

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE AND ITS PROBLEMS

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Christian Science and Its Problems by J. H. Bates

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INTRODUCTION



"TEACHER, we want a sign from *you*." Thus the Pharisees set up their own Messianic standard. Casting out demons was to them a sign from hell. If he was the Messiah, they demanded a sign in the heavens. They had no use for truth that cut the cords of the mind, nor for sinlessness, nor for potent holiness, nor for love that reconciled the soul to God. He must shake the heavens with his power and fill them with his glory to authenticate his divine mission. Jesus "sighed in his spirit," and called them an adulterous and unbelieving generation.

Thus it has ever been—no "sign" within the circle of human life, no revelation of God in the natural working of the mind, no light of love transforming the spirit that shows us the face of Jesus Christ, has silenced the demand for prodigies of divine power. There must be some external manifestation of omnipotence, crushing through all natural law, to convince us that God is still alive. Hence natural phenomena have often been interpreted as miraculous, and the

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Church for ages before the Reformation supplied the faithful with relics and charms and magic to maintain the "faith once delivered to the saints." The Protestant world, while rejecting relics, has often resorted to faith cure in its various forms as a substitute for Romish fetiches. When we insist that normal cures are proof that the salvation of Christ has its physical beneficence as well as its spiritual, that it corrects all human life, still the cry is set up for sudden violent displays of supernatural power, to the exclusion of the gradual processes of recovery which are in harmony with nature. The question may very justly be raised, Did God establish nature for the sole purpose of revealing himself by violating its order, or has he performed miracles that we might know him as the Lord of nature, the miracles being only a violation of "superficial uniformity in the interest of deeper law?"¹

Christian Science is a form of faith cure so extreme that it has been invariably criticised as neither Christian nor scientific. It certainly is not in harmony with the fundamental truths of Christianity, and it wages ceaseless conflict with

¹ Gore, *Incarnation of the Son of God*, p. 60.

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the spirit and results of all approved science. Hence, we cannot but regard the name as misleading and without excuse. To this "science" the laws of health are but a delusion and a snare; the study of physiology and hygiene cultivates mortal mind with all its repulsive offspring; matter is nothing; even the body is an unreality and false belief; sensation is an illusion because nerves cannot feel; all else is but a reflection of God, who is the only reality. Just what Mrs. Eddy means by reality she nowhere makes clear. It is hard to imagine the denial of the actual existence of material things on the part of one who eats with a relish, builds fires against the winter's cold, walks through the open doors instead of through the closed windows, and treats our present environment exactly as others treat it. It is much easier to suppose that by reality is meant enduring existence, which the scientist ascribes to God alone; but this would hardly account for the rejection of the conditions of our present life as *wholly* a "false belief of mortal mind." Her denial of the reality of the world of sense and experience is not only categorical, but it is also woven into the entire texture of her theory of

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health, and with it her scheme must stand or fall.

This little book is an investigation of themes brought again to the surface by Christian Science. Statements of Christian doctrine will be found side by side with the principles of Mrs. Eddy's scheme. Truth has a self-evidencing power; it goes home to the mind with a native energy; it never returns to God void. I have therefore shunned all labored polemics while conducting this discussion in the interest of truth.

Controversy in these pages, however, is subsidiary to the search for health in the profoundest sense—health pervading the whole sphere of life; indeed, it cannot long continue anything less. A diseased imagination is inimical to a healthy stomach. Dyspepsia is a relentless enemy of a sound mind. Body and mind are most intimately related. We no longer divide man into compartments like a steamship. He is a unity with whom it cannot be well in any imaginary department of his being and ill with him in any other. Life is one, and the infraction of it at any point mars its harmony throughout. It is as essential that we should think clearly and love religiously

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to be well in the best sense as that we should have a good digestion. The true physician is not a mere drug doctor. He who treats the sick must take into account psychic and ethical forces as well as chemical. Half the dissatisfaction with doctors arises from their obloquy to spiritual facts. They treat a fraction of a man, not his integral being. But this class of physicians is constantly diminishing as the knowledge of man increases. The study of the relation of mind and body is bringing new factors of health into view which the doctors are quick to appreciate. A new science of therapeutics will soon incorporate these psychic facts and forces, and once more the physician will find his nearest and truest coadjutor in the minister of the Gospel. In the meantime the laity, holding fast its faith in true science, may well avoid "the profane pratings and oppositions of falsely-named knowledge—which some professing concerning the faith have missed the mark!"¹ (1 Tim. vi, 20.)

¹See Greek text, W. and H.