

May 24 - Subject: Ancient and Modern Necromancy, alias Mesmerism and Hypnotism, Denounced

DEAR FRIENDS: Mary Baker Eddy gave her students 26 subjects for weekly Bible Lessons, to be covered twice yearly. Flowing through the year in her order of the subjects, we hereby present fresh views of each one by outstanding Christian Scientists. In this way, we hope to partake with you of new unfoldments of her infinite revelation.

Our selection this week is from—THE BIBLE AS OUR LIFE—BOOK II—by Peggy Brook. Biographies on our contributing authors can be found [here](#).

Rebuilding the Temple—II

Universality brings fulfilment (Ezra 4:7-622)

SOON AFTER the Israelites began the rebuilding of their temple in Jerusalem, they came up against the Samaritans, who are called in Chapter 4 of Ezra “the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin.” The Samaritans were the foreigners with whom the Assyrian conquerors peopled Samaria after they had carried off the Israelites into captivity. They were instructed in Jahweh worship, but retained many of their former heathen practices. They were called “adversaries” here as a result of the incident that follows.

The Samaritans heard of the rebuilding of the temple and approached the Jews, saying, “Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him.” But the leaders of the Israelites would have no contact with them, returning the answer, “Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us.” The Jews, recently returned from captivity, where they had tended to lose their identity as a nation, were now ultra-nationalistic, narrow, and separatist in their outlook, and so refused to allow the Samaritans to take part in this rebuilding.

Thus rebuked, the Samaritans became antagonistic towards the Jews and “weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building.” They interfered in every way possible with the building of the temple, until at length it ceased altogether, and its completion was delayed for sixteen years. It was not until the two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, began to prophesy in Jerusalem,—Haggai with his trenchant demand to delimit their conception of the spiritual idea and Zechariah painting the picture of the glory of the spiritual idea,—that the work again proceeded and the temple was completed.

Truth is universal

This was a major incident in the rebuilding of the temple in 520 B.C., but it also raises a major factor that has been predominant in spiritual progress of every kind throughout the ages; it involves the whole subject of sects and denominations and their attitude towards one another.

It poses the questions: Is there ultimately only one Truth? And are there many paths to God or Truth? To the first question one instinctively answers “Yes,” for there cannot be many Truths. To the second question one needs to give pause. The history of religion has been

rife with bitterness and persecution because this question has been answered mainly in the negative, and men have been prepared to go to any lengths to defend their particular path to Truth, often violating even their own Christian tenets in the attempt to uphold them.

All men and women everywhere who are feeling the impulsion of the spiritual Principle of the universe, who seek it, love it, and are striving with all their heart to let it use them and to be its expression in their daily living, are “rebuilding the temple.” Through letting the spiritual facts of Truth establish themselves in a sure and practical way in their lives they are really being “lively stones.”

Is not the demand on such builders today—perhaps more than ever before—to realize that Truth is universal? It has been all too common for narrow religious thought to give—mentally or audibly—the kind of curt reply that the Jews gave here to the Samaritans, “You have nothing to do with us. We will keep ourselves separate from you in our religious worship.” Sincere spiritual thinkers, however, are coming to realize that dogmatic attitudes towards Truth are untenable. Apart from the fact that such narrowness turns people away from the spiritual and tends to make them ridicule and persecute it, even as the Samaritans did here, enlightenment as to the universal nature of spiritual Truth as Science is increasingly dawning on thought, and a science is always above creed, dogma, and mere belief. It is universal,—understandable and provable by anyone. An arithmetical fact, for instance, such as $5 + 5 = 10$, is true for all races, nations, creeds. It is the same for the child as for the adult. Moreover, it does not work better, worse, or differently if one writes down the figures in Chinese, Roman or Arabic. A man may go to an institute of learning to study the subject, but he does not have to identify himself with any sect or body in order to understand and prove arithmetic, for it is universal fact, available to anyone who seeks it and applies himself to it. How much more so must be the universal Truth,—the truth of man and the universe.

