

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

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JUST as we were getting used to Christian Science, M. Coué thrusts the subject of mental healing again upon our attention. We are now confronted by the question as to whether or not these two cults are identical, and if not identical, wherein they differ.

M. Coué's lucid exposition of his teaching makes the whole subject of autosuggestion quite simple. His method of healing is seen to be an application of the long-known fact that a conscious image of an organic condition is apt to become actualized in the body. The result of this tendency may not always be desirable. The image of a diseased condition seems to have the same power over the organism as that of a healthy one. No one who has observed psycho-physical relations, could have failed to notice many cases in which the conscious image of a disease has caused the disease itself. And we have the historical record of many cases of this kind, the most remarkable being the stigmata acquired by the saints. We have not, however, explained the fact that there inheres a formative power in the mental image. We have not the remotest conception of the manner in which autosuggestion works, nor of the hidden elemental constitution of a conscious state which makes it possible for that state to be transmuted into organic function.

When we turn to the writing of Mrs. Eddy, we find the same teachings as those of M. Coué, but stated in more radical terms, and intimately mixed with a radically different teaching—a transcendental-mystical metaphysics. This metaphysical teaching is treated as the central doctrine of Christian Science, suggestion being assigned the position of an auxiliary.

Metaphysics has not its root in those external facts with which natural science deals. Its origin must be sought in an inner vision of the universe. The study of nature points to nothing beyond nat-

ure. All metaphysical thinking may be traced to a metaphysical intuition which runs like a hidden warp through the entire fabric of human civilization, always and everywhere the same, and quite independent of external experience. Christian Science has the appearance of a rather immediate out-cropping from this metaphysical undercurrent of human life. This is indicated by its potency as well as by its rough-hewn form.

The chief expression of ethnic metaphysics of ancient Asia are the Vedanta, Taoism, and Zoroastrianism. In each of these systems the creative principle—the lower Brahman, the Tao, the Good-Mind—is represented as a thing intermediate between the world of sense and the self-existent root of all, the Absolute.

In the Upanishads, the basic record of Vedanta teaching, the concept of the lower Brahman is expounded with considerable definition. In the Maitrayana-Brahman-Upanishad (6-22) we read: "Two Brahmans have to be meditated on, the Word and the Non-Word. By the Word alone is the Non-Word revealed." The Word, or lower Brahman, is conceived as a creative reason which emanates from the Non-Word, or higher Brahman. The Word contains a great variety of Names and Forms; that is to say, the creative reason is the realm of ideas. These ideas are the archetypes of the things in the world of sense. They are the eternal patterns of which the actual thing is but an imperfect and perishable copy.

As the one sun is seen as many when reflected in the waves of the sea, so each idea projects itself into space and time as a plurality of individual things. That is, the ideas are the creative impulses which bring about the evolution of the actual things of the sense-world. They are the inexhaustible sources of energy, of life, and of mind. "In the beginning . . . there was that only which is, one only, without a second. . . . It thought, 'may I be many, may I grow forth?'" (Khandogya-Upanishad, 6-2-1.) "There is one ruler, the Self within all things, who makes the one form manifold. . . . There is one eternal thinker, thinking non-eternal thoughts, who, though one, fulfills the desires of many." (Katha-Upanishad, 2-5-12.) "Yes, all these creature, my son, have their root in the True, they dwell in the True, they rest in the True." (Khandogya Upanishad, 6-8-4.)

In the Tao-Teh-King, we find the Chinese version of the doctrine of the Word stated as follows: "There was something undefined and complete, coming into existence before Heaven and Earth. How still it was and formless, standing alone, and undergoing no change, reaching everywhere and in no danger! It may be regarded as the

Mother of all things. I know not its name; if I must designate it, I call it Tao."

To the ancient Persians, the creative principle presented itself as Vohu-mano, the Good-Mind. And this creative reason is itself the creation of Ahura-Mazda, the Absolute.

When we enter the realm of Greek thought, we find ourselves in an atmosphere utterly different from that of the Orient. The difference between the Parthenon and a Brahmic temple is typical of the difference between Hellenic culture and that of the Orient. However, as we penetrate the surface-strata of these cultures, their differences disappear. Thus we recognize in the Platonic Idea—the lower Brahman of the Vedanta, the Tao of the Lao-Tze, and the Vohu-Mano of Zarathustra.

