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Challenging Heredity

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Good afternoon, friends. Thank you for inviting me to share your meeting today and to talk a little about “challenging heredity.”

For untold centuries man has, in unthinking ignorance, accepted the package of “heredity” and lived with its contents unwittingly, with a sense of resignation to the inevitable, good or bad.

This afternoon we’re going to take a look at this “prize package,” take off its fancy wrappings, and see if it deserves our acceptance and tolerance. Mrs. Eddy makes a clear statement about heredity, about the temptation to grant it status as cause despite the fact that it lacks a scientific cause or rationale. She writes:

The transmission of disease or of certain idiosyncrasies of mortal mind would be impossible if this great fact of being were learned, — namely, that nothing inharmonious can enter being, for Life *is* God. Heredity is a prolific subject for mortal belief to pin theories upon; but if we learn that nothing is real but the right, we shall have no dangerous inheritances, and fleshly ills will disappear.¹

You nurses are probably more aware than most, of the tremendous concentration of world thought today on the mortal laws of heredity and genetics. Let me read you a few excerpts from some of the recent articles on this subject.

In a science magazine directed largely to a medical group is an article titled “Finding and Treating Genetic Disease.” Here is a brief excerpt:

No one knows how many genetic diseases afflict man. As methods of studying human biochemistry take on new sophistication, scientists find themselves reluctantly adding names to the already long list of inherited disorders. Indeed, it has been estimated that as many as a quarter of all illnesses have a genetic component although they are by no means all directly heritable.²

In an article in the *Wall Street Journal* entitled "The Chances Are" we read:

Two decades ago, several hundred disorders were known to stem from hereditary defects. Now medicine recognizes nearly fifteen hundred such ailments. And it is learning with increasing precision how they are passed from generation to generation. Hereditary disorders are becoming relatively more important to those concerned with the health of infants.

It quotes Margaret W. Thompson, Genetic Counselor, as saying,

Fifty years ago about fifty percent of childhood deaths were caused by infectious diseases, and about two percent to three percent by diseases of known genetic origin. Now only one percent to two percent come from infectious diseases; while twelve percent result from ailments of known genetic origin.

In trying to do something about this the medical profession is recommending that counselors obtain detailed family histories of both parents, extending if possible back to their grandparents. It states that "...if the counselor finds a heredity defect in the history of chromosomes of the parents, he calculates the odds that this defect might occur in a child, harking back to the laws of genetics first formulated by the Austrian Monk, Gregor Johan Mendel." It says that Mr. Schacht of Minnesota believes the importance of genetic counseling is bound to increase because, he says, "As medical science salvages more and more people who otherwise would die of genetic disorders, they in turn will produce

children with defective genes and our genetic problems are going to multiply.”
What a dreadful prophecy!

Some health specialists believe that it may become routine to examine a couple’s genetic makeup before marriage just as blood tests are administered now. There are stories similar to this almost daily in the newspapers and magazines. I cited these not to rehearse or to stand aghast at error, but simply to expose it. Mrs. Eddy says in *Miscellaneous Writings*: “To know the what, when, and how of error, destroys error.”³

So now, in looking at the fallacious claim of heredity, let’s look first to man’s origin—the true and the false:

1. The only account of man’s true origin is, of course, Genesis 1:26: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” This absolute fact is the foundation of all our work in countering the false law of material heredity.
2. The Adam and Eve story of the second chapter of Genesis, like so many tribal and religious fantasies offered over the centuries, was an attempt to answer the primitive tribesman’s questions as to his origin. This account is, of course, not taken seriously today in any advanced scientific society.
3. But what fo the Bible’s third account of creation in Genesis 4:1: “And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord.” Isn’t this biological story of man’s origin the very foundation of the world’s belief in ancestry?

