

FOREWORD

THE TITLE of this book, *Angelic Overtures of Mary Baker Eddy's Christ and Christmas*, has been chosen in the light of Mrs. Eddy's placement of *Christ and Christmas* in the charge of "angels, with overtures" to "announce" its "Principle and idea," her statement in an article in *Miscellaneous Writings* under the title of "Christ and Christmas" reading as follows: ". . . Christian Science and its art will rise triumphant; . . . Angels, with overtures, hold charge over both, and announce their Principle and idea" (Mis. 374:11-16)—implying that such angels alone hold the key to the interpretation of *Christ and Christmas*. Could a book which draws its every life breath from the inspiring premises of Mrs. Eddy's own statements do other than place itself under the same angelic charge by its title, thereby insuring that its presentation will be true to Mrs. Eddy's vision and song?

Thus Mrs. Eddy has locked the interpretation of *Christ and Christmas* with the golden key of the spiritual idea which hears only in tones of the musical cadence of angelic "overtures," and so speaks to human heads and hearts. The words "heads" and "hearts" are employed because Mrs. Eddy says that "music is the rhythm of head and heart," S. & H. 213:26. So an intelligent understanding of what the angels are singing in their "overtures" of *Christ and Christmas* is as important to the "head" of the listener as the rhythmical melodic tones of their song are to his "heart." Thus these angelic "overtures" have their harmonic (basic) Principle and their melodic tones of idea, which require the "rhythm of head and heart" to be understood.

A sojourner, somewhat attuned to both phases of these angelic "overtures" with reference to *Christ and Christmas*, has spent many refreshing hours listening to these glorious annunciations—in line with the invitation of a Christian Science hymn, "O rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing"; and this sojourner has rejoiced in the hymn's assurance that "lo, the days are hast'ning on . . . [when] the whole world [will] send back the song which now the angels sing."

The title of this book has been chosen in full consciousness of the sketchy nature of an overture as compared with the more elaborate composition expanding its theme. So it is with the overtures of "life's music" which in their fuller sense "must be wrought out in life-practice," S. & H. 202:4, for "life's music" can never be sounded to its fullest depth by mere spiritual "overtures," be they ever so ecstatically inspiring. Angelic "overtures" must be echoed in "life's music" in the consciousness of each auditor.

There is nothing more unswerving in *obedience* to its principle than music bringing forth its idea in a definite harmony-form. Thus Mrs. Eddy discourses on the requirements for "life's music" under the exacting title of "Obedience" in the following words: "This question, ever nearest to my heart, is to-day uppermost: Are we filling [not merely hearing] the measures of life's music aright, emphasizing its grand strains, swelling [*actively expanding*] the harmony of being with tones whence come glad echoes?" Mis. 116:11. These words imply that life's *acts* are the notes in the "filling" of life's "measures" in response to life's thought-overtures, for *acts* responsive to thoughts alone type tones or notes which must first be sounded before "glad echoes" re-sound. Thus the spiritual tones of this book as based on Mrs. Eddy's own premises could never be more than angels' ("God's thoughts passing to man," S. & H. 581:4) "overtures" until the *lives* of their recipients *expandingly* re-sound "glad echoes"; for, as Mrs. Eddy says, "The truest *art* of Christian Science is to *be* a Christian Scientist," Mis. 375:5.

Mrs. Eddy further says in her article entitled "Christ and Christmas" in *Miscellaneous Writings* that "the *art* * of Christian Science, with *true hue and character of the living God*, is akin to its *Science*," * Mis. 372:27. Ponder the startling significance of this high commission given "the *art*" of *Christ and Christmas*—that of portraying the "true hue and *character* of the living God"! According to her own words, Mrs. Eddy has sought to convey in *Christ and Christmas* many higher meanings than even the Poem could present without its art symbols, which latter she calls "the *art* of Christian Science" and compares it with its "Science" as presented in *Science and Health*; for she says that "the *art* of Christian Science" portrays the "*true hue . . .* of the living God," while its "Science" as presented in *Science and Health* merely "gives scopes and shades to the *shadows* of divinity," Mis. 372:29. We read a book with our mind, but symbols are always inter-

* The italics are Mrs. Eddy's.

preted in the measure of their identification with our lives. Thus the first process is a mental perception of abstractions, while the second is spiritual discernment through the living lens of spiritual sense. When reading abstract Truth, we identify thought; but when viewing symbols, we identify human actions as the full measure of one's own living understanding of thought-values. So Mrs. Eddy, in speaking of the absolute necessity of all *spiritual* (not abstract) teaching's being by symbols, says, "Did not Jesus illustrate the truths he taught by the mustard-seed and the prodigal?" S. & H. 575:14. Thus *Christ and Christmas* is the one book devoted wholly to the illustration of Mrs. Eddy's most significant statement, "Spiritual teaching must *always* be by symbols," S. & H. 575:13.

