

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT – A CHRISTIAN SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE

"Thou shalt not kill"

INTRODUCTION

Christ Jesus did not seem to spend a lot of his time preaching *"Thou shalt not kill."* Instead, he went right to the root of the problem and pulled it out of the soil of material thinking. We read in his Sermon on the Mount:

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." (Matthew 5:21-22)

Self-righteousness, self-will, self-love, anger, and prejudice are what Jesus condemned. These loveless, nonspiritual attitudes toward God's children – our brothers and sisters – are the killers. An outward murder is the result of an inner motive, as our courts of law recognize. It is the inner motive, the heart of man, that breaks the Sixth Commandment. Murder is the un-restrained physical expression of qualities such as hate, fear, envy, jealousy, lust, or greed. In the textbook of Christian Science, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, the author, Mary Baker Eddy, writes:

"Our courts recognize evidence to prove the motive as well as the commission of a crime. Is it not clear that the human mind must move the body to a wicked act? Is not mortal mind the murderer? The hands, without mortal mind to direct them, could not commit a murder."

"Courts and juries judge and sentence mortals in order to restrain crime, to prevent deeds of violence or to punish them. To say that these tribunals have no jurisdiction over the carnal or mortal mind, would be to contradict precedent and to admit that the power of human law is restricted to matter, while mortal mind, evil, which is the real outlaw, defies justice and is recommended to mercy. Can matter commit a crime? Can matter be punished? Can you separate the mentality from the body over which courts hold jurisdiction? Mortal mind, not matter, is the criminal in every case; and human law rightly estimates crime, and courts reasonably pass sentence, according to the motive." (S&H 105:3-15)

The term "mortal mind" is meant to convey what the Apostle Paul called the "carnal mind." In Christian Science, it is the term for the beliefs of material sense as opposed to the spiritual sense of man bestowed by his Creator. Mortal mind is not part of God's creation – His spiritual ideas – but is a false negative sense of what is divinely real and positive. It is the source of evil motives as opposed to the natural graces of love that spring from man's spiritual identity. Mrs. Eddy writes:

"As of old, evil still charges the spiritual idea with error's own nature and methods. This malicious animal instinct, of which the dragon is the type, incites mortals to kill morally and

physically even their fellow-mortals, and worse still, to charge the innocent with the crime. This last infirmity of sin will sink its perpetrator into a night without a star.” (S&H 563:3-9)

Biblical Background:

The Commandment “*Thou shalt not kill,*” has evolved in its meaning over the centuries. As civilized society has developed morally and spiritually, it has gained new perspectives of this Law that were not necessarily shared by the nation of Israel at the time of Moses. One Bible commentary describes what the Sixth Commandment meant to the early Hebrews:

“The commandment is concerned with the protection of human life within the community of Israel, against destruction by fellow Israelites. The verb is not limited to murder in the criminal sense and may be used of unpremeditated killing (Deut. 4:42). It forbids all killing not explicitly authorized. This means that in Israelite society it did not forbid the slaying of animals, capital punishment, or the killing of enemies in war. It had no direct bearing, either, on suicide.” (The Interpreter’s Bible, Volume 1, pg 986)

For a commentary on the Sixth Commandment that includes information on how the Jewish nation applied it to their system of justice, you might wish to read William Barclay’s book on “*The Ten Commandments,*” originally published in 1973, and republished in 1998 by Westminster John Knox Press. Here are a few citations from his 31 page essay on the Sixth Commandment:

“The Hebrew verb implies . . . ‘violent and unauthorized killing,’ not killing in general.” (page 52)

“. . . the real reason for the commandment, as the Bible sees it, is the story of the words of God to Noah after the flood: ‘Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image.’ (Gen. 9:6) Since man is made in the image of God, then the taking of a single life is the destruction of the most precious and the most holy thing in the world.” (pg. 52)

“Within the Jewish legal system it was never even suggested that this commandment forbade what may be called judicial killing.” (pg. 53)

“Jewish law made special provisions for what might be called non-deliberate killing, killing which happened by accident, or as the result of a blow or an attack which was not meant to kill. For men involved in this, six cities of refuge were set apart to which they might flee if they killed ‘without intent,’ but, if the killer was not inside one of these cities of refuge, the avenger of blood might take his life. (Numbers 35:9-28)” (pg. 53)

Barclay’s essay describes the various ways of carrying out judicial death sentences, such as stoning, burning, beheading, and strangling, but then notes:

“We must go on to see how the mercy of Jewish law in fact made it next to impossible to carry out the death penalty at all.” (pg. 55)

“The all-important thing was the motive. If it was deliberate killing, *coming from acknowledged hatred, then the killer’s life was forfeit.*” (pg. 56)

“No man could be condemned on any evidence less than that of two *eye-witnesses.* *Circumstantial evidence was not valid in a Jewish court.*” (pg. 56)

The rest of Barclay’s essay offers information, history, and opinion on such subjects as capital punishment, euthanasia, suicide, and “just wars,” all of which he personally renounces as anti-Christian.

