

NEW FORMS OF THE OLD FAITH

I

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE AS A SYSTEM

Christian Science is a religious and healing system which Mrs. Eddy began to teach in 1866. Her claim is thus stated in her own words: 'In the year 1866 I discovered the Christ Science, or divine laws of life, and named it Christian Science. God had been graciously fitting me, during many years, for the reception of a final revelation of the absolute divine Principle of scientific being and healing.'¹ The body of her teaching is contained in her book, *Science and Health, with Key to the Scriptures*. This was published in 1875, and is regarded as her principal work and the textbook of her system. Some part of this book is read, equally with some section of the Bible, at ordinary Christian Science services. It is the basis of all official lectures and all explanations of the doctrines of this Church. As we now have it, the book has undergone considerable modifications from its earlier editions, especially in its omissions. The old references to 'malicious animal magnetism,' which obsessed Mrs. Eddy's mind in earlier days, have been wisely excised, and its form and language have been modified and simplified, no doubt by the tactful advice of her literary editor, the Rev. J. H. Wiggin.

¹ *Science and Health*, p. 107. All references in this chapter to numbers (e.g. p. 109) refer to this book, *Science and Health*.

I

Naturally we begin with some account of Mrs. Eddy herself, for her system cannot be understood apart from her own chequered history.

In the main there are two standard biographies of this remarkable woman. One is regarded by the Christian Scientists themselves as the only *official* record, and is written by Miss Sybil Wilbur. It is a plain glorification of Mrs. Eddy, and discreetly omits any incident that might tarnish its idol. The other, written by Miss Georgine Milmine, is frankly critical and even hostile, but is very carefully and accurately documented from the records of the day. From these two biographies, I shall try, as dispassionately as I can, to give a short account of her interesting and vivid life. This is more necessary in the case of Christian Science than in any other modern system; for I question if we can adequately understand Mrs. Eddy's subsequent autocratic claims without some knowledge of her character, her personal and medical history, her temperament, and her troubles and sorrows.

Mary A. Morse Baker, the future founder of a new church which has spread over many parts of the world, was the youngest of six children born to Mark and Abigail Baker, who worked a farm in the township of Bow, near the city of Concord, in New Hampshire, New England. She was born on 16th July 1821. Her parents were simple, honest, hardworking farmers, who had a hard and difficult life on a not too kindly soil. They were always poor, and could not afford any of the comforts, far less the luxuries, of life either for themselves or their children. The parents, who were loyal and deeply interested members of the local Congrega-

tional Church, were as keenly theological and argumentative as any of our old Scots ancestors. Do not let anyone despise the mental atmosphere of a home like this, where there may have been little formal education, but where there was a deep knowledge of the Bible and a constant debate on the great themes of life and religion.

I stress this point here and now in my opening chapter for one good purpose. Again and again my readers will discover—if they are kind enough to proceed with this book—that many of the religious systems we shall discuss have been founded by people who might be rightly described as ‘uneducated’ in a technical sense. Some critics have foolishly discounted the whole teaching of these systems on that one point alone. But surely the word ‘education’ itself needs some sensible definition. Certainly mere schooling does not guarantee education, other than a surface veneer. Indeed it may be a question whether schooling as such has anything to do with *original thinking*, except that it trains the mind and provides a gift of expression. George Fox, the founder of the Quakers, had very little schooling, but he was beyond any doubt an original, able, and resolute thinker. The point is this—a person’s contribution to religious thinking must not be cheaply devalued merely because he had a poor elementary schooling.

The children of this home were brought up in the narrow, unbending, but very searching school of the old Calvinists. Perhaps some of Mrs. Eddy’s later teaching was a natural recoil from the strictness of the popular Calvinistic doctrines of her day—especially the common belief that trials, disciplines, and sorrows are not only natural to man, and therefore unavoidable,

but are even *sent by God* for our well-being and training. Mrs. Eddy rebelled against this desolating creed, not only because she found it wholly comfortless, but because she believed that it defamed the mind and character of God.

All the records of the days of her youth reveal that Mary was a difficult child to rear. She was not only strong-minded and of high mettle, but was also constantly unwell and depressed. She was sent to the district school, the only place where as a young child she had any systematic or ordered education. But even then she was so often absent from school through convulsive attacks of illness that in the end she was allowed to omit school altogether and remain at home. There can be little doubt that during most of her childhood she was a subject of serious nervous illness.

