

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 first two selections are from — TALKS BY JOHN W. DOORLY ON THE SCIENCE OF THE BIBLE — VOLUME SIX. The other selection is from JOHN L. MORGAN'S COLWYN BAY SUMMER SCHOOL—1952—THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

December 3, 2001

God the Only Cause and Creator

The Shumanite Woman Bears a Son: Life as Spirit

Now we come to the tone of Life as Spirit, which we have summarized like this: The consecration of Life enables woman to give birth through the grace of the Spirit.

In Life as Mind the story concerned a widow woman, but now in Life as Spirit we come to the story of the “great woman” of Shunem, who gave birth to a son. Remember that it is all symbolic. The prophets who wrote this were thinking of Israel; they longed for Israel to manifest that womanhood which would give birth to the Christ-idea. The first step for any of us is to be the widow woman—to be widowed, in thought from materiality, and to have that great overpowering longing for heavenly inspiration which prepares thought to receive it. Then we can become the woman who gives birth.

“And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread.” When the widow, the good human belief, empties her vessels of thought, and inspiration comes to her, then she becomes a great woman, who welcomes the spiritual idea. “And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither” (II Kings 4: 8-10). When you are “great” in true womanhood then you see the need of making provision for the things of the Spirit.

And it fell on a day, that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there. And he said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunammite. And when he had called her, she stood before him. And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? Wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people” (II Kings 4:11-13). She wasn't seeking prosperity in matter, the developing spiritual idea was all she cared about.

And he said, What then is to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old. And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door. And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, “Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid” (II Kings 4:14-16). Many spiritually-minded men and women come to the point where they don't see how the spiritual will develop to them, or how they will be able to give birth to it. Someone who is more advanced than they are may say to them, “The idea will soon be developing to you in all kinds of ways,” and they often will not believe it, but it always comes about.

“And the woman conceived, and bore a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life” (II Kings 4:17). That ends the tone of Life as Spirit, and it shows how the consecration of Life enables woman to give birth through the grace of the Spirit. Because of the willingness to have empty vessels the widowed sense gives way to womanhood and motherhood.

The prophets were thinking of Israel giving birth to the spiritual idea, but think what the symbol means to us today. The spiritual idea is created in our thought through true desire, and then we come to the point where we make provision for it to come in and abide with us, and so the idea begins to be born.

Elisha Heals the Poisonous Pottage: Life as Soul (3)

The tone of Life as Soul continues at verse 38 of Chapter 4: “And Elisha came again to Gilgal:” — “Gilgal” means “circle,” and it is used as a symbol of infinity: — “and there was a dearth in the land;” —there is a dearth of spiritual discernment all over the world today; — “and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him: and he said unto his servant, Set on the great pot, and seethe pottage for the sons of the prophets.” He was going to feed them with great spiritual facts. “And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine,” — how often we do that when we go out into the field of thought to gather herbs, which are a symbol of the third day, — “and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage: for they knew them not” — they took into thought unidentified beliefs. “So they poured out for the men to eat. And it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, O thou man of God, there is death in the pot. And they could not eat thereof” (II Kings 4:38-40). If you try to introduce into the system of divine metaphysics something that is based merely on material reason, then your sense of it becomes harmful.

“But he said, Then bring meal” — you remember the woman who hid the leaven in three measures of meal; “meal” symbolizes essential spiritual fact. “And he cast it into the pot; and he said, Pour out for the people, that they may eat. And there was no harm in the pot” (II Kings 4: 41). Elisha translated thought that was deadened, into a living and substantial factor. You know, it is becoming so clear to us what was the real purpose of the prophets of Israel in editing these stories. They weren’t interested in them as little historical or legendary incidents, but rather as illustrations of the development of the Christ-idea, which to them was all-important. The one thing that mattered to them was the development of the right idea of God in Israel’s thinking. This little story of a wild vine would have been of little interest to them except as a symbol of spiritual fact. Remember that they took down with them into Babylon all the mass of myth, saga, legend, folk-lore, and somewhat inaccurate history which had come down through the centuries, and they selected out of that material only that which would illustrate their “seed plot” in the first chapter of Genesis. They told their developing story according to that “seed plot” and so every little episode is used as an illustration of divine fact.

JOHN 5: 1, 2

...**Verse 1.** This feast Was not a Passover.

Verse 2. I think why John mentions the sheep market is because mortal thought is like a flock of sheep, idly following whatever leads and having no individual initiative. We tend to follow idly what the papers say, or what custom says, or what our nationality says, or what the weather says, or something like that. “All we like sheep have gone astray” (Isaiah 53:6). Well, we don’t have to be like sheep; so it would appear that the impotent man had not at this time grasped his individual initiative as the Son of God.

“**Bethesda**” means, “house of kindness” or “house of mercy.” It is like Jesus saying to the woman at the well, “If thou knewest the gift of God,” or like Mrs. Eddy’s “priceless sense of the dear Father’s loving-kindness” (S. and H. 366:1,2). Even the impotent man had been dwelling in that house for thirty-eight years, yet he hadn’t recognized it.

“**having five porches**” - they, of course, represent the five physical senses. Like sheep, we follow what the physical senses say, without reasoning spiritually; the physical senses are the basis of material reasoning.

