

August 7, 2006 – Subject: Soul.

Dear Friends: Mary Baker Eddy gave her students 26 subjects for weekly Bible Lessons, to be covered twice yearly. Flowing through the year in her order of the subjects, we hereby present fresh views of each one by outstanding Christian Scientists. In this way, we hope to partake with you of new unfoldments of her infinite revelation.

Our selection this week is from: GOD'S NATURE AS SOUL No. 5 of a series on the Sevenfold Nature of God – by Peggy M, Brook.

God's Nature as Soul

“My soul doth magnify the Lord.” “Bless the Lord, O my soul.” “He restoreth my soul.” What is meant in these passages by the word “soul”? Surely the spiritual sense of a man, that which is innately conscious of the spiritual identity which lies behind all things. Spiritual seekers, thinkers, leaders, throughout the ages, have been keenly aware of the tangibility of soul or spiritual sense, and this has been the source of their strength, of their comfort, of their ability to accomplish the mighty purposes of good. It has brought to them freedom from the limitations of a sense-bound estimate of man and the universe. Christ Jesus, whose life and works stand as a prototype of the ideal man, prized this quality above all, for he declared, “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” When a man has experienced the certainty, the changelessness, the freedom, the feeling of satisfying poise and balance, and the joy that none can take away which comes from Soul itself, the source of spiritual sense, his heart echoes and re-echoes these words of Jesus.

To most people the term “soul” used in relation to man means his spiritual core, that which has nothing to do with his physicality or even his human personality, though dwelling within it; it is his spiritual essence, which men believe can be good or bad, but is nevertheless untouched by finiteness and therefore is immortal and continues after death. This concept of soul, purged of its duality, can serve as a pointer to its pure, deep, and fundamental character in relation to Deity and the true man.

SOUL AS GOD

Soul, as a term for God, refers to the great Soul of all things, the infinite spiritual identity which is purely good and which lies behind

all creation. It is in this sense that Mrs. Eddy uses the term.

In Webster's dictionary under the definition of "Soul" there is the heading "Christian Science" and it reads, "A synonym for God. Soul or Spirit signifies Deity and nothing else. Soul is the substance, Life, and intelligence of man, which is individualized, but not in matter. Mary Baker Eddy."

Mrs. Eddy lifts the whole concept of Soul out of the personal sense of a soul in the body, and therefore a multiplicity of individual souls belonging to different people – souls which can be sinless or sinful and uses it in its unique signification as God, infinite good. She writes in Science and Health, "Science reveals Soul as God, untouched by sin and death – as the central Life and intelligence around which circle harmoniously all things "in the systems of Mind" (310:14-17).

Of the seven terms Mrs. Eddy uses to define God, it is only of Soul that she says specifically that human thought has adulterated its meaning. This may be because the common concept of soul so nearly approximates the truth and yet this concept is impure in that it mixes Spirit and matter, sinlessness and sin. Mrs. Eddy writes in this connection, "Human thought has adulterated the meaning of the word soul through the hypothesis that soul is both an evil and a good intelligence, resident in matter. The proper use of the word soul can always be gained by substituting the word God, where the deific meaning is required. In other cases, use the word sense, and you will have the scientific signification. As used in Christian Science, Soul is properly the synonym of Spirit, or God; but out of Science, soul is identical with sense, with material sensation" (S. & H. 482:3-12).

So when we come to think about Soul, we can first of all gain a pure concept of it by realizing it to be the one infinite identity which lies behind everything In the universe, – the one Spirit, God.

SOUL REVERSES MATERIAL SENSE

In Mrs. Eddy's writings, more than with any other term for God she defines the positive nature of Soul by saying what it is not. For instance, she says that Soul is not in the body, it is incorporeal; that it cannot sin, for there is no such thing as sinful Soul, Soul is God; and that there is no loss in Soul, and no change in Soul. It would seem that the intact and pure nature of Soul impels the reversal of

material sense in order for Soul to be found as the infinite identity of the universe. Because of this fact one experiences that in proportion as one sincerely seeks to understand and feel the nature of Soul, the testimony of material sense is irresistibly dealt with. One cannot find Soul through anything but pure spiritual sense. Incorporeality, sinlessness, the safety of spiritual identity, the permanence and changelessness of spiritual reality, can be found in all their loveliness only through Soul's reversal of sense testimony. Soul, the one spiritual identity of all things, consistently operates to translate consciousness out of a material sense of man and the universe into the reality of spiritual sense, true identity. Moreover it cannot help but do this specifically, because the very nature of Soul is definiteness. There is nothing so sure and definite in all the world as Soul-sense.

