

February 4— SUBJECT: Spirit

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 selection this week is from — THE GOSPEL OF JOHN — A VERBATIM REPORT OF JOHN L.MORGAN’S COLWYN BAY SUMMER SCHOOL —1952.

The other piece is from Peggy Brook’s Booklet — GOD’S NATURE AS SPIRIT.

JOHN 3

(Verses 1-6) Verse 1. Nicodemus was, traditionally, one of the three richest men in Jerusalem, and we may suppose that he would represent the mentality that wishes to translate matter substance into spiritual substance.

Verse 2. It is evident that there were the beginnings of resurrection: thought was lifted off a material basis. (See S. and H. 268:1-9)

Verse 5. “Verily, verily” again - the divine and it’s correlative, Truth and Spirit. That is, if thought is born of the, divine consciousness, one sees everywhere the reflection of Spirit. There after (verses 4-6) Nicodemus failed to follow what Jesus was telling him, because his thought would not go on to Truth and Spirit. Perhaps we, in helping somebody, don’t seem to take very much notice of their physical condition, and they might say, “Well, don’t these Scientists take any notice of the body?” Truth and Spirit is radical, and “that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and doctoring the flesh, or healing the flesh, or listening to what the flesh is saying, is (within limits) no use at all. We must turn to the facts of Spirit, and as we learn to do that with confidence, the flesh has to respond. It just has to; because, what is the flesh? It’s the objectification of our misconception of Spirit. It’s our ignorance of Spirit, gone solid, and how can we doctor an ignorance, whether it has gone solid or whether it is still fluid in thought? So we have to turn to the spiritual fact, to the Truth.

Spirit and Flesh

Then Jesus is telling them, then, that one must be born of water and of the Spirit, it’s lifting thought off a material basis. Perhaps that’s still a sense of resurrection carried on from the previous tone; it seems to run on for a chapter or two; but we are beginning to see here Jesus translating thought: he is beginning to show that what we look at and think is flesh, — now let me say this carefully, — is truly Spirit; but, — and this is a most delicate point in Science, — that does not mean that we spiritualize matter. It is a question of consciousness. It is never true to say in Science, when we look at a lump of flesh, that this is Spirit, and yet leave it as flesh; because if we really understand what we say, we will transform that flesh and it will become healthy, it will become young, and active, and vital, and everything about it will be less fleshly than it was. If it is not less fleshly than it was, then we are just talking nonsense, — we are trying to say that error is Truth. Let us follow this thought further, in a calm and gentle way.

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Translation

Miscellaneous Writings 67:24-6. “Do you believe in translation? If your question refers to language, whereby one expresses the sense of words in one language by equivalent words in another, I do. If you refer to the removal of a person to heaven, without his subjection to death, I modify my affirmative answer. I believe in this removal being possible after all the footsteps requisite have been taken up to the very throne, up to the spiritual sense and fact of divine substance, intelligence, Life, and Love. This translation is not the work of moments; it requires both time and eternity. It means more than mere disappearance to the human sense; it must include also man’s changed appearance and diviner form visible to those beholding him here.” We won’t strain out gnats and swallow camels, because we cannot work out life’s problem in a day. We never need to feel a sense of frustration, or a compulsion to see these things as all-in-all. It is neither wise nor the demand of Science; but here’s a lovely hint of what we are going to see,- that translation is the work of “both time and eternity..” That is to say, we have to start translating now, in what we call time, and that will fulfil itself by giving us not merely a more spiritual sense of existence, but a more spiritual actual existence, “visible to those beholding him here.” I think that’s marvellous.. It answers the illusion that spiritualization is solely something in thought. Spiritualization is not solely something in thought, be cause human thought and human body are one, and if thought is truly spiritualized the body and the attitude to life must also reflect that spiritualization, else thought is not honestly spiritualized. (See S. and H. 167: 52-3)

There is another side to that picture which is perhaps more comforting... I may say that my aunt Matilda is much sweeter and easier to get on with now than she used to be ten years ago. Actually, is it her, or have I altered? Somewhere between her and me there has been a translation, — “man’ s changed appearance and diviner form visible to those beholding him here.” Now that’s true about everybody: it should be said, about us all that we are a little sweeter or nicer or better in some way than we were a few years ago; and that is beginnings of translation.

