

II

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE AS A CREED

IN my previous chapter, I gave a short outline of Mrs. Eddy's life and experience, her constant illnesses, and her deep pre-occupation with health and well-being. We have seen how for some years she was under the treatment and tutelage of the 'faith and mind healer,' Dr. Quimby, and how much she owed to him not only for her own recovered health but also for the main ideas of her system. It is a pity that none of the official accounts of her life, given by her own people, even *mentions* the name of Dr. Quimby. Mrs. Eddy later wrote this: 'If any so-called new school claims to be Christian Science, and yet uses another author's discoveries without giving that author proper credit, such a school is erroneous, for it inculcates a breach of that divine commandment in the Hebrew Decalogue Thou shalt not steal.' Would that she had been generous enough to apply this to herself!

None the less what is distinctive about Mrs. Eddy is that she made a religion and founded a church. This is her individual and distinctive contribution. It may be true to say that there would have been no Christian Science Church without the teaching which Mrs. Eddy learned and used from Dr. Quimby; but on the other hand, Dr. Quimby, neither by gifts nor by quality, could have founded a religious system or organized a church. No matter how deeply Mrs. Eddy was indebted to her healer, this distinctive contribution is what counts most. It was by her own genius that

she gathered all Quimby's vague ideas into a compact 'system' and based them on a religious philosophy, of which Quimby was in no way capable—what she herself called a 'final revelation of divine Principle.'

I

It is our task now to examine her philosophy, her theory of the universe and human life, her theology, and her ideas of practice and conduct. I believe that all her claims stand or fall by one thing—her philosophy. To my mind, if her philosophy is sound, her claims are reasonable; and if her philosophy is wrong, her conclusions are untenable.

As we saw in the previous chapter, her main teaching about the world and life is stupendously simple. She maintains that the only reality in the universe is God, whom she constantly defines in abstract words, and always in capital letters, as Principle, Mind, Life, Love, Truth. She refuses in any direct way to call God a Person, chiefly, I hazard, because she has an out-dated view of what a 'person' really is. She constantly speaks as if a person is and must be something corporal or corporeal. She seems to have no notion of a personal spirit as living in a body and yet not the body, or ever to be identified with the body. Because during our earthly life our personal spirits have always 'a local habitation and a name,' she seemed unable to think of personality apart from a bodily form.

There is a certain falsity of thought, however—to be noticed also in theosophy—in refusing to call God a person and yet attributing to Him all the precise and distinctive qualities that are only known to us as being

purely and only *personal*—love, truth, justice, goodness, and will. ‘The category of personality is not only religiously the most inspiring that we can apply to the Power behind the Universe, it is also intellectually the least inadequate.’¹ But though Mrs. Eddy is afraid to speak of God as a personal spirit, yet she speaks of the divine Principle *willing* things to happen. But to attribute *will* to a *Principle* is only playing with words.

From her statement that God is Mind, she makes her devastating inference that anything made or created by God must necessarily be mind also—mind and only mind. She has therefore to account for what we commonly call matter—the universe, the earth, the trees, animals, our own bodies, and the things we daily use and eat and handle.

Here she is only facing the elemental problem which no system of philosophy has solved, or is ever likely to solve—how pure spirit can evolve what we call the material and the physical? Out of what, and from where, is it evolved? This is the common hurdle of all systems. On the one hand, it is the supreme difficulty of religious systems with their varied ‘creational’ theories; and on the other hand, it presents an equal difficulty for materialistic and mechanistic philosophies; for in every case, the problem is *how to account for the origin of a material world at all*.

Religion, as we know, rests the problem on faith—as good a place as any—faith that the all-loving and all-powerful God has means and processes which are naturally beyond and, in the circumstances, must be beyond, all human comprehension. Eastern religions—and with them, theosophy—try to ease the problem by their theories of successive ‘divine emanations’

¹ Streeter, *Reality*, p. 133

from the original pure spirit of the Infinite Being. But this does not really ease the problem in any way, except to push it farther back. And to push it back is merely to dodge it, not solve it. In the same way all materialistic creeds are even more in the dark; for they presume or posit an 'elemental matter'—(why? or how?)—which out of its own innate mysterious qualities is presumed to be able to evolve a world of law and order like ours, where beauty and art, and especially mind, are everywhere noticed by us.

I stress this merely to show that Mrs. Eddy was only facing a problem common to all thinking since thinking began. Our question is—how did she face it? She apparently solved this puzzle of the human mind at one fell swoop, and by what I have called a gigantic simplification. Actually, for her, there is no puzzle at all, and so there is no need for any reconciliation. She simplifies everything by asserting that there is *no such thing as matter*. It only seems to exist because we believe it. (She never explains how we have come to believe it.) It is not real, and it would not even *seem to exist* but for our foolish belief.

