



## Christian Scientists and COVID-19

### How Church Periodicals Framed Appropriate Metaphysical Practice, Communication Response, and Spiritual Authority During the Pandemic

Douglas J. Swanson, California State University, Fullerton

#### Abstract

The Church of Christ, Scientist offers a spiritual practice centered around metaphysical healing. This study applied a media framing analysis to stories in church periodicals published during COVID-19. The review identified four types of metaphysical practice, four communication strategies, and six authority figures. Most stories reflected a calm, non-confrontive approach consistent with the social order of Christian Science. Several interesting exceptions were noted. Study findings add to the body of literature regarding Christianity's response to COVID-19 and contribute to knowledge of a church that tightly controls its public communication and has sometimes struggled to adapt in the modern world.

Keywords: COVID-19, pandemic, media framing, Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy

#### Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic that swept across the world in 2020 had a destabilizing effect on religious organizations. In a matter of weeks, the emergence of an invisible, easily transmittable, and often fatal virus resulted in many of the 380,000 Christian churches in the United States closing their doors and canceling in-person services (Goshay 2020). Believers were asked to isolate at home and take other protective measures to not infect or be infected by others. As one Christian theologian wrote, "The classic way of being [a] church is

dramatically interrupted: no classic Sunday services, no collective events which have identified the church's vitality" (Reimer 2021, 2).

One Christian denomination was uniquely impacted. The very existence of the virus was antithetical to church doctrine that has been embraced for decades. The Church of Christ, Scientist, also known as the Christian Science Church, was established in Massachusetts in 1879 by Mary Baker Eddy to "reinstat primitive Christianity and its lost element of healing" (Eddy 1936, 17). Christian Science implores followers to deny the physical reality and existence of sickness, disease, and death (Kramer 2000). Protection from harm and healing of illness and disease has been the cornerstone of the belief system from the beginning of Mrs. Eddy's public practice (Schoepflin 2002). Published narratives from believers often include heartfelt testimonials presented as proof of the efficacy of the spiritual practice.

Although existing literature has addressed the church's general perceptions about and practices of health care (Steckler and Bartkowski 2018; Swanson 2001), no research literature could be located that addresses communication among Christian Scientists during a worldwide pandemic.

The present study involved a media framing analysis of stories published in Christian Science periodicals during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings illustrate the narrative framing of COVID-19 and the healing and protection from harm that believers assert resulted from Christian Science practice. Findings also illustrate how narratives identified Mrs. Eddy, the Bible, her denominational textbook, and other sources as authorities. Appropriate metaphysical practices and communication responses presented by those narratives are identified, along with some interesting deviations from the norm.

Over the centuries, Christians have engaged in much discourse regarding the question, "if God is the creator of all actions, is he then not accountable for all acts good and evil?" (Pieterse and Landman 2021, 5). The current study relates to this question in two important ways.

The first is the foundational, theological approach of Christian Science that God is not responsible or accountable for the appearance of evil in the human realm. Evil, or "error," as Christian Scientists call it, simply does not exist as a true reality. It is a product of "mortal mind" and is unknown to God. Examining how Christian Scientists argued for calming spiritual and metaphysical responses during an unprecedented medical and social emergency is worthy of examination. It adds to the overall understanding of Christianity's response to COVID-19.

The current study is also relevant given the bigger picture of how the Church of Christ, Scientist involves itself with the public at large through its doctrinal periodicals. Christian Scientists would identify themselves as Protestant Christians, but the church does not take a position on political, public health, or social issues, as many Protestant churches and leaders do. When the COVID-19 threat intensified, many Protestant church leaders expressed anger at state and local government-mandated church closings. There were several high-profile cases in California, Florida, and elsewhere of Christian leaders defying local government actions (Wilson, et al. 2020). A debate opened among some Protestants as to whether orders to close churches came about because of "cowardice or indecisiveness of church leaders" or of God's

direct involvement on human affairs (Hume 2022, para. 13). Vaccines and mask orders were questioned and, in some cases, spurned.

It would have been greatly inconsistent with its guiding principles and tightly controlled social order for the Christian Science Church to wade into this. The five-member self-appointed Board of Trustees that governs church operations meets quietly and reports to members only once a year; all public communication by members is tightly controlled by dozens of Committees on Publication in the U.S. and overseas (Swanson 2001). As COVID-19 spread, Christian Science periodicals mostly published as they have been for decades. They did not ignore the tumult in the human experience, but they presented a unique narrative about it, interpreting it with spiritual truths from Mrs. Eddy. They urged followers to do what Mrs. Eddy would ask: respond to the “error” with metaphysical practice supported by the Bible, the Christian Science textbook, and other scriptural authorities. Then, communicate in ways that lift each concern up to God, relying on Him to reveal the truth that any seeming discord was never present in the first place.

Documenting the use of this narrative throughout the onset of COVID-19—along with some interesting deviations from it—adds to an understanding of the wider picture of COVID-19’s impact on Christianity in general. It also offers more insights on a uniquely American religion that developed its approach to public communication in the years following the Civil War and continues to follow that blueprint today.

## Literature Review

A review of literature conducted in several areas will be presented. First, the history of the Church of Christ, Scientist will be summarized. Then, the church’s religious theology will be discussed, showing how metaphysical healing is central to Christian Science practice. The social order observed to be in practice in the Mother Church and branch churches will be presented, followed by a discussion of the powerful Christian Science Publishing Society that controls the framing and dissemination of Christian Science narratives. The literature review will continue with a presentation of early scholarship addressing responses to the COVID-19 pandemic among the larger Christian community. Finally, this section will wrap up with a presentation of the key concepts of media framing, the analytical method chosen to help explain and promote understanding of Christian Scientists’ published communication at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### *History of the Church*

The Church of Christ, Scientist was founded as part of Mary Baker Eddy’s quest to present to the world biblical truths she credited for saving her life. In 1866, Mrs. Eddy fell on an icy sidewalk near her home in Lynn, Massachusetts, and was “taken up in an insensible condition” with injuries “including spasms and intense suffering” (as related in Thomas 1994, 114). Christian Scientists celebrate this moment as the birth of their movement; it was the point at which Mrs. Eddy became their leader (Gill 1998) and subsequently revealed truths hidden in the Bible that followers say result in perfect health and eternal life. These truths are expounded in Mrs. Eddy’s spiritual textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. The book was first published in 1875 and was revised more than thirty times during Mrs. Eddy’s life. It stands today as the unquestioned, unchanging, inerrant explication of Christian Science.

The Church of Christ, Scientist is physically represented by the Mother Church in Boston, Massachusetts, and hundreds of branch churches. At the height of the religion's popularity in the years immediately before World War II, there were more than a quarter of a million Christian Scientists (Stark 1998). In the years after World War II, a decline began in membership and numbers of branch churches. Although the church does not publicize its membership total, in recent years, estimates were offered that there are about 85,000 church members (Steckler and Bartkowski 2018). Various estimates put the number of branch churches as between 1,700 and 2,000, with about 900 in the United States. Toward the end of the twentieth century, Brenneman described Christian Science as "a graying, dwindling religion" (1990, 77), although recent efforts to modernize the appearance of its public communication efforts are noteworthy.

Mrs. Eddy's 138-page *Manual of the Mother Church* lays out the physical structure, hierarchy, and rules for church services. The *Manual* refers 132 times to Mrs. Eddy by name or by the title of Pastor Emeritus. Changes in theology, church doctrine, or management are forbidden without Mrs. Eddy's personal approval (Eddy 1936). When Mrs. Eddy passed away in 1910, church management was left in the hands of a Board of Directors legally bound to follow the *Manual* without deviation. The Board legally holds and manages Mother Church property and verifies that "officers of this Church perform the functions of their offices promptly and well" (Eddy 1936, 28). The church publicly identifies no individual person as its leader.

Humorist Mark Twain, a consistent critic of Mrs. Eddy, suggested that Christian Scientists had no more say in the management of their church than audience members would have in the management of a theater (Twain 1907). Twain's writings, and others, are contained in an extensive body of scholarly and general interest literature dating back more than a hundred years that focuses on Mrs. Eddy and Christian Science (Elder 2020; Schoepflin 2002; Sheler 1998).

### *Theology of Christian Science*

The practice of Christian Science is based on a quiet rejection of the temporal world and the physical body (Elder 2020, Silberger 1980). Mrs. Eddy termed it "radical reliance" (1936, 167) on God. The theology is one of metaphysical strength and personal composure, in such a way that Christian Scientists can be in the physical world but don't necessarily see themselves as part of it. "Christian Science sustains with immortal proof the impossibility of any material sense, and defines these so-called senses as mortal beliefs, the testimony of which cannot be true either of man or of his Maker," Mrs. Eddy wrote (1906, 488). Christian Scientists talk about worldly power without assigning true reality to that power. As a result, a Christian Scientist "lives in an almost constant state of denial as he or she filters out the material elements of the world and replaces them with spiritual interpretations" (Kramer 2000, 104).

Christian Scientists view the Bible as inspired but not infallible (Steckler and Bartkowski 2018). Mrs. Eddy's *Science and Health*, an essential and constant companion to the Bible, interprets and explains any apparent contradictions of scripture. Christian Science churches have no ministers, pulpits, or sermons. Sunday presentations involve a weekly Bible lesson that pairs scriptural passages with quotations from *Science and Health*. The twenty-six Bible lesson topics were chosen by Mrs. Eddy; the topics have never been changed or been added to. Christian Science branch churches hold occasional social events, but such events are not

officially sanctioned. Baptisms, weddings, and funerals do not occur in Christian Science churches.