I think it is important to notice and admit this. It accounts in large part for her deep preoccupation in later days with questions of health and physical well-being. Only those who have suffered the constant disorders of broken health can understand how gravely concerned she became for her own well-being and also for the healing of disease in others. It is unfair to criticize her work as if her main concern was only a consuming interest in her own personal health. We may differ from her in her ideas of what true 'health' is, and how it may be attained; but every fair person must allow that she afterwards went out with her gospel of health to all and sundry. Even if she did make her living by her teaching, is her conduct in this respect in any way different from the customs of our doctors and surgeons? Surely not!

When his wife died in 1835 Mark Baker sold the farm and moved his family to another homestead near a

village now called Tilton, eighteen miles north of Concord. Mary was now in her fifteenth year. Here she was sent again to the village school, with a better and more advanced training. But once more she did not stay long, as her health remained strained and broken.

Thus there can be no question that she was not what we now call a 'well-educated person.' In later days she was conscious of this lack; and unfortunately she made strange and unfounded claims that her brother Albert taught her Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, and that her favourite studies as a girl were Natural Philosophy, Logic, and Moral Science. It is a pity that she felt the need to make such foolish claims, so easily disproved. As her brother Albert entered college when she was nine, and left home for good when she was thirteen, these foolish claims only strain our credulity. No doubt the reason why she made this claim was her desire to justify her system, during later years of controversy, when she felt that she ought to prove that she was grounded in philosophy and science. But why should she seek to do so? She claimed that her system was a *revelation*—as she said, 'a final revelation of the absolute divine Principle.' But revelation as such does not always come, indeed does not generally come, only to those who have been squeezed into a school form. There may actually be something in an ordinary school training that represses revelation and inhibits free self-expression. I point this out merely to show that her claim to a formal education was not only false, but quite unnecessary. If she had a true revelation, it certainly did not depend on her fabled study of Greek and Hebrew.

In any case, even wide reading, while it may be

helpful—especially to make people acquainted with what others have thought and written—is not necessary for resolute and independent thinking. Herbert Spencer, one of our most independent thinkers, put this in a sentence : ‘ If I had read as much as most people, I should know as little as most people.’ Prophets may be bigger than our Academies, and may not need our Academies !

When Mary Baker was twenty-two years old she married a man called George Washington Glover ; but he died six months later. She went back to her father’s home, where a son was born and named after his dead father. But she did not show much affection for her child, and farmed him out among friends. After a few years she married for a second time—a Dr. Daniel Patterson, an itinerant dentist who practised in Tilton and the neighbouring villages. She was still a victim of ill-health and nervous disorders ; and it is recorded that Dr. Patterson had to carry his bride downstairs from her room for the ceremony, and back again when it was over. But this second marriage did not last long ; the two were separated and divorced. All this time her nerves and her health remained unchanged.

It was in 1862 that Mrs. Eddy—the name by which she is now known after her third marriage later on to Mr. Eddy—met the famous Dr. Quimby. Although having no title to call himself a doctor, Quimby practised as a faith healer, and was a man of some distinction in New England. There is no doubt that he was a man of original mind and strong personal influence, who by his so-called mind-healing helped all sorts of distressed people. Mrs. Eddy came to visit him in 1862 ; and in spite of all her later denials, he exercised a stabilizing influence on her health and mental

welfare ; his powers of observation and his originality of treatment enabled him to treat special nervous cases like hers with success.

Quimby had made one important discovery—that if we can only produce a *strong faith* in a man's mind, some marvellous results will take place. It is not what we do to the patient but what he does for himself that effects a cure. In this sense faith may literally heal. Having come to believe this firmly, Quimby made it the ground of a new system of mind-cure which undoubtedly produced some astonishing results. He called his system *Science of Health* and *The Science of Health and Happiness* ; and in his manuscripts, since published, he refers to it on two or three occasions as *Christian Science*—the actual name afterwards adopted by Mrs. Eddy ! Scores of times he calls it 'The Science of Christ,' or the 'Principle,' the 'Truth of Wisdom.' In his writings Quimby also called disease an 'error.' I quote, 'The idea that a beneficent God had anything to do with disease is superstition.' Again, 'Disease is false reasoning. True scientific wisdom is health and happiness. False reasoning is sickness and death.'