Jesus never put a fence round the Truth he knew, taught, and lived. He wrote no books, built no church, founded no organization. Yet he said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.” He was conscious of a universal spiritual law, available to all men in all ages, For he said, “He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also.” To accomplish this he foretold that another Comforter would come namely, “the Spirit of truth,” which would guide men “into all truth.” And it is this “Spirit of truth” that is uniting all spiritual seekers, and which will draw all men nearer and nearer to one another as they understand it and let it use them.

There can be no merely intellectual answer to the ever-recurring question, “What is Truth?” Jesus declared, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” No one was so free from the bondage of materiality, -of sin, disease, and even death itself, -as Jesus was. And he freed others too, so he clearly must have known the Truth. Truth, therefore, must be spiritual, for the basis of the freedom and dominion he brought was, “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.” Moreover, he was supremely aware of the universal nature of Truth, as evidenced in his words to Pilate quoted many times in these articles, “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.” This declaration implies the realization of one power, one Truth, moving everything and everyone.

The spirit of Truth unites

If there is one universal Truth, why then are there differences between spiritual seekers, believing that their way to Truth is the only one? And how can they be resolved? Surely the differences arise because on the upward path to Truth we often see it “through a glass, darkly” and are somewhat imprisoned in the symbols which appear to be different on every path. These differences begin to be resolved when we advance to the point where we look out from the spiritual Principle itself, from the spirit of Truth, as Jesus did. Arriving at this point through spiritual understanding, we become intelligently conscious of only one power at work, one universal Truth, leavening thought everywhere. Then that which seemed limited or even contrary to the Truth, when viewed from a partial or circumscribed standpoint, becomes translated or reversed, and one can see facets of the one Truth at work behind all manifestations.



...Safety in forward spiritual footsteps

As soon as Sanballat and Tobiah heard that Nehemiah and the Israelites were going to rebuild the wall, they laughed at them, despised them, and said, “Will ye rebel against the king?” This is exactly what the carnal mind would claim to do. It would laugh at and despise all definite and forward spiritual steps, classifying those steps as rebellion against the accepted “rulers” of human experience. The carnal mind’s king is matter and material knowledge, and this whispering Sanballat would always say, “If you pursue spiritual values, you are going against that which governs everything. Matter and material knowledge is power and you cannot rebel against that and get away with it.”

Nehemiah, however, gave no quarter to Sanballat at all. He virtually declared that the great spiritual Principle of the universe was behind him and his brethren, and that they would go forward in giving themselves to spiritual values. Moreover he put Sanballat in his place by saying to him, “Ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem.” This is true of the carnal mind. It is “a liar, and the father of it.” As any man goes forward spiritually, conscious of the great universal Principle of being behind him and all who are moving forward in this one body of Truth-impelled consciousness, the “Sanballats” agitate in vain, and although they may whisper again and again, their whisperings are drowned in man’s sure, forward spiritual footsteps, impelled by his divine Principle.

And so the wall-building began.

Nehemiah Rebuilds the Wall of Jerusalem—II

(Nehemiah 3:1—6.79)

THIS CITY of Jerusalem, the walls and gates of which Nehemiah was engaged in rebuilding, symbolizes a living city of spiritual consciousness. As such, it represents the true man. This is beautifully expressed in words found on a papyrus in Egypt around 1897: “Strive therefore to know yourselves and ye shall be aware that ye are the sons of the Almighty Father; ye shall know that ye are in the city of God and that ye are the city.” Therefore, in awakening to spiritual values, understanding them and identifying himself with them, man is finding the eternal structure of his own true being, the “city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

Build that which is natural to you

Chapter 3 of Nehemiah records the building of the wall and the twelve gates of Jerusalem in terms of listing the names of those who built each specific section. As a historical detail this does not mean very much. Yet, taken in its spiritual significance. It contains a vital lesson, for the Bible commentaries say that every group of workers built the gate or part of the wall that was nearest to them. For instance, the priests built the sheep gate as it was adjacent to the temple, the Jericho contingent built the section of the wall closest to their home, and so on. In this way the entire wall with its gates was built.