Christian Science metaphysical practice is built around “The Scientific Statement of Being” which reads: “There is no life, truth, intelligence, nor sub-stance in matter. All is infinite Mind and its infinite manifestation, for God is All-in-all. Spirit is immortal Truth; matter is mortal error. Spirit is the real and eternal; matter is the unreal and temporal. Spirit is God, and man is His image and likeness. Therefore, man is not material; he is spiritual” (Eddy 1906, 468). Every Christian Scientist memorizes this passage and frequently refers to it as a spiritual guide. It is read aloud at the close of every church service.

Mrs. Eddy made healing conditional for “any sincere seeker of Truth” (1906, x). An illness or disease is a “suggestion,” a “challenge,” or at the very worst, a “problem,” which comes from “mortal mind.” The Christian Scientist does not call attention to a condition or refer to it by name. When the condition is successfully resolved, a “demonstration” has taken place.

To Christian Scientists, testimonies of healing allow the sharing of their deliverance from “a dominant medical paradigm,” which when unchecked allows people “to catch society’s fear and concern” about disease and, by association, create its reality (DesAutels, Battin, and May 1999, 45). Testimonies are almost always anecdotal in nature, citing the event as evidence of the believer’s spiritual authority over a material reality that seemed to be but was not.

Christian Scientists are urged not to attach names to medical conditions or seek medical diagnosis. Followers are urged not to discuss symptoms or suffering because to do so would be to admit facts of a discordant reality that is vehemently denied by church theology. The use of traditional medical care is not forbidden, although many Scientists who choose that option feel a “strong discomfort” and resist sharing about it (Steckler and Bartkowski 2018, 595). A delayed healing represents evidence that the believer has not yet “worked things out.” When Christian Scientists encounter other people who do not share their strategy for addressing and mitigating the effects of illness, disease, and accident, the attitude taken toward the non-believer typically is said to be “loving condescension” (Kramer 2000, 190). A Christian Scientist who dies from a medical complication “had a problem he/she could not overcome.”

Over the decades since Christian Science was founded, many of the untreatable medical maladies that it initially focused on, polio and tuberculosis as examples, have now been eradicated or are easily treated through medical means. This is seen by some observers as a strong contributor to the sharp decline starting in the 1940s in church membership and number of branch churches (Wadleigh 2021).

#### *Social Order and the Church*

Social order is manifested through a division of labor, an establishment of trust among people, a regulation of power for decision-making, and a set of systems through which human activity is undertaken (Cowan 1997; Eisenstadt 1992). Social order is realized through “group consensus” characterized by “a set of moral norms that define the behavior of a group of people, through such phenomena as gestures, dress, or disposition, that regulate the way in which individuals can attain their objectives” (Saavedra, Berenzon, and Galván 2017, 1360). It is demonstrated through “an organized set of meaningfully understood symbolic patterns” (Alexander 1992, 295).

Conducting a systematic, scientific examination of what people say, what they do, how they interact with others, and how they address constraints offered by their organizational structures allows prediction and classification of people's behaviors in the context of social order. A comparison can be made to set standards and qualitative judgments can be made.

The sharing of a religious experience allows humans to integrate spirituality into their lives in a variety of meaningful ways (Schneiders 1989). As such, it is relevant to take social order into consideration when analyzing how religious organizations communicate about the shared beliefs of followers.

Within any religion, followers develop spiritual beliefs consistent with theological norms (Neck and Millman 1994). The alignment allows followers to reflect "emotional investment" in a church (Dehler and Welsh 1994, 22). The resulting "relationship-based organizing" (Sass 2009, 201) connects participants, their values, and activities in socially meaningful and supportive ways. The result is an interpretation (or framing) of the religion and its relationships for followers and the public (Appelrouth 1999).

When Christian Science appeared at the end of the Civil War, it quickly became America's fastest-growing religious movement (Gill 1998). It resonated with people who "wished to cling to cherished values and ideals in a rapidly changing America" of the nineteenth century (Thomas 1994, 295). Mrs. Eddy "quite literally institutionalize[d] her personality" in her church (Brenneman 1990, 43). She was thronged by admirers and showered with gifts. She "enjoyed the power she possessed and felt she was honestly entitled to it," Silberger observed (1980, 213). At the same time, Mrs. Eddy discouraged individualistic expression among her followers. "To impersonalize scientifically the material sense of existence—rather than cling to personality is the lesson of to-day," she advised, in *Miscellaneous Writings 1883—1896* (1924, 310).

In that same set of published works, Mrs. Eddy told followers, "I recommend nothing but what is published or sold by The Christian Science Publishing Society" (Eddy 1924, 354); therefore, even today, members may not write of the Christian Science practice unless doing so in a church-sanctioned publication. Church teachings may not be expressed in any detail without quoting Mrs. Eddy (Swanson 1997). Members are not permitted to publicly lecture or teach about the practice without approval of the Board of Directors (Eddy 1936). Public debate on the merits of Christian Science is forbidden. In the multi-media world of today, these and other communication restrictions Mrs. Eddy established present innumerable challenges to members as well as to church leadership that lacks a figurehead to oversee the movement.

#### *The Church and the Published Word*

Upon Mrs. Eddy's death, the Board of Directors legally acquired all copyright protections for her published and unpublished works, allowing the Christian Science Publishing Society to carry out "the promotion of the interests of Christian Science" (Eddy 1936, 79). Those works which the leadership wished to remain in circulation were offered for sale in Christian Science Reading Rooms. The other works were deposited in The Mother Church archives.

The Committees on Publication (COPs) work locally to promote Christian Science, defend it from attack, censor critical commentary, gather information for the Mother Church,

and raise funds to support legal battles. There are fifty-two COPs in the U.S. and more than a hundred overseas. At least one member of each branch church participates. The COPs intervene to keep news coverage about Christian Science informative, uplifting, and positive (Swanson 1997).

In the late 1990s, church periodicals were redesigned for a more contemporary visual appearance. The periodicals were taken online, and electronic subscriptions were offered. At the same time, the Publishing Society began an unprecedented marketing and public relations campaign. In recent years, Church publications have pivoted from content written by paid staff members and Christian Science Lecturers to content that is almost entirely written by lay church members (Snorek 2020).

### *Christianity During COVID-19*

In the early months of the pandemic, Christian denominations and churches struggled to deal with the realities of government-dictated mandates about large gatherings, vaccination requirements, and mask mandates. One philosophical challenge was that believers often sought answers that churches could not offer (Pieterse and Landman 2021). The emergence of COVID-19 proved that neither the church, the government, nor medical science in general had all the answers. This intensified public discussion about the role of the divine in the human experience.

There was great debate in the Christian community about the virus itself, whether its threat was real, and the extent to which government mandates should be followed (Wilson, Boorstein, Hernandez, and Rozsa 2020). Opinion was divided and constantly in flux. A January 2021 survey by the National Association of Evangelicals showed 95% of religious leaders supported a COVID-19 vaccine. Just two months later, a Kaiser Family Foundation survey revealed one-third of White evangelical followers “definitely will not get” the inoculation (Reeve and Guff 2021, para. 6). Experts said the refusal to be vaccinated stemmed from a distrust of government, a misunderstanding of science, news media misinformation, and the influence of one’s personal political identity.

A survey in the United Kingdom found members of different religious groups reported varying levels of fear, social isolation, and compulsive buying during the onset of the pandemic (Jaspal, Lopes, and Lopes 2020). Respondents who identified as Christian reported feeling less social isolation and a greater level of trust in the government to address the pandemic. Respondents who identified as Muslim reported greater fear and more compulsive purchasing. Pieterse and Landman’s study (2021), which collected comments from subject-relevant discussions on social media platforms, found three major themes: COVID-19 is an act of God; COVID-19 has nothing to do with God; and God remains in control amidst a devastating pandemic.

From smallpox to influenza, measles to Ebola and HIV—the historical record of human life is replete with examples of deadly plagues. In each instance, the plague frequently plays out in waves, exposes humanity’s dark side, and forces us to consider the human condition. “Their effect on humanity is often a mixture of societal collapse and rebuilding,” Janssen wrote (2021, 20). This will ultimately be an outcome of COVID-19.

Biblical Studies scholar U-Wen Low observed that “during COVID-19, emotions constantly fluctuate between losing sight and insight, misunderstanding and understanding and fear and hope.” Low concluded, “In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Book of Revelation reminds Christians to continue to wait, witness, and worship God, putting their faith in God’s actions whilst outworking justice in their own communities” (2020, 26).

### *Media Framing Analysis*

This study of Church of Christ, Scientist periodical narratives involved the use of media framing analysis, a common approach used by communication researchers seeking to understand how gatekeepers organize and explain the human experience. Through the framing of topics and ideas, gatekeepers “select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicative text” to inform and persuade media audiences (Entman 1993, 52). This purposeful selection, organization, and presentation of content allows audience members to focus on, understand, and perhaps act on even the most complex issues (Shah et al. 2002).

Analyzing the framing of media content does not reveal *why* gatekeepers made the content decisions they made. But it allows researchers to paint a clearer picture of *how* information is organized and presented (Hung 2001; Scherer 2002) and how certain aspects of experience were emphasized over others (Andsager and Smiley 1997; Tankard 1997). It is common for media framing analysis to examine gatekeepers’ use of language because language can “significantly structure citizens’ responses to public events and issues” (Shah et al. 2002, 370).

Media framing analysis is an approach frequently applied in studies of Christian media content (Swanson 2004; Trammell 2014) and in studies of Christian issues presented in secular media (Butterworth 2013; Hwang 2016). Framing has been applied by scholars to explain and critique media communication during the COVID-19 pandemic (Alshahrani 2021).

