

PSYCHOTHERAPY AND THE CHURCH¹

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Hardly have we outgrown the time when to discuss the question of religious therapeutics almost presupposed a lack of seriousness or dignity on the part of the speaker or writer. Faddist faith-cure movements might seem, perhaps, fit matter for hammock reading or table talk, but scarcely suitable to occupy the time of a reputable scientific body, or to place before the readers of legitimate medical literature. While there has indeed been reason for this attitude on the part of medical men, it is nevertheless not wholly justifiable. Everything which affects either mind or body, the physician is bound, first or last, to take into account. Nothing human dare he ignore, and in the various popular movements such as Christian Science, and its recent offshoot in Boston, in the pathogenesis and symptomatology of these movements, if we may so express it, there is material which deserves attention and even deliberate consideration.

During the present generation, the queen bee of all the swarm of religio-psychotheraputists has been Mrs. Eddy. Before her time, as great a man as Doctor Holmes had thought it worth while to handle, and that without gloves, in one of his famous "medicated essays," certain analogous practices purporting to cure disease, which were based upon conscious or unconscious charlatanry, plus mental suggestion and auto-suggestion. Very recently Christian Science has been deemed worthy of the steel of no less serious a man than Mark Twain; while last of all, the tissue of fraud, spiritual autocracy, hysteria and fanaticism, which constitute the very warp and woof of this cult, has been laid wide open in all its unsavory and ludicrous details, in the elaborately documented articles of Miss Milmine, which have

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As human and psychological documents, if on no other grounds, these movements are worth considering; and just now, while the mother science of Mrs. Eddy, synchronously with the patent medicine fraternity, has been getting into somewhat ill odor throughout the states, a Son of the Blood arises in the person of the Reverend Elwood Worcester, of Boston, and from the land of witchcraft and transcendentalism we receive a new gospel.

Worcesterism, or as its reverend founder modestly calls it, the "Emmanuel Movement," from the name of the church of which he is rector, was inaugurated in November, 1906, and thanks to the efficient manner in which it was advertised, it had gained widespread notoriety within six months. Within a year, branch offices had been established in various cities, Bishop Fallows had inaugurated a parallel movement in Chicago under the name of "Christian Psychology," and people began to wonder what wares next the department church would display upon her counters.

What, then, is this scheme of Christian Therapeutics which comes from Boston? To answer this question, we have ample data in the numerous sermons, public addresses, newspaper interviews, and popular magazine articles which Worcester and his followers have lavishly contributed; and finally, in the official *credo*, "Religion and Medicine," a volume of 427 pages, the joint production of Worcester, McComb and Coriat. The movement is declared to be a combination of theology and medicine, certainly a rare hybrid in these days, a revival of New Testament theory and practice in handling disease, but with the difference that attention is directed specifically to the neuroses and psychoses, and that the methods of treatment are definitely understood to be such as are embraced in the general term, psychotherapy. Let it be stated at the outset, that Worcester has succeeded in enlisting the sympathy and coöperation of certain medical men in Boston and elsewhere, and that at the church "clinics," a physician is in attendance to differentiate the organic cases and to recommend such "functional" cases as may be suitable for religious psychotherapy. That physicians are thus sometimes willing to sell their birthright and to surrender a part of their legitimate province, to hand over impotently to the clergy

for treatment, certain conditions which are just as truly the manifestations of disease or trauma as would be a broken limb or a febrile delirium—these facts are startling enough, but they may be passed over in silence. Our present concern is with the Emmanuel Movement on its own ground.

That the combination of priest and physician working together under the same roof is a formidable one in its passing popular effect is not to be denied. It is calculated to make a strong appeal to a considerable portion of the lay, more especially the feminine mind, and to offer, indeed, a veritable "Rock of Ages" in which their insufficient souls will seek refuge.

"Mental suggestion from a basis of true religion," declares the rector, "is our cure for certain nervous diseases. . . . Our idea is to appeal to them (the patients) from the basis of true religion as it is contained in the New Testament. . . . Our work is essentially ethical and spiritual. Our chief interest in the men and women who seek our care is a moral and religious interest." In short, from all the available literature, it is clear enough that in spite of the proclaimed co-partnership between materia medica and theology, it is ever the latter which takes first place; that the part of medicine is that of a tool or subordinate, by whose aid religion proudly sweeps to her reward.

