

# The vine and the branches

*(John 15:1-8)*

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”

What Jesus said in these verses constituted his highest impersonalization of his work. His disciples could not abide in him personally, but only in the Christ Mind on which he drew. He knew that if they saw that all the qualities they loved in him came from his “branchliness” to the vine, they would be able to find for themselves those same qualities through their own individual “branchliness”. That would cause them to love him truly and also to love one another, as he commanded them to do, for immediately after using this illustration of the vine he said, “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you”.

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"I am the true vine." Jesus must have been referring to the whole Christ — the entire realm of ideas established in Principle and emanating from Principle — and not to himself as the human Jesus. There is no limit to the infinitude of that Christ realm. This was the same Christ as he referred to when he said to his disciples just before the human Jesus disappeared to material sense, "lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20); he did not mean that the individual Jesus would stay with them, but rather the Christ Mind which he individually expressed.

The Master very much wanted to show his students that the one presence they would always have, and the only one they would always have, was Principle's expression of itself. Never Principle itself — that they would not have. If anyone imagines he has that, he is merely leaning on something he *calls* God.

Nobody draws on Principle itself, any more than he does in mathematics. We know that Principle is there, just as the mathematician knows that the principle of mathematics is there, undeviating in expression and purpose; the student of mathematics works all the time with the Christ of mathematics, with some phase of the effect of the principle. To take another illustration: when we say "Spring has come", we are looking at the Christ of spring, as it were, but no man knows what spring is in essence or why it has come or why there are seasons. Nature does not make the seasons: it responds to something beyond itself. No one can define Principle itself. "Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live" — in other words, it is impossible to define Principle in itself. Even the definition of God in "Science and Health" can only show the Christ of Principle — not the infinite One itself. "Our highest sense of infinite good in this mortal sphere is but the sign and symbol, not the substance of good" (Un. 61:17-18).

Principle and its Christ cannot be separated. Christ is all that is or ever will be known of Principle. The Christ of Principle is all there is of Principle as far as we are concerned. "He that hath seen me [the Christ expression or manifestation] hath seen the Father." Christ is God in that it is the only known appearance or expression of God.

That is why Mrs Eddy refers to Christ, Truth. We may think of Christ as something separate from God, but the only thing we can know about God is Christ. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him."

It is true that Jesus had always so closely identified himself with this Christ that he rightly thought and spoke of them as one, but nevertheless we have to differentiate between the individual Christ as expressed by Jesus and the whole Christ on which he drew — that is, Christ, Truth, God's whole expression of Himself. Jesus himself distinguished clearly between himself as a human being and himself as the expression of the Christ. His sense of it was so poised, so certain, so exact. For instance, he said, "Ye judge after the flesh; I [as the human Jesus] judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me [I see to it that I judge from the point of view of Principle through the Christ ideas which Principle gives me]". He was called Christ Jesus or Jesus Christ for the very reason of his close association with and expression of the Christ of God. He was not called Jesus God.

The Christ is the whole realm of ideas proceeding from Principle, expressing Principle. The human Jesus adhered to that Christ until the entire range of his thinking was embraced by it and it translated him out of the Jesus appearing. When he used this analogy of the vine, the time was fast approaching for the relinquishment of the dual appearing, through his resurrection and then his ascension to the one being of whom he could say, "lo, I am with you alway". All this is made clear in "Science and Health", especially on pages 332:9-334:30.

Here on earth we each have a dual appearing — our Christ selfhood which is spiritual, perfect, and ever present, and our highest human selfhood, which is an interpretation of that Christ in a limited language. Just as Jesus continually held his Son of man in heaven, so we have continually to lay claim to the perfection of our Christ selfhood even while we are still feeding and clothing ourselves materially. What Mrs Eddy says of Jesus can apply to any one of us: "The real

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Christ was unconscious of matter, of sin, disease, and death, and was conscious only of God, of good, of eternal Life, and harmony. Hence the human Jesus had a resort to his higher self and relation to the Father, and there could find rest from unreal trials in the conscious reality and royalty of his being, — holding the mortal as unreal, and the divine as real. It was this retreat from material to spiritual selfhood which recuperated him for triumph over sin, sickness, and death” (No. 36:12-20). Like the Master we can have continual recourse to our spiritual selfhood and draw what Christliness we want from the vast resources of the Christ represented by the vine, on which he also drew. In the ratio that we follow his example in this, we lose the dual appearing and find, as he did, the unity of our spiritual identity.

