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“Israel’s Return to Zion”

Jewish Christian Scientists in the United States, 1880-1925

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Abstract

After its founding by Mary Baker Eddy in 1879, the Christian Science movement quickly became for several decades the fastest-growing religious group in the United States. Among the adherents of this new religion were many people of Jewish background. This paper examines the history of this phenomenon, the reasons for Jewish conversion to Christian Science, Jewish testimonies of healing, and the first reliable statistics for Jewish members of local, or branch, Christian Science churches.

Introduction

As he was leaving a Christian Science service in New York City in the early 1950s, Albert Einstein remarked, “Do you realize what a wonderful thing you have?” (Peel 1987: 28, quoting Nay). What prompted Einstein’s surprising comment? Ellen Umansky maintains that the “impact of Christian Science on the American Jewish community was significant” (23), while John T. Appel, observes that the “conversion of sizeable numbers of American Jews to Christian Science is probably a ‘first’ in modern Jewish history” (100). This paper delves into the reasons for this phenomenon, scrutinizes hitherto unutilized primary sources, and provides the first analysis of Jewish membership of Christian Science churches in the United States.

In February 1905, the *Christian Science Journal* carried an article entitled “Israel’s Return to Zion” by Anna Friendlich (1869-1941), former Portland, Oregon English teacher, future Christian Science teacher (CSB), and daughter of a Russian-born rabbi. The essay discusses

why increasing numbers of American Jews were turning to Christian Science. According to Friendlich, Mary Baker Eddy, the leader of Christian Science, bypassed the standard Christian concept of a three-person Trinity, which enshrined Jesus as divine (in Jewish eyes thus violating the First Commandment), and concentrated on the Truth that existed since the beginning of time and is best expressed in Jesus the Christ. Friendlich exulted that a “Roseate morn dawns on Zion” (680).

Within a few weeks of the appearance of Friendlich’s article, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise (1874-1949), of Temple Beth Israel in Portland, Oregon gave a sermon entitled “Christian Science.” Although acknowledging that Eddy’s faith was a “vigorous though unphilosophically developed protest against materialism,” Wise characterized Christian Science as “Platonism . . . translated into the jargon of Eddyism.” For Wise, the new church was a “religion of chloroform,” a school of “self-anaesthetization” (49, 52, 59). Wise continued his opposition to Christian Science when he became rabbi of the Free Synagogue in New York, (16, 32-34); the Christian Science Publishing Society reissued Friendlich’s article as a free-standing tract. The noteworthy Jewish migration to Christian Science had begun.

Research Tools and Methodology

Of central importance to this paper is “The Ark: Christian Science Collection” software, a storehouse that offers complete scans of the monthly *Christian Science Journal*, 1883-1922, and the weekly *Christian Science Sentinel*, 1898-1922, and permits users to enter relevant terms such as “Jew,” “Jewish,” and “Judaism,” names of individual contributors, as well as names of Christian Science practitioners and branch (local) church officials. Additionally, previously untapped reminiscences and correspondence from the Mary Baker Eddy Collection at The Mother Church in Boston provide added richness and depth to this study.

To ascertain the occupations of writers of church periodicals and others mentioned in this study, ancestry.com, which has a scanned version of the manuscript United States Census, 1790-1940, was used. Occupational analysis of Jewish names was gleaned from membership rolls, letters, and applications of 32 branch or local Christian Science churches in the United States, 1884-1925 – the bulk from 1890 to 1910. Most rolls are from disbanded churches whose records are held by the Mary Baker Eddy Collection, but several rolls, including Atlanta, Savannah, Seattle, and Oakland are from active branches and are used by permission of their executive boards. The Website “JewishGen” (Jewish Genealogy) was essential to making educated guesses about whether certain names are Jewish.

Judaism in the Nineteenth Century

During the nineteenth century, “There were five major innovations [in Judaism]: Reform Judaism, the Ethical Culture movement, and Modern Orthodox Judaism in Germany and America, and, in eastern Europe, the *Musar* movement and *Habad* Hasidism” (Henize: 56). When two million Jews left central Europe and especially the Russian Empire from 1880-1920 to immigrate to the United States, they sought religious freedom and economic opportunity. In America, Judaism separated into three main groups: Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform (Diner; Sorin). The latter group was most directly impacted by Christian Science.

