

**CHRISTIAN SCIENCE AND
KINDRED DELUSIONS
PP.1-38 (NOT COMPLETE)**

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LUTHER DAY HARKNESS

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BY

Luther Day Harkness

WITH AN

Introduction.

BY

Prof. Henry Churchill King, A.M., D.D.

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Introduction.

THE files of the *Publishers' Weekly* make it evident that the literature critical of Christian Science is rapidly increasing, but there is certainly room for this plain, straightforward, unprofessional, layman's challenge of the system. Mr. Harkness gives here a clear and interesting statement of facts, that deserve the careful consideration of every man who cares to keep this generation sane.

He does not call in question the honesty of the great majority of Christian Scientists, nor the reality of many of the cures; he only asks people of sense to take account of undoubted psycho-physical laws in judging of these cures, and soberly to face the question whether it is not vastly more reasonable to refer these cures to the action of these laws than to the acceptance of such a mass of metaphysical and exegetical absurdity as he certainly shows Mrs. Eddy's book to be. It were well for both our religious and intellectual health that we should give heed to his suggestion. For the ease with which large numbers of well-meaning men and women allow themselves to be swept away into this delusion, ought to give us all pause, for it argues grave faults in our education, both Christian and scientific. If there were any fairly adequate grasp of Christianity or of the scientific facts involved, this could not occur.

Has the Christian church emphasized as it ought the present personal reality and power of God? Has it given

the place it ought, to the peace and content born of a genuine and hearty trust in a Heavenly Father? Has it cultivated as it ought, the undaunted courage of such a trust? Has it given a fair recognition to mental as well as physical laws? and has it not too often, by its arbitrary use of the Bible, given grave occasion for just such abuse of interpretation as this of Mrs. Eddy?

But let every one who intends in any degree to heed the teaching of Christ, ponder well whether he cares to avow or to defend a system which denies the personality of God, denies the personality of man, denies the reality of sin, and so the reality of redemption, as well as the reality of evil, and treats both sin and evil as Christ did not; that denies in the Bible whatever does not suit its purpose, and accepts Mrs. Eddy's Science and Health as of divine authority.

It is evident that the great mass of Christian Science adherents simply exercise the common right of poor human nature to be shockingly inconsistent, and allow their influence to be cast in favor of this delusion, while they really *shed* a large part of its doctrines. Is it not high time that those who through some "cure" on themselves, or others, have gone over to a profession of Christian Science, should wake up to the reality of the simply abysmal follies into which they have leaped? I find myself simply unable to believe that many of these adherents can have any idea of seriously defending much of what Mrs. Eddy has written. Witness the "Glossary" of Science and Health. Let it be deliberately said and clearly understood, on all hands, that the person who intends to be

a thoroughgoing believer in Christian Science agrees simply to turn his back on all the most assured results of modern science, on every respectable philosophical thinker, and on every even poorest pretense of an honest historical exegesis of scripture. That this result does not often fully follow is not due to any saving virtue in the system, but only to the healthful inconsistency of the "mortal mind," of which the devotee has not been able wholly to rid himself. The simple fact is, that the teaching of Mrs. Eddy is such stupendous folly, especially in its philosophy and exegesis, that it is exceedingly difficult seriously to refute it. It seems as if it could only be laughed out of court; and to this to-be-desired end Mr. Harkness' discussion ought to contribute. One is reminded of Paulsen's remark about a certain form of materialism, of which he says, it "is absolutely irrefutable; not because it is true, however, but because it is meaningless. The absurd has this in common with the truth, that it cannot be refuted."

But the inconsistencies of Mrs. Eddy's system are so palpable that they ought to make even a pretty thoughtless man wonder a little: e.g., If the body is nothing and has no *real* needs, as the system affirms, it is difficult to explain the need by even the most advanced Christian Scientists of food and drink and fire and clothing. So, too, Christian Science is based on the denial of matter and evil, and yet the healing of bodily infirmities occupies almost exclusive attention. Christ made it absolutely subordinate. Again, the two facts which really give the system all its power—the presence and reality of a

personal God, and the influence of human mind over body—are vehemently denied by Christian Science. And as a last example, Mrs. Eddy's attempted explanation of the reason that a poison kills, though the person taking it believes it absolutely harmless, is a two-edged sword. Her theory, as Mr. Harkness points out, is that the death is due to the "majority opinion." But obviously if the "majority opinion" is so controlling, Christian Science *offers no real way of escape from sickness and pain*. In other words, her explanation of the failures of her system explains away all value in the system. And coupled with her alleged suggestion that Mr. Eddy's death was due to arsenical poisoning mentally administered by enemies, this theory of the "majority opinion" is an open invitation to return to the superstition and terror of the "evil eye" and to the horrors of witchcraft.

The true deliverance from this delusion is plain knowledge of the facts. Those who feel that they are in honesty bound to accept the vagaries of Christian Science on account of its cures, may well note the complete parallels Mr. Harkness is able to bring forward, and the evidence he adduces that the direct agent is the influence of mind over body. Mr. Harkness could fully accept the prefatory words of Rev. J. M. Buckley, D.D., in his more extended treatment of a similar theme: "The author has adopted certain principles as working laws: namely, that before endeavoring to explain how phenomena exist, it is necessary to determine precisely what exists; and that so long as it is possible to find a rational explanation of what unquestionably is, there is no reason to suspect, and it is

superstition to assume, the operation of supernatural causes."

It need not be denied that we have much still to learn concerning psycho-physical laws; but if any wish to be assured of the essential soundness of this little book, by further investigation, they will find ample material in Dr. Buckley's Faith Healing, Christian Science, and Kindred Phenomena, and in the strictly scientific works: Moll's Hypnotism, Bernheim's Suggestive Therapeutics, and Binet and Féré's Animal Magnetism.

HENRY CHURCHILL KING.

OSBERLIN COLLEGE, JUNE 1, 1899.