

The rich fool

(Luke 12:16-21)

“And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my 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. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

Jesus is dealing here with much more than the obvious error of trust in material riches. He is exposing something far more subtle, a form of materialism that is “spiritual wickedness in high places” — the disease of intellectualism, with its endless storage. The Master could get on with so-called materialists, such as prostitutes (like Mary Magdalene) and tax-collectors, because they stored nothing and what little they had they threw over the side as useless, which led them to a state of mind ready to receive Soul’s impressions. But a false sense of intellectuality never acknowledges Spirit and Truth. It actually increases belief in matter — worshipping material history, for instance — while at the same time congratulating itself that it has discarded a crude concept of matter. All that it builds up is based on knowledge and memory gathered from the senses.

In using this term “intellectualism” we should acknowledge that true intellectualism is essential and advances the detailed understanding of God as All-in-all and man as part and parcel of that All-

in-all. False intellectualism enlarges egotism. It ranges from highly developed, highly sophisticated forms of physical belief to down-to-earth physical beliefs adamantly and even obstinately held. But whatever the level there is the same false basis — belief in the reality of matter and its would-be laws, even though there is nothing to matter but what mortal mind believes. And the processes are the same — a continual pulling down of the old barns of previous convictions and a constant building of new barns of fresh convictions which seem in advance of the old, all in the attempt to dispense with the spiritual and find personal security in dealing with what life presents. The aim of false intellectualism is to “eat, drink, and be merry” with its own determined opinions.

Jesus was symbolizing in this parable the disease whereby a man’s intellectual proficiency catches hold of him and inflates his egotism to such a degree that he wants nothing else but to enlarge continually that intellectual capacity and output, even to the extent of pulling down the old barns of his accumulated knowledge in order to take up a higher and (by the standards of that world) more fruitful theorizing, with still more storage.

Soul is forever expressed in man in his desire for answers, for definiteness, for certainty, but the individual may be misled or mistaken in his choice of the channels through which his intellectual capacity is directed. If he chooses delusive material for the exercise of intellectual energy, he is bound to be unsatisfied in his searches, however much he goes on developing his egotism with the products of mortal mind’s reasoning and does everything he can to bolster up his fallacious theories. Jesus is showing that this is foolish because he is attempting to build up that which has no substance and trying to do it by means of methods which continually let him down. But because he is a Soul-being who must inevitably “home” to Principle, his true identity does finally overtake him and draw him to what he is. Principle through his Soul-sense requires of him either here or hereafter that he employs his intellectual ability in the right direction and comes to the consciousness of the spiritual through using materials and methods which are intrinsically spiritual and not tainted by

THE RICH FOOL

any form of belief in matter. Soul-sense with its true certainties eventually enters his experience because he has been actively seeking certainty all along the line, though seeking it in directions which by their very nature can never yield what he yearns for. Jesus is telling us by inference that we should not indulge in waste of intellectual energy, but should have the wisdom to seek progress and certainty through accepting the resources of Soul itself.

An outstanding example of this is seen in the case of Saul, who was pre-eminently intellectual according to the world's standards but was led to become a truly intellectual being, able to spread Christianity with all its appeal to common sense and reason. The lesson must be to begin aright and therefore proceed along a path that is right, rather than start wrongly through egotism, only to be eventually ejected from opinionated reasoning, either through suffering or the sudden illumination of Science (as was the experience of Saul when he took on the new identity of Paul).

Intellectualism if allowed sway will always either make the individual self-satisfied and blind to further progress, or else lead him along a path which will never bring him to a revelation of Truth, but leave him always fishing for some further point along a road that he hopes will one day bring him to a conclusion, but which it will never do. In Science the conclusion is first admitted and the proof follows. Intellectualism builds up and up and reaches a conclusion and then throws it aside and builds up again, repeating the whole process over and over. It breeds continual unrest, which is a sign that what is being sought is not true substance, therefore men discard one thing and try another, never satisfied. The true riches of Soul's giving build up steadily into ever deeper convictions. Nothing of Soul is ever pulled down or destroyed, because all is rightly founded and immovable in Principle. One can grow so self-satisfied through intellectualism as to become blinded to pure and therefore apparently simple truth. That is the way to bury the soul, the touch, and the feeling of Science "in the grave-clothes of its letter" (S&H 367:2-3).