Reform Judaism began in Germany to “overturn a structure of authority and a way of life that had reigned for centuries” (Meyer: 226), but found its widest reception among German Jewish newcomers in the United States, with its hallowed concept of individuality. Thus, Reform Judaism constituted an “Americanized Judaism” (Meyer: 262). Rabbi Isaac M. Wise (1819-1900), founder of Reform Judaism in the United States and father of Stephen S. Wise, argued that “The Jew must become an American, in order to gain the proud self-consciousness of the free-born man.” Wise also dismissed the biblical miracles and championed the emancipation of Jewish women, noting that “American women have great influence in religious matters” (Wise: 216, 321; see also Temkin; Goldman).

Rise of Christian Science and Its Attraction of Jews

According to its founder, New Englander Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910), and codified in her textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (1875), Christian Science offered any adherent the promise of restored health, a new concept of the nature of “mankind,” and the possibility of prosperity. Beginning in the 1880s, the new religion spread rapidly across the United States, mainly through the efforts of dedicated female practitioners, or healers. This coincided with the great Jewish migration from Europe to American shores (on Christian Science, see Gottschalk 1973; Swensen 2010; Cunningham; and Hicks; on Eddy, see Gottschalk 2006; Gill; Peel 1966, 1971, and 1977).

Eddy writes, “The Christian . . . virtually unites with the Jew’s belief in one God, and recognizes that Jesus Christ is not God, as Jesus himself declared, but is the Son of God” (1934: 361). Yet Eddy referred to the “Rabbinical rabble” (1895) and states that the Jewish religion was “pedantic and void of healing power” (1934: 351).

Alfred G. Moses later maintained that, while *Science and Health* was “practically a Mosaic of Biblical quotations,” Eddy fell into the historic Christian pattern of “deprecating” Judaism as “narrow and legalistic” (10). Lara Vetter recently referred to Eddy’s “anti-Semitic beliefs” (50). These characterizations should be placed beside the recollections of David Gluck, a former rabbinical student in Hungary, who spent an hour discussing religion with Eddy in her Concord, New Hampshire home in 1892. “I went away from our talk uplifted, with great admiration for the lady’s understanding of the Jewish Scriptures.”

The first American Jew interested in Christian Science may have been Perley Green, a shoemaker who was in Eddy’s class of October 23, 1882, just after she had moved her activities from suburban Lynn, Massachusetts to Boston (Bates and Dittmore: 463). Ten years later, someone writing under the name Perlita (possibly related to Perley Green), penned “From Judaism to Christian Science,” the first article about Jewish conversion in the Christian Science periodicals. After enduring years of physical suffering, Perlita attended Eddy’s Church of Christ (Scientist) in Boston and emerged from “dark Egyptian bondage, into the glorious light of the sons of God, the TRUE [sic] Children of Israel” (Perlita: 68). In 1897, R. F. M. of Cincinnati, daughter of a Hungarian rabbi, wrote “Retro-Experience,” in which she recounted finding the religion of Eddy, “our dear Mother in Israel” (R.F.M.: 18).

Early in 1902, Jacob S. Shield, a clothing merchant in Warsaw, Indiana, claimed, “One of the most significant facts favorable to the rapid growth of Christian Science is that many Jewish people are accepting it for physical, moral, and spiritual healing” (687). The following

year, Isidor Jacobs, President of the California Canneries Company in San Francisco, wrote that “one of the most remarkable features of the rapid spread of Christian Science on this [Pacific] coast is the large number of Jewish people taking hold of this truth” (Jacobs). By 1915, Israel Gittelson could observe, “Whenever and wherever I attend a Christian Science service, I find a goodly number of Jews enthusiastically taking part in the services and testifying to the grand verity of this teaching . . .” (1006).

