

# THE EVOLUTION OF PSYCHIC HEALING

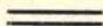


BY  
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# The Evolution of Psychic Healing.

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**H**ISTORY is a wise teacher, a true prophet, a faithful counselor. With all thy reading, therefore, read history, for thereby thou shalt become old without becoming infirm; some sixty centuries through it shall drop the mantle of their wisdom on thee, and of their sowing thou shalt reap! History repeats itself, sure enough, for it is nothing else than a composite biography of the *genus homo*, in which all the fundamental qualities and experiences are constant, no matter in what temporal or territorial position they may appear. Life-principles, life-currents, life-experiences move pretty much in undulations. So the future will be essentially like the past. The variations will be more or less on the surface. The moon will change, almanacs and calendars will become obsolete, styles in dress and phrase drapery and methods of work and play will move through spiral circles; but the constitution of man will not be amended by even a majority vote, neither will the forces and principles of the universe be turned backward or aside. Very well; then the things that most deeply concern mankind, the staples of life, know no tenses or moods; the future is the past that remains to be enacted, and the past is the future we face with our back which is only the converse of us. History has, consequently, an oracular voice in which destiny can be read.

The student of history discovers a law underlying the undulating motions of human thought which is known as the law of recurrence. In accordance with it, attention, interest, enthusiasm and allegiance tend to swing back and forth like the pendulum of the old hall clock between different and even conflicting interpretations and applications of world-facts and world-forces. The tide of individual and race interest ebbs and flows. It has always been so, it will continue to be so; two psychological facts produce this perpetual motion in mental mechanics—the natural aversion to monotony which familiarity produces, and on the other hand, the increasing tyranny of custom, popular opinion and human authority, growing finally into intolerance and over-pressure, from which wholesale revolt is inevitable sooner or later.

Now such a fluctuation is illustrated in the regular swing between idealism and materialism, the one reading the literature of being in terms of spirit, the other in terms of matter. The tide of idealistic interpretation has come in with such thinkers as Plato, Plotinus, Berkeley, Kant; and has gone out with the coming of such as Epicurus, Zeno, Spencer, Haeckel. Today there is a widespread and thoroughgoing revolt against materialism with its "Gospel of Dirt" according to Carlyle. And one of the forms in which this revolt manifests itself is in the strenuous application of psychical forces for the manipulation and alteration of physical conditions. Mind has gone up a good many points in the intellectual stock exchange, while matter is away down below par and selling slow. Thought-force has suddenly become a popular therapeutic agency.

But the suddenness has to do only with the popularity. The method is not new. Trace its path through the centuries—it is there. Stand on the long white beach of history and watch the tides of psychic supremacy come and go. On the loom of investigation

let us weave the historical context of such movements as "Christian Science," "Faith Cure," and the "Emmanuel Movement," and we shall see that they are in all essentials hoary with age.



**W**E are told by historians that the ancient Chinese were familiar with the theory and practice of mental healing. The old Egyptian monuments bear witness to the same fact for that land. The Hebrews were not unaware of its principles, for one of their poets said a thousand years before Christ, "My bones wax old through my groaning all day long," . . . . . "My moisture is changed as with the drought of summer," . . . . . "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws," saying as plainly as words can do that mental depression had kindled fires of fever in his blood. A Hebrew scientist, philosopher, sage, said, "A merry heart is a good medicine, but a broken spirit drieth up the bones." Homer sang of Aesculapius, whom the Greeks afterwards elevated to the circle of the gods as the god of healing. Temples for his worship stood outside the chief cities of Greece; and even Pergamum and Rome were not without them. In these temples multitudes of sick and infirm were cured of their diseases by purely psychic means, and as an expression of their gratitude and veneration covered the temple walls with tablets whereon are inscribed the name of the person, the disease, and the cure. Many of these tablets are extant today.

In the days of Christ, the esoteric sect or fraternity known as the "Essenes" flourished among the Jews, and while much of their history is wrapped in obscurity, this much is sure, that they were extreme ascetics, despising things material, and "by the imposition of hands and certain whisperings, they healed

the sick." Yet Christ did not ally himself with them, nor do his recorded utterances contain the slightest reference to them. He simply ignored them.

