

The two sons

(Matthew 21:28-32)

“A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.”

Jesus was showing in this parable that a man's greatest resistance is the sign of his greatest acceptance. The amount and tenacity of his resistance spells out in exact ratio the power of the impelling Truth and foreshadows its ultimate victory.

The initial reaction of the first son was “I'm an individual and I won't be told what to do” and so he sent his father packing. But on reflection he allowed the rightness of his father's demand and obeyed it. When he felt the call and the possibility of what was right, he got on at once with doing it. Doing the right thing as soon as he saw the wrong nullified the wrong immediately. The second son gave an insipid “I will,” but did nothing about it. The demand did not register with him, whereas the “I will not” of the first son was the realization of what it all meant and involved.

Basically it is mortal mind which makes us say “I won't,” and that is because it feels and knows our acceptance. So we should be glad for stubbornness in the sense that it is a sign of acceptance. We can all look back and realize that the tremendous resistance we felt to-

wards some enlightening idea actually foreshadowed our whole-hearted acceptance. If it is true that the greatest wrong is "but a supposititious opposite of the highest right" (S&H 368:2), then we could say that the greatest resistance is but a supposititious opposite of the easiest and highest acceptance.

That was outstandingly true in the case of Paul. His bigotry portrayed a deep-down recognition of the sheer magnitude of what he was resisting. As the renowned Saul he was adamant in refusing to grant the effects of the ministry of Jesus and in fighting their continued existence, but this attitude pointed to his recognition of the overwhelming power of good which they represented. Being an intellectual he would not concede it, for intellectuality often causes resistance to a truth actually already acknowledged but too simple and profound for easy admission by him who is weighed down with the heavy armour of intellectuality. Saul, encumbered by this so-called intellectual capacity, resisted the truth which subconsciously he knew to be true and he therefore persecuted those who were animated by the pure, clean reasoning which possibly he called childlike. Yet because he pursued the line of his stubbornness with vehemence, he was led to the point where the truth he was trying to subjugate manifested itself more to him than to anyone less vitally interested. At last he saw the blindness of will-power and received a vision of Truth so great that he became the illustrious Paul. The immensity and scope of his original stubbornness had foretold the immensity and scope of his enlightened understanding and its universal nature.

"Science has always been first met with denunciations. A fiction or a false philosophy flourishes for a time where Science gains no hearing" (My.112:2-4). If a man says, "I don't accept Science and I refuse to do so," fundamentally he is admitting its importance to him and showing that he does accept it. Through experience he may become a better Scientist than someone who says he accepts it but does nothing about it.

The man who says, "I don't believe in God" has gone to the trouble of challenging the general belief about God. He has enough spirit to take up this position, and if he takes trouble in the wrong

direction, he comes to the point where he takes trouble in the right direction, and this will surely take place either here or hereafter — whether it is one or the other is of small moment when we realize that man is an infinite being. When someone throws a challenge in the face of God and even says he hates God, it is a sign of strength, not weakness, because he is not afraid to challenge all that he instinctively knows to be right. Instead of being shocked or dismayed by what may appear to be blasphemy, we should recognize the anger as a sign of an individual angry at his own lack of understanding and on his way to making new and profound discoveries of God and man. These discoveries will be more deeply founded than the superficial convictions of those usually labelled “good.”

In his reminiscences of Mrs Eddy a student who was in her last Class in 1898 recorded the following incident: “A child was brought to her with a cataract on each eye, blind. Mrs Eddy began to talk to her of God, Truth and Love, when the child, animated by error, stamped her foot and said, ‘I hate you. I hate you. I could sit up all night to hate you!’ Mrs Eddy replied, ‘My darling, I love you. I love you, why, I could sit up all night to love you!’ and at once the cataracts fell out and the child saw.” Mrs Eddy’s spiritual response removed the cloak of hate and allowed the freedom of love, which restored sight mentally and physically to the child. She discerned where that child *really* was in her mentality and joined her at that point through the expression of love. Such spontaneous perception of where someone is and the immediate joining of him must be one of the truest tests of love.

We miss the Science at the back of this if we think that Mrs Eddy was making that statement to the child merely as a Christian thing to do or as an inspired reversal of what she had said. She truly loved what she detected in that child which had caused the apparent hatred of the truth she represented. She loved the fact that the intensity of the antagonism was but the supposititious opposite of the highest love, and this recognition brought the healing. The spurt of hatred roused her understanding to see the true child and the true character which the child herself had not yet acknowledged, but which Mrs

Eddy's audible recognition aroused and awakened. Nearly all hate expressed by one individual to another is nothing more than the cry of love longing to be recognized, and Mrs Eddy immediately responded to the heartfelt cry of this child.

