

November 24, 2003 - 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 TALKS ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES by Peggy M. Brook. For background information on Ms. Brook, please [click here](#).

CHAPTER 8

VERSE 1. “there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem”—as we are beginning to expect, in the tone of Truth comes a story of persecution of some kind, but always it is offset and Truth is the victor. You remember how in the tone of Mind as *Truth* Peter had to defend the phenomenon of speaking with “other tongues,” because there seemed to be a need for explanation. Again, in the tone of Soul as *Truth*, Peter had to defend the healing of the man at the gate Beautiful, and then he and John were persecuted—they were put in hold. In the tone of Spirit as *Truth*, just after that experience in Spirit as Life when the apostles had performed wonderful miracles of healing, the Sadducees came and put them in prison. Then in the tone of Life as *Truth* Stephen was persecuted. Now in the full tone of *Truth* there is this great persecution against the church.

“and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles”—the idea was growing and growing, and the opposition to what the apostles were doing was growing only because they were growing spiritually; it was their very sense of Truth that brought up the opposition. Truth has the initiative every time, and so when there seems to be persecution, it isn’t because error has the initiative—it’s because Truth is stirring up ignorance only to destroy it, that’s all. Mrs. Eddy says, “Falsehood is on the wings of the winds, but Truth will soar above it. Truth is speaking louder, clearer, and more imperatively than ever. Error is walking ‘to and fro in the earth, trying to be heard above Truth, but its voice dies out in the distance. Whosoever proclaims Truth loudest, becomes the mark for error’s shafts. The archers aim at Truth’s mouthpiece; but a heart loyal to God is patient and strong. Justice waits, and is used to waiting; and right wins the everlasting victory. The stake and scaffold have never silenced the messages of the Most High. Then can the present mode of attempting this—namely, by slanderous falsehoods, and a secret mind-method, through which to effect the purposes of envy and malice—silence Truth? Never. They but open the eyes to the truth of Benjamin Franklin’s report before the French Commissioners on Mesmerism: ‘It is one more fact to be recorded in the history of the errors of the human mind.’ ‘The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice.’” (*Mis.* 277: 3—22). There is nothing but God going on.

Mrs. Eddy also writes, “Conflict and persecution are the truest signs that can be given of the greatness of a cause or of an individual, provided this warfare is honest and a world-imposed struggle” (*Mess.* ‘00 10:5-8). It’s got to be “honest and a world-imposed struggle,” because some people have a “conflict and persecution” complex, and very often such

people aren't really accomplishing very much, but just imagine that everyone is against them and that they're being persecuted. I'm sure that what is called persecution comes to us only if we're really accomplishing something, because all that persecution is positive Truth stirring up a negative sense—only to destroy it, of course. The word “persecution” comes from the Latin per” + “sequi,” which means “to follow up with vigor to the end.” It seems to me that that is exactly what Truth does--it follows up with vigor to the end. Because Truth is a whole and operates spiritually, morally, and physically, there's nothing that it doesn't touch, and because of that very fact it seems to stir up opposition, but because Truth is a whole and is complete and operates everywhere, it's bound to be victorious.

We can get great comfort these days from realizing that it is Truth, which is bringing out all the chemicalization in the world. As Mrs. Eddy says, “Error is walking to and fro in the earth, trying to be heard above Truth, but, its voice dies out in the distance.” Error just doesn't have a chance against the voice of Truth. Truth always has the initiative. We've got to see that we're on the side of Truth and that we understand Truth. If we don't, then it may seem as though temporarily we get overwhelmed, but there's nothing ever to fear if we're on the side of Truth. Regarding this question of persecution, I believe that if you and I wouldn't hold to a fixed physical form of Truth, by sometimes unconsciously determining to hold Spirit in the grasp of matter, we wouldn't feel persecution. It might look as though we were being persecuted, but we wouldn't feel it, because it's only the material form of anything, which is persecuted—and never spiritual identity. Spiritual reality can never be touched. You can't persecute Spirit. If we determine not to hold Spirit in the grasp of matter, I don't think that we shall ever feel persecution....

