Although Christian Mysticism, as such, does not come within the scope of this essay, Dr. Achelis points out that this tendency of thought of necessity assumes a religious character. He rejoices in everything that rouses the modern mystic from the mere passivity of the *vita contemplativa* and impels to energetic deeds; but

he rejoices even more in every sign that the intensity of the struggle for existence does not so entirely absorb men's thoughts that they fail to appreciate, and to meditate upon, the things that are eternal.

J. G. TASKER.

Handsworth.

The Exegesis of Christian Science.

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WHICH is the most widely read of Bible commentaries? I must confess that a few weeks ago I should have been at a loss to answer my own question, but I have lately happened upon a book which appears to me to show stronger claims than any other to this distinction. The copy I have been reading was published two years ago, and it bears the imprint 'three hundred and sixty-sixth thousand.' How many other expositions have gained such a circulation? And this is not all. Every Sunday morning and evening extracts from this volume, as expository of the appointed Biblical lesson for the day, are publicly read in the services of a large number of churches. The honour of being directly used in public worship as well as in private study has not, I suppose, been enjoyed by any previous commentary from Matthew Henry to the Cambridge Bible. This is the unique function of Mrs. Eddy's *Science and Health, with Key to the Scriptures*.

It is significant of the impression that the Bible has made on the mind of the civilized world, that the founders of the popular new religions are so eager to back up their teachings by Biblical sanction. Even the blatant Dowie affected to base his claims upon Biblical revelation, and garnished his tirades with scriptural quotations. Mrs. Eddy is anxious to have it understood that her system is not a supersession of the Bible but an illumination of it. When she was making her discoveries, the Bible was her only text-book (*Science and Health*, p. 110). The Bible has been her only authority, and she has had no other guide in the straight and narrow way of truth (p. 126). Christian Scientists take the inspired word of the Bible as their sufficient guide to eternal life (p. 497).

One discovers, however, that while the Bible is an 'only authority' and a 'sufficient guide,' Mrs. Eddy's own exposition ranks with it in inspiration. The *Christian Science Quarterly* publishes the following 'explanatory note,' which is to be read in the Sunday services by the 'first reader' before beginning the lesson sermon. 'The Bible and the Christian Science text-book are our only preachers. We shall now read scriptural texts, and their correlative passages from our denominational text-book,—these comprise our sermon. The canonical writings, together with the word of our text-book, corroborating and explaining the Bible texts in their spiritual import and application to all ages, past, present, and future—constitute a sermon undivorced from truth, uncontaminated and unfettered by human hypotheses, and *authorized* (the italics are Mrs. Eddy's) by Christ.'

The examination of a book whose pretensions to authority are so widely accepted by persons of normal intelligence in secular affairs is of more than a merely curious interest. Many adherents of Christian Science are seceders from orthodox congregations, and most of them have had the benefit of religious instruction in day or Sunday schools. It may be a wholesome, if painful, surprise to ministers and teachers to discover the ideas of Biblical exegesis that it is still possible for educated people to hold in the twentieth century.

The characteristic principle of Christian Science interpretation is the 'spiritual' or 'metaphysical' sense. 'The divine Science taught in the original language of the Bible came through inspiration, and needs inspiration to be understood. . . . The one important interpretation of Scripture is the

spiritual' (p. 319). 'Take away the spiritual signification of Scripture, and that compilation can do no more for mortals than can moonbeams to melt a river of ice' (p. 241). The glossary at the end of the book 'contains the metaphysical interpretation of Bible terms, giving their spiritual sense, which is also their original meaning.'

This process of spiritualizing the words of Scripture is carried out even where one would have supposed that the natural meaning of the term was already sufficiently spiritual. Even the word 'soul,' for example, has to be thus treated. 'When reading the Scriptures, the substitution of the word "sense" for "soul" gives the exact meaning in a majority of cases. Human thought has adulterated the meaning of the word "soul," through the hypothesis that soul is both an evil and a good intelligence, resident in matter. The proper use of the word "soul" can always be gained by substituting the word "God," where the deific meaning is required. In other cases, use the word "sense," and you have the scientific signification. As used in Christian Science, Soul is properly the synonym of Spirit, or God; but out of Science, soul is identical with sense or sensation' (p. 481). But it is in the spiritualizing of proper names that the problem of discovering the required meaning is most ingeniously solved. A whole page of the glossary is occupied in stating the spiritual signification of the word 'Adam.' Its general meaning is 'error; a falsity; the belief in "original sin," sickness, and death; evil; the opposite of good,' etc. Philologists will be especially interested in the detailed explanation of this word given on p. 338. '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. This suggests the thought of something fluid, of mortal mind in solution; it further suggests the thought of that "darkness . . . upon the face of the deep" when matter or dust was deemed the agent of Deity in creating man,—when matter stood opposed to Spirit as that which is accursed. Here "a dam" is not a mere play upon words, for it means much. It illustrates the separation of man from God, and the obstacle the serpent, sin, would impose between man and his creator.' Then follows the enunciation of a law which ought surely to give Mrs. Eddy equal rank with Grimm in the history of philology. 'The dis-

section and definition of words, aside from their metaphysical derivation, is not scientific.'

