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**"THE MATURITY OF CHILDLIKENESS"**

Isn't it wonderful that, whatever our age, we can never lose our childlikeness, our childlike qualities of inquisitiveness, wonder, spontaneity, innocence, expectancy, teachableness and the childlike naturalness of just learning by doing? We can learn many valuable lessons from the way children sometimes learn how to do things by just doing them. They seem in many cases to work things out and just do them, whereas we would be hesitant and need everything to be cut and dried before we took a step. Our spiritual maturity needs to be balanced with this childlike spontaneity and trust, so that we can learn more of the practice of Christianity by doing. The many, many words we know as mature students have to be proven by the deeds in our daily affairs.

A child was asked, if she had the choice of being pretty or good, which would she choose? She answered she would like to be pretty because she could be good at any time! I would call that mature reasoning! Fortunately, we don't have to make a choice between the qualities of Spirit we reflect. They are all present for everyone to claim, all the time. Childlikeness is a spiritual quality that cannot be depleted however much we use it. It cannot age, deteriorate or be tainted by time, and never needs to be renewed. Each of you includes this quality of childlikeness because you are, "the child of His care." <sup>1</sup> You are, not just shall be, the child of God.

The spring bulb containing everything within itself that is needed to bring it to full bloom. Likewise, childlikeness is a budding quality within consciousness, which conceives and produces new and fresh ideas, which are then cultivated and nurtured from root to fruit.

The most successful man who ever trod the earth was our Master Christ Jesus, and he never lost his childlikeness. This same spiritual quality was nurtured in the development and fulfilment of his career. Just listen to the way Luke describes the way Jesus was being nursed and nurtured as a child <sup>2</sup>. "And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him." Then, at twelve years, after conversing with the teachers and doctors in the

synagogue, Luke tells us that "... Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." Firstly, he waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom and grace. Then, later he increased further in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man.

This evidence of childlike maturity was the unfoldment and preparation for his public practice. The childlike qualities of innocence, humility, meekness and spontaneity enabled him, through humble prayer with his Father, to meet the spiritual needs of those who came to him for healing. He went on to fulfil his mission with divine honours in the three years of his full ministry.

Our Leader, Mary Baker Eddy, was also childlike in her trust in God. Her work as Discoverer, Founder, Teacher, Lecturer, healer and Leader of this Science was accomplished also through childlike maturity. Even as a child she would not let her sense of a God as a loving Father be tarnished through the influence of "Old Theology".

In his book 'Twelve Years with Mrs Eddy,' Tomlinson writes <sup>3</sup> that Mrs Eddy was a Leader because she permitted God to lead her. How we can all learn from both our Master's and Mrs Eddy's examples of childlikeness, of being willing to be divinely led in any situation. We can see this quality of thought also when Mrs Eddy wrote from the heart, "Shepherd, show me how to go ..." <sup>4</sup>

Both Mrs Eddy and Jesus required us to be childlike, well knowing the resistance of the adult human mind against the things of Spirit, which it does not understand. Why did they ask us to express this childlikeness? The answer was given to us twenty centuries ago and still applies. It is the quality of thought that enables us to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. This is the heavenly state of consciousness that is needed in order to receive revelation and healing.

Material sense, with its wilfulness, pride of opinion, its desire to be seen and heard, has to wait outside the gate of the kingdom until it is humbled and refined sufficiently to be received in. This is why Christian Science is totally redemptive and not remedial. What I mean by this is that if we think healing a sick body, or extending life in matter is working out our salvation, we are mistaken. Christian Science healing is redemptive in that every healing has to be a putting-off of the limitations of matter and a yielding to God's will; accepting His love, and loving to know Him better, and to feel His presence.

A friend of mine related to me that three months after Christian Science had been introduced to her, she awoke in the middle of the night paralysed. She could not move her legs at all. She said that what she had learned about God's care for man in

that short time enabled her not to be afraid. She said that she lay still and quiet and loved God! She just loved God! After some time she fell asleep and awoke in the morning completely free. I call that childlike maturity!

Just think how often we allow fear to overrule our sense of God's presence, and panic! We then start to petition or plead God's love for us, which yes, is legitimate, but remember, she just loved God! Isn't this what is required of us? 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.'<sup>5</sup> It says, "Thou: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God ... and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This is the divine command, that man truly loves both God and his neighbour.

What is childlikeness? It is a compound quality that includes meekness, purity, innocence; obedience, teachableness and receptivity; simplicity, love, joy, gentleness and wonder; trust, freshness, gratitude and spontaneity. These are all included in your Christ-like nature. Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures tells us of, "the infinite distance between Truth and error."<sup>6</sup> We see this comparison when we contrast childlikeness with childishness.

The childish thought constitutes: wilfulness, impatience, selfishness; pride, self-love, jealousy; thoughtlessness, stubbornness and unteachableness - all of which I am sure you have overcome! These false traits of character remain outside the Kingdom but, if indulged in any degree, prevent us from experiencing good, quick healings.

Mrs Eddy longed for her students to know better the qualities of childlikeness, and even wrote a poem, "to the big children." I remind you<sup>7</sup>:-

"Father-Mother good, lovingly  
Thee I seek, -  
Patient, meek,  
In the way Thou hast, -  
Be it slow or fast,  
Up to Thee."