But of this later.

In the meantime, we are somewhat struck with amazement by the very appearance in this avowedly practical and material age, of the anomaly of the priest-physician, so alien is the idea to modern scientific thought. But as we turn over in our minds this apparently novel phenomenon, we become conscious that the idea is not altogether a new or original one, and we finally recollect that the species was in existence 2,500 years ago, and that in the long epoch before the dawn of science, the priest-physician was the only one to whom suffering humanity could go for the treatment of their diseases, whether of body or soul.

Beginning with that remote day, it is illuminating to follow with hurried steps the part assumed by priestly authority throughout the ages till the present day. In the primitive period the priest was the sole minister to all the ailments of humanity, and his means of cure were, in a general sense, the same as those used by his successors of the cloth today; that is, such methods as were directed to the cure of disease of the body by influences

brought to bear upon the mind. A new order of things was established with the advent of the Greek school of medicine. The priest was left in large part his authority in matters pertaining to the soul, but the domain of physical disease was snatched from his hands, never to be returned. It follows, as a matter of course, that the therapeutic methods used by the earliest physicians would be in some measure similar to those of their priestly predecessors. We have, accordingly, in the school of the sons of Æsculapius, a transitional phase, as it were, from priest to physician; and while drugs and various physical measures were employed by them, the psychic element in therapy occupied always a conspicuous place. The Asclepiadæ discharged an important function in the phylogenesis of medicine. That function discharged, there was no further occasion for their existence, and they passed from the scene. But their seed did not wholly die out, and from that day to this, various modifications of their type have reappeared spasmodically in remote places and times, never as elements of progress, but rather as tares in the field of science, and the latest of these anachronisms is now biding its day in Boston.

But disregarding for the moment these occasional type reversions, it has remained true throughout the greater part of history that the priest and physician have carried on parallel but distinct activities, working side by side but with a high fence between them, each cultivating his own particular acres; the one attending to the needs of the soul, and the other to those of the body.

From the earliest times, however, it has been clearly recognized that perturbations of the soul (mental diseases) are, in reality, diseases of the nervous system, and more particularly of the brain, and that, therefore, their treatment was the proper work of the physician and not of the priest. We have but to recall the remarks of Hippocrates on the Sacred Disease for evidence of the antiquity of this view. Of late, these facts have been more and more emphatically brought home to our minds; and as our knowledge of both structure and function of the nervous system has increased, so has it become more firmly established and more widely recognized that the mind, or soul, and the brain are simply co-partners in the life history of the individual; there being, so far as we have evidence, no mind or soul, no mental or spiritual life without the physical substratum, the brain.

The physician has become acquainted more and more with the interrelations and interactions of soul and body in health and disease. He has found that he cannot successfully treat the one while neglecting the other, and he has grown aware of the need of an acquaintance not only with anatomy and physiology, but also with normal and morbid psychology. In this way, as facts and rational tendencies have gradually replaced fancy, prejudice and fear, has the sphere of usefulness and duty of the physician broadened, and we feel a tendency strengthening itself in our day, which fully realized, is nothing else than an absolute reversal of the original order of affairs three thousand years ago. Then, the priest was supreme arbiter of both soul and body; later, this authority was equally divided between priest and physician; more lately still, the entire field would seem to be falling more and more into the hands of the physician, to whose care there may one day be entrusted all the ailments of the flesh and spirit of man.

In her noblest and highest reaches, is not this practically the attitude of science today? And yet, for various reasons of personal interest, *laissez-faire*, inherited prejudice, or dread of adverse opinion, we are not always willing to maintain it. There are too many Laodiceans among us.

Schematically, the tendency we have been discussing may be set down as follows. At first view it is startling perhaps, and for its ultimate realization we hardly dare hope. That the tendency exists, however, there is no denying.

