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# MENTAL HEALING IN JUDAISM

ITS RELATIONSHIP TO CHRISTIAN  
SCIENCE AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

BY

S. FELIX MENDELSON

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

DR. FELIX A. LEVY



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*By the Same Author*

**The Jew Laughs: Humorous Stories  
and Anecdotes (1935)**

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TO THE MEMORY OF MY REVERED  
PARENTS

HAYYIM LEIB BEN MENAHEM  
Heshvan 19, 5696

AND NEHAMAH WAXMAN  
MENDELSON

Tishri 24, 5690

“And He said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His eyes, and wilt give ear to His commandments, I will put none of the diseases upon thee, which I have put upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord that healeth thee.”—*Exodus* 15:26.

“Heal us, O Lord, and we shall be healed; save us and we shall be saved; for Thou art our praise. Vouchsafe a perfect healing to all our wounds; for Thou, almighty King, art a faithful and merciful Physician.”—*Authorized Daily Prayer Book* (Singer’s translation).

“Said the Holy One, blessed be He, If thou wilt come to My house (the synagogue) I shall come to thy house, but if thou wilt not come to My house, I shall not come to thy house.”—*Talmud, Tractate Succah*.



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## PREFATORY NOTE

The following pages represent outlines of a series of sermons which I preached in the fall of 1935. Their delivery aroused much favorable comment and their publication is prompted by numerous requests for copies. For sentimental reasons I am publishing these sermons in their original form.

The problem of mental healing is today of unusual interest particularly to American Jews. Unfortunately there is a dearth especially of simply written material on this subject. If these sermons will in a small way help crystallize the issue involved and lead to further study, their publication will be justified.

S. FELIX MENDELSON

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## INTRODUCTION

By DR. FELIX A. LEVY

*President, Central Conference of  
American Rabbis*

Spiritual healing is as old as Jewish tradition itself and plays a rather prominent part in our life. No period of our history has been free of the practice of "mind cure" or of the dangers of magic and superstition that lurk in this custom. To guard against the latter eventuality in our own day and to give our Jewish valetudinarians a Jewish way by which "psychoses" and "neuroses" may be dissolved, and health, spiritual and physical, may be gained Rabbi Mendelsohn has published the following discourses.

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These sermons fill, as every rabbi knows, a distinct need. Our people are driven frequently to strange altars in order to find relief from some real or imaginary malady that will not yield to medical knowledge or skill. They will read strange literatures and pray alien thoughts because they are unaware of what their own religion offers them or find its ideas inaccessible because of the lack of popular literature on this topic. In simple almost childlike language the author has expounded the views of Judaism on mental healing and many will be grateful to learn, from the Jewish point of view, about the relation and inter-relation of mind and body, of the therapeutic functions of prayer and of the spiritual attitude as a cure for physical ills. The rabbi of today has rarely the time and even more seldom the inclination to serve as "healer." Perhaps we ought have practitioners



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(there are a few), deeply religious men and women, who by their ministrations aid the physician and nature in effecting the patient's recovery.

A study of this little volume and a following of its suggestions can help the divided mind and restore confidence to shattered nerves. Faith does move mountains but is not a cure-all nor can religion with its call to prayer and communion claim to be an infallible panacea. Judaism, as our writer indicates, steers a middle course, and makes neither extravagant claims nor the unintelligible (to us) denials of Christian Science. Our religion recognizes as real all the factors of human personality, does not negate body or call pain and evil illusions.

May the book achieve its author's purpose, to stimulate further discussion of an important problem. May it also brighten the lives of many readers which it deserves and bring to a nerv-

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ous and disintegrated generation a hope and a faith, and thus an integrity of personality, in the name of the God of Israel who can "heal all wounds" and "make us whole."

## I.

### WHY IS OURS A NERVOUS AGE?

The present age has been variously characterized. It has been characterized as the age of science, since science has in our day succeeded in doing so many marvelous things for us. It has been characterized as the age of psychology, since psychology has in our day succeeded in penetrating the human mind and divulging many of its ramifications. However, it seems to me that there is still one more way of characterizing the present age and that is the age of "nerves." There are undoubtedly more neurotics in our day than ever before in the history of mankind.

