

The wheat and the tares

(Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43)

With each of these parables of Jesus one can only seek to show the mainstream of reasoning that runs through it. Every one of them is such a marvellous condensing of Truth, such a jewel of purity and depth, that light continually radiates from it as more of its facets are illumined.

The parable of the wheat and the tares offers great encouragement to the student and shows him the way to a continuous heavenly experience, instead of one attended by discouragement and dejection.

“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. . . . Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil;

the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

As an individual goes forward in Science or in any activity and is doing the best he can in the field before him, he is operating as the Son of man. The Son of man denotes the expression of those true principles of manhood which are derived from the one Principle called God. The standards of true manhood and their requirements as they unfold to him may cause the individual to become very much aware of the shortfalls in his performance. "Because God is Spirit, evil becomes more apparent and obnoxious proportionately as we advance spiritually, until it disappears from our lives" (S&H 207:2-4). Knowing his good motives, the individual may be surprised and disappointed at the tares which thus appear. They may become so real to him that he feels, "I can't go on. I'm no good, and there is no point in my trying to do anything in Science until I have got rid of all these errors." What the parable tells him is this: "Go on. The tares are no part of the wheat which is steadily growing and they cannot affect it in any way or interfere with its growth or fruitage. It is the work of the devil, or the false reasoning of mortal mind, to make you believe otherwise. It is only because you have been asleep — there has been a lack of alertness — that you have regarded the tares as having any real substance, even temporarily, and they have taken your attention from the wheat and the strength of its growth."

Because we are not one hundred per cent perfect now in human manifestation, our progress towards this, if fruitful, may reveal qualities which associate themselves with us through various beliefs of mortal mind, and which, being foreign to our true nature, will eventually pass out of our lives. Experience shows that with the growth of the corn and especially at the point of its "bearing fruit," as the

parable puts it, the tares often appear. With our growth in understanding along the lines of Science discrepancies in our character-expression are bound to come to light. The parable is saying: Do not be disheartened by the appearance of the tares, especially at the time of some fruitage in demonstration, because that very fruitage shows that you are on the right path. Go forward with your progress and your understanding.

When tares appear, the tendency with the earnest student is to halt in his line of development, thinking that he must eliminate all error before he can be qualified to proceed any further in the line of good. If this subtle argument were adhered to, the tares would become more important than the wheat; and in pulling up the tares the growth of the wheat would be retarded and possibly temporarily arrested. Discouragement could destroy the rooting and growth of true character. Therefore the student is told by the Master to go ahead with his growth in spiritual understanding.

In her first address to The Mother Church (Mis.106:15 — 110:12) Mrs Eddy spoke strongly and clearly about the need to recognize one's errors, to repent of them, and then reach to an understanding of good through freshly stimulated loyalty to the fact that "good is infinite, All." She said, "Mankind thinks either too much or too little of sin. The sensitive, sorrowing saint thinks too much of it: the sordid sinner, or the so-called Christian asleep, thinks too little of sin" (Mis.107:32-3). Surely this parable gives the answer as to how to deal with both these false tendencies. First recognize and identify clearly the tares, the errors, and immediately realize that they are the work of mortal mind and not inherent in the individual ("An enemy hath done this"); then just as immediately and without further delay (there are not "yet four months, and then cometh harvest," as Jesus said) move over to harvesting the specific truths about which the errors are lies — "by reversal, errors serve as waymarks to the one Mind" (S&H 267:24). This will always result in the tares being bound into their native nothingness and the consequent healthy rejoicing of the student.

And so we should all have an honest admission of the inconsis-

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tencies in our character-expression, but instead of concentrating thought on them as realities, we should have a much keener discernment of our growth Spiritward and the inspiration this brings. Growth "is the eternal mandate of Mind" (S&H 520:26) and no one can avoid this; it is a law of being throughout eternity.

The recognition of an error *as* an error — that is, without a vestige of reality — is, according to Science, the beginning of its annihilation. "Error found out is two-thirds destroyed, and the last third pierces itself" (Mis. 355:13-15). This healthy attitude of mind is what the parable points to as the right one, for it does say that the tares were noticed and not ignored, but it then underlines that they must not be realities to the extent of our thinking that they could interfere with the growth of the corn; they should be seen as powerless, able only to work out their own extermination. In the meantime the job of the student is to press on with growth in Science, with continual emphasis on the fruitage to which this entitles him.