According to Plato, ideas or forms are not thoughts in minds of men, nor even in the mind of a personal God; he conceives them as existing in and for themselves, they are substances: the original, eternal, transcendent archetypes of things, existing apart from things and prior to them, uninfluenced by the changes to which they are subject. Of ideas, there is only one of a kind; but this one idea is reflected in a plurality of sensible objects.

The material and mental phenomena which constitute our world are mere fleeting shadows of the eternal and never-changing ideas. The sensible object receives its form as well as its actuality from the idea. The objects perceived by the senses are but imperfect copies or reflections of the eternal patterns. The object is an appearance, a phenomenon. The reality which underlies it is the idea. Things appear, and things vanish; but the idea remains forever.

The ideas are not isolated units. The realm of ideas is not a chaos of independent forms. The ideas constitute a well-ordered whole, an ideal system, a highly articulated organism. Each particular idea is but an aspect of the one supreme all-embracing Idea—the Logos. The Idea is the fullness of reality, infinite being, the absolute Good, the cosmic purpose.

In later Old Testament times, Hebrew thought absorbed many elements of Greek culture. Among these, was the Platonic doctrine of the Idea. When incorporated into Hebrew tradition, the Idea, or Wisdom, appears as the Son of God. "Before them all, was Wisdom created," says Ecclesiasticus (i-4). Just as with Plato, Wisdom is the Book of Creation; that is, the great Pattern by which all things are made. In this first-born Son, the Father is expressed. He is "the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror

of the power of God, the image of his goodness." (Wisdom 7-25.) And in Proverbs (viii-22) Wisdom says: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.

"I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the world was

"When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water.

"Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth.

"While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.

"When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depths:

"When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep:

"When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth:

"Then I was by him, as one brought up with him."

During the first century of the Christian era, there existed no well-defined Christian doctrine. The metaphysical background of early Christianity was largely ethnic. The Logos conception was the central thought of early Christianity, and it held that position until it was obscured by speculative theology. The most definite statement of the metaphysical groundwork of early Christianity is found in the prologue of the fourth Gospel:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

"The same was in the beginning with God.

"All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

"And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."

Ethnic metaphysics sees the Logos, not as an entity distinct from the external world, but as the reality or essence of the world. That which appears as matter, life and mind to the outlooking consciousness, is seen in metaphysical intuition as the Logos. Just as the infinitesimal portion of solar radiation which enters the human eye is the sun, so also is each object in nature the Logos. External things are not independent entities, but merely different ways in

which the Logos affects our externalizing sensibility. Each natural phenomenon is a particular aspect of the Logos. Our experience of physical energy is one kind of contact with the Logos; life is another; and thought, still another. In reality, the world is the Logos; and the Logos is also that which each thing in the world really is.

This external contact is not like the contact with an inanimate object; rather, it is like the contact with another mind, which we experience when we read a book. That, it is not we ourselves who go out to the Logos and make a contact with its passive essence, but it is the Logos that goes out of itself in order to effect our passive sensibility. The world-in-itself is an emanation from the Logos, so that our external contact with the Logos is confined to this emanation, and limited by it.

From the earliest times it has been the common belief of mankind that human thought sometimes become invested with power to change the direction of external events by means of an influence exerted on the source of nature. The exercise of this power is what we call prayer. As a result of the over-emphasizing of the naturalistic aspect of the universe, which the rapid development of natural science has brought with it, there has appeared in recent times a quite general disbelief in prayer. A careful consideration of the implications of the concept of prayer, however, discredits such disbelief. In the first place, the belief in a personal deity is not an essential presupposition of the concept of prayer. Prayer may be conceived as an effect produced by human thought on an impersonal source of nature. It may be regarded as a mode of thought which acts on the source of nature in such a way as to induce a discharge of energy. In conscious bodily movement, we see thought translated into motion. Because of its familiarity, this utterly incomprehensible fact is accepted as a matter of course. Evidently there is a potential in thought, the loss of which may result in motion. The concept of prayer implies that this potential may reach a height sufficient to produce a release of energy at the source of nature. The energy thus discharged would form an increment to the existing natural processes, and the result would be a change in the course of events; furthermore, this would be a progressive change, manifesting itself as an enlightening, harmonizing, invigorating, and healing influence in the physical or mental environment of the thinker.

In its more philosophical forms, prayer is a thought more in the nature of an affirmation of the essential fullness of things, than a

petition addressed to a personal deity. Such prayer consists in an identification of the sensible object with its ideal archetype. What appears as an imperfect thing of sense, is affirmed to be the perfect, unchanging, eternal Idea.

