

The sower

(*Matthew 13:3-13,16-23*)

“And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand . . . But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them. Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon

with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

"Behold, a sower went forth to sow." Principle is the sower, and since Principle is always declaring itself, its sowing is always going on. It is not a once-and-for-all activity. Truth is ceaselessly being sown by Science in the minds of men. The soil is man and each individual man. Moreover, there is no variation in the sower and the quality of the seed being sown; they maintain the same standard of perfection.

Jesus is showing in this parable the different states of thought in their response to Principle's forever revelation of itself. This emphasizes that the state of consciousness is the decisive factor as to the results we actually receive. Truth is perpetually voicing itself, but the immediate effect on us is according to our receptivity.

The first state of thought is described as follows: "And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up . . . When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side." Truth registers only superficially on the state of thought symbolized here. We cannot ignore any of these states of thought and think that they could never apply to us, because if we are not alert, we can all find them very close at hand and influencing our relationship to Truth without our even noticing it. Any of us can become casual in response to Truth, whether we are reading it or hearing it, and we must be awake to detect and reject this claim.

Jesus says, "then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that

which was sown," and there is no greater wickedness than being casual. Vacuity is a bigger evil than aggressive opposition. It is better to be in contact with someone angrily contesting what is being said of Truth, because at least this is a sign that Truth is registering and doing something, than to be with someone who smiles blandly but is not letting Truth make any impression because it has no importance for him. The Master could heal the demoniac, but not the scribes and Pharisees, even though he could point out to them the obvious folly of their ritualistic beliefs and practices.

Casualness is impossible in Science. You cannot play with Science any more than with an H-bomb. Science is serious – not serious with sadness, but serious in its purposefulness. "All is real, all is serious" (Un.26:24). The "fowls" represent the flighty, silly, empty thoughts of mortals which give no substance to Truth and so do not allow it to have any effect. We can all watch that we *are* alert to Truth – just declaring that we are awake and alert in Science is not enough if we are not following that declaration with active obedience.

"Superstition, like 'the fowls of the air,' snatches away the good seed before it has sprouted" (S&H 237:12-14). Superstition might be described as the active aspect of ignorance. Left alone and unchallenged by Truth, it operates in human consciousness through the false education of mortals and prevents Truth from registering.

We tend to laugh at the superstitious belief that if someone walks under a ladder, breaks a mirror, has a party of thirteen for dinner, or does anything else which contravenes any of the multitudinous fables of mortal mind, he will have bad luck. But we do not always laugh at the belief, for instance, that if we walk in a heavy shower and get wet through, we shall probably have the "bad luck" of a bad cold. In all these cases the Science of being has to be brought into play to show that man is spiritual and does not live in a physical body in a physical world and therefore is not subject to so-called laws which have been created by mortals after their admission that they are physical and consequently mortal. But the point is that unless challenged the walking under a ladder, for example,

will subconsciously destroy or snatch away our understanding that good is consistently good and that we “live, and move, and have our being” in that atmosphere of good, and thus we may find that we subconsciously expect and therefore receive a bad effect. From having tacitly accepted the superstition, which in itself has no foundation, we create some happening from our ignorant expectancy and then say that it came about because of walking under the ladder! And it is exactly the same with the belief that the bad cold comes about through getting soaked. (See S&H 377:26-378:7.)

Superstition always embodies matter as its most important ingredient and unless matter is continually seen as a lying supposition, superstition can hold sway and can snatch away seeds of Science. The seed of Science telling us that we are immortal is immediately snatched away if we believe that this applies to a physical body, for reason and experience based on the physical body as being “us” deny forever the scientific truth that man is an immortal being. So it must be recognized that the admission of matter’s reality and the lack of a vigorous denial of that lying supposition create a state of thought where superstition reigns. Superstition cannot be dismissed casually while we are still admitting matter and thus mortal mind as having any part to play in the realm of consciousness, which is wholly spiritual. We cannot laugh at superstition under any guise as long as we believe that matter is real, even temporarily. In the ratio that we understand that man and the universe are purely spiritual do we scientifically and effortlessly challenge the myriad claims based on the superstition of mortal reckoning. When we challenge matter and see that it is unreal and never existed, we find seeds of Truth taking root in consciousness, unhampered by the arguments of superstition. We can then walk under ladders, get our feet wet, or find the calendar saying that we have well exceeded threescore years and ten, and suffer no ill effects — so long as we recognize that we are not material in any degree, because there is no such thing as matter. The seeds of Truth sown from the basis of our understanding of matter’s unreality and Spirit’s allness thrive in our consciousness and bear the fruit of goodness, directly opposed to the claims of superstition or ignorance.

