

The necessity of right relationships

(*Luke 12:51-59*)

“Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: for from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time? Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right? When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.”

Because Jesus was the supreme Scientist, it is natural that all his statements, couched as they were in parable-pictures, should be full of meaning for the student. Mrs Eddy tells us that he was “the most scientific man that ever trod the globe. He plunged beneath the material surface of things, and found the spiritual cause” (S&H 313: 23-26). Here in these verses we find teaching which it is essential to accept in its full purpose, both as regards our human life here on earth and our spiritual life which, although already established, has yet to be understood by us more fully than at present.

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The opening verses read as follows: "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: for from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law". This appears to paint a negative picture of conflict and hostility, but the Christ has no negative side and can never bring anything but that which is of God, and so we have to look deeper for the real meaning. The Master was the great healer of mankind and taught love for one another as of paramount importance in human life.

There is of course a strong but ignorant human belief that antagonism within families claims to be almost natural. This is a subtle argument which the Christ-idea of relationship enables us to meet as soon as it suggests itself. The basis of every mortal family is the belief that man is a personal creator. Building on this false basis, falsity is added to falsity and there cannot possibly be lasting harmony. "The foundation of mortal discord is a false sense of man's origin" (S&H 262:27-28).

It must have been because this lie of material creation leading to discordant relationships was laid bare to her through the revelation of Truth that Mrs Eddy wrote that Christian Science "pre-eminently promotes affection and virtue in families and therefore in the community" (S&H 102:32-2). We should note that this statement occurs in the chapter "Animal Magnetism Unmasked", and so whenever the suggestion comes that the practice or acceptance of spiritual virtues by individuals in a family can antagonize others in that family, it should be seen as nothing more nor less than animal magnetism and one of the subtlest forms of reasoning put forward by mortal mind; it should then be thoroughly excluded from our own reasoning. If the human senses deny the fact of harmony in Science and bring up plenty of evidence to uphold their denial, we have only to think of the sunrise to remind ourselves that however emphatic the senses are in their strong and clear denial of truth in that area of experience we

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have all learnt to deny immediately what they report, because of the truth we have been taught to accept. So here the quick and thorough denial of that which is not true about relationships should be increased in the student's mental activities because of his acceptance of the facts of Science with regard to man's spiritual origin and parentage. "Immortals, or God's children in divine Science, are one harmonious family" (S&H 444:27-29).

If the claim of dissension between members of a family or in a community appears strongly evident and persistent in our experience, we can again draw immediate help from realizing how easily we turn in thought from the strength of the evidence imposed on us by the rising and setting of the sun. Because the truth is established in Science that every man, woman, and child is of the same parentage as we ourselves are, the realization of that truth enables us to dismiss the forcible suggestions given us by the senses with regard to discordant relationships. The necessity of this work of the Christ, Truth in our experience was clearly shown at the beginning of this discourse of Jesus when he asked, "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth?" He plainly set out the area of our work here on earth, but the joy of accepting the truths of relationship established by Principle in the Science of being is ours for the taking, in the ratio of our letting spiritual reasoning be established in our thinking and then obeying it implicitly in practice. Mrs Eddy wrote, "Stand porter at the door of thought. Admitting only such conclusions as you wish realized in bodily results, you will control yourself harmoniously" (S&H 392:24-27). This applies not only to "bodily results", but also to all results in the experience of the human mind.

Although these opening verses may present at first sight a negative picture, nevertheless the Christ is bound to overturn every misconception of relationship and cannot leave it in so-called peace. The Christ cannot help but expose the false sense of relationship just because it is false and can form no part of Truth. And so the Christ operates to bring "division" between father and son in the sense that Truth uncovers and uproots the sense of personal creation, whether it exists in the mind of a father looking at "his" son or a composer

looking at "his" symphony. The false sense of creation inevitably brings dissatisfaction and discord in its wake; if someone thinks he has personally created anything, he pretty soon sees faults in it — because of that original fault in his own mentality that he and not God is the creator.

The Christ could never come with anything but a pure intent — to bring the destruction of a false sense by establishing the truth, in this case the truth that man is not a personal creator but "reflects the creation of Mind, God" (S&H 305:14).