### **Methodology**

This inquiry was carried out to identify how appropriate metaphysical practices (action) and communication strategies (response) were communicated by stories published in two primary doctrinal periodicals, *The Christian Science Journal* and *The Christian Science Sentinel* and made available through JSH-Online, the church’s searchable database (Christian Science Board of Directors 2021). Stories offered by these publications are typically framed around a particular timely subject and often include a testimony of healing.

The *Journal* is a monthly publication launched in 1883. Mrs. Eddy, its original editor, declared that it was “designed to bring health and happiness to all households wherein it is permitted to enter, and to confer increased power to be good and to do good” (Church of Christ, Scientist 2021, para. 3). The *Journal* includes instructive articles, editorials, testimonies of healing, news of branch churches, and a listing of Christian Science branch churches and practitioners. Practitioners are Board of Lectureship-accredited individuals who provide metaphysical treatment upon request.

The *Sentinel* is a weekly publication launched in 1898. It “watches the events and emerging trends that most affect people’s lives [and] points out how the laws and nature of God are enabling people to exercise greater control over daily challenges” (Church of Christ, Scientist



2021, para. 11–12). The *Sentinel* contains instructive articles, explications on the weekly Bible lessons, testimonies of healing, and letters from readers.

JSH-Online also indexes articles from *The Herald of Christian Science*, a magazine targeting international audiences. The *Herald* was not included in the present study because its outreach to audiences is in 16 languages and sometimes involves less frequent publication.

A time frame for stories that were reviewed begins February 3, 2020, the date that the Trump Administration declared a public health emergency in the United States (American Journal of Managed Care 2021), and ends September 1, 2021, the beginning of the nineteenth month following the declaration of emergency.

A search was conducted in JSH-Online in late 2023 and early 2024 to identify stories containing relevant key words: contagion, Coronavirus, COVID, and/or pandemic. Although the search functions of JSH-Online are behind a paywall, at the time of access, 30 days of free usage was offered to any new user by request. A search of the database resulted in 1,340 stories published during the timeframe. Of those, 276 (approximately 20%) contained one or more of the four keywords. In all, 81 stories were found to contain the words Coronavirus or COVID and 195 were found to contain the words contagion or pandemic. From these results, a sample set comprising 111 items was selected at random for analysis. This aggregated sample set represented 33 stories with keywords Coronavirus and/or COVID, and 78 with keywords contagion or pandemic (or 40% of the total of items displaying these key terms).

JSH-Online labels items as “Article,” “Editorial,” or “Testimony.” The only differentiation seemed to be that Testimony items had a writer’s name and city included in the copy. Therefore, no disaggregation was made for analysis. Every item in the sample set is referred to here as a “story.” As noted by JSH-Online, all content “comes from our community of members” (Snorek 2020, 2).

Of the 111 stories selected for analysis, 15 were found to be duplicated works, annual meeting transcripts, historical items from the Mary Baker Eddy Library, poetry, or reader endorsements of literature. These were disqualified for review, leaving a sample set of ninety-six unique items, eighty-nine originally published in the *Sentinel* and seven originally published in the *Journal*, as shown in Appendix 1.

The Glaser and Strauss (1967) method of constant comparative analysis was utilized in the analysis. The analysis was conducted by the author of the present study and relied greatly on his background and expertise on communication by the Church of Christ, Scientist.<sup>1</sup>

The author’s review began with downloading each of the ninety-six stories in PDF format. Then, data for each story including year and month of original publication and the title were

---

<sup>1</sup> The author does not practice Christian Science and is not a church member but has a family history with the belief system that extends across four generations. The author’s paternal grandmother became bedridden and was medically diagnosed with incurable polio in the early 1930s. Within a short period of time, she met and was healed by a Christian Science practitioner. She enjoyed full physical mobility while embracing the faith for six decades until her death at age 92 in 1996. Over a twenty-seven-year period, the author has produced peer-reviewed scholarly journal articles, book chapters, and conference presentations focusing on Church of Christ, Scientist communication strategies and outcomes. The author has never had any communication with church leadership about any of his research.

entered into a spreadsheet to verify that original publication was within the study timeframe and not duplicated in the sample set.

Each story was reviewed line-by-line using the Glaser and Strauss (1967) method and supported by use of a coding sheet. The first review was objective in nature, seeking each item's narrative content addressing COVID-19 (Table 1) and identify its framing of spiritual and metaphysical authority (Table 2). Then, each item was reviewed at a more subjective level, to discover narrative affirming appropriate metaphysical practices for believers (Table 3) and appropriate communication responses for believers (Table 4). Each item's title was compared to the item's narrative, to see if there was subjective agreement. Then, relevant narrative segments that supported appropriate metaphysical practices and/or communication responses were copied from the text of selected stories to utilize in the presentation of findings.

### Research Questions

- RQ1: At the onset of COVID-19, how did stories published by Church of Christ, Scientist periodicals frame narratives associated with the pandemic?
- RQ2: What spiritual authorities were presented in COVID-19-related stories to support metaphysical practices by believers?
- RQ3: How did COVID-19-related stories present and describe appropriate metaphysical practices by believers?
- RQ4: How did COVID-19-related stories present and describe appropriate communication responses by believers?
- RQ5: Among the COVID-19-related stories in the sample set, were any found to have a structure or narrative that was remarkably different from the others, and if so, in what ways?

### Results

*RQ1: At the onset of COVID-19, how did stories published by Church of Christ, Scientist periodicals frame narratives associated with the pandemic?*

The review identified four different ways COVID-19 as a health issue was referred to in narratives, either directly or indirectly. Healing or demonstration was communicated in five different ways. It should be noted that Christian Scientists commonly refer to their experience as a “practice” and often use the term “demonstration” to refer to any positive resolution of a health challenge or interpersonal relationship issue. Table 1 presents the narrative frames of COVID-19, healing, or personal protection observed in the stories that comprised the sample set.

Coronavirus or COVID was identified by name in fifty-five stories (57% of the total) including 40 items where the terms “contagion” or “pandemic” were also applied. Thirty-three other stories (34%) used “contagion” or “pandemic” exclusively, leaving out the name of this specific virus. Ten stories (10%) used the term “virus” without associating it specifically with COVID-19.

A large proportion of the stories (73 stories, or 76% of the total) included one or more narratives of physical healing, relationship recovery, or protection from harm in support of the efficacy of Christian Science practice. Some stories offered more than one example of healing. Stories that included healing narratives included forty-one stories (43%) that identified a healing or demonstration of some issue not involving COVID-19; twenty-three stories (24%) that either specifically identified or inferred the author’s personal protection from COVID-19; eleven stories (11%) that either specifically identified or inferred the author’s personal healing of COVID-19; and seven stories (7%) that either specifically identified or inferred the author’s witness of another person’s healing of COVID-19. Twenty-three stories (24%) contained no narrative of healing or demonstration.

Table 1: Framing of COVID-19, Healing, and Personal Protection from Contagion as Identified in Church of Christ, Scientist Publication Narratives, n = 96 stories

<i>Ways that COVID-19 was Referred to in Narratives</i>	<i>Occurrence</i>
The public health issue was framed specifically as COVID, COVID-19, or Coronavirus, and also indirectly as either “contagion” or “pandemic”	40 stories (42%)
The public health issue was framed specifically and exclusively as COVID, COVID-19, or Coronavirus, with no discussion of “contagion” or “pandemic”	15 stories (16%)
The public health issue was framed specifically and exclusively as “contagion” or “pandemic,” with no discussion of COVID-19.	33 stories (34%)
The word “virus” was used in narrative without direct association to the current public health issue or to COVID-19	10 stories (10%)
<i>Narratives of Healing or Demonstration</i>	<i>Occurrence</i>
Narrative description of a healing or demonstration not involving COVID-19	41 stories (43%)
Narrative description of the author’s personal protection from COVID-19, either implied or specifically identified	23 stories (24%)
Narrative description of the author’s healing of COVID-19, either implied or specifically identified	11 stories (11%)
Narrative description of more than one healing or demonstration of different issues	8 stories (8%)
Narrative description of the author’s witness of another person’s healing of COVID-19, either implied or specifically identified	7 stories (7%)
No narrative description of healing or demonstration	23 stories (24%)

Note: Some stories offered more than one example of healing.

RQ2: What spiritual authorities were presented in COVID-19-related stories to support metaphysical practices by believers?

To persuade people to adopt a particular belief system and then act on it requires an authority—perhaps a scriptural text or command, or the encouragement of religious leader such as a minister. For Christian Scientists, *Science and Health* and Mrs. Eddy’s other writings—along with the Bible—have traditionally been recognized as the primary authorities for the practice. This was reflected in the framing of story narratives related to COVID-19.

Six types of spiritual authority were identified. Mrs. Eddy was referenced by name as an authority figure in ninety stories (94% of the total). One or more quotations from *Science and*

*Health with Key to the Scriptures* were identified in eighty-one stories (84%). One or more quotations from the Bible were identified in sixty-eight stories (71%). Other lesser-referenced authorities including other Christian Science periodicals or bound publications were quoted in thirty-seven stories (39%). Mrs. Eddy was specifically identified as the Christian Science “Discoverer” and/or “Founder” in thirty-three stories (34%). Other sources not affiliated with the Church of Christ, Scientist were quoted in eighteen stories (19%). Most stories in the sample set contained references to more than one authority. Table 2 presents structural frames of spiritual or metaphysical authority (or sourcing) observed in the stories.

