

MENTAL SCIENCE

— AND —

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

HELEN WILMANS POST



THE DIFFERENCE

BETWEEN

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE AND MENTAL SCIENCE

A Lecture Delivered by Helen Wilmans Post in Wilmans' Opera House at Seabreeze
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A few nights ago I listened to Judge Ewing, of Chicago, in his effort to prove that Christian Science and the long established orthodox religions are very similar. I need not give even a synopsis of what he said to his audience, as many who are present this evening heard that lecture.

If Christian Science is simply an offshoot of the old orthodox churches, I need take up very little time in describing it. Christian Science is founded on the Bible; and it has as much right to its own interpretation of the Bible as any other sect. I suppose no one will deny this.

Christian Science is a religion, thoroughly organized in working form; and if it is drawing adherents from the older and longer established religions, it is doing no more than the different sects are doing among each other. Christian Science teaches a religion of good works, and in this respect it serves purposes of usefulness far above the older religions, which undoubtedly preach a good deal more than they practice.

The main difference, however, between Christian Science and the old established churches is in regard to

the personality of God. By the way, Judge Ewing, in trying to establish the similarity between the old and new schools of religion, forgot to mention this point. He also forgot to allude to the non-existence of matter—a queer and unexplainable statement of Christian Science that no one ever did or ever will understand. We are all fond of enigmas; and this is the great, fascinating enigma of Christian Science. You may look at it as long as you please, and turn it to the light in every possible way; finally, if you accept it, as you are bound to do if you accept Christian Science, all you can do will be to wrap it in jelly like a pill, and swallow it at one gulp, declaring wildly that it has not choked you; then seek to forget it ever after.

I consider this part of Christian Science perfectly harmless, to say the least, and a point not to be considered should Christian Science and the older churches become fused together. Seeing the similarity between them, as pointed out by Judge Ewing, this union might easily be made but for a very important and a real difference. Christian Science refuses the idea of a personal God, and in its place substitutes a universal principle of life and intelligence. I am not prepared to believe that Christian Science will surrender this idea, though there are times when they would prefer to have it covered up, as Judge Ewing evidently covered it up on the evening of his lecture. Should they surrender it, it would not seem either improbable or impossible that the long established churches would take possession of them, thus obliterating them as a separate

church. Surely in this case there would be no valid excuse for their remaining apart. And yet, mark my prediction, I do not expect to see the older churches swallow the Christian Science churches, but rather that the Christian Science churches will swallow the others; or at least in the course of time that there will be so great a desertion from the older churches to the new one as to render their organizations too weak to hold together. In the evolution of religions this has usually been the case. The newness, the overweening vitality of the new counts as a most important factor in these things.

In furtherance of this view I call the audience to look at the unprecedented growth of Christian Science in the last five years. Nor do I see the smallest chance of its being stopped. Indeed, it is only from the present time that its mighty growth is beginning. Before ten years there will not be a town or village in the United States that will not have its church and its regular service; and these churches are going to prove immensely popular for a time at least.

Church creeds are not such indestructible things as people suppose. They are constantly being modified by the various leaders. Where they are too inelastic for modification, the masses burst through them and seek other creeds more in accord with their growing ideas. In looking back I cannot help seeing what great changes have taken place in religious views. When I was a girl the most popular churches outside the large cities had but two creeds that they held in common

These two were "Jesus Christ and him crucified, and Hell fire, and it boiling hot." They differed on the subjects of baptism, infant damnation and other unimportant things, but the cardinal points they all adhered to. I remember a Universalist preacher who came to our town and tried to get a hearing. Not a house would we let him have. He managed to get a few reckless persons together and delivered a sermon in an old abandoned log cabin that stood well out from the main part of the place. Portions of his sermon leaked out, and we children listened to these reports with the hair creeping up on the back of our heads. To think that anyone could be so abandoned of morality, so lacking in character and religion as to dare think that there was no hell and no personal devil. "He'll find out about that," remarked one of the gossips to whom I was listening. "And he kain't find out too soon to suit me," observed another. Indeed, I think this woman voiced the sentiments of the majority of us.