It is revealing to examine some of the many letters to Eddy and reminiscences about her from the growing number of Jewish converts. Mrs. H. Shornstein of New York related that her friend, Mrs. Amelia Fishberg, and her frightened children had been given shelter in 1881 from a storm in Eddy’s Lynn, Massachusetts home. As they were leaving, a policeman told them their hostess was “revealing the scriptures,” prompting Fishberg to attend Eddy’s services (Shornstein). In 1905, Mrs. Elizabeth Katz, wife of a shirt manufacturer in New York, sent Eddy a poem by Heinrich Heine, the great German Jewish poet. Silver miner Joseph A. Kauffman of Brigham Canyon, Utah sent Eddy a Socialist tract. One may assume that there were not too many Jewish Socialists in Eddy’s ranks! In 1906, former clerk and Christian Science practitioner, Bohemian born Charles I. Ohrenstein of Syracuse, New York, sent Eddy a letter from one S. P. Trood suggesting founding an “Educational Magazine,” which would “prove an excellent vehicle for the presentation of Christian Science in a fair and true light . . .” Less than two years after receiving this letter, Eddy founded the *Christian Science Monitor*.

As Christian Science sprouted with increasing rapidity across the American scene, the burgeoning Jewish community felt the simultaneous tugs of orthodoxy and innovation. Speaking in 1908 to the Conservative Union of Hebrew Congregations, New York financier Jacob Schiff asserted, “What is needed is a revival of Jewish traditions, and the instilling thereby of enthusiasm into the younger generation” (*New York Times*). Although Orthodox and Conservative Judaism in the United States were losing some ground to Reform Judaism, the latter felt especially threatened by defections to Christian Science. In 1911, B’nai B’rith in California excluded Jewish Christian Scientists from membership. The exodus to Eddy’s church so alarmed Reform rabbis that they drew a line in the sand at the 1912 meeting of the Central Conference of American [Reform] Rabbis (CCAR). “Any Jew subscribing to Christian Science teachings . . . would henceforth be regarded ‘as a non-Jew in faith.’” In succeeding years, various rabbis, including Stephen S. Wise, worked to “revitalize Reform Judaism by reemphasizing its notion of the Jewish mission” (Umansky: 7, 28).

One way that Jews could embrace a version of Eddy’s metaphysics without renouncing the name “Jewish” was through Jewish Science, conceived by Rabbi Alfred G. Moses and launched through his 1916 treatise, *Jewish Science*. According to Moses, “Many Jews are unaware of the fact that their religion teaches Faith-Cure, and unfortunately have turned to Christian Science to discover the truth of Divine Healing” (1). He went so far as to charge that Christian Science was simply “Judaism veneered with Christology” (Appel: 103). “Jews attracted to Jewish Science were looking for something quite different: a faith that spoke to their personal needs, that could bring them cheer, and hope” (Meyer: 260). Jewish Science was therefore a “direct counterattack against Christian Science” (Umansky: 40).

Jewish Science was soon led by Rabbi Morris Lichtenstein (1889-1938), who conducted services in New York City. In 1925, Lichtenstein published *Jewish Science and Health: Text Book of Jewish Science*. Some of the chapter titles show his debt to Christian Science: “The Divine Mind,” “Healing,” and “Immortality.” Although Lichtenstein maintained, in common with Eddy, that the “Divine Mind permeates all existence,” he departed from Christian Science when he stated, “There are two types of creation – human and divine” (7, 9). Eddy stressed that mankind is made in the image and likeness of God, but that the human existence we experience is neither divine nor real. Although Jewish Science still exists, it never attracted more than a few hundred followers (Appel: 112-15).

Some Jews who converted to Christian Science had been agnostics, some had been mildly anti-Christian, while others had harbored a great fear of and an aversion toward Jesus and his followers. Mrs. A. L. Shocken of San Francisco, wife of a cigar retailer, had been “somewhat skeptical about Christian Science,” while I. T. Kahn of Chicago had previously thought Jesus was a “very moral teacher with impossible ideals, and a very successful deceiver.” As Sophie L. Newman, wife of a San Francisco grocer, exclaimed, “Being reared in the Jewish faith I had seemingly a huge mountain of prejudice, hatred, and anger to overcome.” Anna Friendlich maintained that the Jew’s “own limitations of prejudice and race feeling, the scars of his long, sad experience, these may be removed” (675). About half of the Jewish Christian Scientists were of Germanic origin, and the others were of eastern European stock.