Table 2: Spiritual Authorities Supporting Believers’ Metaphysical Practices as Framed in Church of Christ, Scientist Publication Narratives, n = 96 stories

<i>Structural Frame</i>	<i>Occurrence</i>
Mrs. Eddy referenced by name as an authority figure	90 stories (94%)
One or more quotations from Christian Science textbook <i>Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures</i> as a narrative authority	81 stories (84%)
One or more quotations from the Bible as a narrative authority	68 stories (71%)
One or more quotations from Christian Science periodicals or bound publications (other than <i>Science and Health</i> ) as a narrative authority	37 stories (39%)
Mrs. Eddy identified as Discoverer and/or Founder of Christian Science as an authority figure	33 stories (34%)
One or more quotations from a source (not a Church periodical or publication) as a narrative authority	18 stories (19%)

Note: Most stories in the sample set contained references to more than one authority. Stories averaged 3.4 authority references each.

RQ3: How did COVID-19-related stories present and describe appropriate metaphysical practices by believers?

The analysis of the ninety-six stories identified four common narratives, all declarative in focus. These narratives proactively presented key tenets of Christian Science metaphysical practice; they also presented that practice as imperative. In other words, narratives communicated that it was imperative that believers metaphysically align with these ideas. Table 3 presents the four narratives that focus on appropriate metaphysical practice for believers. Selected examples from story narratives—some quoted, some paraphrased—are shown.

Divine protection and safety from disease and contagion was identified as a narrative in fifty-four stories (56% of the total). This narrative presented the idea that Christian Science metaphysical practice allows believers to be protected from illness of any kind. Several stories implied, and one story directly asserted that Christian Scientists could safely interact in public with people who had highly contagious conditions. About half of the collection utilized this divine protection focus, and it was usually always coupled with the guidance to be free from fear.

Table 3: Appropriate Metaphysical Practices for Believers; Four Narratives, Declarative in Focus, Selected Examples Shown, n=96 stories

<p><i>Practice 1: Realize divine protection and safety from disease and contagion, 54 stories (56% of total)</i></p> <p>“... Health and wholeness are divinely maintained . . .”</p> <p>“... Right thinking is protective armor . . .”</p> <p>“... When spiritually poised, you can see divine evidence . . .”</p> <p>“... God is the actual power, before we even check the news or social media . . .”</p> <p>“... God’s love removes fear . . .”</p> <p>“... God’s presence nullifies concern of disease . . .”</p> <p>“... chaos can dissolve like a dream . . .”</p> <p>“... Living harmoniously with God is natural . . .”</p> <p>“... True spiritual consciousness is in God . . .”</p> <p>“... believers can safely have contact with people who have highly contagious conditions . . .”</p>
<p><i>Practice 2: Trust in God; become one with God’s allness, 53 stories (55%)</i></p> <p>“... Align each of your thoughts with God . . .”</p> <p>“... Life is a continuous cycle of good . . .”</p> <p>“... God is the only creator . . .”</p> <p>“... There is nothing unlike good, therefore no contagion and no power . . .”</p> <p>“... God is an all-encompassing presence . . .”</p> <p>“... God is in control of the universe . . .”</p> <p>“... there is no separation from God . . .”</p> <p>“... In God’s creation, one element does not infect another . . .”</p> <p>“... turn to the Divine and experience healing power . . .”</p>
<p><i>Practice 3: Accept the naturalness and certainty of health and healing, 26 stories (27%)</i></p> <p>“... Christian Science is wonderfully powerful . . .”</p> <p>“... We have immunity to disease as expressions of God . . .”</p> <p>“... Healing is supported by spiritual law . . .”</p> <p>“... Healing is spiritual view with certainty . . .”</p> <p>“... Healing is the natural effect of aligning with God . . .”</p> <p>“... God-given thoughts are peaceful . . .”</p> <p>“... Each of us can be healed . . .”</p> <p>“... death and illness express states of consciousness . . .”</p> <p>“... With God there are no shutdowns or lockdowns . . .”</p> <p>“... we can wipe out thoughts of disease and find the body healed . . .”</p>
<p><i>Practice 4: Acknowledge Mrs. Eddy’s divine revelation of Biblical truths relevant to past, present, and future, 24 stories (25%)</i></p> <p>“... Mrs. Eddy’s discovery is spiritual reality”</p> <p>“... Effective in healing of disease for more than 150 years . . .”</p> <p>“... Mrs. Eddy explained that disease is fundamentally mental in nature . . .”</p> <p>“... Mrs. Eddy’s wisdom was remembered by her students . . .”</p> <p>“... Mrs. Eddy recognized the eternality of existence . . .”</p> <p>“... Mrs. Eddy explained Jesus’s actions and the Bible’s meanings . . .”</p> <p>“... Mrs. Eddy tells us how to stay free . . .”</p> <p>“... We are immortal beings . . .”</p> <p>“... God, who is divine Truth, defends us . . . against the notion that cycles of illness, lack, and injustice could ever exist or be real . . .”</p>

Trusting in God and becoming one with God's allness was identified as a narrative in fifty-three of the stories (55%). This narrative involves presentation and repetition of the common Christian Science phrase, "God is all-in-all." This is consistent with Christian Science theology that the reality of all being is spiritual, and that the physical world and mortal mind are unreal. According to the stories utilizing this narrative, appropriate metaphysical practice involves declaring and taking to heart the omnipotence of God.

The need to accept the naturalness and certainty of health and healing was identified as a narrative in twenty-six stories (27%). This narrative presented and reinforced the idea that Christian Science is powerful, and that believers must expect to be healthy no matter what the worldly evidence indicates. Thoughts of disease can and should be eradicated from thinking. Although only about one in four stories included narrative that specifically addressed the certainty of healing, nearly all the stories in the collection made at least a passing reference to Christian Science "demonstration" as effective for resolution of health problems.

The importance of embracing Mrs. Eddy's role in divine revelation of Biblical truths was identified as a narrative in twenty-four stories (25%). Stories using this narrative frame wrote of Mrs. Eddy's wisdom, divine guidance, explanation, and recognition of eternal truths from the Bible and the works of Christ Jesus. It is customary for Christian Science publications to identify Jesus as "Christ Jesus" and to mention Mrs. Eddy by name while praising her discovery. Christian Science and its "Discoverer and Founder" are conceptually bonded (Elder 2020; Gill 1998; Thomas 1994).

*RQ4: How did COVID-19-related stories present and describe appropriate communication responses by believers?*

The analysis resulted in identification of four common narratives, or subject focusing within the published stories. This subject focusing presented appropriate communication responses for believers. Table 4 presents the four narratives that focus on appropriate communication practice for believers. Selected examples from story narratives—some quoted, some paraphrased—are shown. First, an admonition to seek spiritual intuition and correct thinking was identified in eighty-one stories (84% of the total). Stories advised readers to communicate in ways that shut out thoughts of disease, to pray often, to declare spiritual truths out loud, and to defend daily against aggressive mental suggestion.

Second, believers were advised to actively demonstrate or testify to others of their experiences. This was a narrative identified in twenty-three stories (24%). None of the stories advocated or implied that believers should proselytize to non-Christian Scientists. To do so would be contrary to the established social order of the church. Rather, the stories recommended showing oneself as an example by communicating harmony in daily actions, blessing others with healing, and seeking harmony among neighbors.

Third, believers were advised to communicate in ways that recognize traditional economic, governmental, political, and social approaches. This narrative was identified in seventeen stories (18%). Story narratives advised readers not to ignore difficult events but to communicate support for public wellbeing. Narratives acknowledged that workplace and public norms are changing, but this was not something to be frightened of. Narratives also encouraged Christian Scientists to pray for people in different public service roles.

Table 4: Appropriate Communication Responses for Believers; Four Narratives, Responsive in Focus, Selected Examples Shown, n = 96 stories

<p><i>Communication Response 1: Seek spiritual intuition and correct thinking, 81 stories (84% of total)</i></p> <p>“... To shut out or eliminate thoughts of disease, we need divine help . . . ”</p> <p>“... open our minds to God’s healing power . . . ”</p> <p>“... knowledge of divine law enables us to be intelligently unafraid . . . ”</p> <p>“... Spiritual inspiration unfolds practical solutions . . . ”</p> <p>“... Our prayers are helping to bring an end to the shared struggle . . . ”</p> <p>“... prayer is more than positive thinking . . . ”</p> <p>“... vehemently declare truths out loud . . . ”</p> <p>“... don’t rehearse your problems . . . ”</p> <p>“... Defend yourself daily against aggressive mental suggestion . . . ”</p> <p>“... Spiritual changes may be unexplainable to the physical senses . . . ”</p> <p>“... constantly monitor your thoughts . . . ”</p> <p>“... disease is a mental suggestion . . . ”</p>
<p><i>Communication Response 2: Actively demonstrate or testify to others of your experiences, 23 stories (24%)</i></p> <p>“... express harmony in all our daily actions . . . ”</p> <p>“... consciously bear witness to truth . . . ”</p> <p>“... embrace and demonstrate the truth . . . ”</p> <p>“... we can bless others with healing . . . ”</p> <p>“... What ultimately determines our lives is our thought . . . ”</p> <p>“... bring harmony to neighbors and all mankind . . . ”</p> <p>“... Stand against the economic and social disruption that the whole world has been experiencing as a result of the pandemic . . . ”</p>
<p><i>Communication Response 3: Recognize traditional economic, governmental, political, and social approaches, 17 stories (18%)</i></p> <p>“... Don’t ignore difficult events in society . . . ”</p> <p>“... Support the public wellbeing . . . ”</p> <p>“... We must love our enemies to reduce turmoil . . . ”</p> <p>“... masks don’t prevent us from our normal activities . . . ”</p> <p>“... Workplace norms are changing . . . ”</p> <p>“... Acknowledge the workplace changes but do not be frightened . . . ”</p> <p>“... pray for key workers, such as nurses, custodial staff, and grocery store clerks, for public health officials, and even for national recovery plans . . . ”</p>
<p><i>Communication Response 4: Recognize traditional medical approaches, 12 stories (13%)</i></p> <p>“... Respect those who choose the medical options of vaccinations and prescriptions . . . ”</p> <p>“... Wear a mask to comply with Coronavirus rules . . . ”</p> <p>“... If we were to encounter a situation where vaccination was required to help stop the spread of COVID-19, our compliance doesn’t compromise our reliance upon God . . . ”</p> <p>“... My husband and I continued our quarantine together, healthy and well . . . ”</p> <p>“... a vaccine is being developed for the COVID virus. And as many look forward to widespread, permanent well-being, unaffected by toxic contagion in the future, we can acknowledge and trust today that divine Love casts out hateful beliefs and the disease and divisive behavior they foster . . . ”</p> <p>“... We all observe global fatigue that has resulted from the pandemic . . . ”</p>

The fourth and final common narrative, to recognize traditional medical approaches, was identified in twelve stories (13%). Readers were not advised to engage in medical practices. Rather, narratives encouraged communication that would show respect for others who did embrace medical options. One story stressed the importance of wearing a face mask in public, to communicate support for others who also chose this option. Another story noted the development of a vaccine for COVID-19 but asked readers to communicate trust in God regardless of any medical advancements.