If we are willing to study modern

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life carefully we shall have no difficulty in locating the reason for the great number of neurotics in the world today. A nervous individual is in many respects an abnormal individual—and modern life prevents us from being normal. We all boast about the accomplishments of civilization, but we forget that it possesses one inherent evil, viz., it alienates us from nature. Our instincts demand that we be very close to nature, but civilization is constantly getting us farther and farther away from nature. Our disregard of the laws of nature and our adherence to civilized rather than natural morality create a conflict in our minds—and this conflict expresses itself in a variety of nervous disturbances.

Another reason for the great number of neurotics in the world today is the failure of medicine to cure most functional diseases. Now I do not

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want to be misunderstood. I am certainly the last person to underestimate the tremendous service which medicine is rendering to us and the constant progress which it is making in the field of human health. However, this service and this progress are primarily in organic diseases. When our organs do not work properly, medicine is most helpful, but when our emotions do not work properly, medicine seems to be helpless. If medicine were able to cure functional diseases, there would not be as much quackery as we find on all sides in this country today.

Now intelligent people realize that the fact that this is a nervous age is a serious problem which cannot be ignored. The nervous individual is constantly haunted by fears and worries—and he does not know where these fears and worries come from nor how to get rid of them. Frequently they are so disastrous as to lead to

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suicide. And even if they do not lead to this extremity the neurotic is a terrible burden to himself and to his family. If you have a neurotic in your family, you know exactly what I mean.

What are these neurotics doing in order to save themselves from their unhappy lot? Those whose disturbance is serious fill our hospitals and sanitariums, but those whose disturbance is not serious resort to escape mechanisms. They engage in a variety of activities for the purpose of getting their minds away from themselves. One of these activities is card playing. Many a card player will tell you that this pastime soothes his shattered nerves. We Jews are a nervous people, and for this reason there is probably more card playing among Jews than among any other group in this country. However, it is a well-

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known fact that card playing, like all other escape mechanisms to which neurotics resort, has never relieved anybody's nerves. On the contrary, after an evening of cards an irritable individual will be even more irritable. Ask husbands who have nervous wives or wives who have nervous husbands and they will readily corroborate this point.

Since the aim of religion is to bring happiness into the life of man and since neurotics are invariably unhappy, the problem of curing "nerves" is a religious problem. Fortunately, religion has tackled this problem and the nervous individual who desires to cure himself will find relief by applying diligently the prescription of religion. This prescription is found in the first chapter of Genesis which deals with the subject of creation and which is read on this Sabbath in all

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synagogues. A careful study of this chapter will bring to light two fundamental propositions:

In the first place, the first chapter of Genesis teaches us that man is created in the image of God. There is a spark of the divine in every human being, whether he be white, black, or yellow, or whether he be rich or poor. If man is created in the image of God, it means plainly that happiness is the inalienable right of every human being. The neurotic in particular must digest this principle, since no one can ever be happy unless he first believes that happiness is possible. In the second place, the first chapter of Genesis teaches us how to acquire happiness. The outstanding attribute of God is His creativeness—and Judaism teaches us that man must constantly imitate God. If God does and creates things, we too must do and create things. We must find out just what



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we like to do best and then proceed and do it. Not escape mechanisms, but useful activity can and will make for happiness.

I shall not be surprised if many of you will say that I have given you only another "preachy" sermon. I shall not be surprised if many of you will say that this rabbi, like all other rabbis, ministers, and priests, is trying to rob us of pleasures like card playing and to get us to work for charity and religion. If this be your conclusion, you are greatly mistaken. Not everybody is qualified to work for charity and religion, and I can assure you that frequently synagogues, churches, and charitable institutions would be much better off if many of their workers would resign. If you enjoy public endeavor, well and good, but if you do not enjoy it and you are in it only in order to please somebody else, the sooner you quit, the better for every-

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body concerned. The point to remember is that you must find yourself in your work regardless of what this work may be. Make an art of everything you do, whether it be baking pies, writing books, or painting pictures—and when you are a real artist happiness will be yours.

Many nervous people claim that you do not have to be an artist in order to gain happiness. There is another and more effective way of gaining this objective and this is by taking up Christian Science. However, as far as Jews are concerned the question arises whether or not a Jew can accept Christian Science and still remain a Jew. This question deserves special treatment and it will constitute the subject of our sermon next Friday evening.