I quote these passages from Quimby's writings to show how directly Mrs. Eddy was indebted to this strange and original man. We know definitely that she stayed under his care for the best part of four years, listened to his teaching, and had access to all his manuscripts—of many of which she made copies.

In her early days, she owned her indebtedness to Quimby freely and openly. Indeed, she became a bit of a nuisance by writing articles and letters to the local papers extolling the man and his system. Here is an excerpt taken from one of her many letters to the

Portland *Courier* : ' But now I can see dimly at first, and only as trees walking, the great principle which underlies Dr. Quimby's faith and works : and just in proportion to my right perception of truth is my recovery. This truth which he opposes to the error of giving intelligence to matter, and placing pain where it never placed itself, if received understandingly, changes the currents of the system to their normal action : and the mechanism of the body goes on undisturbed. . . . The truth which he establishes in the patient cures him (although he may be wholly unconscious thereof) : and the body which is full of light, is no longer in disease.'

Again she wrote this letter to Dr. Quimby himself : ' I am to all who see me a living wonder and a living monument to your power. . . . I eat, drink, am merry, and have no laws to fetter my spirit. . . . My explanation of *your curative principle* surprises people, especially those whose minds are all matter.' Note this.

From these, and many other open acknowledgements, it can be seen that Mrs. Eddy admitted in her earlier days her full indebtedness to Dr. Quimby, not only for her own recovery, but even more, for the principles of the system she afterwards established. Yet, when Quimby died in 1866, she began not only to deny her indebtedness, but even to hint that *she* had given *him* the system which he had practised so successfully for years before she ever met him.

Why need Mrs. Eddy deny her indebtedness, and worse, try to slander the memory of the old man who helped her to health and happiness ? The only reason I can see is that she thought it necessary to claim absolute originality for the system and the church she afterwards founded. I quoted her claim earlier in this

chapter. In the light of what we now know from the records of history, listen to it again. '*In the year 1866 I discovered the Christ Science or divine laws of Life, and named it Christian Science.*' There are two statements here ; and both of them are false. Elsewhere she says, 'No human pen nor tongue taught me the science contained in the book' (p. 110). This is not true. Why should a unique woman like this be afraid to acknowledge natural indebtedness to others? We are all indebted to somebody, and certainly to the labours and discoveries of other workers in the past. Even Our Lord Jesus Christ was openly indebted to the Old Testament and to the teachings of the Hebrew prophets. But this does not in any way lessen Christ's original and unique revelation! Shakespeare was indebted to old romances for the stories of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. But no sensible person imagines that this impugns Shakespeare's amazing originality. Defoe, so it is said, read an earlier and very prosy narrative of *Robinson Crusoe*. But what has that to do with the genuine originality of Defoe's immortal story?

If Mrs. Eddy's system is in any sense a real revelation, then all her indebtedness to Quimby or anybody else would not affect that claim! Undoubtedly, she alone made her own church what it now is, and she alone gave her system coherency and drive. She need not have feared to be honest and fair about her indebtedness to a man like Mr. Quimby. To us who know what she has accomplished, it is only a pity that a woman who has brought such light and help to thousands of people during four generations should have been led to found her system and church on a plain dishonesty. The dishonesty is so plain that anyone who can read the records of the times can prove it. I wish that there

had been no such blot in the record of her work ; it makes her a lesser woman than she need have been. In any case, a great person's indebtedness to the past does not lessen his or her own native originality.

2

The rest of her life gathers round the founding of her church and the promulgation of her message. She gathered her teaching—never too clearly or logically stated—into her textbook, *Science and Health, with Key to the Scriptures*. She proved herself a woman of great acumen, administration, and driving power ; and she has certainly made her organized church into a powerful corporation. She died on 3rd December 1910. On any estimate of her and her teaching, she remains one of the outstanding women of her own or any generation in the influence she has had upon her fellowmen. She had a natural power of forceful thinking and some considerable speculative gift. She could apply her views with relentless logic—indeed I would venture to say that if we once grant her premisses, we are almost shut up to her conclusions. Even if we regard her premisses as unwarranted, we must admit that she was always a strict idealist and was passionately concerned for 'the honour of God.' In this concern, I think she was genuinely religious. Many of her other qualities were equally admirable—her courage, foresight, endurance, and almost indomitable will, though she had few of the gentler attributes of tenderness or affection. Above all, let us do full honour to her desire to help and heal the sorrows and ills of men, for whose sufferings she had a sympathy born of her own experience. For all these great qualities she

will be remembered as one of the ablest and most dominating personalities among women.