Science and Health 274: 12,13; 17-20. “The senses of Spirit abide in Love, and they demonstrate Truth and Life... When, what we erroneously term the five physical senses are misdirected, they are simply the manifested beliefs of mortal mind, which affirm that life, substance, and intelligence are material, instead of spiritual.” If, instead of naming them erroneously, we identify them truthfully, what are they? They are the infinite senses of Spirit; one infinite spiritual sense.

Verse 3. We all lie waiting, hoping for chance to produce something out of a hat for us. Perhaps we think, “I’ll just read the scientific statement of being and go to sleep, and maybe I’ll be all right in the morning.” The time to be all right is now, but mortal belief is always waiting, always putting it off.

JOHN 5: 1, 2 (cont.)

Verse 4. This angel is the divine idea which comes from Truth and stirs up human thought until it will accept the spiritual fact. Angels are always symbols of God's ideas, and their office is "to stir the human mind to a change of base on which it may yield to the harmony of the divine Mind" (S. and H. 162:9-11). Until thought is stirred onto a different basis and is found to be divine idea, then that angel stirs the water in vain, and we don't get down to it and receive the benefit.

...Science and Health 540:6-16. "...the prophet referred to divine law as stirring up the belief in evil to its utmost, when bringing it to the surface and reducing it to its common denominator, nothingness. The muddy riverbed must be stirred in order to purify the stream. In moral chemicalization, when the symptoms of evil, illusion, are aggravated, we may think in our ignorance that the Lord hath wrought an evil; but we ought to know that God's law uncovers so-called sin and its effects, only that Truth may annihilate all sense of evil and all power to sin."

Verse 5. Thirty-eight years was the period of the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness. We refer to it as forty years, but actually they travelled from Egypt to the borders of the promised land in two years. That would be Mind and Spirit leading one to Soul, which is the promised land; and then we are frightened by the price that mortals have to pay to enter, — that is, to lay down the mortal concept. They said, "Oh no, not just yet," and so they turned back and wandered for thirty-eight years until a new generation had arisen. We don't have to do the same; that story is included in the Bible for our instruction.

Salvation

Verse 6. Jesus wanted to see how much real desire for wholeness that man had, — for spiritual wholeness. He might have said "Do you really love the spiritual, or do you just want a healing?" Now it's a thoroughly right thing to want a healing, but to love the spiritual is divine. Jesus was really trying to get him to see that salvation is salvation from the belief that we need salvation.

Unity of Good 59:19-3. "Jesus came to rescue men from these very illusions to which he seemed to conform: from the illusion which calls sin real, and man a sinner, needing a Saviour; the illusion which calls sickness real, and man an invalid, needing a physician; the illusion that death is as real as Life. From such thoughts — mortal inventions, one and all — Christ Jesus came to save men, through ever-present and eternal good." That is, ultimately, what we all need salvation from: the belief that we have a real condition requiring salvation. (Yet this point must be approached with sincerity and humility if we are to avoid hypocrisy.) And so when Jesus asked the man, "Wilt thou be made whole?" he just wanted to see where his thought was. Was he just hoping for something to turn up and ameliorate his physical condition, or was he longing to see that the fact is that man has never been born into this status?

Initiative

Verse 7. He admitted that he hadn't got that sense of manhood which has initiative; initiative is one of the great qualities of manhood, which we all need to culture in order to progress in Science. Peter in the Gospel exemplified initiative. He rushed in, perhaps, where angels feared to tread, but thank God for Peter: he did something, and whether he made mistakes or not doesn't matter. "Have a go," and that's how you learn: that's initiative. Peter was the one who had the initiative and the courage to say to Jesus, "Thou art the Christ" he might have been wrong, but he said what he thought, and there's much credit in that. Look at the initiative that the great characters in the world have had: the initiative that Jesus had, that Mrs. Eddy had, that John Dooley had. Without initiative we don't have the ability to grasp the opportunities that present themselves. Initiative is the counterfact of apathy. Mrs. Eddy says, "mental idleness or apathy is always egotism and animality" ('00. 8:14-17).

Initiative (cont.)

So the man had not at this point, that sense of initiative which would grasp the opportunity, and because he hadn't got it, he said, "While I am climbing down another steppeth down before me," — which is a very poor excuse indeed. I remember once when I had a bad school report and I came out bottom of the class, my father asked me what I was doing at the bottom. I thought I had the perfect answer, and I said, "Well, someone has to be bottom," but it wouldn't wash; he said, "And somebody has to be top, and why shouldn't it be you?" "Another stepped down before me," — that's just the human mind. We regard Science as a race, and we think that someone is making much more progress than we are but it isn't a race, it's the gift of God, individually, collectively and universally, and it's to be accepted and loved. So Jesus didn't bother with this excuse.

Verses 8, 9. Jesus' answer was to state the calculus to him in a way which he could follow. "Rise"— the Word; you rise in thought. He said, in effect, "resurrect yourself out of that mental apathy, lift your vision above the mist, because that isn't the truth about man. Your identity is identification with the one Life, which is activity; and power, and living. Come on, come out of it, it isn't you."

Then the Christ tone: "take up thy bed" — reckon man in Science; spiritualize your ideals. You are not lying on a lot of mortal beliefs, you are dwelling in the realm of spiritual idea."

Christianity: "and walk" — walking is always a lovely sense of Christianity. Go forward, keep in step with the whole of mankind, express the activity which is yours to express.

(Verse 9, to "walked): that was obedience, and obedience is the tone of Science.