

A Christian Science Lecture entitled:
The Spiritual Elements of Peace
by Charles W. Ferris
given during the month of May, 1986

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Introduction

A year and a half ago on December 8, a worldwide meeting was called by the Christian Science Board of Directors and this was the beginning of a campaign on waging peace. Our lecture today is part of this campaign.

Of course a major reason for this campaign is the fact that the international tensions have increased dramatically in the last few years and that the two major world powers, the United States and Russia, have continued to develop nuclear weapons, which literally threaten the existence of mankind. People are feeling more and more deeply that something needs to be done to reduce tensions and improve relationships.

Our purpose today is to explore how this peace can be achieved. I'd like to begin by telling you about an instance where war was averted. And as we examine the different stages of this development, both the problems and solutions, I think we'll get some insight on how to answer the broader question of achieving peace.

The seeds of this conflict that I'm referring to had been sown some years earlier. One side had been unjustly treated and the other side had lived for years in fear of retaliation.

Isn't this a lot like what we're seeing today? Aren't the United States and Russia in a rather similar situation? Hasn't each side felt it's been unjustly treated and haven't both countries lived in a cold war in which they feared retaliation from the other?

The conflict I referred to earlier had reached its final point of confrontation. One side was advancing to meet the other with its military forces prepared. If this sounds like a modern scenario, let me explain that it actually took place several thousand years ago. It's the Biblical account of the conflict between two men, Esau and Jacob.

Ingredients of Conflict

Now in considering any conflict, it's important to look at what the ingredients are in the conflict.

The first ingredient that we might examine is that of people having diametrically different ideologies. This seems to be one of the major aspects or stumbling blocks in the cold war between the United States and Russia, and it certainly was in the case of Jacob and Esau.

In their instance, each felt that he deserved the birthright and the blessing. Let me give you just a little background on this although I'm sure most of you are rather familiar with it.

Esau and Jacob were twins. Esau was born first, so he had legal claim to the birthright and the blessing. Before their birth their mother had felt a struggle going

on between them, and she prayed to God for an answer. The answer was that the elder would serve the younger. In other words, the conventional roles would be reversed.

So each side felt he had a legitimate claim even though their viewpoints or, shall we say, their ideologies, were diametrically opposite. The seeds of the conflict were sown by these opposing beliefs.

Now let's extend it to the broader picture today. Without trying to render a value judgment, don't we see the Russians promoting a communist ideology as a superior form of existence? No doubt most of us here feel very strongly that democracy and free enterprise are a more desirable form of society. But again, without trying to render a value judgment, I think we can agree that we're dealing with two diametrically opposing ideologies or viewpoints which each side feels it must defend and promote.

So we can identify a difference in ideologies as one of the major seeds of war.

Opposing Viewpoints Resolved

All right, how can we expect to resolve a conflict when each side holds to an opposite viewpoint?

Let me give you a simple example here that can perhaps provide a key to the answer. Because as we understand how individuals bridge ideological gaps, this can help us see how nations might bridge these gaps. After all, even agreements between nations are worked out by individuals.

My office lease had run out. I'd tentatively arranged

to lease another space in the same building, though I didn't feel it was a perfect answer. Rewiring had begun in the new space when an office opened up in another building which I really preferred. I told my landlord I wanted to move to the other building. He wasn't exactly delighted! In fact I might even say he was hostile. He informed me that since I hadn't given written notice thirty days before the termination of my lease, I was obligated to take the new space in his building with a continuation of the old lease. He was adamant about it!

Now here we have a situation where each side felt he was right. The landlord felt I was obligated to stay. I felt that since a new lease had not yet been drawn up and signed, I was free to make this move.

He looked at it from his side, I looked at it from mine.

We set a time to meet and before the appointment my wife said to me, "Remember that man is a friend of God." As I prepared to meet with him, this is what I thought of more than the specific details we would discuss.

We sat down, studied the lease together. It stated plainly that if a new lease were not signed, the old lease would continue on a month-to-month basis. In other words, at this point we each had the option to cancel at the end of any thirty day period.

The landlord conceded this point. We agreed that I would move and also that I would pay for the electrical

work done in the other office. This I was very willing to do, and of course the improvements could be used by the next tenant with no added expense to the landlord.

Also I was able to find someone to rent the space I'd been occupying and that person rented from this landlord for many years.

Now what had happened that allowed us to resolve what appeared to be directly opposite viewpoints? The landlord's viewpoint was that he wanted to keep me as a tenant as I had been for ten years. My viewpoint was that it was right for me to move to a building that would meet my needs better. We could say this was resolved because my position was supported legally. But, as you know, mere legal justification doesn't necessarily mean that the viewpoints are reconciled.