But note the change between that time and this! The doctrines that were preached then with so much gusto and swallowed with such relish, are entirely out of fashion now. A personal devil and a burning hell have ceased to be respectable, and are not admitted to any up-to-date church. The change from what we call orthodoxy to Christian Science is not half so great as from that of an awful hell gaping for the souls of the damned, and the peaceful religion of the gentle Jesus as it is taught to-day. True, there are some remnants of this horrible doctrine still lingering in the minds of

a few, to whom—from the peculiar character of their brains—an absolute change is impossible. But these people are regarded as being behind the times. The bulk of the Christian world—the intelligent, humane part of it—no longer endorses this frightful conception, which was once the mainstay and bulwark of the entire scheme of salvation. For my part, I have known for years that Jesus did not teach it; that grand and gentle humanitarian, whose mission it was to save and not to destroy, taught nothing but pure love. And how do his followers live it? But I will not answer this; it is not a part of the evening's discourse. It is my effort now to show the difference between Christian Science and Mental Science. The first teacher I had in the line of new thought was a Christian Scientist; a student Mrs. Mary G. B. Eddy, and the correct representative of her ideas.

Mental Science is what its name indicates; it is the science of mental unfoldment, or intellectual growth. It bases its hope of man's ultimate and perfect redemption from all the ills of life, including disease, old age, poverty and death, upon man's ability to acquire knowledge through the deductions of his reasoning powers acting on his experiences. In other words, that man is his own savior, and his brain is the instrument by which he effects his salvation. The salvation I am speaking of has no reference to life after death, but to practical, every-day salvation from the ills of the body in this world. Mental Science does not deal with the wrath to come, but with that which now is. So it will readily

be seen that it is not a religion at all. It is one of the mistakes of the public to suppose that it is a religion. It has nothing to do with religion any more than the study of history. It is the philosophy of mind growth. It assumes that the human mind is still in its infancy; and its one endeavor is to induce its students to reason upon the world's phenomena and their own experiences; and by so doing to enlarge the scope of their mental horizon. It believes in the use of the human intelligence first, last and all the time; subjecting all superstitions, all hereditary beliefs to the test of reason, and discarding or accepting them as reason disproves or justifies.

Christian Science denies the authority of the intellect; it says virtually, "The intellect may reason and reason on forever, but it will always go round and round and never arrive at any true conclusions from nature;" that is, *from natural law*.

Mental Science says, "The intellect is our guide, and the only guide we have. It does go round and round in its search for truth, but it does eventually find it; and with it, it finds the freedom that is always incarnate in truth, and that, too, by natural law, for there is no other law but natural law. What is called supernatural law is only the higher manifestation of natural law."

Christian Science says, "The human intellect and the carnal senses faint, fail, tire, die. Therefore they are not real, and cannot be trusted."

Mental Science says, "The human intellect and the

carnal senses are absolutely real, though at this early period in race development they have not arrived at a condition of perfection. They are the outfit of a baby race not yet out of its swaddling clothes; an unripe race—not grown up to a knowledge of its own power. Therefore they *are* weak at the present time, and they do faint and fail and tire and die, simply because—being young and undeveloped—they do not know their own power and ability; to give them this knowledge is the effort of Mental Science. That they have not yet achieved freedom from the many forms of weakness we see about us is because they are ignorant of their own capacity to do so; a capacity which mental training, the cultivation of the reasoning powers, will confer.

When Christian Science states the unreality of the senses because they are weak, it might as well declare the unreality of the babe because it is weak. And indeed, it does declare the unreality of the babe and of the adult, also. It declares the unreality of all things of which the five senses—seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling—have cognizance of. It calls the whole visible world “Mortal Mind,” and proclaims that it is a delusion and not a reality.

I investigated this point thoroughly when I was attending Christian Science lectures. “What is it,” I asked the teacher, “that we take in our arms when we say a babe is born?”

“Nothing,” was her answer.

“What is it we bury out of sight when we say a friend is dead?”

"Nothing."

"What do we see when we look into the starry skies at night?"

"Nothing."

"Then astronomy is not a science, and has no true basis of existence?"

"True; it has no real basis of existence," she said.

"Our bodies, you say, are absolutely unreal and non-existent?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Then of what use is your practical religion that aims at the mitigation of this world's ills?"

"I see that you do not understand," was her reply.

"I have nothing to understand with," I answered.

I have not recounted this to throw discredit on Christian Science. My teacher spoke truly when she said I did not understand. But in spite of not understanding this particular tenet of the doctrine, I was fascinated by the main part of it, and felt that there was much in it. The belief that all is good and there is no evil; that what has been a mistake in the habit of calling evil is simply error—the mistakes of ignorance, I accepted, and it opened a world of possibilities to me.