Reasons for Jewish Embrace of Christian Science

According to Friendlich, the “Jewish seeker finds in Christian Science an interpretation of the teachings of Jesus which is free from many of the conceptions that have heretofore been so offensive to him.” Friendlich lists four reasons why Jews accepted Christian Science: 1) replacement of a “man-like God” with one made in “His image and likeness;” 2) redefinition of the Trinity as “Life, Truth, and Love,” coupled with the notion that Jesus was not God but instead the “highest manifestation of the Divine nature known to humanity;” 3) belief in the Immaculate Conception and Mary as “heaven-inspired with mighty revelation;” and 4) acceptance of “vicarious atonement” which is only available through the “individual’s own repentance and reformation,” with the life of Jesus as a guide. The third part of her argument might have posed difficulties for a person with Jewish background (676-77).

One of the most compelling reasons for Jews to take up the study of Christian Science was the second plank of Friendlich’s platform: the fact that Eddy did not subscribe to the divinity of Jesus. The concept of Jesus as God had long repelled Jews, who felt this was a violation of the First Commandment, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” Millicent Hyman, daughter of a “deeply religious orthodox Jewess,” wrote, “I thank God with the upmost sincerity for the most gracious gift of Christian Science. It is the impersonal Messiah of Judaism, the fulfillment of Judaism’s every promise” (545, 548). That is, Eddy showed that Jesus best embodied the Christ, or Messiah, available to comfort humanity since the beginning of time.

There were other reasons Jews felt drawn to Christian Science. As Umansky observes, “Like most non-Jews who joined Christian Science, Jews often found themselves initially

attracted to it because of its promise of health, peace, and comfort.” Other drawing cards for Jewish conversion included the possibility of “socially elevating themselves” into American society, and being impressed with the “newness” of Christian Science. “While undoubtedly the initial attraction of hundreds, if not thousands, of Jews to Christian Science was physical,” Umansky states, “what Christian Science offered was spiritual sustenance, only part of which was relief from physical pain” (8, 12, 13, 14-15).

Despite the resolution of the CCAR, many Jewish people who became Christian Scientists maintained they had not renounced Judaism. Married to a Milwaukee, Wisconsin insurance agent, Mrs. Joseph Herzberg, rejoiced that her new faith had made her a “better Jewess.” Mrs. Clara Pake of Montgomery, Alabama, wife of a real estate dealer, observed, “To the true Jewish heart the words *Shama Ysroael* are sacred, the Hebrew word *Shama* meaning ‘to hearken.’ I am most grateful that I can say with the psalmist, ‘He shall call upon me, and I will answer him.’” For bookkeeper Mrs. Minnie Goldsman of Boston, “Jesus was the best Jew who ever lived.”

Testimonies of Healing

There are at least 80 testimonies of healing from people who mention Jewish backgrounds in the monthly *Christian Science Journal*, 1883-1922, and weekly *Christian Science Sentinel*, 1898-1922. Striking is that about half of the testimonial writers of Jewish background came into Christian Science because of nervous ailments, while 13% of all New Yorkers came into the movement primarily to overcome problems of a nervous nature. Many Jewish converts also came as a result of physical illness, and others arrived after a spiritual search. “For many Jews,” writes Umansky, “the major allure of Christian Science lay in its seeming ability to heal an illness” (11; on testimonies of healing, see Hansen: 299-377; Peel 1987; Gottschalk 2006: 331-37; England; Swensen 2003: 243-45; 2010: para. 15-17; 2011: 120; Curtis). Meyer refers to the “flow of troubled Jews into Christian Science” (314).