You remember I had started our discussion with a determination to see him as a friend of God. There's a Biblical basis for this phrase "the friend of God." The book of Exodus describes Moses' relationship to God, "The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend."¹

If I was seeing this landlord as a friend of God, wouldn't this mean I was seeing him as receptive to God's guidance in the same way I was trying to be receptive to God's guidance.

So as friends of God, wouldn't we both receive the best answer for this situation--an answer that would not divide but would unify us?

Also when I was seeing this man as a friend of God, I could expect that he would be related to God's nature. I could expect a sincere warmth and honesty as we sought to settle our differences.

God Supplies Our Needs

This may seem like sort of a simple example, but it brings out two important spiritual points that help us to understand how ideological or differing viewpoints can be resolved.

The first point is, it's God's will that everyone's needs be met. Generally differences of ideology are based on the belief that one answer is satisfactory and an opposite answer is not satisfactory. But if it's God's will that everyone's needs be met, then there can be no ideological conflict. Each person is satisfied with God's intelligent answer.

Mary Baker Eddy, the author of the Christian Science textbook, Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures, brings out that God, infinite Mind, is the only real Mind and that this Mind is unlimited in the intelligent ideas it provides. Here's the way she states it: "Infinite Mind is the creator, and creation is the infinite image or idea emanating from this Mind."².

So if we think of God as the universal divine Mind, as the infinite source, then we have to conclude that His provision of ideas would be infinitely complete and would include everyone in this completeness.

Wasn't this metaphysical point brought out in settling the contract? Everyone's needs were met.

Man is God's Likeness

Then a second spiritual point that played a part in solving this conflict was that each person is actually God's likeness. The Bible tells us that "God created man in His own image."³ Isaiah refers to man as God's witness. (See Isaiah 43:10) This is not only Biblical authority, but it coincides with logic. Where else would we draw our nature from except from our creative source, God? Prayer brought forth this enlightened tone in my discussion with the landlord. His hostility disappeared, the two opposing viewpoints were resolved, and the conflict was ended.

Unresolved Conflicts Induce Distrust

But what happens when the opposing viewpoints are not resolved?

Doesn't a succession of offences very often occur? And as this takes place, bitterness and mistrust deepen.

That's what occurred with Jacob and Esau. Their basic viewpoints did not change. Esau still felt that he was legally entitled to the birthright and the blessing. Finally, Jacob took action to override the legal obstacles.

He devised tricks to get the birthright and the blessing from Esau. First, he waited until Esau was returning from a hunting trip and was famished. He then offered him food in exchange for his birthright. Esau, feeling that the

birthright wouldn't do him any good if he died of hunger, accepted the offer. He sold his birthright.

Then when Isaac, their father, was about to pronounce the blessing on Esau, his mother overheard the intent and encouraged Jacob to disguise himself as his brother and so trick his father into giving the blessing to him instead of Esau.

Jacob thought that the birthright and the blessing were what he wanted. But because the basic difference in viewpoint had not been resolved, he wasn't able to benefit by what he had gained.

Esau hated him so much because of what he'd done, he threatened to kill him. Jacob had to leave home and forfeit what he thought he had gained.

Notice how these various events evolved from the basic differences in their viewpoints, and how the mistrust between them developed further as a result.

Don't we see a similar evolution in the relationship between Russia and the United States? As each side maintains its divergent view, a power struggle follows in an effort to promote its own position and, here again, the distrust increases. Russia and the United States, of course, had been allies during the Second World War, but directly following the war, certain countries fell under Russia's control and Russia then continued to maintain control of these countries with strong military enforcement.

At the same time, the United States gave aid and gained

influence over other countries adjacent to the Russian sphere.

Again, without making any value judgments, each side regarded the actions of the other as increasing its own power base. With this tension and suspicion, various incidents occurred that strengthened this interpretation as power plays threatening the other side.

Both sides have continued to behave as rivals competing more or less aggressively with each other. As the offences keep piling up, each party comes to distrust the other one more.

Distrust Eliminated

How do we counteract this pattern where a series of offences causes each party to distrust the other more?

Again, let's look at an individual example to try to discover ways to resolve this distrust and rivalry.

This was an experience that my wife and I had a number of years ago. We were on a trip overseas and we'd been given the name of some people to call on. At first the visit was very cordial. With one exception.

As we continued talking together, a sort of rivalry or competition began to develop. It seemed that whatever I had to say, these people had something more significant to say or a contradiction of what I was bringing out. Everything I said was matched or corrected by something they said. They knew everything better.