SOUL IS THE "DRY LAND" THAT IS FRUITFUL

In the Genesis record of creation the third day is illustrative of God's nature as Soul. After the light of the first day,— symbolizing the one Mind, divine wisdom and intelligence,— and the firmament of the second day, which divides the waters above from the waters beneath (a symbol of the purity of Spirit), the record declares in the third day, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear." This "one place," this "dry land," symbolizes the definiteness or the one infinite Soul which underlies all creation. It deals with the uncertainty of "tempest-tossed human concepts advancing and receding," as Mrs. Eddy defines the sea (S. & H. 536:6-7), and presents a symbol of a firm basis of God-given identity, something that is definite, something we can stand on, something that never lets us down.

The Scriptures show through saga, history, and allegory how the divine nature works itself out in every man's experience, and in the third thousand years of Bible history, which illustrates the third day of creation, the great symbol is correspondingly that of "land." The story is one of journeying, migrating from an old land to a promised land,— from a confined, mortal sense of self to the unconfined yet firm land of God-given identity. The very first character in this third thousand-year period, Abraham, came out of Ur of the Chaldees, a place rife with beliefs of chance and superstition, and "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Later in this period his grandson, Jacob, had to flee his land because of Esau's hatred, and to find his true identity in a new land. Joseph,

Jacob's favorite son, was forced out of his land,– sold into Egypt by his brethren,– and had to prove his God-given identity in a new and strange land. Finally the great exodus of the whole body of Israelites took place under Moses' leadership, whereby he led them out of the land of Egypt, through the wilderness, and eventually, under Joshua, into the Promised Land, where they found their identity as a nation.

All these instances are illustrative of the “dry land” appearing, and symbolize man's individual spiritual journey, through varying experiences, to find and understand his assured and God-given identity. Also, the third day of creation declares that the earth brings forth grass, herb, and fruit tree – the land is fruitful. There is nothing so fruitful as definite understood identity. It is the same in any subject; when we gain a definite understanding of arithmetic, for instance, or of music, these subjects begin to bear fruit for us in all kinds of ways. So directly we stand on the dry land of definite spiritual understanding and become conscious of our true identity, we find it to be fruitful. Moreover, the grass, the herb, and the fruit tree have seed within themselves. This speaks of the natural reproducing power and permanence of specific identity throughout all creation, and illustrates that man's God-given identity quite naturally reproduces itself in Godlikeness continually, persistently, and effortlessly.

To seek and find our Godlike identity is to realize the kingdom of God within. It is the only thing in the world that matters, for in spiritual idea – and only in spiritual idea – man finds real and enduring health, happiness, supply, friendship, everything that makes him complete, and when he finds these things in God, he can never lose them. Man can never lose anything of good so long as he keeps his spiritual lamp trimmed and burning. Once more the Master's words come to mind, “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” One can have material plenty and yet feel poor and mean, one can be materially healthy whilst still remaining dissatisfied and incomplete, one can experience longevity but still feel lifeless and purposeless. On the other hand, with spiritual sense aroused and awake, one can appear to be in the midst of poverty and find a sense of real substance and richness in the facts of Soul, one can be tempted by disease and find the unfailing testimony to man's health and wholeness in Soul, or be faced with death and find the changelessness and eternity of true life in Soul. Moreover, remaining with these living, spiritual facts will always ultimately translate the sense picture. So the one and only thing that it is vital

never to lose is one's own soul, and this man can never really do, for it is his very identity which sooner or later must assert itself.