Perhaps because of their history of persecution, many Jewish people were burdened by nervous problems. As cashier Mrs. Bertha Friedman of Kansas City, Missouri testified, “The desire to be healed of nervous trouble is what first brought me into Christian Science.” Claudia Marx of Denver, whose husband was a tailor, had been a “sad, anxious, troubled woman,” but wrote that taking up the study of Christian Science brought her “health and peace.” Mrs. H. Astrowski of Chicago had experienced a “general breakdown, physical and mental,” but explained that through Christian Science was “enjoying the best of health, and am perfectly contented.” Other testimonies mentioned a combination of nervous and physical troubles, such as Emil Rosenthal of Chicago, who felt he was freed from “distressing nervous and stomach troubles.”

Other testimonies recounted healings of physical ailments. Samuel Kaufman of Fort Smith, Arkansas was forced to give up his business because of “inaction of the brain,” but affirmed that he recovered his faculties through studying Christian Science. Emanuel Weil of Chicago asserted that he was freed from varicose veins, which had forced him to wear “rubber stockings” for many years. As grateful as he was for the physical healing, Weil spoke for many when he declared that he was even more thankful for the “spiritual awakening” and “moral regeneration” that ensued. One practitioner wrote about visits to the “thickly populated Hebrew district of the lower East Side” of New York City, where the “gospel of

this new-old Truth” apparently healed many people of ailments ranging from the “last stages of consumption” to “cancer of the breast” (S. B. K.).

Perhaps the longest Jewish testimony is that of noted British-born New York playwright Charles Klein (1867-1915). Observing that his life had previously been “one round of mingled pleasure, pain, work, play, enjoyment, misery, health, and sickness,” Klein was advised to try Christian Science. Initially he thought of *Science and Health* as a “sort of ethical culture handbook.” After overcoming his objections to the word Christian and his concept of God as a “hypothetical abstraction,” he rejoiced that he was healed of “stomach troubles which I had from childhood, dyspepsia, nervous irritability, heart, gastric, and bowel ailments.” He then found the Bible, which had been “utterly unintelligible to me,” was now an open book.

Two Early Jewish Teachers of Christian Science

Unusual and challenging experiences awaited Abraham W. Hertzka (b. 1878) of Nashville, Tennessee, who became a Christian Science practitioner in Portland, Oregon in 1898. Responding to a call from Mrs. Jacob Frye, a woman of mixed Indian and white parentage from Wedderburn on the isolated south west Oregon coast, Hertzka arrived in the middle of the night after a perilous journey on horseback down the rugged Rogue River, marveling at the phosphorous glow on the ocean. One of cases he treated was the six-year-old child of Hannah Moore, who was blind and wore an Indian death mask, but who received his sight and exclaimed that people were as “big as houses.” Hertzka established Christian Science services at Wedderburn and travelled as far south as Crescent City, California doing healing. He later became a CSB, or teacher of Christian Science, and was in remarkable health when interviewed in 1968 by the author of this paper¹ (Hertzka 1901, 1968; Moore; Wilson; Swensen 1969: 29-30, 88-93).

An unusual conversion in 1899 was that of German-born Orthodox Rabbi Max Wertheimer (b. 1863) of Dayton, Ohio, who enthusiastically embraced Eddy’s faith, established a close relationship with her, and briefly became a teacher of Christian Science. In remarks at First Church of Christ, Scientist, Dayton, Wertheimer exulted that Eddy had “rediscovered what was lost, forgotten, or stifled for centuries,” concluding that “upon this Rock I stand and shall remain standing (1900b). At Eddy’s behest, Wertheimer took the Normal Class with noted Christian Science teacher and lecturer Edward Kimball au gratis in Boston in both 1900 and 1901, becoming a CSB in Dayton. Kimball reported to Eddy that Wertheimer was “flawed in utterance,” but that he had “assimilated much of the teaching.”²

Wertheimer soon showed signs of disillusionment, complaining to Eddy that “some of the higher Christian Scientists are afflicted with that shocking pest, called professional jealousy” (1900a). Calvin Frye, Eddy’s secretary, wrote to Kimball that such criticism “shows very bad taste especially until after he has demonstrated a success for himself as a Christian

¹ Christian Scientists take a two-week course entitled “Class Instruction” from a Teacher of Christian Science, or CSB. Practitioners who become teachers must take a Normal Course at The Mother Church in Boston.