...**VERSE 5.** This is the first time that the idea touched Samaria. Hastings' *Greater Men and Women of the Bible* says of Philip: — *The account of Philip's character and life is given in a very brief form in Scripture, but it is full of encouragement to us, because we cannot all expect to be a Paul, and very few of us expect even to be a Stephen; but might not all of us be a Philip? (Vol. 6, page 117).*

That's very lovely, because Philip the Evangelist, as he is called, used to go around quietly converting people here and there wherever he contacted them. He didn't seem to stir up a lot, but he did his job, and when Paul was on his way to Rome he visited Philip and found him still doing his job quietly; by that time he had four daughters, who prophesied. His is a type common among groups of this kind, and it is much needed.

Every individuality is needed, because every one is different; if that were not so, there would be no Science and no system. We're every one of us different, -and in human experience it works out that some are used by God to cut through and stand up against opposition and lead the way, and others just as essential, like Barnabas for instance, are used to make the gospel palatable and to comfort, or, on the other hand, to evangelize like Philip. Every individuality is needed, and that's a lovely thing to remember. It's what we are seeing today, when every one of us who loves this idea is going about his Father's business in his own way, expressing the idea in his own way and in a way that is absolutely vital. If we're keen on doing our own job, we shan't interfere with anyone else, or criticize anyone else, but we shall appreciate what everyone is doing. If we all genuinely desire to see the idea of universal Science accepted, then we shall all love what the other fellow is doing and help him whenever we get an opportunity.

I think that the reason why Philip didn't appear to come up against much persecution or go through many difficulties was that he didn't seem to take on a lot of human responsibility. He just took opportunities as they came along to spread the truth, but he didn't take on a lot of responsibility for other people. If he had, he would probably have met more persecution. I feel, for instance, that Jesus' demonstration and Mrs. Eddy's demonstration and John Doorly's demonstration were such that they seemed to have to break through the apathy and resistance of mortal mind and rouse people to their own individual responsibility, and so they had to take on a certain amount of responsibility for others and that was their burden and the cause of the persecution they encountered.

In going through this story, you constantly find yourself seeing great similarity between the various missions of the apostles and those of individuals of more recent times. It's interesting, though, how one realizes from doing just this that one individual manifests something of the nature of a "Philip," something of the nature of a "Stephen," something of the nature of a "Paul," and so forth. Individual reflection of the divine idea is infinite and unlimited. So it's never a question of being classified by mortal mind in a stereotyped way. Our individuality is always definite, but infinite and unconfined. The great thing to see is that each one of us has a God-given individuality. So don't let's decide for ourselves in advance and from a human point of view, "My job is just to do such-and-such," because the divine way we have to go may be quite different. Our only job is to listen to what the spontaneity of our inspiration tells us to do, and that's so much better than classifying ourselves humanly as a Philip for instance, or as not a Philip. Sometimes if we say, "I'm just a Philip," it's because we're resisting something greater that God wants us to be.

We must be willing to take on our God-given individuality, and it's usually past anything that the human mind would say that we're capable of. I'm getting very chary of saying, "My job is such-and-such," because I can see that the important thing is to keep our thought open to the spontaneity of inspiration, and to be prepared to go whatever way Principle dictates in order to express our true individuality. This spontaneity of thought may lead us to do all kinds of things that we never thought were possible, but if Principle impels us to do something, we should do it at once, or we shall only have to do it later. There are no ruts for any of us!

We're all individual expressions of the one divine Science, and we're going to see that that is true and the scales are going to fall from our eyes in many ways. It may seem to us that as a result of listening to Truth, we go up higher, but really it's just our true individuality coming to light. It's not a question of getting a bigger and bigger understanding, but of reflecting our true individuality, which has always been there.

Don't for a moment despise the Phillip type of thought in human experience, because it has a valuable contribution to make, but do keep your thought open to listen to what divine Principle is impelling you to do.

VERSES 6, 7. You see what a wonderful job Philip did. This is the passage that I mentioned to you before, when I was comparing it with the tone of Life as Truth, where Stephen was doing the same thing from the standpoint of laying down the mortal concept—"greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Philip had a great sense of the universal brotherhood of man, generic man, and he called forth God's image and likeness wherever he went.