SOUL MEANS GOD AND MAN ONE

In the first three booklets of this series, we considered the threefold essential nature of the divine Principle of the universe, first as Love, then as Truth, and then as Life. With Love, not only did we feel the substance of its nature, but also its operation as true Christianity; with Truth we felt its nature operating as the dynamic, rocklike power of the Christ; and with Life we felt its timeless facts operating as the eternal flow of being inherent in the living Word. Then in the last booklet we considered the divine Principle itself and saw that it operates through infinite Science and system. Now, as we consider Soul, we shall find that Soul expresses that quality of being that all along enables us to realize that we are these spiritual ideas of God in operation. In reality we are not learning about God, but becoming aware of our true selfhood as God-in-action, -Mind-in-action, Spirit-in-action, Soul-in-action, Principle-in-action, Life-in-action, Truth-in-action, and Love-in-action. Just as a ray of the sun is the sun itself shining, so man is the expressing of God. This complete identification of man with his Cause is the operation of Soul. Soul in its essence is identity, which comes from the Latin word "idem" meaning "the same"; the German philosopher, Schelling, defined "identity" as "reality at its deepest level, at which subject and object are one."

Soul's identity reveals the deepest level of reality where we realize God and man to be one, so that all that is true about Love and its harmonious operation is us, - our very being; all that Truth is in its rocklike certainty, we are; the flow of divine Life is the flow of our life, the only life we have; man has no other existence but as idea of Principle, moving in Science and system and harmony. Man is not a mortal, entertaining ideas of divine Principle. He is those ideas in operation. This indivisible relationship of man with God is the function of Soul.

Soul is the synonymous term for God which Mrs. Eddy uses least in her writings, and yet her whole textbook teems with the sense of Soul, and indeed without Soul-sense or spiritual sense it cannot be understood at all.

It is significant that the first edition of her textbook used the term

“Soul” copiously, for the outstanding accent in her first edition was the revelation of the oneness of God and man. It would seem that the dawning of this fact of true identity,— God and man one,— was so brilliant in Mrs. Eddy’s thought at that time as a revolutionary discovery that she used every tool of language to convey this overriding conception. Because the pure sense of this great fact was misunderstood and many were identifying their mortal selves (instead of their eternal and immortal selfhood) with God, and also because of the continual unfoldment of the Science of her discovery to Mrs. Eddy, her textbook went through many revisions until it arrived at its present form. This form is essentially a presentation of Science in its wholeness, and therefore it takes account of the infinite categories of the Science of Being. For instance, it takes account of the levels of Divine Science, absolute Christian Science, and Christian Science; the standpoints of the absolute and the relative, the subjective and the objective; what constitutes both the fatherhood and motherhood of God, and the manhood and womanhood of God; the functions of understanding and demonstration, the letter and the spirit. It gives a complete sense of the divine nature as Mind, Spirit, Soul, Principle, Life, Truth, and Love; and a whole sense of its operation through the Word, the Christ, Christianity, and Science.

Nevertheless, this fundamental fact of Soul, of spiritual sense, of the one identity is basic to a living understanding and consistent proof of the Science and truth which the last edition of her textbook contains. Exercising Soul-sense gives us the spirit of the oneness of Being which overwhelmingly pervades the first edition, together with an understanding of the scientific letter to which Mrs. Eddy was led to wed the spirit. In spiritual matters, this is the wedding of womanhood and manhood, which constitutes the balance of Spiritual sense, or Soul.

A SEVENFOLD ASPECT OF SOUL

As with all the other synonymous terms for God that we have considered in this series, we shall take a sevenfold aspect of Soul in this way:-

Soul as Mind is the spiritual understanding that knows

Soul as Spirit is spiritual sense, which discerns reality and is sinless

Soul as Soul is the one changeless identity, which identifies all with God

Soul as Principle is the incorporeality which unites all in one body

Soul as Life is the immortality which resurrects

Soul as Truth is the certainty which brings man's birthright of freedom

Soul as Love is the calm and balance of Soul, which satisfies and keeps safe

So in this sevenfold reflection Soul expresses itself as spiritual understanding, spiritual sense, one changeless identity, incorporeality, immortality, certainty, and balance.

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