“My Father is the husbandman.” We may think that Jesus should have said, “I am the vine, and my Father is the rootings, the Cause”. But he did not — he said, “my Father is the husbandman”. According to our normal reasoning the husbandman has no relationship to the vine other than to tend it, but how essential that job is. What Jesus was emphasizing throughout this passage is the importance of the Christ as being all that we know of Principle; the only thing we ever know of Principle is its expression, but we know the *presence* of Principle not only in its expression but also in the way in which Principle is husbandman to that expression.

In any sphere of life where there is Principle-reflecting activity an intelligent student in that realm would admit that the principle itself remains forever unseen and indefinable, but at the same time he would tell you of his certainty of its presence. He knows its presence, first, through the ideas which express it, from which he draws his inspiration, and secondly through its continual shaping of those ideas as they appear to him individually, trimming them to the shape which is essential for their principled expression. He feels himself compelled to conform his expression of the principle according to the lines pointed out by that principle. He is constantly aware of the ever-watchful eye and hand of the husbandman, so to speak, keeping its ideas on course, and he knows that he has to accept the corrections

of that husbandman. If he is fruitful, he feels the praise of the principle, but he is also pruned to enable him to bear more fruit or better fruit; there is no musician or artist who has not felt an impelling force pushing him on to something better in his own line and asking more than he has previously given in devotion to it and expression of it. If he is not fruitful and has no results which are principle-expressing, that unfruitfulness is cut away. Whenever anyone produces a distorted branch through going outside the principle, the husbandman causes that distortion to be rejected. The husbandman is perpetually present as a tutor, and a stern tutor if this is necessary to remove unwanted dead material. Any man who tries to stay with the dead stuff is temporarily cut off from the vine — he has come outside the vine and its purpose and is cut off by not abiding in it. He is outside the principle by not being principled.

Mrs Eddy felt the husbandman continually by her side. She called herself "a scribe under orders" (Mis. 311:26), with the husbandman shaping the words, the sentences, the paragraphs, and the chapters in her writings. The ideas she presented were all drawn from the Christ of Principle, but the husbandman saw to their expression. With Principle as the husbandman the expression of Truth in her writings was bound to be brought to the point where it had not only strength and clarity, but also all the warmth and appeal which would win the hearts of men.

The husbandman by which we all know Principle's presence is so close, so real, that we cannot miss it. If ever we try to express ourselves outside of Principle, Principle manifests its husbandman aspect by showing that this bears no fruit and through that showing causing it to be cut out of our experience. The more we advance, the more instantly we are aware of the presence of the husbandman. We feel Principle's presence with us as we learn to express its idea through our own understanding. If we as a branch of the Christ of Principle do not conform to what we are, then our Father the husbandman cuts us out — that is, we lose the strength of reasoning which proceeds from the vine of Principle. Then we have to start again in right relationship to Principle, and if we do this, knowing that it is the

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husbandman aspect of Principle showing us how to do it, we are glad to receive the necessary directions as we see and feel the upward path unfolding.

“My Father is the husbandman.” Jesus was perfectly clear that he was not the husbandman, he was not God. Although human thought may confuse itself over this issue, it is obvious that any student master who is also a master student does not put himself in the position of God. He says to his students, “All that I stand for is the ideal of this subject. That is what is important. Forget me personally and keep your eyes on what I am conforming to”. Mrs Eddy said, “Follow your Leader, only so far as she follows Christ” (Message 1902, 4:3-4). Jesus did not want to be deified or considered to have a special position aloof from his students; he made it plain that what he stood for and taught was where their thought should be focused. He was a “divine student” (S&H 117:16), as much as were his disciples, so in that sense he was like a master sitting among the other students; but what he was teaching was the Christ and it was there that their thought had to be centred — not on the human Jesus, who according to the Scriptural record went to sleep in the boat on the lake, was sometimes weary, sometimes angry, and so forth.

