

The house on the rock

(*Matthew 7: 24-27*)

“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”

These words of Jesus are found at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, “that divine digest of Science” (Rud.3:15). He was clearly distinguishing not those who hear spiritual teaching from those who do not hear, but those who hear and fully identify themselves in living practice with what they hear from those who, although hearing, cognize it only as a beautiful subject which is very true and wonderful and go no further.

We may think of a rock as something solid and static, but physical scientists today would maintain that it is a living, moving structure, and to Jesus it was certainly not a solid inert lump. He went much further than the advanced modern physicist because he did not hold on to the rock as matter at all; he let that go and saw it only in its spiritual significance as a symbol of the stability of Principle expressing itself in activity.

The theme of activity is introduced at once when he speaks of everyone who “heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them.” He follows this with a picture of a man building his house or consciousness on a structure that is rocklike. The emphasis is first of all on understanding his teachings and then acting upon them.

THE HOUSE ON THE ROCK

In Luke's version of this parable (6:47-49) Jesus speaks of "a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock." He had to dig deep to find the rock. To understand the teachings of the Master we have to dig deep, in the sense of studying what he says, in order to arrive at a rocklike, well-founded understanding of the Truth and Science on which it is based.

The earnest student may feel that he is not equal to this requirement. This is untrue, for every man is a reflection of the same one Principle and that Principle in reflecting on itself has every individual equal to its own realization. Therefore such a student is wise to throw out at once any opposing suggestion and set out on the basis that he can be what he already is — an expression of Mind in the reflection of intelligence. With this approach, if he begins to search the Scriptures and the writings of Mrs Eddy, he will soon find that he is fully equipped to dig deep, as the parable requires, and he will find for himself the rock of joyous activity. No longer will he be satisfied with mere surface readings of the great truths taught and enacted by the Master and by the discoverer of Christian Science. The parable gives a clear warning to those of us who miss the opportunity of profiting by these truths through playing around on their surface without an attempt at understanding. If we accept Jesus' teachings in a soothing way which leaves us self-complacent, this acts in a soporific manner upon the intellect, so that when problems arise — when the rain descends and the floods come and the winds blow — we have no stability or true understanding, but only a faith, and a blind faith at that. This is certain to lead to that faith being swept aside and destroyed. Our house of consciousness is built only on sand and cannot withstand the stresses imposed by the tides of general human thought.

As a symbol, a rock stands for ideas which cohere and form one whole. A few fragmentary ideas isolated from each other or disconnected statements of truth do not constitute a rock. The integration and coherence are vital. Without them there is no rock. Break up a rock and you have sand. Ideas not seen as held together by their Principle become mere sand. In fact, sand is only the rock of Truth continually pounded by seas of mortal reasoning and assumptions until

it disintegrates in our thought.

Anything that is not held together by Principle and Science eventually breaks up. A good thought has to be Principle-affirming or it can be lost. Mrs Eddy brings this out clearly when she says, "Principle is not to be found in fragmentary ideas" (S&H 302:1); "Truth is not fragmentary, disconnected, unsystematic, but concentrated and immovably fixed in Principle" (Ret.93:11-13); "Christian Science, understood, coincides with the Scriptures, and sustains logically and demonstratively every point it presents. Otherwise it would not be Science, and could not present its proofs" (S&H 358:9-13). Where there is Principle, there is Science and proof and everything holds together and demonstrates itself. That is the rock. If there is no Principle, there is no Science and no proof, and that is the sand. No man can build on that sand. The strength of $2+2=4$ in the realm of mathematics is that as a part of that whole it cannot possibly be shaken, dislodged, or become non-operational, and it is the same with every idea in Science.

Mrs Eddy realized that after the original revelation of Life in and of Spirit which came to her it was imperative that she should find the Science which would safeguard that revelation for herself and for others. So is it not plain that we should refresh ourselves continually with the Science which makes a truth true and makes it inevitable and factual to us? Unless we keep ourselves active in that Science, we can lose its beatitudes in awful platitudes and be overwhelmed by any challenge.

In answer to the question "How can I progress most rapidly in the understanding of Christian Science?" Mrs Eddy begins with the words, "Study thoroughly the letter and imbibe the spirit" (S&H 495: 25-28). This parable which closes the Sermon on the Mount indicates the necessity of this twofold activity, for to imbibe the spirit of the letter in any scientific process we must practise what is indicated in the letter.

When Jesus asked his disciples, "whom say ye that I am?" Peter replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus then declared, "upon this rock I will build my church." On the rock of

active understanding he was going to found his church, or “structure of Truth and Love” (S&H 583:12). What he commended was the living activity and certainty based on Principle, Life, stabilized in Principle but never static. Peter’s pronouncement brings out the whole tone of this parable: first of all in his recognition that Jesus’ teachings were the Christ, Truth, and secondly, that they were active here and now (they were “the Son of the *living* God”). Through watching Jesus, Peter had seen that the *living* God gives man something to *live*, and that is the heart of the matter.

