

or man, whose source is infinite Mind. There is no really finite mind, no finite consciousness. There is no material substance, for Spirit is all that endureth, and hence is the only substance. There is, can

be, no evil mind, because Mind is God. God and His ideas—that is, God and the universe—constitute all that exists. Man, as God’s offspring, must be spiritual, perfect, eternal.”

“HE WILL PROSPER US”

DOROTHY ROBERTS

THE story of Nehemiah’s successful completion of the walls of Jerusalem is a most comforting one to the student of Christian Science. It portrays distinctly the different ways in which suggestion tries to impose itself as thought, activity, and causation, and shows how it must inevitably fail in the presence of a pure and vigorous realization of the fact stated by Mrs. Eddy in “Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures” on page 93, “Whatever contradicts the real nature of the divine *Esse*, though human faith may clothe it with angelic vestments, is without foundation.” Nehemiah’s experience is thoroughly familiar to every Christian Scientist even though he may never have heard of Nehemiah. Upon beginning the study of Christian Science, we have all discovered “how Jerusalem lieth waste,” how very unprofitable most of our thinking has been. Like the Jews under Nehemiah’s leadership, we feel the urge of Principle, “Let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach,” and like them, we strengthen our hands “for this good work” of learning what God is, and by that knowledge destroying the lie about Him.

Very soon we encounter Sanballat

and Tobiah who come calling themselves our own thoughts, arguing the absurdity and futility of our efforts. “Will ye rebel against the king?” they ask; that is, will you foolishly endeavor to separate yourself from the belief of life in matter, which is the very essence of your thinking and living, which constitutes your past, present, and future, and determines your character and temperament? It is at this point that we need to understand what Mrs. Eddy means when she writes on page 213 of Miscellany: “Unless one’s eyes are opened to the modes of mental malpractice, working so subtly that we mistake its suggestions for the impulses of our own thought, the victim will allow himself to drift in the wrong direction without knowing it. Be ever on guard against this enemy. Watch your thoughts, and see whether they lead you to God and into harmony with His true followers. Guard and strengthen your own citadel more strongly. Thus you will grow wiser and better through every attack of your foe, and the Golden Rule will not rust for lack of use or be misinterpreted by the adverse influence of animal magnetism.”

We have probably been going about declaring frequently that God

is Love and have wondered why in spite of this we have become confused and discouraged. Here we are told the reason why and what to do about it, and in Nehemiah's experience we have an excellent illustration of the results which follow right handling of the arguments of evil. When Sanballat and Tobiah taunted him, he did not accept their suggestions and reply mournfully something after this manner: "Yes, I remember that the ruins of Jerusalem are certainly overwhelming. I have a great deal to meet there,—more than anybody realizes; it is a terrible responsibility for me; I never built a wall before and besides there are so many mortal laws connected with wall building which make it peculiarly difficult." Such an answer was just what his enemies were suggesting,—that there is an "I," or ego, apart from God, which remembers evil, is compounded of good and evil elements, and is subject to mortal laws so inexorable that it is absurd to try to act contrary to them. In Nehemiah's reply he does not mention himself except as one of the people; he only talks about God,—about what He is and what He is not. He gives Sanballat and Tobiah the only answer which ever effectually silences them, an understanding affirmation of "the real nature of the divine *Esse*." He says, "The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build." It is not difficult, it is not futile to "arise and build;" it is the natural consequence of the fact that God does prosper His idea, making it rich in reflected activity. We cannot

imagine Him prospering man by endowing him with impoverishing faults of character, hereditary weaknesses, and subjection to the caprice of matter. Nehemiah goes on to make this clear, "But ye [evil suggestions] have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem." He has just spoken of the "God of heaven," using the term Jerusalem in the last meaning which Mrs. Eddy gives for it on page 589 of *Science and Health*, "Home, heaven." Nehemiah is saying, then, that evil has no portion, right, nor memorial in true consciousness. In reality he completed his own wall when he understandingly made this statement, before work on the structure of stone and brick had even begun. It was this correct knowledge of God which enabled him on all subsequent occasions to help the people and to withstand successfully all the efforts of Sanballat and Tobiah to paralyze the good work. In fact, all their efforts were foredoomed to failure from the moment Nehemiah realized the truth he sets forth in this first short, complete statement.