The Old Testament offers a number of stories and lessons on the consequences of breaking the Sixth Commandment. A good one to study is the life of David. Here is a man who killed for both “just” reasons and very wrong reasons, yet at times showed great mercy when others might have taken revenge. You can read about David in the books of I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, and I and II Chronicles. Other suggestions for Bible stories to study relating to “Thou shalt not kill,” will be found in the section on “Teaching the Sixth Commandment to Children,” (coming up in a later post).

Jesus and the Sixth Commandment:

Jesus brought fresh inspiration and spiritual insight to the all of the Ten Commandments, which, over the centuries since Moses, had become weighed down with burdensome and endless rules. Harsh punishments were meted out by hypocritical Pharisees and others authorized to administer the Jewish law. As we read at the opening of this essay, Jesus warned his followers not of killing, but of anger and self-righteousness. But that did not mean Jesus was going to let people ignore the original intent of the Commandments. Jesus said: “*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*” (Matt. 5:17)

As with all his teachings, Jesus demonstrated these laws of God for his followers. With gentle exhortations, as well as strong rebukes, he set forth the requirements for those who would be called Christians. These included the qualities and actions that would prevent killing.

In the Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught us to be merciful and to be peacemakers, promising the rewards of mercy for ourselves, and the honor of being called God’s child. He also said in the Sermon:

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.” (Matthew 5:38-39)

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Matthew 5:43-45)

In the Lord's Prayer, he urged us to pray daily to forgive those who may owe us something, and to pray to be delivered from the temptations of evil. By forgiving others, rather than seeking so-called justice for "debts" not paid, and by turning away from the temptations of human will, we can help put out the fires of anger, greed, or fear that would burst into acts of murder – physical or mental.

"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)

Could not the "thief" be the carnal, or mortal, mind that Paul spoke of, which seems to be the avenue for evil thoughts and motives? Jesus is here telling us he has brought the good news that it is not God's will that anyone should have their life destroyed or depleted.

In spite of his divine source, Jesus had a human side which also struggled briefly with a personal will. Self-will is often the engine that drives us to murder, and it needs to be challenged and subdued. In the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus had his greatest war to wage with self-will on the night of his arrest, Jesus asked God to "remove this cup." Mrs. Eddy comments on his victory over self:

"When the human element in him struggled with the divine, our great Teacher said: 'Not my will, but Thine, be done!' — that is, Let not the flesh, but the Spirit, be represented in me. This is the new understanding of spiritual Love. It gives all for Christ, or Truth. It blesses its enemies, heals the sick, casts out error, raises the dead from trespasses and sins, and preaches the gospel to the poor, the meek in heart." (S&H 18)

This "new understanding of spiritual Love" is what will eventually dissolve all desire to murder, to hate, to be angry, and to be unforgiving. Love will destroy the fear that others might harm us. Mrs. Eddy writes: *"Clad in the panoply of Love, human hatred cannot reach you." (S&H 571:18-19)*

Following our Master, Christ Jesus, we will see that Truth, God, is all we need, whether to defend ourselves from others, or to prevent ourselves from acting aggressively or violently:

"Judas had the world's weapons. Jesus had not one of them, and chose not the world's means of defence. 'He opened not his mouth.' The great demonstrator of Truth and Love was silent before envy and hate. Peter would have smitten the enemies of his Master, but Jesus forbade him, thus rebuking resentment or animal courage. He said: 'Put up thy sword.'" (S&H 48:17)

What gave Jesus such courage? Why did he not take revenge on those who would harm him? Jesus knew that life is eternal, that it can never be destroyed, no matter what the material senses, or mortal mind, would claim.

"'This is life eternal,' says Jesus, — is, not shall be; and then he defines everlasting life as a present knowledge of his Father and of himself, — the knowledge of Love, Truth, and Life. 'This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.' The Scriptures say, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth

out of the mouth of God, ' showing that Truth is the actual life of man; but mankind objects to making this teaching practical.' (S&H 410:4-13)

As mentioned earlier, Jesus provided a new and improved version of the Commandments. His life provided a model for how to live them. Mrs. Eddy describes it this way, especially as it relates to so-called justified killing:

"Rabbi and priest taught the Mosaic law, which said: 'An eye for an eye,' and 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.' Not so did Jesus, the new executor for God, present the divine law of Love, which blesses even those that curse it.