## II.

### CAN A JEW BE A CHRISTIAN SCIENTIST?

For a number of years I have been asked to speak on the relationship of Judaism to Christian Science. I have hesitated to do this just as other rabbis have hesitated—and the reason is obvious. In every Jewish congregation there are members who have a Christian Scientist in the family, and we Jews are a very sensitive people. When the rabbi speaks against Christian Science these members interpret his remarks as an attack on them personally—and sermons should of course deal not with personalities but with generalities. However, Christian Sci-

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ence is becoming more and more of a problem in American Jewry and any rabbi who ignores this question is, in my opinion, faithless to his calling.

Last week I announced that the topic of my sermon for this Friday evening would be, "Can a Jew Be a Christian Scientist?" However, this statement is not properly worded. This is a free country and our Constitution guarantees freedom of worship to all of us. If a Jew so desires he certainly can be a Christian Scientist, just as he can be anything else. He can be a Catholic, a Presbyterian, or even a Holy Roller. The real question therefore is not whether a Jew can be a Christian Scientist but rather whether, after accepting Christian Science, he can still remain a Jew.

Before answering this question, we must first find out what it means to be a Jew. A great deal of confusion pre-

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vails on this subject not only among Gentiles but also among Jews. In the Book of Jonah we are told that when Jonah was asked to identify himself he said: "I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven." This definition has been accepted by the Jewish people for thousands of years and it still holds true today. A Jew is only he who professes Judaism and the moment he begins to profess another religion he ceases being a Jew. Christian Science practitioners, however, have been telling Jews that the acceptance of Christian Science does not in any way affect their Judaism. Christian Science practitioners have even been telling Jews that the very opposite is true, that the acceptance of Christian Science will make of them better Jews.

Many Jews have been influenced by this argument, but unfortunately it is

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a flagrant misrepresentation, to say the least. Anyone who is willing to do a little studying of Christian Science will have no difficulty in locating the real facts. Mrs. Eddy publishes in her text-book "Science and Health" the creed of her new faith. The second article of this creed says: "We acknowledge His son one Christ, the Holy Ghost or divine comforter." Does not this show beyond any doubt that a Christian Scientist is a very good Christian? And Mrs. Eddy does not stop at this point, for she takes us much farther. She makes it perfectly clear that a Christian Scientist must be an orthodox Christian and he must subscribe to the entire orthodox Christian theology. He must believe that the crucifixion of Jesus was intended as the vicarious atonement for human sins; he must believe that Jesus rose from his tomb in order to prove to the

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world that it is possible to conquer death.

I wonder whether you know that all other Christians are bitter enemies of Christian Science not only because of its impossible theories but even more so because of its arrogance. Mrs. Eddy proclaims boldly that all other Christians are decidedly erroneous in their interpretation of Jesus, and that she alone possesses "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." All other Christians are not true followers of Jesus because they have overlooked the most important detail in his character. Jesus healed the ailing but the large majority of Christians have relegated the entire matter of healing to the medical profession. Not so, however, is the case with Mrs. Eddy. She and her followers have made healing the primary object of the Christian Science church.

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The Christian Scientist, according to Mrs. Eddy, is therefore the best Christian in the world and there is none like unto him.

The fact of the matter is that Mrs. Eddy is not only pro-Jesus and pro-Christianity but she is also anti-Judaism and anti-Jew. In "Science and Health" she makes slurring remarks about Judaism and she harps repeatedly on "rabbinical error." The Jew who accepts Christian Science is expected to swallow the orthodox Christianity of this church and its slurs on Judaism and the Jewish people. Moreover, in order to join the Christian Science church a Jew must waive all allegiance to Judaism and to the synagogue. It is therefore perfectly evident that it is impossible to accept Christian Science and remain a Jew.

Of course at this point you will



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naturally ask, Why then do Christian Science practitioners deny this undeniable fact? The answer is not difficult to locate. Christian Science is a materialistic religion and the Jew who is stingy with his synagogue is very generous with the Christian Science church. He is anxious to convince his Gentile friends that they have made no mistake in accepting him into their ranks. In order to draw Jews into their midst Christian Scientists are satisfied to do a little temporary misrepresentation on the fine points of their theology.

Some Jews are under the impression that the opposition to Christian Science arises only from orthodoxy but that reform is willing to adopt a more liberal attitude. This impression is entirely erroneous. Reform is just as adamant in its opposition to Christian Science as orthodoxy, and the Central

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Conference of American Rabbis has been quite outspoken on this subject. I have before me a letter from Dr. David Philipson of Cincinnati, who is one of the oldest and most prominent reform rabbis in the land, in which he tells me that he refused to officiate at a marriage between a member of his congregation and a Jewish girl who had accepted Christian Science. He also states that he would not officiate at the funeral of a Jew who was a member of a Christian Science church. It therefore goes without saying that a Christian Science Jew cannot be buried in a Jewish cemetery.

