

DEATH, THE SECOND BIRTH

Mrs. Abigail Scott Duniway Tells of Its Necessity.

Mrs. Abigail Scott Duniway addressed the society of Bible Spiritualists at its hall on Second street last evening, by special invitation. She said in part: "I have chosen as my theme 'The Visit of Nicodemus to Jesus by Night.' I wish first to say that I appear before you as an advocate of no ism. I should feel drawn to these meetings much more strongly than can now be possible, if, instead of adopting the name of Spiritualism, which has come to stand for so much in the public mind which you cannot indorse, you would call yourselves by some such name as 'Students of Psychic Law.' However, the name of your society is not a matter for me to decide; and I trust you will pardon the suggestion, whether you consider it or not.

"Now to my subject: If you will turn to the third chapter of John, you will find that there was a man named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; and the same came to Jesus by night. Did you ever notice that the average 'man of the Pharisees,' of whom Nicodemus was one, is so deeply incrustated within the shell of some organized ism that when his mind begins to expand in the birth throes of desire for more light along psychic or spiritual lines, his first impulse is to seek it in secret, or, as Nicodemus did, 'by night?'

"The most wonderful part of the wonderful career of Jesus of Nazareth was the simplicity and naturalness of his teachings. He broke the unnatural laws of the Jewish Sabbath without fear of consequences, and wrought what the world in its ignorance called miracles as naturally as he would sit at meat with his followers. He lived the 'simple life' to the uttermost, and both by precept and example enlightened the dormant understanding of all who were willing to study the divine revelations of Nature. Nicodemus, being stirred by his teachings, but unable to comprehend them, said unto him: Rabbi, we know thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these things that thou dost unless God be with him.

"Jesus answered and said unto him: 'Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.'

"Remember, always, that Jesus lived close to the heart of Nature. He recognized the kinship of every sentient thing with the eternal mind, of which we are all a part. But Nicodemus, failing to comprehend the supreme naturalness of this simple fact, said: 'How can a man be born when he is old?'

"And Jesus answered, calling his attention to a natural law that permeates all physical life, by saying: 'Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.' And Nicodemus said: 'How can these things be?'

"Every physician knows, and every man, woman and child ought to know, that all embryo life, from the atom to the man, exists in water, and is born in water. This is the natural birth. The tiniest seed cannot escape the environment of this natural law, nor can man escape it.

"But Nicodemus, though a master in Israel, failed to comprehend the primal, universal law, by which the great Teacher was attempting to lead him up to a knowledge of the ultimate birth of the spirit of man, which would only occur after he became a living soul. And Jesus added, in his effort to make his meaning clearer: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the spirit is spirit.'

"Still Nicodemus did not understand, and Jesus, being amazed at his ignorance, said: 'Art thou a master in Israel and understandest not these things?'

"Again he said: 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the spirit.'

"And yet," said the speaker, "we are gravely taught that the new birth is a mysterious, experimental change within these physical bodies, in the face of the spiritual significance of a fundamental, universal fact, so beautifully explained by the great teacher that every child can be made to understand it.

"Scientific research is slowly, but surely, leading men to understand the true significance of the new birth. The new, or second birth is simply the birth of the spirit, through the chemical change we call death, which releases the soul from the body and permits it to return to God, who gave it. The change we call death is as necessary to our spiritual unfolding as is our first, or physical birth from the water in which we existed before we were born.

"The secret of happiness hereafter lies wholly in our efforts to do right in the body. We must all sow as we reap. There is no escape from this law. It is as unerring as it is universal. The law of retribution is as universal as the law of evolution.

"I know not how many aeons man existed as an animal before the eternal mystery of life, that we call God, breathed into him the breath of the spirit, so he might become a living soul. But let man become convinced without the possibility of a doubt that he must reap as a spirit what he has sown in the flesh, whether it be of good or evil, and the inexorable law of self-preservation will lead him in the ways of righteousness."