"As the individual ideal of Truth, Christ Jesus came to rebuke rabbinical error and all sin, sickness, and death, — to point out the way of Truth and Life. This ideal was demonstrated throughout the whole earthly career of Jesus, showing the difference between the offspring of Soul and of material sense, of Truth and of error." (S&H 14-25)

At the end of this earthly career, Jesus demonstrated how his refusal to call down "legions of angels" to assist him escape his ordeal of crucifixion, and his forgiveness of all who played a role in this crime, would lead to his resurrection. This is what it means to be a follower of Christ: complete self-abnegation in the service of God and mankind. We are to bless and help reform those who fall prey to the sin of hate, anger, greed, and murder. We are to also help those who may be suffering from depression or mental illness that would prevent them from thinking rationally about suicide or murder. If we are not in a position to offer practical help, we must at least show mercy for their struggles. We are to champion Love, not war or revenge.

This is not to say that kind of universal brotherly love is easy. It takes self-sacrifice and commitment to discipline those animal instincts which mortals wrestle with, that would cause us to react in fear and anger. In spite of his teachings and examples of mercy, Jesus had to rebuke his own disciples when they thoughtlessly forgot about the law of the Sixth Commandment. For instance, we read this episode in Luke:

"And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village." (Luke 9:51-56)

Jesus also had to rebuke Peter when he slashed off the ear of the high priest's servant who had come with the soldiers to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Peter had already been given the lesson he needed to use in this moment, as we read in Matthew:

“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.” (Matt. 18:21-22)

It is said that the number seven in the Bible symbolizes “completeness,” in which case Jesus is telling Peter, and us, that we must always forgive. We must always restrain ourselves from using violence to get even or harm another.

Christian Science and the Sixth Commandment:

Holding before us this ideal of forgiveness as taught by Jesus, how could Christians ever justify killing? Alas, there are many issues relating to “killing” that the world still struggles with:

- War
- Suicide
- Abortion
- Genocide
- Capital punishment
- Euthanasia or mercy killing
- Killing in self-defense or protection of others
- Driving while under influence of alcohol, drugs, or anger

As mankind grapples with how to apply the Sixth Commandment to these issues, some of which may seem justified at times, we must never lose sight of the original ideal put forth by God to Moses, and then by Jesus in his teachings of mercy and self-sacrifice. Simply put: *Thou shalt not kill*. One day, humanity will have grown spiritually to the place where there is no longer a need to justify any form of killing. Yielding to God’s will, we will find a better way to peace and harmony.

We are taught in Christian Science to literally obey the Sixth Commandment. How this is applied in today’s society to the various issues listed above is something each individual must pray about and demonstrate on his or her own. **There is no official church stand on political and social issues.** However, Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science, had strong views about war, in particular, as we shall see in upcoming citations.

The main thrust of Mrs. Eddy’s teachings regarding “Thou shalt not kill,” is the spirit of this law: We must destroy the hate and anger which erupt in thoughts and acts of violence. There are many ways to kill morally and spiritually, in addition to physically. It is not enough to simply resist physically killing someone, if we are assassinating his or her character in our conscience. We should also resist killing reputations, opportunities, livelihoods, worthy goals, or anything that rightfully belongs to another. We do not control or manipulate the lives of others for personal power. We do not break or kill the “spirit” of anyone, especially children.

The world needs to grow into the spiritual maturity which will fulfill the Sixth Commandment. If someone stands in the way of what we think we want, we must learn to bow in humility to God's will, and wait for the proper flow of events that will bless everyone. We must recognize the power of Love in the law behind the Golden Rule. Christian Science gives us the mental tools to work with.

For a complete presentation of Christian Science, I recommend you read Mrs. Eddy's primary work, *"Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures."* This is necessary to understand the basis upon which the citations and statements in this essay are based.

What does Christian Science bring to an understanding of the Sixth Commandment that is unique?

Christian Science, discovered by Mary Baker Eddy in 1866, reveals the truth about God and man that has been demonstrated by thousands of spiritual healings. Research within the published testimonies of healings will show that many people have found Christian Science an aid in forestalling violence or recovering from the effects of it. Many have been healed of the hate and anger which could have exploded into harmful acts. People in wartime have been protected by an understanding of the ever-presence of divine Life and Truth and Love.