Surely in these verses Jesus is also warning us of the false sense of relationship between God and man, which lies at the heart of all the relationships which proceed from it. Every single relationship depends on our sense of God and therefore of man. The Master is saying that the Christ inevitably comes as a sword to destroy the effects and the conflicts produced by a wrong sense of the relationship between God and man, a sense which divides Parent from child and generates a false sense of sonship. If we believe that God is our Father, or God is our Mother, and that we are the offshoot of this Father-Mother God and yet imagine that as such an offshoot we are now separated from this Parent, there can be no peace from this earth-made assumption; the moment we imagine ourselves to be out on a limb, we are in some form of self-assertive battle with everyone and everything. So the Christ is bound to decapitate this false claim. "In divine Science, God and the real man are inseparable as divine Principle and idea" (S&H 476:4-5). When Mrs Eddy is writing about the false record of creation in Genesis, she says that this record "chronicles man . . . as having broken away from Deity and as revolving in an orbit of his own". She adds, "Existence, separate from divinity, Science explains as impossible" (S&H 522:8-11).

We may believe that we inherit qualities from our divine Parent, but go on to assume mistakenly that we are now a lone unit required to learn both how to express the positive sense of this inheritance and also how not to practise the opposite of these attributes. On such a basis there can be no real peace. In other words, any theory or teaching based on the belief that man is a lone unit separated from his

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Principle and yet from that position of separation required by this Principle to conform to it is bound to bring unwanted results in experience, until the sword of the Christ, Truth comes to decapitate its claim; through Science or suffering it sets the truth squarely in the mentality of the student and thus governs his actions harmoniously. This truth is that Principle and its idea is one; God and man are never separated, for God is the parent Mind and man is the expression of that Mind, which in all its godliness and perfection must have such an expression in order to have entity — which it certainly has. “Separated from man, who expresses Soul, Spirit would be a nonentity; man, divorced from Spirit, would lose his entity. But there is, there can be, no such division, for man is coexistent with God” (S&H 477:29-2).

The truth is that man has no power or ability or necessity to generate good of his own accord or to generate evil of his own accord. The sooner we accept this truth, the sooner we shall be freed to find ourselves as the very expression of our perfect Principle, with no possibility of being anything else *but* that expression, because there is nothing else except that Principle and its expression of itself in the perfection called man and the universe. All the qualities of manhood and womanhood which go to make up the individuality of man are proofs of that great truth voiced and lived by Jesus: “I and my Father are one”. Because effect is wholly the expression of Cause and the only means by which the presence of that Cause is known to man, all the claims of animal magnetism or error are aimed at destroying the truth of that relationship in our thought. Its most subtle suggestion is of the personal responsibility of the individual to be Godlike, leading him to the turmoils of egotism involved in calling upon himself continually to adjust his poor performance on his own initiative; in point of fact all the initiative has to be recognized as lying with Principle, and Principle’s expression of itself in the character of man has to be seen as natural and inevitable.

Certainly we have responsibility to our Principle, but that responsibility is to erase in theory and practice any sense of separateness from that Principle and to develop instead the freedom and joy of accept-

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ing in thought and word and deed the responses established by that Principle and also activated by it in our experience. The Christ Mind will forever demand this purity of being, and that is why it comes as a sword to disturb all the subtle claims of sense which endeavour to befog the unity and clarity of God's onliness and His expression in the onliness of true manhood and womanhood. Mrs Eddy writes, "thou shalt recognize thyself as God's spiritual child only, and the true man and true woman, the all-harmonious 'male and female', as of spiritual origin, God's reflection, — thus as children of one common Parent, — wherein and whereby Father, Mother, and child are the divine Principle and divine idea, even the divine 'Us' — one in good, and good in One" (Mis. 18:14-21).

The acceptance of our own true relationship to Principle requires the admission that relationship to Principle must apply to everyone else as well. Having let this truth become firmly founded in consciousness, we can go on to acknowledge that every individual is individual in his or her expression of this truth; we can then withdraw from human opinions about others and get on with our own inexhaustible realizations of individual relationship to Principle. In this respect the instruction of Jesus to his earnest student Peter is an instruction for us all, for when Peter asked Jesus how his fellow-student John should perform *his* individual part, the Master's response was to indicate John's path and add what was crisp and very much to the point for Peter: "what is that to thee? follow thou me" (John 21:22). A good gardener will be found getting on with his own garden, whilst also enjoying what he sees of the ways in which others do their gardening.

Whenever an individual enters into his own right relationship with Principle, he finds unbroken relationships with all those who are also in harmony with Principle. "Where God is we can meet, and where God is we can never part" (My. 131:20-21). In our common love for Principle we can never part, never be separated, never be at loggerheads with each other.

