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Be thou my strong
habitation, whereunto
I may continually resort.

—Psalms 71:3



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Bible Lens

Ancient and Modern
Necromancy, alias
Mesmerism
and Hypnotism,
Denounced

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from the **Golden Text**

Nahum 1:9

What do ye imagine against the Lord? he will make an utter end.

Little is known about the prophet Nahum. His name signifies consolation or comfort—and is related to the name *Nehemiah*, which means “Yahweh consoles.” This book prophesies the fall of the Assyrian capital, Nineveh. Scripture describes the city as repentant at one point, though the date is uncertain (see Jonah 3:10). Now Nahum is sent to predict its doom. In 612 BC, within fifty years of his prophecy, Nineveh is destroyed by the Babylonians.

The Hebrew word rendered *imagine* (*hāšab*) refers to thinking or planning, often in the sense of plotting evil. Nehemiah uses this term to describe the machinations of his enemies: “They thought [*hāšab*] to do me mischief” (Nehemiah 6:2). Zechariah warns, “Let none of you imagine [*hāšab*] evil against his brother in your heart” (Zechariah 7:10, citation 19).

Lamentations 3:60 (Responsive Reading) employs the related word *imaginations* (*maḥ^ašābâ*) to portray hostile intent. In Jeremiah 29:11, however, the same word is translated *thoughts*, indicating the benevolent purpose of God: “I know the thoughts [*maḥ^ašābâ*] that I think [*hāšab*] toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts [*maḥ^ašābâ*] of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”

from **Section 2**

4 | Genesis 11:1, 4, 8, 9

The whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.... And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven.... So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel.

Babel is thought to have been located in southern Babylonia, an area designated *Shinar* in Hebrew (see v. 2). Genesis 10:8–10 specifies a great-grandson of Noah named Nimrod as its founder.

Babel is the Hebrew name for Babylon and is derived from *bab-ilu*, a word meaning “gate of God” in the ancient Semitic language Akkadian. Its resemblance to the Hebrew verb *bālal*, signifying to confuse or mix, allows for the play on words between *Babel* and *confusion*.

from **Section 4**

14 | I Chronicles 28:9

The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee.

Near the end of David’s life, he addresses his son Solomon. This statement is part of the king’s assurance that although Solomon has a huge task before him—the building of God’s temple—God will guide him. After David’s death, Solomon does indeed look to God for wisdom (see II Chronicles 1:7–12).

An exploration of Bible citations from the *Christian Science Quarterly*® Bible Lessons

“... a lesson on which the prosperity of Christian Science largely depends.” —Mary Baker Eddy

Unlike *imagine* in the book of Nahum (see note on Golden Text), here the word *imaginations* is translated from the Hebrew noun *yēšer*, meaning form or conception. In Isaiah 26:3, it is rendered *mind*: “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind [*yēšer*] is stayed on thee.”

from Section 6

22 | Psalms 35:11, 12, 17

False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not. They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul.... Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions.

Commentators believe this psalm to be the plea of a military leader or king whose former allies have turned against him. “Spoiling of my soul” utilizes the Hebrew word *š-kôl*, a strong term that expresses the desolation of losing a child. One describes it as “the stripping of my person of all my comforts and hopes, and of my life itself.”

“My darling” signifies to most sources “my precious life” or “my soul”—the dearest, most essential part of one’s being. In this word picture, the treachery of “false witnesses” against the soul is compared to the savagery of attacking beasts.

24 | Matthew 5:10

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Christ Jesus speaks openly about persecution several times during his ministry. In a detailed description of times to come, for

instance, he includes the prediction “They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name’s sake.... and some of you shall they cause to be put to death” (Luke 21:12, 16).

This prediction came true. Christians were targeted by Jews (see examples in Acts, chaps. 4–8)—illustrated in Saul’s vendetta against them and in Jesus’ words to him, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” (Acts 9:4). After his radical change of heart, Saul himself suffers repeated persecution. But he professes, “I take pleasure ... in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (II Corinthians 12:10).

Christians were also persecuted by Rome, especially for setting Christ above Caesar, and worship was driven to underground catacombs. In AD 64, after a sweeping fire destroyed much of Rome, Emperor Nero ordered the arrest and execution of Christians there.

Jesus’ words to his disciples must have sustained believers in these times: “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.... But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning” (John 15:18, 26, 27).

Resources quoted in this issue

Cit. 22: Poole, Matthew. *Annotations upon the Holy Bible*. 3 vols. London, 1685. Reprint, New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1853. Also available at biblehub.com/commentaries.

Animal magnetism is not mysterious

By Nathan A. Talbot

From the April 1978 issue of *The Christian Science Journal*

A deeper and clearer recognition of God's nature—a more faithful acceptance of Him—is the key to understanding reality. God is All. He is the very center of being. He is the very circumference—the All—of infinity. Man is a divine idea, wholly spiritual, fully representative of Spirit's perfection.

If we fail to understand the allness and supremacy of God, animal magnetism may seem to be mysterious. But if we grasp at least a beginning understanding that good is absolutely infinite and that divine Love is the only power and presence, we will assess animal magnetism properly. If we are frightened by it, we haven't sufficiently glimpsed God's omnipotence. If we are fascinated by it, we are not sufficiently loving God's omnipotence. If we are ignorant of it, we haven't proved His omnipotence over it. As we begin learning more of God's presence and power, animal magnetism loses any air of mystery.

Although animal magnetism was at first hailed by its adherents as a method of healing, Mary Baker Eddy perceived that the workings of this supposed force accurately described the underlying nature of all evil. She writes: "As named in Christian Science, animal magnetism or hypnotism is the specific term for error, or mortal mind. It is the false belief that mind is in matter, and is both evil and good; that evil is as real as good and more powerful. This belief has not one quality of Truth" (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 103).

Evil, in whatever form it appears, is *never* more than a hypnotic state of thought. Evil has no true substance or permanence. God is Mind, and Mind is infinite. There is no separate mind capable of being receptive to or impressed with evil. But the dreamy mis-

taken concept that man does have a separate mind and that he flows through stages of matter—birth, disease, sin, death—is a mesmerized state of thought. Paul speaks of "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Corinthians 10:5).

Christian Science does not shrug off evil as being simply a figment of the imagination in the usual sense of the word. It explains the *whole* of mortal thought—including whatever images it embraces, limitation, disease, fear, ignorance—to be illusory from the standpoint of perfect, all-knowing, divine Mind. Mrs. Eddy explains, for instance, "Disease is more than *imagination*; it is a human error, a constituent part of what comprise the whole of mortal existence,—namely, material sensation and mental delusion" (*No and Yes*, p. 4).

The fact is that there is no negation to God's allness. Mind is the only source of being, and man expresses this perfection. Healing that rests upon these truths disproves the claims of animal magnetism. As we refuse to bow to the discords of a hypnotic state of thought and accept man's true status as a pure and holy expression of divine Mind, animal magnetism becomes an obvious fallacy. It falls from any appearance of mystery, and God's allness and perfection are clearly recognized as the only realities of being.

To read the entire article, which has been shortened to fit this page, go to jsh.christianscience.com/animal-magnetism-is-not-mysterious.