One truth that Christian Science proves is that God is infinite Spirit and is perfect, and man, His "image and likeness" (as the Bible teaches), is therefore spiritually perfect. God's creation is therefore spiritual only, leaving what is called "matter" to have no real substance, life, or intelligence, except in the realm of mortal mind beliefs and illusions. Therefore, in spiritual reality (the only reality) man cannot kill or be killed. While that statement may seem delusional to those unfamiliar with how Christian Science works, it is the basis for demonstrating God's power over evil.

Also, according to Christian Science, any attempt by a mortal to kill will be proven ineffective, since man never really dies. Life is eternal, because God is eternal. Man reflects this eternal Life as God's "image and likeness." If, from humanity's earthly point-of-view, a loved one is killed, we can take comfort in the fact that God has preserved his or her life, in spite of what we seem to experience. This may be a tough fact to grasp, but many people have been healed of severe grief by accepting that Life is eternal. Jesus proved this for all time through his resurrection from the grave and his ascension above all material beliefs. Ultimately, mankind will be able to prove this as well. *"Thou shalt not kill"* means also *"Thou cannot kill."*

One unique Christian Science interpretation of the Sixth Commandment can be found in Gilbert Carpenter's book *"Mary Baker Eddy: Her Spiritual Precepts, Volume IV."* In it he writes: *"Once Mrs. Eddy interpreted the Commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill, ' as ' . . . shall not kill our insight into spiritual things -- it would be the commission of the greatest sin, to kill the spiritual insight.'"*

The whole of Christian Science itself is unique to other teachings and systems, not just in its Founder's interpretations of the Commandments and other Bible verses. Mrs. Eddy explains:

"What is the cardinal point of the difference in my metaphysical system? This: that by knowing the unreality of disease, sin, and death, you demonstrate the allness of God. This difference wholly separates my system from all others. The reality of these so-called existences I deny, because they are not to be found in God, and this system is built on Him as the sole cause. It would be difficult to name any previous teachers, save Jesus and his apostles, who have thus taught." (Un. 9:27)

Does God cause death?

People often suggest that someone's death may be "God's will." This is not a teaching of Christian Science. God is Love and Love never kills. We read in *Science and Health*:

"God, divine good, does not kill a man in order to give him eternal Life, for God alone is man's life. God is at once the centre and circumference of being. It is evil that dies; good dies not." (S&H 203:31)

"Does God send sickness, giving the mother her child for the brief space of a few years and then taking it away by death? Is God creating anew what He has already created? The Scriptures are definite on this point, declaring that His work was finished, nothing is new to God, and that it was good.

"Can there be any birth or death for man, the spiritual image and likeness of God? Instead of God sending sickness and death, He destroys them, and brings to light immortality. Omnipotent and infinite Mind made all and includes all. This Mind does not make mistakes and subsequently correct them. God does not cause man to sin, to be sick, or to die." (S&H 206:19-31)

"In one sense God is identical with nature, but this nature is spiritual and is not expressed in matter. The lawgiver, whose lightning palsies or prostrates in death the child at prayer, is not the divine ideal of omnipresent Love. God is natural good, and is represented only by the idea of goodness; while evil should be regarded as unnatural, because it is opposed to the nature of Spirit, God." (S&H 119:17-24)

What is "death" according to the teachings of Christian Science?

As we learn in Christian Science, man is more than what he appears to be to the five physical senses. He is not mortal, but has a spiritual identity. We can also say of death that it is not what it appears to be to the physical senses. Life cannot be destroyed by death, even though it seems that way to those experiencing it from a mortal viewpoint. Death is a mortal belief to be destroyed by spiritual understanding, just as sin, sickness, and disease are. Jesus commanded that his followers "raise the dead." Christian Science shows us how to do that.

The Christian Science textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, by Mary Baker Eddy, explains and develops this concept much better than can be done in this short space, but here are a few citations that touch upon the concept of death. Each one tackles the beliefs of death from different angles, and require careful study to understand.

Mary Baker Eddy responds to this question by a reader:

“After the change called death takes place, do we meet those gone before? — or does life continue in thought only as in a dream?”

“Man is not annihilated, nor does he lose his identity, by passing through the belief called death. After the momentary belief of dying passes from mortal mind, this mind is still in a conscious state of existence; and the individual has but passed through a moment of extreme mortal fear, to awaken with thoughts, and being, as material as before. Science and Health clearly states that spiritualization of thought is not attained by the death of the body, but by a conscious union with God. When we shall have passed the ordeal called death, or destroyed this last enemy, and shall have come upon the same plane of conscious existence with those gone before, then we shall be able to communicate with and to recognize them.