Beyond all question, she has helped thousands of people and has brought health and new hope to many of her followers. I do not question the value of her system in aiding certain types of people to happy healthful living, especially those who, like herself, suffer from nervous prostration. There is testimony beyond measure to the thousands of people to whom she has brought comfort, help, and healing. In certain definite ways also she has helped our understanding of some aspects of the Christian faith. Indeed, it is my claim that she has only stressed some truths, fully resident in our faith, which many of us have constantly overlooked or neglected.

I am dealing with her religious system at present for these main reasons: (i) She thought fit to leave the recognized Christian Church of which she was a member, and founded an organization of her own which is largely in competition with the other Christian Churches. Instead of staying inside the Church and reforming it where she thought it to be faulty or deficient, she formed a church of her own. (ii) Her philosophy of man and the material universe seems to me to be wholly inadequate, and her theology is not in accordance with the New Testament which she professes to follow. (iii) Her predominant concern for physical well-being, while immensely important, is not the main concern of Jesus Christ, or rather is only a natural by-product of His spiritual message; and (iv) her simplification of our complex life is really a falsification, as such stupendous simplifications generally tend to be.

Before I express my own valuation of her system,

now known as *Christian Science*, I must first give a brief statement and summary of her teaching and creed, although necessarily my statement will have to be condensed.

3

Mrs. Eddy's problem, as is the case with all idealistic thinkers, was this—how to reconcile the love and goodness of God with the evils, the sins, the sufferings which meet us everywhere in human life. She was deeply concerned with this problem, both from her own bitter experience and as a matter of religious faith.

She began, as we all must begin, with a statement of her ideas and values of God. 'God,' she said, 'is incorporeal, divine, supreme, infinite Mind, Spirit, Soul, Principle, Life, Truth, Love.' God, who is Mind, is the only Cause and Creator, and He is the only Principle of the Universe—the origin, source, governing power or law. God is all-in-all, and there is only God.

So far every Christian will agree. Even modern scientists, who must find some universal principle to explain the 'laws' they work, will agree that the only reasonable explanation of this created universe is the Mind of God—what Professor Eddington called 'a creative spirit.' My only question at the moment is whether Mrs. Eddy ever thinks of God as 'personal' at all. She speaks about Principle, Truth, Life, and Love—and always in capitals—and does not seem to see that it is not easy for us to speak of Life and Love except in relation to some one who lives and loves. Love does not float through the air like a passionless cloud; as known to us, it is always and only a personal thing, or rather, a *relation* between persons.

However, that apart, it is what she deduces from her definition of God that really matters to us. She argues as follows : Since God, the only and original Cause, is Mind, Truth, Love, Principle, therefore everything that proceeds from God, or is made by God, must be *Mind* also—only Mind. Mind, she argues, can only produce Mind, as like produces like.

Hence, Man and the Universe are merely ‘ideas’ of God. These ideas must partake, and can only partake, of the nature of the Mind that produced them. Therefore Man and the Universe are only spiritual, eternal, perfect, expressing the Divine Nature.

Therefore, she continues, there is no such thing as Matter. What we call Matter is only an Error or Delusion of our foolish Mortal Mind. Because God is Infinite Good and Infinite Spirit, there can be no such thing as Matter or the things which seem to go with it—Evil, Sin, Disease, and Death. These things are not real. They only *seem* to exist, and do so because of the Error of our Mortal Mind. If only we could enter into the Eternal Mind of God and live in His thinking, all these things which seem to partake of matter would be seen to be ‘unreal,’ and would cease to exist as real in our minds. In fact, Mrs. Eddy denies that they do ‘exist’ now. (Forgive the constant capitals : but this is a system of capital letters.)

Thus, as with Matter, there is no such reality as *disease* ; it exists for us only because of the Error of our Mortal Mind. There would be no disease, no evil, no sin, and no death, if we could rid ourselves of our ‘Iying Material Sense,’ and the Delusions of our Mortal Mind.

