

Weekly Lesson Citations

DEAR FRIENDS: We plan to use this spot on our web page to bring you a different set of citations each week—expanding on specific citations from the “Weekly Lesson.” A paraphrase can so often open thought to new insights of familiar statements. In this way we hope to share with you some of the wonderful work that has been done in Christian Science over the past fifty years and in to the present by authors you may or may not have yet met.

Our selections this week correspond to the Subject as a whole and section 4 of the Lesson. The first is from Peggy Brooks booklet —GOD’S NATURE AS SOUL.

The other selection is from John Morgan’s VERBATIM REPORT OF THE GOSPEL OF LUKE -Given at a COLWYN BAY SUMMER SCHOOL in 1953.

August 13: 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).

SOUL AS GOD (cont.)

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, since Soul is God; and 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 one 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 of 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 (see 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 favourite 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 constanually, persistently, and effortlessly.

SOUL IS THE "DRY LAND" THAT IS FRUITFUL (cont.)

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 changeless-ness 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.

...What can one say about Soul in conclusion? To write so many words about Soul is almost contrary to the true nature of Soul, for it is, in fact, essentially that which is above and beyond words, —it needs to be felt. It is said that "as we rise, the symbols disappear," and Soul is really the constant disappearing point of the symbols, being "reality at its deepest level, at which subject and object are one."

To understand and feel the meaning of Soul is to bridge the gap between "absolute" thinking in metaphysics and thought which maintains that there is also the problem of the belief in life, substance, and intelligence in matter to be seen through and disproved. Soul, or spiritual sense, reveals the spiritual facts of being as the only identity of man and the universe, but of necessity its very depth and definiteness pierces through the veil of material sense, reversing its presentations and so translating them that there is no longer any twofold sense of being, even in belief. To be truly aware of Soul, the one identity, whereby we can say with understanding, "I am the being of Being" is to remove forever the cry, "I can see spiritual facts intellectually, but I cannot prove them," for Soul-sense is aware of only one universe, one identity, and this actively and specifically translates out of all material sense to prove this one spiritual universe to be the only universe.

A true sense of Soul makes possible of fulfillment in our own experience the Psalmist's certainty, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."

LUKE 12

Vv. 13-15. This man wanted the inheritance as a thing, and thought that he couldn't have it equally with his brother unless it was divided physically. Jesus' answer was, "Don't covet the inheritance of Life as a thing, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." A man's life consists in the measure in which he embodies forth his spiritual understanding. Life isn't a possession, it's an expression.

Covetousness or greed is so subtle, it may be greed for food, or for sleep or for travel, or for any one of a hundred things which seem normal enough; but "beware of, covetousness" for it is one's attitude that counts. If you are always wanting to pack into your body or into your experience something that you rather fancy, then life becomes a matter of possession and not of expression. So "stand porter at the door of thought" and see that you are not packing into your experience more and more body, but that you are dissolving mortality and living your body inside out.

For instance, how much music do you possess? Not a scrap; Only as much as you can express. How much body do you possess? Not a bit, not a little finger of it; only as much as you express.

V. 16. "plentifully" —this rich man was rich in material sense. Now listen to this (verses 17-19): "And he thought within himself, saying, what shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow fruits?" And he said, "This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all fruits and goods, And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

LUKE 12 (cont.)

V. 20. "thy soul shall be required of thee:" —your spiritual sense is being called forth, and then what do these things avail you?

V. 21. Laying up treasure for oneself is a cumulative view of life, What a beautiful phrase, "rich toward God"! That is, treasures of Soul expressed in life.

Now we are, everyone of us, that rich man half the time. It isn't specifically to do with money, but indicates the human sense of values which we like to pack inwards, instead of the spiritual sense of values which must be expressed outwards. This man had planned his life on the basis of acquisitions; he was enlarging his borders, but in terms of physicality and matter.

Now human planning may be a very right thing, but it can also be the devil. It all depends on one's attitude. There's obviously no future in planning to accumulate a nicer material life, but if your human planning is the effect of your desire to live outwardly, then it will be a blessing to you, and instead of building up mortality for you it will help you to reduce it. Human planning may become a rod for our own back, albeit unknown to us because it assails the humanly competent. A good human belief in being capable sometimes renders us unwilling to sit back and let Spirit plan for us, because it's easier to do it humanly when you have done it so well all your life, and it tends to become a habit that interferes with God's regulator. So if we have that belief to cope with, let's face it, and translate outlining an existence in mortality into listening to how Life wants us to embody true living. (See Misc.353:11-24)