Humanly it is true that in the ratio of our progress errors are uncovered and will appear to be magnified, and at this point the earnest student often forsakes this progress through his feeling that until the errors are dealt with he cannot make that progress. This inclination must be wrong because it goes against the teaching of the Master in this parable and against the teaching of Science in that it makes error real and substantial before calling upon the student to root it out. This attitude ensures failure since it is non-scientific, for it is impossible to destroy anything that is real. According to the method outlined by Jesus in this parable we lessen the reality of error by cultivating our growth Spiritward, towards what he calls "the time of harvest" — that is, towards the realization of our own goodness as the son of God, or expression of Principle. How often the endeavour to get rid of a fault in character-expression on the basis of admitting its reality and then trying to overcome it through human goodness or will-power results in the error becoming more real to us and more stubborn and our efforts increasingly disappointing. Therefore we should watch against the inclination to do this and follow the instructions given in this parable, heeding not the human cry, "You

must destroy error before you can reach to good," for obviously only by reaching towards good in any form of science do the errors which may have appeared in our performance decrease, until they are finally annihilated.

If a mathematician looked over the shoulder of a small boy doing a sum in arithmetic and saw written down $2+2=5$, the only thing it would spark off in his mind would be $2+2=4$. The point to bear in mind is that he would not have to go through a process of correction in his thinking, for when he looked at the computation as it appeared to the senses, nothing else would register with him but $2+2=4$. He could of course help the small boy if asked to do so, but from his standpoint the impact would be of the manifestation there in front of him of the science which controlled his thinking. And so when we "let this Mind be in [us], which was also in Christ Jesus," we shall, like him, behold "in Science the perfect man," who will appear to us "where sinning mortal man appears to mortals" (S&H 476:32-2). We shall find that without effort we shall be spiritually scientific and that whatever manifestation of error presents itself, it will only quicken in our thought the truth of which it is the supposititious opposite. We shall not seek a reason for the tares or how they came into being, because to us they will not be there, but only "the works of God" being made manifest. Whenever we do come to this Christ attitude, we shall heal the sick as Jesus healed, for through our understanding we shall release the consciousness of the individual concerned to express itself as it really is; when the truth and the truth alone occupies fully the consciousness of one individual, all that comes within the radius of that consciousness finds itself freed from the lies which hampered its expression. This was a continual experience with Jesus, for he left everything to "the time of harvest," but that time was always present with him, as he indicated when he said on another occasion, "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest."

We should always bear in mind that the tares are fundamentally nothing to do with any of us, but are the result of the false education

of mortal mind. Our course should be to take education from the divine Mind and not stay back. We must "let the dead bury their dead," and follow the Christ ideal to the best of our ability.

"Leaving the seed of Truth to its own vitality, it propagates: the tares cannot hinder it" (Mis.111:15-16). This parable shows the importance not only of non-interference with what Principle is doing, but also of seeing that Principle is working and of intelligent acquiescence in that operation, rejoicing with Principle in what it is doing for each and every one of us.

Because Principle has its own way of working things out, it is wrong to interfere with those ways on the basis of human judgment. How often parents with the best will in the world have tried to root out the evil that has appeared to them in their child, and in so doing have not seen what Principle is doing for that child. They have finally come to accept that Principle's ways are far more thorough than anything the human mind could outline or devise. No man can say to Principle, "What doest thou?" We cannot always see how Principle works, but have to learn to admit that Principle is doing its work and will not suffer interference. It cannot be thwarted in that work and it is not up to us to see something thwarting it, but rather to see that there is nothing which can possibly thwart it. That is our work.

We try to interfere in the name of good, instead of yielding to Principle by knowing that it is at work, producing the right combination of circumstances and the right conditions for the best growth and fruitage, even though some of those conditions may appear to us to be opposite to Principle. We should not go to sleep over the situation, but should accept that Principle has sown the seed and is doing the work. It will "overturn, overturn, overturn . . . until he come whose right it is." To Principle there is no enemy, no contender. "The greatest wrong is but a supposititious opposite of the highest right" (S&H 368:1-2).

It was the knowledge of this which caused Jesus not to interfere with any of his precious students. He must have been well aware of the tares growing alongside the wheat in the character of Judas — of the "tares" of meanness, jealousy, etc., growing beside the good seed

which he himself had sown — but he knew that the good seed had its fruitage in Judas and therefore instead of remonstrating with him (as he certainly could have done, for we know his supreme powers of detection and correction), he was the servant of Principle. What he did know was that Truth could not but be triumphant; although the tares would gather themselves together and be burned in the brief agony of self-destruction in the potter's field, this he would never have allowed had it constituted a catastrophe. He saw that the lesson Judas would learn was a much better and quicker lesson for him than if he had been kept forcibly on the rails. (See John 13:21-30; Matthew 26:47-54, 27:3-10.) With Peter too and others of the disciples Jesus did not interfere.

He knew that Principle is not outside us — it is operating through us and as us. That is why we are all growing towards the time of harvest. The devil tries to tell us something else to discourage us or cause us to halt to get rid of that which *it* says is real, but Principle knows nothing of that unreality. If we follow the impelling good, we reach the harvest in continual enlightening experiences and growing realizations.