“If, before the change whereby we meet the dear departed, our life-work proves to have been well done, we shall not have to repeat it; but our joys and means of advancing will be proportionately increased.

“The difference between a belief of material existence and the spiritual fact of Life is, that the former is a dream and unreal, while the latter is real and eternal. Only as we understand God, and learn that good, not evil, lives and is immortal, that immortality exists only in spiritual perfection, shall we drop our false sense of Life in sin or sense material, and recognize a better state of existence.” (Mis. 42)

“DEATH. An illusion, the lie of life in matter; the unreal and untrue; the opposite of Life . . . Matter has no life, hence it has no real existence. Mind is immortal. The flesh, warring against Spirit; that which frets itself free from one belief only to be fettered by another, until every belief of life where Life is not yields to eternal Life. Any material evidence of death is false, for it contradicts the spiritual facts of being.” (S&H 584:9-16)

“Matter has no life to lose, and Spirit never dies. A partnership of mind with matter would ignore omnipresent and omnipotent Mind. This shows that matter did not originate in God, Spirit, and is not eternal. Therefore matter is neither substantial, living, nor intelligent. The starting-point of divine Science is that God, Spirit, is All-in-all, and that there is no other might nor Mind, — that God is Love, and therefore He is divine Principle.” (S&H 275:1-9)

“Man in the likeness of God as revealed in Science cannot help being immortal. Though the grass seemeth to wither and the flower to fade, they reappear. Erase the figures which express number, silence the tones of music, give to the worms the body called man, and yet the producing, governing, divine Principle lives on, — in the case of man as truly as in the case of numbers and of music, — despite the so-called laws of matter, which define man as mortal. Though the inharmony resulting from material sense hides the harmony of Science, inharmony cannot destroy the divine Principle of Science. In Science, man's immortality depends upon that of God, good, and follows as a necessary consequence of the immortality of good.” (S&H 81:17-30)

“The fact that the Christ, or Truth, overcame and still overcomes death proves the "king of terrors" to be but a mortal belief, or error, which Truth destroys with the spiritual evidences of Life; and this shows that what appears to the senses to be death is but a mortal illusion, for to the real man and the real universe there is no death-process.

“The belief that matter has life results, by the universal law of mortal mind, in a belief in death. So man, tree, and flower are supposed to die; but the fact remains, that God's universe is spiritual and immortal. “The spiritual fact and the material belief of things are contradictions; but the spiritual is true, and therefore the material must be untrue. Life is not in matter. Therefore, it cannot be said to pass out of matter. Matter and death are mortal illusions. Spirit and all things spiritual are the real and eternal. (S&H 289:14-30)

“Mortal belief says that death has been occasioned by fright. Fear never stopped being and its action. The blood, heart, lungs, brain, etc., have nothing to do with Life, God. Every function of the real man is governed by the divine Mind. The human mind has no power to kill or to cure, and it has no control over God's man. The divine Mind that made man maintains His own image and likeness. The human mind is opposed to God and must be put off, as St. Paul declares. All that really exists is the divine Mind and its idea, and in this Mind the entire being is found harmonious and eternal. The straight and narrow way is to see and acknowledge this fact, yield to this power, and follow the leadings of truth.” (S&H 151:14-30)

“If you or I should appear to die, we should not be dead. The seeming decease, caused by a majority of human beliefs that man must die, or produced by mental assassins, does not in the least disprove Christian Science; rather does it evidence the truth of its basic proposition that mortal thoughts in belief rule the materiality miscalled life in the body or in matter. But the forever fact remains paramount that Life, Truth, and Love save from sin, disease, and death. ‘When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality [divine Science], then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory” (St. Paul). ’” (S&H 164:17-29)

While not every student of Christian Science has been able to prove that death is unreal by “raising the dead” as Jesus did, we accept that his resurrection and ascension demonstrated that death can be overcome. Our present demonstrations should at least consist of what Mrs. Eddy describes as *“raising the dead, — those dead in trespasses and sins, satisfied with the flesh, resting on the basis of matter, blind to the possibilities of Spirit and its correlative truth.” (S&H 316:29)*

That citation tells us that the healing of the sins of the flesh is chipping away at the belief in death, and we can have faith that we are working toward the goal of destroying the “last enemy” of death. That said, there are accounts of Christian Scientists, including Mrs. Eddy, having brought people back from death’s door, and perhaps a few steps beyond.