For many centuries it was considered opprobrious among Jews to refer to a "meshumad" in the family. I do not know whether this is still the case in this country today, but the fact remains that a Jew who accepts Christian Science is a perfect "meshumad"

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and a Jewess who accepts Christian Science is a perfect "meshumedes." To the Jew who joins a Christian Science church I therefore say, "My dear friend, I hate to lose you, but the step which you have taken excludes you from *K'lal Yisroel* and I am forced to part company with you. My people is no longer your people and my God is no longer your God."

### III.

## NEED A JEW BE A CHRISTIAN SCIENTIST?

In my sermon two weeks ago I tried to prove, and I hope to your satisfaction, that it is impossible to accept Christian Science and remain a Jew. Of course I realize that my argument has a serious flaw. For the Christian Scientist will come forward and say, "Well, what of it? Supposing I grant that Christian Science destroys Judaism; what difference does that make? If the Jew finds in Christian Science that which he is unable to find in Judaism, he will continue to accept it and the thunderings of rabbis will not in any way alter the situation."

My purpose this evening, therefore,

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is to deny categorically this contention. I shall try to show you that Christian Science has no message whatever for the Jew. I am perfectly willing to admit that some of the teachings of Christian Science are beautiful—but these are borrowed from Judaism. There is an old Talmudic proverb which says, "Do not throw stones into the well from which thou hast drunk." Mrs. Eddy violated completely the admonition in this proverb. After borrowing her best teachings from Judaism, she belittled the Hebrew Bible and ridiculed Jewish teachers. In order to clarify my point let me cite two popular doctrines of Christian Science and their Jewish counterpart.

In the first place, the Christian Scientist says that Mrs. Eddy must have discovered a great religion since she proclaimed to the world that "God is All in All." If God is to be found

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everywhere and in everything, then ours must be a perfect world. This represents a beautiful doctrine which is bound to make life more interesting and attractive. Now I do not deny that this is a beautiful doctrine, but I do deny that Mrs. Eddy is entitled to any credit for this doctrine, since it is Jewish to the core. The book of Isaiah says plainly, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory." And the first chapter of Genesis says plainly, "And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good." Here you have an unmistakable proclamation of God's omnipresence and our world's perfection.

In the second place, the Christian Scientist says that Mrs. Eddy must have discovered a great religion since she proclaimed to the world the lesson of optimism. Mrs. Eddy taught that God is not only everywhere, but he is

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also loving and merciful to all His creatures. He who accepts this doctrine has therefore nothing to worry about. Here again I do not deny that this is a beautiful doctrine, but I do deny that Mrs. Eddy is entitled to any credit for this doctrine, since it is Jewish to the core. The book of Exodus says plainly, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth." And the twenty-third Psalm says plainly, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Here you have an unmistakable proclamation of Mrs. Eddy's optimism.

I could continue to show you indefinitely how all the beautiful doctrines of Christian Science are borrowed from Judaism. However, the Christian Scientist will again come forward and say, "You have overlooked the most important thing about Christian Science. You have failed to

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state that it is a healing religion. Christian Science teaches that by having faith in Jesus and by praying to him, the depressed and the ailing will be relieved of their suffering." It will no doubt sound strange to the Christian Scientist, but the fact of the matter is that this idea too is borrowed from Judaism. Judaism, of course, does not say that the final healer is Jesus, but Judaism does say that the final healer is God. Twenty-five centuries before Mrs. Eddy was born the prophet Jeremiah offered the following prayer, "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me and I shall be saved; for Thou art my praise." The Orthodox Jew still recites this verse three times daily in the *Sh'mone Esre*, the prayer of silent devotion.

Thus far I have shown you only one phase of Christian Science. However, in order that you may know the whole story I cannot stop at this point.



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I must proceed to show you that some of the teachings of Christian Science are highly objectionable. In order to teach her followers not to be disturbed by any disease Mrs. Eddy evolved a philosophy of her own. According to this philosophy material things have no objective existence; they exist only in your mind. If everything you see and hear and smell does not exist, then disease too does not exist. Mrs. Eddy therefore proclaims repeatedly that "disease is an error of mortal mind." This doctrine is contrary not only to logic but also to Judaism; hence the Jew must reject it. For when Jeremiah prays, "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed," he states plainly that disease exists, for if it did not exist then there would be nothing for God to heal in the prophet.

