

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

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I.

THE MEANING AND VALUE OF THE DOCTRINE OF DECREES.

THE proposal to revise the Westminster Standards has brought the doctrine of the Divine decrees into the foreground. The controversy turns upon this pivot. Other features come in incidentally, but this is capital and controlling. This is the stone of stumbling and rock of offense. If election and reprobation were not in the Confession and Catechism, probably the fifteen Presbyteries would not have overtured the Assembly. It is for this reason that we purpose to discuss the *Meaning and Value of the Doctrine of Decrees*, so plainly inculcated in the Scriptures, and from them introduced into the Westminster symbol. We are certain that the Biblical truth of the sovereignty of God in the salvation of sinners, and of His just liberty to determine how many He will save from their sin, and how many He will leave to their self-will in sin, is greatly misunderstood by many who profess the Presbyterian faith, and who sometimes describe it in much the same terms with the anti-Calvinist, and inveigh against it with something of the same bitterness. The conservative and the radical reviser meet together at this point, and while the former asserts that he has no intention to make any changes respecting the doctrine of decrees that in his opinion will essentially impair the integrity of the Calvinistic system, he nevertheless practically coöperates with the radical in bringing about a revolution in the sentiment and creed of the Presbyterian Church concerning one of the most distinctive articles of its belief. Because revision, be it conservative or radical, contends that there is more or less that is *un-Scriptural* in the tenets of election and reprobation as they are formulated in the Standards, and that

VI.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE OR MIND-CURE.

CHRISTIAN Science, of which Mind Healing is the art, was unknown thirty years ago, at least in the sense now attached to this term. It originated in Massachusetts in 1866, in the alleged discovery of Mrs. Mary Baker Glover Eddy. After having been for many years a sufferer from chronic disease, she met with an accident pronounced necessarily fatal by her physicians. They declared that she could not live till noon. She replied that she would be well at that time. Her pastor called at the hour named, expecting to find her dead, and found her busy at her work. She said that her cure was due to the direct and gracious exercise of the Divine power, but denied that it had been extraordinary. Three years' meditation convinced her that it was in accordance with "general spiritual laws capable of being known and clearly stated." She then began to teach and write. In 1870, she copyrighted her first pamphlet, but did not publish it till six years afterwards. In 1876, she organized the Christian Scientist Association. In 1879, at a meeting of that association, she formed a "Mind Healing Church, without creeds, called the Church of Christ." Of this church she was, in 1881, ordained pastor. The church now requires an assistant pastor, and the college flourishes. The course embraces—or did quite recently—thirty lessons, for which the very moderate tuition fee of \$800 is charged. This, however, has not caused many to depreciate the advantages offered. Three years ago sixty-six women and twenty-nine men were advertised as practitioners in Mind Healing. The number to-day is very much larger. Christian Science colleges are also advertised: two in New York; four in Chicago; one in Milwaukee; one in Brooklyn; one in Colorado; others elsewhere. One has lately been opened in Philadelphia. Nor is the movement confined to our own country. These institutions are not all of the same school. Indeed, numerous sects have arisen. Interesting, however, as these may be for Christian scientists to discuss, the consideration of them is not necessary to the understanding of the theory and practice of Mind Healing. They agree in all essentials.

I. We will, therefore, notice at once the general theory of Christian Science. This may be summed up in the following statements :

1. The intuitive perceptions of men in all ages affirm the existence of God. He is spirit. Spirit is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. This does not mean merely that spirit or God can do everything, knows everything, and is everywhere. It means, that He is wisdom, and there is no other wisdom; that He is power, and there is no other power; that He fills all space, and there is nothing else in space. Indeed, He is space. It thus appears, that second causes are denied; that individuality and personality are made impossible; that all things are one, for all are spirit. Let this be grasped at the outset; "for," in the words of one of the clearest expounders of Christian Science, "the truth that every form of life in God's vast universe is Spirit, is the grand central doctrine of scientific Christianity." This, they say, is not pantheism; but wherein is the difference?