Not being in any way an exact thinker, she is guilty of some curious confusions. (a) Sometimes she says that things are not 'real,' and at other times that they do not 'exist.' She uses these terms as if they were identical, not understanding that a thing may be real and not exist, and may exist and not be real. The number '10' is real, but does not exist; and the colour 'red' exists, but is not real. (b) She has to admit for her own purposes that things do exist—food, chairs, flowers, and the pen with which she used to write her books. But she always gets over the hurdle by claiming that they exist *only as we believe in them* by our foolish

Mortal Minds. She never by any chance explains how and why this villainous Mortal Mind ever came upon the scene at all.

2

I suggest that it is not too difficult to trace how Mrs. Eddy—no doubt through Dr. Quimby who at least read books—came by her quaint views of ‘matter.’ The philosopher, Bishop Berkeley, author of the famous book *An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision*, came to stay in America in 1729, and resided for three years on Long Island. The papers and journals of the time hailed his arrival, published interviews, and gave some rough account of his general teaching. Among his friends and pupils was a man, Samuel Johnson, who is described by Professor Campbell Fraser of Edinburgh as ‘one of the most acute thinkers then in America.’ This man, who afterwards became President of Kings College in New York, had later a very distinguished student (while he was professor at Yale University) in a young man called Jonathan Edwards, who afterwards deeply affected contemporary and later American thinking. In his life of Berkeley, Campbell Fraser writes, ‘Whether Edwards drew his thoughts about matter from Berkeley’s books at first hand, or through Johnson, is uncertain ; but it is a fact worthy of remembrance that Berkeley’s new conception of nature and the material world was entertained by the best metaphysical mind in America.’¹

But unfortunately, no-one has been so misrepresented, even by responsible philosophers, as Berkeley. Some alleged that he taught that there was no phenomenal external world except as our eyes could see it, and that

¹ Campbell Fraser, *Berkeley*, p. 138

it had no real existence except in our vision and our conceiving minds. People who had mis-studied him, or had not studied him at all, declared that he proved the unreality of matter—indeed that it could not be said to exist except in our minds and ideas. But what Berkeley taught was actually the reverse of this—that the very act of seeing is only an interpretation which in itself presupposes the same sort of rational unity in the visible phenomena of the outside world. He was concerned to show that there was a corresponding reality in the material world as in the eye that sees it. As he himself puts it, his theory was ‘a virtual recognition of the perpetual creative agency of the Supreme Being.’ Again, ‘I am not changing things into ideas, but ideas into things.’ ‘Those immediate objects of perception, which according to you are only appearances of things, I take to be the real things themselves.’ In other words, he was not out to deny the reality of the external world, but to assert the reality of our inner world, and the spiritual world of God.

This is the sort of misrepresentation which finally percolated down to untrained people like Quimby and Mrs. Eddy. They took the caricature, and preached it as a new gospel. It is simply a philosophical mistake. All thinkers admit that, made as we are, we can only *know* the outer world through the senses; and at the best, as Bertrand Russell points out, we can only know the outside world in our ‘mental picture’ of it. ‘We naturally interpret the world pictorially—that is to say, we imagine that what goes on is more or less like what we see.’¹ We might therefore say that all we can know—really know—of this external world is our perception of it and our ideas about it. That is plain sailing. But

¹ Bertrand Russell, *ABC of Relativity*, p. 226

no responsible thinker has ever said, because of this, that the material world on which our ideas are built is unreal or does not exist. How it exists for us is one thing ; but it is another thing to imagine that it would cease to exist, if and when *we ceased to think about it*. My idea of existence naturally depends upon my vision and my mind. But I cannot thereby think it away. And at the best, my vision of the world of matter must presume one thing—that there is something definitely existing to cause and justify my vision and my mental picture.

Mrs. Eddy's ideas about matter are only crude misrepresentations of what Bishop Berkeley taught. He certainly did not deny that matter existed ; he merely asserted that we could only *know* about this external world through our ideas about it. And he maintained that our very ideas about order and law in this world *are the best, and indeed the only, proof that such order and law do really exist*.

Mrs. Eddy's philosophy of the universe outrages the senses as well as human thinking. It is one of these guileless simplifications that only make thought a muddle. 'Spirit never made matter.' 'The Father-Mind is not the father of matter.' But say what we like—even though in desperation we only appeal to the philosophy of common sense and experience—we have to deal with matter. We can deny that it exists, but it is there. And if it is there, and if Spirit did not make it, then we have to face what we call a *Dualism*—not one Principle or Power in the universe, but two. In a universe—if it is to be a 'universe'—this is unthinkable. It is evident that Mrs. Eddy reached her gigantic simplification merely by denying what she could not disprove. Amid all the respectable systems that

have tried to reach some 'unity' in thinking about this world, hers is the only one that attains its end, not by what she affirms, but merely by what she denies.