Superstition is not an actuality any more than darkness is an actuality. Bring in light and there is no darkness; darkness is not there as something to be overcome. Bring in Truth and there is no error, no superstition, no ignorance; none of these is there as a real something to be overcome.

The second attitude of mind is presented like this: "Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away . . . he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended." If Truth is allowed to touch only the sentiments, the heart and not the head as well, this leads to emotionalism and Truth is not thoroughly digested and assimilated. The result is that as soon as adverse circumstances arise, the arguments presented are felt to be overpowering; there is no depth of understanding of Truth on which the student can rely to counter the apparently scorching arguments put forward by the so-called reasoning of mortal mind through *materia medica* or anything opposed to the onliness of Spirit. The only way to be safe from the withering blasts of mortal mind is to "abide under the shadow of the Almighty," where consciousness is so imbued and strengthened with spiritual reasoning that it cannot be moved.

We may accept some aspect of Science for its loveliness and attractiveness and then when an opposite so-called attraction operates through fear or doubt, our fidelity may not be sufficient to meet and defeat the arguments of sense and so we may give way to the rulings of *materia medica*, for instance. Our love of Truth is still there, but we may let the "stones" of many false calculations overcome for the time being our first love.

The stone has always stood for a line of reasoning. When Jesus said, "the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner," he was using the stone positively as a symbol

of the line of reasoning based on Principle which he himself employed and which is the cornerstone of all true building. But negatively a stone stands for a line of reasoning which is not truly reasonable but merely based on mortal mind, and it is often used in this sense throughout the Bible. We can deal with and remove such stones through our devotion to the spiritual – that is, through the depth of our soil.

Each of us has his own stones to remove, embedded through education, beliefs of birth, and so forth, but they are a problem only if our sense of Science is shallow; they are cast aside as easily as a strong plant pushes aside stones as it breaks through the soil when we see to it that we are rooted in Science. For example, while we may feel sure that we love Science, we may still harbour subconsciously a stone of belief that our forebears lived to a good old age; because we have almost made age a god and relied on the belief that we stem from a family noted for its longevity, instead of understanding that God is our Life, we may find that if we are struck down by some illness, the sudden fear that we shall not live to a good old age causes the whole edifice of belief to collapse around us and produces the very mental conditions which increase the illness. A similar kind of stone is the belief that we belong to a family where death has often come about through one particular disease, subconsciously inducing the fear that we shall suffer the same fate. Here although again we may love Science and accept its teachings, we could find that if this belief was not handled and removed, and we then thought we saw some symptom of that disease in ourselves, immediately the fear based on accepting the belief about family could wither inspiration and uproot our faith in and love for Science. We might wonder how we could possibly have been affected in this way after all the teaching given us by Science, whereas the point to recognize is that we have not removed the stone of family belief. “Disease being a belief, a latent illusion of mortal mind, the sensation would not appear if the error of belief was met and destroyed by truth” (S&H 168:26-29). The way to remove it is to realize that each of us belongs to no human family,