Even though today's Christian Scientists may not be raising the dead on a consistent basis at this period in history, the fact that “Life is immortal” is the spiritual law that underlies the thousands of physical healings that have occurred on a daily worldwide basis over the past century and more. As mankind grows spiritually -- both individually and collectively -- there will be more

and more proofs that death, including attempts to murder, has no power to rob us of the life that God has given us, and that He eternally sustains. Already, there have been millions of people (according to Gallup Polls and other studies), who have experienced "near deaths" (NDE's), and have reported that life does indeed continue after leaving their mortal bodies. The writer's mother had such an experience, which had a great impact on how she lived her life. She said she never feared death after being allowed to make the choice to return in order to care for her family.

While many people of various faiths also believe in an afterlife, students of Christian Science have added to the proof that Jesus gave us, through an understanding that man's spiritual identity does not end because of a material sense of death by those of us left behind when someone appears to die. This truth, or law, can heal the belief of death here and now, just as it heals sickness and sin, however modest that proof may be. Sooner or later, mankind will prove that God's kingdom is come on earth, as it is in heaven.

Does this teaching of Christian Science -- that death is an illusion -- mean that we can be indifferent to impulses to lash out in anger, or even to kill? After all, some might argue, we cannot really hurt anyone if matter is unreal!

No, this is not how Christian Science works. In our human experience, we must discipline our thoughts and lives to conform to the laws of the Bible and the Christian morals taught by Jesus. We must rebuke sin in ourselves and others, and we must pay the penalties for sinful thoughts and acts until we cease sinning and destroy the belief in its pleasures and pains. We must pray to understand the spiritual facts of God, Truth. We use the truth about the unreality of sin to destroy it, not to justify it! We do not indulge in sin and then claim it is "unreal," pretending that we have nothing to feel guilty about or be punished for. That is "mental quackery" and not Christian Science. Mrs. Eddy comments:

"The evil-doer receives no encouragement from my declaration that evil is unreal, when I declare that he must awake from his belief in this awful unreality, repent and forsake it, in order to understand and demonstrate its unreality. Error uncondemned is not nullified. We must condemn the claim of error in every phase in order to prove it false, therefore unreal." (Message for 1901 14:30-6)

"The notion that one is covering iniquity by asserting its nothingness, is a fault of zealots, who, like Peter, sleep when the Watcher bids them watch, and when the hour of trial comes would cut off somebody's ears." (Mis. 335:21-24)

Are there any specific directions about applying the Sixth Commandment to impulses to kill, including self-defense?

Here are a few below. Mrs. Eddy's statements on war and suicide are in separate sections.

"'Thou shalt not kill;' that is, thou shalt not strike at the eternal sense of Life with a malicious aim, but shalt know that by doing thus thine own sense of Life shall be forfeited." (Miscellaneous Writings 67:10-13)

“The Christianly scientific man reflects the divine law, thus becoming a law unto himself. He does violence to no man.” (S&H 458:23-25)

“Love metes not out human justice, but divine mercy. If one's life were attacked, and one could save it only in accordance with common law, by taking another's, would one sooner give up his own? We must love our enemies in all the manifestations wherein and whereby we love our friends; must even try not to expose their faults, but to do them good whenever opportunity occurs. To mete out human justice to those who persecute and despitefully use one, is not leaving all retribution to God and returning blessing for cursing.” (Mis. 11:14-23)

“As I now understand Christian Science, I would as soon harm myself as another; since by breaking Christ's command, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,’ I should lose my hope of heaven.” (Mis. 311:19-22)

“The Jewish religion demands that ‘whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.’ But this law is not infallible in wisdom; and obedience thereto may be found faulty, since false testimony or mistaken evidence may cause the innocent to suffer for the guilty. Hence the gospel that fulfils the law in righteousness, the genius whereof is displayed in the surprising wisdom of these words of the New Testament: ‘Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.’ No possible injustice lurks in this mandate, and no human misjudgment can pervert it; for the offender alone suffers, and always according to divine decree. This sacred, solid precept is verified in all directions in Mind-healing, and is supported in the Scripture by parallel proof.” (Mis. 65:30-66:13)

What does Christian Science teach about the faulty mortal thinking, or sinful qualities of thought, that tempt men to kill?