There are in the Upanishads, many passages which indicate that the ancient Hindus were familiar with the healing and vitalizing power of metaphysical meditation. For example, the Kaushitaki-Upanishad (3-2) says:

"He who meditates on me as life and immortality gains his full life in this world."

And in the Khandogya-Upanishad, we read:

"Let a man meditate on that as brightness and health. He who knows this becomes bright and healthy." (3-13-1.)

"He who sees this (Brahman), does not see death, nor illness, nor pain; he who sees this, sees everything, and obtains everything everywhere." (7-26-2.)

"That self is a bank, a boundary, so that these worlds may not be confounded. Day and night do not pass that bank, nor old age, death and grief; neither good nor evil deeds. All evil-doers turn back from it, for the world of Brahman is free from all evil.

"Therefore, he who has crossed that bank, if blind, ceases to be blind; if wounded, ceases to be wounded; if afflicted, ceases to be afflicted. Therefore when that bank has been crossed, night becomes day indeed, for the world of Brahman is lighted up once for all." (8-4-1.)

Passages like the following from the Venidad (20-9), indicate that the healing power of the Logos conception was known to the ancient Persians. Vohu-Mano says: "I drive away sickness, I drive away death, I drive away pain and fever, I drive away the disease, rottenness and infection which Angra-Mainyu has created by his witchcraft against the bodies of mortals."

In the New Testament we find the conception of prayer as a power inherent in an attitude of mind replacing the primitive view of prayer as supplication aimed at a personal deity.

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John, viii-32.)

"All things are possible to him that believeth." (Mark ix-23.)

"And these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall

recover." (Mark, xvi-17.)

"For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. (1st Cor., iv-20.)

Christian Science is essentially a revival of the practice of prayer as metaphysical affirmation. Such prayer has a strong suggestive power, but this element is definitely regarded as auxiliary. The main reliance is placed on the metaphysical effect of an affirmation of fullness of being, as distinguished from its psycho-physical effect. Herein lies the chief difference between Christian Science and auto-suggestion. This difference is best illustrated by the difference between the methods of the two systems. M. Coué's method requires that the healing thought be presented to the consciousness of the patient. The Christian Science practitioner holds the thought in his own mind, usually in silence, and often in the absence of the patient.

As a consequence of this fundamental difference, there arises a difference in the field of application of the two methods. Auto-suggestion, obviously, can be applied only to organic functions, whereas the Christian Science treatment is applicable throughout the entire field of human experience.

In autosuggestion, the conscious image exerts an immediate healing influence. Prayer, on the contrary, in order to be efficacious, must be something more than a conscious image. A mere product of the imagination has not the power to release energy from the source of nature. Nor do the constructions of the intellect in themselves possess that power. Efficacious prayer must possess that subtle quality called faith.

In its outward aspect, faith seems to consist in a strong sense of the reality of the object presented—in a conviction that what we think is actually there. But when we try to construct faith by injecting this sense of reality into the mental image, the healing power is not realized. In spite of the most striking facts and the most conclusive arguments, this power often eludes us. The source of faith does not lie in the external world.

The attainment of faith is the essence of mysticism. The mystics tell us that faith is achieved through the Ego's union with the Logos. In all mystical metaphysics, that is, in all the ethnic philosophies, the philosophies around which the world's great cultures have formed, we find the doctrine of man's one-ness with the Logos. In all these systems, the Logos is represented as the common soul of all living individuals, not in the sense of being divided among the many,

but as belonging wholly to each individual. Practically, this means that all the power of the Logos is available, without limitation, to each individual.

The ancient Hindus boldly and unequivocally identified themselves with the Word, or lower Brahman. In the Khandogya-Upanishad (6-8-7), we read: "Now that which is that subtle essence (the root of all), in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self, and thou, O Svetaketu, art it." The creative principle, the reality behind phenomena, the essence of each particular thing,—that is the soul of man. "If a man worships another deity, thinking the deity one and he another; he does not know." (Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad, 1,4-10.)

From the sayings of Jesus, it appears that he unreservedly and habitually identified himself with the Son of God. Jesus says, "I am not of this world." (John, viii-23.) "I am the Son of God." (John, x-36.) "Before Abram was I am." (John, viii-58.) To Jesus, the eternally first-born Word was his own Soul. Hence, he could say: "I am the way, the truth and the life." (John xiv-6.) "I am the bread of life." (John, vi-35.) "I am the resurrection and the life." (John, xi-25.) And since the Son is the eternal emanation from the Father, he said: "I am in the Father, and the Father in me." (John, xiv-11.) "He that hath seen me (the Logos) hath seen the Father." (John, xiv-9.) "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." (John xiv-7.)