but is a direct individual expression of God, subject to no other but divine influences and laws. It matters not whether according to mortal belief our forebears lived to a good old age or suffered an early demise from some particular disease, because the only truth is that man has no beginning and no end, and this truth applies to them as much as it does to us. Man is the ever-present expression of Principle and always will be so, with no past and no future, but only a Principle-empowered "now." Jesus not only said, "Before Abraham was, I am," thus establishing the fact of pre-existence, but also on a human level asked, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? . . . whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Unless these stones and many others like them are cast out, our joyous reception of Truth can be suddenly withered by the fears produced by such beliefs being accepted instead of rejected—if necessary repeatedly rejected, until like nightmares they are completely extinguished in thought. The Master drew attention to the lack of depth of soil as the reason why the stones could stop the seed growing. Depth of soil symbolizes sincere devotion of thought to understanding the spiritual. The stones of human belief and theories founded on materiality would never have any effect if the roots of Truth went deep enough in that good soil. Those stumbling-blocks of human belief, whether based on heredity, on background, or on fresh forms of error in any of its phases, mental or physical, will all be taken care of according to our fidelity to our rootings in Principle. There were innumerable stones of belief surrounding Jesus in his day, just as there are today surrounding us, but his rootings were such that wherever he detected them he could remove them, and those which did not come into the areas of his cognizance had no effect whatever on his life or its purpose. We should expect the same in our own experience; our one concern should be to get our rootings right and keep them right. Then, if it is necessary, a particular stone or latent belief about ourselves will be uncovered, but more often than not these things will be dealt with by the very fact of our new and proper rootings. "The

prophylactic and therapeutic (that is, the preventive and curative) arts belong emphatically to Christian Science" (S&H 369:23-25), so we have no need to be troubled as to how the stones will be taken care of, but should devote thought to our rootings in Principle, through our growing understanding of the spiritual and all that it means.

Let us bear in mind that it was said of Jesus that "he made himself the Son of God," so it is not just a matter of accepting that we are the sons of God, but of making ourselves be it through strong spiritual reasoning, based on Truth and designed to subjugate and silence every one of the voices of error or materiality. In this case it is true that we are all of us "rooted and grounded" in Science in the reality of our being, but this only renders it all the more essential to get rid of any shallowness right where we are and become firmly established in what Science teaches. Understanding is creative, purposeful, and truly muscular — there is nothing flabby about it — and in proportion as we attain and maintain it, we find the strength which casts out error as unreal, and our understanding grows in zest and depth.

The third state of thought in response to Truth is described as follows: "And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them . . . He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful."

If we have a burdened sense of the troubles of the world and they are very real to us and we are always thinking of our duty to do something about them, then we can find ourselves fully occupied with servitude to a very thorny world with many thorny problems; it continually sticks its thorns into us to hurt us. It can certainly make Science unfruitful as far as we are concerned. The thorns choke the seed of Truth after we have received it because we feel that we have not the time — and even that we *should* not spare time — to dwell with the facts of Science, since we would be failing our world if we turned aside from it to obey the Scriptural command, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord." It may

seem callous to heed that demand, but it is essential if we are to be fruitful in Science. There must always be the human and divine coincidence, but that comes about *from* the divine, through the divine being very real to us.

It is bound to be a thorny path and bound to result in a loss of inspiration if we try to take on our shoulders the burdens of a matter-world as presented by mortal mind with all its lies. The Master constantly "withdrew from the material senses to refresh his heart with brighter, with spiritual views" (S&H 32:25-27). His attitude was, "I can of mine own self do nothing . . . the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works," and then in following the leadings of Truth he said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." That is the only right approach for the humanitarian in this world.

The "deceitfulness of riches" refers to the seductiveness of believing that we can depend on the supposed riches of personal mental capacity without resort to Principle or Truth. It is a form of egotism if we think we know better than Truth itself and so argue back at Truth and choke it in our consciousness. Mrs Eddy describes the right attitude when she says, "I will listen for Thy voice, Lest my footsteps stray" (Mis.398:1-2) — listening to discover what Mind is already knowing, not worrying things out on a basis of human intellect and personal responsibility, but being open to the acceptance of Truth, listening above all to its best demonstrators, Jesus and Mrs Eddy.

