



# **19<sup>th</sup> Century Mystics**

And their Influence on Today's Society  
Part 1: Christian Based Movements

## Today's Focus

- Joseph Smith and the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints aka the Mormons
- Adventist Millennial movements
  - Ellen White and the Seventh Day Adventists
  - Charles Russell and Jehovah's Witnesses
- Mary Baker Eddy and Christian Science

## Joseph Smith Bio

- Joseph Smith, bone disease at 7, crutches 3 yrs
- Visions starting at age 14, continued throughout life
- Treasure seeker to help family money problems
- Angel Moroni revealed golden plates, age 18
- Eight men signed statements saying they saw plates
- Wrote (translated?) the Book of Mormon at age 24-30

Second great awakening. Smith goes to lots of meetings. Prays, asks what is true religion. God says none, but wait a little bit, you will get to (re)start the real one.

Treasure seeking with seer stone. Was brought before court for "glass-looking"

Didn't find the plates on first try. Took annual visits for four years. Angel told him nobody else to see plates.

Dictated book to scribes. 1<sup>st</sup> left after fallout, but later comes back in financial support.

Signer of statement also put up money (mortgaged farm) for publication of book.

## Joseph Smith Bio (continued)

- Established “Church of Christ” in 1830 in New York
- When others in church claimed visions, Smith pre-empted them, claiming sole right to visions as prophet
- Arrested for disorderly conduct; left New York
- He and another were ordained by Peter, James, & John
- Moved to Ohio where: merged with Campbellites; accused of philandering; tar and feathered; shady money deal; fled

First name of his Church was Church of Christ

Ordination of Smith and Cowdery purported to be joint vision of the three men, Peter, James, and John.

Campbellites join up, under Sidney Rigdon, in Ohio as United Order – practiced communalism.

Ohio group into “spiritual gifts,” including “fits and trances, rolling on the ground, and speaking in tongues.” Smith tamed these. Mob beat Smith and Rigdon unconscious as well as tarred and feathered.

Fled after warrant issued for banking fraud

## Joseph Smith Bio (continued)

- Church in Missouri, site of 1838 Mormon war, Mormons expelled from state, Smith jailed for treason
- Smith escaped to Illinois and with connections to legislature was given autonomy over settlement
- After split with top men in church again jailed and was murdered by mob in 1844
- Brigham Young led main branch to Utah, other branches split
- Tops the lists of most influential religious leaders in US (*Smithsonian* magazine, 2015)

Missouri first place church took its current name. Dissenters expelled, including early leaders. Mormon persecution caused the formation of the semi-secret group Danites formed to counter anti-Mormons. This group had Smith's implicit approval. Not allowing Mormons to vote sparked an uprising. Mormons attacked Missouri militia, mistaken for vigilantes. Governor ordered extermination or expulsion of Mormons. Seventeen Mormons killed at Haun's Mill massacre. Mormons surrendered and agreed to leave the state. Smith accused in military court of treason and was to be hanged next morning, but brigadier general, former lawyer for Smith, refused to carry out execution.

Brigham Young led Mormons to Illinois.

Smith unsuccessful in his petition to the federal government for reparations for the oppressed Mormons.

In Illinois much new doctrine came down from Smith, but also much unrest in the community.

1841 Smith revealed doctrine of polygamy. (Denied by wife after his death.) His legislative connection, John Bennett, was said to have used this to seduce women. When rumors of Bennett's spiritual wifery blew up, Smith expelled him from position of mayor and from the church.

In 1842 someone shot the governor of Missouri. Some blamed it on a Smith's bodyguard. Extradition papers were filed. Smith fled. US DA then says extradition unconstitutional. Then extradition for old treason charge was filed. Smith was arrested, but Nauvoo writ of habeas corpus was used to release Smith back to Mormons.

1843 Smith petitioned congress to make Nauvoo independent territory. Denied. Smith then organized a secret council of 50 to study and determine which laws Mormons should obey and which they should ignore.

In 1844 Smith splits with closest associates over how to manage economy of Nauvoo. (Both advisors also say Smith had proposed to their wives.) Those outcast formed a competing church and filed charges of perjury and polygamy against Smith. Published a new newspaper castigating church and Smith's theocratic aspirations and other ideas. Press destroyed. Provokes a call to arms by long time detractor and editor of another paper. Smith declares marshal law. Governor mobilizes militia and calls for Smith to surrender himself. Smith flees, but returns to turn himself in very soon after. Held in custody for treason. Armed mob storms jail in Carthage and kills Smith and his brother.