As Mrs. Eddy says, “Christianity is again demonstrating the Life that is Truth, and the Truth that is Life, by the apostolic work of casting out error and healing the sick” (S&H 97:29-32). I just long to see Truth more clearly, because sometimes one has an experience of helping somebody who is getting on in years, and it’s as if what one knows seems to prolong their life but doesn’t bring health. And so I long to see the Life that is Truth and the Truth that is Life, because if we did, we should heal those people quickly. I feel that the full answer lies in Truth and Love, and we re beginning to see it.

VERSE 8. You remember that one of the Commentaries says that happiness was characteristic of early Christianity.

So in this tone of Truth as Life we’ve seen that persecution doesn’t do anything but multiply the Word of God. That’s what happened here. Truth stirred up error, but it also multiplied Truth.

INTERVAL

A Scientific Story

This story of Acts is a marvelous story of marvelous people, and we’ve always read it like that, but to-day we’re reading it as a marvelous story impelled by Science, and that is such a different sense of it. I think that the world has always read this as a wonderful record of acts accomplished by wonderful characters, but we’re seeing it today as more than that, because we’re seeing it as a story of Science, as a story of spiritual facts. and seeing it in that way makes it possible for every one of us to be expressions of Science equally great as the apostles. Science is the interpreter, and so it is because of Science that we can interpret this human story scientifically.

We’re learning many everyday lessons from it and we’re seeing the ways that these apostles went, but behind it all, and most important of all, are the spiritual tones that were impelling the action, because those same spiritual tones are impelling us today. The same spiritual Science that lies behind the story of Acts is available to us today. Mrs. Eddy says, speaking of the four cardinal points of “the city of our Cod”: “first, the Word of Life, Truth, and Love; second, the Christ third, Christianity, ... fourth, Christian Science, which, today and forever interprets this great example and the great Exemplar” (S&H 577:13-19). And what we are doing is interpreting this symphony, this story, through Science, and because it’s universal Science it’s possible for every one of us to be like these apostles. If it weren’t Science, it wouldn’t be possible for us, and we’d still be reading this story and saying, “Weren’t they wonderful?” whereas to-day we’re saying, “Isn’t Science wonderful?” We’re seeing that we today must identify ourselves with the scientific facts, which were impelling these apostles.

Don’t let us ever lose sight of the fact that the whole story of Acts is different today because of Science. I can get very fond of Barnabas and Paul and all these characters, and then I think, “That’s all very well, but don’t let’s forget that they were impelled by Science. This is a story of the operation of Science.” That doesn’t stop us admiring them, but at the same time let’s always remember that this is Science, because that realization gives every one of us the power to go and do likewise. That’s the whole point of what Mr. Doorly s showed us.

I realize today more than ever before the greatness of what Mr. Doorly did: he identified for us the Science of Mrs. Eddy's discovery. It would seem that many of us plodded along after him in the beginning, learning the fundamentals of Science and studying "Science and Health" and the Bible as though/the divine system were something apart from us, - but now it seems as though the fruitage of that work 'is beginning to come and Science is really beginning to live for us. We're consciously feeling its reality "closer than breathing." But we shouldn't ever forget to be grateful for what Mr. Doorly labored to show us and sacrificed to show us; without that, we wouldn't be able to interpret the book of Acts like this, and we wouldn't see and feel so keenly the living reality of Science. We would still be religionists. So it's the most wonderful achievement, when you really ponder it. I never saw so clearly as when studying this book of Acts that we can interpret these books of the Bible so practically only because we have learnt something of the spiritual tones and the fundamentals of Science.

TRUTH as Truth (Chapter 8:9-25). There is only one Truth, and it establishes itself in spite of all dangerous resemblances.

If we hold to Truth, we needn't worry about what extravagant claims or deeds the anti-Christ may put forward, because Truth is its own witness and cannot be turned aside. Truth is.