2. Man is not the last link in a chain of endless development having its origin in the lowest form of life, nor was he "created in the image and after the likeness of God." On the contrary, he was never evolved or created, but is "very God of very God." That is, he is the Divine idea; or he is God expressing Himself. His essence is the same. He is spirit; this must be, since spirit is all. Moreover, since spirit is one, there cannot be men; there is only man; nay, there is only God. As Spinoza wrote, "When we say man perceives this or that, it is only that God has such or such ideas." As Hegel said, "Man is both the product and the producer of the world, the seer and the sight; he is the Absolute Spirit, the concrete expression of God." As the Christian scientists say, "Every man is an inlet to the same and all of the same, and is a channel through which the influx of common or universal life and power is constantly flowing." Such, at least, is the spiritual, that is, the real man. For there is, so to speak, also an unreal one. We become conscious of him in thought. Thinking means effort. What is it, then, that thinks? It cannot be the real or spiritual man; for that is God and He is omnipotent and cannot, therefore, be conscious of effort; He knows, He does not think. It must, consequently, be another man, one whose presence is known through the senses, the man of the senses. It will follow from this that he is an unreal man; for he is not God, and all that is real is God. He can, therefore, be only a reflection or shadow of the real man. As Lowell says, "Man, Woman, Nature, each is but a glass where the soul sees the image of herself." To the beholder this reflection is precisely what he thinks it is. "To be is to be perceived." And a man is good and strong in propor-

tion as he thinks himself to be, and perceives himself to be according as he spiritually and so really is. Of such men the best was "the man Christ Jesus." Some of the Christian scientists deny that this is idealism, but wherein is the difference?

3. The world of matter, the world that we see and hear and feel, exists only in the mind. It is an idea. This must be; for all substance is spirit, and spirit is all. Matter, therefore, is not substance, but the reflection of substance. This reflection takes place, whether in the case of our own bodies or of the external world, as follows: Spirit or God manifests itself as our ideas; ideas constantly seek expression in thought, that is, they flow through what is called the mind, which is the unreal man; thought is reflected as matter and its phenomena. Thus as mind or thought is the reflection of spirit or knowledge, so the world of matter is the reflection of mind or thought. It is the shadow of a shadow. Hence, the explanation of mental and bodily defects, of moral and physical evil. It is simply the absence of good—the blank occasioned by withdrawing the light; the chill by which the lack of heat is detected; the sense of suffocation when free air is excluded; the nothingness that is the substance of the shadow. Hold fast this truth, says the mental healer, for only those whom it possesses can work a mind-cure.

4. There is, therefore, no such thing as disease. At worst it is but a very black shadow. Nor is it difficult to show how it comes to seem so real. The root of all the ills to which flesh or mind is heir is the idea of personality. The real man is not a personality, but Divine life, knowledge, power. The man as you and I are conscious of him is Divine life, knowledge, power descending into the laboratory of the mind, that is, expressing itself in thought. As this process goes on, we come to think that intelligence is our own to have and to use. "Not that the spiritual or real man changes, and appropriates what does not belong to him; but thought, powerful at first because of its correspondence with idea, assumes independent power and asserts authority over the intentions which it labors to express. The servant presumes on his obedience and overpowers his lord. The picture, because it is so true, takes the place of the real subject. The idea man thinks of himself rather than of Him of whom he is the idea. His thought becomes inverted, and the result is that he conceives himself as separate from God; *i. e.*, a person. Then he realizes his isolation and gets afraid. This fear is the parent of all the ills to which he is liable. His diseases, mental or physical, are simply the reflections of his fears. And as these fears are all due to disordered inverted thoughts, it follows that all diseases, and all equally, are insanity. They are but shadows; and the more real they seem, the more shadowy they are.

5. From this may be inferred the nature of sin. It is simply an extreme form of disease. As the latter is the reflection of the fears which arise in man when he has thought himself into a false position and established what seems to his inverted thought an independent life for the mind and body; so sins are the reflection of the more inverted thought, the more false position, that he is not only isolated from God, but his enemy. Thus our sins are only self-created errors. Horrible though they may be, they are but dreams. In this connection a word should be said on hereditary disease and original sin. They are explained as follows: As spiritual man or idea is one, so thought in us, which is spiritual man or idea in the various stages of the laborious process of self-expression, has always a common element. Hence, fear in one mind may reflect itself as disease or sin in the case of another. Thus a mother's fear may appear in the weakness or sinfulness of her child. Hence, the supreme importance of the mental atmosphere by which we are surrounded. We are prepared now for a word as to death. If sin is the worst form of disease, death is the worst form of sin; and if sin be merely a distressing dream, death is simply the most unreal and, therefore, horrible of all dreams. The real man knows that he is eternal life. The dictum, "all men are mortal," is only a law made by the most inverted and perverted of all thoughts. The grim destroyer is the most shadowy of all shadows.