"Willingness to become as a little child and to leave the old for the new, renders thought receptive of the advanced idea. Gladness to leave the false landmarks and joy to see them disappear, this disposition helps to precipitate the ultimate harmony."<sup>8</sup>

The action of surrendering the false landmarks of human will, pride and impatience, means we are willingly to follow God's guidance, whether the lesson is learned 'slow or fast', as the poem states. Certainly, when we have a challenge to meet we should not allow the childishness of self-pity to halt our progress. We should not complain

over the bruising of personal sense if we are being criticized. Neither can we afford to flinch when we are being forced to stand firm in the face of disturbing symptoms whilst making a demonstration.

The childlike thought has to meet the same problems that the childish thought has to meet, but the difference is that with a heart full of gratitude and thankfulness, the childlike thought is willing to listen and hear the guiding angels saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." <sup>9</sup> He then humbly puts his hand in God's, is filled with grace, spontaneity, expectant good and obedience, and every hour becomes holy.

However much we think we know of the Science of Being, being childlike is the only way to demonstrate God's law. Childlikeness is not weakness but strength, the strength to stand firm to fulfil the last requirement in the poem, of being unmoved whether the lesson seems slow or fast. The motive of our work is always to give back the glory to God, 'up to Thee'.

We need to practise being childlike. A famous pianist once said, "If he did not practise his piano for one day, he knew it. If he did not practise his piano for two days, his family knew it. If he did not practise for three days, his audience knew it! Don't we know, too, if we have not been practising the truths revealed, when we have had our communion with God through the Lesson Sermon. Our daily Lesson is God's personal sermon to each of us.

One day, another friend was describing her love for God. I cannot describe the words she used, but I certainly felt them! Later, she wrote me and said, "When I think about God's care, His guidance and goodness, and how he has brought me through the years with tender love, I just melt." I call that childlike maturity.

Mrs Eddy says in her Message to The Mother Church 1901, "... does not this heavenly Parent know and supply the differing needs of the individual mind even as the Scriptures declare He will?" <sup>10</sup> He supplies the differing needs of the individual mind. Our demonstrations are always the healing of the fears, doubts and anxieties within the human consciousness, which mortal mind manifests as symptoms on the body.

Mrs Eddy speaking to Frank Gale, one of her students, said in substance, "... when fear is gone, doubt is gone and your work is done. Why? because it was never undone." <sup>11</sup>

The childish thought through ignorance of God's nature, tries to heal a physical body and becomes confused and disillusioned because its prayers are not met. The

childlike thought, willing to turn away from the problem to Mind, humbly listens and is prepared to follow the leadings of Truth.

Let us now, silence some of the errors which would obstruct your spiritual freedom. The arguments of mortal mind claiming to be our thinking suggest that the physical senses deteriorate or slow down through age. Spiritual sense, the activity of the Christ, ever-present within individual consciousness always reveals to us the truth regarding any situation. Let us just take a brief look at how we should think of these senses.

Spiritual sense reveals that man includes the spiritual capacity to view things as God sees them. Material sense would have us go on forever accepting a lie to be true. All things are brought into sharper focus when viewed through the lens of Spirit. A young man blinded in the Vietnam War decided to develop his love of sculpture. He became renowned in his profession and won many awards for his work. When asked how he approached his work, taking into account his total lack of sight, his reply was that before his hands touched the clay, he had perfected in his thought every element of the form and outline of the piece. Isn't that active use of light, focus and vision which is not dependent upon the physical senses? He didn't allow matter's limitation to stop him using those creative qualities.

The Right To Sight Doris Kerns Quinn <sup>12</sup>

Sight is active use of light

The bright appearing  
right in perfect focus -

Sight is Spirit's might  
not matter's peering.

Height not depth, nor  
night, nor mortal fear  
can hide from us the  
right to vision clearing.

The question is, are we depending upon the limitations of the physical sense of sight to tell us what our capabilities are, or using our spiritual sense of discernment to reveal what we are capable of achieving? When we think about ourselves and others, do we mark the perfect, upright man which the Psalmist states has his end in peace?

<sup>13</sup> I like to think this means that when we are thinking about ourselves or others, we have always to bring reasoning to a right spiritual conclusion before we let go. This is one way we can daily practise perfect seeing.

Our hearing becomes more acute as we become more accustomed to listening to God's voice. Good listening improves poor hearing because these functions are correlated and are one and the same effect of Soul. While listening to truth, one is not at the same time listening to error, it's impossible. Our understanding of our oneness with God reveals that there is no place where God's voice is not heard.

It is said that Susannah Wesley, the mother of John and Charles Wesley, had such a large family that her time was fully taken up in feeding and clothing them. When she wanted to pray and be alone with God, she would sit in her chair in the middle of all the noise and fling her long apron over her head. That was her closet! Even with her many children around her she obviously spent some very precious moments in her closet with God! After all her two sons helped to change the course of history and it would be no exaggeration to say that her prayers had a real part in their later ministries.