That Christian Science is a *practical* religion, ministering to the present wants of the time—in spite of its fanciful conception of the nothingness of matter—cannot be successfully denied. It cures disease whether there is any disease or not; it heals sick bodies even if the bodies have no existence. It has proved a blessing in the world, and it now seems probable that its in-

fluence is only just beginning. Heretofore it has spread without any great effort on the part of its leaders; but now it seems that lecturers are to be sent abroad into every nook and corner where they will be received, and a large and concerted effort made to convert all christendom to its ideas. This looks like a large contract, but I do not see that I have any quarrel to make with the projectors of it. It is just what we Mental Scientists intend to do with our own ideas when we feel that we have popularized them sufficiently by our writings.

But Mental Science, though holding a few of the ideas of Christian Science, is far enough from being the same thing. In some respects it is the direct opposite. Instead of believing that matter is a delusion and the senses mere phantoms of ignorance, it goes to the other extreme and asserts that matter is a living, vital substance, every atom of which either thinks or holds in latency the power to think when it shall have evolved to higher life. It is difficult for a great many to understand this. "What," says a doubter, "does the potato I ate for dinner think?" I answer yes, in its way it thinks. It could not have drawn the substances from the ground on which it fed and grew without it possessed a low form of thought. *It knew what it wanted*; and to know anything predicates ability to think. Moreover, but for the faculty of thought in the potato, there would have been no affinity between it and the person whom it fed, consequently it would not have fed him. If he had eaten it, it would have been like

so much iron or clay in his stomach; quite indigestible. But there was an affinity between it and the person who ate it, in consequence the thousand little mouths of the digestive system were attracted to it and absorbed it. There was thought at the bottom of this entire transaction. There was thought in the potato that grew. There was thought in the one whose inclination attracted the potato to himself. There was thought in all the myriad life cells that absorbed it after it had passed into the human stomach.

Now, since there was an attraction between the potato and the person who ate it, how was it that the attraction on the part of the eater was so great as to draw the potato within his own organization, instead of the potato drawing the man to itself for food? It was because the man was the most developed thinker of the two; in consequence of which the potato was negative to him and subject to his more intense capacity to desire.

The higher the capacity to think, the more positive and powerful the creature is. The two words, "positive and negative," explain the entire phenomena of growth. These two words are at the bottom of that great science called evolution. These two words rest on and spring from two other words, "intelligence and ignorance." The potato was negative to the man; that is, it possessed less intelligence than the man, or the man could not have compelled it to serve his purpose. But the potato did possess a certain degree of intelligence, or else there would have been no affinity between it

and the man, and it would not have responded to his desire. The affinity had to exist or they would not have come together. Positive and negative are the poles of that mighty power which expresses itself in the law of affinity—the law which draws atoms into relation with each other, and which is the basis of all organized intelligence, the starting point and the operating factor all through the universe of those objects which are cognizable by the senses of man. The trees, the animals, the sand heaps, the waters of old ocean, man himself with his wonderful organization, our planetary system and the whole of that vast system of planets, so immense as to cloud the keenest comprehension in trying to get a conception of it, are all held in place and under the guidance of this mighty law of attraction or affinity.

And this law of attraction is what men call God.

Christian Science is not a science. Nothing that shuts off the power of thought and denies the use of the reasoning faculties can be a science. Christian Science is based on the Bible, and is a religion. If it denies the personality of God, so does the Bible deny it in more than one place. "God is spirit, and they who worship him, worship him in spirit and truth." Again, "God is love." Love is an impersonal quality. Again, "No man hath seen God." If God is spirit, no man can see him. But the strongest confirmation of the non-personality of God is found in the fact that everywhere he is proclaimed as being omnipresent. If God is omnipresent, he fills all space and all eternity; he is

limitless, boundless. That which is limitless cannot be personal, since personality implies limitation. You who listen to these words are personal; consequently you are not God, because God is not circumscribed by any limits whatever. You embody within yourself as much of this personal power as you can recognize of its attributes; but you are not God. You are one of the manifestations of this infinite reservoir of possibilities which men call God, and which I call Law; but it would be a mistake to say that you are it.

Now, Christian Science, according to my belief, contains more than one inconsistency; but its main inconsistency is in denying the personality of God, and then writing and speaking of this impersonal power as if it were personal. There is no reason in this, but then Christian Science is distinguished by the absence of reason. How could it be otherwise when denying the authority of the intellect; when denying the results of human thought and condemning the power of thought?

