

## CORRESPONDENCE

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### EVIL IN MRS. EDDY'S DOCTRINES

IN Number 4 of Volume II of this Journal a "prominent neurologist" calls attention to what seems to him, and to many others, a striking inconsistency in the belief of Mrs. Eddy and her followers "in the possibility of a hostile and destructive influence by evil minded persons, even on the minds of true believers." As I feel that the "prominent neurologist" has missed one of the important points of "Christian Science" doctrine, and as there is prevalent amongst medical men a large amount of misconception of this doctrine, I am impelled to make some explanatory remarks on this aspect of Mrs. Eddy's system.

"Christian Science" has two basal theories on which its therapeutic method is supposed to rest. To be sure they are modified versions, in the language of Emmersonian idealism, of the characteristic tenets of the Vedanta system of Indian philosophy, but that is not to the point at present. An intelligent attitude towards Mrs. Eddy's propaganda presupposes an understanding of the use she makes of these two principles.

The first theory is that "All is God," "All is good" and "All is Mind." There is no evil, no suffering, disease, or sin; no matter, physical causation, or physical law. The apparent evil and material causation in the world are simply erroneous beliefs. Hence, the true believer refuses to speak of disease, matter, etc.; but speaks of "beliefs of disease," "beliefs of matter" etc.

But an *erroneous belief* is evil, and hence cannot exist in Mind, *i. e.*, God. Hence the second theory, which supposes *mortal mind*" (no capital), something different from, and antithetical to Divine Mind; and it is this "mortal mind" which is said to be guilty of all those "false beliefs" of sin, disease, material causation, etc. "Mortal mind" is then the principle of evil; really a sort of abstract devil. The question at once arises, how God can be *all*, and yet this "mortal mind" exist. The explicit answer of Mrs. Eddy is that it *doesn't* exist. We have then on the one hand "mortal mind" existing as the sufficient cause of, and medium for, the "errors" or "false beliefs"

which Mrs. Eddy recognizes and which she proposes to cure; and on the other hand, "mortal mind" non-existent, that God may still be "all."

The harmonization of these contradictory principles is of course impossible for the logician, but not for the "christian scientist." The contradiction is only apparent, *i. e.*, is a contradiction for "mortal mind" only, and for the true view there is no contradiction. The trouble with the unbeliever (and the trouble is with him and not with the doctrine), is that he is trying to understand it with "mortal mind," which is by nature the source of error only, and hence incapable of comprehending the truth. The "christian scientist" understands through "Divine Mind." We might say in metaphorical language that "mortal mind" is a useful burden-bearer which, when it gets in the road, considerably swallows itself.

The usefulness of the "mortal mind" concept is enormous, since it not only accounts for its own existence and for the existence of evil, but also for all the inconsistencies with which the "christian scientist" may be charged. It is evident that the person who has once accepted the doctrine cannot be dissuaded by being shown that "christian science" is full of logical contradictions, nor by being shown that he remains alive only by acting constantly in defiance of his belief. All such things are provided for by the doctrine of "mortal mind." Here lies, I am sure, the kernel of the psychological and psychiatric importance of Mrs. Eddy's religion. The same mental attitude is of course rampant in many other sects, but it is especially accentuated in "christian science."

If we bear in mind the fundamental doctrines of Eddyism, we can see that the belief in malicious witchcraft, *i. e.*, mesmerism, is quite to be expected. The active principle in the "christian science" faith is in fact belief in both white magic and black magic. The "practitioner" cures the patient in defiance of the laws of natural causation; that is to say, by white magic. We must remember that the "christian scientist" does not think that his treatment depends on understanding of the principles by the patient, or by any sort of accepted psychological action; for he not only treats *in absentia*, but treats infants and animals. Of course the patient who does accept the religion is more amenable to treatment, for he uses the magic on himself. In short,

it is impossible to class the "christian scientists'" own opinion of their therapeutic method as other than the world-old belief in witchcraft. But if good effects can be produced by the principle of good, evil effects can be produced by the principle of evil (*i. e.*, "mortal mind"). Hence, the well-known doctrine of Mrs. Eddy and her followers that wicked persons can (and do), by the exercise of "malicious mesmerism," injure and even kill true believers, as well as hinder the spread of the faith, is a natural consequence of the leading principles of "christian science," which in this instance is surprisingly consistent.

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### BOOKS RECEIVED

THE INTERNAL SECRETIONS AND THE PRINCIPLES OF MEDICINE By Charles E. DeM. Sajous, M.D., Fellow of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, etc. Volume second. With twenty-five illustrations. Cloth. Pp. xxv, 801-1873. Philadelphia. F. A. Davis Company, Publishers. 1907.

MENTAL PATHOLOGY IN ITS RELATION TO NORMAL PSYCHOLOGY. A Course of Lectures delivered in the University of Leipzig, by Gustav Störing, Dr. Phil. et Med., now Professor of Philosophy in the University of Zürich. Translated by Thomas Loveday, M.A., lately Professor of Philosophy in the South African College, Cape Town. Cloth. Pp. x, 298. Price \$2 75 net. London. Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Ltd. 25 High Street, Bloomsbury, W.C. 1907.

THE SEMI-INSANE AND THE SEMI-RESPONSIBLE. (Démifous et Démiresponsables.) By Joseph Grasset, Professor of Clinical Medicine at the University of Montpellier, etc. Authorized American edition translated by Smith Ely Jelliffe, M.D., Ph.D., Clinical Professor of Mental Diseases, Fordham University, N. Y., etc. Cloth. Pp. xxxv, 415. Price \$2.50 net. New York and London. Funk & Wagnalls Company. 1907.

THE DANCING MOUSE: a Study in Animal Behavior. By Robert M. Yerkes, Ph.D. Cloth. Pp. xxi, 290. Price \$1.25 net. New York. Macmillan Company. 1907.