We are taught the need to recognize when sin is attempting to identify itself as our thinking, and to separate it from ourselves and others. Otherwise, we believe the impulses are our own, and are tempted to act out their suggestions. This is how evil operates. Christian Science teaches that we have the power to challenge sin, recognize its nothingness, and destroy it forever, one belief at a time, until we have overcome the material world, either here or hereafter. Bearing in mind that Mary Baker Eddy's entire book, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, is a full explanation of this process, and is the best source to understand these ideas, here are a few citations regarding the sinful thoughts and beliefs that might lead to acts of murder:

“A wicked mortal is not the idea of God. He is little else than the expression of error. To suppose that sin, lust, hatred, envy, hypocrisy, revenge, have life abiding in them, is a terrible mistake. Life and Life's idea, Truth and Truth's idea, never make men sick, sinful, or mortal.” (S&H 289:8-13)

“Genesis iv. 8. Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. . . . The erroneous belief that life, substance, and intelligence can be material ruptures the life and brotherhood of man at the very outset.” (S&H 541:14-18)

“Matter is neither intelligent nor creative. The tree is not the author of itself. Sound is not the originator of music, and man is not the father of man. Cain very naturally concluded that if life was in the body, and man gave it, man had the right to take it away. This incident shows that the belief of life in matter was ‘a murderer from the beginning.’ (S&H 89:25)

“Self-love is more opaque than a solid body. In patient obedience to a patient God, let us labor to dissolve with the universal solvent of Love the adamant of error, — self-will, self-justification, and self-love, — which wars against spirituality and is the law of sin and death.” (S&H 242:15)

“The anatomy of Christian Science teaches when and how to probe the self-inflicted wounds of selfishness, malice, envy, and hate. It teaches the control of mad ambition. It unfolds the hallowed influences of unselfishness, philanthropy, spiritual love.” (S&H 462:25-30)

“Evil is a negation, because it is the absence of truth. It is nothing, because it is the absence of something. It is unreal, because it pre-supposes the absence of God, the omnipotent and omnipresent. Every mortal must learn that there is neither power nor reality in evil.

“Evil is self-assertive. It says: ‘I am a real entity, over-mastering good.’ This falsehood should strip evil of all pretensions. The only power of evil is to destroy itself. It can never destroy one iota of good. Every attempt of evil to destroy good is a failure, and only aids in peremptorily punishing the evil-doer. If we concede the same reality to discord as to harmony, discord has as lasting a claim upon us as has harmony. If evil is as real as good, evil is also as immortal. If death is as real as Life, immortality is a myth. If pain is as real as the absence of pain, both must be immortal; and if so, harmony cannot be the law of being.” (S&H 186:11-27)

“He that touches the hem of Christ's robe and masters his mortal beliefs, animality, and hate, rejoices in the proof of healing, — in a sweet and certain sense that God is Love. Alas for those who break faith with divine Science and fail to strangle the serpent of sin as well as of sickness! They are dwellers still in the deep darkness of belief. They are in the surging sea of error, not struggling to lift their heads above the drowning wave.

“What must the end be? They must eventually expiate their sin through suffering. The sin, which one has made his bosom companion, comes back to him at last with accelerated force, for the devil knoweth his time is short. Here the Scriptures declare that evil is temporal, not eternal. The dragon is at last stung to death by his own malice; but how many periods of torture it may take to remove all sin, must depend upon sin's obduracy.” (S&H 569:11-28)

“The belief of life in matter sins at every step. It incurs divine displeasure, and it would kill Jesus that it might be rid of troublesome Truth. Material beliefs would slay the spiritual idea whenever and wherever it appears. Though error hides behind a lie and excuses guilt, error cannot forever be concealed. Truth, through her eternal laws, unveils error. Truth causes sin to betray itself, and sets upon error the mark of the beast. Even the disposition to excuse guilt or to conceal it is punished. The avoidance of justice and the denial of truth tend to perpetuate sin, invoke crime, jeopardize self-control, and mock divine mercy.” (S&H 542:1)

“The intentional destroyer of others would destroy himself eternally, were it not that his suffering reforms him, thus balancing his account with divine Love, which never remits the sentence necessary to reclaim the sinner. Hence these words of Christ Jesus: ‘Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.’ (Luke 13 :27-28.) He who gains self-knowledge, self-control, and the kingdom of heaven within himself, within his own consciousness, is saved through Christ, Truth. Mortals must drink sufficiently of the cup of their Lord and Master to unself mortality and to destroy its erroneous claims. Therefore, said Jesus, ‘Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with.’” (My. 160:19 – 161:21)

What are Mary Baker Eddy’s teachings on suicide?

Here is her response to a question on suicide that was originally published in the *Christian Science Journal*:

“If this life is a dream not dispelled, but only changed, by death, — if one gets tired of it, why not commit suicide?”

