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Couch potato Christian Scientists?

By Elise L. Moore

How have the people of the eighties coped with demands on their time and attention? Why, we have turned into couch potatoes - according to marketing specialists! Certainly there is nothing wrong with enjoying one's home and family. Spending more time at home may well strengthen the family unit. But what effect do the excesses of this societal attitude have on Christian Scientists? Is there a danger that we may become couch potato Christian Scientists?

We must be increasingly alert to defend our thought actively against influences that are not from God, divine Mind. One such influence is apathy. The argument might begin any number of ways: "The church is too far away, too small, too large, too old, too young, too white, too black, too active, too inactive. I can't attend because of my family, my work, my lack of work, our recreational activity, my illness, someone else's illness." But the argument usually ends with the conclusion "I really don't need to attend church, because I have all I need right here at home!"

These arguments can be especially aggressive for students of Christian Science. The self-education system provided by the Founder of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy, is thorough. There are weekly Bible Lessons in the *Christian Science Quarterly*, testimonies of healing and inspirational articles in daily, weekly, and monthly periodicals; class instruction and annual Christian Science Students Association meetings. Christian Science practitioners are available to provide healing treatment. Christian Science Reading Room attendants answer basic questions. And the pastor of our Church - the Bible and *Science and Health* by Mrs. Eddy - is always present with us, ministering to our needs and healing us through the Word of God. At no time, however, did Mrs. Eddy endorse isolation from other faithful followers of Christ. Oneness and unity are characteristic of God's creation, not limitation and separateness. In fact, Mrs. Eddy clearly states that man is not "an isolated, solitary idea." Here's what she says: "Man is not absorbed in Deity, and man cannot lose his individuality, for he reflects eternal Life; nor is he an isolated, solitary idea, for he represents infinite Mind, the sum of all substance."¹

¹ *Science and Health*, p. 259

A vital component of Mrs. Eddy's provision for our spiritual education is the public church service. It is clear from even a cursory reading of the *Manual of The Mother Church* that the twice weekly worship services form both foundation and superstructure for the continuing education and protection of students of Christian Science.

The combination of preaching on Sunday, practicing the teaching during the week, and expressing gratitude for healings and blessings received closely follows Christ Jesus' example of continuous living of Truth. While Jesus established no church hierarchy or ritual, he consistently taught the multitudes and healed them. When he sent his disciples forth, he gave them similar instructions. He commanded the seventy, "Heal the sick ... and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."²

The success of Jesus' method was evident even after his ascension. His disciples continued to join together to preach, heal, and praise God. What blessings flowed from this unity! We read that multitudes were healed. Believers were added daily, with as many as three thousand reported on the Day of Pentecost. All were filled with the Holy Ghost, or divine inspiration. This is an active and vital Church! Who wouldn't be willing to leave the comforts of home to participate actively in such blessings!

It is interesting to note that this tremendous growth took place after the apostles had thoroughly handled the argument of who should be greatest. This question had come up more than once when Jesus was present. On one occasion Jesus told them firmly, "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant."³ He later illustrated this necessity by washing the disciples' feet and commanding them, "Ye also ought to wash one another's feet."⁴ On another occasion he placed a little child in the middle of those sincere followers and warned them, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."⁵ I always thought it was as if he had said, "Never mind greatness! Humility is the prerequisite for attaining spiritual blessedness."

This is never more evident than in church work. Seasoned church workers constantly need to be on guard to defeat the claims of pride and self-righteousness that sometimes seem to grow alongside experience. The temptations to feel our

² Luke 10:9

³ Matthew 23:11

⁴ John 13:14

⁵ Matthew 18:3

years of service are not sufficiently appreciated, to resist certain committee appointments because they do not have enough prestige, or to decide that we are no longer capable of meeting the challenges of church work may seem particularly aggressive. But, like Moses, we can continue in humble, productive service as we turn to God moment by moment, knowing He is the ever-present source of our health, activity, and supply.

Each serious student of Christian Science must promptly, persistently, and vigorously shake himself free from the soothing stranglehold of stay-at-home-itis. Our individual, spiritual demonstration and growth depend on it!

The original inspiration and healing effectiveness of the Christian church have not been lost. Healing of sin, sickness, hopelessness, and indecision occurs during every Christian Science service, Sunday and Wednesday. Let us not take such healing for granted! Gratitude and a just acknowledgment of God's power and willingness to heal here and now open the path for the complete correction of chronic illness.

The Wednesday testimony meetings are especially important in the public ministry of Christian Science. I have found it useful to think of Wednesdays as adult Sunday School. When each member of this large "class" comes prepared to learn from the lesson read from the desk and share some healing, insight, or experience, the church becomes a classroom and all present become teacher/students.

Our branch Church of Christ, Scientist, likes to think of Wednesday night as family night. Children as young as kindergarten are encouraged to join their families in the auditorium rather than go to the Children's Room. The result has been that children attend each Wednesday, and different youngsters rise frequently to express gratitude for a healing. The children's innocence and simplicity have sweetened the entire atmosphere of the service.

Whatever obstacle is preventing us from benefiting by attending these healing services can be overcome. The healing balm of divine Love erases hurt feelings or critical comments. Faith in the oneness of Mind gives courage to meet the self-doubts and fears that come in the guise of family responsibilities or resistance. Willingness to apply the truths of Christian Science in our daily lives yields a harvest of practical experiences that can be shared weekly.

The relationship between individuals and church is somewhat like coals and a fire. When isolated from one another, once hot coals slowly cool and die. Pushed

together, they spring into flame, providing heat beyond the capacity of separated, solitary coals. No wonder Jesus promised to bring all his sheep into one fold and told the parable of the good shepherd who would not permit even one in a hundred to stray from the security of the flock! What protection we have in unity!

As the early Christians experienced great growth, springing from a firm foundation of humility, unity, and obedience, so can we. We can vigorously challenge the personalized suggestions that would threaten to undermine the very foundation of our church and its availability to the public. We can rededicate ourselves to supporting the public worship provided by Christian Science. Those who successfully challenge the subtle attraction to become couch potatoes on Sunday mornings or Wednesday evenings can expect to hear the benediction “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”⁶

⁶ Matthew 25:21