6. Healing from disease, salvation from sin, and deliverance from physical or spiritual death—all are one and the same process. The power that heals, saves, or delivers is spirit or God. This must be; for there is but one power, and that is God. The process is the changing of the thought of the sufferer. His inverted thought is reversed. Instead of thinking that he is the enemy of God or is independent of Him, he comes to realize that he is one with Him. He is overmastered by the glorious fact that he is God, and then immediately he is and must be healthy, sinless, immortal. The discovery that such is the case is what constitutes the cure, and the part of the mental healer is to assist in this discovery. By his right thought he works on and overcomes the thought of fear in the mind of the patient; and, if his own thought be right, he can always do this; for truth is ever stronger than error. Hence, a mental healer is skillful directly in proportion to his conviction that disease and sin and death are delusions; and it may be added that they call themselves Christian scientists because, in their view, the Great Physician came, not to put away sin and eventually death and disease by the offering up of himself first once for all, but only in the sense above indicated, to open the blind eyes and manifest that truth which shall and must make us free.

II. Such being the theory of Christian Science, it may be helpful now to contrast it with similar and still different systems.

It is pantheistic, and yet it is not the pantheism of the schools, for it denies the existence of matter, and Spinoza, at least, admitted it as one of the two ground forms of God. It is idealistic, and yet it is not the idealism of the schools, for it denies the individuality of spirits, and Berkeley, at least, allowed the personality and so individuality of spirits. Philosophically, therefore, Christian Science would seem to be Pantheistic Idealism or Idealistic Pantheism. Again, Christian Science, in its effects, appears to be identical with mesmerism. But it is not. Mesmeric influences are thought to be due to mind acting on mind. Christian or mental healing, on the contrary, is said to be in proportion to the manifestation of God in mind. Once more, mind-cures and faith-cures are often classed together, but they are radically opposed. A faith-cure is a miracle. A mind-cure is always in accordance with "general spiritual laws capable of being known and clearly stated." The faith-healer emphasizes the personality of God and man's dependence on Him and consequent distinction from Him. The mind-healer denies the personality of God and aspires to the intuition that he himself is God.

III. It will be interesting, next, to notice some of the peculiarities in the practice of mind-healing, especially as these are, in the main, the direct consequences of the theory.

First, diet, exercise, sleep, bathing, observance of what are known as the laws of health, are not of the least importance. Indeed, to the study of medicine, physiology, etc., more than to anything else, it is said that sickness is due. Such studies emphasize the fact of man's separation from God; they create fear; thus they cause disease.

Next, it is of supreme importance that the patient should be brought under the influence of right thought. "The aroma of my thought, without an audible or even a mental argument, has sometimes healed inveterate diseases," writes one of these scientists. Patients may be brought under the influence of such thought in various ways. The essential thing is that the practitioner should be himself persuaded that the real man before him is spirit, and, *consequently*, well and perfect, and that the man whom he sees appears to be sick and sinful only because he is unreal. This conviction the mind-healer will endeavor to strengthen in himself until all that is unreal in himself has passed away. Then the reality and truth of his Divine being will overpower the unreality and error of his patient. The truth will make him free. No argument, of course, can be allowed; for argument implies thought, and thought

is unreal. The mental healer may only affirm ; for affirmation implies knowledge and knowledge is power, since it is of the essence of spirit.

Here is a specimen treatment :

"I said to him mentally : 'You have no disease ; what you call your disease is a fixed mode of thought arising from the absence of positive belief in absolute good. Be stronger,' I said, 'you must believe in absolute good ; I am looking at you, and I see you a beautiful, strong spirit, perfectly sound. What makes you think yourself diseased ? You are not diseased ; the shadow of a doubt is reflected on your feet, but it has no real existence. There, look down yourself and see that it is gone. Why, it was a mere negation, and the place where you located it now shows for itself as sound as the rest of your body. Don't you know that imperfection is impossible to that beautiful creature, your real self ? Since there is no evil in all the universe, and since man is the highest expression of good amidst ubiquitous Good, how can you be diseased ? You are not diseased. There is not an angel in all the spheres sounder or more Divine than you.' Then I spoke out aloud : 'There now,' I said, 'you won't have that pain again.' *As I said it there was a surge of conviction through me that seemed to act on the blood-vessels of my body and made me tingle all over.*"—*Helen Wilmans.*

IV. It will be proper in closing to offer some criticisms on Christian Science.

It is open to every objection that lies against idealism. These need not now be enumerated. It must be sufficient to observe that it violates the common sense of mankind and issues ultimately and necessarily in that very skepticism from which its great representative, Berkeley, fondly hoped that it would be the deliverer.

Every objection to pantheism bears equally against this so-called science. It denies free agency ; for to be free one must be a person, and personality, says the Christian scientist, is only an inverted thought and the root of all that we call evil. Again, it pronounces our convictions as to right and wrong delusions. The remorse of the murderer is only an imagination. The guilt of the world on account of which the Son of God shed His blood is a fiction. Hence, the foundation of morals is swept away, and all rational religion is rendered impossible. There is nothing left to worship ; for there is nothing left but self. Thus, whatever Christian Science may be it certainly is not Christian.