Taken in its spiritual import, this says to all who are building a city of spiritual consciousness, "There is only one wall". The same spiritual fundamentals are basic to all, but build that which is nearest to you. Don't think you have to do what others are doing. You don't have to make your way across the 'city' to build in some strange and unfamiliar surroundings. Build right where you are on familiar ground." If every man in his spiritual journey fulfils his part in the plan at the point where he is, then the wall with all its gates will be found to be one interlocking whole.

It is always a case of "To thine own self be true," and that self is every man's highest and purest sense of the universal fundamentals of the one Truth, expressing themselves to him and through him in the way which is most natural, living, and substantial to him. No matter how large or small it may seem, if a man sincerely and selflessly follows his individual spiritual conviction of the one fundamental Truth, he will inevitably find himself building an essential part of the whole structure of this city "not made with hands." Every individuality is unique; this means that all are essential to the whole, and it also ensures a very living whole. If anyone strives slavishly merely to copy or to reproduce the work of another, it results in a dull monotony and deadness. The truth is, though, that no one can ultimately escape expressing their unique identity and individuality, for it is "built in" to every expression in creation. Even in the universe of nature no two blades of grass are alike, and their uniqueness is the forever pattern throughout all creation.

Dealing with subtle, discouraging arguments

To return to the story in Nehemiah: as soon as the wall began to be built, once again Sanballat entered the picture. This "enemy in secret" seems to increase its opposition wherever positive progress is being made, even as the stronger the light the darker the shadow, but it is always the light that counts. The light is the positive, motivating factor. Darkness is negative and has no initiative.

At first Sanballat and Tobiah were "grieved exceedingly" when they were given the news that "there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel;" next, they laughed at the Israelites and despised them when they heard that they purposed to build the walls and gates of Jerusalem. Then, when word came that the wall was actually under construction, Sanballat was furious and indignant and mocked them, saying, "What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?"

Have not these arguments always been the line that the so-called carnal mind takes when any spiritual enterprise is under way? First of all, "What do these feeble Jews?" In other

words, “What you are trying to do spiritually is feeble and ineffective. There is no power to it.” This is virtually what Saul said to David when he volunteered to fight Goliath—“Thou art but a youth.” Yet spiritual power prevailed. “Will they fortify themselves?” The carnal mind’s next taunt is that spiritual understanding can neither fortify nor protect you. One recalls Daniel praying three times a day, trusting in spiritual understanding to fortify and protect him in the lions’ den, and it did. “Will they sacrifice?” “What is the point of acknowledging spiritual identity as supreme and surrendering a material sense of existence?” suggests the carnal mind. Immediately one’s thought goes to the supreme exemplar of such a sacrifice, Christ Jesus, and his proof of the indestructibility and eternity of the true man, which was the outcome. “Will they make an end in a day?” This is the argument of discouragement,—that it takes so long to work out one’s salvation, so why endure? Many instances in the Bible spring to mind here,—Abraham, who never lost faith in the promise that his ideal, Sarah, would bring forth, which promise was ultimately fulfilled; Jacob, who served seven years for his ideal, Rachel, and “they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her;” Job, who refused to resign himself to being a sinner; he knew that his Redeemer lived, and his conviction was justified. “Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?” The inference here is that spiritual idealism cannot be revived once it has gone dead. The truth is that spiritual reality is eternally living and vital. The various symbols through which it expresses itself may appear stereotyped and lifeless as a result of confusing the living spirit with the symbol and thus burying it in the symbol, but the spirit is always alive, fresh, new, and pregnant with power, needing only inspiration to give continuous rebirth to it here and now. When Jesus said that he had not come to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfil them, surely he was reviving “the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish,”—rebuilding in a vital and fresh way the city of spiritual consciousness on its eternal, changeless foundations.