That Jesus did not regard himself as being unique in being the Son, but that he regarded every man as equally divine, is evidenced by his saying: "I (the Logos) am in my Father, and ye in me (the Logos), and I (the Logos) in you." (John, xiv-20.) Hence it is written (1st Cor., xv-47), "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from Heaven." And (1st John, iii-2), "When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." That is to say, when we shall know the Logos, we shall find that we are the Logos. Knowing all men to be equal to himself, he said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me (the Logos), the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do." (John, xiv-12.)

In Neo-Platonism, the concept of man's transcendental selfhood became the dominant note. Plotinus tells us that he had actually experienced the Logos as his own soul. In Islam, too, we find the doctrine that the human soul and creative principle are one. Moham-med says: "He who knows himself knows God."

Among the Christian mystics we find the same tendency to identify themselves with the Logos. Thus, for example, St. Catherine of Genoa, says: "The proper center of everyone is God Himself; my Me is God, nor do I recognize any other Me, except God himself. Indeed, the glorious God is the whole essence of things, both visible and invisible."

In the writings of the two pioneers of the Christian Science movement, namely, P. P. Quimby, and Mary Baker Eddy, there occur quite different indications of the sense of oneness with the Logos. Mr. Quimby writes: "The real man is God, or the First Cause. . . . But this real man is not seen, but is truth or Wisdom." (Quimby manuscripts, p. 336.) In "Science and Health," Mrs. Eddy writes: "The I is Spirit." (P. 249.) "Life is God, Spirit." (P. 486.) "The Science of being reveals man as perfect, even as the Father is perfect, because the Soul, or Mind, of the Spiritual man is God." (P. 302.) "The divine Mind is the Soul of man, and gives man dominion over all things." (P. 307.)

This oneness of the Ego and the Logos is represented by all the sacred books as not merely theoretical, but as also a practical oneness. While the Ego and the Logos are one by virtue of their being emanations from the absolute One, they are also one through a potency of active union. This union with the Logos is achieved through an act of introversion. The Ego becomes one with the Logos only by turning from all external experience toward the inner vision of being.

The human mind is a part of nature, and as such, all its operations are governed by the law of cause and effect. That is, the mental state is the necessary consequence of preceding states and of the existing character and environment. In mental process, there are no dual possibilities. In every situation, only one thing is naturally possible. Within the mental process, there is no such thing as free will. Human actions are predetermined precisely as are physical changes. Insofar, therefore, as we are the subject of external experience, we are at the mercy of nature, drifting with the current of events, passive spectators of the show of life, imagining ourselves active agents because some of the action is laid in our own bodies and in our own minds forgetting that our bodies as well as our minds are themselves but parts of the show. The external life, then, is not a thing done by us. It is a thing imposed on us by nature. The natural, external life is a destiny.

To create, means to bring into being something that would not

have happened as a consequence of what preceded it. The created thing might not have been. It is not necessary. It is a novelty in the sense that it forms the beginning of a wholly new tendency, a tendency which has not its roots in any pre-existing tendency. In other words, the creative act is a free act, and a first cause. It is a thing beyond destiny; it is the source of new destiny.

When, by introversion, man get himself out of the world, which is the domain of causality, he is free. Indeed, the act of introversion is in itself a free act. Nothing compels it. Nothing can hinder it. It is not facilitated by knowledge, nor by virtue, nor by health. Nor does sickness, nor ignorance, nor vice obstruct it.

In this absorption in the Infinite, there is no loss of individuality. On the contrary, it is fullness of individuality. In the first place, the Ego—becoming the One—remains the Ego. In the second place, introversion is the supreme act of self-assertion. That, which to thought appears as a solution in the *Lógos*, is really an appropriation of the *Logos*.

The inner union with the *Logos* manifests itself in the out-looking consciousness as metaphysical inspiration. In this inspired attitude, the consciousness of body and mind fades into the consistency of a dream. The mortal limits of the self recede, and it expands into a symbol of the transcendent reality. Sometimes this translation into the inner life even results in the total cessation of external consciousness.

The practical value of inspiration, from the viewpoint of the external life, lies in the fact that it is the source of faith, and may be converted into efficacious prayer directed toward any practical temporal problem.

Thus, Christian Science appears to be essentially a manifestation of mysticism, but it does not belong in the class of other-worldly manifestations, where voices and visions abound. It is a practical mysticism, definitely directed toward the solution of specific problems.