**THE REAL AND THE UNREAL SENSE OF THINGS**

WILLIS F. GROSS.

From the [January 1905 issue](https://journal.christianscience.com/issues/1905/1/22-10) of *The Christian Science Journal*

In his endeavor to impart to his disciples some conception of those spiritual truths which were to him the eternal realities of being, and which he was able to demonstrate in the healing of sickness and sin, the Master made use of similitudes and parables; and it is said that "without a parable spake he not unto them." That these parables have been misunderstood and misinterpreted, in some instances teaching the very opposite of that which they were intended to teach, is evidenced by the radical changes that have been made from time to time in the various declarations of faith set forth by the different religious denominations in this and other lands.

The parable of the tares of the field is often interpreted in such a manner as to be made to teach the doctrine of eternal punishment. It is thought that the wheat and the tares represent good people and bad people, who are found side by side in every community. They meet and pass each other on the street; they mingle together in the business world, in the social world they are not separated; they are even found dwelling together under the same roof, apparently in peace and harmony. But this condition of affairs is one which, for some reason, is suffered to be so now, and it is argued that there will come a time of separation. The good people will enter heaven to the enjoyment of eternal life, while the bad people will be consigned to a place of everlasting punishment.

If this is the correct interpretation of the parable, it would seem to teach that the now almost entirely rejected doctrine of foreordination and predestination clearly sets forth the divine will and purpose. Wheat always remains wheat, and tares can never be anything else than tares. In no way is it possible for one to become the other. Then, according to this interpretation, it would not be possible for the wicked man to turn from his evil ways and live, as he is repeatedly exhorted to do in the Bible. The destiny of all the unrighteous would thus be foreordained, and the very best they could do would be to become resigned to the inevitable.

The fact that the Christian world has practically rejected the doctrine of foreordination and now maintains that salvation is for all men if they will but meet the divine requirements, is evidence that there is a demand for a more rational and more practical interpretation of the parable than the one just given.

Another reason for concluding that it is an error to state that the wheat and the tares refer to personalities is the fact that no one is wholly good, neither can there be found one who is totally depraved. Wheat is good, but there is no good in tares. All persons have some sense of good, but he that saith he hath no sin deceiveth himself, and there is no truth in him. It thus becomes apparent that the scientific explanation of the parable is the practical one, and it is also evident that there is nothing in the interpretation above referred to that will help a man in his every-day affairs. It contains no truth that can be demonstrated, nothing that makes it possible for one to work out his salvation.

The Master declared that "the good seed are the children of the kingdom" and are sown by the Son of man. "The tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil." Here is clearly shown the source and origin of the good seed and the bad seed, each of which brings forth after its kind.

In the scientific interpretation of the parable the wheat represents all that is true and real, and the tares signify that which is false and unreal. The sense of personality is eliminated and the separation takes place in each and every individual consciousness. The good remains because it is real and eternal, but the evil passes away and is remembered no more.

In Science and Health, page 72, we read, "Mortal belief (the material sense of life) and immortal Truth (the spiritual sense) are the tares and the wheat, which are not united by progress, but separated." One is a false sense, the other is the true. Of all that exists there is the true sense and there, is also the false sense. No argument is necessary to prove that the true sense of a thing is real and it ought to be as self-evident that the false sense is unreal, even though it is believed to be real. Because ignorance is deceived into believing the false to be true, this cannot make a reality of that which is unreal. The real and the unreal sense of things seem to grow side by side until the real is perceived, and then the unreal passes away.

According to Holy Writ there is one God. God is. His nature and character remain unchanged throughout eternity. The true sense, or spiritual understanding, of God is real. There is a personal and material concept of the Creator of man and the universe, but this concept is a false sense and does not comprehend the reality of being. Science teaches that God, and all that He has made, is perfect and is forever the same. On the other hand, the material sense of God and man is constantly changing. Every day brings experiences which in some degree fashion anew the human sense of God and man. God and His creation are not in the least affected by the changes which take place in human consciousness. When creation is seen as it is, it will be found to be real, harmonious, and eternal. That which God has made never becomes discordant, never ceases to be. The material, or false sense of creation is discordant and finally passes away. The false sense is consumed, but the true sense abides because it is real.

The difference between God's creation and the material sense of that creation, which is called a material universe, and the relation they hold to each other, if indeed it can be said there is any relation existing between them, is clearly illustrated by the difference between reputation and character. A man's character is himself; it is what he is. His reputation is what others believe him to be. His reputation is not his character; oftentimes it is the reverse. A bad man may have a good reputation and a good man, owing to misrepresentation and malicious falsehoods, is sometimes burdened with a bad reputation.

It is therefore apparent that a man's reputation does not directly affect his character. He who has a true sense of a man's character knows the man, while the one who is familiar only with his reputation may have a perverted sense of the man. A man is not two personalities; he is individual; there is, however, a true sense and a false sense of his character. In other words, the tares and the wheat grow side by side until the time of harvest, when the man shall be known as he is. The knowing of the man separates the true from the false, and nothing else can or will.

