spiritual property, and the usual attacks upon her character and theology. Gottschalk does a superb job of providing historical context for the chaotic events of Eddy's final decades. He analyzes frequently oversimplified disagreements between Eddy and Mark Twain, deftly highlighting the many points of agreement and parallel thinking that led Eddy and Twain to very different conclusions. Finally, Gottschalk makes accessible Eddy's

mature theology, the product of controversy as well as deep reflection: a thoroughgoing rejection of all materialisms affirmed by her contemporaries (scientific, medical, ecclesiastical, spiritual) in order to seek something higher and better than matter, and apart from it. All libraries should own this book. Summing Up: Highly recommended. Lower-level undergraduates through faculty/researchers; general readers. D. Campbell, Colby College, 2006 oct. CHOICE

"The book includes a great deal of fresh research and honest scholarship... [F]or the individual wanting to sink his or her teeth into a serious study of Eddy... you have a lot to look forward to in reading this book." ?The Christian Science Journal, Vol. 129, No. 5 May 2011

"Gottschalk has provided readers with a masterful account of Christian Science in its heyday. The book is a first-rate read for students of American religion and provides a look into how one of the country's more complex religious figures dealt with materialism in the late nineteenth-century America." ?Religious Studies Review

From the Publisher

A *Choice* Outstanding Academic Title for 2006

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