² In 1898 Eddy created the Christian Science Board of Lectureship to help correct public misconceptions of the faith.

Scientist.” Wertheimer later wrote, “God makes something of the blood [sin-offering]. Mrs. Eddy says ‘that blood is a belief of mortal mind; it is error, delusion; it is nothing’” (1934: 40). In 1904, he became a Southern Baptist minister.

Statistics for Early Jewish Christian Scientists

Assumptions about the number of Jews who turned to Christian Science vary widely. According to John J. Appel, “Estimates concerning the number of Jews-turned-Christian Scientists range from a high of 200,000 to a low of six thousand Jews out of some three million in 1912” (101). One writer claimed that there were 60,000 Jewish Christian Scientists in New York City alone. As recently as 2007, Umansky wrote, “In short, there seem to be no reliable statistics concerning the number of Jews who took an active interest in, much less joined, Christian Science” (22).

Utilizing the membership roll books, letters, and applications of 32 Christian Science branch churches (1884-1925),³ this paper represents the first effort to determine more reliable statistics. One can make educated guesses about which individuals were Jewish, but some names, such as Brown, Klein, Neuman or Neumann, Shafer, and Wolf may be either Jewish or Gentile. Further, some people of Jewish heritage, as did many immigrants, may have changed or Americanized their names, making it virtually impossible to identify formerly Jewish members. For instance, unless Jacob Shield had identified himself as Jewish in articles for the Christian Science periodicals, it would have been difficult and time-consuming to ascertain if he was of Jewish heritage.

The 17 branches with roll books dating from 1887-1921 showed 5295 members, of whom 345 (6.5%) appear to have Jewish names. The percentage of Jewish members ranged from a high of 10.4% in Third Church of Christ, Scientist, Chicago (1898-1908) and almost 9% in Second Church, New York (1891-1906) to 5.4% in First Church, Salt Lake City (1910) and 3.76% in First Church, Oakland, California, and a low of 1.2% for First Church, Atlanta (1901). There were also six branches that sent Eddy letters containing members’ names (Swensen 2011: Tables 1-6). Many Jewish members were married to or were themselves small proprietors, clerks, artisans, and skilled laborers. This partially corrects the assumption that “most of the Jews who turned to Christian Science were urban and middle- to upper-middle class” (Umansky: 26).

Another challenge arose when looking through the membership lists that churches and societies sent to The Mother Church after 1910. One of the questions was about previous religious affiliation; not one of the 362 members in those applications, 1911-1925, listed previous affiliation as Jewish. Also, just because a wife had a Jewish-sounding last name was no guarantee that she was Jewish. Both railroad clerk S. K. Nussbaum and his wife Ethlynn of First Church, Denison, Texas, 1917, identified themselves as former Baptists. Perhaps they had been Jewish, but had become Baptists on the road to embracing Christian Science. It may also be true that some former Jews may have listed “no religion” or some Protestant church, to avoid being labeled as Jewish.

³ Included are about 90 names, from 1884 to 1888, from the roll of the “Church of 1879,” the precursor of The Mother Church, The First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston (see Swensen 2011: 121).

There were 362 members listed in the application forms submitted by nine branch churches and societies for 1911-1925. These churches and societies ranged from Princeton, New Jersey to Daytona, Florida, to Deer Lodge, Montana. Fourth Church, Milwaukee listed names such as Ferber, Graetz, and Zinn as “Luthern [sic].” Only Sixth Church, Los Angeles (1911) did not provide any indication of previous religious affiliation, but did show Jewish-sounding names such as Klein, Weir, and Schaeffer. Despite the absence of any designation as Jewish, I have identified 17 possible Jewish names out of 362, or 4.8% (Swensen 2011: n. 39, Table 6).