Touching upon the more mundane history of *Christ and Christmas*, there were nine numbered editions of *Christ and Christmas*—one of which, the third, was a triple edition in the sense that each of three issues of this same edition was called the third; thus, in reality, there were eleven issues of *Christ and Christmas*, in the course of which the Poem and four of the pictures were radically changed. Even the first and second editions of *Christ and Christmas*, published in the same month, December 1893, were not the same in that the second edition added to the back of the book the "Glossary" containing what Mrs. Eddy calls the Scriptural "basis" for the verses of the Poem (Chr. 55), as well as the last significant Scriptural verse succeeding the "Glossary" and Poem—this verse promising "power over the nations" and "the MORNING STAR" as a reward of faithfulness "unto the end." While seemingly less significant in point of thought-value, it might be added that the second edition was also distinguished from the first in that the pictures were in sepia instead of black.

Mrs. Eddy's counsel in regard to the proper use of the old editions of *Science and Health* from which *comparative* quotations are made, as well as her warning in regard to their *misuse*, has been undeviatingly observed in this book. That Mrs. Eddy approved the use of the old editions for their *comparative* value is attested by a very wonderful article, entitled "Science and Health," which appeared in the March 1891 *Journal*. This article highly commended the use of the old editions for their *comparative* value and urged students to keep them all as a valuable record of the progress of Christian Science, stating that they would prove to be a "*treasure trove* [*italics in original*]." Mrs. Eddy not only had this article published in the March 1891 *Journal* but had it republished twice in April of the same year (in the

sense that it was published once in the regular issue of the April *Journal* and again in a special reprint of that issue)—even in the June 1891 *Journal* it was stated that Mrs. Eddy was (still) urging its wide distribution; thus it had her full endorsement. Mrs. Eddy's clear directions for the use of the old editions were never retracted by her or by anyone else during her presence with us in person. These specific directions in regard to the *proper use* of the old editions are quoted in full elsewhere in this book.

In this connection it seems pertinent to say that not one of these old editions of *Science and Health* has ever been read by the author and that they have been used by her only for their *comparative* value, as commended by Mrs. Eddy. When quotations have been made therefrom to show their general *comparative* trend, the old markings of the books' previous owners have been exclusively used—thus building upon the actual Field's progressive spiritual perception of higher values. Only when the books have been *comparatively* used by the author at specific points of interest have quotations been directly sought *—however, this use has always been in line with Mrs. Eddy's commendation.

Mrs. Eddy's warning with reference to the *misuse* of the old editions of *Science and Health* is recorded in *Miscellany* and reads, "What I wrote on Christian Science some twenty-five years ago I do not consider a precedent † for a present student of this Science," p. 237. This statement confirms one of the major motives and trends of the comments in this book—that of clearly showing throughout the fallacy of studying the old editions for light above our present edition and the destructiveness of such forbidden practice.

Applying Mrs. Eddy's commendation of the *comparative* use of the old editions of *Science and Health* to *Christ and Christmas* to the end of showing its constructive progress, and in view of the inaccessibility of the old editions of *Christ and Christmas* to the Field generally (there having been but a thousand of each edition published), gratitude for the privilege of a full file of the changes in this perhaps least understood of Mrs. Eddy's writings has impelled the author to share them with the Field.

A further consideration prompting the presentation of this book

* Copyrights of these old editions of *Science and Health* from the first to the fiftieth have expired and cannot be renewed. Therefore they have been released to the world, as well as to Christian Scientists.

† "Precedent" is derived from *prae*, before, + *cedo*, go (see Standard Dictionary).

featuring the progressive changes in *Christ and Christmas* is the now dimness of the art symbols in the pictures. The reproduction of outworn plates has doubtless effected the conspicuous changes in *Christ and Christmas*, almost effacing in many instances the clear, positive form in which these pictures appeared in all of Mrs. Eddy's several revisions—including the last in 1910, the year she left us in person. In view of the weighty expectation Mrs. Eddy has placed upon "the art" of *Christ and Christmas*, the reconditioning of the plates (constituting a revision in itself) is a serious handicap to its understanding.

The reader's attention is called to an outstanding feature of this book of comments on *Christ and Christmas*, and that is, this book lays no premises—all of its premises having been laid in Mrs. Eddy's writings and in the Bible. Therefore it will be found to be a book of conclusions vibrating between "thus," "so," "hence," and "therefore," which so frequently introduce its inevitable deductions. The comments in it are wholly based upon the illustrated poem, *Christ and Christmas*, by Mary Baker Eddy, and are unintelligible without it.

Thus this book is lovingly dedicated to the fulfillment of Love's own purpose.

THE AUTHOR

N. B.—Italics which do not appear in the original are sometimes used in quotations—not for the purpose of implying undue emphasis, but for ready identification of the portion directly applicable to the point in hand. Also, citations of lines for references *do not always start a sentence*, for the same reason.

The abbreviations for the titles of Mrs. Eddy's writings (other than *Science and Health*, for which "S. & H." is used) are those used in the *Concordance to Miscellaneous Writings and Works other than Science and Health*.