Before long, without realizing it, I found myself competing with them and coming out very much second-best. We parted cordially, but it had really disturbed me greatly.

Now you might not think this should be so unsettling, but I was upset. So much so that by the time we reached our hotel it had affected me physically and I had to withdraw to my room.

Jesus' Humility Brought True Greatness

I prayed about this and as I prayed, I saw that this had really been a case of who shall be greatest? And I found myself asking, "Who was the greatest person who ever lived?".

Well, it was Jesus. And what made him great? It was his humility, his willingness to acknowledge God as the source of his being. This is what endowed him with his God-like nature, with that true selfhood we call the Christ.

And then I thought about myself. From a human standpoint others may have more intelligence or talents or affluence than I did, but there certainly couldn't be any limitation in my power to express humility. And it is through humility, through willingness to accept what God gives, that God's nature and substance are expressed by all of us. And there can't be any competition in the expression of humility either because it's available to everyone.

Here I was overcoming my own self-mistrust--the very thing that compelled me to enter this conversational battle which I lost.

Jesus Lifted People Up

Then I thought about the effect that Jesus had on people when they came into contact with him. They didn't feel put down or inferior. They were healed and reassured and regenerated. To produce this kind of effect is the sign of true greatness.

Then I thought about these people we'd been with and I reasoned that if they were not producing this effect of uplifting others, they weren't expressing true greatness.

Suddenly I stopped feeling antagonistic toward them. Instead I felt a great compassion. I saw they could be missing out on the genuine satisfaction of bringing this uplift to others. I had a deep desire then to see them bring a feeling of support to others and to have the satisfaction that comes from doing this.

I even had to be honest with myself and admit they'd had some pretty intelligent ideas and, if I'd been a little more receptive, I might have learned something.

By the way, I also found myself entirely healed of the physical problem. We went down to dinner, continued happily on our trip.

This whole episode had a long-range effect because ever since then, if I've run into aggressiveness or assertiveness in others, I've been able to think back on this experience and to see where my own abilities and identity come from and also to desire deeply that the other person experience the feeling of satisfaction that comes from bringing a sense of uplift to others.

I might add that we had contact with these people from time to time and, even though there would be hints of their former attitude, it just didn't touch me. There was no build-up of mistrust.

Then a few years ago we met again and I must say it was one of the most mutually affectionate, mutually appreciative relationships I've ever had. There wasn't a trace of the former rivalry or mistrust, only an outgoing desire on both sides to be as supportive and helpful as possible.

What really eliminated the distrust and rivalry? For me it was seeing firstly, through Jesus' example, that by humility we can find God to be the source of our being and thereby gain confidence that we are completely provided for with all we need in our identity and safety.

And isn't this similar to the spiritual point that came out in settling the contract? I saw that a friend of God would be supplied by God with all he needed because creative Mind expresses itself in the fulness of ideas eternally.

Secondly, I lost my concern about how these other people were treating me. I stopped mistrusting them as I thought about how I wanted them to be helped.

This would certainly correspond to the other point I made earlier, that a friend of God would express God's nature, that each individual must be like Him in giving out warmth and inspiration.

Enemies No Longer

As we work in this way to remove the seeds of mistrust, we can then approach the final stage where each side stops thinking of the other as an enemy.

And isn't this the stage we need to reach when we think about the relationship between the United States and Russia?

To get an idea of how this can be achieved, let's look again at the situation with Jacob and Esau and see how they stopped thinking of each other as enemies. All the odds seemed to be against their achieving any kind of accord. You remember they were different in nature. Esau was very physical, Jacob showed more the mental qualities and, as it developed, a greater inclination toward spiritual elements. There was a division between them because Esau was born first and therefore legally had the birthright, while Jacob was identified with the birthright in line with a higher destiny. Esau was favored by their father. Jacob was favored by their mother. Esau stayed at home. Jacob lived away for many years. Their ideologies, their situations were diametrically opposed to each other. They were contestants in every way.

So what did finally happen? As you remember, Jacob had served his uncle Laban for twenty years and had himself accumulated extensive possessions. At that point he'd received the message from God that he should return to his home and to Esau.

No doubt he thought a lot about his earlier actions and how much Esau had hated him. So even though he'd developed his spiritual understanding further and had strengthened his relationship to God, still he was unsure how Esau would receive him.

As he approached his former home, Jacob divided up his family so that in case of attack, some could escape. Finally he heard that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men. In military terms, we would say that Esau had an overwhelmingly greater strike force and there was no way that Jacob could contend with it.