I do not know to what extent Gentile Christian Scientists really accept Mrs. Eddy's doctrines but I do know

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that the large majority of Jewish Christian Scientists do not accept them. They prate about being "in Science" and about disease being "an error" but they do not mean what they say. I have first hand information that most Jewish Christian Scientists use physicians and medicine constantly—although this is against their religion. I know of a Jewess who is a prominent Christian Scientist but who came to a dentist and said, "Doctor, I have been too busy to read, so I came to you to relieve my toothache." That dentist was sufficiently charitable to help the poor lady in spite of her insult to his profession. Such tactics make the Jewish Christian Scientist a pathetic figure. No one, in my opinion, is entitled to more pity than the average Jewish Christian Scientist.

In all justice to the Jewish Christian Scientist, I must say that occa-

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sionally you do find one who sincerely accepts Mrs. Eddy's doctrines. I knew of a Jewish mother whose two year old boy became seriously ill and all she did for him was to keep on reading from "Science and Health." The father begged that they call a doctor, but the mother insisted that the baby did not need a doctor—and the mother was absolutely right. The baby died. I knew of another Jewess who contracted an infection and again the husband begged that they call a doctor. Here again the wife insisted that she did not need a doctor and again she was absolutely right. They rushed her to the hospital where she died. Jews and Jewesses who take Christian Science seriously always suffer the consequences.

Let me then restate my thesis. The distinctive theories of Christian Science are illogical, objectionable, and dangerous. However, when Christian

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Science teaches that God is everywhere, that this is a beautiful world, and that prayer relieves suffering, it is rendering a genuine service to mankind. These excellent teachings are all found in Judaism and Christian Science has therefore nothing whatever to offer to the Jew. Why then do some Jews take up Mrs. Eddy's religion? This question will be discussed in my sermon next Friday.

#### IV.

### SHALL WE CONDEMN THE JEWISH CHRISTIAN SCIENTIST?

All Jews who are willing to face reality are satisfied that Christian Science is a disintegrating force in Jewry. Once a Jew joins a Christian Science church he is lost to his people. For this reason most rabbis have expressed themselves in condemnatory terms about the Jewish Christian Scientist. However, if we resort to condemnation and do nothing else, we are only following the road of least resistance. The late Dr. Gotthard Deutsch of the Hebrew Union College used to say, "It takes two to make a *shidduch*." After a careful study we may perhaps conclude that the blame for the spread

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of Christian Science is to be placed not upon the Jews who accept it but rather upon the Jewish community which has made this acceptance possible.

Of course I know that some of our people have taken up Christian Science for social reasons. These Jews do not have the courage to profess their origin. They believe that there is a stigma attached to being a Jew and that by professing Christian Science the stain is immediately removed. About such people it is difficult to express an opinion. Their motive is so low and disgusting that one hates to talk about it. We have no cause to regret the exit of such people from our midst. On the contrary, we should be glad that they will no longer pass for Jews but for Christian Scientists, and in this particular instance Christian Science is rendering a genuine service to the Jewish Community.

However, most Jews who take up

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Christian Science cannot be included in this category. They are prompted by sincere motives. This act is usually consummated during a crisis when Jews, like all other people, are greatly in need of cheer and encouragement. These unfortunates resort to Christian Science because they find in it that which they have not found in the synagogue.

What is wrong with the American synagogue? I take it that all of us are friends of the synagogue and we should therefore have the courage to see not only its strength but also its weakness. As far as I am concerned, the greatest weakness of the synagogue is expressed in a fable by the famous Russian Kriloff. This fable tells about a peasant who returned from the circus and described his experiences to his cronies. He said that he had seen insects no larger than the head of a pin. "How about the ele-

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phant?" asked one of the auditors. "The elephant?" asked the peasant. "Was he there? By Jove, the elephant I did not see." The American synagogue too has failed to see the elephant in Judaism. The primary object of the synagogue is to teach the Jew that he must have faith in God and that this faith is acquired through prayer. Everything else outside of faith and prayer is secondary in Judaism—and yet the American synagogue emphasizes many other things but not these two cardinal principles.