Long before I attended Christian Science lectures I had reasoned myself into what I still consider the true conception of God. I was surprised when I found that Christian Science had the same conception. God is an immutable principle; the principle of Being; the forever unseen though moving power in every manifestation of life; in the animals, the plants, the stones and the stars. There is no spot in all the universe where this principle does not exist, and where its essence does not transfuse every atom and every creature. It is the active agent within all things, without which there

would be nothing; no life, no action, not a solitary object throughout the infinite vastness of creation. Truly this is the omnipresent power that men have personified and called God.

Mrs. Eddy's conception of this ubiquitous and omniscient power is precisely the same as my own. She affirms, as I do, the existence of it, and its all-pervading and all-embracing potency. Without it there could be no manifest existence; it is the living principle in all things, self-existent and eternal. Such a position as this is the inevitable denial of the personality which the Christian religion applies to it; and it proves the inadequacy of describing it as a person, by attributing sex to it, and calling it a man.

And yet, while denying the personality of this life principle, she still calls it God and refers to it constantly as a masculine individual.

Friends, I know that many of you, while kind to us and disposed to be perfectly fair in your estimate of us, still feel that we are separated from you by an almost impassable gulf, from the fact that we are called a godless people. But we are not godless, if you are willing to accept our interpretation of the word. You believe in a limited God, whose manifestations of power are arbitrary, resembling those of human beings, only on a vaster scale. We believe in an absolutely unlimited God, whose attributes of love and intelligence circumference all things and permeate all things, rendering all things *One with itself*. This mighty Life Principle we do not *call* God, because the word implies

limitations, and we recognize no limitations to it. The word God means a man. No matter how great that man is, it yet means a man. Therefore the word conveys no true meaning of the omnipresent Life Principle that is the soul of all things.

We are teaching a science and not a religion. We occupy a place outside the pale of the churches, and we are not trying to proselyte Christians. We are not trying to destroy Christianity. If the true principles of science are unfavorable to the churches, and if they have a tendency to liberalize thought in the people, we cannot help it, even if we would. Science is demonstrated truth, and nothing can stand against it. If Christianity is also demonstrated truth, then it is ready to accept science.

Mental Science is based on immutable law. It is as much of a science as mathematics. It simply forges ahead in the manifestation of truth, and has no side issues whatever. Its principles are founded on the doctrine of evolution, the same as Darwin's "Origin of Species." We do not teach from the Bible, but it is a fact that—according to my understanding of the Bible—Mental Science is in almost complete accord with it.

I have only mentioned two points where Mental Science and Christian Science meet. One is in the statement that all is good, and there is no evil. The particulars of this statement that must sound strange to those who have investigated the subject, will be explained, and its claims clearly demonstrated in a future lecture.

The other point where Christian Science and Mental Science meet is in our joint understanding of God. We both believe that God is a principle and not a person. Christian Science is not consistent in carrying out this statement when it appeals to the public. It may be afraid of public condemnation; it may be afraid of being misunderstood; it may be afraid that the bulk of the people are not ready to receive it, and that it might react to the injury of the Christian Science creed. Mental Science has no creed; never expects to have. It regards creeds as hitching posts, to which human thought is tethered, and from which it is hard to break loose. It refuses to tie itself up to any set of ideas. It believes in constant progress from one set of ideas to another, and it knows that the individual has no other means of progression but by absolute freedom to change his beliefs as often as his increased understanding of truth requires it.

Mental Science is striving for the cultivation of the human mind. It has unqualified confidence in man's intellectual powers to solve every problem of existence. Knowledge of man is its watchword. It knows that knowledge is the only savior, either of the individual or the race. It is intent upon this great study, and it is digging up new and splendid truths about man daily; truths that will eventually save him from the errors of the past ages and place him upon a pedestal of power, from whence he will proclaim his conquest over all environment. For man is master, and all things are ready to bow to this fact and to become

subservient to him as soon as he gains—through investigation of his own latent possibilities—the true knowledge of his power.

Mental Science is by far the greatest science on earth. It is the latest and best. It is the most uplifting in its tendency and the most clean in its morality. Like Christian Science, it expresses its power in practical good works. It heals the sick, gives hope to the disconsolate, and, best of all, it enlarges the scope of man's intellectual perceptions until in time he will feel himself almost godlike in his ability to do good to himself and others, and to raise the whole world to a higher plane of thought and action.

Mental Science is not understood at this time; and being not understood, it is misrepresented and abused. But it is nevertheless true that it is working out the mightiest problem of all the ages; a few years from now this fact will be seen and acknowledged, and it will take its place as the most potent savior of the race.