All along the line egotism makes a man feel that he can arrive at a point where he can lean back on the aggregate of intellectual knowl-

edge and “know it all,” but that very attitude takes away the heart and soul of Science. If he feels he knows a great deal, he may eat, drink, and be merry with it all day — that is, be immersed in complacency — but the danger of that attitude is clearly revealed in this parable. It is “minus the unction of divine Science” (S&H 164:13), and so avails nothing. If ever a man feels that spiritual healing, for example, is a matter of routine and formula because of everything he knows, he has lost the whole soul of it.

“This night thy soul shall be required of thee.” In the fear-filled “night” of error’s apparent reality, whether as sin, disease, or death, it is not mere intellectual knowledge which is required of us, but only our “soul” (our spiritual sense) conscious of the certainties of Soul itself, attuned to the very atmosphere of the divine. Nothing else avails. The “night” comes down so quickly if we look at sense testimony and say, for instance, “That poor man is ill and I must help him,” but only Soul can bestow the calm conviction, “He thinks he is ill, but that cannot be true, and Soul will give me the ideas whereby I can prove to myself and to him that there is no illness for him to experience.” Intellectualism cannot produce Soul-sense. Its whole quality and feel is alien to that Soul-sense so wonderfully brought out in the Beatitudes, for example. Soul alone produces the mood and spiritual state depicted there.

“Soul has infinite resources with which to bless mankind” (S&H 60:29). Those infinite resources come into focus as we lay our “earthly all on the altar of divine Science” (S&H 55:23-24), enter the presence of God through sincere devotion and love for all that Science teaches, and affirm the fact that we are the specific presence of God in the particular situation.

The processes which sense requires are entirely contrary to the revelations of Soul. Sense has to store; it has no ability other than to grab something, try to contain it in something and keep it. Soul is the opposite. Therefore above all what we need is a state of thought attuned to and prepared for Soul’s impressions, and this comes in the ratio of our turning from what the senses say and dwelling with the things of Spirit. There has to be “a famine of sense” to have “a feast

THE RICH FOOL

of Soul" (My.263:6-7).

Just before giving this parable Jesus said, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," for being the reflection of God, Principle, he has no power of possession. What he can have is the continual unlimited joy of reflection, which means not the storage of knowledge, but the use of all his intellectual capacities to keep him supple and prepared to let go the manna of yesterday, pick up through reflection the new ideas forever being expressed by Principle, and enjoy the perpetual newness they bring in his life. The so-called intellectual feels unable to let go and let God stream through him with the joy of inspiration based on Principle alone. But nearly everyone has had an experience where preparation either for speech or action has produced something which proved wholly inadequate for the occasion as it arose. Every minute brings its own fresh challenge and new demand, so we can never rely on what we have stored. If we try to do so, we close the door on the inspiration which would otherwise have flowed direct from Principle. That is why Jesus said, "ye shall be brought before governors and kings [before beliefs trying to dominate us with their so-called authority] for my sake . . . but when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."

It could be said that the storage of knowledge is the death's head to its usefulness, whereas the development of one's capacity to become aware of Principle through its symbolic expressions is the development of the truly intellectual, as against that form of intellectualism which is based on matter, material knowledge, and material history. The storage of knowledge can become useless; the daily practice of spiritual understanding (however small or great) never does.

The storage of knowledge in the scribes and Pharisees had so clogged their mental capacities that they could not accept Truth in its pure expression as given them by the Master. The criterion of true intellectualism will always be the simplicity with which it voices

Truth, and here we see the difference between Jesus and the intellectuals of his day.

If we tried to store daylight, we would have to shutter up all the windows to keep it inside and then we would only have darkness. We cannot store light or life or anything spiritual. We can express it, reflect it, *be* it, but it will always be in the movement of life. The spiritual is a flow of ideas and will not stay for storage. It is, as John says, "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," and it has never been contained or stored.

The instruction of the Master was not only to take no thought for the future as regards food and clothing, but also no thought as to our ability to meet any situation which may arise, for it must be obvious that only Principle could place a man in that position and therefore Principle has endowed him through reflection with the means of fulfilling Principle's part in that position. If water finds its own level, so does man always find himself at the level equal to his capacity to maintain himself in it through reflecting the ideas given him by Mind.