Here we have the story of Simon the sorcerer, who really represents the anti-Christ. He was trying to pose as the Christ, as Truth. The apostles had previously met opposition only from the Jews, but now they began to meet it from other quarters, — from various world systems. The Century Bible edition of Acts says: — *Simon seems to have won the name of being the incarnation of the highest personal potency emanating from God, and so to have occupied among the Samaritans very much the place which their religion assigned to the coming Messiah (John iv. 25). Indeed it is possible that Simon, after his first formal adhesion to the name of Jesus the Messiah, boldly claimed to be himself the true Messiah (page 210).*

Verses 9-11. Moffatt's Commentary on Acts says: — *Rival miracles often mark the contest between a new and an old religion. Nor must it be forgotten that preachers of truth and disciples of error are both wont to claim to be gifted with supernatural powers. Thus, when Moses confronts the magicians of Egypt, both sides are able to work wonders; and Jesus himself warned his disciples that their enemies would show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, the elect (page 71).*

Mrs. Eddy writes, "What the prophets of Jehovah did, the worshippers of Baal failed to do; yet artifice and delusion claimed that they could equal the work of wisdom. Science only can explain the incredible good and evil elements now coming to the surface. Mortals must find refuge in Truth in order to escape the error of these latter days ... Between Christian Science and all forms of superstition a great gulf is fixed, as impassable as that between Dives and Lazarus" (S&H 83: 2-9, 22-25).

Simon was a sorcerer who claimed to do the works of Truth, and of course we have the same phenomenon today when such people as hypnotists claim to do the works that Christ, Truth, accomplishes. But remember that Mrs. Eddy says, "Science only can explain..." "We may see healing accomplished in all kinds of ways, but the question is, "What is the statement behind the proof?" In Christianity we're always tracing proof back to statement.

The statement behind our proof is Science. Truth operates through divine system. And you remember that the essential structure of the sixth day of creation is the reflection of the

“seven” and the “four”; so when the consciousness of spiritual Truth produces healing, there lies behind it the infinite intelligent operation of divine system, just as the whole system of arithmetic lies behind an arithmetical fact introduced into an arithmetic problem. It seems to me that the touchstone in all these cases is, “What is the statement of Truth which lies behind the healing? Does it lead back to a clear statement of Truth?” I don’t mean just words, but the absolute fundamental facts of Truth, which lie behind the phenomena of healing. Also we have to ask ourselves, “Does it heal spiritually and morally as well as physically?” That’s the test. “Does it measure up to the standard of Truth, which always has that threefold witness—spiritual, moral and physical?” Truth is a whole, and it is “the light of the world.” Jesus said of this light, “A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house,”—it brings light to every level and state of thought. If we see that, it gives us a touchstone. “Rival miracles” are all right if they’re done spiritually and in the name of God; but if they’re done through magic or sorcery they don’t really get one anywhere.

Somebody told me recently that he saw one of these hypnotists on the stage doing amazing things, and so he paid him a fee and asked him to come back to his home and tell him how he did it; he said, “Tell me from A to Z about hypnotism.” Then this hypnotist said, “Well, there’s nothing to tell you. The most important thing is to persuade people that you have this hypnotic power. When you’ve done that, it’s more than half the battle. If I go into a room and nobody knows that I’m a hypnotist, they don’t take much notice of me, but if I’m introduced as a hypnotist, they all say, ‘Oh yes, you can tell! Look at his eyes! Extraordinary!’ If I can convince people that I have this hypnotic power, I’ve more than half hypnotized them. It’s the build-up that counts.” And it’s so interesting; too, to find that at these hypnotists’ shows the people who are real thinkers can’t be hypnotized. Someone was telling me the other day that he went to a dinner where there were a great many people, and a hypnotist was engaged to entertain them. This fellow had no success at all in hypnotizing those people, except with one man. The guests at the dinner were all very pleased with themselves, because they felt that they had dominion over their thinking. The hypnotist was most apologetic about his failure, but I think that he had done them a very good turn, because he had given them all courage. Some people get frightened that they might be hypnotized, but if you have dominion over your thinking and if you understand that Truth is the rock, you can’t be hypnotized, either by this material existence which is trying to hypnotize us all the time, or by those who call themselves hypnotists.

Truth is a two-edged sword, and so it enables us to detect what is true and what is not true, - to detect what measures up to the standard of Truth and what is just a dangerous resemblance to Truth. Truth establishes us on the rock, and nothing can budge us from it. If we love Truth, we shall never be fooled, because the standard of Truth just won’t allow us to be fooled.

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