Nehemiah refused to listen to these whisperings. He uncovered them for what they were and continued to build the wall. And we need to do just this today, knowing that spiritual Truth is power, strength, and protection; it is the pearl of great price, and nothing else matters. We may have to endure at times, but Truth is irresistible and it is impossible to overthrow or turn back that which is fundamental to all being. The arguments of the “Sanballats” and the “Tobias” will come up, but we shall always defeat them if we go forward with the living understanding of Truth and never turn aside from it.

Dealing with open warfare

These subtle arguments having no effect, the opposition then developed into open warfare, and so Nehemiab prayed to God, setting a watch against the enemy day and night. Jesus was insistent that men should watch. He commanded his disciples, “What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.” Many times he instructed them, “Watch and pray.” A number of the great Scriptural leaders were originally shepherds, who in their youth were taught to watch over their flocks so that no enemy could rob them of their sheep. Moses, destined to be a deliverer of his people, was a shepherd. David, the finest king ever to sit on Israel’s throne, was trained as a shepherd. To have dominion over the inroads that the carnal mind would attempt to make upon our spiritual progress, we need to watch. True watching primarily necessitates constant, intimate acquaintance with the spiritual ideal. No man can make an effective watch unless he is continually dwelling with the ideal and is therefore alert to recognize all that does not approximate it.

When awake and alert spiritually and mentally, such watchers are unfailingly warned of approaching danger through some channel or other, just as here their fellow Jews warned the builders of the enemy's intent. In this enterprise, Nehemiah formed an effective watch by having half his servants working on the wall and half of them bearing weapons. Moreover, those who were actually engaged in the construction work built the wall with one hand and held a weapon with the other. Surely this is the "Yea, Yea" and the "Nay, Nay" of which Jesus spoke. It is the prayer and the watchfulness essential to all spiritual progress. On the one hand every spiritual seeker needs to build solidly and continuously through pondering spiritual values in an ordered and progressive way, and on the other he must be prepared to deal actively with any attempt of the carnal mind to stop his spiritual progress through subtle arguments or open warfare.

One of the outstanding points in this alert defence of the wall-building was that when any section of the wall was attacked, a trumpet had to be sounded, which alerted all the builders to go to the defence of those at that particular part of the wall. This emphasizes the fact that it was one wall which was being built and that the defence of any part of it was the defence of it all. Is this not so with spiritual building? We are concerned with universal Truth, and not with separated sects nor isolated and personal Truth-seekers with divided interests. Therefore the understanding love and active support of all who are upholding the standard of Truth, when they come under attack, is the defence of all Truth. "All are but parts of one stupendous whole," wrote Pope, and the signs are that this great fact of oneness is being realized and voiced increasingly today. It is *one* "wall" that is being built, and men will recognize this fact even more rapidly as they become spiritually acquainted with the great fundamentals of being that are at work everywhere and are symbolized in their unfolding order and relationship in the first chapter of Genesis and the first three verses of the second.

Irresistible fulfilment of the "seed within itself"

During the building of the wall a difficult situation arose with which Nehemiah had to deal. Many of the Jews had sacrificed everything in order to give themselves to this task. It was a labour of love, and being undertaken voluntarily it left those who were concerned with it very little time to earn a living. The result was that their richer brethren lent the builders money, demanding from them in return their lands, vineyards, houses, and even their sons and daughters as mortgage. When Nehemiah heard of this, he made these wealthy Jews restore everything to their brethren.