## Mormon Doctrine

- Revelations not the word of God, but couched in language suitable to the times
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Joseph Smith Book - *Doctrine and Covenants*
- Re-establishment of original Christian Church
- Prophet, Quorum of Twelve
- Temples, need recommendation

## Mormon Doctrine (continued)

- Lay (male only) Priesthoods
- Relief Society (women only)
- Sealing of marriage in Temple
- Family Home evening
- Missionary work
- Stakes of Zion
- Theocratic rule of earth

## Mormon Doctrine (continued)

- Word of wisdom, dietary recommendations
- Polygamy (at first)
- Baptism for the Dead
- Pre-existence
- Three degrees of glory, Terrestrial, Telestial, Celestial
- Man can become a god (God seen as advanced glorified man, with father of own)

# Adventist Millennial Movement

- Began by Baptist lay leader William Miller in 1831
- Predicted the second coming of Christ via interpreting scripture like a “treasure map”
- Target date calculated via Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6; Daniel 8:14; Daniel 9:24-27
- Miller banished by other churches
- Date move twice before followers lost faith in 1844

Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 – a prophetic day is equal to a year  
Daniel 8:14 – in 2,300 days the sanctuary will be cleaned  
Daniel 9:24-27 – after seventy weeks the “end of sins”  
Other lines of evidence supposedly

## Ellen (Harmon) White and Seventh Day Adventists

- As youth helped in father's hat business using mercury
- Bullied as child; turned her inward
- "Conversion" at age 12; family joined Millerite movement
- Visions started in 1844, age 17; over 2000 visions in life
- Married another Millerite in 1846 who believed visions

First vision: Advent people were traveling a high and dangerous path towards the city of New Jerusalem (heaven). End of vision left her longing for returning to heaven. Subsequent visions told to "make known to others, what I have revealed to you."

## Ellen (Harmon) White (continued)

- Charismatic leadership, vegetarian
- Visions in public; trance state dramatic; one minute to four hours; superhuman strength; no breathing; not aware of surroundings, although eyes open
- Most translated non-fiction American author of all time
- One of 100 most influential Americans

Charisma resulted from believing in herself.

Her works are held in high regard by the church, but not as gospel.

Members believed she had the gift of prophecy or spirit of prophecy. Her writings are called a continuing and authoritative source of truth, ultimately subject to the Bible.

Visions involved a bright light which would surround her and she felt in the presence of Jesus and angels who would show her events, past and future, and places on earth and heaven.

She would speak in a strong voice during visions and someone would take dictation.

Held 18.5 Bible in outstretched left hand for half a hour. She weighed 80 pounds at the time.

## Seventh Day Adventists Beliefs

- Miller's date (in 1844) correct, anticipated wrong event
- Christ not coming to earth, yet, but instead has begun to cleanse Heaven
- "Investigative judgment" based on Leviticus 16:16-33
- Christ's return to earth is imminent
- Sabbatarianism - Church on Saturday

Investigative judgment – in which the books of record are examined for all the universe to see. It will affirm who will receive salvation, and vindicate God in the eyes of the universe as just in his dealings with mankind.

## Seventh Day Adventist Beliefs

- Unconscious state of the dead; no soul
- Emphasis on diet and health – cereal for breakfast
- Formed in 1863 in Battle Creek Michigan, but Trinitarian belief not adopted until early 1900's
- Started Creationism movement; no dancing, etc.
- Abortions allowed for medical reasons, rape, incest
- Women ordained beginning in 2012

People are holistic – mind, body, spirit all one. No soul.

John Kellogg early founder of Adventist health work. His brother founded Kellogg's. In Australia and New Zealand the church-owned Sanitarium Health and Wellbeing Company makes health and vegetarian-related products. Most prominent one is Weet-Bix.

Adventists live on average 4 to 10 years longer – based on California study.

## Seventh Day Adventist Beliefs

- Over 18 million followers - 12<sup>th</sup> largest religious organization in the world; 5<sup>th</sup> largest Christian communion according to *Christianity Today* (2015)
- 1 Medical School; 2 Colleges; numerous hospitals, academies, and publishing houses
- Conscientious objectors against combat service
- Volunteers in army medical experiments

Operation Whitecoat – volunteers willingly were infected by pathogens to study effects and cures.