In the first century there arose in the very heart of the apostolic church a sect called "Gnostics." They were cultured and clamorous. It was their proud boast that while the apostles and plain Christians were satisfied with the letter of Scripture, they had gone below the letter and were regaling their souls on the spirit that yielded its message to their superior spiritual illumination. They said the orthodox church followed "blind faith," whereas they alone had "knowledge," hence their name. Their interpretation of the Bible was astoundingly allegorical. They first put their own meaning on the words of Scripture, without regard to the laws of language or historical usage, and then proceeded naively to read their message back. The vicious circle with a vengeance! And not without modern exemplification! Like the Essenes, they looked upon matter as evil and sought in every way by denial and repudiation, to be freed from its dominion. According to Iraneus and other ancient Church Fathers, two results followed among the Gnostics—asceticism and sensualism, the first when the flush of victory over matter was upon them; the last when the conquest had to be repeated again and again until the despair of full and final victory by the weapons of denial had throttled hope, so that they gave matter up for a hopeless case and let it take its own course. That kind of history, also, is likely to repeat itself, gentle reader. But the Gnostics practiced psychic healing, and so successful were they that their ranks swelled until they had well nigh swept the whole Christian church, and it took two hundred years for the inadequacy and the viciousness of their philosophy to make themselves clear to the popular mind. Paul wrote the Epistle to the Colossians to refute their errors. John's first epistle was directed

against their sophistries, while the message to the Church at Laodicea was for the purpose of saving that congregation from the deadly virus of their pagan teachings. But all seemed to be in vain, and multitudes of Christians had to learn in the bitter school of experience, as a lot are now doing.



**A**MONG the Jews, there sprang up a cult known as "Cabbalists," who claimed that Moses received an inner and mystical interpretation of the law which he committed to Joshua, and he in turn to the Seventy Elders, who in their turn passed it on down through a select circle of Jews from generation to generation. Like the Gnostics they arrogated to themselves the exclusive right to be considered the cultured thinkers of their day, and practiced the healing of diseases by incantations. Cornelius Agrippa in the early part of the seventeenth century wrote a treatise on the principles of this cult, entitled, "De Occulta Philosophia," a reprint of which it was my pleasure to see not long since. The story of their career reads like romance for fascination.

The little town of Lourdes in southern France leaped into world-wide notoriety a half a century ago through the cures wrought there in the waters that flow from a grotto near the place. The fabled visit of the Virgin brought cures which, while they were fully certified as to their occurrence and extraordinary character by France's most acute and learned scientists and physicians, none of whom were glad to make their findings, still filled the world with utter amazement. Time would fail us to tell of St. Patrick's cures, of St. Bernard's, of those wrought by means of Catholic relics, many of which are far from legendary in their character. Suffice it to say that all of them were wrought through psychotherapy.

But if the ancient days witnessed the ebb and flow of psychic healing, so likewise have the days of modern times. Amulets and fetiches are used in other parts of the world than Africa, mind you; nor are they without prophylactic and therapeutic power, for they are strong objective suggestions, whether in the form of a potato carried in the pocket, a little bag of asafetida worn about the neck, or a bit of bone or ivory.

The Buddhists practice psychotherapy. Their priests are the main operators and follow the general lines of our American "Faith Cure" healers, accomplishing astonishing results in the healing of many forms of disease. They say to the patient "You must have faith in God," and sometimes they give him a cake to eat after it has been devoted, thus giving a tangible suggestive factor to the whole transaction.

We Occidentals are mere children in the manipulation of psychic healing when brought into comparison and competition with the Indian theosophists. Their whole framework of thought has been for many centuries immersed in mysticism, until their very words drip with the delicious, dreamy accents of that upper, or under, world; so that, whereas our western healers are just entering the portals of the preparatory school of psychotherapy, their Indian Yogis are well on in their post-graduate course. In my library I have a handbook on the subject by Yogi Ramacharaka which is a marvel of conciseness and completeness as such. It does not pretend to enter the domain of philosophy but confines itself to a setting forth of the most approved methods of treating various diseases by psychic methods. For centuries mental therapeutics has made its home on India's soil, and the methods there in operation are imitated closely by several of our American cults.