*RQ5: Among the COVID-19-related stories in the sample set, were any found to have a structure or narrative that was remarkably different from the others, and if so, in what ways?*

Five stories from the sample set were observed to have strong structural and narrative differences. These stories involved include: (No. 60) describing a family member's potentially successful use of medicine as a preventative measure against disease; (No. 63), a narrative discussing a hostile political environment and recognition that many people looked forward to a COVID-19 vaccine; (No. 65), a criticism of stay-at-home orders and other social restrictions; (No. 89), an expression of strong opposition to political and governmental efforts to contain COVID-19; and (No. 96), an accusation of improper response to the pandemic by Christian Science Church leadership, teachers, and practitioners. Stories No. 65 and No. 89 were contributed by the same author.

These narratives seem to run contrary to the guidance Mrs. Eddy offered in the *Manual* and contrary to the narrative norms of the other stories in the sample set. It is inconsistent with the belief system and social order of Christian Science to describe or project 'successful' medicine use, to address in any detail social or political unrest, or to criticize church leadership. It is also inconsistent with Mrs. Eddy's wishes to prominently display human personality or opinion. She instructed believers that personality "is not the reflection or likeness of Spirit, the perfect God" (1906, 337). Appendix 2 presents a summary of the five atypical articles.

## Discussion

Christian Scientists are often described as quiet, reflective, socially conservative people who demonstrate great equanimity and are unfailingly pleasant. For the most part, a similar broad characterization could be made of the stories reviewed in the current study.

COVID-19 was the most significant public health emergency in a century. Hospitals were overwhelmed with sick people. Morgues were filling quickly with the bodies of the dead. But COVID-19-themed stories from Christian Science periodicals did not address these unpleasant physical manifestations. Christian Science periodicals did not ignore COVID-19, but rather addressed it most often indirectly, which would be the Christian Science way.

As an example, it was not uncommon for stories to use the term "contagion" to identify what was obviously COVID-19. Stories rarely discussed any specific physical symptoms of illness experienced by the author or person the author was writing about. Only one story made a direct mention of an author's family members engaged in social distancing. COVID-19 testing was not presented as an issue. To delve into any of these kinds of physical realities would be antithetical to Christian Science doctrine and practice. Ultimately, although each of the ninety-six stories was selected because of a keyword directly or indirectly tied to COVID-



19, less than one-third of the stories described personal protection from COVID-19 and an even smaller number claimed a healing of COVID-19 symptoms.

Nearly all the stories established a meaningful narrative of spiritual relevance by softly but powerfully presenting the metaphysical practices Christian Scientists should follow regarding COVID-19 and the communication they should express. Each narrative ended with an uplifting ending of some sort. That is what Christian Science was ultimately communicating in every situation: Work metaphysically, trust Mrs. Eddy's revelation about God's goodness, and know that "Divine Love always has met and always will meet every human need" (Eddy 1906, 494).

Christian Scientists would likely consider themselves Protestant Christians, but regarding this pandemic, the similarity would end there. A study by Bartkowski et al. (2023) concludes that Protestant Christians "were less likely to perceive the pandemic as a threat to human and social welfare, principally due to *their skepticism about the community and personal health threats posed by the coronavirus*" (2023, 14, italics added). But, as evidenced by the story narratives of COVID-19, a Christian Scientist would not be skeptical; a Christian Scientist would argue that this disease *does not exist* in the reality of God's creation. To do this, the Church of Christ, Scientist and its adherents walked a fine line, and continue to do so. Theologically, Christian Science must deny the reality of what would appear very real—that COVID-19 was and is a deadly pandemic that could affect anyone. The church had to do this, encouraging followers to practice and communicate consistently with what Mrs. Eddy would want. At the same time, the church and its periodicals did not overtly oppose mask mandates, social distancing, and government close orders.

The stories did not offer any specific to-do list for believers. To do so would also be antithetical to the social order of Christian Science. In the Christian Science practice, efficacy is never presented as resulting from adherence to any formula. In the stories reviewed, the narrative of naturalness and certainty of health and healing, for example, was presented in somewhat vague terms because believers should not dwell on physical manifestations and symptoms of ill health or social discord. The story narratives did not open the door to any debate between spiritual truths and manifested physical realities. This, too, is consistent with the social order of Christian Science. It is a religion where spiritual truths are offered, but never in such a way as to create opportunity for a comparison with contradicting evidence.

There were five stories identified as noteworthy exceptions to the rule, as seen in the results of RQ5 and the information in Appendix 2. A media framing analysis allows researchers to identify the *what* and the *how many* of communication. But the *why* of the decisions made remains unknown—and that is the case with these five stories. Even though exploring the *why* is not possible given the present study's methodology, these five narratives still remain inconsistent with Mrs. Eddy's written guidance to followers. Even though the church's theology and governance structure bear Mrs. Eddy's unique imprint, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science still discouraged personal opinions. "Man is the likeness of Spirit, but a material personality is not this likeness," she argued (Eddy 1906, 544). Regardless of the assertive narrative in each of these five stories, however, it is interesting to note that all circled back to a positive, uplifting conclusion. That is the Christian Science way.

Social order is about what people say and do when working within the constraints of organizational structure. There are some clear constraints when it comes to writing about Christian Science practice. A previous study concluded that Christian Science practice cannot be expressed in any detail without quoting Mrs. Eddy (Swanson 1997). The analysis of these stories affirmed that finding. As noted in Table 2, the narratives were more likely to identify Mrs. Eddy as an authority figure than they were the Bible. Least likely of mention as an authority were other published sources. One could argue that this is because the Publishing Society will not acknowledge as official any subjective communication about the healing efficacy of Christian Science made by someone unauthorized by church administration.

In other words, no Christian Science periodical would publish a sermon-like article expressing a personal point of view on Christian Science practice. The only point of view is Mrs. Eddy's. All those who write about Christian Science must do so in a way that aligns their perspective with hers. That is why stories such as these are almost always framed around a testimony of some sort. That way, the personal experience of the author verifies Mrs. Eddy's discovery. As others have noted, even after more than 150 years, Mrs. Eddy's personality is solidly institutionalized in her church.

Evangelical Christians actively and even aggressively engage in "witnessing" to non-believers (World Evangelical Alliance 2011), but the Christian Science approach is passive. True to form, the narratives observed in these stories did not use the term "witnessing," but instead advocated believers practice and communicate in more subtle means—as reflected in Table 3 and Table 4.

## **Conclusion**

"If we trust matter, we distrust Spirit." (Eddy 1936, 234)

Christian believers sometimes see religion and science as incompatible (Rios 2021). Therefore, our knowledge of communication in society grows as we examine how Christian churches and believers responded to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. It's especially relevant to inquire about the Church of Christ, Scientist considering the obvious conflict between the physical realities of the COVID-19 pandemic and the theological, metaphysical norms of Christian Science.

Overall, the Christian Science narratives identified in this analysis aligned with two of the three themes uncovered by Pieterse and Landman's study of "dialogue about COVID-19 as religious or spiritual discourse" (2021, 3): COVID-19 has nothing to do with God and God remains in control, no matter the cause of COVID-19.

We can conclude that these stories were consistent with previously observed framing of reality in Christian Science publications. We can conclude that the stories were clear on the appropriate metaphysical practices that believers should take, and the communication believers should engage in to support those practices.

In that sense, the stories do support the larger purpose of Christian theology as helping people "not to be confined to the obvious, natural and material but to explore the metaphysical world beyond with as much confidence" (Pityana 2020, para. 4).

### Recommendations For Further Research

There is an extensive body of scholarly and general interest literature that focuses on Mrs. Eddy and Christian Science. But there are still many opportunities for additional research focusing on communication between the religion, its followers, and the public in general.

The present study offers a starting point for learning about how the Church of Christ, Scientist communicated through its periodicals during the early months of COVID-19. But there is much to investigate when it comes to media communication of the church. *Journal* and *Sentinel* content is created by church members and not an editorial staff. It would be relevant to explore how publication decisions are made, especially in cases where submissions might appear contrary to any of Mrs. Eddy's philosophies or written guidance.

A hundred years ago, Christian Scientists faced another pandemic—the so-called Spanish Flu. It killed more than 20 million people, including 675,000 Americans (The History Channel 2021). Although communication media have certainly changed in a century, an interesting comparison could still be developed between Christian Science periodicals' responses to two worldwide pandemics a century apart.