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|------|-------------------|------------------|---------|---------------------|
| I. | Priest | { Soul
Body } | | Pre-scientific era. |
| II. | { Priest | Soul | } | Empirical era. |
| | { Physician | Body | } | |
| III. | Physician | { Soul
Body } | | Rational era. |

Although from century to century the fortunes of the conflict have varied, the Church has been conducting a steadily losing warfare with Science; but she has never willingly, or with good grace, yielded up an inch of territory. Medical authority, with the prestige and *entrée* which it assured, was ever particularly dear to her heart; and after she had reluctantly surrendered the great field of bodily diseases, she still clings tenaciously to

the administration of the affairs of the mind. In the part which has been played by every great religious genius or prophet, whether self-elected or the accident of circumstances, wonder cures and faith healing have regularly been the long suit. The New Testament teaches that Christ went about healing the sick and casting out devils; in other words, treating maladies of both body and mind; and in his therapeutic activities, there is no record that he selected certain forms of disease as being most amenable to his influence. His word was a panacea; there was no distinction between functional and organic disorders.

But in so far as we are able to draw conclusions from the records and traditions which have been transmitted to us, we find that his cures were faith cures pure and simple, such as have been wrought by religious and non-religious leaders of all times, whenever they have spoken with the authority of conviction. There is no evidence whatever, that Christ knew anything about medicine, or indeed, about any other science, in spite of the fact that he has been called the "Great Physician."

As a natural result, the church founded on his teachings has had the experience that, as science advanced, she was thrust ever farther into the background. In her repeated attempts to readjust herself as the intellectual horizon of mankind has expanded, she has suffered the throes of bitter intestine wars, has been rent by schism and weakened by defection, until to-day, in every land, her prophetic eye foresees a more sombre future than ever threatened her before. In England, the New Theology has come forward as a son to beat down his own mother whom he could no longer respect. On the continent, similar movements are afoot. The Bibel-Babel tempest in Germany has washed away accredited strongholds of the church, which were found to be built upon sand. Scholasticism is writhing in the clutch of Modernism, and after Modernism —————?

Worcesterism is one of the evidences of this spirit of despair. The people at large have gradually been outgrowing the influence of the pulpit; they are left cold by the promises and the threats of the church. Obviously, new blood is required to reinfuse her with the semblance of life. No one knows this better than the church herself. Hence this latest *tour d'adresse* in which theology tries again to reclaim the healing art, and to re-instate in the twentieth century, the crude régime of the first.

"The time is come," declares Worcester, "when the church must enter more deeply into the personal lives of the people and make a freer use of the means modern science and the gospel of Christ places at her disposal, if she is to continue even to hold her own." "In my opinion," Bishop Fallows is quoted as saying, "the church, to save itself, must begin to minister to the bodies as well as to the souls of the American people." Precisely! In these admissions we detect the essence of the new propaganda; and throughout the land, clergymen are catching at the straw thus offered, preaching a return of New Testament practice, and promulgating the hope that the church is not, after all, outliving her usefulness, and that through religious agencies, can be cured not only nervous and mental afflictions, but all the diseases of the body as well.

But there were also other moments which led up to the spectacular Emmanuel campaign. The cue was taken obviously from Christian Science. The churchmen had noted with envy the phenomenal vogue of this cult, which, they were forced to admit, had far outstripped them in numbers and influence. It was patent that Christian Science was offering something to humanity which the church was not, and this something was the promised relief from sickness and disease. Good! The church should likewise offer to cure disease. Better late than never! But herein lay a great danger to be avoided. In scientific circles, and among the majority of intelligent people, Christian Science was after all looked upon, in popular parlance, as a fake. If the church could take over the trick of Christian Science, and dress it out a little less preposterously, perhaps it could be disguised and palmed off on the public as something original and worthy, and the desired end would be attained.

It was necessary, therefore, to begin by disclaiming all connection with Christian Science. "Do you suppose," asks Worcester, "that the most experienced neurologists of Boston would have approved this movement if it had borne the slightest relation to Christian Science?" Unfortunately, all of his disciples are not carefully schooled, and one observes often enough that their arguments run to cross purposes. Fallows, for example, declares unequivocally, that he uses "the best of Christian Science and the best of materia medica." Worcester evidently foresaw that in turning his Church into a polyclinic, he incurred the

risk of becoming ridiculous. Just at this point he achieved his master stroke.