I say this because we too, as strongly as Mrs. Eddy, believe in the 'pure eternal mind' of God, God who willed and created all things. We believe, as much as she, that the only 'eternal' things in this universe are spiritual. But we do not maintain this simply by denying that the things of this world by which we live, and the happenings of life, however much they may puzzle us, are not real and are not in God's will. We believe that all the visible and tangible world around us, so evident to our senses and our experience, is the creation of God, and is in itself good, and that God's spirit maintains and informs all the material universe. We believe in God's Laws, by which alone the universe is maintained, and by which alone we ourselves can live and think. We hold that this is not only the teaching of the Bible, but also the teaching of Science and of human experience. This means that we find God's creative handiwork everywhere; His spirit permeates all things in their loveliness and power.

Mrs. Eddy denies this, and says that there is no such thing as Matter. 'Matter or body is but a false concept of mortal mind' (p. 177). Our error is due only to our delusion—our material sense. Matter in all its varied magically beautiful forms is not 'real'; and we could think it away, if we thought aright.

Now if by 'real' she means *eternal*, we should at once agree with her. Our bodies are real—and must be real to us, if we are to use them—but they are not eternal. Stone and iron and trees and animals are real, but are not eternal. The whole universe, of which we are but a tiny part, is real, but not eternal. Both

the Christian faith and modern Science agree in saying this. On the one hand the Bible states that even heaven and earth shall pass away, and our bodies shall fade within a few short years, as a leaf fades in the autumn. But none the less all that is truly eternal in us shall remain and abide.

And on the other hand Science tends to show ever more and more that matter can be constantly changed and resolved into its primitive constituents of energy and force. But though it can be changed, matter is just as real as the energy and power it releases.

3

By the way, a recent Christian Science writer has ventured to claim that the 'splitting of the atom' has shown that matter is not real. This is only foolish thinking; for atomic fission is merely a change of one real thing into another as real. If the question arises whether the energy released is real, one feels tempted to say with sorrow, 'Ask the Japanese,' and see what they say. They will tell us that the atom and its resident power, once it is released, is the most dreadful reality known to man.

On this interesting point of the possible dispersal of matter into nothingness, Professor Frederick Soddy writes, 'Even if we accept these ideas, it would be a mistake to suppose that matter has been resolved into electricity. There are still two fundamental units in atomic structure, the electron and the $+$ ion, and the resolution has been rather into electricity *and* matter than into $-$ and $+$ electricity. For $+$ electricity on this view has every one of the ordinary features of matter in addition to its electric charge, and even its

further resolution into a collection of protons and electrons cannot really be said to constitute more than a verbal preference for calling matter positive electricity.'¹

It is one thing to say that matter, in whatever form it may be, is not eternal; it is another thing to say that it is not real, or does not exist. In actual fact, and in concerted human experience, this 'stubborn reality' which we agree to call matter is the only thing with which we must deal, and by which we can alone live in our sort of world; and our spiritual worth is shown by *how we deal with it*. Of more things than of Jesus may it be reverently said, the Word of God was *made flesh*. This is the ordained order of the world as we can alone know it—that God's creative spirit is in all things and maintains all things, governing them by His gracious laws which are our guarantee of security. These forms are not eternal, as we now know them; but they are our common daily realities. All the mere denials of their existence cannot possibly affect their existence for the ends of human living.

I imagine that Mrs. Eddy denies the reality of matter for two foolish reasons. (i) Like some of the out-dated philosophies of early days, she believes that matter in itself is 'evil.' In the same foolish way, some of the early Christian hermits and ascetics believed that what we loosely call 'the world' was evil, and in their desire to be spiritual they turned their backs on the world and forsook it. But it cannot be emphasized enough that to the Christian *there is nothing evil either in matter or the world except the use to which we may put them*. Since all forms of creation in our universe must necessarily come from the will and power of God—unless we are going to believe in the impossible dualism

¹ *Evolution in the Light of Modern Knowledge* (Blackie & Sons), p. 372

of which I have spoken—matter in itself is in no sense evil. The only possible evil is our use of matter.

(ii) Mrs. Eddy thinks that evil and sin have their only source and cause in the 'body.' This is not true. As I hope to show later, sin is always an affair of the will, the mind, and the spirit. It will not do to make the body the seat of sin. This is merely bad psychology, added to her previous bad philosophy.

Now it is on this philosophical absurdity—that in no sense does matter proceed from God, and that it only seems to exist because we foolishly think it exists—that Mrs. Eddy bases everything. If we reject her premisses, as normal thinking men must do, all her conclusions and deductions become invalid. By the laws of logic, anything built on a falsity is false all through. Since her ethics, her religious system, her doctrine of health and cure are built on this falsity, they become suspect at once. I hold that the foundation of Christian Science is philosophically absurd, is against reason and experience, and most of all is against the Christian basis of the New Testament. I think that it may fairly be claimed therefore that Christian Science is neither scientific nor particularly Christian.