In the early months of COVID-19, the Mother Church created a set of online materials to support branch churches. These included a text-based resource guide, posters, and information on Mother Church grants to support advertising and promotion of local church services. Audio recordings of hymns and solo performances were made available for download and use in online church services. YouTube videos were created to aid local church and Sunday School administrators in online engagement (Christian Science Board of Directors 2021). This online outreach was unprecedented in the history of the church and is worthy of scholarly examination in regard to the framing of the narratives, their impact on branch churches and members, and the extent to which the communication was consistent with the expectations of The Board of Directors and the Committees on Publication.

Mrs. Eddy's metaphysical healing methods originated in times when medical science did not have the many effective treatment options that have since become available (Stark 1998). The church faces considerable marketplace competition from New Age healers promising the same physical benefits as Christian Science without the demands necessitated by a Christian worldview (Sheler 1998). Because Christian Science is framed both as religious practice and a method of physical healing, it is difficult to examine communication about the movement without "bias for one or the other" (Schoepflin 2002, 281). It would be appropriate to compare the church's communication about healing and that of popular New Age movements to look for similarities and differences.

In 2018, Steckler and Bartkowski conducted in-depth interviews with Christian Scientists who had been "raised in the Christian Science tradition" to learn how these believers could sustain their approach to health care in a society where conventional medical treatment is the norm. Participating Christian Scientists reported that using medical means for healing was a departure from the practice, but not a rejection of the faith. "Disease and the treatment of symptomatic conditions are not proof of the efficacy of conventional medicine. Rather, they only prove that a weak or distorted connection to one's divine source has implications that are manifested in physiological form," the authors reported (2018, 598). The authors called for

more research on this topic, and it would be ideal to do so in the context of the many challenges of COVID-19. Specifically, Christian Scientists could be queried to find out whether they feel COVID-19 challenged their faith or strengthened it.

There is growing dissent among Christian Scientists in terms of the church's longstanding insularity while many other Christian churches have significant engagement in their communities (Wadleigh 2021). Regardless of what the focus of any future research might be, this issue cannot be ignored. In an article addressing the communication impacts of COVID-19, public relations practitioner Valeria DiMaria observed, "This has been a time like no other. The circumstances will change the way we think, act and work forever" (2021 18). This is true for all of Christianity, and certainly for the Church of Christ, Scientist. Further scholarly inquiry could identify the extent to which weathering the storm of COVID-19 strengthened or weakened the spiritual and metaphysical practice of the Christian Science Church and its congregation.

### Appendix 1: Sample Set from JSH-Online (Five Atypical Stories Bolded), n=96 stories

*Story number. Year, Month. Author. JSH-Online Label, Original Source. "Story Title."*

1. 2020, February. Trinity Thomas. Article, *Sentinel*. "What I am learning about contagion."
2. 2020, March. Deborah Huebsch. Article, *Sentinel*. "What is Christian Science healing?"
3. 2020, March. Kevin Graunke. Article, *Sentinel*. "Bringing our prayers to the threat of contagion."
4. 2020, March. Deborah Huebsch. Article, *Sentinel*. "TeenConnect: What the news won't tell you."
5. 2020, March. William Whittenbury. Testimony, *Journal*. "Protected from contagion in the workplace."
6. 2020, March. Kevin Ness. Article, *Journal*. "Thinking about vaccination and public health."
7. 2020, April. Thomas Mitchinson. Article, *Sentinel*. "Christian Science isn't 'mind over Matter.'"
8. 2020, April. Michelle Boccanfuso Nanouche. Article, *Sentinel*. "Finding immunity from sickness."
9. 2020, April. Nathan Talbot. Article, *Sentinel*. "Not afraid but not naïve."
10. 2020, April. Jenny Sawyer. Article, *Sentinel*. "TeenConnect: Help stop the spread of fear."
11. 2020, April. Tony Lobl. Editorial, *Sentinel*. "Loving our neighbor during a nationwide lockdown."
12. 2020, April. Jimmy Mahon. Article, *Sentinel*. "TeenConnect: The key to effective test prep."
13. 2020, May. Susan Booth. Mack Snipes. Article, *Sentinel*. "Uncertainty in uncertain times."
14. 2020, May. Traci Fenton. Article, *Sentinel*. "The crowning idea that conquers fear."
15. 2020, May. Susan Tish. Article, *Sentinel*. "Shielded from contagion during air travel."
16. 2020, May. Melissa de Teffé. Article, *Sentinel*. "Report from Milan: Finding spiritual peace during the pandemic."
17. 2020, May. Deborah Huebsch. Article, *Sentinel*. "Predictions: the ball is in our court."
18. 2020, May. Barbara Vining. Editorial, *Sentinel*. "With reasoning anchored in God, no more worrisome 'what ifs.'"
19. 2020, May. Larissa Snorek. Editorial, *Sentinel*. "The good that can never be cancelled."
20. 2020, June. Curtis Wahlberg. Article, *Sentinel*. "Lessons on conquering contagion."
21. 2020, June. Tony Lobl. Editorial, *Sentinel*. "Our right to freedom from self-righteousness."
22. 2020, June. Mark Swinney. Article, *Sentinel*. "God's goodness is uninterrupted."
23. 2020, June. Carol Coykendall Raner. Testimony, *Sentinel*. "Protected from chicken pox."
24. 2020, June. Adrienne Thomas. Article, *Sentinel*. "God's care—in and out of care homes."
25. 2020, June. Carla Stillman. Article, *Sentinel*. "Listening to what we most need to hear about our health."
26. 2020, June. Larissa Snorek. Editorial, *Sentinel*. "Praying for ourselves and the world."
27. 2020, June. Tony Lobl. Editorial, *Sentinel*. "Can prayer protect us?"

28. 2020, July. Laura Bonnacarrere. Article, *Sentinel*. "What you think does matter."
29. 2020, July. Chet Manchester. Article, *Sentinel*. "Overcoming fear of the unknown."
30. 2020, July. Sharon Morash Brooks. Testimony, *Sentinel*. "Family freed from contagion."
31. 2020, July. Evan Mehlenbacher. Article, *Sentinel*. "You have no power over me."
32. 2020, July. Jennifer Ann Gordon. Article, *Sentinel*. "Inspiration during isolation."
33. 2020, July. Susan Booth Mack Snipes. Article, *Sentinel*. "Untangling feelings of loss."
34. 2020, July. R. Derek Swire. Testimony, *Sentinel*. "Healing of viral flu."
35. 2020, July. Toni Wengler. Article, *Sentinel*. "Healing prayer that embraces humanity."
36. 2020, July. Tony Lobl. Editorial, *Sentinel*. "Maybe 'normal' is not the right goal!"
37. 2020, July. Linda Kohler. Editorial, *Sentinel*. "'Small rain' prayer."
38. 2020, July. Brandon Jones. Article, *Sentinel*. "A pilot's prayers during pandemic."
39. 2020, Aug. John Quincy Adams III. Article, *Sentinel*. "Christly compassion in times of need"
40. 2020, Aug. Adrienne Thomas. Article, *Sentinel*. "Safely anchored in God's care"
41. 2020, Aug. Suzanne Smedley. Article, *Sentinel*. "We don't allow that in here."
42. 2020, Aug. Lyle Young. Article, *Sentinel*. "Prayer: A powerful resource now and anytime."
43. 2020, Aug. Judith Hardy Olson. Editorial, *Sentinel*. "There is hope."
44. 2020, Aug. Margit Hammerstrom. Article, *Sentinel*. "Overcome fear- act in the living now."
45. 2020, Aug. Jenny Lobl. Article, *Sentinel*. "The source of supply that meets our needs."
46. 2020, Aug. Suzy Seibert. Testimony, *Sentinel*. "Healing of strained muscle and much more."
47. 2020, Sept. Patrick Barrett. Article, *Sentinel*. "Peace of mind in a stressful time."
48. 2020, Sept. Sandy Sandberg. Article, *Journal*. "Our changeless source of health."
49. 2020, Sept. Kevin Graunke. Article, *Sentinel*. "Bringing the power of home to work."
50. 2020, Sept. Mark McCurties. Article, *Journal*. "The spiritual understanding that keeps us safe."
51. 2020, Oct. Chris Jones. Article, *Sentinel*. "Stillness that heals loneliness."
52. 2020, Oct. Judith Hedrick. Article, *Sentinel*. "You can't be isolated from God."
53. 2020, Oct. Evan Mehlenbacher. Article, *Sentinel*. "Heaven...here on earth?"
54. 2020, Oct. Rosalie E. Dunbar. Article, *Sentinel*. "You're in the ark."
55. 2020, Oct. Annette Dutenhoffer. Article, *Sentinel*. "God's unique messages."
56. 2020, Nov. Judith Hardy Olson. Article, *Sentinel*. "Be a first responder."
57. 2020, Nov. Betty Jean O'Neal. Article, *Sentinel*. "Enough employment and provision for everyone."
58. 2020, Nov. Kelly Michaels. Article, *Sentinel*. "Estranged from family? Don't give up."
59. 2020, Nov. Jürgen Kurt Stark. Article, *Sentinel*. "Spiritually-based immunity."
- 60. 2020, Nov. Toni Albert. Article, *Sentinel*. "Psalm 91: A promise of safety."**
61. 2020, Nov. Larissa Snorek. Article, *Sentinel*. "Continuing the Conversation: Coming together as a community on watch."
62. 2020, Nov. Kim Crooks Korinek. Article, *Sentinel*. "Breakthroughs—always possible."
- 63. 2020, Dec. Julia Miner. Article, *Sentinel*. "Handling 'viral' hatred crucial to healing."**
64. 2020, Dec. Melanie Ball. Article, *Sentinel*. "Seal the breaches!"
- 65. 2021, Jan. Evan Melenbacher. Article, *Sentinel*. "Keep on singing."**
66. 2021, Jan. Caryl Emra Farkas. Article, *Sentinel*. "Intuition that heals."
67. 2021, Jan. Shelly Richardson. Testimony, *Sentinel*. "Healed of a breathing problem."
68. 2021, Feb. Gavin Kirn. Article, *Sentinel*. "How I've been praying during COVID-19."
69. 2021, March. Connie Coddington. Article, *Journal*. "Cherishing our church manual."
70. 2021, March. Alice Chedister Ellis. Testimony, *Sentinel*. "Flu symptoms healed."
71. 2021, March. Rachael Ostheim. Article, *Sentinel*. "TeenConnect: Would the pandemic ruin our dance production."
72. 2021, March. Anne Whidden. Testimony, *Sentinel*. "Deep wound healed."
73. 2021, March. Lyle Young. Article, *Sentinel*. "How you can help end the pandemic."