Remember! Good listening wherever we are improves poor hearing and has untold effect not only in our lives but in the lives of those around us.

So often one hears the remark, My memory cannot retain things. This is a form of mental malpractice on oneself, and is one of the worst forms of malpractice. We are allowing ourselves to be used wrongly when we talk ourselves down. As Christian Scientists, we are taught mental practice, yes, but it is mental right practice. One's memory is no more subject to ageing than is the multiplication table. It is the very reflection of immortal Mind's everpresence. Because Mind knows all, we, through reflection, know what we every moment, but we need need to know that we know. This knowing is another element of being 'filled with wisdom,' listening only to the Father's voice for the answers to all the small things as well as the big things.

Demonstrating our spiritual freedom means that our movements becomes less restricted when we are clearer regarding our selfhood as being totally spiritual. We are no longer 'halting' between two opinions. A patient was healed of arthritis. She found it very difficult going up and down stairs, but healing came through persistence in knowing she reflected grace in every thought and movement. The understanding of grace undergirds all right motives and actions, and releases us from stiffness and rigidity of thought and action. It replaces with elasticity, flexibility and buoyancy, demonstrating that mobility is Spirit's unceasing action.

In all these demonstrations, childlike maturity accepts that, 'the grace of God is upon us as we grow in favour with God and man.' What a precious quality childlike maturity is, unrestricted, uncomplicated, unfettered, unimpaired, forever under the

one supreme Government. We are talking about Soul forever reflecting its own beauty and holiness in man.

One definition of maturity is, "Youth wrapped up in experience." Whoever, wherever we are, childlike maturity will never be heard to say "I have done enough" regarding our work for the Movement, or our practice. Childlikeness will always be willing to learn more, ready to discover the undiscovered from within, and practise with freshness and spontaneity. We are all working out our salvation individually, but if we allow the suggestion to implant itself in our consciousness that our work is finished, we are shutting the door on progress and blocking the opportunities for more wonderful experiences of unfoldment in our lives. An inactive consciousness becomes like a pond, which grows stagnant until pure fresh water is again channelled through and purifies our attitudes, motives and desires.

I recall the story of one church, where, when the filling of offices came round, no treasurer could be found. The Board deliberated long and hard over this because the only person who was available to take the position was a lady in her mid-nineties. The board generally felt that she could not meet the needs of the office because of her age, but there was one Board member who was listening to the Father and said that really they had no right to judge whether she would be willing to take the position or not. It was true justice to let her decide. When asked, she accepted, and was the best treasurer they had ever had! She just loved it, and the finances just flowed in to support the church. So, beware Board members, childlike maturity and willingness to serve is not lost, but is here to stay!

We all need to recognize and acknowledge our spiritual, childlike maturity and be like the child who when asked how old she was answered, "I have no old." Or like the father standing at the bottom of the bed after his second son had just been born, nursing the child said to him just minutes after his appearing, "Well my son, you may as well know how the wheels turn in this household," and promptly went on to read to him the Tenets from the Manual. What better start could you have.

Mrs Eddy states in part, referring to the revelation appearing, "Here, however, was no stopping place ... God unfolded the way." <sup>14</sup> There is no stopping place for anyone of us. God's work for us goes on developing, 'waxing stronger in spirit' through every demonstration.

As dedicated, mature Christian Scientists, each of you have an essential part in the healing ministry. Ask yourself daily, "How is my practice today?" You may not have the responsibility of family or property, but instead a wonderful opportunity to be continually productive citizens embracing your family, church and community.

God is saying to each of you, as much as you think you need me, I need you. I need you, I AM the Light and you are the shining. I need you right here to be the very expression of my love, or maybe He is saying to you how much this dear one needs to feel appreciated. This childlike maturity I have been referring to includes the natural ability to reflect God, not as a personal gift but as your divine right.

We are all His precious children, and His promise to each of us is that He will not leave us alone. Each hour, God is pouring "the riches of His love into the understanding and affections, giving us strength according to our day."<sup>15</sup> Make sure you are daily responding and expressing this boundless love, understanding, affection and strength. Accept that there is no stopping place in your unfoldment. God, divine Love is forever unfolding the way for each of you..

I end with a verse by Joyce Grenfell.

There is no such thing as time,  
Only this minute.  
And I am in it!  
Thank the Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> Science & Health with Key to the Scriptures by Mary Baker Eddy (S&H) 539:10

<sup>2</sup> Luke 2:40,52

<sup>3</sup> Tomlinson, Twelve Years with Mary Baker Eddy, p 124

<sup>4</sup> Hymn 305

<sup>5</sup> Matt 22:37-39

<sup>6</sup> S&H 538:8

<sup>7</sup> Mis 400 19-25

<sup>8</sup> S&H 323:32

<sup>9</sup> Isa 30:21

<sup>10</sup> Mess '01 7:15

<sup>11</sup> Frank Gale We Knew Mary Baker Eddy 91

<sup>12</sup> 'The Right to Sight', Doris Kerns Quinn, Sentinel, 1972, Vol 74, 1999

<sup>13</sup> Ps 37:37

<sup>14</sup> My 348

<sup>15</sup> S&H 5:16-18