The parable ends with the fourth state of thought: "But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold . . . But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

Here thought is open wide first to listen to Truth and then to receive it with depth and devotion, and this is the recipe for fruitage. Mrs Eddy tells us that the good ground represents "the soil of an 'honest and good heart'" (S&H 272:6). Honesty is love of

Principle. The good soil is that humility which is the constant recognition of the onliness and wonderfulness of God, the “adorable One” (S&H 16:29). The true basis of humility is adoration, and it is the good soil because it allows the individual to long, to listen, to seek, and to find through that seeking that the only thing going on is God and *His* goings-on. We see it in the Virgin Mary and it called forth from her the words, “My soul doth magnify the Lord.”

In such soil Truth is quickly apprehended and valued, so that time, thought, and energy are gladly devoted to its understanding. And this yields fruit in three different ways. First, “an hundredfold” — this is the acme, and it indicates those moments of inspiration which bring an “out of this world” realization and experience, such as a musician may have when he reaches a sense of communion with the soul of the music he is playing. The Scientist not only can but should expect to have experiences similar to that described by Mrs Eddy in the words, “When I have most clearly seen and most sensibly felt that the infinite recognizes no disease, this has not separated me from God, but has so bound me to Him as to enable me instantaneously to heal a cancer which had eaten its way to the jugular vein” (Un.7:8-12).

Secondly, “sixtyfold” — through being host to Truth with all the graces of Spirit, there will be a renewal of selfhood or true manhood (the “six” derived from the sixth day of creation in Genesis when man enters the picture), giving a totally new outlook and approach to life. Jesus recommended this to Nicodemus when he stressed the importance of being “born again.” (See John 3:1-8.)

Thirdly, “thirtyfold” — “three” in the Scriptures often indicates uplifted and resurrected thought, and the supreme instance of this is the resurrection of Jesus, which took place on the third day after the crucifixion. So here the Master is showing that devotion to Truth will bring continual resurrection morns, a constant uplifting of thought to altitudes higher than previously attained. Attending this will be the joy of being lifted out of beliefs which formerly held sway.

While we may tend to think that the stony ground applies to this

or that sort of person and that the thorny ground applies to another such classification, we should realize that the parable applies as a whole, in all its aspects, to each individual and therefore everyone should guard against those attitudes of mind symbolized here by the wayside and by the stony and the thorny ground. In anyone the seed may fall by the wayside at one time or into stony or thorny ground at other times, depending on the prevailing mood, unless he accepts the purpose of this parable by being determined that he will be alert to these negative processes and see that they never affect his devotion to Science. In the final analysis there is only the good ground in every man — that is, his spiritual instinct and identity — and this will receive the seed, which will spring up and bear fruit. So there is no one so hopelessly buried in materialism that he is exempt from this. All have the spark of spirituality. What Jesus implies is that the sooner men acknowledge that they are good ground and live according to that acknowledgment, the sooner they will enjoy the fruitage of the seed.

The Master gave the Sermon on the Mount, but the extent to which it all registered at the time was not his concern. He knew that even with the best will in the world he would have been interfering with Principle if he had been worried about the degree of acceptance in his audience. We all have to learn this lesson, especially with those we love and those for whom we feel a personal sense of responsibility. We do not always even recognize that we are trying to put mental pressure on them to accept what we think they should accept and at the time we think they should accept it. That was not the Master's way. He never interfered with individual development, because he knew the danger of trying to direct continually another mentality. A pressurizing teacher may get a whole class through some examinations, but the apparent success may not be for the ultimate benefit of the students.

The sower does his job of sowing, but he does not go round picking away all the stones, removing the thorns, and so on. We can take the sower as our guide in that he scatters the seed evenly and well and then leaves the field. And so we should not be disappointed

or anxious if the seed we sow appears to fall into shallow ground, where there is initial excitement but no real impact, or into stony ground, or if it appears to be choked by the cares of the world. We should "leave the field to God, Life, Truth, and Love, remembering that God and His ideas alone are real and harmonious" (S&H 419:5-7).

