

The Ram in a Thicket

Rebirth and Reform in the Practice of Christian Science

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While it is generally unwise to write a “book by committee,” over one hundred friends and those associated with Christian Science have weighed in on and supplied much of the contents here, and the constructive comments and suggestions of many have helped shape these pages. Any credit for narratives and ideas that have come my way belongs to those valued contributors, and any blame for not accurately presenting experiences or ideas in this book rests solely with the author.



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Preface

*“And now the rest of the story...”*¹

THE RAM IN A THICKET is about mercy and honesty in religious practice. It is not a treatise on the theology of Christian Science. It brings to light the often-downplayed humane dimension in the practice and teachings of Christian Science, as well as pointing out dogma² which has for decades subordinated and concealed that humane dimension. Christian compassion, embodied in the life of Jesus, is the vital part of all Christian living, and is evident in the basic teachings of Christian Science and much of its practice.

In the following pages, the reader will discover important historical information that few church members are aware of. This book attempts to gather out stones from the path of faith without putting other stumbling blocks in their place.

The Old Testament prophet Gideon posed the problematic question: **“If the Lord is with us, ...where are all the miracles our ancestors have told us about?”** (Judges 6:13 *The Living Bible*). Gideon’s question found an answer in his age by a refreshing of old signs and deeds, and Gideon himself helped lead a resurgence of faith among his people.

Prophets who succeeded Gideon needed to point out obstacles to

1. The signature line used by radio broadcaster Paul Harvey (1918-2009).

2. The term “dogma” has a diversity of meanings in the Christian world. *Webster’s Dictionary* (1828), (a text referred to by the founder of the Christian Science Church), defines dogma as “a settled opinion.” Elsewhere we find this definition: **“a point of view or tenet put forth as authoritative without adequate grounds”** (*Merriam-Webster*, 2019). This author works from these definitions, which are quite distinct from definitions attached to that word, which other faiths subscribe to, and that equate *dogma* with divinely revealed truth.

the progress of Israel. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, and other prophets made clear to their audience why things were the way they were, both from a human and spiritual standpoint. Nobody understands today without understanding yesterday.

If we don't point out "elephants in the room," that is, the significant undiscussed and unresolved problems at hand, how are we going to begin to usher those elephants out the door, or at least tame them? Progress must **begin with self-knowledge**.

The following chapters consider a variety of areas of controversy within the world of Christian Scientists and offer possible forward steps that Christian Scientists may consider and act upon. The primary focus of this work centers on the interaction between Christian Scientists and the field of medicine, because of the importance of that relationship. While these pages offer a critical assessment of current and past problems in the practice of Christian Science, they put forward positive potential solutions to those problems, and do not ignore the negative aspects of today's conventional medical practice. The chapters are both direct and hopeful. The reader is invited to take seriously the ideas and suggestions in these pages for their intended corrective value. The aim of this book is improvement of the practice of Christian Science, while pointing to promise for the future.

The Ram in a Thicket is not an exhaustive description of important matters. The author hopes to encourage a discussion but not put a capstone on that discussion. There's a herd of issues in the room, so let's get after them.