The Bible declares that man was made in the image and likeness of God, but among mortals man is believed to be something very different from the likeness of Spirit in whom is no sin and no power to sin. Mortals know but little of man's character, his true being. To them the mortal and material sense of man is the man, and he is believed to be subject to sin, sickness, and death. As a man's reputation is the reality of his being to those who know him not, so to a false sense of things God's man is believed to be mortal and material. God's man lives, and moves, and has his being in Spirit, he is therefore subject only to the law of Spirit; throughout eternity he dwells in the realm of eternal harmony. A false sense of man shuts out the true sense of his being, but the man himself is not touched nor in the least affected by this wrong conception; he is and must ever remain the image and likeness of God. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

God imparts the true sense of His own creation, but from evil there comes a wrong sense of God and what He does. It is evident that he who has a wrong sense of God does not know God and cannot see Him. In like manner, the image and likeness of Spirit is unseen and unknown to the mortal and material sense of man. The material sense of God is not God, and the material sense of man is not man.

Even in the material world, we discriminate between the false or imperfect sense of a thing and the thing itself. The student who looks upon the work of a master does not see the picture as the artist perceives it. His concept of the picture may be better than that of others, but it falls far short of that which the artist held and endeavored to express. If it be true, materially speaking, that there is such a great difference between the wrong or imperfect concept of a thing and the thing itself, how much more is it true that there is a great and vital difference between a materially imperfect concept of God's creation and creation itself. Be it understood that Science does not attempt to reduce reality to nothingness, but it does demonstrate the nothingness of the false sense of creation and thereby reveals God's man and universe, harmonious, real, and eternal.

To material sense God is unknown and He is ignorantly worshiped if worshiped at all. God is not the author of the material sense of His creation, neither is He directly or indirectly responsible for the discords arising in and resulting from this false sense of things. The material sense of being is not being, for all true being is spiritual.

Paul tells us that "to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." In other words, the material sense of life is not life, but the true sense of life is eternal. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

The material sense of substance, called matter, is not substance. Real substance is Spirit and "faith [spiritual understanding] is the substance of things hoped for." The material sense of wealth is not wealth. "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world [all there is in the material sense of existence], and lose his own soul [the true sense of that which is real and eternal]." The material sense of pleasure is not pleasure: it is error and results in discord and suffering. "At thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore." Peace, joy, and satisfaction are real and lasting. They are God-bestowed.

Thus we might continue to illustrate the difference between reality and the material sense of reality, but enough has been said to show the distinction Science makes between the real and the unreal and how it separates the wheat from the tares. The separation takes place in the time of harvest, and "the harvest is the end of the world." "The reapers are the angels." In Science and Health we are told that angels "are pure thoughts from God, winged with Truth and Love" (page 298). First the tares are burned; the false sense is destroyed, and then the wheat, —the true sense of God and His creation,— is gathered into the storehouse of human consciousness and there remains to feed and sustain man throughout eternity.

In Science and Health, page 300, we read, "In the harvest, Science separates the wheat from the tares, through the realization of God as ever present, and of man as reflecting the divine likeness." What but the angels, God's "pure thoughts," can bring "the realization of God as ever present"? Jesus said to his disciples, "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." To a finite sense of good the day of separation is far distant, but to the spiritual understanding of God and man the harvest time is now.

The parable teaches that the separation must be made, but it also teaches that it is unwise to attempt to root up the tares before the proper time. The time of harvest comes as the result of one's own growth, and the result is disastrous when the attempt is made to work from another's standpoint of experience. This is not a suggestion that one should be content to abide in the false sense of things, rather does it show the necessity for one to open his eyes and see for himself. To-day is the day of salvation and now is the time to know the kingdom of heaven within.

All truth is as true and as real now as it was in the past and as it will be in the future. The Master's words, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" plainly declare that it is through spiritual understanding only that man can escape the bondage and suffering resulting from the false, material sense of things. Only that which is true can be known. The false may be believed to be true but it can never be known to be true, for it is not true. It seems to be true and for a time mankind believe it to be good; its falsity will, however, be revealed, and it will be seen that it is not good but evil. Why should a man be content to live in the false sense of things when it is possible to gain the true? Why should he cling to the material when he has everything to gain and nothing to lose by forsaking matter for Spirit?

"The Science of Christianity comes with fan in hand, to separate the chaff from the wheat" (Science and Health, p. 466). Let those who are the grateful recipients of the blessings of Christian Science say whether they have gained or lost by this separation. They most gladly testify that God is nearer, dearer, and more real to them than ever before.

Since they have gained some understanding of man's true being as a child of God, existence is no longer a dream, rather is it a most joyous awakening to perceive the eternal realities. Man and all that belongs to him becomes more and more real, he does not lose his identity: he does not become nothing, but he learns that his true individuality is eternal.

The true sense of substance is more enduring; the true sense of life is sweeter; the true sense of health and strength is more harmonious; the true sense of intelligence makes the mental vision keener and clearer; the true sense of love is broader and more benevolent, and the child of God exclaims with the Psalmist, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." When the harvest is ended and the tares and the wheat no longer even seem to grow side by side "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." When the true sense of things is gained man beholds a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth (the false sense of heaven and earth) are passed away.