“The temporal and unreal never touch the eternal and real. The mutable and imperfect never touch the immutable and perfect. The inharmonious and self-destructive never touch the harmonious and self-existent. These opposite qualities are the tares and wheat, which never really mingle, though (to mortal sight) they grow side by side until the harvest; then, Science separates the wheat from the tares, through the realization of God as ever present and of man as reflecting the divine likeness” (S&H 300:13-22).

The Master tells us, “the harvest is the end of the world.” The end of yesterday's world comes to us hourly as a new world of greater understanding breaks upon our thought. For instance, when we accept that there is only one divine Mind and it is All, that is “the end of the world” we have lived in before. The world of minds many with all the possible dissensions and disruptions this entails is no longer so real. The fruitfulness of that realization of one infinite Mind is what causes the tares to show up, because previously we unthinkingly

allowed the possibility of dissension and discord; but our growing understanding of that one Mind will also show up the impossibility of those tares, and so their claims will become increasingly unreal to us and more and more impotent in our experience.

What the parable indicates is that *only* good is going on all the time. Mortal sense can manufacture and see error running parallel to that good, but he who thinks he should personally tear up error has made a reality of it. He who knows that there is no error in factual being is not disturbed by the mirage of evil rampant, any more than he would be by the shadow caused when light is thrown on an object.

When we have a picture of evil as very real in some situation and our first inclination is to take precipitate action to uproot it on the basis of its reality, our only and immediate reaction must be to see that if God never made it and knows it not, it is not there as a reality to be uprooted; and from this basic truth we should go on to entertain the angel thoughts which substantiate this truth to our understanding, until they lead us to the harvest of our own individual conviction that the truth we have declared is really true to *us*.

If opinions were voiced about our best friend which were completely un-Principled and untrue, our first and only reaction would be that they were lies and had no foundation. Then we would both allow and cultivate a flow of truths (the angels of our Son of man) relative to our friend and they would finally so occupy our consciousness that we would enjoy a harvest of even more wonderful realizations about him than we had ever had before. The tares would have been recognized as tares or lies and then left alone, whilst the wheat of true thinking would have effortlessly obliterated those so-called tares. Anyone who did not adopt this direct and clear loyalty to God would temporarily suffer from his admission of error as real and from his conviction that being real it now had somehow to be overcome. It is wise to bear in mind also that "our best friend" need not always refer to someone else, but may apply to our own true selfhood.

Principle's ideas are bound to come to every individual, either here or hereafter, but always in the "hereness" of his experience, and being Principle's ideas they cannot help but burn up the errors

decisively and enhance the beauty or righteousness of that which is good.

Once the individual takes his stand right up to and alongside Principle and its perfection, he finds Principle embracing his whole consciousness so that it becomes clean and clear, without a vestige of impediment. That is why Jesus ends the parable: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." It is a simple fact — and can be experienced by anyone — that all the weights drop away from him and all the mists disperse when he truly does stand with a feeling of clarity and certainty equal to Jesus' description of shining forth "as the sun in the kingdom of [the] Father."

When the tares are burned, there is "wailing and gnashing of teeth," but this applies only to that state of thought which clings to the belief that the handling of error involves first admitting its reality and then trying to eradicate it — an impossible task on that basis. Mrs Eddy says, "*by knowing the unreality of disease, sin, and death, you demonstrate the allness of God*" (Un.9:28-1), and so we must start with the unreality of evil and not with a sense of its reality. A man who puts on plenty of clothes to stand up to a storm and then opens his front door to find the sun shining cannot help but be disappointed. Some people so over-emphasize the presence of tares that they become disturbed and envious at the progress of him who follows Principle and destroys the foe of self-depreciation, going forward with the best he can, knowing he is loved of the Father. There are individuals who spend so much time watching the tares in others' fields of expression that they seldom if ever have the time of harvest or accept those angelic thoughts which dispel suggestions of limitation in their fellow-men. One of the signs that we have allowed Love's presence is when weaknesses in our own expression of Principle or in that of others become so unimportant that they are permitted to destroy themselves, whilst the good becomes so enhanced that inspiration reaches down from heaven to lift us to a higher plane. Mrs Eddy wrote, "The more I understand true humanhood, the more I see it to be sinless, — as ignorant of sin as is the perfect Maker. To me the reality and sub-

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stance of being are *good*, and nothing else. Through the eternal reality of existence I reach, in thought, a glorified consciousness of the only living God and the genuine man. So long as I hold evil in consciousness, I cannot be wholly good" (Un.49:8-14).

And so when Jesus opened this parable with the words, "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field . . ." he was saying, in effect, "Do it this way, have this attitude of mind, and the results will have the quality of heaven or harmony." He was like a master musician demonstrating the beauty of a piece of music with his instrument and through this activity saying to a pupil, "Do it this way and instead of having a difficult time you will find yourself in the realm of harmony which speaks to you of the very soul at the back of it all."