## Charles Russell & Jehovah's Witnesses

- No visions, no special authority, but charismatic
- Wrote business contracts and ran stores by age 12; wrote scripture on fences and tried to convert people at that age
- Questioned faith at age 16 came back to Bible at age 18
- Age 24, joined Adventist church run by N.H. Barbour who claimed Christ had returned, invisibly, in 1874
- Sold his five clothing stores for almost \$7,000,000 current value and financially backed Barbour

Russell did not seek to establish a new denomination.

Father owned several haberdasheries.

Presbyterian until age 13, then Congregationalist. Questioned faith because of the differences in various denominations. Looked into other religions but did not pursue any. Christ invisible based on translation of New Testament that used *presence* instead of *coming*.

## Charles Russell (continued)

- Age 27, split with Barbour (1879) and began publishing *The Watchtower and Herald of Christ's Presence*
- Russell recruited thousands to distribute *The Watchtower*
- Formed *Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society*; later formed the *International Bible Students Association*
- Wrote six volume series: *Studies in the Scriptures (1886-1904)*
- Marriage of 29 years ended in divorce (1908); wife wanted more say in publishing business
- Russell most distributed Christian author by 1912

Split with Barbour after resurrection predicted for in 1878 did not happen. Debated chronology calculations.

Divorce granted on claim of mental cruelty. Legal separation six years before divorce.

## Jehovah's Witnesses growth

- Watchtower Society experienced five splits. Three other organizations from those splits still around.
- Leaders of Watchtower Society jailed for sedition after WWI when they published material that condemned Churches that supported the war
- Adopted name in 1931 under Joseph Rutherford
- Currently 8.2 million active members
- Often called a cult

Splits: Laymen's Home Missionary Movement, Associated Bible Students, Free Bible Students

Some split due to disagreeing with Russell. Others split due to disagreement over interpretation of Russell's will. And others due to agreeing with Russell after the Watchtower had changed directions.

Would not swear allegiance to US. The leaders published criticism of participation in war. Espionage Act of 1918 used to jail them. Charges later dropped.

Membership defined as one who is spreading the word – distributing the *Watchtower*. Those who identify as JW may be twice that number.

## Early problems

- Prophecies from Russell proved false – saints to be transformed into spirits, “harvest,” predicted several times, but didn’t happen
- Rutherford (2<sup>nd</sup> leader) involved in many scandals – adultery, drinking, excessive luxury, etc.
- Rutherford (leader from 1917-1942) – prophecies and proclamations that overturned much of Russell’s not well-received – membership dips in beginning before coming back

Russell accused of taking power in autocratic secretive manner.

Russell prophesized that Jewish patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, etc would be resurrected In 1925 marking the beginning of Christ’s thousand year Kingdom. Armageddon prophecy changed after not happening in generation alive in 1914

Russell said Jews did not need to convert to Christianity. They would take over ruling the world after they gathered in Palestine.

Russell claimed Great Pyramid of Giza was work of God. Rutherford said it was work of Satan.

## Jehovah's Witnesses **Don't** Believe In

- The Trinity
- Hell fire; Immortality of the Soul
- Predestination
- Fleshly return of Jesus
- Burning up of the world
- Military service of any kind

No blood transfusions. No saluting of flag.

## Jehovah's Witnesses Beliefs

- Restoration of true church; baptism required; strong central control
- Progressive revelations; guidance of the Holy Spirit, an active force, not a person
- Direction from Jesus Christ; they alone are God's organization; meetings study material same for all congregations
- Satan controls human governments; UN is scarlet-colored wild beast
- Kingdom in Heaven established in 1914; paradise on earth coming

Bible is inerrant word of God

Must tow the line with doctrine. Dissenters are kicked out and shunned.

God's kingdom is literal government in heaven ruled by Christ and 144,000 spirit anointed Christians drawn from the earth which will create a paradise on earth without sickness or death. JW will serve as the earthly representatives of the Kingdom of Heaven.