“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” Anything in our thinking derived from the testimony of the senses will prove fruitless and will be cut away. By what? By the very fact that we are the branches of Principle’s expression of itself, the vine. That truth, which is established and is active through us and as us, will throw off all our attempts at being anything else. It will clean out the resistance and obstinacy which mortal mind has tried to educate in us.

If anyone keeps in contact with the principle through its expression, its manifestation, in any science, he will find that it is purging him, clarifying and refining his conception and realization of it and enlarging his ability to accept it. It does not only purge him in what he has, but also increases his capacity to accept, which is one of the prime needs if there is to be greater fruitfulness. As he goes on in any

science, he has to accept, but as he goes on, he accepts even the advanced ideas with increasing ease, because he is more in rapport with it. Therefore any of us can realize the extent of our branchliness by the very fact of the improvement being produced in us both as regards understanding and readiness of acceptance.

Jesus recognized the right of the individual to be taught directly by Principle, and he did not try to step into Principle's shoes. He was saying here, in effect, "If you abide in the Christ, you will receive what you need from Principle to clarify your thinking". Knowing that his Father was the husbandman, he let Him be so. He was saying to his students, "If you look at the Christ and you abide there, Principle through your individual Christ will correct you according to your unique ways and necessities". The issues were so impersonal with the Master. He never tried to enter the mentalities of his students and manipulate or rule them. He was there to show them the Christ and to show them that if they abode there, they would bear much fruit and would also be continually cleansed. But all the time he left the individual free. That was why he could later stand without condemnation on the shores of Galilee and let it come clearly to the disciples that they had not been abiding in the vine and therefore were not experiencing fruitage. With his usual loving method he invited them to use their ability to cast their nets on the right side — to reason with ideas from Principle — and as soon as that ability was reawakened and they did as he said, they received the reward. (See John 21:1-6.)

"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." Jesus was saying, in other words, "I have shown you the right channels for your flow of thought and you have felt the cleansing which this brings". All the time he was giving them the cues for their safety and sure progress after he had left them.

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." There is no fruitage through personal opinions, but only through dwelling with Principle's ideas and abiding in their truth.

Nature teaches that a branch maintaining a flow from the vine all

its life expects to form fruitage as a result of its branchliness, and it is obvious that if it were cut asunder from the vine, it would be nothing; if it is not cut asunder from the vine, its fruitage is assured. The lesson is: keep constant contact with the vine, the whole Christ, Principle's whole expression of itself; and this is done in a straightforward manner by entertaining only ideas traceable to Principle and to Principle alone.

Take the idea expressed by "I love you": you lift it into the quality of a branch of the vine by realizing that the love you feel is not of your making, but given you by Principle; it flows from Principle and you recognize it as flowing from Principle and passing through you as you. You realize that your true purpose in life is to be this branch through which Principle has its fruitage and by which it is glorified.

"I am the vine, ye are the branches." Jesus himself as Jesus was as much a branch as each of the disciples; he abode in the Christ and for that reason bore fruit. Because of his own continual experience of this, he knew and taught that it was equally true for his disciples and for all men — there was no doubt about the Science of it. He drew on the whole manifestation of God to express his own Christhood, and we are in the same position. Because we *are* branches, we must keep that truth alive in our consciousness. We do this by recognizing the source of our branchliness, which is the Christ, the whole Christ, defined by Mrs Eddy as the "divine manifestation of God" (S&H 583:10), and by drawing from that Christ, Truth. Thereby we abide in the vine as branches of it.

The vine and its branches are one and are equally important, although they have distinct functions in their unity. We are branches maintained by that vine, for we are inseparable from it. The vine is God's expression of Himself and we are part and parcel of that expression, but we can realize this only by maintaining a ceaseless flow of ideas from that Christ, Truth. The Christ is the whole realm of consciousness which emanates from Principle and we can entertain that consciousness as our own and as us. In other words, we can keep our thinking filled with ideas which are Principle-based and Principle-endowed. Keeping our minds filled with ideas derived from this vine,

this whole expression of God, we are the branches; and we are fruitful in the ratio that those ideas are reflected by us to the exclusion of anything which does not proceed from the vine.