After Jesus had given this parable of the sower to the large crowds on the shore, the disciples asked him why he spoke to them in parables. His reply enables one to appreciate this method of teaching, a method which ensured that because of the people's familiarity with the subjects he chose, what he was bringing home beyond the surface meaning would be bound to penetrate their thought in due course. If he had tried to give them the spiritual interpretation of this particular parable, which he *was* able to give his disciples because through their studentship they were ready to accept it, the crowds would not have been interested and would have dismissed it altogether if they had felt it had been imposed on them. They could not dismiss, however, the truth of what they knew from their own observation of the life around them – the effect of seed sown by the wayside, for instance – and therefore the deeper, spiritual significance of all this would eventually dawn on their thought. Of that the Master could have had no doubt. "In no other one thing seemed Jesus of Nazareth more divine than in his faith in the immortality of his words" (Mis.99:19-20), and this was because his words expressed ideas established in the divine Principle and translated into human language. He rested his case there and left the seed to its irresistible propagation.

Surely the deeper lesson of this parable is that we should rejoice that the first three states of thought and all that they suggest have no reality, no validity, no claim on us or anyone; there is only one Mind and one type of mind and that is the Mind which men call God, the divine Principle from which emanates all intelligence. For the same reason we can see that the fourth state of thought, the good soil, is ours and is us. The student should understand how important it is that he establishes in his consciousness of himself the fact

indicated by the Master in that phrase "good soil." He should realize that because he is nothing more and nothing less than Principle's expression, his whole being represents the "soil of an 'honest and good heart.'" He can then turn to the negative tendencies raised by Jesus, analyze his thinking, and accept that they are no part of his being. Thus he acknowledges that the vital seeds of Truth are not something falling by the wayside of his experience, a subject in which he is occasionally interested when he has the time. Dismissing this lie, he knows that he is vitally interested, that Truth is not a wayside subject but concerns every side of his experience of living. Placing himself squarely in that position, he will find that it is so, and then his thought will pass to dealing with the suggestions covered by the stony ground and shallow soil. He will realize that he has no time to waste on the theories put forward in the world around him by the news media, idle gossip, ignorant reasoning based on mortal history, and suchlike - stony stuff which, if entertained, would cause such a stumbling-block in his thinking that it would endeavour to destroy his true rootings, his strong convictions about God and man, Principle and idea; in other words, he knows that like the Master he can "walk *over*, not *into* or *with*, the currents of matter, or mortal mind" (Un.11:3-4). With this joy and strength he moves to deal with his own personal self - the thorns of self-depreciation or of egotism which choke the wonderful truth that his whole selfhood is the expression and presence of that divine Self whom men call God.

Adopting the threefold purposefulness arising from the meeting of the challenges given by the Master in this parable, he finds himself standing in the stature of true manhood where he feels and knows that the Science of being as revealed to him through the teachings of Christian Science is not a wayside subject, but the whole subject with which he is vitally concerned; for that reason it does not allow of the stony reasoning of mortal theories which if listened to would weaken the certainties of his true rootings, the rootings which when held to give vigour and freedom to his thinking; nor does it allow of selfishness, the thorny stuff of self-

depreciation, "self-will, self-justification, and self-love" (S&H 242:18), which, again if allowed, would choke the clean realization of what he is and why he is.

Thoroughly dealing with the obstructive tendencies symbolized in this parable, he finds that his experience embraces realizations of Truth which take hold of his consciousness to such a degree that he enjoys that hundred per cent illumination and inspiration which men can find no words to explain; he also has that "sixtyfold" experience of the strength and purpose of his own manhood; and again he has constant reminders of the resurrection process, the threefold uplift out of various suggestions and inclinations of mortal mind which may have seemed to pursue him, on to a continual upward plane of reasoning. He has the joy of a continual flow of demonstrations, a continuous resurrection morn which confirms and encourages him in the realization that the ultimate perfection is drawing nearer to him day by day. These experiences give him a touch of what Mrs Eddy referred to when she declared, "To-day my soul can only sing and soar. An increasing sense of God's love, omnipresence, and omnipotence enfolds me. Each day I know Him nearer, love Him more, and humbly pray to serve Him better" (My.174:25-28).

As with all the parables of Jesus, when looked at properly and taken seriously, the student can only say of this parable, "How wonderful," and then pausing for the moment of Truth add, "Not only is it wonderful, it is me."