

TOO MUCH SUN 2

My talk about souls evoked (provoked?) a number of "souls." Some thought I might have trivialized the idea of souls. I re-read my words and edited a few. I meant to include David Bell's web site in case any want to follow his series on *"The Doctrine of Discovery,"* which begins with an informative section on "souls." To get Dave's *Ridged Valley Reflections*, go to — yakamamission.wordpress.com/

Here are four of the thoughtful responses received from the last Blue Sheet:

— *"I have a quote from Albert Einstein in my bathroom (where I can think of it often) which says, 'There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle'."*

— *"What difference does it make whether or not we have a soul? Or that it is higher or lower than that of other creatures? Dead is dead. We will live on in the memories of those who knew us, missed by some and not missed by others. I trust that the Great Mystery knew what he/she was doing with the never ending cycle of life. If only we could accept things that way! To me that's the meaning of faith."*

— *"Whatever spirit the individual comes to embody comes from beyond ourselves from the relationships and/or environment which the individual chooses and gives its character to the soul. Since the soul is a function of our brain, I doubt if that survives death. I am not an 'immortality-of-the-soul person' (read Greek idea). What might survive is the Holy Spirit which is from God/Is God and inhabit. eternity. What sort of life after life this Imparts to us is, for me, a mystery .*

— *"I just started writing a piece entitled 'Brain, yes. But mind? Spirit?' It's a take-off from Hawking but adds some reflections stimulated by two books I read recently, 'The Journey of Man: A Genetic Odyssey' by Spencer Wells and 'The Brain That Changes Itself' by Norman Doidge. Your reflections on the connectedness of all things set me to thinking about that aspect of the topic as I sipped a Starbucks tall bold this morning."*

One lady was disturbed that I should even raise a question about "what the Bible teaches." She said that she believed "everything in the Bible," and was upset that I might not.

It is true that "soul" is a Bible word...I mean, that it appears in numerous places in the Bible and suggests a dimension in our being that has been long acknowledged. *"He restores my soul..."* said the psalmist, and at some deep level we think we know what it means.

My first encounter with the word came before I was thinking very far in concepts. It was one night in my early childhood when my mother was teaching us the *"Now I lay me down to sleep..."* prayer, the one that *"prays the Lord my soul to keep"*. I was apparently as much a questioner of things then as I am now. "What is a soul?" I asked. In response to whatever she said I asked another question, "Where is my soul?" I can remember going to sleep sometimes thinking where in my body my soul might be and how God could take it and how I could keep God from taking it. Now I am old I am still asking unanswerable questions.

Dave Bell's tracing of ancient and more recent ideas about the soul idea raises the question of the assumptions held regarding the status and relative value of "souls." As he reports there was a time when Rome was proclaiming that the only valued soul was a Christian soul, thus any land not occupied by Christians was open for the claiming. (Picture European "conquerors" planting the cross and claiming the continent from its "pagan" occupants.) Is there any residual belief and practice of that kind of soul thinking today? Spiritual one-up-man-ship?

My friend, Ken, was telling me his thoughts on our final trip to Mexico in mid-May. He liked the Native American idea of "Great Spirit," for its inclusiveness. That "Spirit" pervades life and every living being is endowed with "Spirit." I suppose this translates into soul. His idea was that the greatest failure, "the unforgivable sin" was to turn against this inner gift, this inner Spirit, or against one's own soul. He would not claim, as some do, that this gives humans priority over all other life.

Here are some "soul" thoughts to complete this page. They don't complete the discussion.

"To every man there openeth a way, and ways, and a way.

The high soul takes the high way, the low soul treads the low,

And in between on the misty flat, the rest drift to and fro." (John Oxenham) — Art Morgan, 7/7/11