At the point at which he was speaking Jesus had not fully attained to the Christ. He was still conscious of himself as a branch drawing everything from the vine, but by becoming a perfect branch (that is, wholly expressing the vine, the Christ), there became no difference between him as a branch, or Jesus, and the vine itself, the Christ Mind which he expressed. He was finally the same as the vine, and that was at the point of the ascension. This must be our aim, and it is an activity which can go on in our experience continuously in growing measures of ascension above the material.

When we abide in the vine with complete fidelity and naturalness and even the need for symbols goes, then we too shall be able to say, "I am the vine", the Christ consciousness individually expressed, and to all the ideas we have we shall be able to say, "ye are the branches".

This Christ consciousness, this whole expression of Principle, is as available to us as it was to Jesus. It was only his whole fidelity and consecration to that consciousness which differentiated him in experience from ourselves, but even so, we can here and now let ideas derived from this divine source possess our thought, and we can develop this until there is no room for any theory based on the senses; at such time we shall have the same Mind "which was also in Christ Jesus". It is as possible for the individual to entertain ideas solely based on Truth, in increasing measure with increasingly good results, as it is possible for a mathematician, starting with the ideas of simple arithmetic, to develop them in increasing measure in the realm of the science of mathematics and with increasingly good results. It is a matter of the acceptance, not the manufacture, of ideas divinely established and already present. They become more and more attractive as we grow closer to them through the devotion and spiritual determination so clearly demonstrated in the life of Jesus.

If you spoke to any thinking, faithful student of any of the human sciences, which in their symbolic expression do symbolize the divine Principle, he would tell you that as he went on he became more and

more attracted to the ideas given to him and that his study became less and less arduous and increasingly inspirational. If this is so in the experience of men when they become servants of any scientific process, how much more must it be so with us in relation to the Science of all being, since our whole natural selfhood is indeed a branch of that vine of infinite goodness radiating from Principle.

“He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” The vine stands for the idea of perfection, and you just where you are at this and indeed in every moment are a branch of that idea. If you want to be fruitful in the realm where you need such fruitfulness (for instance, in healing), it is essential to remain with the true idea of yourself, your Christ selfhood.

In mathematics the principle has its Christ, which is the system of mathematics, and you as a student accept that you must remain in that vine here on earth. Even a child expects and receives fruitage immediately in mathematics. His sums come right in proportion as he abides in the vine of mathematics, and so he is blessed with health and harmony in that sphere. Getting his sums right is his present interpretation of the ideal of mathematics, and then as he becomes more and more devoted to the mathematical idea, he goes on to its more advanced metaphysical aspects.

Jesus had already said to his disciples, “He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father”. What he was saying was that he who understands the Christ on which he drew will do the works that he did (healing the sick, raising the dead, and so on) and will also do “greater works” — not greater than Jesus, but as he proceeds along the same Christ path as Jesus followed he will do the greater works which Jesus himself has gone on to do as his “I” has gone higher and higher in the Christ realization. And so we shall come to the point where, like Jesus after the resurrection, we have outdistanced the need to heal the body in order to express consciousness in the realm of ideas, uncontaminated by anything human. This is the Shekinah to which Mrs Eddy refers when she says that “the

anchor of hope must be cast beyond the veil of matter into the Shekinah into which Jesus has passed before us" (S&H 40:32-2).

We accept this quite naturally in mathematics. The small child forms his numerals distinctly and neatly and gives this much time and attention. Later he may just scrawl them, and later still as he advances in mathematics he does not have them in a physical form in front of him at all. Later still he does not even have those same symbols in a mental form to express his consciousness of mathematics.