When Mrs Eddy wrote, "Wait, and love more for every hate" (Mis.389:16), she was not asking us to do this merely as a Christian act, but rather to accept the challenge that in order to love more we must recognize the true forces at play and through this learn that the only forces always at play are those of good. The call is a much deeper call than just to practise Christian virtues. It is a call to so analyze as nothing the apparent cause of the error, the hate, that we rouse ourselves into a fresh understanding and conviction of the presence of Love alone and its forever operation, maybe overturning, overturning, overturning, but always "until he come whose right it is" (see Ezekiel 21:27). The revelation of this activity to the individual is one of the greatest and most fruitful, and that is why we are required to "love more for every hate, and fear No ill, — since God is good, and loss is gain," for to have lost an insipid and inactive sense of the power of good is to have gained a true understanding of its irresistible operation for us and for all mankind. It was never a question with Jesus of not believing in evil as having any power, but a question of understanding that it has no *existence*, for if it had existence it would be bound to have some degree of power somewhere. The human constantly needs to be stirred to go beyond its own estimates of good into a deeper conviction as to the nothingness and impossibility of evil and the somethingness — yea, the allness and obviousness — of good.

We never really resist the truth. We resist feeling that someone else or even Truth itself is trying to drive us to it. Jesus never pushed. He said, "I am the good shepherd . . . my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." He was the great exemplar, not the great dictator. It was this which roused people to follow him. He did not interfere with their individuality, but awakened them to their own ability.

"The Ego-man is the reflection of the Ego-God" (S&H 281:10-11).

Man has that true ego and therefore will not be driven. When someone pushes him, he instinctively resists, because he must follow Truth of his own initiative, of his own accord. That is why he says, "I will not." But fundamentally he has recognized the particular truth and that very fact has wakened in him his individual ability and necessity to do it off his own bat. The Ego-man must and will assert itself and fulfil the truth it has initially resisted.

A man knows he is an individual and must respond to that fact. Any pressure trying to force him to accept good will consequently be resisted. Nevertheless Truth will inevitably put pressure on him until such time as he realizes that his whole being represents Truth and therefore that which he thought was coming from outside to interfere with his individual expression was really coming from within his own wholeness, reflecting the wholeness of Truth itself. And so the son's "I will not" was only the resistance to someone else telling him what inherently he knew *was* himself, but which had not been roused into recognition until the request was made. Once the father, representing Truth conceived of as being outside man, had been dismissed, the truth which *was* the son was found by him; in other words, he accepted in his own way what the father represented. He would have become a real worker in the vineyard, whereas the other son symbolized that emasculate insipidity which feels no disturbance at Truth's claims and so never truly responds to Truth. He accepted the call humanly, but did nothing about it. His brother rejected it humanly, but immediately felt the impulsion of his divine acceptance; in fact, the human rejection revealed the presence of that divine acceptance.

At the beginning of Jesus' own ministry there is an example of initial resistance. At the wedding in Cana of Galilee his mother told him that the wine had run out. His reply was, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." But she, recognizing that his hour *had* come and being a good mother, was the instrument of Principle in saying to the servants, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." And then he turned the water into wine. It was not a question of a loving son complying with his mother's call upon him, for we have to remember that at a later date when he was told that "his

mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him," he repudiated this sense of relationship and its influence by asking, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?" and went on to say that his only real relatives were those conforming to the same Principle as himself. So in his immediate assertion of independence in response to his mother's statement at the wedding he was first of all like the son in the parable who said, "I will not." But afterwards, as with that same son, the call awakened in him a realization of his own individual ability and his responsibility to Principle rather than to a human parent, and he obeyed it. As with all of us he could only finally fulfil the call in his Parent's way as expressed in his later statement, "I can of mine own self do nothing . . . the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works." It was the awakening in his thought of the strength and completeness of individuality as the expression of the Father-Mother God which enabled him to turn the wedding into a demonstration of this fact for the two people concerned. What he established as the pervading atmosphere was the only scientific basis for a continuing happy partnership — namely, two individual natures, each complete in itself, brought together by Principle in order to enhance that completeness by mutual recognition of it. This was the inspiring wine which took the place of the water of the generally accepted concept of the purposes of marriage, whereby each partner is dependent on the other for completeness. (See John 2:1-11.)

