

May 14, 2007 – Subject : Mortals and Immortals.

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—SCIENTIFIC TRANSLATION by John L. Morgan.

CHAPTER I

Translation Outlined

The Theme

The great Protestant Reformation was marked by the appearance of the Bible translated into the language of the common people, the earliest version being John Wycliffe's translation of 1382. Whereas the old Latin text could be understood only by a few, once it appeared in English and in German it became available to all who could read or hear. Everyone now had direct access to the Word of God, and the Bible's inspired message was released to accomplish its mission. As consciousness accepts and adopts the spiritual standpoint, humanity is formed anew. The human concept begins to be translated.

Translation is the modus operandi of Christian Science. That is to say, the way in which its divine Principle operates is through a translating process. The explanation of how Christian Science heals, or of how Christianity redeems and saves, is to be found in this idea.

This book is an exploration of the subject of spiritual, scientific translation. It traces the way in which divinity communicates itself to human thought, and, correspondingly, the way our conception of being is itself transformed. Translation may appear to be but one element in the whole spectrum of spiritual experience, yet upon investigation it proves to be the central factor, coordinating all the others.

While the mortal mind says, "I can't," Christ says, "I can. " Where the human says, "I can of mine own self do nothing," by turning thought around he is able to say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

The thinker who has only a slight acquaintance with divine metaphysics recognizes a continuous process, taking place within consciousness. He is aware that the divine reality is forever pouring itself forth, translating itself into the language that human thought can comprehend; at the same time he knows that the material, discordant picture of man and the universe is not the reality but is a mistranslation. Accordingly, he demonstrates that correction and healing come about by spiritual retranslation. When the mistaken concept is viewed in the light of God's unvarying conceiving, that misconception is translated back into its original perfection in Spirit. The outcome is what human sense calls a healing, or the resolution of a problem.

The Christian Scientist is familiar with this scientific translation, operating in his experience in two phases. First, it gives him the spiritual understanding of God, and of what man really is as the God-idea. Second, it causes the mortal misconception of man and the universe to yield, to be corrected by degrees, so that the immortal and perfect idea stands forth as the only true conception of being. Nothing has changed in reality; nothing is destroyed; but a momentous and powerful translation has taken place in human consciousness – and consequently in life. This process constitutes human experience.

The life-problem, which we are required to work out, is that of the mortal concept. When misconstrued through material sense, man appears to be separated from his divine source, isolated, confined to a corporeal body, subject to birth and death and vulnerable to accident and disease. His separation from his spiritual origin, God, eventuates in his division from his fellow man. All his problems, – mental, bodily and social, – arise from the supposed 'fall' from his divine status, for to break away from the divine Principle of being would result in breakdowns all along the line. To attempt to heal his ills piecemeal, therefore, on the level of replacing a discordant mortal

with a harmonious one, is of no real avail. It is not mortal man that is wrong, but the concept of man as mortal. A radical reappraisal of the concept is demanded, a return to the pristine spiritual conception which in Science he never left. It is only by working out from this summit, as our starting point, that we can effectively arrive at it in practice. The 'out from' and the 'return to' comprise the two phases of scientific translation, which is the theme of this book.

On the surface, it appears that Christian Science is dedicated to healing sickness and resolving problems, – which indeed it does. However, it can resolve mortal mind's misconceptions only because it first makes the true nature of Mind and the universe understandable to human thought.

Everywhere in her writings Mary Baker Eddy pays equal attention to these two complementary functions of Science, – the revelatory and the corrective, – but she is careful as to the order in which they are stated. First must be the outward flow from God, and only second comes the restoration to God. For instance, in the article "One Cause and Effect" in Miscellaneous Writings, on page 22 we read, "Christian Science translates Mind, God, to mortals." Then on page 25 is its corollary: "Science, understood, translates matter into Mind..." There we have it: Christian Science operates by translating the absolute nature of Mind, God, into the temporary language of mortals, where God can be understood; this same understanding of God then translates what had been mistakenly thought to be matter and mortals back into the spiritual idea. This reinstatement is the great purpose of Christian Science.

The potential of this promise is almost beyond human imagining. That God can actually be understood as the spiritually scientific Principle of all being is surely the Comforter, or divine Science, promised by Christ Jesus. To understand what God is, will be to understand what man really is, and therefore humanity will find itself based on divinity and not on mortality. Mankind will thus have the means to be free of its fears, its ills, and its fratricidal divisions. The human concept will be entirely translated. As we read in Romans (9:26), "And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the

children of the living God.”

Of such importance is this concept of scientific translation that the Christian Science textbook, Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures, sets it out systematically in a table, on pages 115 - 116.

Because this present volume is an exploration of that statement, and of its meaning and implications, we cannot do better than turn to it at once and observe it carefully.

