

About the John W. Doorly Archive - a record of spiritual development

This archive is, in effect, the record of the spiritual idea as it developed in Christian Science through the research, teaching, and practice of the Christian Science teacher and practitioner John W. Doorly (1878 -1950).

The spiritual idea in its Science has never stood still. As Mary Baker Eddy wrote, "Stately Science pauses not" (S&H"566:9) and the understanding of it has continually developed from the foundations Mary Baker Eddy discovered and laid in her textbook *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, until today its pure Science and system is seen. This evolution will forever go on, for "God expresses in man the infinite idea forever developing itself, broadening and rising higher and higher from a boundless basis" (S&H 258:13-15).

If we look back we can trace a broad line of light that has led to the present stage of development in Christian Science. In Mrs Eddy's time one of her most valued teachers, Edward A. Kimball, began to discern the fact that the one Principle or Mind expresses itself in ideas and these ideas constitute the basic reality of everything that exists. His teaching is said to be epitomized by the statement, "Metaphysics resolves things into thoughts, and exchanges the objects of sense for the ideas of Soul" (S&H 269: 14-16). The next great step forward was the inevitable move into the realm of the oneness of Being, pioneered by the well-known teacher, Bicknell Young - a pupil of Kimball. Through the teaching of Kimball it was seen that the divine Principle can only be understood through the ideas of Soul which express it, but the further revelation then began to impress itself upon enlightened progressive thought that man and the universe are the ideas of Soul. There is only one Being, one "I AM". Man is God-in-action, God-being. This teaching has gathered momentum until it has become widespread in thought today.

Around the same time John Doorly, who was a pupil of Bicknell Young, caught this unfolding revelation of oneness, and was receptive to the next unfoldment in this line of light, namely, the discernment of what constituted the pure Science and system of this oneness. John Doorly was teaching Christian Science at that time and was a popular lecturer on the subject. He had also been a very successful practitioner for many years; he loved the healing practice, but began to feel that there must be more to Christian Science than healing morally and physically, and he questioned what was the exact nature of this infinite spiritual Science of Being. He saw that it must have a pure self-contained Science and system with specifically defined fundamentals, just as music and mathematics have. At this point his extensive researches into the Bible and the Christian Science textbook led him to discern the significance of the fact that the fundamental spiritual values of the days of creation at the beginning of the Bible, seen as a symbolic record, are what Mrs Eddy called "the numerals of infinity" (S&H 520: 10), their full range operative in the divine nature, defined in Christian Science as Mind, Spirit, Soul, Principle, Life, Truth, Love (see S&H 465:8-10). These numerals function in a fourfold spiritual calculus of the Word of revelation, the Christ in its translating office, Christianity demonstrating this Christ, and Science forever interpreting these divine processes in a living way. The four are symbolized at the conclusion of the Bible as the city "which lieth foursquare" (see S&H 577: 12-21). Moreover, John Doorly saw that the divine system functioned on the various levels of Science, divine Science, absolute Christian Science, and Christian Science. When he began this research, he had no preconceived idea of what would be shown to him, but the time was ripe for the pure Science of Christian Science to unfold and it found its natural receptive channel in John Doorly.

This progressive move forward in the evolution of the understanding of Christian Science was revolutionary in its impact on thought, leading many open-minded Christian Scientists out of a mainly religious, denominational sense of this Science into a consciousness of it as the one Science of all being with clearly defined fundamentals, these fundamentals being seen as universally operative, inspiring all progressive thought that is looking outward and upward.

When John Doorly left this earthly scene, all his Association papers and reports and research notes, and also items and letters of importance and interest were left to the Trustee of his writings, Mrs Peggy M. Brook, who had been his secretary and assistant from 1937-1950. They are now the property of The John W. Doorly Trust, which Peggy Brook formed in 1991 and of which she is one of the Trustees. These papers were stored away pending a time when they could be gone through and sorted out. This was not to take place until 1989, when Peggy Brook and Portia Birse began to meet regularly in order to go through the papers together. All the material had been stored in Portia Birse's home in Chichester, Sussex, England, where she had done useful preliminary research of all the items and made copious notes.

From the beginning we felt that the outcome might result in an archive of some kind and we earnestly prayed to be used by the divine Principle to gather all that would be germane to such an outcome. At the start we both

had an inner conviction that this was no ordinary archive of a person and his life accomplishments, but was primarily a record of the irresistible development of the progressive spiritual idea in Christian Science. We found as we went through this material that our overwhelming impression was that no matter what difficulties and obstructions John Doorly encountered along the way, the idea of the pure Science and system of Christian Science was inevitably impelling itself upon thought.