This consisted in employing certain physicians as assistants on his "staff," thus lending an air of medical respectability to what might otherwise have been a fiasco. The weak point in Christian Science, namely, its antagonism to legitimate science, was repeatedly pointed out. Worcesterism, on the contrary, accepted the reality of matter and of physical disease. Knowing, however, that an intelligent public would no longer unquestioningly bow to theologic authority in these matters, and realizing that the old theocracy was inevitably crumbling, the brilliant maneuver with which we are familiar was executed. It was nothing else but a bold and triumphant gasconade. A truce was sounded and science was bidden to a parley. The church assumed a patronizing attitude and invited science to *aid* in carrying on a work which science was in the habit of looking upon as peculiarly her own, and in which it had not occurred to her to seek assistance from the church. The bait was cleverly prepared, but it may be assumed that the critical palates of the medical profession at large will promptly reject it. "Its relation to scientific medicine," declares First Assistant McComb, speaking of Worcesterism, "is not one merely of non-opposition, but of enthusiastic alliance." The character of this "alliance" has already been referred to. "The main idea of the Emmanuel Movement is moral and spiritual and religious, and its main principle is faith." More specific is McComb in a late pronouncement.² "Christ, who was not only the greatest of teachers, but an ever successful physician as well, achieved his mighty deeds through the faith in God, which was the secret of his own life, and which he sought to awaken in the sufferer."

The natural result is that *prayer* should be one of the strong points of the new Boston therapy, and this idea is clearly set forth. "It follows that this trust in God will find natural expression in prayer. . . . To teach men to pray so as to win the good which such a movement of the human spirit brings is one of the purposes for which the Emmanuel clinic has been founded."

That auto-suggestion is a potent factor in the relief as well as in the causation of symptoms is of course a banal observation. *Only, let it be called by its correct name.*

² Century Magazine, March, 1908.

Tourguéneff, in one of his exquisite Poems in Prose, entitled "Prayer," observes: "Whatever a man may pray for, he prays for a miracle. Every prayer comes to this: 'Great God, let twice two not make four.' Only such a prayer is a real prayer, face to face. To pray to the Spirit of the universe, to the Supreme Being, to the abstract, unreal God of Kant or Hegel, is impossible, unthinkable. But can a personal, living, imaginable God make twice two other than four? Every true believer must answer, 'Yes, He can.' And he is obliged to convince himself of it. But what if his reason rebels against such nonsense? Then Shakespeare comes to his aid: 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio.' But if you seek to controvert him in the name of truth? He has merely to repeat the well-known question, 'What is truth?' And so, let us eat, drink and be merry—and pray."

But Worcester admits that we should not pray for miracles. He admits that the scope of prayer has been steadily narrowed by the advancing domain of Natural Law. We behold it reduced almost to a geometric point. However, "even if you are convinced that no prayer of yours can quiet the storm or augment your fortune, or check the dreaded development of the disease which is taking your loved one from your sight, are there no storms within your own soul which prayer can quell?" Even so! But again let us not do violence to the canon of Lloyd Morgan. Again substitute the word "auto-suggestion," and we are agreed.

After a discussion on "suggestion," which might have been taken from any current text-book of psychotherapy, except for the fourteen capital I's in a single page, the author of "Religion and Medicine" remarks: "I ought perhaps to add that I personally attach a religious importance to this state of mind." (That of suggestive receptivity.)

From every point of view it is clear, after searching the scriptures of Worcesterism, that in spite of its medical advertising, the organization is strictly and essentially religious, that its object is to renew the waning prestige of the church, and that its trick is to offer suffering humanity a theologic pill to purge melancholy, after making it a little more palatable to our modern consciousness by means of a thin medical sugar coating.

Judging, however, from the considerable stir which the Em-

manuel "clinic" has aroused, it would appear that there is a popular demand for this new theologic pill; and herein lay another finesse with which Worcesterism must be credited. We are conscious that in late years in medical teaching, profound changes have come about in the doctrine of therapeutics. Born of mystery, this science has been passing through a tedious age of empiricism, and is gradually emerging into an era of rational practice. Characteristic of this age is the passing of poly-pharmacy.