SCIENTIFIC TRANSLATION OF IMMORTAL MIND

GOD: Divine Principle, Life, Truth, Love, Soul, Spirit, Mind. Divine synonyms

MAN: God’s spiritual idea, individual, perfect, eternal. Devine image

IDEA: An image in Mind; the immediate Object of understanding – Webster. Divine reflection

SCIENTIFIC TRANSLATION OF MORTAL MIND

First Degree: Depravity. Unreality

PHYSICAL. Evil beliefs, passions and appetites, fear, depraved will, self-justification, pride, envy, deceit, hatred, revenge, sin, sickness, disease, death.

Second Degree: Evil beliefs disappearing. Transitional qualities

MORAL. Humanity, honesty, affection, compassion, hope, faith, meekness, temperance.

Third Degree: Understanding.

SPIRITUAL. Wisdom, purity, spiritual understanding, spiritual power, love, health, holiness. Reality

Divinity and Humanity

We shall be studying in subsequent chapters every term employed here in the text, and numerous examples of translation in practice, but in this present brief survey certain points call for attention.

At the outset we notice that the translation of immortal Mind to the understanding of humanity (Scientific Translation of Immortal Mind) translates the false mortal mind view (Scientific Translation of Mortal Mind). The power which sets it all in motion lies in the fundamental truth of God, and man as His idea. The premise from which Christian Science works is that God can be understood as the divine Principle through a range of capitalized synonymous terms, and that His image, man, is His own spiritual idea or reflection of Himself. God, man and idea are all characterized in the marginal headings as divine. We are thus presented with one compound truth, the integration of Principle and its idea.

This declaration of divinity immediately sets to work in the human understanding to correct and translate the false conception of humanity, so redeeming it from mortality. Three degrees of awareness mark the stages. In the First Degree, the depraved physical conception is shown to be unreality, resulting in the Second Degree in evil beliefs disappearing. Humanity is being liberated from the myth of animal origins and from a purely physical status. The transitional moral qualities are the symptom of this release. The transformation of consciousness continues, however, till the spiritual is understood to be the reality of being. We recognize this understanding as our original starting-point in the first translation, where God, Mind, understands man to be His own idea. Accordingly, the text continues, "In the third degree mortal mind disappears, and man as God's image appears. Science so reverses the evidence before the corporeal human senses, as Spiritual to make this Scriptural testimony true in our hearts, universe 'The last shall be first, and the first last,' so that God and His idea may be to us what divinity really is and must of necessity be, all-inclusive. "

The last being first and the first last confirms that the whole process is a cycle, – a concept which will be explored in a later chapter. The

understanding which God bestows (the understanding of our divinity), at which we appear to arrive in the end, has been at work from the beginning. The Third Degree spells out this understanding as seven spiritual qualities which, as we shall see, represent the seven synonymous terms for God. Thus we both start from and conclude with divine understanding. Never do we begin from outside, from the mortal concept. The primal spiritual understanding shines upon this false conception, penetrates its darkness, and the human concept is in transition. Humanity is seen to be made up not of animal qualities (First Degree), but rather of morality (Second Degree). At length, the translation is complete and humanity understands its divinity (Third Degree). Man knows himself to be nothing less than wisdom, purity, spiritual understanding, spiritual power, love, health and holiness. In terms of the cycle, this means that God's understanding (as in the first translation) has so translated human consciousness that humanity now understands itself to be of the nature of God. As thought travels full circle the problem is resolved.

We see the beautiful simplicity of the dual translation in the life-work of Christ Jesus. He stated, "I am the light of the world," and immediately healed the man born blind. He said, "I am the bread of life," and fed the five thousand. He declared, "I am the resurrection, and the life," and raised Lazarus from the tomb. In each case the statement of man's perfection (first translation) was proved in practice by the parallel correction of the mortal picture (second translation). Christian Science is based on this same balance of Principle and practice.

One Twofold Translation

A further point one observes is that the two phases of translation are not in fact entitled first and second, although for convenience this is how they are usually described. They are actually complementary and simultaneous aspects of the same activity: the light comes and the darkness goes in one operation.

Both translations are the single, continuous working of the one Christ-principle. The impulsion of the first spontaneously puts the second into operation. That is to say, the understanding that man is actually

the image or idea in Mind begins instantaneously to translate the belief that he is unlike the divine. This twofold translating principle holds good in any field, whether we are considering a sick person, a poor business or a mistake in arithmetic.

The second translation is just as scientific as the first, for the same Christ Science, which is declaring the unity of Principle and idea in the first, is demonstrating it in the second. Without this disproof of the falsity – the mortal concept – there is no tangible proof that man is God’s spiritual idea. Proof of Truth must involve the disproof of error.

Every spiritual worker has experienced this process. What is true and demonstrable on the individual scale must likewise be valid on the world scale. Christian Science sets before mankind an open door, – the assurance that the universal translation of humanity is feasible. Is it perhaps for this reason that the marginal heading on page 116 is “Spiritual universe”?

