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What's wrong with hypnotism?

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While I was in junior high school, prior to my learning about Christian Science, an auditorium program on hypnotism was presented to our school. I was fascinated by the apparent power and unusual characteristics that this state of consciousness seemed to exhibit. A classmate's father was a psychiatrist, and we found a book on hypnotism in his library. Before long we were experimenting with some of the techniques, and I found that I was able to hypnotize my friend. (It's interesting to note that I could never be hypnotized: I simply would not yield control of my thinking to someone else—a fact that should have alerted me to one of hypnotism's inherent problems.)

After several weeks we gradually lost interest in hypnotism. Later, as a college student, I again began experimenting with it. I used to entertain my fraternity brothers with occasional "sessions" with volunteers in the lounge of the fraternity house.

At another time I hypnotized an acquaintance at his request so that he would do well on a test. He not only passed the test, he excelled on it. I was very pleased with myself.

Four weeks later, however, my friend was back again. He wanted me to hypnotize him again to prepare him for another test. He had failed once more to study properly, still believed himself to be inadequate, and felt more strongly than before that I held the key to his success.

It was very upsetting to me that someone had come to feel dependent on me for his sense of intelligence. Clearly, my friend was in worse condition now than if I had never helped him in the first place. He had achieved the results he wanted on that first test but had paid a very high

price: Not only did he still believe he was lazy and unintelligent; he had now added to this the firm belief that the solution to his problem was outside of his control and that he could and should be controlled by someone else.

It became obvious to me that hypnotism was a blind alley from which he would have to retrace his footsteps before he could make any real progress. I urged my friend to look within himself for the motivation and intelligence that he wanted me to give him. I lost all interest in hypnotism at that time.

A few years later I was introduced to the teachings of Christian Science. It was only after a two-year struggle to bring my life style and motives into line with these teachings that I began to understand enough of this Science to prove its healing power consistently in my life. The use of drugs and alcohol was overcome, a sense of direction and purpose was gained, and a high standard in subsequent academic studies was achieved.

I also gained through the study of Christian Science a clearer perspective on the evil of hypnotism. One statement in particular by Mrs. Eddy in *Science and Health* seems to capture what I had learned from that last episode with hypnotism: "The hypnotizer employs one error to destroy another." She goes on to say, "This greater error thereafter occupies the ground, leaving the case worse than before it was grasped by the stronger error."¹

A subsequent request for Christian Science help that I received from another friend offers an interesting contrast with the preceding experience. I was residing in the home of a family who lived near the graduate school I was attending. The teenage son of the family was heavily involved in drugs and had dropped out of school. He was well aware of my interest in Christian Science.

One night he told me that a friend of his had just been hospitalized with hepatitis. Both of them had used the same hypodermic needle to experiment with drugs, and my friend also had all the symptoms of hepatitis. He was very frightened and wanted me to help him with Christian Science treatment.

Although I had experienced several personal healings through prayer, I had never been asked to help someone else. I was reluctant to take the case. After discussing the situation with a Christian Science practitioner, I felt encouraged to pray for my friend.

That night I alternated between reading selections from the chapter entitled "Christian Science Practice" in our textbook, *Science and Health*, and prayerfully affirming the perfection and wholeness of my friend as God's flawless child. When a suggestion of fear came to my thought, I consciously replaced that suggestion with specific truths from the textbook. By morning I had gained a sense of peace about the situation. I was still somewhat surprised, however, when my friend came bouncing into my room, declaring that all the symptoms had vanished and that he felt great!

As a result of this complete healing, he became an earnest student of Christian Science and his life was progressively regenerated. He has subsequently learned how to heal himself and others. What a contrast to my ill-advised effort to help my fraternity brother prepare for his exam!

Understanding that God is the one infinite Mind—purely good, the very source of all ideas—and that perfect man reflects only this one Mind destroys the belief in many separate, braincentered creatures struggling for mental solutions to their problems. This understanding of the one Mind elevates consciousness to see the reality of man's direct reflection of God's perfection, and this understanding heals without external influences of any kind. *Science and Health* states, "There can be no healing except by this Mind, however much we trust a drug or any other means towards which human faith or endeavor is directed."²

Hypnotism, or animal magnetism, is the action of error or matter-based suggestion in human consciousness. Since hypnotism attempts to work with mortal belief—the actual source of all matter-based thinking—it can never really uplift and heal. It is doomed, at best, to replacing one false belief with another, and a stronger false belief at that.

The human mind seems to be in constant search for a means to solve its problems with something beyond physical or material methods—which we come to realize are limited and ineffectual. When we first see the connection between human thought and outward

experience, which hypnotism seems to demonstrate, hypnotism may seem to be a step in the right direction—a step out of matter. Compared to the widely held belief that our experience is the result only of the interactions and collisions of matter, hypnotism may appear in some ways to be progressive. But this is a deception. Any apparent benefit of hypnotism is ephemeral and is bought at too great a price, since the temporary solution or "cure" actually leaves the subject worse off.

The control of one human mind by another is evil, every bit as confining and limiting as submitting to the domination of matter. In fact, both are phases of the same false belief: that man is material and separated from his purely spiritual origin and source. When Christ Jesus warned the people about false saviors, false Christs, he said, "Take heed that ye be not deceived."³ And Mrs. Eddy clearly warns Christian Scientists about the danger of hypnotism, even requiring in the *Manual of The Mother Church* that students of Christian Science are not to learn hypnotism.⁴

Christian Science treatment, based on the love of God and the realization of the absolute spiritual facts of being, pierces through the suggestive nature of material conceptions and destroys the source of the apparent discord. The following aspects of Christian Science treatment illustrate its nature as being exactly opposite to hypnotism:

- Because it is based on timeless Truth, or divine Principle, Christian Science treatment is not subject to human speculation about what to say or how to give a correct treatment.
- No attempt is ever made in Christian Science to control another's thought or action. No dependency is developed between patient and practitioner, since all metaphysical healing is based on the direct relationship that already exists between God and individual man, which the practitioner's prayers help to illumine.
- Christian Science healing is permanent. It doesn't wear off, since the patient has been healed by the realization of eternal Truth, not by suggestion or human willpower, and therefore is in that degree a new person.

- Christian Science treatment is always wholesome and good. To be effective the healer must have pure motives, fidelity to Truth, and a genuine love for God and man.

Freedom and dominion can only be found by knowing and doing God's will. Then the conscious use of our capacity to determine for ourselves our thoughts, attitudes, and motives will be in conformity with the law of God, and Truth and Love will govern our lives. As Mrs. Eddy writes: "God has endowed man with inalienable rights, among which are self-government, reason, and conscience. Man is properly self-governed only when he is guided rightly and governed by his Maker, divine Truth and Love."⁵

When we are confronted with problems of any kind, spiritually mental solutions are always available directly from God. Christian Science awakens us to the ever-presence of this direct relationship, and shows us how to heal ourselves and how to help others do the same, and thus glorify the one Mind, God.

¹ *Science and Health*, p. 104. ↑

² *Ibid.*, p. 169. ↑

³ Luke 21:8. ↑

⁴ See *Man.*, Art. XI, Sect. 9 . ↑

⁵ *Science and Health*, p. 106. ↑