One of our patients, who has known many doctors in his time, takes delight on every possible occasion in repeating the well-known quotation that "a physician is a man who pours drugs of which he knows little, into a body of which he knows less, to cure a disease of which he knows nothing." Happily, the therapeutic drug habit is gradually receding, and at the same time an interest, never wholly dormant, has been vividly awakened in the possibilities of psychotherapy, resulting in a greatly widened scope and more specific, elective and rational application of this means of treatment.

The bane of mental therapy, as practiced by the earlier healers, hypnotists and magnetisers, was the mystery with which it was enveloped and the facile quackery in which it too often resulted; and precisely these have ever and inevitably been the conditions of mind healing as practiced by the church.

The ventilation of the subject and its establishment on a scientific basis, we owe preëminently to the school of Nancy, to the work of Liébault in the past generation, and that of Bernheim in the present. Rational suggestion is the product of the new movement. It has demanded and received a steadily extended recognition, and just now is being illuminated in a practical way by numbers of our best clinicians the country over. But what, we may ask, has been the actual state of affairs along the firing line of the profession during this period of readjustment? What, with regard to a large class of patients, is the effect of the waning faith in drugs? Drugs have hitherto constituted the chief ammunition of a multitude of physicians, and workers who are used to one set of tools do not readily adapt themselves to an entirely different set. Psychotherapy, therefore, in its broader usefulness, has remained in the hands of the few. It is a subject which has not been taught in the medical schools. Obviously there is a con-

spicuous group of patients, representing largely the various neurotic and psychotic states, which, not being relieved by internal medication, have been more or less neglected. These cases, which are by every right subjects for medical attention, the practicing physician has even studiously avoided. What wonder that many of them fall victims every year to quackery, that they seek from every wind that blows the relief which is so elusive? Such have been the conditions which led up to the psychologic moment when Worcester contrived his spectacular entrée. Setting forth on the one hand the incompleteness and contradictions of Christian Science, he has, on the other, emphasized an existing defect in legitimate medicine; and with Christian Science as the ill-concealed foundation, his ambition would use medicine as the ladder for the erection of his religious superstructure.

And what is the method of the new cult? In the limelight publicity with which it surrounds itself, in its alarmist proclamation of the alleged spread of nervousness among the populace, in its open exploitation of all sorts of morbid symptoms, is not Worcesterism appropriating the method of the nostrum advertiser, who either in his paid-for newspaper notice, or by the light of a gasoline torch, describes to the gaping public the alarming symptoms of various diseases from which many of his hearers or readers promptly believe themselves to be suffering, with the result that they eagerly grasp at the god-sent panacea, at so much per bottle? We read in the press reports of a séance in Philadelphia, "More than a hundred women waited at the close of the vesper service to seek the new teacher, who is clergyman, healer and psychologist in one, and to ask his help." (Note the sex of the seekers.) What shall we say of such a demonstration, and of the means by which it is produced? Are they not calculated, like the pregnant words of the nostrum vender, to bring forth among the people the very ills they assume to remedy, in playing upon the pathophobic suggestibility of the masses?

Indeed, the author takes specific account of dangers of this sort. He details the case of "a sufferer known to us whose trouble is to be traced to the reading of a medical work, a practice which the non-medical person would do well to avoid. Nowhere is the adage so much to the point as here: 'A little knowledge is a dangerous thing,'" etc.

Against this place the opening paragraph in the next chapter:

“As we hope that this book will be of some service to nervous sufferers, we are loath to introduce into it any descriptions of disease. But, on the other hand, the chief object we have proposed to ourselves is an account of the work undertaken for the benefit of the sick in Emmanuel Church, and to give this without any discussion of the disorders we attempt to treat is impossible. *The sick are therefore advised to skip this chapter,* AND THEY WOULD PROBABLY DO SO WITHOUT ADVICE.” The italics and small capitals are ours. Other comment is superfluous, except to say that the chapter in question contains a “popular” journeyman account of the condensed morbidity of “neurasthenia,” “hysteria,” “psychasthenia,” “melancholia,” “hypochondria,” “chorea” and “mania”—in short, pathogenic material enough for a thoroughly satisfactory infection of a nosophobic generation.

