

Our Contributors.

Rev. Dr. Herridge on "Christian Science."

In the course of a recent sermon in St. Andrew's Church, Dr. Herridge considered Mrs. Eddy's at present somewhat popular "cult" in the following sane fashion:

Let me now turn to another creed which likewise appeals to the Scriptures for support, and which under the curious name of "Christian Science," claims to have at last discovered the whole truth concerning God and humanity. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that its doctrines have never been preached before. Every student knows that, as far back as the first century after Christ, a sect arose which maintained that matter had no real existence, that the belief in it was the root of all evil, and that sanctification came through the ultimate absorbing of everything into a purely spiritual universe. And beliefs similar to these, in various forms of modification, have appeared in almost every age of the church's history. In regard to other modern works on the subject, the prophetic of the new truth, with perhaps a slight lack of modesty, gives us a warning. In the preface to *Science and Health* she says: "The first edition of *Science and Health* was published in 1875. Various books on mental healing have since been issued, most of which are incorrect in theory, and filled with plagiarisms from *Science and Health*. They regard the human mind as a healing agent, whereas the mind is not a factor in the Principle of Christian Science. A few books, however, which are based on this book are useful." All others, I suppose, are worthless. What, then, are the doctrines we must hold on peril of being thought stupid or ignorant if we reject them?

"The fundamental propositions of Christian Science," says Mrs. Eddy, "are summarized in the four following, to me, self-evident propositions. Even if read backward, these propositions will be found to agree in statement and proof:

1. God is all in all.
2. God is good. Good is mind.
3. God, Spirit, being all, nothing is matter.
4. Life, God, omnipotent good, deny death, evil, sin, disease.—Disease, sin, evil, death, deny Good, omnipotent, God, Life."

I shall not subject these propositions to the test of being read backward, but assuming that they yield some meaning when treated like the sentences of ordinary mortals, we naturally inquire what result will follow if we accept them. Let me quote again from *Science and Health*: "Thus matter will be finally proved to be nothing but a mortal belief, wholly inadequate to affect man through its supposed organic action or existence. Error will be no longer useful in proving Truth. The problem of nothingness, or 'dust to dust,' will be solved, and mortal mind will be without form and void, for mortality will cease, when man beholds God's reflection, incorporated individuality, as man seeth his face in a glass." (Pg. 19.) Let us take a concrete illustration:

"You say a boil is painful; but that is impossible, because matter without mind is not painful. The boil simply manifests your belief in pain, through inflammation and swelling; and you call this belief a boil. Now administer mentally to your patient a high attenuation of truth on this subject, and it will soon cure the boil. The fact that pain cannot exist where there is no mortal mind to feel it, is a proof that this so-called mind makes its own pain—that is, its own belief in pain." (Pg. 47.)

I have no wish to deride anyone's honest conviction or to misrepresent it. "Let our pulpits do justice to Christian Science," says Mrs. Eddy; and the demand is reasonable. Mere vituperation accomplishes little; but on the other hand no one need assume the airs of a martyr if he happens to be fairly criticized. Unless I have been misled by the somewhat oracular and disjointed style of the volume which is the text-book of those who call themselves Christian Scientists, the quotations just made seem to indicate its salient principles. If anyone who takes the trouble to think for himself, and to weigh the meaning of statements placed before him, can believe that matter is an hallucination, that "mortal mind" is responsible for all our errors, and that we have only to reach a kind of nebulous spirituality in order to see pain and sickness and death vanish away—if anyone is able to hold to these views, by all means let him do so. But when this doctrine claims to be based upon the teaching of Holy Scripture, it is not only our right but our duty to ask what foundation it has in its pages. No one can read the story of Jesus Christ without being struck with His many miracles of healing. But we have no reason to suppose that even He cured everybody in an indiscriminate sort of way. That policy would have demoralized the people, and exchanged faith for mere selfish superstition. It is easy to triumph over trials by getting rid of them. It is something far greater to triumph over trials though they still remain. Christ shows His power at the very depths of human nature, not simply in the events which ruffle its surface. His miracles are a moral object lesson. His purpose is not to banish from the world, by some touch of magic, all that seems mysterious and unpleasant, but so to educate the hearts of men that the root of evil, which is sin, shall be eradicated, and a sympathy like His own begotten among others, a sympathy which should seek out the sad and the suffering, and bring to them the message of Divine comfort and salvation. In short, He is, above all things, the great Physician of the soul; and no word of His gives the slightest warrant for thinking that if we can only get rid of our belief in matter, and stop our use of whatever material aids He Himself has created, and the proper place of which is made known through the patient investigation of that human intelligence which is His gift; if we can only adopt a kind of Pantheism which absorbs the creature in the all-encompassing essence of the Creator, then pain and sickness will come no more.