Jesus was "the most scientific man that ever trod the globe. He plunged beneath the material surface of things, and found the spiritual cause" (S&H 313:23-26). If a man uses his so-called intellectual ability as a tool for that purpose and then drops the tool in adoration of what it has shown him — the "adorable One" (S&H 16:29) — then he will never be egotistical, however highly gifted, and will never lose sight of the fact that the tool is only a tool, even at its best, and must not be endowed with the purpose which it merely serves. The purpose it serves is to move consciousness into the spiritual sense of being and speak to it of Soul. So what we need is the admission that beyond the letter is the presence of Soul and that this is what we are going to enjoy. All that Principle "requires" of us is that the symbolic language used by the Mind of Christ drops away to leave with us only that which it symbolized. "Soul must be God; since we learn Soul only as we learn God, by spiritualization. . . . Whatever cannot be taken in by mortal mind — by human reflection, reason, or belief — must be the unfathomable Mind, which 'eye hath not seen, nor ear

heard' ” (Un.28:17-22).

The Master was certainly an intellectual in that he knew his Scriptures and the history of his race, but every aspect of it was to him but the story of Principle expressing itself through man and therefore taught him how to improve his own present performance in that expression. But his intellectual capacity both as regards the Scriptures and the so-called law of the Jews exceeded that of those who had so stored it that it had obstructed their ability to discern its spiritual purpose and momentum.

Mrs Eddy too was undoubtedly someone whose intellectual scope and breadth was of the highest quality. We cannot read her works without realizing this, and yet all of it lies at the feet of the divine Principle which she had discovered and so scientifically adored.

We need to be alert that we are not drawn into the mazes of mortal mind through egotism. The following paragraph in “Science and Health” reveals some of the paths to which we should be awake so that we do not pursue them but reject them out of hand, for in Science Jesus’ instruction, “let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” is essential: “Material substances or mundane formations, astronomical calculations, and all the paraphernalia of speculative theories, based on the hypothesis of material law or life and intelligence resident in matter, will ultimately vanish, swallowed up in the infinite calculus of Spirit” (209:25-30). If that is so — and it is — then it is this spiritual calculus whose reasoning we should always follow. There is infinite scope in Science for the student to pursue a path continually filled with fresh spiritual realization, much of which may be entirely new to him, and this will become more and more spontaneous in the exact ratio that he becomes more and more conscious of God’s presence in all things, especially in the ideas which are given to him.

The parable ends: “So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” To be “rich toward God” is to be rich in understanding of what God is and does. Therefore the lesson is to keep ourselves constantly rich in realization of what Principle is and does and our relationship to Principle as its expression. This will

immediately dissuade us from any sense of having to store up knowledge in order to become rich. If we cultivate the ability to have always a rich appreciation and understanding of what God is and does, and our relationship to that, we have real riches, ready for any call which may be made upon them.

The richest man on earth kept himself determinedly poor in both personal capacity and responsibility, but was always "rich toward God." He said, "The Son can do nothing of himself [note the word "nothing"], but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." We are safe when we use our intellectual capacity to affirm and reaffirm our conviction through every fresh channel that God is the only Mind and that all true consciousness emanates from that Mind — and when we are as clear as Jesus was that we can of our own selves do nothing and also as clear that we can accomplish everything which Principle sets us to do, for the reason which he gave on another occasion: "the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works."

The memorizing of passages from the Bible and from the writings of Mrs Eddy cannot of course be classified as the storage of knowledge based on egotistical theory and un-Principled assumptions, for when referred to these passages give ideas which are clearly not of our own making, but are sources from which we gather inspiration, causing our continual gratitude as they lead us to acknowledge that their origin must be God. They therefore lead us away from self to the Principle which gave them to those who spoke or wrote them for the benefit of mankind. Our attitude is one of partaking of what *they* have to say, and this very attitude keeps us clear of egotistical theory which lacks Principle. Whether through reading, through memory, or through speech we are safe if we keep on the path which Mrs Eddy followed and of which she tells us in her verse:

"I will listen for Thy voice,
Lest my footsteps stray;
I will follow and rejoice
All the rugged way" (Mis.398:1-4).