A few other metaphysical interpretations of proper names may be worth recording. 'Eden' signifies the mortal, material body. 'Gihon' means the rights of woman acknowledged morally, civilly, and socially. 'Dan' is animal magnetism, or one belief preying upon another; while 'Gad' is science, or haste towards harmony. In some cases the meanings are so different that novices must certainly be puzzled. 'Benjamin' means not only pride and envy, but also a gleam of the infinite idea of the infinite principle. 'Jacob' is both 'a corporeal mortal, embracing duplicity, repentance, sensualism,' and 'the revelation of Science, wherein the so-called material senses yield to the spiritual sense of Life and Love.' 'Jerusalem' denotes home and heaven, as well as envy and tyranny. Among the synonyms for Christian Science are Elias, Euphrates, Hiddekel, and New Jerusalem; and the dove is its symbol.

Let us now see these principles at work in the exposition of passages of Scripture. Jacob's wrestling was a struggle with 'a mortal sense of life, substance, and intelligence as existent in matter, with its false pleasures and pains' (p. 308). The angel 'gave him the spiritual sense of being, and rebuked his material sense,' and he thus became 'the father of those who through earnest striving followed his demonstration of the power of Spirit over the material senses.' Moses was taught Christian Science when he feared that his brethren would not listen to him. When he handled the serpent into which his rod had been transformed, his fear departed, for thereby 'matter was shown to be a belief only' (p. 321). So, too, 'it was scientifically demonstrated that leprosy was a creation of mortal mind, and not matter, when Moses first put his hand into his bosom, and drew it forth white as snow with the dread disease, and presently restored his hand to its natural condition, by the same simple process. God had lessened his fear by this proof in Christian Science.' The spiritual sense, which is the new tongue referred to in the last chapter of St. Mark's Gospel (p. 272), brings out several distinct references to Christian Science in the New Testament. It is the Elias, who shall first come and restore all things (p. 585). It is the seamless dress, woven into one web of consistency, for which lots were cast at the Crucifixion (p. 242). 'He came unto His own, and

His own received him not' means that Christian Science has come, but the churches seem not ready to receive it (p. 131). The Comforter promised by our Lord to teach His disciples and abide with them is none other than Christian Science (pp. 55, 271, 331). The little book which the Angel in Rev 10 bore in his hand was a revelation of Christian Science (p. 559). And the four sides of the city that lieth four-square are the Word, Christ, Christianity, and Christian Science (pp. 575, 577).

In these passages the spiritual sense discerns direct references to Christian Science. There are many other passages in which the enlightened mind can find clear references to its distinctive doctrines. 'Take no thought for your life' is, of course, prominent among them, and it receives here the interpretation which by this time one might have supposed every one in the infant class would know to be erroneous (pp. 228, 365, 382). The exhortation not to be weary in well-doing dissipates our common notions about fatigue (p. 79). 'Absent from the body and present with the Lord' is a passage that refers to this life, not to the next. It is the state already enjoyed by those who have given up the belief in matter and are absolutely governed by Spirit (pp. 14, 216, 383). The weight which we are to lay aside is that of material self and sense (p. 20). 'When Jesus declares that "the light of the body is the eye," He certainly means that light depends upon Mind, not upon the complex humours, lenses, muscles, the iris and pupil, constituting the visual organism' (p. 393). The condemnation of mortals to till the ground means that they should so improve material belief as to destroy it, by thought-germs tending spiritually upward (p. 545). 'He uttered His voice, the earth melted' indicates that all matter will disappear before the supremacy of Spirit (p. 97). Simon's confession, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,' is equivalent to 'The Messiah is what thou hast declared—Christ, the spirit of God, of Truth, Life, and Love, which heals mentally' (p. 137). 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me' means 'Thou shalt have no belief of Life as mortal'; 'thou shalt have no intelligence, no life, no substance, no truth, no love, but that which is spiritual' (pp. 19, 467). 'If Christ be not risen,

then is our preaching vain,' signifies 'If the idea of the supremacy of Spirit, which is the true conception of being, come not to your thought, you cannot be benefited by what I say' (p. 324).

This selection may fitly be concluded by the Christian Science version of the Lord's Prayer. This paraphrase is read in every service in addition to other passages of Scripture and the commentary thereon. It runs: 'Our Father-Mother God, all-harmonious, Adorable One. Thy kingdom is within us, Thou art ever-present. Enable us to know—as in heaven, so on earth—God is supreme. Give us grace for to-day; feed the famished affections; and infinite Love is reflected in love; and Love leadeth us not into temptation, but delivereth us from sin, disease, and death. For God is now and for ever all Life, Truth, and Love' (p. 16).

Such, then, is the final word of modern exegesis. This is the illumination of the Scriptures for which the world has been waiting through all the stupid centuries. Any one who has read anything of medieval exposition will possibly suggest that some of the Schoolmen, in their methods if not in their results, show a remarkable approximation to the insight of Mrs. Eddy. There is an obvious touch of Scholastic philology about the identification of 'Adam' with 'a dam.' But there came presently the so-called Reformation, which illustrated the meaning of that word, and has since blocked all Biblical scholarship until Mrs. Eddy removed the obstacle and permitted the waters of Truth once more to flow. Her followers now find Scripture made plain to them by *Science and Health*. In some testimonies printed in the appendix one of them tells us that this volume gives him a new pleasure in the study of the Scriptures (p. 620), and another that the Bible is now a new book, full of life and hope (p. 645). And Mr. Bicknell Young, in his lecture at the Queen's Hall, reported at full length in the London *Tribune*, makes this claim: 'Probably Christian Scientists study the Bible more than any other class of people in the world. The reason for this is to be found in the fact that our text-book, *Science and Health, with Key to the Scriptures*, by Mrs. Eddy, makes the Bible the most interesting and beautiful book in the world.'