Jacob Overcame the Enemy Within Himself

To show his good faith, Jacob had sent gifts ahead of him. But more important than these steps was the real confrontation that Jacob had with himself the night before. The Bible says he was alone and there wrestled a man with him. Now this wasn't the first wrestling match Jacob had had. He and Esau had wrestled in the womb. Later Jacob wrestled with Esau in a different way when he gained the birthright and the blessing from him. Still later he had to contend with his uncle Laban to receive what he'd earned during his twenty years' service to him. In fact, the name Jacob in the original Hebrew means "contender."

But in this wrestling match on the night before his meeting with Esau, he finally had to face up to the mental conflicts within himself. Mrs. Eddy speaks of this encounter in Science and Health. She says, "Jacob was alone, wrestling

with error,--struggling with a mortal sense of life, substance, and intelligence as existent in matter with its false pleasures and pains,--when an angel, a message from Truth and Love, appeared to him and smote the sinew, or strength, of his error, till he saw its unreality....." Mrs. Eddy continues, "This changed the man. He was no longer called Jacob, but Israel,--a prince of God, or a soldier of God, who had fought a good fight."⁴.

Esau Feels a Sufficiency

Jacob had finally wrestled out many of the remaining material traits that would divide him from his brother. But of course he still had to prove what he had seen. He had to bring forth the results of his more enlightened view.

When he saw Esau approaching, Jacob went forward to meet him. The Bible description is so beautiful! It says, "And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept."⁵.

Esau then asked Jacob what was the meaning of the gifts that he had sent. Jacob said those were to find favor with Esau. And then Esau made the statement that showed the resolution of the conflict over possessions. He said, "I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself."⁶.

Jacob Sees Man as God-like

But Jacob urged him to receive the gifts as evidence that Esau had accepted him and he explained to Esau, "I

have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me."7.

Jacob had changed his view of Esau. He no longer saw him as a mortal with conflicting interests and different characteristics from his own that would divide them from each other.

Instead he saw his brother as showing forth the nature of God. This is one of the most important points in resolving this relationship problem between Jacob and Esau.

They each had been claiming the rights and privileges of the firstborn. Now a concept of man was emerging that transcended this material evaluation. It showed that the identity of each person finds its source in God and therefore receives the full benefit or heritage that comes from this divine relationship.

As a result, the various facets of the conflict between Jacob and Esau were removed through this higher perception. Their physical differences were neutralized by seeing more clearly the characteristics of their true identity. The privilege that society would confer was replaced by seeing that God determined the position and possessions of each individual abundantly in accord with His own infinite nature. And finally, the feeling of being separated, of being strangers, was eliminated as each came to know the other in the way that God knows them.

Their feeling of being enemies disappeared.

Spiritual Concepts Apply at National Levels

These same basic conflicts of possession and identity

need to be resolved in the bigger question of the relationship of nation to nation. For instance, in the relationship between the United States and Russia, there are many questions of territorial control as well as ideological differences. Certainly they have to be taken up individually and worked out, but don't these same fundamental spiritual concepts apply?

Take the matter of possessions. Esau said, "I have enough." Now if we just look at things materially, it might be pretty hard to take this attitude in some countries that feel overcrowded or deprived or in a country that's seeking additional territorial domination. But the problem can be resolved with the conviction that real being is in the realm of consciousness where ideas are independent of material space with its various restrictions.

This may sound abstract, but consider that every problem is resolved by a right idea revealing an alternative to the current restricted view.

Ideas solve problems and as these ideas do appear and the problems are worked out, the other person is no longer viewed as an enemy who's threatening our well-being, but instead as a fellow recipient of the benefits of these ideas, ideas we can identify as coming ultimately from the infinite divine Mind.

What about the ideological differences? Jacob was able to say, "I have seen thy face as though I had seen the face of God." The various differences between him

and Esau were absorbed into the higher view of seeing how each individual resembles God, infinite Spirit which is Love and Life and Soul.

Today many people are working to resolve the differences in the world. One approach we hear a lot about is for Russia and the United States to get to know each other through cultural and business exchange. This can indeed be a useful tool to achieve unity and friendship.

Of course in taking this approach, aren't we assuming that the good traits of both sides will come out? This is what we hope for. But does it always work that way? What happens when grosser elements come forth?

Esau and Jacob had what we might call cultural exchange and trade activities while they were growing up, but in their case it intensified the animosity between them. To get good results from such exchange and from working together, there has to be a higher basis for seeing the character of each side and this is the basis Jacob achieved when he saw the divine nature of Esau.