**I**N America today there are at least six methods of mental healing in vogue. Each one of the six works cures. Any one of the six methods can exactly duplicate any cure effected by any of the other five. Yet all six are quarreling among themselves, after the manner of the proverbial Irish family. But if their cures are identical, why should they quarrel with each other? Here is the explanation of it. Every axe has two parts—a blade and a head, and these systems of psychic healing are in this regard like an axe, not necessarily like a meat-axe. The blade of the axe in these systems is the psychological principle called *suggestion*—SUGGESTION, I say, or the rising inflection in the grammar of determination. 'Now, it is the blade of the axe, that does the cutting; the head serves two purposes, viz: to give the blade momentum and to knock with. The blade of the axe is exactly, precisely, unambiguously, organically, the same in every one of these six systems. Will you please put a pin there? Suggestion is the axe-blade that does the work of healing every time and it is never done by anything else. And because every one of the six systems has the axe-blade of suggestion they all heal diseases. They may deny it, they may wax indignant over the intimation, they may fulminate in magazines with long articles having big blue pencil marks about them, they may buy space in the daily press to say it isn't so and it is all very wicked to suppose it to be so; but *the fact remains that it is so*. The head of the axe is the philosophy that lies behind the therapeutical method. The head is different in every one of the six methods, and that is why they quarrel. But since the head is of no real value in this realm of psychic healing except to drive the blade, and since the blade of suggestion is so keen that it needs little or no head-weight to drive it, we are not in the least concerned with the quarrel. To remember this simple illustration of the axe will be to escape from a good many of the

perplexities caused by the Babel voices that clamor on all sides.

The first of these six methods we mention is the "Mind Cure" method. The Indian theosophists call it "Thought Force Healing." The theory back of it is that every cell, nerve, organ, of the body has a mind; the central mind is the will mind and must control the cell, nerve or organ minds, accomplishing normal functioning of the various parts of the body through them. In some instances, the theory goes no further than to assume that every physical ailment springs from a mental or moral twist which must be corrected, and when it is corrected the consequent physical disturbance will pass away. The "Home of Truth" cult holds substantially to this philosophy. That is the head of the axe. The blade of the axe is the suggestion made to the patient that the mental or moral twist has been or is being corrected and the ailment is consequently passing. And it is the blade that cuts.

The second method is "Spiritualism." Head of the axe—the spirits of the departed exercise their power for the relief of the ailment either directly or through the medium. Blade of the axe—they have exercised this power or are now exercising it and the disease is going, is gone, and health has succeeded.

Third, we remark "Mesmerism." The Indian theosophists call this "Pranic Healing," and use it probably more than any other method. They operate by "Distant Pranic Healing" a great deal and with splendid results. That is, of course, the counterpart of "absent treatment" as we know it in this country. Mesmerism is popularly known as "Magnetic Healing." Its axe-head is the theory that a cosmic fluid pervades the universe in general and the human body in particular, which may be projected by the healer into the body of the diseased person, lifting him on the tide of this vital fluid above the jagged rocks of disease. The axe-blade is the suggestion that the fluid has been

duly projected, the tide of vital fluid has risen and that the disease with its symptoms is gone or rapidly going. There is a gentleman of my acquaintance who was cured of inflammatory rheumatism in four days with four of these treatments eight years ago after three physicians said he could not get well, and he has never had the slightest return of the disease. And yet the operator was a rough, swearing, drinking fellow, who laid no claim to either ethical or religious excellence.