## Jehovah's Witnesses highest in

- Education going **no** further than High School
- Belief in God; importance of religion
- Frequency of prayers, Bible reading, church going
- Belief that theirs is the only faith leading to eternal life
- Opposition to abortion, homosexuality, same sex marriage

According to Pew Research

## Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910) & Christian Science

- Childhood included: physically abusive father, eating disorder, catatonic episodes, hearing a voice at age 12
- Widowed before birth of son, lost custody
- Physical and emotional problems treated by Phineas Quimby, who used mental cure – later accused of plagiarizing Quimby’s “science of Christ”
- Claims spinal injury cured via faith in 1866

Doesn't reunite with son until he is 34

Emotional problems = depression

Quimby now seen as a prophet of the New Thought movement – Christian Science doesn't want to be called part of the New Thought movement.

## Mary Baker Eddy (continued)

- Left second husband, evicted from friends homes after quarrels
- Spiritualist, participated in séances
- Said to have been a medium/trance channeler
- Advertised as a healer in Spiritualist paper
- Later denied ever being a Spiritualist

Second husband would not adopt her son, although he said he would before they were married

Says she went to séances to push her ideas about spiritual healing

## Mary Baker Eddy (continued)

- Claimed mental assassination one of the greatest crimes; feared malicious animal magnetism
- Sued Daniel Spofford for mental malpractice; dubbed “The Second Salem Witch Trial”
- Permitted only limited use of medicine
- Monument to her later destroyed by church, as was her birth home... to prevent them from be pilgrimage sites

Ok to vaccinate if law says to. Paid for mastectomy for sister-in-law. Used reading glasses for a while.

## Christian Science facts

- Church of Christ, Scientist established in 1879
- Christian Science publishing established in 1898
- *Christian Science Monitor* established in 1908, has won seven Pulitzer Prizes
- Publish healing testimonials in *Journal* and *Sentinel*. Including false positives? No negatives ever get printed.
- Book: *Science and Health* used to train practitioners

Practitioners take 2-week, 12 lesson course after which they can charge for prayer healing service – usually \$25-50 per phone or internet session. 1249 practitioners in 2010

## Christian Science teachings

- “A few brief tenets, rather than a creed or doctrine”
- Matter is unreal and all that really exists is spirit, “No person, no body, no patient, no illness, no one to heal”
- Sickness is an illusion which can be corrected by prayer
- The allness of God; Life, Truth, and Love are the only reality; Love is wholeness
- Reported that Christian Science was in harmony with Vedanta philosophy, but then retracted in later edition

Quote from website, but the few brief tenets are very much like Christian dogma: 1) Bible is sufficient guide; 2) Trinity light; 3) Forgiveness of sin and understanding that evil is unreal, but belief in sin is punished as long as belief lasts; 4) Salvation through Jesus, as demonstrated through Christ’s healing the sick and overcoming sin and death; 5) Crucifixion and resurrection served to uplift faith to understand eternal Life, the allness of Soul & Spirit, and the nothingness of matter

6) Promise to watch and pray for that Mind to be in us which was also in Christ Jesus; Golden rule; be merciful

CS claims to be mainstream Christianity, but other Protestant sects see them as extreme cult-like due to “allegorization” of basic theological terms

Prayer consists of “silently arguing with oneself; no appeals to a personal god, and no set words” - wikipedia

## Christian Science Decline

- Membership peaked in 1936, about 250,000 in the US
- Today around 100,000 members in the US and about 800,000 members worldwide
- In 1941, 11,200 practitioners trained to pray for others
- In 2015, only 965 (US statistics)
- Decline attributed to better, more efficient medicine

## Christian Science Legal woes

- Laws say that in life-threatening situations children must have access to medical care, but CS parents are not educated about medical problems
- After conviction of manslaughter in 1967 law changed in 1974 to protect parents, rescinded in 1984
- In 1995, Minnesota overturned a fine of \$1.5 million against the church. Appeals court found that the judgment forced the church to “abandon teaching its central tenet” and was thus unconstitutional.

Main criticism against Christian Science believers is that their children are denied equal protection under the law.

1972 128 children in CS school in CT contracted polio, four partially paralyzed. In 1985, 128 children in CS school in IL contracted measles and three died.

Over 50 cases between 1887 and early 1990s where CS adherents were charged after adults and children died of treatable illnesses without medical care.

1967 5-yr old girl died of pneumonia in Cape Cod. Mother convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to five years of probation.

Between 1980 and 1990 seven parents prosecuted, four convictions, two overturned. Overturned ruling: couple reasonably believed that they could cure child with prayer.