Taken together, the church rolls, letters, and applications contain 5652 names, 1884-1925, with 362 possible Jewish names, which comes to 6.4% nationally (Swensen 2011: Tables 1-3). Considering that some of these names were not Jewish, it is safe to estimate that about 5% of the Christian Science movement were people with Jewish heritage. If one looks at the figures of membership in the United States for 1906 (84,000) and 1926 (202,000), it is possible to arrive at estimates of 5,952 Jewish members for 1906 and slightly more than 10,000 for 1926 (United States, Bureau of the Census 1894: 39; 1910 v.1: 385, 524-25; 1926 v.2: 350). The number of Jews in the Christian Science ranks was about 10% in New York and Chicago, perhaps approaching 15% or even 20% in certain branch churches (see Appel: 120).

Some Post-1925 Developments

Christian Science was the fastest-growing religion in the United States between 1890 and 1926 and just barely fell to second-place in the 1936 religious census. Although this study concludes with 1925, the year that Lichtenstein’s *Jewish Science and Health* appeared, it is enticing for further research to note examples of two influential Jews who studied Christian Science in the following decades.

According to Lara Vetter, Jewish poetess Mina Loy (1882-1966) was a committed Christian Scientist for most of her adult life. For Vetter, “it is the idealist philosophy behind Christian Science . . . that provides the theoretical basis for her meditations on race and evolution.” Vetter writes, “Loy’s biographer, Carolyn Burke, notes the intense but transitory interest in Christian Science among the transatlantic literati of the early twentieth century, particularly Jews like Gertrude and Leo Stein, who attended Christian Science services in Florence” (49-50).

Albert Einstein (1879-1955) wrote, “I want to know how God created this world. I am not interested in this or that phenomenon, in the spectrum of this or that element. I want to know his thoughts. The rest are details” (202). Einstein regularly visited the Christian Science Reading Room in Princeton, New Jersey in the early 1950s (Keyston: 189, citing incorrect source). After attending a Wednesday noon testimony meeting at Fifth Church of Christ, Scientist, New York, in 1953, he remarked to George Nay, a Christian Science lecturer and practitioner, “Do you realize what a wonderful thing you have?” (Peel 1987: 28). One could extrapolate much from this comment, especially Einstein’s possible opinion that the Christian Scientists were under-utilizing Eddy’s religious system. It is significant that the person who was arguably the most influential (secular) Jew of the twentieth century investigated Christian Science. Although Einstein’s longtime secretary, Helen Dukas, denied

that the great physicist ever had an interest in Christian Science, he may simply not have shared his feelings with anyone (Armstrong).

Conclusion

Christian Science presented a path to life that seemed logical for thousands of Jews. Eddy rejected the traditional Christian concept of Jesus as God, characterizing him instead as a great teacher and healer who best embodied the eternal Christ, the “divine manifestation of God, which comes to the flesh to destroy incarnate error” (Eddy 1934: 583). For Jewish seekers, the new faith offered a non-traditional view of Jesus, restored physical and mental health, a new outlook on life, relative gender equality, and the possibility of acceptance in American society.

How welcome were Jews in the Christian Science ranks? Former Christian Science practitioner and church critic Arthur Corey wrote in the 1960s, “Jews are definitely unwelcome among orthodox Christian Scientists” (Appel: 102). The many Jews who converted to Christian Science belie this statement, although many years ago this writer witnessed a Jewish woman sobbing at a Christmas party because her fellow church members did not accept her. Nevertheless, many Jews became practitioners and teachers, while Samuel Greene, Anna E. Herzog, Herschel P. Nunn, Jules Cern, and Theodore Wallach served as lecturers.

It was ironic and possibly comforting to Christian Scientists that Jewish leaders, including Rabbis Alfred Moses and Stephen S. Wise and the CCAR, labeled Eddy’s faith as unalterably Christian, since many Protestant and some Catholic clergymen derided the new faith as un-Christian. On this essential point there was agreement between Jewish and Christian Science thinkers. Considering the decline of the Christian Science movement since World War II, it is noteworthy that Eddy’s faith once drew a sizable number of Jewish converts and raised alarm bells in the Jewish community.

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