The reason why the American synagogue does not emphasize faith and prayer is not difficult to locate. The American Jew has not as yet found himself religiously and he therefore does not know what he wants. As a result of this situation we have Jews who style themselves orthodox but do not know the meaning of orthodoxy; we have Jews who style themselves



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conservative but do not know the meaning of conservatism; we have Jews who style themselves reform but do not know the meaning of reform. If an individual is not sure of himself he looks for assurance from somebody else—and what is true of an individual is true also of a people. Since synagogues do not know what they want they clamor for crowds. They advise the rabbi that if religious subjects are not popular he should preach on secular subjects—but he must draw crowds. As an old religious people we ought to know that crowds are frequently an index not to religion but to irreligion. We ought to remember the vision which came to Elijah that God is not to be found either in the wind, earthquake, or fire but in the “still small voice.” At any rate, under present conditions the synagogue is largely not a religious institution but a lecture platform. It is this fact which in my

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opinion is driving many Jews to look for faith and prayer in the Christian Science church.

Another reason why Jews take up Christian Science is the fact that we lack the missionary spirit. Jews are very sensitive people. Frequently they would like to make friends but because of their natural reserve they cannot do that. However, instead of blaming themselves for their backwardness they blame the rabbi and the officers of synagogues. This backwardness is a serious barrier to the progress of synagogues and we have not yet learned to overcome it. Since officers of Christian Science churches are better handshakers than officers of synagogues, the Jew who visits the Christian Science church is greatly attracted by this overbubbling zeal and sociability.

What then shall we do in order to stop Jews from taking up Christian

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Science? The problem is more serious than most of us realize. There are no statistics available for Chicago, but I have been told that seventy thousand Jews have taken up Christian Science in New York City alone. Thus far most rabbis and synagogues have ignored the entire problem. The only one in the country who has done something constructive in this direction is Rabbi Morris Lichtenstein of New York. He founded a Jewish Science synagogue and he published a series of valuable books in English in which he shows that the Jew does not have to look for religious knowledge and inspiration outside of his faith. Rabbi Lichtenstein stresses particularly the subject of healing in Judaism, and his efforts have met with a great deal of success.

Conditions peculiar to New York City forced Rabbi Lichtenstein to organize a special Jewish Science syna-

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gogue, but this is not necessary in other communities. It is my firm conviction that the same results can be obtained even more satisfactorily through existing synagogues. Let all synagogues organize weekly Jewish Science meetings at which the fundamentals of Judaism and especially faith and prayer should be stressed. These doctrines cannot be brought to the people effectively through our regular services, since they are too formal. Public worship is primarily an inspirational and not an educational agency.

Many orthodox leaders have dodged the entire subject of Christian Science by saying that it is a problem of reform only. Orthodox Jews, these leaders argue, never take up Mrs. Eddy's cult. However, this contention is decidedly erroneous. The fact of the matter is that the large majority of Jewish Christian Scientists whom I know come from orthodox

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homes. To attempt to solve any problem by ignoring it means to follow the philosophy of the ostrich which imagines that by burying its head in the sand it is safe from its pursuer. Christian Science is a problem which concerns all of us, and it is only through a concerted effort on the part of all Jews that we can ever hope to reach a solution.

## V.

### THE VOICE OF THE CONGREGATION

My series of sermons on "Judaism and Mental Healing" has aroused a great deal of interest. This fact has not surprised me in the least, since I decided to deliver this series only after a number of people had asked me to do so. That mental healing is today a burning issue among the Jewish people is evident also from the goodly number of questions which came to me during the delivery of these sermons. Most of these questions display thought and learning, and they are a compliment to the intelligence of those who attend our services.

Let me express my profound grati-

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tude to all those who have sent in questions. They have helped me greatly and some of them are so important that I expect to publish them. All questions will be answered this season, but this evening I am going to discuss only those which I consider of immediate significance.

Before answering definite queries I wish to discuss for just a moment a general criticism which came from a large number of people and which runs something like this: "You have not told us enough. We should like to know much more about why this is a nervous age and how we are able to cure ourselves from nervousness." Those who have made this complaint do not seem to understand that the sermon is only a stimulant to Jewish knowledge. No sermon or lecture will ever educate anybody in anything. You may listen to lectures on medicine for fifty years in succession and yet

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you will not be a physician—unless you are willing to study and digest these lectures for yourself. The late Henry Ward Beecher, who was one of the very great American preachers, used to say, “You can’t save any souls after the first twenty minutes”—and he was absolutely right. The modern Jew must therefore not rely on the sermon alone and he must do some studying in Judaism for himself.