What brings it about? well, these things are the fruits of the Spirit, and the fruits of the Spirit are the effects of Truth, one infinite Truth which is the divine ideal dwelling in God, and not knowing anything about us as a mortal, but which is always calculating itself in terms of the fruits of the Spirit, in terms of loveliness, friendliness, unselfishness, — every desirable quality. That is the Son of God translating itself in terms of the Son of man. Let me say once again that this may be a pexplexing point to some of us; if you find anything perplexing in Science, leave it until growth experience interpret it to you.

INTERVAL

Let us consider some of the details of the Nicodemus story again, beginning at verse 3. S. and H. 274:9-11, “Ideas,... are born of Spirit, and are not mere inferences drawn from material premises.” If you are born of the Spirit, that development which comes to you called an improved human belief is not an inference of a deduction from material premises. It’s not a case of “My sore is getting better.” It’s a case of, “Thank God, I’m seeing a little more of Truth than I saw yesterday. Nothing ever happens from “the lower end.” Nothing happens from the darkness; it’s just negation, there’s nothing there. The new birth depends on and proceeds from Truth and Spirit.

Verse 4. Apparently Nicodemus wasn't prepared to take that step over, - that pass over, — when he asked if a man can be born again from his mother's womb. As with us, it just means that he wasn't prepared to lay down the mortal at that point. To him, to be born, again was a development from a material premise, but truly it means to be born of the matrix of Truth and Love. There isn't any other womb. Those of you who have given thought to this arrangement of symbols on a chart which we call the matrix will appreciate that that is what we are born of, — we are always in it, the matrix is “the seal of Deity,” and man “has the impress of heaven.” (See S. and H. 511:11,12) It is a word symbol of the womb of the divine Mother. But if you have not been able to devote time and thought and study to the matrix and these symbols, it doesn't matter: accept what you can accept with joy, and the rest of it will look after itself; but don't feel despondent if some of it doesn't make sense to you. There are bound to be states and stages of thought. Born of the matrix: “conceived and born of Truth and love” (S. and H. 463:14).

Verse 5. “of water” — of the elements of thought; “and Of the Spirit” and of divine qualities. I feel that that means that we require both “thought tending spiritually upward,” and the understanding of divine fact. The water and the Spirit; the Word and the Christ.

Verse 6. That is, it must be ‘nay nay’ and ‘yea yea’ for true calculation.

Science and Health 356:9-18, “Jesus reasoned on this subject practically, and controlled sickness, sin, and death on the basis of his spirituality. Understanding the nothingness of material thing, he spoke of flesh and Spirit as the two opposites, — as error and Truth, not contributing in any way to each other's happiness and existence. Jesus knew, ‘It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.’”

“There is neither a present nor an eternal copartnerahip between error and Truth, between flesh and Spirit.” The marginal heading is “Irreconcilable differences.” There is in reality no point of contact between Truth and error, between Spirit and flesh. The only point of contact which they appear to have is in what we call human consciousness, which is a mistaken premise; but they have in fact no point of contact whatever. That is why “a healing” takes place in human consciousness. A healing doesn't take place in Spirit because Spirit doesn't need healing; nor does it take place in matter because matter is just a mistake anyhow. It takes place in human consciousness, which is the name we give to the disappearance of ignorance. Jesus is showing, in this tone of Spirit and Truth, that one does not attain to Truth by trying to spiritualize matter, but by laying matter aside.

Verses 7, 8. That's lovely. As we sit quietly and start thinking things out with Truth, something begins to happen. We are calmed and comforted and something is mended, or healed, or restored, or forgiven; we don't know how it comes about, nor what effect that Truth will have universally; we can “not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth, and that is because we have been loving Truth. If we love Truth, Truth operates through Spirit as a corrective, as an ameliorative, as a comforter, as a renewer.

A SUMMARY

Let us conclude by summarizing this sevenfold sense of Spirit as we have taken it here, feeling the reality of these statements and Jesus' words in connection with them.

Spirit as Mind is the pure unfoldment of reality that is creation. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Spirit as Spirit is the substance of all reality. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Spirit as Soul is the pure understanding of good that constitutes the firmament. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Spirit as Principle is the strength of oneness. "He that cometh from heaven is above all ... For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand."

Spirit as Life is the rhythm of Spirit that is infinite progression—the chain of scientific being. "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

Spirit as Truth is the one pure reflection appearing- as the divine standard. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Spirit as Love is the purity of holiness that blesses man and abides with him forever. "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with You for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

There has always been resistance to the acceptance or the allness of Spirit and the nothingness of matter. Perhaps this is because in general the spiritual has been thought of as vague and intangible, and has never