Whatever the results of the work of the founder of the Emmanuel movement and of his immediate disciples, there lies in it a further danger which, under certain circumstances, might become considerable. Worcester has called for coöperation in the churches throughout the land, and to that end he has traveled from city to city preaching the new gospel. As a result, numerous preachers all about are feeling themselves suddenly revived with apostolic power to cure bodily infirmities, and already some of them have out-Worcestered Worcester in overlooking the “alliance” with medicine which he assumes to be essential, and foresee the dawn of a new religious era in which the church shall be reclothed in all the authority and power she enjoyed before science took them from her. Thus, every preacher, whatever his intellectual qualifications, becomes potentially a “healer,” and the resultant evils among credulous and ignorant communities might become matter for anxious contemplation.

It is refreshing to observe that not all clergymen are swept away by this private pentecostal wave. The Rev. Dr. Joseph H. Crooker writes in a recent issue of *The Christian Register* (Boston): “The experience of the centuries in differentiating religion and medicine is the wisdom of God. . . . For the clergy to ignore the verdict of the ages and attempt to revive an outgrown function will be harmful to both public health and to the Christian church, as it would be for surgeons to substitute magic for anesthetics, or for doctors to give physic when repentance of sin is needed. . . . To carry it (mental therapeutics) into the noisy

market place, and exploit its merits with the waving of banners and the blare of trumpets, will cause more invalids to suffer fresh torments and create more new patients with serious disorders, than many a doctor can cure. To get up a spectacular procession, to flourish gorgeous standards, and to shout aloud to the crowd, 'Come all ye that are sick and be mentally healed'—to follow this course is to invite seven devils to enter and take possession where only one previously existed!"

In conclusion, are we justified in denying that Worcesterism has in it any possibilities for good? By no means. There probably never was any method of treatment so bad that it could not boast some cures, either real or apparent; and it is a trite observation that any "New Discovery" in therapeutics appears in the eyes of many for a certain time following its exploitation as the long-sought panacea. Such has been the history of the Sympathetic Powder, Metallic Tractors, the exhibition of relics, and other fundamentally fraudulent procedures. Moreover, mankind seems to be "incurably religious," to borrow the phrase of Sabatier. A child-like fear of the unknown has not yet departed from the human breast, and any method of cure which bears the trademark of the church is bound for its season to win the confidence of numerous trusting souls.

It need not be gainsaid that *religious* psychotherapy has effected cures, but the cures it may have produced are such as could have and should have been brought about by means of *rational* psychotherapy in the hands of a conscientious physician. Whatever ills of humanity it is possible by any means to relieve, legitimate medicine is able to cope with. She requires no assistance or encouragement from the church; and in the use she makes of mental treatment, she is working in a direction absolutely counter to that of clerical healing. This is the final point of distinction, and it cannot be too much emphasized. What, after all, is the object of rational psychotherapy, indeed, of all honest therapeutics? Is it not to make the patient independent of the physician, to render him self-reliant, to evoke his latent powers of resistance and self-reinforcement, to unfold from within the sinews of strength, to make him in every part a man, conscious of his manhood, unafraid and able to stand alone?

To this human and humane attitude the clerical method is diametrically opposed. Priestly therapy would make man strong

only by emphasizing his weakness and dependence. It would keep him a religious, fearful, prayerful animal, finding his sources of strength not within, but in mysterious and hidden agencies without; and as often as he is down, it would force him to believe in his own helplessness, and to have recourse again and yet again to the outside mysterious agency, or its self-elected priestly representative.

The contrast is complete. It is the difference between bondage and freedom. Science would emancipate the soul of man. Declares the Church, "My quarry is the soul."

One of the greatest apostles of intellectual liberty once related this parable: "A surgeon once called upon a poor cripple and kindly offered to render him any assistance in his power. The surgeon began to discourse very learnedly upon the nature and origin of disease; of the curative properties of certain medicines; of the advantages of exercise, air and light, and of the various ways in which health and strength could be restored. These remarks were so full of good sense, and discovered so much profound thought and accurate knowledge, that the cripple, becoming thoroughly alarmed, cried out, 'Do not, I pray you, take away my crutches. They are my only support, and without them I should be miserable indeed!' 'I am not going,' said the surgeon, 'to take away your crutches. I am going to cure you, and then you will throw away the crutches yourself.'"