CHAPTER II

To Begin Rightly is to End Rightly

Sounding the Keynote

Explaining the proper attitude which the student should have towards the teaching and study of Christian Science, Mrs. Eddy makes a remarkable statement: “When I teach Science it is not woman that addresses man, it is the Principle and Soul bringing out its idea by blotting out the belief that otherwise hideth it” (Ess 227). A revelation indeed! The material human mind would expect some lengthy programme of instruction before we could experience our God-being. But Science, working from the premise that we are forever ‘there: is the divine explanation of this being. It cannot make us what we are not already: it can only bring it to light. “We understand best that which begins in ourselves and by education brightens into birth” (My 253:26).

Spiritual education, then, must start from the divine platform of what

God is, and what man forever: is as His spiritual idea. We are not starting from outside, not building up, as though recovering from a “fall” nor are we approaching Science, for merely by being we are already involved in the God-experience. True, it seems to be misunderstood and overlaid with false beliefs. It is also true that Christian Science unfolds as a discipline, as an orderly process of revelation, reason, and demonstration through which we understand, spiritually and scientifically, the primal universe of God. Our education thus appears to be a learning and a becoming, whereas in reality it is a successive removing of the veils. Even our earliest study, done as we think with the human mind, is actually the divine Mind at work in us. This is the story of the two translations. It translates our striving to ‘get there’ into a striving to bring it out into expression.

The New-old Idea

One of the rewards of the search for spiritual truth is that every new discovery is, in some strange way, also an old familiar friend. Each new revelation is but a bringing to birth of some long-buried aspect of our own true being. What we had thought was us discovering Truth turns out to have been Truth discovering itself in us. The two come into happy conjunction. When we realize that our seeking and God’s self-revelation are not separate activities, our whole sense of spiritual development is transformed.

Our work in Christian Science can seem a daunting task if we think of it as the unilluminated human mind laboriously learning about God, acquiring knowledge, and eventually reaching the ultimate understanding. This upward view would be only one half of the picture, and a half-truth is not true. Like the pin responding to the magnet, we rise up because all the initiative, the inspiration and power is with Truth, pouring itself into consciousness, – as our consciousness. This sense that “I’ve been here before” makes our progress unlabored, joyous and fruitful.

The understanding of God, the Christian Science textbook teaches us, “Is not the result of scholarly attainments; it is the reality of all things brought to light” (505:26). It is brought to light as calmly as the dawn and as naturally as birth - the birth of our spiritual individuality.

Because our divine Principle has a Christ and is always revealing and manifesting itself irresistibly, we experience this marvelous awakening and ascending of thought. Our seeking and striving is the result of this Christ-impulsion. What empowers our efforts and ensures their success is the transcendent fact of "I and my Father are one:" for if it were not forever true divinely, it would be idle to embark for it humanly. Metaphysically speaking, then, man is not going anywhere: he's coming from. This attitude is the essential starting-point of the translation story.

Unfoldment Not Accretion

The textbook teaches us that "Christian Science presents unfoldment, not accretion" (68:27). Instead of trying vainly to spiritualize or develop a mortal, we shall be letting the infinite spiritual facts of God and man unfold so that the misconception of man as a mortal personality begins to yield. For example, when referring to the Christ, John the Baptist said, "He must increase, but I must decrease. "It will appear, of course, that the mortal is becoming more humane and more spiritual, though in fact what happens is that the layers of ignorance hiding the reality fall away by degrees, and we gain clearer views of what he is eternally. Accretion would be starting from the assumption of incompleteness, to be made good by instruction from outside, whereas unfoldment is leading out - deducing - what is already there.

Paul explains in his first letter to the Corinthians (2:16) that it is because "we have the mind of Christ" that we can know "the mind of the Lord." This "mind of Christ" is that which makes Christ or Truth intelligible to man; the same Mind that is our subject, God, works also in us, discovering and explaining what God is. It would be impossible otherwise for the unaided human mind to apprehend spiritual being.

From the human standpoint we might be inclined to say, "Divinely, I am; humanly, I become." This is how it seems to be if we split up being into separate departments. From the primal split would evolve even more divisions: morally, "I ought to" be; religiously, I pray to be; mortally, I fail to be, – or, I wish I were, or even, I'm glad I'm not.

Thus we shut ourselves out of the kingdom. Yet all the while, that which we try to become is what we are forever in Science. Science-unfolds our I AM from the I AM. "The Ego-man is the reflection of the Ego-God" (S. & H. 281:10).Mortals may mask it behind the disguise of person, but sooner or later that persona must disappear and the divine Ego appear. The mortal doesn't become divine, but as mortals start to reflect divine being they are no longer mortals. It is in the "being" that we, "become."

Thus when we reassure ourselves that we are making some spiritual progress, we need to be clear that we are not describing some actual improvement or development from a mortal basis so much as a revelation, an unfoldment, of our original God-being. It is Spirit evolving in our consciousness in an "outwards" evolution or disclosure, rather than human consciousness evolving "upwards" or "towards." Whether the biological sense of evolution proceeds in a long, gradual change or by jumps, is therefore irrelevant, for the only kind of evolution applicable in Science is that of un-foldment from fulfilled perfection. (See S & H 69:2-5; 135:9,10; 335:18-20; 551:12-16)

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