4

Let us now consider some of the main points of her teaching, as they must now appear if we reject her philosophy of God and the universe.

(i) There is no such thing as *pain* and *suffering*. Pain and suffering depend only on our foolish belief in matter. If we did not believe in this unreal thing, but could think it away, there would be no such thing as pain.

True. But since we cannot, by any known possibility, think matter away, but must deal with it as real—as real as our own bodies with their flesh and bones and nerves—we cannot avoid pain and suffering. These things are only a natural part of our human physical heritage, as natural as growth and decay.

No doubt she has hold of a half-truth here. We admit fully that if we observed the good laws of health and lived in accordance with the will of God, we might be able to avoid nine-tenths of the pains and sufferings we commonly bring upon ourselves. Nothing can be more sure than this; for we believe that God in His goodness means us to enjoy health, vigour, and well-being. But while this is true, we know that since the human body is only part of God's physical world, it is futile and foolish to say that pain does not exist, except as we believe in it and think it. To say so is a kind of cruel satire on the boundless real sufferings of mankind.

My readers may hardly credit to what lengths Mrs. Eddy is ready to go in her assertion that pain is entirely due to foolish belief. When a little helpless baby of a few weeks old cries with pain—let us say, from flatulence or any other childish discomfort—she dare not say, of course, that the trouble is only due to the baby's *belief* that it is in pain, for she is sensible enough to know that the little baby has no belief one way or the other about the business at all! How does she manage to get round the little baby's natural sense of pain? She says that it is due to you, the baby's mother, thinking the pain into your baby. Listen to this from *Science and Health*—'Giving drugs to infants, noticing every symptom of flatulency, and constantly directing the mind to such signs—that mind being laden with illusions about disease, health-laws, and death—these

actions convey mental images to children's budding thoughts, and often stamp them there, making it probable at any time that such ills may be reproduced in the very ailments feared. A child may have worms, if you say so, or any other malady, timorously held in the beliefs concerning the body' (p. 413).

Can folly go further? This is riding a theory over a precipice. The next time your helpless little baby cries with sudden pain—pain that it at least never doubts—the reason is that you, its loving and prayerful mother, have thought the pain into it. Naturally, she could not attribute the pain to the 'foolish thought' of the baby, for at that age the child has no thoughts or beliefs at all. So the only way in which she can justify her foolish theory is to blame you for thinking the pain into the child. I suppose that when I, by a thoughtless blunder, step on my pussy's tail and it howls with pain, which somehow it knows to be real, the only reason for this is that I have thought the pain into the pussy's mind.

Please follow her reasoning. There is no such thing as matter, except in our foolish delusion. On this false premiss she builds her theory that therefore there can be no pain or suffering. Pain only exists in the folly of our mortal mind. If this is so, I wonder why Mrs. Eddy in later years went herself to an approved dentist, and had a painful tooth removed. The extraction was done with the aid of a local anaesthetic! If pain is not real, but only due to mortal error, why should she so contradict her own foundation beliefs? When challenged about this, she replied that—I quote from the *Brooklyn Eagle Library*, 1901—'the dentist's belief in the means he employed was a mental force which combined with her own.' From any experience

I have ever had even of the gentlest dentist, it is not a 'mental force' he employs, but something definitely different!

So far this is our conclusion. We know that her first postulate is definitely wrong. Matter is real, and there is no way of denying it; it is indeed the one inescapable reality we have to deal with in this physical world. Instead of denying that matter is real, we believe that it proceeds from God, who created the real world we know, the only world we can know in this life. Thus since her first premiss is wrong, her conclusion is wrong. Unfortunately, as every human being at some moment has discovered, pain and suffering are definitely real both to mind and body. She herself, poor woman, found them to be real, and all her attempts to deny their reality or think them away did not save her from them, as they didn't save her from death.

Her creed has undoubtedly helped many people; for any faith firmly believed, no matter how foolish the faith may be, can often provide an exaltation of life or a plane of emotion that acts like a tonic. And yet we should not be blind to the essential callousness of her teaching. I know that she meant only to help people, but there must be millions of gentle sufferers to whom her message must seem a ghastly irony. I have known people—young men in our war hospitals—so tormented that they would believe anything, and believe it passionately, if only this might ease their pain. To say to these stricken souls—to say to a Jesus gasping for water on His cross—'There is no such thing as pain, except in your foolish belief,' is one of the enormities which only a person who values a theory more than truth could ever perpetrate.

I would not object to any theory she might fancy if she would only be loyal to it. 'If from any injury or from any cause a Christian Scientist were seized with pain so violent that he could not treat himself mentally—the sufferer could call a surgeon who could give him a hypodermic injection; then, when the belief of pain was lulled, he could handle his own case mentally' (p. 464). *The belief of pain was lulled?* No, the *actual pain* was lulled!