In any undertaking of this particular nature such work naturally involves decisions as to what to keep and what to discard. Realizing from the outset that this archive was concerned with the development of the idea of the pure Science of Christian Science (apart from early biographical details which it seemed necessary to include), in times of doubt we always found ourselves asking this question as we came across various specific items: does this contribute to an understanding of the development of the idea of the pure Science of Christian Science, or not? And the answer usually came quickly to us both. Moreover, our guiding text throughout the whole work was "Spirit, God, gathers unformed thoughts into their proper channels, and unfolds these thoughts, even as He opens the petals of a holy purpose in order that the purpose may appear" (S&H 506: 18-21). All our working sessions were prefaced with this reminder.

From the beginning we found ourselves confronted with four rich channels of information regarding the development of the idea of the pure Science of Christian Science, namely: John Doorly's Christian Science Pupils' Association notes and reports; many research notes; countless letters from all over the world regarding this progressive teaching; and all John Doorly's published writings after his excommunication from the Christian Science organization. These began to formulate themselves in our thought as a natural reflection of the fourfold activity of the inspired Word, the Christ translating itself, the universal response to that Christ, which is true Christianity, and the interpretation of Science.

At one point there was a question of leaving all letters out of the archive, but we felt that they essentially expressed in this context a Christianity aspect of the unfoldment, namely, the response to the progressive Christ-idea. John Doorly never kept personal practice letters unless there was some special reason to do so, but reading many of the letters that he kept regarding his teaching (most of them written in the late 30's and 40's) makes one realize that his teaching not only brought a new vision of Christian Science as pure Science to a large number of people, but also inspired students to stand on their own feet in their developing spiritual understanding of its pure Science and system and be individually active. This took various forms, such as holding small groups to study the Bible and Science and Health, giving Talks and Summer Schools, and writing books on this progressive development. This was a unique evolution and would seem to answer Mary Baker Eddy's clarion call, "Let the Word have free course and be glorified. The people clamor to leave cradle and swaddling-clothes. The spiritual status is urging its highest demands on mortals, and material history is drawing to a close. Truth cannot be stereotyped; it unfoldeth forever" (No 45:24-28). No new organization involving membership and a following was ever contemplated either by John Doorly or by his pupils throughout this whole unfoldment. It has been allowed to go forward individually from its divine Principle, with trust in the Principle to care for its own idea.

Naturally, though, every collective activity which relates to the human must have some kind of ordered operation and in 1946 John Doorly did form a small publishing company called The Foundational Book Company in order to publish his books and those of others written along the same line, but eventually, by mutual consent, students began to make their own publishing arrangements, thus averting any sense of a headquarters for the literature on this subject. The divine Principle operating in its Science, rather than any form of hierarchical organization, has always been the unifying factor.

[This Book Company also published a periodical called *Metaphysical Notes*: this was subsequently followed by *Ideas of Today*, and later a series of *News Items* to give news of meetings and literature on this subject.] Both these publications represent the activities of many students along the lines of the pure Science of Christian Science, and they are always firmly based on the Bible and Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures by Mary Baker Eddy. John Doorly said at his last Summer School at Oxford in 1949, "The further I progress the more determined I am to stick to the Bible and Science and Health. They will always show us the way. Moreover, if we all do that, we shall have the true church, we shall have, not an organization, but 'the structure of Truth and Love' (S&H 583: 12), wherein every man is an individual and a 'lively stone'." Copies of all the literature produced by The Foundational Book Company may be found for reference in the Christian Science Research Library in Cambridge.

As we proceeded with our research and came towards its conclusion, we found that it was forming itself quite naturally into four main classifications: firstly, biographical material; then documentation of John Doorly's

experience and official activities during many years as a member of The Mother Church organization; this was followed by material related to the growing divergence of views between John Doorly's expanding and progressive vision of the pure Science of Christian Science and the Boston authorities' desire to preserve the organized status quo, leading to John Doorly's excommunication from the official Church; finally, evidence of the prolific activity of this new vision free from organization.

Working through all this material we became more and more impressed with the irresistible way the deeper, more scientific sense of Christian Science defined and impelled itself into the forefront of consciousness. The "time for thinkers" had indeed come. This is particularly apparent in all the annual Pupils' Association Reports; and even in the verbatim press reports of the Christian Science Lectures given by John Doorly under the auspices of the official Boston Board of Lectureship the seeds of the divine order of the fundamentals of Christian Science can be discerned. Students can see this for themselves in these reports in the archive. John Doorly's teaching always emphasized the fact of divine order and this never changed, but the divine Principle or Mind in which this order finds its origin continued to interpret itself in a deeper and more detailed way to the clear transparency so ready to receive it. Mary Baker Eddy's revelation further defined and refined itself to John Doorly as he pondered the Bible and Science and Health and was also willing to face up to and meet the fierce persecution which these progressive conclusions aroused. The verbatim reports of his annual Association meetings tell this spiritual story and of course record its effects. These reports would seem to be the most important part of the archive, together with all the literature written and published after his excommunication from the Christian Science organization. The many letters may round out the human picture in a wide and living way, but the spiritual story of the Christ-idea at work in its Science speaks powerfully, progressively and clearly at every annual Pupils' Association Meeting; the 1938 gathering, in particular, was like a watershed in the advancing understanding of the Science and system of Christian Science.