When we live individually the demands of Principle, we find in so doing that that Principle is Love and is truly a live Principle, not the inert foundation of a theory which, however correct, makes no demands on man for its demonstration and proof. Science requires proof, and the proof is us or it is nowhere as far as we are concerned. Mrs Eddy wrote, “I first proved to myself, not by ‘words,’ — these afford no proof, — but by demonstration of Christian Science, that its Principle is divine. All must go and do likewise” (Mis.338:5-8).

$2+2=4$ is an expression of an arithmetical idea. The child can learn it and declare it and even write it on his paper and think how nice it is, but until he has had occasion to use it in practical demonstration in his own experience and *has* thus used it, he is not certain of its factuality nor is he certain that nothing can dispute it. A great many other children shouting other answers than 4 to $2+2$ could confuse or shake that child’s thinking *until* his certainty was based on the conviction of experience. Then no matter how many children made mistakes or voiced them, it would serve only to strengthen his own conviction.

Jesus is saying here that if a man regards the Sermon on the Mount with all its directions and requirements as nothing more than a beautiful expression of Science, it will be quite useless to him when that which is opposed to its positive and beautiful enunciations comes into his life with its challenge. In the same way, if someone accepts the statement, “Love alone is Life” (Mis.388:10), for instance, and sees that the expression of Love gives purpose to life and watches it doing so in the lives of others, but he himself never identifies himself with

its truth and therefore never discovers how it would give life and health to him and also that it is Life itself in expression, then he never really knows it as a truth. But that truth once demonstrated as truth in his own immediate experience will remain with him forever and nothing will be able to assail it. He will know then that he truly knows it, and moreover he will know that it is the all-knowing Mind which is knowing it through him and as him. That is the rock. If he has seen a truth but falls away from it in time of trouble, instead of letting it demonstrate itself, it is a greater fall than ignorance of that truth, for it is the fall of lack of fidelity.

There is hardly a Christian on earth who does not recognize the work of Jesus in its glorious exemplification of good, but what is the benefit of that recognition unless he takes some aspect of the Master's activity, discerns its scientific basis, and then practises it in his own life from the scientific understanding gained from his exemplification?

Jesus shows in this parable that consciousness built on the rock of true activity, founded on scientific understanding, is not affected when the rain and floods and winds come, because it is not only based on Truth, but also active in that Truth. The rain may indicate the first mild suggestions of error, the arguments which dilute Truth to conform to some human or mortal standard. The floods may indicate that when left alone those suggestions can grow into that which drowns Truth, overwhelming our understanding of the spiritual by the apparent greatness of error in the world. The winds may then indicate the unhealthy and destructive angers which overtake an individual who has been slothful and feels the rebuke of this slothfulness, making him feel very far from Truth. "Let us disrobe error. Then, when the winds of God blow, we shall not hug our tatters close about us" (S&H 201: 14-16); when regret and remorse overcome us, it is wise to learn the lesson immediately and not cling to the tatters in our understanding in an attempt at self-defence.

It is good to remember that Jesus revealed that the qualities and strength of his teachings would only be experienced through what he describes here as the rain and also the floods and the winds beating upon those truths in the individual's consciousness and that individual

finding those truths so true to him that the rain, floods, and winds serve only to prove to him the integrity of what he has learnt — and the joy of it.

With Jesus there was plenty of rain, floods, and winds against him, but they merely made stronger the truth. And so if every day we take what truth we know and make ourselves really know it by practising it — and is there any other way? — then we shall not only be made strong but also experience the joy of knowing and feeling our own individuality, our own purposefulness, our own sonship of the living God. There is no room for emasculation or illusive vision, for dreamy absentness, or insubordination to the laws that be (see Mis. 206:14-15) in any form of scientific process and above all in the Science of being which Jesus taught and demonstrated, the essence of which is contained in the Sermon on the Mount.

If any man through studying thoroughly the letter and imbibing the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount cleanses his thought of selfish and limited human standards (designed above all to preserve “self” in a hostile world), and leaves them behind for obedience to Principle’s standards, based on the oneness of being, he finds himself on a rock of conviction which is unassailable. He feels the unwavering Principle at the back of Jesus’ words and the steady, consistent, unbroken flow of certainties proceeding from that Principle, whatever the storms to which the senses alone bear witness. Unless he sees that the Sermon on the Mount is an imperative command to abandon matter and materiality in all his reckonings and adopt spiritual aims, motives, and methods in its place, he has missed its rocklike quality — rocklike in the stringency of its demands, rocklike in its unshakable rewards. “Every man and woman should be to-day a law to himself, herself, — a law of loyalty to Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount” (Mis.12:12-14).