"If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered." The claim of the serpent (and its strongest weapon) is that it can separate us from the vine, and cut us off from our branchli-ness. It suggests that each of us is an entity of our own making. "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Let the serpent convince us of that and we are no longer abiding in the vine but are out on a limb all alone. We must watch therefore that we never allow ourselves to be separated from the vine and never lose sight of the fact that Love is as fully wedded to its own spiritual idea as we are to Love. We need to be alert to this because right through the piece the serpent is saying, "Ye shall know more, ye shall know it of yourselves". We cannot know anything of ourselves. We can only know ideas of Principle. We can feel our true selfhood and the joy and strength of it when it is Principle's own knowing that we are conscious of. Jesus was aware of this when he said, "I and my Father are one" — one in quality, not quantity, because he also said, "My Father is greater than I". His natural sense of closeness to God made it natural for him to see all mankind as close to God and close to each other.

"And men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Mankind eventually uncovers the withered branches, that is, the fraudulent theories, teachings, and methods of healing which are not based on Truth, and will have nothing more to do with them. For instance, Mrs Eddy predicts that just as men have rejected the doctrine of the predestination of souls to damnation or salvation (once widely accepted), so the time will come when the belief "that both matter and mind are subject to disease, and that, too, in spite of the individual's protest and contrary to the law of divine Mind" will

be to all others as “evidently erroneous” as it was to her (see S&H 150:18-26).

In the light of this we need to make sure that we keep to the straight truth of Spirit’s onliness, for the challenge which this presents and the acceptance of it means that our thinking will never wither for lack of inspiration and will thereby always have an appeal to mankind. In all walks of life man responds to Truth — clean, direct, demanding — for this is the substance of which he is made. Interest wanes the moment there is a departure from the standard spelt out in Mrs Eddy’s words, “Truth is real, and error is unreal”. She follows that with words which constitute a warning similar to that given by Jesus: “This last statement contains the point you will most reluctantly admit, although first and last it is the most important to understand” (S&H 466:15-18).

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” This was not just the personal promise of a loving Master, but the declaration of a scientific spiritual fact, namely, that if anyone abides in the Christ of Principle, that is, in the true ideas of God and man, then when he has a specific need, answers will come from this Christ Mind in the form of a flow of spiritual conviction whereby he will find that the need is met. “When a hungry heart petitions the divine Father-Mother God for bread, it is not given a stone, — but more grace, obedience, and love” (Mis. 127: 11-13). Suppose you wanted health, for instance. Through abiding in the Christ, Truth, an influx of Truth would come to you, revealing as present the very health for which you longed, ready to take the place of some lying suggestion. In other words, when we abide in Truth, Truth so abides in our consciousness of it that it reveals the truth of our well-being with a clarity and conviction which expunges any belief to the contrary.

In mathematics we all accept without difficulty that we can ask what we will and be given it as long as we are abiding in mathematics and using its system. So it should be equally natural to see that if we are abiding in the Christ and what it says to us through its ideas, the same thing applies in that realm.

If we are abiding in the Christ, what we ask for will not be something material or based on self-will. If a man lives in Buckingham Palace, he does not ask for a box of matches and a few sticks to light a fire, but for something in keeping with where he is dwelling. So if we are abiding in the Christ, what we ask for will be the Christ nature. We shall ask for a continual expression of our true Christ selfhood and ask that our state of consciousness through conforming to the Christ will be such that it will naturally express itself in all that is right and lovely to us and to others. If all we are asking for is the expression of our Christ selfhood, then the human manifestation will certainly reflect this, and that reflection will include everything that gives us and all those in the radiation of our experience happiness and certainty. Mrs Eddy saw that "happiness would be more readily attained and would be more secure in our keeping, if sought in Soul" (S&H 60: 30-31), and our desire for a greater expression of the Christ is truly a Soul-inspired desire. In the Lord's Prayer Jesus showed us one of our needs in the words, "Give us this day our daily bread", and it is wise to note the wonderful interpretation of this in "Science and Health": "Give us grace for to-day; feed the famished affections" (S&H 17:5).