The same correct knowledge is today equally essential and equally successful. As we try to build our walls, to learn more of what God really is, error will come suggesting its concept of His nature and creation. Consciousness, it argues, is a mixture of good and evil, inextricably bound together. If we listen to these suggestions, we shall find ourselves voicing such metaphysical absurdities as, "He is slow but sure; geniuses are absent-minded; she is good as gold, but so stupid; and, he is a queer combination who jumped into

a river to save a drowning dog, but invariably takes the largest piece of cake on the plate." Long after we have detected the necessity for separating any claim of physical inharmony from man, if we are to destroy it, we are apt to discourse complacently upon the peculiar portion which evil has in our characters. We remark with conviction that we have executive ability, but are quite unable to master detail, that we are very practical but lack imagination; we can write but we cannot talk, we can talk but we cannot write, and so forth. Now Nehemiah not only affirmed that evil has no portion in Jerusalem, but also explained why it has none. It is because the "God of heaven" does prosper His idea; because He has said, as the Master expressed it in one of his parables, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine;" and has bestowed on man "every good gift and every perfect gift." Surely slowness, absent-mindedness, stupidity, and petty selfishness are not good and perfect gifts; hence they have no portion in man's heritage. God's idea must continually reflect the Love which is intelligence, originality which is one with order, consistent selflessness, and practical vision.

Nehemiah also affirmed that Tobiah and Sanballat had no right in Jerusalem, thus stating a fact which destroys one of the most persistent claims of the adversary. Because man lives by the immutable law of Principle, men have a certain innate respect for law. Recognizing that, as itself, it cannot command obedience or even attention, error endeavors to

take advantage of this reverence for law and pushes its claims in that guise. When we begin the study of Christian Science or, having begun, find it necessary to start new work of any kind, the argument comes: "Anything new is hard to learn and to do at first. It always takes time, and a good many mistakes and failures are but natural until it is learned." The new work mastered, we hear the whisper that it will not be necessary to think much about it any more, and that even if we try to, we shall soon sink into routine. It will also say, "I am alert and fresh in the morning, while later in the day I grow fatigued, irritable, and liable to make mistakes." If one endeavors to dismiss these suggestions by declaring that he is an exception, the argument of a right in Jerusalem will come up, "But you cannot hope to escape since these are laws, general laws which, long experience has proved, apply to every one." At this point we are often prone to accept error's own estimate of its inevitableness. Even though we have perhaps studied Christian Science and have proved the falsity of so-called laws of disease, we are apt to accept as legitimate these other claims simply because they are more general and less acutely disturbing. They are, however, equally unlike God, the Lawgiver, and so, as Nehemiah saw, for that reason have no right in Jerusalem. Since nothing can be added to God's creation, already complete, what seems to be new and totally different work can only be an unbroken continuation of the only work a Christian Scientist ever really has, the

work of discovering what God has already done. There is no interval in this steady reflection of activity when man is capable of failure or mistake, since intelligence abundant for his needs is as available at one moment as another. This same law renders equally impossible lapse into routine or mechanical processes. Man, as God's idea, can no more cease to be active, to think, to be truly original, than God can. He knows no new or old work, no beginning or end. Absolutely, man possesses no less vigor at one time than another, and, since the results of a real day's work can only be a greater recognition of this fact, we can expect to be refreshed and more confident at the end of a day than at its beginning when we realized less of the source of strength. This is a law which has a right in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah finished his declaration of freedom with the denial of the most insistent imposition of the Horonite and the Ammonite—that they have a memorial in Jerusalem. If, for instance, a mistake seems to have been made, we are prone to say,—in fact it has almost become a formula,—“I am very sorry it happened and will not allow it to occur again.” We then try to “know the truth” that there are no mistakes in Mind, and so forth, and then perhaps the mistake occurs again and we become quite discouraged and wonder why when we have declared that error has no power and existence, it still seems to happen. We do not realize that when we said and thought “occur again” we gave error a memorial in Jerusalem. In admitting that

a mistake ever was made, that things have ever gone wrong, we have given error all that it asks—existence and reality. It cares not that we have only given it a past, for in so doing we have made a present and a future for it. If anything really has occurred, it surely can occur again. If it has a yesterday, it has a to-day and a to-morrow, as our experience is bound to prove, until, like Nehemiah, we abide in the truth that error has no memorial in Jerusalem. We cannot remember what never was. If error argues that a mistake has undoubtedly been made, witness the effects,—we can only and always remember that at the very moment when it seemed that a mistake was made, God was expressing perfect activity, the only effects of which can be harmony. When we realize that from the standpoint of Principle, the standpoint from which man thinks, nothing wrong ever has happened, it becomes quite irrelevant how this fact may have appeared to human sense last year or yesterday or one second ago. The general belief is that unpleasant memories are very vivid for a short time and then gradually and mercifully fade; but it is not the lapse of time, it is the degree to which we understand that all which is unlike God has no existence even for an instant, that frees us from paralyzing memories. The scope of our present activities is never determined by either what we call our immediate or our remote past, since the statement of the psalmist is forever true: “The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.”