On this great simplification, she bases her theory of cure, which was the one practical thing in which she

was obsessively interested. No medicine is needed for any cure ; for of course medicine itself is only false Material which does not really exist. No surgeon with his knife, or nurse with her bandages and physical care is allowed, for these also are only false and material. None of Mrs. Eddy's practitioners is allowed even to *touch* a sick person. The cure must be entirely by Mind : and this Mind can cure at a distance, and in the absence of the patient. ' If the Scientist reaches his patient through divine Love, the healing work will be accomplished at one visit, and his disease will vanish into its native nothingness like dew before the morning sunshine ' (p. 365).

In the same way, there is no such thing as evil or sin or death : they are not real except as we believe in them, and therefore do not ' exist.' If they seem to exist for us, the blame is our own, the fault of our Mortal Belief. God being entirely spiritual, and God having created all things, there is nothing in the world but Spirit, Mind, Truth, and Principle. Hence all that we foolishly call Matter, even our very bodies, the birds, the trees, the things we make, are not ' real ' ; and we would at once see that they are not real, and we could think them away, but for the Error and the Delusion of this villain of the piece, our Mortal Mind. Only by thinking them away can we ever rid ourselves of the problems that crush us—evil, disease, sin, and death. If only we live in the Divine Principle, these things would be no more. Whatever we may think about this teaching, we must admit that it is a gigantic simplification of our human problems.

In case anyone should think that I am exaggerating the teaching of Mrs. Eddy, let me quote these short statements from *Science and Health* : ' Spirit, God, has

created all in and of Himself. Spirit never created matter. There is nothing in Spirit out of which matter could be made' (p. 335). 'Sin, sickness, and mortality are the suppositional antipodes of Spirit, and must be contradictions of reality' (p. 335). 'The Father-Mind is not the father of matter' (p. 257). 'Divine Mind is the only cause or Principle of existence. Cause does not exist in matter, in mortal mind, or in physical forms' (p. 262). In expounding her creed, an official contribution to the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* by one of her prominent leaders makes these two claims: (i) 'Christian Science maintains that it has Scriptural authority for the teaching that matter does not proceed from God, but is the outcome of evil—in other words an illusion of mortal mind.' (ii) 'Its object is to bring to the individual such a clear recognition of the ever-present, omnipotent God, and of the perfection of man made in His likeness, as will enable him so to discern the illusion, yea, the nothingness of evil, whether sickness or sin, as to rise above it and be free.'

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This then summarises what we might call Mrs. Eddy's philosophy of God, Man, and the Universe—that the only reality that exists is the Mind of God, and that all else is unreal—disease, pain, sickness, sin, evil. These things, if they seem real to us, are due to our error. What she says about Jesus Christ, especially about His personality, His death, His atonement, and His resurrection, I shall leave until I deal with her philosophy and theology in the following chapter, when I shall try to give an estimate of her teaching and system. Meanwhile for what remains of this chapter

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I should like to admit as fully as I can all that I consider good and helpful in Christian Science.

(i) A church or a system like this does not come into being and grow—as the Christian Science Church has undoubtedly grown—without having a considerable truth at its heart. Most of us now believe that Christian Science has laid hold of, even though it has gravely exaggerated, some aspects of Christian truth which have been overlooked or neglected. It is only right for us to recognize that unless a system like this has some real core of truth in its heart, it cannot possibly hope to live for long.

(ii) The neglected truth, as I see it, is twofold : (a) man's mind can have quite amazing creative results on his body, just as the body in certain conditions can sometimes have as amazing effects on his mind ; and (b) faith, if it is only strong and vigorous enough, can often work what seems to us to be a sheer miracle. These two facts are undoubted. Unfortunately they have often been under-stressed or even overlooked in our ordinary religious life.

(iii) All thoughtful and observant people must admit that our mental states can affect the constitution of the body, for good or ill, for health or disease. I fancy that most doctors know, and will freely admit, that there are distinct mental and spiritual approaches to well-being and health, and that if a person's outlook is changed, a corresponding change may take place in his vigour and power. Sometimes our doctors in frank moments will tell us with a smile that it is not their medicines or their methods that cure, so much as their patient's faith ! In some measure we have all had the enlarging experience that if our minds are elevated and uplifted, and our emotions moved and heightened, this

in itself may produce a new feeling of exaltation that may completely change our well-being. Some psychologists have even ventured to say that this uplifting and happy emotion, if strong and continuous, may actually change the 'chemical' structure of the body, almost as sunshine can alter the health of an invalid. So far as the changing power of *faith* is concerned, did anyone ever lay such stress on this as Our Lord Jesus Christ? Indeed, to illustrate the almost incalculable power of faith, He said, 'If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.'