The beloved disciple John wrote, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us", and the best thing we can ask for is to acknowledge, feel, and know this love so that it possesses us and we "let this Mind be in [us], which was also in Christ Jesus". If we accept that God loves us, that "Love is wedded to its own spiritual idea" (S&H 575:3), we are bound to reflect and express that Love and so bear much fruit and glorify Love. In the book "We Knew Mary Baker Eddy: First Series" (page 74) Abigail Dyer Thompson recalls Mrs Eddy saying to her in conversation, about her healing work: "I saw the love of God encircling the universe and man, filling all space, and that divine Love so permeated my own consciousness that I loved with Christlike compassion everything I saw. This realization of divine Love called into expression 'the beauty of holiness, the perfection of being' (Science and Health, p.253), which healed, and regenerated, and saved all who turned to me for help".

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As we abide in Principle, and Principle in us, we have the will of Principle, the will of Truth, because of that abiding in the Christ. We could not have any other will whilst abiding in that Christ, and so when we ask what we will, we ask only what Principle is willing for us.

“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.” Jesus accepted the responsibility of glorifying Principle by doing the works of Principle and found the true joy of living in his response to that acceptance. So it was natural to show his disciples (and us) that all must do the same and thereby receive the lasting joy which no man can take away. The healthy child of healthy parents wants to do that which will bring honour to his parents and has no more genuine happiness than to hear them say, “Well done”. Man is the same in relation to his Principle.

It is not true that Principle is not dependent on man. Principle is as dependent on its idea as the idea is dependent on Principle. Their interdependence is made plain in this statement from “Science and Health”: “If there ever was a moment when man did not express the divine perfection, then there was a moment when man did not express God, and consequently a time when Deity was unexpressed — that is, without entity” (470:24-28). This being so, we have the responsibility, and the ability, to glorify Principle in everything we do, which is best attained by producing the fruits of expressing Principle in our life — just as a vine bearing fruit through its branches is what brings a sense of glory and reward to the husbandman. There can be no better feeling for anyone in any Principle-impelled activity than to feel that he is responding to Principle to the best of his ability, in such a way that Principle itself is glorified and made known as Principle to those who experience the results of his responsiveness. There can be no greater reward to a man than to know that he is doing this work and that Principle is conscious of him doing it.

Jesus, like a student walking up to take the prize or symbol of his achievements, was able to say, “I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do”, and then going up to take the reward, he said, “And now, O Father, glorify Thou me with Thine own self, with the

glory which I had with Thee before the world was" — that is, with the original perfection of his being, which he had expressed in the manner of the world and the practicality of which he had demonstrated for himself and for all mankind.

It is a wise man who endeavours to see to it that he has this consciousness, that he truly realizes that his Father or Principle is glorified in his bearing much fruit, and learns how to hear in his whole being what those words meant when they were made articulate to Jesus: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased".

The student should be vigilant to detect the serpentine argument that although he is abiding in the vine, he is not experiencing fruitage. This can only be a claim of mortal mind, because it is impossible in Science. No branch has the power within itself to bear or not to bear fruitage. If it abides in the vine, the impulses for fruitage are from the vine and the branch is only a channel. Mortal mind is a deceiver from the beginning and would deceive us in this matter. It is sometimes well to remember Jesus' words to those he would have loved to save from the false conclusions which were needlessly persecuting them: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it". Let us watch that we do not let this serpent father our thinking through suggestions of disappointment or doubt.

Jesus said, "the Father that dwelleth in me [the Christ consciousness of Principle which dwelt in his consciousness through his entertainment of Principle's ideas], He doeth the works". He also said, "I can of mine own self [as a branch of the vine] do nothing", and "my Father worketh hitherto, and I work" — in other words, the vine, the whole Christ consciousness of Principle, is ever at work, and anyone who maintains constant identification with that vine through having no other thoughts except ideas drawn from this consciousness of Principle cannot help bearing fruit. Under those circumstances it is not within his power *not* to bear fruit. If he stands in the way of his own ability to experience this, by accepting arguments which are

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completely un-Principled because based on mere egotism — arguments that the branch and not the vine is responsible for fruitage — he may not to his experience think that he has had fruitage, but that fruitage will have taken place; and at any moment that he opens his eyes to it he will find that it has taken place.