**T**HE fourth method of psychic healing we mention is "Christian Science," or more properly, "Eddyism." The head of the axe here is the philosophy that matter is unreal, that only mind exists. The phrases run on without head or tail and remind one of a bushel of beans thrown into a bag. It does not matter where one begins or quits or in which direction one goes, the sense is just the same—all nonsense. This axe-head is not new, much as many of our friends would persuade us that it is. The Buddhists and Essenes and Gnostics, and Theosophists have been swinging it for centuries unnumbered. The Eddyist principle of Biblical interpretation is identical with that of the Gnostics and Cabbalists. They may deny it ever so vociferously but the fact remains. But it is not this philosophic axe-head that cures: it is the blade. But what is the blade in Christian Science? The suggestion persistently dinned into the patient's ears on this wise: "You are not sick. There is no matter: God is All: God is Spirit, Mind: Spirit is All: Deny sin, sickness and death. Your sickness is a delusion of mortal mind. You are well." The same old shining blade of suggestion. The suggestive principle of Eddyism is psychologically scientific: the philosophy of it is absurd; the religion of it

is pagan. The pagan message has been forced into the Scriptures and then read out, the Master's words have been compelled to bear their own cross to the place of their crucifixion. In a Western city a prominent Christian Science healer was accidentally overheard to say to another Christian Scientist, "God! God!—There's no God in it. It's nothing but Mind, and you know it. The notions a lot of these people have when they come to us disgust me!" The person, who was at that time a follower of Mrs. Eddy, rushed away to a healer in the place and in amazement reported what had been heard. "Did you hear that?" inquired the healer. "I certainly did," replied the person. "I am very sorry you have advanced so rapidly," was the astounding response from the healer. On the rocks of such incidents, which could be multiplied indefinitely, the claim of Christian Science to anything Christian or even theistic must go to pieces. It has been pointed out by one writer that the word "God" may be marked out of "Science and Health" everywhere it occurs without the slightest effect on the message of that book. Volumes of pious verbiage piled up in meaningless heaps cannot change the foundation facts; interminable lectures calculated to darken counsel cannot make black into white. I have never yet heard a lecture on Christian Science, altho I have heard a good many lectures by Christian Scientists. They always lecture on first century Christianity and then unblushingly tell their audiences that is Christian Science. The whole transaction "demonstrates" nerve power.

The fifth method is "Faith Cure," which would be more accurately styled "Prayer Cure," for faith is essential to every method of psychotherapy. Of course, it makes no particular difference in what the faith is put, whether in God, or a healer, or an abstract proposition, or an amulet; but there must be faith, confidence, before there be any cure. In passing it may

be said that the object of faith determines its quality and results, ethically and religiously, but not physically. This is something that should be remembered. The Indian theosophists call this kind of healing "Spiritual Healing." The Lourdes cures fall at least in part here. Those of the notorious John Alexander Dowie likewise rank as faith cures, and there were thousands of them—although he was a monster, ethically and religiously. Here fall the cures wrought in a good many Christian missions and in many churches. Strange as it may seem to many, this method of psychotherapy is no different from the other five in that it is an axe with a head and a blade, as any one can easily see by examination. The axe-head is the declaration that disease, as well as sin, was included in Christ's atoning sacrifice, and that Christians are bound to claim exemption from disease as from sin, or by their refusal to dishonor their Savior. Prayer for the healing of disease must, therefore, have no element of contingency in it on the part of the petitioner. It is assumed that it is always God's will to heal the diseases of Christians, so the prayer for the healing must be a sort of sight draft which must be paid on presentation without demur. Of course Paul's "thorn in the flesh" is a thorn in the side of this theory, but it isn't the first time facts have had to stand aside for theories. So much for the head of this axe, which, whether it be true or false, whether it manifests faith or presumption, does not do the cutting. The blade that does do the cutting is the same regulation blade of psychic suggestion, which operates on this wise: "You have prayed for healing: you have prayed in faith: God has heard your prayer: it is His sovereign will that you should be well: now you must claim the answer: your prayer has been answered—you are recovering, recovering—you are well!" There you have the suggestion of health and that is what does the work every time.