Naturally this illustrates that in building spiritually man can never lose anything of value. But it also illustrates another important point in attaining spiritual consciousness, namely, that in this process no man should "sell" himself to another, nor to any limited channel. Sometimes it may seem that a spiritual teacher or leader is richer in vision than oneself, and the subtle temptation is to hand over mentally and spiritually one's individuality to that person, which is virtually selling one's soul. Or this can also happen with an individual and his relationship to an organized body, which body may appear important and rich materially or spiritually. To be safe from this temptation one should never put Spirit into matter, and so personalize it, nor confuse the idea with the symbol. Every idea has its identity in the infinite divine Source, and realizing this means that it is free to develop in unconfined ways. Other individuals or organizations may be temporary channels through which Truth comes to a man, but he

should watch that he never “sells” himself to *any* finite channel through a belief in his own lack of the richness of spiritual revelation, development, and support. Every man has “the seed within” himself of pure spiritual identity, which must irresistibly grow and bring forth.

Nehemiah saw this fact so clearly himself that he did not take anything from the governors in order to live, but relied on God’s support for himself and many others who fed at his table. The whole of Chapter 5 of Nehemiah speaks of the self-sustaining nature of spiritual sense.

Dealing with three personal temptations

Sanballat tried three more tricks to prevent the completion of the wall. The first of these was an invitation to Nehemiah to come down and meet him in one of the villages in the plain of Ono. “Ono” means “safe abode; strong; rich; gain-bringing.” Spiritually interpreted, this is the temptation that comes to all of us to cease building on the heights and come down into the valleys of human ways and means, which are believed by the human mind to be safer, stronger methods, with greater rewards. Nehemiah saw through this subtle suggestion and answered Sanballat in the way that all such inferior suggestions should be answered: “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?” To go forward, steadfastly building with spiritual values, always brings to man a lasting dominion, safety, and satisfaction, whilst merely human ways and means are temporary, always limited, and so often involve bondage.

The second subtle trick that Sanballat tried was to write an open letter, stating that Nehemiah and the Jews were rebelling against their rulers and that Nehemiah planned to set himself up as king and appoint prophets to preach in Judah. All these lies Nehemiah repudiated, saying that there was no word of truth in them. When any man is going forward spiritually, so often the carnal mind will circulate lies about him, declaring that he just wants to make himself great and spread his personal sense of Truth around. But if a man is honestly and sincerely adhering to his clear understanding of divine Principle, conscious of the fact that of himself he can do nothing, but that it is God with him that enables him to accomplish anything worth while, and also that he is merely fulfilling his part in the divine plan along with everyone else, then he need not fear any of these accusations of pride and personality.

Finally, Sanballat secretly hired Shemaiah to try to persuade Nehemiah to meet the latter in the temple and shut the doors on them both in order to forestall a plot to slay Nehemiah. Again this was subtle trickery on Sanballat’s part, and Nehemiah saw this and refused to shut himself up through fear. As forward steps are taken, the carnal mind often seeks to frighten a spiritual pioneer by saying, “Don’t expose yourself; Shut yourself up in an ‘ivory tower’ spiritually, and do not go forward with your pioneer work or you will be killed.” It has often been said, though, that the safest place in battle is in the front line, and in any case the only thing a man can do to fulfil his destiny successfully and safely is to go forward in the way God is leading him. Humanly Jesus need never have gone to Jerusalem and faced the mob, but he was impelled by the divine plan to do so in order to prove the dominion and eternity of the true man. In the garden of Gethsemane when he was able to say, “Not my will, but thine, be done,” he was letting all his private defences down and surrendering himself to the divine plan. Through being willing to fulfil his place in this universal plan, his own true individuality was naturally taken care of also, as it will always be with every sincere spiritual pioneer.

The wall completed

And so the wall was completed. Every subtle suggestion of the carnal mind was detected and rejected by Nehemiah. His single-mindedness and persistence are surely a lesson for all spiritual seekers and pioneers. Yet a man will find that once he has begun to build his wall of understanding spiritual values in a truly living way, seeing them as the very substance and essence of his being, he is not tempted to pay any attention to the "enemy in secret." His positive, forward course inevitably gives him dominion over all the carnal mind's wiles, for it increasingly establishes him in his alert, sure, and Godlike identity, from which he can never be drawn aside.



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