5

Since there is no matter, except in our own delusion and foolish thinking, there is and can be no such thing as *disease*. Like pain and suffering, disease only exists because we believe in the reality of matter.

How the world has longed for health and sought to eliminate, or at least lessen, the scourge of disease! The ancient Greeks—by their arduous training for bodily fitness, their open-air life, their moderation in eating, and most of all, their teaching of health as an attainable ideal for all—came as near to eliminating disease as any people ever did. They regarded health as being only 'natural.' Their word 'physician' (from *phusis*—nature) shows us how they regarded all disease as a breach of nature, and as Dr. Singer remarks 'that word itself stands as a lasting reminder of their achievement.'¹ In the same way, it is worth remembering the humorous, and yet very thoughtful, discussion of disease in Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*, where he pictures the natives of his fabled land *punishing* disease as a social crime. The natives of Erewhon regarded health as being so natural and so easy for good-living and wise-thinking people that a man who 'caught a cold' was

¹ *Legacy of Greece*, chapter 'Medicine,' p. 202

liable to be fined or punished for his careless social sin.

All this is indirectly on Mrs. Eddy's side—or rather on Dr. Quimby's, for it was he who first believed and taught that disease or illness was 'error.' There is no doubt at all—all experienced people believe it—that if we live wisely and 'conveniently to nature,' we may easily rid the world from all its decimating plagues and most of its virulent diseases. But while we say this, no-one but a fool or a blind theorist can believe that disease is only a delusion of our mortal minds because we believe in matter. Matter, though real and existing, constantly changes by the laws of natural growth, development, and decay; and disease therefore in some real fashion naturally inheres in matter. Just because we must believe in matter—just because we ourselves are physically parts of matter—we must recognize that disease is only a normal symptom of natural growth and decay. It may be astonishingly lessened and relieved, and might become largely non-existent—but *not* in Mrs. Eddy's sense of that word!

As keenly as Mrs. Eddy, every thoughtful and caring person strives to eliminate or lessen disease. But we know that we can never abolish it merely by denying its existence and reality. I admitted freely in my previous chapter the astounding power which the mind may exercise over many of the ailments of the body; and especially we know how a healthy outlook, a happy and exalted emotion, and good habits of mind and life can charge many an ailing person with new vigour and power. But surely that is freely and openly admitted by every observant person. It is quite another thing, however, to say that sickness and disease are not

real. Here, as already hinted, Mrs. Eddy is guilty of a queer contradiction. She says that our common belief in the reality of disease is due to 'false material sense' and to 'lying sense perceptions.' These lying sense perceptions are themselves not real, and therefore should be openly distrusted. If we would only refuse all *material physical evidence* for disease, we should soon see that there is no disease at all. But—here is the contradiction—she herself in the last chapter of her textbook accepts all these material proofs for *health and well-being*, and quotes them with huge approval to show how Christian Science has cured people. But Mrs. Eddy cannot have it both ways. If she accepts and quotes 'the material evidence of the senses' for *health*, she must accept these same material proofs for *disease*. Health and disease are merely different sides of the same thing, and if we allow material proof for the one, we cannot deny material proof for the other.

6

Because matter does not exist, there are naturally no such things as *evil* and *sin*. Evil and sin belong only to matter, and they are merely illusions of the 'material mind.' 'Both sin and sickness are error, and Truth is their remedy' (p. 461). 'Evil has no reality. It is neither person, place nor thing, but is simply a belief, an illusion of material sense' (p. 71).

We can honour her attempt, however inadequate it may seem, to 'justify the ways of God to man.' Once again she was merely facing one of the age-long problems of human thinking—if there is a God of love and mercy, how can we account for the presence of evil and sin in His world? Some religions—for instance,

Zoroastrianism—just admit the dilemma as insoluble and believe that there must be two rival Principles in our universe—one of essential Good, and one of essential Evil. This is a dualism ; and the universe is not really a ‘ Universe,’ but a scene of warring and irreconcilable Powers. Some crude forms of Christianity resolve the problem by positing an active personal Devil who has power over the souls of men. In the Book of Job, Satan is represented as an ‘ adversary ’ or rather as a sort of ‘ testing spirit ’ who has generous latitude in sifting and trying all human souls. On the other hand, a religion such as Buddhism seeks to resolve the problem by its passionless doctrine of ‘ Karma,’ which attempts to explain all the grave inequalities and apparent injustices in our human lot by saying that all these evils are due, not to the Will of God but merely to our own folly and sin in some past incarnation. All the grave evils from which we suffer are in no way due to any malevolence or want of love or lack of provision on the part of God, but are only the natural consequences of our own past follies in some previous life. This theory seems at first to remove any disquiet about God’s ways and character, and yet it actually leaves the greatest sense of injustice—that I am held responsible for acts in a former life of which I have no possible recollection now.