74. 2021, March. Marsha Pecaut. Article, *Sentinel*. “Am I spreading the good news.”
75. 2021, March. Cindy Martin. Testimony, *Sentinel*. “No more flu.”
76. 2021, April. Jodie Eva Cook. Testimony, *Sentinel*. “Crisis averted during pandemic.”
77. 2021, April. Curtis Wahlberg. Article, *Sentinel*. “Vaccines immunity, and the pathway to health.”
78. 2021, April. Himanshu Dhand. Testimony, *Sentinel*. “Healed during church.”
79. 2021, April. Kim Crooks Korinek. Editorial, *Sentinel*. “A God-impelled redefinition of our lives.”
80. 2021, April. Gillian Fife Rees. Article, *Journal*. “Stop contagion in its tracks.”
81. 2021, May. Mónica B. Esefer Passaglia. Article, *Sentinel*. “Life a continuous cycle of good.”
82. 2021, May. Annu Matthai. Article, *Sentinel*. “How are you praying about the situation in India?”
83. 2021, May. Tressie Armstrong. Article, *Sentinel*. “Seeing and being seen.”
84. 2021, May. Cathy Pepperell. Testimony, *Sentinel*. “Quickly freed from restrictive movement.”
85. 2021, June. Avantika Dey. Article, *Sentinel*. “TeenConnect: Surviving lockdown—thanks to Sunday School.”
86. 2021, June. Kacy Valentine. Testimony, *Sentinel*. “Freed from sudden illness in church.”
87. 2021, June. Anita Byth. Testimony, *Sentinel*. “No grief, just Love.”
88. 2021, June. Anne Cooli. Testimony, *Sentinel*. “Coronavirus symptoms healed.”
- 89. 2021, July. Evan Melenbacher. Article, *Sentinel*. “Exercising our right to think spiritually.”**
90. 2021, July. Barbara Vining. Article, *Sentinel*. “Live to love!”
91. 2021, July. Susan Booth Mack Snipes. Editorial, *Sentinel*. “The algorithm of Spirit.”
92. 2021, Aug. Griffith Henninger. Article, *Sentinel*. “No more COVID symptoms.”
93. 2021, Aug. Diane Johnston with contributions from Jennifer Harlan. Testimony, *Sentinel*. “Family’s fears calmed during quarantine.”
94. 2021, Aug. Jane Mirianki. Article, *Sentinel*. “Stillness of Mind heals pandemic concerns.”
95. 2021, Aug. Lyle Young. Article, *Sentinel*. “What the power of music shows us.”
- 96. 2021, Sept. Paul Perea. Article, *Journal*. “Years of criticism and judgment fell away.”**

## Appendix 2: Exceptions to the Norm: Five Atypical Christian Science Narratives, n = 5 items

*Story No. 60: Albert, Toni. “Psalm 91: A promise of safety.” Christian Science Sentinel, November 30, 2020.*

“Psalm 91: a promise of safety” described a family member’s use of medicine. This made it unlike any other story in the sample set. It is extremely atypical for a church narrative to discuss the use of medicine, except in cases in which use was unsuccessful. The author described how she and her husband planned travel to Costa Rica during COVID-19. Her husband “decided to take antimalarial medication, since malaria is considered a risk in that part of the country.” The narrative explained how the author “wanted to rely on God’s protecting power and turned to Him for guidance.” The author offered details of the trip, did not criticize her husband for his decision, and offered no further mention of the medication. The narrative attributed the safety of everyone in the travel group to the author’s prayers that began before departure: “When I had begun my prayers at home, I thought I was praying to protect myself from disease. But really, I was holding in thought a universal truth—the truth of God’s perfect creation and perfect care for all of us.”

*Story No. 63: Miner, Julia. “Handling ‘viral’ hatred crucial to healing.” Christian Science Sentinel, December 7, 2020.*

This story centered on the author’s busy workload with “a looming deadline” and how she seemed to be “coming down with the aggressive symptoms of a flu virus.” The author described contact with a Christian Science practitioner leading to an instantaneous healing that “lifted my thought above a limited, material sense regarding how my body felt.” The story then pivoted to a discussion of how “hostility seems rampant in today’s political atmosphere.” It mentioned “abuses of power that oppress

and harm innocent people” and “righteous indignation over the status quo and its injustices [that] can turn into hopeless despair, exaggerated accusations, and violence that only intensify division.” The story closed by mentioning that a vaccine is being developed for COVID-19, and that “many look forward to widespread, permanent well-being, unaffected by toxic contagion.” The overt acknowledgement of a dangerous world is quite atypical for Christian Science narratives. The suggestion that a medical answer to contagion would be anticipated and desirable is also remarkable. However, the story ended by reminding the reader that, [L]ooking beyond our own experience to pray for humankind, we can affirm that this prayer is effective.”

*Story No. 65: Melenbacher, Evan. “Keep on singing.” Christian Science Sentinel, January 21, 2021.*

“Keep on singing” addressed stay-at-home orders and other social restrictions in a very direct way, which was unusual for the sample set. It is also unusual for Christian Science narratives in general to address the particulars of social disruption. The story began by noting the “disheartening decree” that residents of the author’s community have been ordered to stay home and cancel family gatherings. The story proceeded to tell the Bible story of Paul and Silas who were imprisoned for preaching the Gospel. Despite the “dismal physical circumstances,” the author noted that Paul and Silas were not despondent because they understood God was in control. The story—which has no subjective connection with music or singing—wraps up in a positive way. Although taking note of “government authorities, who are doing their best and need our prayers and support,” the story concluded with the statement, “Whatever rules for social distancing you may be facing, above all, claim your heritage of freedom, and keep on singing!”

*Story No. 89: Melenbacher, Evan. “Exercising our right to think spiritually.” Christian Science Sentinel, July 29, 2021.*

“Exercising our right to think spiritually” took an aggressive tone to express opposition to political and governmental efforts to contain COVID-19. In that sense, this story was extremely atypical among all the stories reviewed. The story began by describing a friend of the author who “was lamenting a plethora of rules, policies, and laws considered or enacted to manage the spread of the coronavirus.” It proceeded to criticize “ever-tightening regulations” and “mass anxiety about contagion [that] makes helplessness, depression, and fear of the future seem normal.” The author asserted that treating viruses as real and developing “plans to manage them” is merely “human convoluted logic.” The author sympathized with readers who “feel assaulted by material viewpoints.” The author stopped short of encouraging direct confrontation of government officials. After 15 paragraphs of mostly aggressive narrative, much of which would align nicely with anti-government storylines, the author ended with the positive affirmation, “We can listen for God’s direction, reason with spiritual truths . . . and trust that immortal Truth and Love always have the final say—and truly, the only one.”

*Story No. 96: Perea, Paul. “Years of criticism and judgment fell away.” Christian Science Journal, September 2021.*

The author of “Years of criticism and judgment fell away” began by describing difficult work conditions during COVID-19 and directly asked the reader, “[H]ow would you handle this situation? What would your thought process be?” This direct questioning of the reader was quite atypical. Christian Science publications usually assume, grammatically, the third person point of view and do not present direct questions. The author proceeded to describe difficult physical work, long hours, and fear of contagion. He then proceeded to direct criticism toward church leadership, something that is unprecedented among stories in the collection for review: “I found myself mentally accusing officers of The Mother Church, Christian Science teachers, and Christian Science practitioners of failing to stand up to the problems we were all facing by coming forward and pronouncing that disease and contagion are not real. I entertained the belief that there wasn’t enough healing going on among our members, and that this was responsible for branch churches closing.” As was the case with the other stories that differed from the norm, this story, too, came full circle to conclude by aligning with

Christian Science norms. Through long hours of study, prayer, and reading, “years of criticism and judgment fell away,” the author wrote. “My daily routine became less burdensome. My understanding and demonstration of Truth grew exponentially, and harmony reigned.”