“Man's existence is a problem to be wrought in divine Science. What progress would a student of science make, if, when tired of mathematics or failing to demonstrate one rule readily, he should attempt to work out a rule farther on and more difficult — and this, because the first rule was not easily demonstrated? In that case he would be obliged to turn back and work out the previous example, before solving the advanced problem. Mortals have the sum of being to work out, and up, to its spiritual standpoint. They must work out of this dream or false claim of sensation and life in matter, and up to the spiritual realities of existence, before this false claim can be wholly dispelled. Committing suicide to dodge the question is not working it out. The error of supposed life and intelligence in matter, is dissolved only as we master error with Truth. Not through sin or suicide, but by overcoming temptation and sin, shall we escape the weariness and wickedness of mortal existence, and gain heaven, the harmony of being.” (Mis. 52:18)

The last 100 pages of *Science and Health* contain testimonies of healings from those who had read early editions of the textbook. One of them illustrates how the truth contained in this book rescued a reader from thoughts of suicide:

“SAVED FROM INSANITY AND SUICIDE

“A few years ago, while under a sense of darkness and despair caused by ill health and an unhappy home, Science and Health was loaned me with a request that I should read it.

“At that time my daughter was given up by material medica to die of lingering consumption, supposed to have been inherited. My own condition seemed even more alarming, as insanity was being manifested, and rather than go to an insane asylum, it seemed to me the only thing to do was to commit suicide. Heart trouble, kidney complaint, and continual headaches caused from female trouble were some of the many ailments I had to contend with. My doctor tried to persuade me to undergo an operation as a means of relief, but I had submitted to a severe

operation ten years previous, and found only additional suffering as a result, so I would not consent.

“When I began with Science and Health, I read the chapter on ‘Prayer’ first, and at that time did not suppose it possible for me to remember anything I read, but felt a sweet sense of God's protection and power, and a hope that I should at last find Him to be what I so much needed, — a present help in time of trouble. Before that chapter on ‘Prayer’ was finished, my daughter was downstairs eating three meals a day, and daily growing stronger. Before I had finished reading the textbook she was well, but never having heard that the reading of Science and Health healed any one, it was several months before I gave God the glory.

“One by one my many ailments left me, all but the headaches; they were less frequent, until at the end of three years the fear of them was entirely overcome.

“Neither myself nor my daughter have ever received treatments, but the study of the Bible and Science and Health, the Christian Science textbook by Mrs. Eddy, has healed us and keeps us well.” (S&H 637:14 - 638:19)

What are Mary Baker Eddy’s teachings on war, peace, and national defense?

In an article titled “Prevention and Cure of Divorce” published in the Boston Herald newspaper in 1905, Mrs. Eddy, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science, wrote:

“Divorce and war should be exterminated according to the Principle of law and gospel, — the maintenance of individual rights, the justice of civil codes, and the power of Truth uplifting the motives of men. Two commandments of the Hebrew Decalogue, ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’ and ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ obeyed, will eliminate divorce and war.” (My. 268:11-17)

There is a chapter in the book *First Church of Christ, Scientist and Miscellany* (pages 277-285) titled “Peace and War” which contains reprints of a number of Mrs. Eddy’s remarks on war published in newspapers. Near the end of her earthly career, Mrs. Eddy was a famous and distinguished citizen, known world-wide. As head of a growing religious movement in Boston, her views were often sought by the editors of various newspapers and magazines. These letters are now found on another post on this site: [War and Peace, a Christian Science Perspective.](#)

Conclusion of The Sixth Commandment essay:

The Sixth Commandment is based upon a divine law which holds man secure in God’s love and protection. Humans experience this whenever they put themselves in the “*secret place of the Most High.*” (Ps. 91) This “secret place” is the lofty height of spiritual understanding, which destroys the erroneous suggestions and illusions of mortal mind. As we also read in Psalms:

“He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man.” (Psalms 18:48)

That “*violent man*” may, at times, be our own selves. God can lift us up to that secret place of spiritual understanding, where we will know for certainty that we are protected from others, as well as ourselves. We will see that God, Truth, does deliver us from the temptation of the self-will that is at war with Spirit. This evil will lose the battle in its own inevitable self-destruction. Man will shine forth in freedom from fear and the terrorism of evil beliefs. There will be no more violent man, only the spiritual, perfect man, made in God’s image:

“Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.” (Psalms 37:37)

In Christian Science, we are not only expected to obey the Sixth Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," but to prove that, in spiritual reality, it can never be broken!

“The dream of death must be mastered by Mind here or hereafter. Thought will waken from its own material declaration, ‘I am dead,’ to catch this trumpet-word of Truth, ‘There is no death, no inaction, diseased action, overaction, nor reaction.’” (S&H 427:29)