Sometimes—so queer are we—it does not matter what the faith is, be it as ridiculous and nonsensical as possible, so long as it is only strong enough and radiant enough. Under the impulse of such high emotion, many miracles of cure have taken place. In any case, faith can produce a clear serenity and a personal exaltation which may have a transforming effect upon many human conditions of life—and particularly on all nervous and mental disorders.

It is undoubted that Christian Science under its sweeping belief—and it does not matter how irrational that belief may seem to others—has had its cures. The testimony is there. Whether Mrs. Eddy has any justification to quote this physical testimony, material testimony, for *health* and *physical cures*, when she definitely refuses to admit any such testimony for *disease* and *ill-health*, is another matter. The last few pages of her book are full of the most crude physical testimonies to health and healing, whereas she constantly denies the same 'testimony of the senses' to prove disease and ill-health—a most illogical proceeding. All that apart at

the moment, it is only ungenerous to deny that her system has helped thousands of people, especially those neurotic, highly-strung, and disordered lives like her own. A faith like hers—indeed, any faith firmly enough held—is almost bound to have a curative effect on certain people.

Our point just now is twofold : (i) to admit generously the unquestioned good which her teaching has done for many people ; and (ii) to point out that she has only stressed a healing power that is deeply resident in our Christian faith. If all of us allowed our spiritual and mental life to be heightened and purified by Jesus Christ, we should live on a higher plane of efficiency and happiness. Some say that she has only stressed this faith out of all focus and reasonable balance—and of course to overstress or exaggerate even a good quality is to spoil its appeal—but none the less she has laid the Church under a debt by recalling it to the fullness of the inherent powers in its own faith.

(iv) Further, it is also right to admit that some of the common religious explanations of her day regarding the mystery of pain, sin, evil, and death were not only wholly unsatisfactory but even bitterly vicious and cruel. It was not easy for a young woman, fiercely afflicted herself, to be told that all the evils that oppressed her were not only unavoidable, but were even ' sent by God ' as a sort of divine discipline for her spiritual well-being. The regular Church did rightly teach that all the events of our experience—no matter what they are, pleasing or annoying—may be taken in a rich faith, and may be used most certainly as an opportunity for Christian courage and for the formation of a great and choice character. But in too many cases the emphasis was wrongly laid on the idea that these things were

purposefully sent upon us by God only to keep us humble. In other words, the wrong side was accented—the sending of the discipline to us personally, instead of our needed consecration in facing anything that may necessarily lie in the nature of our general human experience. Thus this tormented woman had much the same problem as is discussed so passionately and memorably in the Book of Job—how to reconcile her faith in the love and goodness of God with the facts of pain, suffering, and disaster—the everlasting and teasing problem of all religious philosophy.

Now, no matter how we may question Mrs. Eddy's philosophy, at least it does one thing—if we accept it, it solves this problem. In fact, so far as she is concerned, there is no problem to solve! She maintains the unquestioned love and goodness of God by the simplest expedient—she denies everything that contradicts this love of God! Everything else but God's love is unreal. If contradiction seems to exist at all, this is only due to our Error and our Mortal Mind. For instance, evil, disease, sin, and death seem to contradict God's love. But there is no contradiction at all for Mrs. Eddy; for all these things—evil, sin, and death—are not of God and are not in His will. They are *our* creation, not His. As she keeps repeating, they are only due to our faulty living and thinking. Thus for her, the ancient problem of man's agony is solved, and the character of God is cleared.

All this may not particularly help us, especially if at this moment we have sorrow, loss, or pain in our own lives. But we must acknowledge none the less that if we do accept Mrs. Eddy's premisses, we must accept her conclusions. Of course, like me, you may reject her premisses, in which case you will see that she has so

simplified everything that she has falsified everything. I believe that in trying to explain one puzzle, she has only created a hundred more. However, our point at the moment is this—that to the Christian Scientist who accepts Mrs. Eddy's thesis, there is no contradiction and no agonizing problem of how to reconcile our belief in God's perfect goodness and love with the sin, the pain, the suffering, and the death in the world around us. To the Christian Scientist these things are all unreal, and they only exist because we believe in them. They do not come from God, and therefore they do not conflict with His love.