Any mother on reflection realizes that passion, anger, and resistance in her child only indicate a recognition of the rightness of what is being required of him. The disturbance is caused by the child feeling, rightly or wrongly, that the instinct of individuality and its expression has not been given a chance. If he himself has thought of what he is asked to do, he will do it at once. He resists it if he feels he has not been allowed the opportunity to arrive for himself at the rightness of the particular demand. Happy the day when the appearance of anger at its worst can only be seen and felt by us as Love at its best. And happier still the day when the full implication of Principle's requirement is understood and yet immediately there is complete acquiescence.

“Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believeth him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.”

The Master was pointing out that the so-called bad people recognized what sin was, whereas the smug “I’m all right” men saw no sin of which to repent. To mortals an undisturbing truth is no truth. Jesus saw in the publicans and harlots the disturbance which Truth causes when it is breaking surface, but he also saw that through their experience they were quick to realize the value of that truth and to go over to its side. Hence when John the Baptist came, showing a way in which they could accept Truth, they were ready to take it.

Jesus did not fear the devils in anyone. It was an expression of animality out in the open to be destroyed. He saw much more danger in “whited sepulchres,” or mentalities cherishing and not casting out devils. The man possessed by an unclean spirit who was breaking his chains and cutting himself with stones was at least angry with himself, unlike the Pharisees. *He* would never have crucified Jesus — in fact, he recognized him as “thou Son of the most high God” (Mark 5:7). That recognition of the potency of the Christ-idea and the realization that this dealt the death-blow to any claim to existence by that unclean spirit, or error, proved that the devils were on their way out.

A sinner or a bad man, so called, is only someone running away as fast as he can, and with all the energy he can summon, from a truth which is present to him and closer than to those who have overlaid it through a false egotism until its claims upon them are temporarily submerged.

It is better for the individual if he feels the irritation of Truth’s presence than if he has no feeling at all, for the discomfiture spells defeat to the claim, whereas no feeling spells out lies that are undisturbed, like a stagnant and filthy pond. In the ultimate that pond *will* be disturbed, for the ultimate for all men is the realization of Truth and that they are its expression.

Just as what showed up in the first son as stubborn resistance was really a symptom of the obedience waking in him, so the apparent physical evidence of disease in someone is a symptom of his specific waking to Truth. This is in line with that statement in "Science and Health" (418:29-32): "Tumors, ulcers, tubercles, inflammation, pain, deformed joints, are waking dream-shadows, dark images of mortal thought, which flee before the light of Truth." It is the waking dream-shadows or the waking to Truth which may be seen as the cause of the so-called physical aggravations, and to regard them in this light is very helpful. Because the first waking is bound to culminate in a full awakensness or responsiveness to Truth, the various physical phenomena selected by Mrs Eddy as illustrations, as well as all other erroneous phenomena, will inevitably be dissipated with that full awakening.

So we should never be disturbed by the upheaval produced by initial resistance to Truth, either in ourselves or others, for Truth is true, man knows it, and knows himself as Truth's representative.

All the parables of Jesus concern divine facts translated so as to become true to the human and therefore practical in their analogies and their calls upon men. In the case of this parable the translation is from the divine fact that the individual knows he is an individual and must express that individuality. When contemplating the term "individuality," it is well to remember what Mrs Eddy wrote as part of her answer to the question "Do you believe in God?": "He sustains my individuality. Nay, more — He is my individuality and my Life" (Un.48:7-9). The individual's individuality is therefore part and parcel of God's expression of Himself and so can never remain in opposition to Truth. If anyone resists this, he feels the spur of Truth and shouts out against it, but finally Truth is the victor. "Truth is always the victor" (S&H 380:4). Discerning the truth illustrated in this parable and the law it presents, we shall not be discouraged or dismayed by any form of resistance, and by not giving it any identity through discouragement or dismay we shall attain to that obviously ideal state of consciousness whereby we accept Truth easily and naturally and no form of resistance exists in our experience.

Whilst the parable gives the answer to anyone who feels resistance to Truth in himself or sees it in someone else, it should be recognized that resistance is not requisite in order to enjoy the acceptance of Truth. All that we know of Jesus' young student John shows him, from the first, accepting and loving the truth that his Master taught and also loving the human Jesus. This love never wavered, and ranged from the ability to be so close to Jesus as to rest his head on his bosom (John 13:23) right through to his complete fidelity at the crucifixion, where Jesus, recognizing the strength and endurance of his love, united him to that other individual whom he loved, his mother (John 19:25-27). And yet if we read Revelation, we realize that all this unresisting devotion and love turned John into the keenest analyzer and annihilator of error in its myriad forms. Therefore in studying this parable and the great truths it illustrates, it is wise to bear in mind that greater truth indicated in these words of Mrs Eddy: "Love is the way alway" (Message 1901,35:10).