### Bibliography

- Alexander, Jeffrey C. 1992. “The Promise of a Cultural Sociology: Technological Discourse and the Sacred and Profane Information Machine.” In *Theory of Culture*, edited by Richard Munch and Neil J. Smelser, 293–323. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Alshahrani, Abdulaziz. 2021. “A Frame Analysis of the Language Used by Eight US Media to Describe the role of China and Chinese in spreading Covid-19 during late January to Early June 2020.” *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies* 17 (2): 1129–40.
- American Journal of Managed Care. 2020. “A Timeline of COVID-19 Developments in 2020.” <https://www.ajmc.com/view/a-timeline-of-covid19-developments-in-2020>.
- Andsager, Julie, and Leioth Smiley. 1997. “Evaluating the Public Information Function: How Media Agents Framed the Silicon Breast Implant Controversy.” Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Baltimore, MD, July 30–August 2, 1997.
- Appelrouth, Scott A. 1999. “Shifting Frames and Rhetorics: A Case Study of the Christian Coalition of New York.” *The Social Science Journal* 36 (2): 329–41.
- Bartkowski, John P., Katherine Klee, Terrence D. Hill, Ginny Garcia-Alexander, Christopher G. Ellison, and Amy M. Burdette. 2023. “Fear God, Not COVID-19: Is Conservative Protestantism Associated with Risky Pandemic Lifestyles?” *Healthcare* 11 (4): 582. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare11040582>.
- Brenneman, Richard J. 1990. *Deadly Blessings: Faith Healing on Trial*. Amherst: Prometheus.
- Butterworth, Michael L. 2013. “The Passion of the Tebow: Sports Media and Heroic Language in the Tragic Frame.” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 30 (1): 17–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2012.701010>.
- Christian Science Board of Directors. 2021. “Branch Resources During the Pandemic.” <https://www.christianscience.com/additional-resources/churches-societies-and-groups/branch-resources-during-the-pandemic>.
- Church of Christ, Scientist. 2021. “Christian Science JSH-Online.” Accessed August 21, 2021. <https://jsh.christianscience.com/console>.
- Cowan, Ruth Schwartz. 1997. *A Social History of American Technology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dehler, Gordon E., and M. Ann Welsh. 1994. “Spirituality and Organizational Transformation: Implications for The New Management Paradigm.” *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 9 (6): 17–26.
- DesAustels, Peggy, Margarert P. Battin, and Larry May. 1999. *Praying for a Cure: When Medical and Religious Practices Conflict*. Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield.



- DiMaria, Valerie. 2021. "No Going Back after COVID: How Communications Has Changed in 2021 and Beyond." *Strategies & Tactics*. January 22. <https://prsay.prsa.org/2021/01/22/no-going-back-after-covid-communications-trends-for-2021/>.
- Eddy, Mary Baker. 1936. *Manual of the Mother Church, the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, Massachusetts*. Boston: The First Church of Christ, Scientist.
- . 1924. *Miscellaneous Writings 1883-1896*. Boston: The First Church of Christ, Scientist.
- . 1906. *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. Boston: Trustees under the Will of Mary Baker G. Eddy.
- Eisenstadt, Shmuel. N. 1992. "The Order-Maintaining and Order-Transforming Dimensions of Culture." In *Theory of Culture*, edited by Richard Munch and Neil. J. Smelser, 64–88. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Elder, Jonathon. 2020. "Manhood and Mary Baker Eddy: Muscular Christianity and Christian Science." *Church History* 89 (4): 875–96.
- Entman, Robert M. 1983. "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm." *Journal of Communication* 43 (4): 51–58.
- Gill, Gillian. 1998. *Mary Baker Eddy*. Reading: Perseu.
- Glaser, Barney. G., and Anselm L. Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.
- Goshay, Charita. 2020. "Difficult Days are Ahead for America's Churches, Faith Institutions." *Atlanta Beacon Journal*, August 22, 2020. <https://www.beaconjournal.com/story/news/local/2020/08/22/lsquodifficult-days-are-aheadrsquo-for-america-s-quos-churches-faith-institutions/42282593>.
- Hume, Chris. 2022. "'God stopped our worship' and other lies about the church's response to COVID." *Reformed Hope* (blog). August 5. <https://reformedhope.com/2022/08/05/god-stopped-our-worship-and-other-lies-about-the-churchs-response-to-covid-19>.
- Hung, Kineta. 2001. "Framing Meaning Perceptions with Music: The Case of Teaser Ads." *Journal of Advertising* 30 (3): 39–49.
- Hwang, Taisik. 2016. "Newspaper Coverage of Christianity in South Korea, 1996–2005." *Journal of Media & Religion* 15 (4): 196–209.
- Janssen, Luke J. 2021. "Pandemics in Need of a Christian Response." *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 73 (1): 13–22.
- Jaspal, Rusi, Barbara Lopes, and Pedro Lopes. 2020. "Fear, Social Isolation and Compulsive Buying in Response to COVID-19 in a Religiously Diverse UK Sample." *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 23 (5): 427–42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2020.1784119>.
- Kramer, Linda. S. 2000. *The Religion That Kills - Christian Science: Abuse, Neglect, and Mind Control*. Lafayette: Huntington House.

- Low, U-Wen. 2020. "Out of the Great Ordeal: Reading Revelation in a Global Pandemic." *Stimulus: The New Zealand Journal of Christian Thought & Practice* 27 (1): 26–30.
- Neck, Christopher P., and John F. Millman. 1994. "Thought Self-Leadership: Finding Spiritual Fulfillment in Organizational Life." *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 9 (6): 9–16.
- Pieterse, Tanya, and Christina Landman. 2021. "Religious Views on the Origin and Meaning of COVID-2019." *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77 (3): 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i3.6283>.
- Pityana, Barney. 2020. "More eyes on COVID-19: Perspectives from Religion Studies - How Christian Theology Helps Us Make Sense of the Pandemic." *South African Journal of Science* 116 (7–8): 1. <https://doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2020/8498>.
- Reeve, Elle, and Samantha Guff. 2021. "Many Evangelicals Say They Won't Be Vaccinated Against COVID-19. Some Experts Say Distrust and Misinformation Have Played a Role." *CNN* (April 14). <https://www.cnn.com/2021/04/14/us/covid-vaccine-evangelicals/index.html>.
- Reimer, Johannes. 2021. "The New Normal: Corona and the Church." *European Journal of Theology* 30 (1): 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.5117/ejt2021.1.001.reim>.
- Rios, Kimberly. 2021. "Examining Christians' Reactions to Reminders of Religion–Science Conflict: Stereotype Threat Versus Disengagement." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 47 (3): 441–54.
- Saavedra, Nayelhi I., Soshana Berenzon, and Jorge Galván. 2017. "'This is How We Work Here': Informal Logic and Social Order in Primary Health Care Services in Mexico City." *Qualitative Health Research* 27 (9): 1359–69.
- Sass, James S. 2009. "Characterizing Organizational Spirituality: An Organizational Communication Culture Approach." *Communication Studies* 51 (3): 195–217.
- Scherer, Michael. 2002. "In Review: Framing the Flag." *Columbia Journalism Review* 40 (6): 10.
- Schneiders, Sandra M. 1989. "Spirituality in the Academy." *Theological Studies* 50 (4): 676–97.
- Schoepflin, Rennie B. 2002. *Christian Science on Trial: Religious Healing in America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Shah, Dhavan V., Mark D. Watts, David Domke, and David P. Fan. 2002. "News Framing and Cueing of Issue Regimes: Explaining Clinton's Public Approval in Spite of Scandal." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 66 (3): 339–70.
- Sheler, Jeffrey. 1998. "In Mrs. Eddy's house: the Church of Christ, Scientist Tries to Heal its Divisions." *U.S. News & World Report* (February 16): 61.
- Silberger, Julius. 1980. *Mary Baker Eddy: An Interpretive Biography of the Founder of Christian Science*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co.
- Snorek, Larissa. 2020. "Coming together as a community on watch." *Christian Science Sentinel*, (November 30): 2.

- Stark, Rodney. 1998. The Rise and Fall of Christian Science. *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 13 (2): 189–214.
- Steckler, Rebecca A., and John P. Bartkowski. 2018. “‘God is My First Aid Kit’: The Negotiation of Health and Illness Among Christian Scientists.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 57 (3): 585–603.
- Swanson, Douglas J. 2004. “The Framing of Contemporary Christian Apostasy on the World Wide Web.” *Journal of Media and Religion* 3 (1): 1–20.
- Swanson, Douglas J. 2001. “‘Standing Porter at the Door of Thought’: The Social Order of Christian Science.” Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Western Social Science Association, Reno, NV, April 18–22.
- Swanson, Douglas J. 1997. “Censorship and the Christian Science Church.” In *Ready Reference Censorship*, edited by Peter Abelard, 139. Pasadena: Salem.
- Tankard, James W. 1997. “PR Goes to War: The Effects of Public Relations Campaigns on Media Framing of the Kuwaiti and Bosnian Crises.” Paper presented to the Annual Conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Baltimore, MD, July 30–August 2, 1997.
- The History Channel. 2021. “Spanish Flu.” <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-i/1918-flu-pandemic>.
- Thomas, Robert D. 1994. *With Bleeding Footsteps: Mary Baker Eddy’s Path to Religious Leadership*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Trammell, Jim Y. 2014. “The grandest, most compelling story of all time! Dominant Themes of Christian Media Marketing.” *Journal of Religion & Popular Culture* 26 (1): 23–35.
- Twain, Mark. 1907. *Christian Science*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- Wadleigh, George. 2021. *The Ram in a Thicket: Rebirth and Reform in the Practice of Christian Science*. Lim: Fairway.
- Wilson, Scott, Michelle Boorstein, Arelis Hernandez, and Lori Rozsa. 2020. “Coronavirus creates conflict for churches, where gatherings can be dangerous but also provide solace.” *The Washington Post* (April 5). [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/coronavirus-church-services-outbreak/2020/04/05/7f5b63cc-7773-11ea-90ad-819caa48d39f\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/coronavirus-church-services-outbreak/2020/04/05/7f5b63cc-7773-11ea-90ad-819caa48d39f_story.html).
- World Evangelical Alliance. 2011. “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct.” [http://www.worldevangelicals.org/pdf/1106Christian\\_Witness\\_in\\_a\\_Multi-Religious\\_World.pdf](http://www.worldevangelicals.org/pdf/1106Christian_Witness_in_a_Multi-Religious_World.pdf).