

Dr. Ernest Holmes (1887-1960) - Founder of the Religious Science Movement

Ernest Holmes founded the International Religious Science movement, wrote "The Science of Mind" and numerous other books on metaphysics, and originated the international periodical Science of Mind magazine, which has been in continuous publication since 1927. Holmes' Science of Mind teaching, recognized today as one of the leading viewpoints in modern metaphysics, is a spiritual philosophy that has brought to people around the world a working cosmology - a sense of their relationship to God and their place in the Universe - and a positive, supportive approach to daily living.

Ernest Holmes was born in 1887 on a small Maine farm, the youngest of nine sons. As a teenager, he attended Bethel preparatory school, but he spent most of his time out-of-doors, asking himself "What is God? Who am I? Why am I here?" He mentally tangled with all the local preachers and doubted the answers he got in church. At the age of 18 he left school and formal education and set out on his lifelong course of independent thinking. He went to Boston, worked in a grocery store, and pursued his studies relentlessly. A year later, he discovered the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson. "Reading Emerson is like drinking water to me," he said later. His metaphysical studies intensified, his quest for truth leading him to literature, art, science, philosophy, and religion, and in particular the Christian Science teachings of Mary Baker Eddy.

After Ernest Holmes became acquainted with the writings of Emerson and Mary Baker Eddy, he soon was exploring the writings of Christian D. Larson, Ralph Waldo Trine, Horatio Dresser and Phineas Quimby. Holmes was particularly impressed with the New Thought writings of Larson and eventually abandoned the Christian Science textbook for Larson's works.

In 1914, at the age of 25, Ernest moved to Venice, California. Pursuing his studies, he discovered the writings of Thomas Troward, which fed the flame ignited by his earlier studies of metaphysics. Almost casually, he began speaking on Troward's writings to small but ever-growing groups. Without ceremony, his lifetime ministry had begun. Later, as his audiences grew, he was ordained as a minister of the Divine Science Church.

Ernest published his first book, "Creative Mind," in 1919, continued his studies, and lectured to growing crowds in California and Eastern cities. Meanwhile, he was writing "The Science of Mind," which was to become the "textbook" of the Religious Science philosophy. Published in 1926, it was revised in 1938, is now in its 45th printing, and has been translated into French, German, and Japanese. At the time the book was published, his many enthusiastic students urged him to set up an incorporated organization. He refused at first, but eventually agreed, and the Institute of Religious Science and the School of Philosophy was incorporated in 1927.

On October 23, 1927, in Los Angeles, he was married to widowed Hazel Durkee Foster. They were to be inseparable companions for thirty years. In 1953, the Institute became the Church of Religious Science. On May 21, 1957, he lost his chosen life-companion. Ernest Holmes made his transition to the next experience on April 7, 1960, in Los Angeles. He left no children. But he left all humankind an enduring legacy: the way of life he called Religious Science.

On that way of life, he said this in 1958:

"We have launched a Movement which, in the next 100 years, will be the great new religious impulsion of modern times, far exceeding, in its capacity to envelop the world, anything that has happened since Mohammedanism started.

"We have to have the same faith in what we teach and practice that the scientist has, or the gardener has, and when that great simplicity shall have plumbed and penetrated this density of ours, this human stolidness and stupidity, this debauchery of the intellect and the soul, something new and wonderful will happen. It is the only thing that will keep the world from destroying itself...."

(Abstracted from the booklet Path of Discovery, prepared by Scott Awbrey, Los Angeles United Church of Religious Science, 1987.)