5

(v) Let us gladly admit further that she has preached a sane gospel of healthy-mindedness for all who believe in God. Some critics have alleged that she is only—or mainly—concerned with *physical* well-being. I think that this is an unfair judgment. She believes, on the contrary, that spiritual well-being and spiritual readjustment must always come first, and that physical well-being is only the natural outcome, the overflow, the *by-product* of this good spiritual and mental health. Indeed, there can be no real lasting physical health until the mind and the soul are adjusted to the reality of God. When that adjustment has taken place, and only then, can there be the natural flower of the good health we all desire.

We may differ from her about what true spiritual health is, and how it is attained and maintained ; but I am convinced that she is definitely interested, first and last, in our *mental* and *spiritual* outlook. From that, in her view, all normal healthy living comes.

Here again, I believe that she has only emphasized an aspect of our Christian faith which many of us have been content to overlook. Can there be any question that our Christian faith teaches the happy, healthy, full, virile life in which joy and creative faith are supreme? Thomas Carlyle once called our religion 'the creed of sorrow,' and a 'faith of sadness and sacrifice'; and admittedly many Christians have lived as if some kind of gloomy restriction and repression must be the natural heritage of the Christian. But there is no book in the world where joy and the sources of joy are more stressed than in the New Testament. We are not blind, of course, to the fact that there are sorrows and disciplines to face in this world; and we are asked to meet them in the courage of faith. There is, for instance, the greatest sorrow of all, right in the heart of the Church—the death and crucifixion of Jesus Christ at the hands of wicked men. There are constant personal sorrows for sin, for weakness, and for the crimes of men. But none the less, in the love, the friendship, and the communion of God—and most of all in the final victory of Jesus Christ—there is reason for joy and hope beyond any that the world can give. 'That my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.' And in any case, so far as the happenings of life are concerned, does not Jesus assure us that nothing that can happen in this world can ever spoil the soul's serenity and peace?

Mrs. Eddy has undoubtedly emphasized this serenity and hopefulness of the Christian life, which so many of us overlook. It is there—deeply resident in the Christian faith—if only we will give it its true power and place.

(vi) Lastly, on the vexed question of 'healing,' so important in the practice of Christian Science, we have

to admit two things : (a) From the angle of history, the practice of medicine in her day was far from scientific—most of its methods were crudely experimental ; many of its remedies were ignorantly applied ; she herself had little reason to trust in the nostrums of doctors. (b) Experienced doctors, as we have seen, will freely own that many physical troubles are mainly mental or spiritual in origin, and that certain particular types of condition can frequently be as readily cured by the psychology of faith as by medicinal treatment. I need hardly say that no responsible doctor would admit for a moment that an organic derangement can be so treated and cured. But many will allow that so-called functional and nervous troubles may be thus happily altered and bettered. Thus there may be some reason to admit that Christian Science practice may greatly help the ill-health of puzzled, unhappy, thwarted, and frustrated daily living. Our Lord Himself laid emphasis on the healing power of faith ; and it is interesting to notice, in connection with His own work, that He could do no great healing where *personal faith* was not deeply involved, directly or indirectly. We may agree therefore that such healing as Christian Science can offer may bring new hope, health, and vigour to many distressed people. In spite of some grave failures by Christian Science practitioners—where patients have died without the services of a trained doctor who might easily have saved them—in hundreds of cases where serious illness has been due to mental and spiritual maladjustment, the kind of belief that Christian Science represents can be of some considerable help.

Mrs. Eddy has founded a great, energetic, and powerful organization which has chosen to separate itself from the orthodox church everywhere. In my

next chapter I shall offer my frank criticism of her whole system of teaching, especially of her philosophy of the world, her theology, and her creed of conduct. Meanwhile I appreciate Mrs. Eddy's amazing creative capacity, her natural and sustained power of speculation, her logical masterful mind, and her consecration of spirit during years of difficulty, even amid slander and calumny. In our religion we speak about 'new creatures,' those who have seen a great light, found a strong life, and go out with a burning message. She was certainly one of this great company, for she became a changed woman herself; and with this in her heart, she set out to do what she could for her fellowmen. If I differ radically from her in some things which seem essential to me, I can yet preserve a respect for her work, an admiration for her aims, and especially an appreciation of the great dream that was in her heart for the sufferings of others who walk through the same dark valley where she herself suffered so long.