**T**HE sixth and last method is what we may call "Suggestive Hypnotism." There are many shades and grades in this general system. The famous Nancy institution where Bernheim and his colleagues turn out multitudes every year made well of their diseases belongs under this class. Braid was one of the pioneers in its perfecting and application. Prof. Hudson in his "Law of Psychic Phenomena" anticipated practically all we find in any of the latest varieties of this method. Dubois, the illustrious neurologist of Berne operates by it with gratifying results. Dr. Schofield, the great English psychologist and physician, is an expert in the use of it and has written many books explaining and commending it to the confidence of the medical profession. Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, the renowned physician of Philadelphia and a life-long friend of Phillips Brooks, uses this method a good deal in his practice. One of the most interesting individual operators in this line is a physician in St. Joseph, Mo., by the name of Bell, who is reputed to be able to accomplish marvels in the way of healing by pure suggestion. Last but not least, here the "Emmanuel Movement" takes its rank, although there are elements in its philosophy that come very close to "Faith Cure." Still, its increasing reliance on scientific initiative and direction, as well as the general trend of its practice, would seem to point to "Suggestive Hypnotism" as its logical dwelling place. The axe-head is the psychological hypothesis that the human body consists of two parts or sections—objective and subjective, conscious and subconscious, conscious and coconscious, supraliminal and subliminal—indeed there are many terms used to distinguish the two. The "sub" or "co" is supposed to be the arbiter of the physical fortunes of the individual. The biography of this mysterious partner runs with as much thrill as the tale of the "Arabian Nights." It does not reason or initiate, but takes the ball from the hands of the

“objective” “center rush” as an expert “half back.” The difficult thing for the ordinary individual is to get into communication with this part of the mind that is like the part of the ship below the water line. You have to have a written order from the office before you can gain admittance; but once get in, and you can have almost anything you want for the asking. This mental basement is full of good things—health, happiness, achievement in love and scholarship and business (so the Christian Scientists say, at least) and even sainthood, we are told. It makes one gasp for breath just to hear about it. But the stairway! That too has been arranged. The “suggestor” will guide you gently down—awake if you are not obstreperous, in the dreamy state of “mental abstraction” if you are tolerably tractable, in the deep sleep of complete “hypnosis” if necessary—but you can go down if you will follow his directions. Prof. William James of Harvard, who is one of the trusted advisors of Dr. Worcester in the “Emmanuel Movement,” tells us that the anaesthetic power of suggestion is so great that legs and breasts may be amputated, children born, teeth extracted, etc., positively without pain with its use alone. Functional diseases, which include those where there is an interruption of the normal workings of an organ without any appreciable change in its structure, especially those of a nervous character, are said to yield in almost every instance to this suggestive treatment. As to the power of suggestion to cure organic diseases, which are those where an organ is broken down structurally, there is a wide difference of opinion. Dr. Weir Mitchell says, “No organic disease was ever cured by it, and its legitimate uses are circumscribed.” Dr. Cabot analyzes one hundred alleged Christian Science cures about Boston, and having traced them back in their history, finds them to be composed in nearly every case of purely functional ailments. Prof. Dubois, Dr. Worcester and

his colleagues, and nearly the entire medical profession confine its efficiency to the same sphere. On the other hand, Dr. Schofield is inclined strongly to the opposite opinion, and argues that the distinction between functional and organic diseases is after all rather a gratuitous one, as disturbed work in an organ is pretty conclusive evidence that there is a disturbance of the tissue composing the organ. In his late work, "The Mental Factor in Medicine," he quotes liberally from several noted physicians of the regular school in vindication of his position. From Dr. Tuke he gives this list of diseases as having been cured by suggestion without hypnotism: "Toothache, sciatica, painful joints, rheumatism, gout, pluroidy, colic, epilepsy, whooping cough, contracted limbs, paralyzes, headache, neuralgias, constipation, asthma, warts, scurvy, dropsy, intermittent fevers, and often impending death." The Christian Scientists attempt both classes of disease and are now engaged in a controversy with the leaders of the Emmanuel Movement over the matter.

Dr. Bell is said to be able to cure exophthalmic goiter in from three to four days with nothing but suggestion. The last word on this point has not been spoken yet. But under and through all the forms and varieties of this sixth system of psychic healing, the axe-blade is the same psychic principle of suggestion. Watch it cut—"There are subliminal reservoirs within you from which you may draw health, if you will but tap them; these hidden resources are yours to use: they are flowing in on your life now; they are lifting you; you are not weary; you are not sick; you are getting stronger; you are strong, vigorous, well." Or if the person has been hypnotized the treatment runs something like this: "When you wake up, your disease (whatever it may be) will be gone, your organs will perform all their functions normally; you will be well and strong. Now mind! Go asleep!" It is the

very same blade that has done the cutting in all ages in the human manipulation of psychotherapy.