Anyone who has felt the joy of being a house that, standing on the rock of Truth demonstrated, experienced the rain and the floods and the winds of mortal opinion proving their own inability until they died away will tell you that there is no greater experience on earth and no other way of opening the gates which show men heaven and what it is made of. So we can see that this parable is filled with declarations of

good for those who act on understanding and without procrastination. Faith can become pleasurable, but activity based on understanding brings joy through the satisfaction of realization and demonstration, which is the only joy. Jesus referred to this joy when he said to his students, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." Everyone is entitled to this joy, but only as he individually earns it. It is his individual joy, and it has to be individually won.

Thus Truth engrounds me on the rock,
 Upon Life's shore,
 'Gainst which the winds and waves can shock,
 Oh, nevermore! (Mis.397:9-12)

It is Truth which engrounds us on the rock of Principle. For instance, the only way to love our neighbour is to know the truth of his character as the expression of God and to dismiss every false suggestion. In accepting the truth we are accepting ideas which must derive from Principle in order to be true, and so our cognizance of our neighbour is established on a rock which no derogatory views can move or disturb; in fact their rejection only strengthens the truth for us.

"The question, 'What is Truth,' convulses the world" (S&H 223:14), and this statement points to a means of discovering what Truth is. If we look at a flower, for instance, we find that it speaks to our spiritual sense of spiritual qualities which we love and enjoy. This truth of the flower discerned in the spiritual qualities it reveals engrounds us on the rock, on the Principle which evolves those qualities. This truth also convulses or shakes every belief that the flower is material, just as it did for Jesus when he spoke of the spiritual and immortal qualities of the lily of the field, which as matter would be dead the next day. So in the ratio that we accept the truth of anything, we find that belief in a material world is first convulsed and then destroyed. It is analyzed in its ignorance, uncovered in its nothingness, and annihilated, because it never was.

This way of living — of discovering ideas emanating from the Principle of perfection and then emphatically adopting those ideas in

our lives and in our cognizance of everything — does indeed enground us on a rock, against which none of the so-called reasoning of mortal mind can prevail. To live as a spiritual being through expressing spiritual qualities of character empowered by the Principle from which they spring is to live in a world where everything which symbolizes those qualities will surround us in everlasting evidence of the truth that we *are* solely spiritual and live solely in a spiritual world.

So an individual's rock is his living of ideas which are born of Principle and are therefore Principle-empowered, Principle-sustained, and in themselves have continual fruitage.

There is nothing hard or depressing in this work, and the more one does it the more one becomes accustomed to it. Then the movements of thought along the paths of Science become unlaboured and winged with inspiration beyond the human comprehension of the individual. The worker in Science finds that his work brings him into rapport with the divine activity forever going on; it takes him into a position where the divine embraces his thinking and carries him forward into realms impossible to man on his own, but natural when he has joined that heavenly flow. This indicates that his own efforts and impulses towards this end were in themselves created by that same heavenly source.

The rock of Truth is not just solid conviction or a stoical outlook that endures the storms; it is inspiring conviction. A man on that rock of Truth "upon Life's shore" is not merely standing his ground against storms, but is so inspired that he is unaffected by any attempts at opposition — he can just smile at them as he goes forward with Truth. He is not trying to *make* himself unshakable. He is no longer even shocked by the winds and waves, because they are not real to him. It is the living Truth that is real to him.

The great point of this parable is the promise that it implies. The purpose of true Christianity is not just to make you into a good man, but into the real man, and to give you the reward of this in the impregnable strength of manhood which cannot be shaken by the buffetings of this physical and human world, spelt out here as the rain, the floods, and the winds. Its purpose is to make Truth so real to you

that nothing of earth's experience can touch the certainty of your conviction, and finally the negatives of this earth's experience no longer exist for you. Your house, your consciousness, is not just something so stabilized in Truth that it stands up against all the attempts of error to shake it, but is a consciousness so convinced of the unreality of error that no error exists for it to stand up against. Man is not here to stand with strength against error, for he is equipped with the strength of reason and revelation whereby he sees that there never has been error. His strength is not in standing up against it, but in finding that it never existed to stand up against.

Building all our reasoning on Truth and conforming all our actions to that Truth, we shall find that Truth will grow and grow to us and the lie of anything existing in opposition to it will diminish until it exists no more. This applies to the student in every scientific process on earth and so it should surely be held in mind by the student of divine Science, even whilst he obeys the process given him in this parable and enjoys the growing strength of his conviction as it leads him on to that wonderful point where Truth is not only real to him but where error has become so *unreal* that it no longer exists. Jesus' fidelity to Truth led to the resurrection and culminated in the ascension. As it says in Isaiah, "This is the way, walk ye in it."