Anyone labouring under this delusion that fruitage is not his would be helped by heeding these words from “Science and Health”, already quoted: “If you believe in and practise wrong knowingly, you can at once change your course and do right” (253:18-19). And so by being loyal to the truth that Principle *has* fruitage and therefore we *are* experiencing it, since Principle is indeed the Principle of our whole being, any one of us can enjoy what is actually already present.

We must stand up to the claim that we personally can produce fruit *or* stop that fruitage through doing what interferes with it. We have neither the power to produce good nor the power to defer its manifestation or expression. We cannot stop fruitage being formed by Principle through us and for us. We should therefore admit the truth that we cannot hold an argument which could deprive us of the present demonstration of Principle. All false education is against immediacy of fruitage, and through ignorance we may allow this to thwart immediate fruitage. But the fact in Science remains that we are the immediate object of Principle’s understanding, Principle’s consciousness of itself. If we acknowledge this, we shall experience quicker and quicker fruitage, because we shall be allowing what is already true. In stating the tenets of Christian Science at the end of the chapter “Recapitulation” Mrs Eddy uses that word “acknowledge” six times, and so it is surely wise to learn to acknowledge fully and finally the truth of fruitage as the present demonstration of Principle itself.

It is a sound practice to acquiesce in this and to “rejoice that we are subject to the divine ‘powers that be’ ” (S&H 249:8-9) — fully subject to them, so that our only job is to maintain our branchliness. “You have simply to preserve a scientific, positive sense of unity with your divine source, and daily demonstrate this” (Pul. 4:9-11). No other outlook is possible in Science, because there is either one God

or there is no God.

The vine of Principle is constantly spelling out the perfections inherent in Principle. It is saying, "You are well, you are strong, you are immortal, you are loving, you are perfect now". You are the branch of Principle when you accept that vine's declarations and accept nothing else. The proof of your full acceptance is the fruitage that will be yours. If the one liar endeavours to creep in with any other suggestion, it is up to you to do only one thing and that is to look at those statements of Principle and in all honesty make yourself accept them and keep at it until you do accept them. At the point of your full acceptance, you have the fruitage in human experience which they impel. The purpose of all Jesus' parables was to underline what Mrs Eddy saw as the spiritually scientific meaning of the fourth statement of the Lord's Prayer: "Enable us to know, — as in heaven, so on earth, — God is omnipotent, supreme" (S&H 17:2-3). The prayer of the sincere student must surely be to know just that.

The path is straightforward. The student has to ask himself consistently of all the thoughts that come to him, "Are they Principle-based, Principle-empowered? Are they of the nature of Principle? In other words, are they good and perfect? If so, I will dwell with them and they will become my consciousness and in that way I shall become a branch from that flow of ideas which is forever emanating from Principle — I shall become what I am, a branch of the eternal vine. I will be alert to see that I am not led into a state of consciousness which is neither me nor mine". Mrs Eddy tells us, "No doubt must intervene between the promise and event" (Mis. 319:28-29). It is up to us to realize that doubt is a state of thought based on mortal theories and assumptions, none of which are true; it is not a fact of being and is therefore something we can expunge from consciousness through accepting the truth as taught by the Master. From a human point of view truth is also a state of thought, based on the actuality of being and the Science which it evolves; it is that state of consciousness which will allow nothing to abide in it but that which is Principle-founded, Principle-impelled, Principle-empowered, accepted by Principle and therefore by us. We should remind ourselves that

## THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

consciousness is a moving thing, and that unless we keep it moving in the right direction, we may find it moving in the wrong. The loyal student knows that it is only the truth which he must know, and that in so doing he must turn on and extinguish every lie opposed to that truth. Through doing this work he arrives at the position where the reality of Jesus' statement operates in the full experience of his being: "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free". Doubt is not a reality. If we constantly refuse to let it enter our consciousness, then, because it never was anything but an illusion, we shall find that nothing exists to intervene between the promise of healing and perfection and the event of it in our immediate experience. Doubt could not exist to God, where the promise of goodness and its presence are one and the same. Therefore doubt does not exist to man and we realize this as we stay steadfastly in all our thinking in the vine of the Christ consciousness. This is the story of the vine and the experience of those who abide in it.