Let us turn now to some definite questions which have been put to me. Here is the first question: “In your sermons you seemed to have belittled the value of Christian Science. How is it then that all Christian Scientists are poised and cheerful?” My answer is that I deny the premise of this question. It is not true that all Christian Scientists are poised and cheerful. The most nervous person I know is a Jew who is an ardent Christian Scientist. A prominent Gentile physi-



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cian of this city relates a story about a Gentile woman whom he treated for a nervous disturbance. This woman moved to another city and after a lapse of some time she wrote to her Chicago doctor: "Please send me the prescription for the pills you gave me. I need them so that my hands may not tremble when I hold up my book in the Christian Science Church." Surely, the Jew who accepts Christian Science is seldom poised and cheerful, since this new cult creates a conflict in him. The Jewish Christian Scientist feels that he has something to hide, and he is therefore never at home in the company of his newly-acquired Gentile friends.

Of course I am ready to admit that some Christian Scientists are happy people. By training themselves to have faith in God and to pray to Him constantly, human beings do acquire an optimistic outlook upon life. How-

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ever, the religious Jew has done the same thing for hundreds and hundreds of years before Mrs. Eddy was born. When you strip Christian Science of its illogical and impossible theories, it does have a message for the Gentile—but not for the Jew who is able to find all the cheer he needs in Judaism.

And here is the second question: “Your remedy for fighting Christian Science among Jews is to teach Jewish Science. Does not this show that you are only an imitator?” My answer is that it does not show anything of the sort. By adopting the name Jewish Science I am not imitating anybody. I am only reclaiming a Jewish term which has always existed. In the first chapter of Proverbs we are told: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.” Here the word “knowledge” is used to denote religion—and “science” is derived from the Latin “scire” which means “to know.” The

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term "Jewish Science" is therefore only a synonym for the "Jewish religion"—but those who do not like the word "science" may use "*chochmah*" instead. In my opinion the word "science" is preferable since Christian Science has advertised it for us, and when I say Jewish Science people will know exactly what I have in mind.

However, this question suggests another one which has not been asked by anybody. Since when is it wrong to imitate the good practices of Gentiles? Certainly Ezekiel did not think so, for he proclaimed to his contemporaries: "Neither have (ye) done after the ordinances of the nations that are round about you." There are many excellent things which you could have learned from your Babylonian neighbors, said the prophet, but since you failed to do so God will be stringent with you. In like manner I say that there are many excellent things which we are able to

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learn from our Christian neighbors today. We can learn from our Christian neighbors reverence and loyalty, since the average church member is more reverential and more loyal than the average synagogue member. It happens that the word "science" as a synonym for religion is Jewish, but even if it were Christian we should not hesitate to use it.

And now for one more comment which came to me: "You dwelt so much on the prominence of healing in Judaism, but all this is meaningless, since the American Jew knows nothing about it." My answer is that this comment is very well taken. If the Jew had been familiar with his religion Christian Science would never have been a problem among our people. However, since the Jew is ignorant of his religion it is the duty of the synagogue to teach it to him. Historically the synagogue has been known as

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*“Beth Hammidrash,”* a house of study, and unless it is willing to carry on this tradition we do not need synagogues at all.

In concluding this series of sermons I must add one more reason why the Jew should not look for mental healing outside of his own people. Jews have been the leading physicians of the soul not only religiously but also medically. The greatest contribution to mental therapeutics has been made by professor Sigmund Freud whose theories have revolutionized modern psychiatry. The fact that Freud is a Jew has everything to do with his medical knowledge, since in my opinion his basic principles are derived from Jewish sources. This represents a new and interesting angle of the subject of mental healing, and I shall return to it a little later this season.

## VI.

### ANCIENT JUDAISM AND MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

There is a well-known and well-established law in sociology that the minority will always imitate the majority. It is the misfortune of Judaism that it has held up an unusually lofty ideal before its adherents. For this reason the number of these adherents has always been very small and there has always been apostacy in Israel. In every age and generation Jews and Jewesses have forsaken their own faith, the faith of a minority and accepted the faith of their neighbors, the faith of the majority.