How then did Mrs. Eddy seek to solve the ancient dilemma of God’s power and love on the one hand, and the presence of evil and sin on the other? Merely by her usual futile method—she preserved the unassailable goodness of God by *denying* that evil and sin exist. Thus there is no problem for her to solve—evil does not clash with any doctrine of the love and power

of God, for the simple reason that evil and sin are not real—they do not exist except by our foolish thinking. There cannot be any evil in this world, because evil belongs to matter, and there is no matter—and that's that!

Two things are plain: (i) Matter was so desperately real to her that she was always denying it! The more you keep on denying a thing, the more you actually assert it! Her constant irrational denials only prove that she was obsessed and hag-ridden by the things she denied. (ii) She constantly asserts that sin and evil belong only to the body. Is this true? There is no kind of sin known to me that is not entirely a thing of the mind and the will. It is always conceived in the mind first, and it only operates in and through the body as an instrument. The Epistle of James puts this fact unforgettably—'Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.'¹ Even if Christian Science could 'think away' matter, it could not think away *sin*, for sin is always and only a thing of the will, the spirit and the mind.

Compare her thought about evil with our Christian view. We believe that God has given us reason, mind, conscience, and will—a sufficient guide to the things of right and wrong. He has bestowed on us the dignity and peril of choice; for the only good that is worthy is the good that is willed and freely chosen. But obviously if we have any free choice at all, we must be as free to choose the lower and the evil, if we so wish, as to choose the higher and the better. We cannot be free to choose unless we can choose either way. Therefore, if good is real when we choose it, evil when we

¹ James i. 14, 15

will it, must be as real. To say that good is *positive* and evil is *negative* is playing with words, for they are both—and equally—choices of the mind and will. In no possibly worthy sense can we get rid of evil and sin merely by denying that they exist. In all human thinking, and especially in all religious thinking, there is only one way to rid ourselves of sin—know it, face it, overcome it, and will the good. This is the way of Jesus Christ.

In any case—and she called herself a Christian—what possible idea can her system give of the mission and work of Jesus Christ—His life, His teaching, His suffering, and His cross—if, after He came to save the world from sin, there should be no such thing as evil and sin at all? She more than hints that Jesus came to save us only from our foolish ideas and our ‘delusion’ about sin. If so, then He Himself suffered from the same ‘delusion of the mind’ about the reality and the power of sin.

It should be noticed what is implied in her theory of the unreality of sin. She says, ‘Being destroyed, sin needs no other form of forgiveness’ (p. 339). None of the gracious doctrines of forgiveness and redemption has any place in her system. Since there is no sin, there is no call for grief and repentance. All that is needed is to disbelieve in the reality of sin. Thus the whole doctrine of Christ’s redemption of mankind in the forgiveness of God is completely unnecessary; and if Jesus died to convince men of sin, recall them to repentance, and assure them of the grace of God, it was a complete mistake. At the best, Jesus only came to ‘demonstrate’ that our belief in sin is an error.

Since there is no matter—nothing that is truly physical, except as we falsely imagine it—and since the thing we call matter certainly does not proceed from God, there can of course be no such reality as *death*. ‘The belief that matter has life results by the universal law of mortal mind in a belief in death. So man, tree, and flower are supposed to die ; but the fact remains that God’s universe is spiritual and immortal’ (p. 289). ‘Life is not in matter. Therefore it cannot be said to pass out of matter. Matter and death are mortal illusions’ (p. 289). ‘Life is real and death is an illusion’ (p. 428). ‘Man is incapable of sin, sickness, and death’ (p. 475). Since we are entirely spiritual, and our bodies are not real except to our foolish mortal thinking, there is, to put it bluntly, *nothing real left to die*. This is where Mrs. Eddy’s dreadful simplification becomes such a dreadful falsification, and an even more dreadful mockery and irony. Her theory that there is no real body that can be born, can grow, can be healthful or diseased, and at the end can return to the dust from which it came, is merely a mockery and contradiction of everything we can know and believe about ourselves and life.

She says, ‘Since life is not in matter, it cannot be said to pass out of matter.’ But life *is* in matter ; it uses and inhabits matter, by God’s ordaining. It used the matter of her own body, and the physieal mechanism of her own brain. We recognize the urgency of her desire to establish the final realm and reality of the spiritual, as against the crude materialistic philosophy of her own day—now long happily out of date. But we cannot dispose of facts merely by shutting our eyes.

Our mental life, for instance, is certainly dependent on the suitable physical organism of our brain ; and any alienist knows how an injury to that delicate physical organism affects good thinking. We agree with her that Mind and Spirit are not finally conditioned by any natural or physical state. But to say that the personal soul does not use and inhabit the body is only an attempt to justify an impossible theory by impossible claims. Life is in matter ; for life uses matter ; and if life is in matter, it can certainly pass out of matter. This is the simple explanation of all growth, decay, and death—the only explanation of the proved things that happen. Birth, growth, decay, and death are parts of the natural rhythm of ordained human living. We may say that they are not there ; but say what we like, they will be there, when we are not.