In fact, this higher basis has to exist in all these areas of possession and attitudes if the classification of enemy is to be set aside either with individuals or with nations.

Jesus Prayed for Unity

Jesus wanted us to achieve this higher basis. On behalf of his disciples and of all of us he prayed, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us".⁸.

Of course there's diversity of expression, but since each person finds his source in God, it's the one divine nature that is expressed in this diversity, harmonizing, unifying, blending, each contributing to the well-being of the other.

Jesus also commanded us, "Love your enemies." He wasn't being naive about the dangers of hostile forces. He was very aware of the malevolence of unenlightened human thought. And he avoided becoming its victim. He did this numerous times. In this way he also saved others from being used as tools of unenlightened human thought. The ultimate example was in the crucifixion where he was able to neutralize this attack to such a degree that he proved for all time the total triumph of divine Love and Life over unenlightened material thinking.

Mrs. Eddy was Dedicated to Bringing Peace

The Founder of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy, was a devoted follower of Christ Jesus. She was deeply committed to his teaching that we should reflect the love of God in our attitudes and actions toward others. Everything she has written in Christian Science is dedicated to the purpose of eliminating those enemies that would try to intrude themselves on the peace and the well-being of mankind.

She adhered firmly to Jesus' counsel "Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."⁹.

She set forth the ideas that would enable us to deal with divisions and conflicts in a constructive way, and so establish the basis for peace individually and world-wide.

In her book Miscellaneous Writings, she has included an article entitled "Love your Enemies" and she opens the article by asking the question, "Who is thine enemy that thou shouldst love him? Is it a creature or a thing outside thine own creation?"¹⁰. Throughout her writings she shows us that our experience really is a mental one and that the solutions to problems of individual or international conflicts come with change of thinking, spiritualizing our view of the world around us.

In taking this approach, Mrs. Eddy was not ignoring the need for specific human footsteps and intelligent actions. She makes this clear in an article that was published in the Boston Herald in 1898. The article was entitled "Other Ways than by War." She writes, "I will say I can see no other way of settling difficulties between individuals and nations than by means of their wholesome tribunals, equitable laws, and sound, well-kept treaties."¹¹.

But don't all of these human footsteps proceed from an enlightened concept of the nature of man as God's expression?

So where is the conflict? Where do we have to eliminate the concept of an enemy? The whole point of our discussion today has been to show that the resolution takes place

within your individual consciousness and my individual consciousness. There's no other place where this resolution can occur.

Conclusion

I've spoken about various specific instances where conflicts were resolved, and shown that the answers came as the true nature of substance and the true nature of identity were realized. So we might say that the battle goes on within ourselves between accepting Spirit, God and His unlimited creation or submitting to the material, limited view of substance and identity.

We have a graphic description of this battle and its resolution in the twelfth chapter of Revelation. The Bible says, "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought, and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven."¹².

Now this may sound strange, that there would be war in heaven. But if we think about it, where else could a war finally be won except in heaven, which Christian Science describes as "the reign of Spirit; government by divine Principle."¹³. Heaven, which Jesus said was within us, is a state of perfect spiritual consciousness, a total awareness of divine reality. Jesus said it was at hand.

This is a promise for us, an assurance that as we allow the angels, the divine messages from God, to be

active in our consciousness, then the dragon and his angels or false beliefs, which are the denials of God's reality, are indeed overcome. This victory is on behalf of ourselves and every other person.

So with this basis of enlightened understanding, we're able to make a specific and significant contribution to world peace. This approach won't make us naive, but it will impel us to be well-informed about the world's needs. It will impel us to pray intelligently about these needs and to put this prayer into appropriate action.

If we're haunted by fear, we'll be able to replace this with the confidence that comes from knowing God as the only power.

If we're concerned about lack, we can replace this by seeing the true nature of substance as the abundance of ideas divine Mind is constantly providing.

If we're suffering from hostility because of other peoples' behavior, we can elevate our view and see the unity which God provides in bestowing His glory and His nature on everyone in His creation.

As these conflicts are resolved in our own thinking and in our own lives, we're making a tremendous contribution to the world's achievement of peace. We're bringing to light the spiritual elements that are the facts of our being and the substance of genuine peace.

1. Exodus 33:11
2. Science and Health, p. 256
3. Genesis 1:26
4. Science and Health, p. 308,309
5. Genesis 33:4
6. Ibid., 33:9
7. Ibid., 33:10
8. John 17:21
9. Matthew 5:44
10. Miscellaneous Writings, p. 8
11. Miscellany, p. 277
12. Revelation 12:7
13. Science and Health, p. 587