The Christ-presence is still amongst us. The New Testament record is not intended to be a mockery. But our reading of it would be superficial indeed if we did not see that the whole power of Christ is concentrated not upon some cheap and easy method of procuring release from that pain which is often itself life's best medicine, but rather of raising the whole tone of human character, so that, alike in joy or sorrow, in health or sickness, our souls shall abide strong in the sympathies which grow out of earth's varied experience, and strong in the faith which no mystery can stifle and no anguish overwhelm, because it rests in the love and wisdom of Him who doeth all things well.

It does not seem to me necessary now to make an elaborate refutation of what is misnamed "Christian Science." If any of you have questions to ask on the subject, I shall be glad to answer them. I prefer at present to inquire whether, in spite of exaggerations

which, in my humble judgement render its tenants absurd and irrational, it may not suggest some useful lessons. If I were shut up to a choice between believing that matter is everything or that matter is nothing, I would choose the latter. And though that, of course, is not the alternative, we may be thankful to anyone who reminds us that mind is greater than matter, that good is more potent than evil, that health, not disease, is the normal condition of mankind. Most people put altogether too much emphasis on the body. Some who call themselves Christians, through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject unto bondage. By needless foreboding they perpetuate the very evils from which they would fain be free, and lower their vitality through want of faith in God. If I had my way, there should be a chair of psychology in every medical college; for a purely corporeal treatment of human nature, under any circumstances, ignores the larger part of it. Every intelligent physician admits this. Drugs are not omnipotent. The drastic doses of half a century ago are prescribed no more. The mental tone, the spiritual atmosphere of the patient count for a good deal. Possibly the time may come when doctors of medicine, visiting sick persons who think only about themselves, will inject altruism into the mind as they now inject morphine into the body, and thus, by breaking the chain of morbid self-consciousness, prepare the way for complete restoration. Or perhaps, a prescription for a tonic may read like this: "A Psalm of David, a chapter of St. John, a poem of Browning, an amusing story, a bright and hopeful friend. Mix and take daily with prayer and gratitude."

If the common sense does not tell us that we are neither all soul, nor all body, there is no use arguing about it. Both sides of our nature come from God, both are sacred, both deserve rational treatment, and both will be ultimately raised to their best estate, not by destroying the material and keeping only the spiritual, still less by destroying the spiritual and keeping only the material, but by frankly recognizing the interactions of our complex being, and the wise and kindly laws in obedience to which our whole nature shall yet be delivered from the bondage of evil and made free indeed.

Reminiscences of Belfast and Some of its Ministers.

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The attack of erysipelas in the face which has delayed my correspondence reminds me of a former attack thirty years ago in Belfast. I had preached for the eminent scholar and theologian, Dr. Gray, College Square North, and was engaged to preach for Rev. Dr. Hanna at his great tabernacle called St. Enoch's. Dr. Gray had moved to a new house and the damp walls of the room where I slept brought on the disease. Dr. Seaton Reid, the famous physician, being absent at the time, I consulted Dr. Ross, who prescribed medicine with perfect rest and quiet; but being anxious to keep my appointment with Hanna, an old fellow student, I waited to learn Dr. Reid's opinion. When he had endorsed the diagnosis of Ross I pled the urgency of my appointment and asked if it were not possible, leaving all the rest of the service to Dr. Hanna, to preach the sermon and so save the doctor and his congregation of between 2 and 3000 from a disappointment, as there was a large placard out in front of the church and the announcement had appeared in all