From time to time the question naturally came up as to where this archive should be housed. For many years the archive was eventually housed in the Christian Science Research Library, Cambridge. This Library, based on a collection gathered over many years by one individual, was established in 1983. Soon afterwards the Christian Science Foundation was set up to protect this collection which is now incorporated in the Foundation. The Library already has many hundreds of books relating to Christian Science and forms an invaluable body of reference. The literature gathered together here comes from many sources all over the world, and spans the years from the discovery of Christian Science to the present day. The criterion for a work to have a place in the Library is that it relates in some way to Christian Science or to the Bible. Taking in the panoramic view which the contents of this collection affords enables the spiritual researcher in Christian Science to embrace the whole perspective of the progressive Christ-idea in a truly balanced way. The unfoldment of the pure Science and system of Christian Science, which constituted John Doorly's mission, is an integral part of this picture and by the mutual and happy consent of the Foundation and the Trust, The John W. Doorly Archive was moved from Chichester to be cared for by the Christian Science Foundation. [...]

[In 2009, as an integral part of its ongoing development, The John W. Doorly Trust moved the entire archive from the Christian Science Research Library (now incorporated in the Christian Science Foundation) to its own offices in order to produce an electronic version of the same for safekeeping and in-depth but efficient research by electronic means. This task is still in progress.]

In the course of the many years we have been engaged in this work we have been asked if we think that John Doorly would have approved of this undertaking. We too asked ourselves this question right at the outset. Firstly, one cannot destroy or leave in obscurity papers wherein can be traced so important a development as the evolution of the Science and system of Christian Science; to many these are of great interest. Secondly, and in addition to this, John Doorly himself was always most generous in sharing with others at his Association Meetings, and indeed at all times, the most recent discoveries that had come to him regarding the pure Science of Christian Science from his unceasing study of the Bible and Science and Health. New vision was constantly dawning on him from these two books. It is interesting that Mary Baker Eddy, when writing about *Christ and Christmas* in an article entitled "*Deification of Personality*," stated, "The Scriptures and Christian Science reveal 'the way,' and personal revelators will take their proper place in history, but will not be deified" (see Mis. 308). Finally, John Doorly himself said that at one time he felt that all his papers should be destroyed, but in a letter to his solicitor in 1943 he changed his mind and wrote the following: "I want to alter [my Will], re all my papers and books ... In my former Will I put a note to say that the papers should be burned, but I feel now this would be a mistake. Some day all these papers are going to become public property. Of this I am sure."

We have continually stated that this archive should not be regarded as the record of a person and his human life and achievements, but as a record of the irresistible development of the progressive Christ-idea in its

Science. Mrs Eddy wrote her autobiography in Retrospection and Introspection in which she stated that our "material, mortal history ... has no place in the Science of being" but nevertheless earth's shadows have a heavenly intent. She ultimately goes on to say, "The human history needs to be revised, and the material record expunged" (see Ret. 21 and 22).

[The spiritual history speaks for itself through the many verbatim reports of Association Meetings and other meetings, lectures, notes and literature, and also through the overall spirit of this whole collection. The "human history." as always, needs to be "revised" or seen anew in the light of the progressive Christ-idea, and the "material record expunged."]

[There is much more that could be seen and said about this whole subject, but any sincere researcher who is interested in how the idea of the pure Science of Christian Science evolved through an inspired and open-minded individual, has the opportunity through the impersonal records section of this archive of discovering for himself from source material many facts concerning the evolution of a progressive spiritual idea whose time has come.]

[It is not everyone who feels it is his or her mission to pursue such a line of serious research. Those who do will no doubt discover amongst all this material many new aspects of the Science of Being that are truly universal but speak to them in a unique, powerful, and comforting way. The divine Principle alone can lead us and interpret itself.]

[As the documents and papers preserved in the archive have now reached a critical age and must therefore be safeguarded, the archive is being reproduced on electronic media. This work is currently still in progress, and will be so for some time to come. When the task has been completed, this will be announced on this web site. At this point any sincere research student of Christian Science who wishes to make a serious and deep spiritual study of how the scientific evolution of the understanding of Christian Science took place in the spiritual experience of John W. Doorly may apply for access to the electronic impersonal records section of The John W. Doorly Archive.]

For all enquiries regarding the archive, potential researchers are asked to apply first in writing to the Honorary Secretary of The John W. Doorly Trust. Such an application should briefly describe the objective of the research project and provide a meaningful outline of the enquiry to be pursued and whether the results are to be published in any form.

Author: Peggy M. Brook 1995

(Updated in March 2011 by Peter A.W. Rosenthal, Trustee of The John W. Doorly Trust - Updated text is marked by square brackets)

Published by: The Foundational Book Company for The John W. Doorly Trust, London, England (March 2011)