The truth of Christian Science is contradicted by the facts. It is a theory which, when tried, is found wanting. According to its principles, food should not be necessary. It is unreal. The man that it nourishes is unreal. So long as it is taken the unreality is

emphasized. Yet no Christian scientist has given up food. At this Dr. Tanner has beaten the best of them. So long, however, as they eat, they are either voluntarily perpetuating an illusion, or unconsciously demonstrating that they are in error.

According to their theory, drugs should have no power in themselves. Their efficiency is due wholly to our confidence in them. They seem to cure because we think that they will. Poison, however, will kill even when one is unconscious of having taken it. True, the Christian scientists explain this, just as they do hereditary disease and sin, by community of thought. There are common elements in the thoughts of all men. Most men think that arsenic will kill. Hence, though one is not conscious of having taken arsenic, he will be destroyed by the perverted thought of the majority with reference to it. Really this explanation is worse than what it tries to explain. It seems, too, to be the product of a materialistic conception. Spirit may be one, but is it like a lump the whole of which a little leaven must leaven? Once more, according to their theory, broken bones, wounds, etc., are only delusions, which the influence of right thinking should destroy. Yet never has it done so. Not until the surgeon comes or nature has wrought her slow work, can the patient discover that his wound has closed. In his case at least, either his wound is not an error or truth is not omnipotent. Then, too, the perpetuation of youth and the abolition of death should also be within the reach of Christian Science. "Man should grow younger," say they, "as he grows older." As we think, so are we. By keeping the mind young we have a perfect guarantee for continued youthfulness of body. But who has yet succeeded in keeping the mind young? Has not the freshest, most progressive mind sometimes been found in a feeble and wasting body? Have you never in an insane asylum seen toothless and shriveled old women who thought themselves in the bloom of youth? There are said to be hundreds of persons in Boston who believe that Mrs. Eddy, the founder of Christian Science, will never die; but she is not yet very old, and many of her associates who have seemed to be at least as much possessed by the truth as she, have already gone the way of all flesh. Thus judged by its claims, the theory of Christian Science is untenable. Whatever it may be, it is not scientific.

Its practical effects have in many cases seemed remarkable. In others they have been insignificant. In not a few they have been unspeakably bad. The writer knew of one case of aggravated paralysis in which the patient, an old lady, was reported by a physician of eminence to be really cured—so truly so that she not only went walking, but leaping, and, it is to be presumed, praising God.

He knows of two others who, for a time, seemed to be cured, but on whom their maladies, in one case hay fever, in the other neuralgia, returned. He knows of a fourth who was treated for a diseased throat, and not only was not cured, but was rendered utterly, and, it is feared, hopelessly insane. Such cases are only too common.

"Another fateful one is brought to light. A Brooklyn woman treated by her physician for consumption placed herself under the influence of Christian Science, and after being treated and 'lectured' to by a Christian scientist, came to the conclusion that nothing was the matter with her, and became happy in the belief that she was perfectly well. A few weeks afterwards she died, and the physician who had been discharged when she placed herself with the Christian scientist said: 'I have fifty patients apparently in the soundest health to-day in Florida and Southern California, who were further gone in consumption than she was when they went there. I wanted her to go there, but she wouldn't take the advice. She's only another victim to Christian Science. That is all.' But we trust it is not 'all,' but that in the interests of the safety of society the law will interfere and prohibit the practice of this latest school, which, however sincerely its tenets may be held by its disciples, is peopling heaven with saints before their earthly work is done."

Indeed, not only un-Christian and unscientific, it is, according to the recent testimony of Dr. St. John Roosa, in its various developments, the great obstacle to the progress of true medical science.

Finally, the saving truth in Christian Science is the reality and power of spirit. There is a soul and it does affect the body. The most potent medicine is the will to be well. Indeed, mind is as real and much more powerful than matter. To the recognition of this are due the cures wrought in connection with Christian Science. This also explains why mind-healing seems to be most effective in nervous affections. Should Christian Science only direct attention generally to the reality and power of spirit, we might overlook its errors and almost forgive its sins. There is no doubt that the disgusting materialism of the last quarter of a century is largely responsible for its origin. We may not doubt either that were the Satanic spirituality of this so-called science to permeate and dissipate the beastly sensuality of materialism, its influence, with its motive, would be gone. God often fights error with error, and the throne of truth is largely built of spoils taken from fields where equal heresies contended and died.

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