When this master teacher continued by saying that the Christ Mind had come to set the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, he was simply going

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beyond the claims of direct relation covered by father and son, mother and daughter, to show that even the secondary claims of relationship (such as those imposed by human law — for instance, between employer and employee in business and between individuals in any group engaged in any human activity) have to be dealt with in such a way that no influences are allowed to disturb the unity and clarity embraced in the right understanding of God and man as Principle and idea. The mother-in-law frequently sees the daughter-in-law as obstructing her special relationship to the individual she considers to be her son, and it is this possessiveness which causes the dissension between her and her daughter-in-law. A right sense of who is the Parent not only of the son, but also of them all, restores harmony, and that right sense of man's relationship to God is the Christ-idea.

It is interesting that in the verse preceding this Jesus says that the Christ will come to reveal division in the "house" of individual consciousness or experience, division between the five senses — hence the words, "there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three". The realm of the senses is indeed a house "divided against itself", in which the senses will never be found supporting each other. For instance, as Mrs Eddy says, "the most beautiful mansion is sometimes the home of vice" (Un. 52:25-26), "A wicked man may have an attractive personality" (S&H 491:26-27). In other words, what appeals to one or two senses — the senses of sight and hearing, for example — as desirable or true may if yielded to result in conflict with another of the senses — the sense of feeling, for instance; thus what seemed attractive to the senses of sight and hearing may bring discord and even dis-ease to the sense of feeling. If we allow the senses to rule in our "household" or consciousness, there is bound to be conflicting evidence as to someone's character. For instance, our *eyes* may tell us that he looks generous and open and yet we may *hear* how mean he is. In these sorts of ways we find the senses at war with each other in their evidence, contradicting and not supporting each other consistently. This being so, the obvious course is never to accept their evidence in any direction, but deny it with the true and unchanging testimony given

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by Soul-sense.

The next section of this discourse is again filled with instruction for the student: "And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time? Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" Here Jesus uses two simple examples of how human prognostications based on visual evidence generally fulfil themselves on that level. He employs these illustrations to make plain how mortal mind produces effects according to the beliefs which it has itself set up and accepted. His hearers must have known from their own experience that these expectations based on mere visual observation are never unfailingly fulfilled, and that more often than not things turn out differently from what was predicted by an easy acceptance of the senses' testimony. Hence Jesus' term "hypocrites" for such casualness of thinking based on guesswork rather than Principle, and his call to the individual to use his capacity to discern what is really going on — to discern the cause of all effects in the mental realm, or the thinking of men. Those questions of his, "how is it that ye do not discern this time? Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" show that he knew that every man has both the ability and the necessity to go beyond perfunctory reading of sense-testimony and thereby respond to reasoning based on Principle, bringing a true estimate of the result to be expected.

In effect Jesus was asking the people why they did not pay attention to the actual and ever-present Science of being in connection with matters of far more importance than weather predictions (based as they were only on so-called science unworthy of the name). In that way alone could they attain the harmonious results they wished to see, instead of allowing the false sense of relationship to rule their experience and fulfil nothing but general human expectations. Predictions founded on an understanding of the one Science of all being cannot help but fulfil themselves.

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“When thou goest with thine adversary, to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him: lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.” The Master has been showing us how to be free from going along with that which would destroy balanced thinking drawn from Principle and accepted in practice. There is no necessity to allow the “adversary” or opposite of this balanced thinking to take us to its inevitable conclusions and the suffering or forms of imprisonment which they impose. These sufferings have in any case to be finally eliminated by the eradication of each and every suggestion which we accepted if we allowed ourselves to be taken along this negative path. Ultimately there has to be the paying back with the truth of even the smallest error of thinking which we have entertained. Hence the words with which Jesus ends this whole passage: “till thou hast paid the very last mite”.

So in these verses the student sees the wonderful teaching available to him through the words of the Master, words which (as he himself said) will “never pass away”. Even as we have considered these verses, we have seen how their teaching has never passed away in any detail from our present experience. That is why his words should be examined carefully and intelligently so that we allow their great truths to permeate our consciousness, bringing us health in thought-processes and thereby health in every aspect of life. The old saying, “The proof of the pudding is in the eating” can be applied to all the teachings of the Master, but especially in this case where he shows that our experience of relationships depends entirely on our getting the relationship between ourselves and our Principle clearly established in our realization. So to accept this truth and then practise it must result in better and more harmonious relationships coming to pass for us. Mrs Eddy gives us the key by which to unlock the treasures of the many truths embraced in this discourse when she states, “You have simply to preserve a scientific, positive sense of unity with your divine source, and daily demonstrate this” (Pul. 4: 9-11).