**I**N concluding, let me add a few skeleton remarks. *First*, psychic healing is here to stay. It is a legitimate method, if legitimately used. But its legitimate use may not be so wide as many are claiming. Suggestion is doubtless beneficial as long as it does not produce a cauterization of the appreciative and sympathetic faculties of the mind, but experience would seem to point to such a cauterizing as one of the earliest ethical consequences of an emphasized use of it. Hypnosis, as an ally in the use of the suggestive principle, is open to the suspicion of undermining the initiative and self-control of the individual who yields himself to it, and may induce a form of slavery to the will of others for which no physical benefit could be an equivalent. Realizing this danger, the leaders of the Emmanuel Movement use hypnotism as a last resort. These and kindred perils which gather themselves about the practice of psychotherapy advise great caution in its exercise. *Second*, there is no necessary connection between any one of these six modern methods of mental healing, and religion. The Faith Curists, Christian Scientists and Emmanuel Movement leaders may drag a religious philosophy into their scheme, but it does not naturally or necessarily belong there, as has, I think, been shown in the progress of this essay. Atheists and Pentecostal Missioners alike heal the same diseases. Not one of these systems heals according to the method used by Jesus Christ. His cures were instantaneous and were wrought by his divine mandate which drove suffering and sin and Satan into exile with its overwhelming compulsion. He demanded faith on the part of the individual only for

moral and religious reasons. Let no manipulator of psychic forces lay claim to the Savior's position as a healer of disease. The Great Physician was no hypnotist or suggestor or "healer." To class him as such is little short of blasphemy. He raised the dead with the utmost ease, so that the "greater works" promised to his disciples could not lie in the physical realm but must refer to those spiritual achievements inaugurated on the day of Pentecost. Dr. Worcester and his assistants have only the highest of motives in their work, I am sure; nevertheless they have inverted religious values and were their plans to come into popular operation in the churches over the land, it would be a dark day for religion, for it would mean what one writer has called a "massage gospel," whereas it is the souls of men that demand healing more emphatically than their bodies. Time is shorter than eternity; this earthly tabernacle must give place to the house not made with hands; this natural body must be superseded by our spiritual body; and sickness is not so alarming as sin. *Third*, psychic healing should be operated by the physicians and not by the preachers, for the simple reason that the latter have neither the equipment nor the time to bring to its successful operation. It is still false economy for God's ministers to leave prayer and the ministry of the word to serve tables, even if health is served hot from those tables. Preachers must not degenerate into pettifogging physicians, or men shall ask for bread and be given a stone. Dr. Buckley, editor of the "New York Christian Advocate," takes this position emphatically in an article in the February issue of the "Century" on "The Dangers of the Emmanuel Movement." The Congregational Club of Boston, led by the Rev. Dr. George A. Gordon of the Old South Church, has recently placed its veto on the movement, and that noted divine declared that he had told Dr. Worcester, his long-time friend, to his face that he is

a "quack." Indeed a growing chorus of protest is rising from all quarters, and it begins to be apparent that the movement must lay aside its peculiar religious claims and take its place among the other methods of psychic healing, which, of course, means its extinction as a propaganda. *Fourth*, for a decade I have maintained that the time has come when in every community there should be a sanitarium where honest and skillful operators should use psychotherapy for the relief of disease, and where physicians could send those of their patients who need that sort of treatment; and that the churches should give at least their moral support to such an institution, not as being in any sense a strictly religious institution, but as being humanitarian in the best sense of the word, and thus meriting the endorsement and help of the church, just as gymnasia, and baths and other physical accessories to the complete development of men merit encouragement as by-products of Christianity. If the Emmanuel Movement shall help to clear the intellectual atmosphere in the zone of psychic healing, and finally crystallize into some such institutional form as I have just outlined, its brief career, which is already nearing its close, will not have been in vain.