Her theory contradicts facts ; it contradicts all human experience ; and it certainly contradicts the findings of science and the teaching of Jesus Christ. It is simply idle to deny that our spirits inhabit a material body, the gift and design of God, or that we do grow in all gracious ways, or that at the end, at our appointed time, our bodies die, according to the observed laws of Nature which we believe to be the Laws of God. More surely, because more reasonably, than Mrs. Eddy, we believe that we are immortal souls made in the image of God, and that our personal spirits are eternal in the promise and power of God. But while we accept this, we accept the whole wonderful material world of which our mortal bodies are only a part. We may not understand the why and the wherefore of all this—we do not—but certainly it is easier to believe these great affirmations than the irrational denials of Christian Science. I am reminded of the pawky story told about Thomas

Carlyle. In argument, a young man once said to him with apparent generosity, 'Of course, Sir, I accept the universe.' And the old sage replied, 'You'd better.'

The philosophy and creed of Christian Science depend upon an original premiss or assumption which reason, experience, and religion declare to be fallacious. If we reject that premiss—as we must—her whole system falls to the ground with it. Do not say she is illogical; she is not; she is only too terribly logical. But any system, however logically worked out, which is founded on an original fallacy is false all through.

8

Christian Science claims to be a *religion* and a *code of conduct* as well as a philosophy of the universe. We know that it purloins the word Science—always spelt with the capital letter—to describe itself. Indeed, we have to be wary of Mrs. Eddy's unwarranted use of this word; for when she says 'Science proves,' she does not mean the accepted science of our scientists, but merely her own system. I have tried to show that she has no claim to describe her creed as in any fashion a 'science.' The further question arises—has she any justification to use the equally definite word 'Christian' as descriptive of her faith? In what sense is it Christian, and how does it agree with the facts of the New Testament?

(i) I have shown earlier that she hesitates to call God a 'person,' and I gave my suggested reasons for her hesitation. She refers to '*the great truth of God's impersonality*,¹ and speaks of God only in abstract terms—Mind, Principle, Truth, Love, and what not. I

¹ *Miscellany*, p. 117

questioned her right to do this, for I doubt if one can legitimately ascribe a *personal* attribute to Something that is not a person. Occasionally she speaks confusedly of the Father-God and the Mother-God; but how there can be a Father-Mother-God who is not personal, is beyond all common understanding.

(ii) Mrs. Eddy's views of Jesus Christ, whenever I can understand her vague words, have certainly no basis in the records of the New Testament. I shall only ask you to consider a few points, but these should be sufficient to show you how she regards Jesus and His message to the world, and will enable you to decide what title she has to the name Christian.

First of all, we saw that in the view of Christian Science, sin is not real, being only a delusion of our mortal mind. Therefore, of course, there can be no thought of what the Bible calls 'the need of Salvation.' Christ's work, according to Mrs. Eddy, was to save us from our mistaken ideas and our delusions about sin. Equally, of course, there can be no notion of what the New Testament and all the apostles call 'redemption.' Mrs. Eddy says that when Jesus claims that He came to redeem mankind and save men from their sins, He only meant that He came to save us from our foolish notion that there is such a thing as sin at all. In her own phrase, Christ came—i.e. if Christ did actually come in the flesh¹—merely to reveal the true 'Science,' which had lain hidden till disclosed by Mrs. Eddy, God's chosen instrument. That Science—as I have explained till you must be weary—is that men should be saved from pain, suffering, material existence, disease, fear, sin, and death by learning to know that

¹ 'Christ was not born after the flesh: He was born of Spirit, not matter,' *Miscellany*, p. 261

these things are quite unreal. They never lay in God's plan, but are only the product of man's mortal thinking.

Hence—let this be clear—Jesus died not to save men from sin and its dominion, but only as a 'demonstration.' This is her own word—a demonstration that matter, and sin, and suffering, and death are not real. I am wrong in saying that He died. The Jesus part did; the Christ part did not. Here again, if we look closely enough and try to understand Mrs. Eddy's vague assertions, we are faced with a new 'dualism.' Jesus is somehow strangely different from Christ. Listen to this: 'Jesus is the name of the man who, more than all other men, has presented Christ, the true idea of God, healing the sick and the sinning, and destroying the power of death. Jesus is the human man, Christ is the divine idea' (p. 473).

But even then, I am wrong in saying that the Jesus part died. He only seemed to die. He was not dead when He was placed in the tomb. 'There,' as Mrs. Eddy says, 'He met and mastered, on the basis of Christian Science, the power of mind over matter, all the claims of medicine, surgery, and hygiene' (p. 44). Again, a little later she adds, 'His disciples believed Jesus to be dead while He was hidden in the sepulchre, whereas He was alive, demonstrating within the narrow tomb the power of spirit to overrule mortal, material sense' (p. 44).