Now when we read the book of Jeremiah we discover that this great prophet treats the subject of apostacy

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from a striking point of view. Jeremiah deplotes not so much the fact that many of his brethren forsook the faith of their fathers but rather the fact that the new faiths which they accepted were ineffective and inferior to Judaism. Here is what Jeremiah has to say on the subject of apostacy: "For my people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Had the new faiths which his brethren accepted been an improvement upon Judaism the prophet would not have said anything, but since these faiths were far from being an improvement, the prophet felt called upon to condemn his brethren in the severest terms possible.

History repeats itself. In our day too the Jew is still in the minority and

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he is still imitating the majority. It should therefore be no surprise to anybody that apostasy is just as prevalent among our people today as it was in ancient times. There is no church or denomination or religious movement in which you will not find some Jews. This is particularly true of all faith healing cults. We live today in a nervous age and Jews in particular are a nervous people. Centuries of persecution and oppression have left scars even in the souls of free and emancipated Jews, and we therefore furnish a greater quota to nervous disturbances than any other group in this country. Hence any religion which promises happiness to unhappy people is sure to attract large numbers of Jews.

However, like Jeremiah of old, the modern rabbi should deplore not so much the fact that many of his



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brethren forsook the faith of their fathers but rather the fact that the new faiths which they accepted are ineffective and inferior to Judaism. We Jews consider ourselves specialists. We do not claim to have produced the world's greatest scientists or artists, although we have made some contributions in these fields, but we do claim to have produced the world's greatest religious teachers. No religious movement and no faith healing cult has as yet enunciated any sound doctrine which had not already been enunciated by Judaism. That Judaism still enjoys supremacy even in the field of mental healing is evident particularly from the contribution of Freud to this subject.

Who is this man Freud? Sigmund Freud is a physician of Vienna who is considered the greatest psychiatrist of modern times and perhaps of all times.

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His theories have revolutionized completely our knowledge of psychology. No man has succeeded in probing into the innermost recesses of the human soul as deeply as he has. We Jews should be interested in Freud since he is not only a Jew but also a self-respecting Jew. He has for years been a member of the B'nai B'rith lodge of Vienna and he is also a member of the Board of Governors of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. However, what is most interesting is the fact that his theories are derived from Judaism. He himself admitted that if he had not been a Jew he would never have been able to make his great contribution to psychology.

The Freudian psychology is complicated and it takes years of study to master it. However, I shall attempt to point out its main principles in a few words. Freud is not a religious repre-

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sentative but a medical representative. He and his disciples all over the world have succeeded in curing thousands of nervous people by a new method. Freud claims that the methods hitherto used for curing nervous people have been false. Neurologists have hitherto prescribed pills, electric massages, or rest cures for nervous people. These prescriptions have proved ineffective because the nervous individual is not sick physically but mentally. He therefore needs not physical medicine but mental medicine.

The main trouble with the nervous individual, says Freud, is the fact that he is running away from himself. He is confronted by an unpleasant past which he refuses to face and this alone is responsible for his nervousness. The thing to do, therefore, is to make the nervous individual see himself as

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he really is, and when this is accomplished he is cured. Of course to make an individual see himself as he really is, is very difficult, but through careful application and with the aid of a good physician it can be done. Freud and his disciples have proved this time and time again.

Now it should be of unusual interest to the Jew of today that the old book of Psalms has visualized both the Freudian method and its difficulty. In the one hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm we find the following remarkable verses: "Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any way in me that is grievous, and lead me in the way everlasting." These verses are so simple that it is impossible to misunderstand them. In the first place, the Psalmist is convinced that unless he knows his heart and unless

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he knows his thoughts he cannot attain "the way everlasting," which means that he cannot be happy. In the second place, the Psalmist is convinced that it is extremely difficult for him to know his heart and his thoughts. He therefore prays to God to help him in a situation which he is powerless to handle by himself.

The fact that the Freudian psychology is derived from Judaism gives the modern rabbi the moral right to exclaim with Jeremiah of old: "For my people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." There is surely wisdom in the world for the Jew outside of Judaism, but the point which I am trying to make is that there is no religious wisdom for the Jew outside of Judaism. A large number of Jews today are

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afflicted with nervous maladies, but Judaism has already long ago prescribed the remedy for these maladies. Of course this remedy is difficult to master, but Judaism has never promised an easy life for the Jew. Nervousness is one of the most baffling problems of modern life, but the Jew should consider himself fortunate that through his own faith he is able to solve this problem.



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