What can we think of this? I can only state three things—(i) she trifles with every attested fact of New Testament history—this especially, that Jesus Christ was crucified on that cross by Roman soldiers, who took His body down when dead, certified to be dead, after a sword had been driven through His side; (ii) she who professes to honour Jesus Christ refuses to believe

that He said, not once but many times, as the only true explanation of His divine ministry, that the Son of Man must die; and (iii) she is ready to twist any fact—misconstrue it, whittle it away, or deny it—to suit her own theory-ridden ideas.

9

Practically, I despair of any kind of reasonable argument with a mind like Mrs. Eddy's. I have tried to show from various quotations how she denies that there is anything 'corporeal' or 'in the flesh' or 'material.' Now, with this in mind, read this final quotation: 'The dual personality of the unseen and the seen, the spiritual and material, the eternal Christ and the corporeal Jesus, manifest in the flesh, continued until the Master's ascension, when the material concept of Jesus disappeared, while the spiritual self or Christ continues to exist in the eternal order of divine Science, taking away the sins of the world, as Christ has always done, even before the human Jesus was incarnate to mortal eyes' (p. 334). I imagine that everything she has ever asserted is bluntly contradicted in that one sentence. She speaks about 'material,' 'in the flesh,' 'the sins of the world,' 'the human Jesus,' 'incarnate to mortal eyes,' and 'the corporeal Jesus'—and so, in spite of herself, she is forced to contradict herself in every essential point of her own theory.

In fine, if this is her ground for calling her system 'Christian Science,' her word 'Christian' has no understandable relation to the message of the New Testament.

In general, her use, or rather misuse, of texts and passages of Scripture is a constant pain to any honest

student of the Bible. She picks texts out of any passage, wholly out of their context, and tosses them about as a child throws pebbles on the beach—and just as aimlessly. At other times, when a passage does not suit her theories, and especially if it contradicts them, she calmly claims the right to ‘spiritualize’ the text, i.e. to give it any meaning she fancies. They say that we can prove anything by texts from the Bible, torn from their context; but when we actually twist the words of the texts themselves, we can prove even that light is darkness.

May I give one illustration—now famous because so often quoted. On page 338 of *Science and Health*, she has this gem of exegesis. ‘The word *Adam* is from the Hebrew *Adamah*, signifying the *red colour of the ground, dust, nothingness*. Divide the name *Adam* into two syllables, and it reads *a dam*, or obstruction.’ The only thing I can say will be voted impolite, but if you are going to split up the man’s name into two syllables—(why should you?)—you may well say that the exegesis is certainly not worth *a dam*!

Such an explanation betrays Mrs. Eddy’s wholly uncritical mind. If I quote one more example, it is only to show how she is constantly forced to contradict her own basal position. In commenting on the statement in *Genesis* that God divided the light from darkness, she says that this means that ‘Truth and Error were distinct in the beginning and never mingled.’ But her main argument surely is that Error never existed until man, especially poor old Adam, believed in it; and yet here, in her fancy exegesis, she asserts that it *existed with Truth in the very beginning*, before man with his foolish mortal mind could ever dream it into existence!

I am not going to proceed any further, lambasting a

dead horse. I have tried to show, as clearly as I can, the following facts: (i) Her creed is founded on an initial fallacy—that material things are not real, do not proceed from God, and are only the illusion of our minds. (ii) We can prove anything, if we simply *deny* everything that contradicts our theory. (iii) Because of her primary fallacy, she denies as unreal everything that is so desperately real to us—pain, suffering, evil, sin, and death. (iv) Because of this, she has cast scorn on the great discoveries of medicine, surgery, and nursing; and by refusing her people the aid of these gains, she has doomed many credulous people to needless pain, and even more needless death. (v) Her system is not particularly Christian, and is in no sense scientific. (vi) It offers us nothing that we cannot obtain by real faith and union with God, in any of the orthodox forms of the Christian Church. (vii) It leaves us no room for the Jesus of the New Testament, who lived, ministered, suffered on the cross, and rose from the dead for the sins of mankind. (viii) It makes His cross an empty and needless demonstration, and of course, it makes His passionate words about sin and the need of salvation a travesty. (ix) It gives us no true view of the problems of human life, and no remedy for the things we suffer. (x) It treats the great realities of Christian experience as if they did not exist. (xi) It claims to be gigantically simple, but it is only gigantically false. It is false to the New Testament, false to the world's Saviour revealed there, false to every method of judgment that man possesses, false to science, false to human experience and the great facts of life, and it is false to God—most of all to God—for it denies Him His own personal being, and it denies Him the glorious world He made.