Enormous efforts have been made to confirm and support this biological base. One of these was made by Darwin who offered an elaborate explanation of the first creation of the amino-acids—the single cell and its subsequent development into the present two-legged, two-armed, upright mortal, the Cro-Magnon man. He said it occurred through the forces of “environment and

conditioning,” or as he termed it, “selective survival.” Under this doctrine, of course, the claim is that these forces of “environment and conditioning” are constantly having their effect upon us today. When we look at or rehearse past experiences (our “conditioning”) and accept their effect or impact upon ourselves or others, it is simply our acceptance of or submission to this baseless law of mortal mind, known as Darwin’s theory, isn’t it?

Gregor Johan Mendel, the Austrian Monk, experimenting with the garden peas, came up with the doctrine of inherited characteristics that he called “Mendel’s Law of Heredity.” It has, over the years, been expanded enormously from his simple claims of “dominant and recessive” genes to include almost every aspect of man. As you can see from the steady barrage of medical articles, at the moment of conception there is a combining of the genes of two parents that determine, they claim, almost everything about us: our body structure; our height; our coloring; our muscular development; our facial structure and appearance; our intelligence; our temperaments; our criminal or peaceful tendencies; our athletic abilities; our artistic abilities; our very life span; and more recently, our susceptibility to an almost endless number of diseases.

In a recent criminal case a man charged with a serious violent crime advanced as his defense, supported by considerable scientific testimony, that he was not responsible for his actions because of a certain deficiency in his genes. That because of this, he simply couldn’t help it. The attempted defense was not successful, but it indicates the extent to which this doctrine is accepted.

Now, it’s one thing to recognize, intellectually or theoretically, that these are the claims of *conditioning* and *heredity*, but to effectively stand guard at the portals of consciousness to keep them out appears to be quite difficult for most of us. Why? Well, just take a look at the “wrappings” they come in. So time-honored, pleasant, harmless, attractive—that few want to really look closely at them, but prefer to blink their mental eyes and rationalize or justify the tradition as a harmless concession. Besides, they don’t want to miss out on the packages!

That special day when we're the star, the center of attention, when we are remembered so nicely! But what's behind it? The reminder, the reestablishment of the belief that we are a biological creature and thereby subject to the (so-called) "laws" of creation, environment, conditioning, heredity. A birthday is the starting point of a finite measurement called a life span, isn't it? Whether one is conscious of it or not, all the limitations that characterize the various stages (age-determined categories) of life are identified with him by the ignorant mass of universal thought. It has been said that the belief of death is the continuation of the belief of birth.

I know of an instance where a man had been suffering from what was termed an incurable fatal blood disease. He had turned from medicine to Christian Science when the doctors had given up and pronounced the death sentence. In discussing this with a practitioner one day, he mentioned with inordinate pride that his ancestry traced from nobility in Europe; and as he spoke about it, it dawned on the practitioner's thought almost at once that it was this false belief of mortal ancestry (heredity) that needed treatment. Immediate, specific work was done in this area, with the result that there was a complete healing—the man returned to robust health. Months later, this man, in reading some old history books which had an account of his family, found that for generations the male members of his family had been dying from this same blood disease. You see, he didn't even know of it at the time, but he had accepted the "package" and all that it contained.

Now, if he had been an orphan, and he and those around him had been unaware of his lineage, would this belief still have affected him? Here's some instruction from our Leader:

If a dose of poison is swallowed through mistake, and the patient dies even though physician and patient are expecting favorable results, does human belief, you ask, cause this death? Even so, and as directly as if the poison had been intentionally taken. In such cases a few persons believe the potion swallowed by the patient to be harmless, but the vast majority of mankind, though they know nothing of this particular case

and this special person, believe the arsenic, the strychnine, or whatever the drug used, to be poisonous, for it is set down as a poison by mortal mind. Consequently, the result is controlled by the majority of opinions, not by the infinitesimal minority of opinions in the sick-chamber.

Yet, she continues, "Heredity is not a law."⁴

The fact that heredity, that the aging process, is not in accord with law but is governed by human belief, is illustrated in an experience Mrs. Eddy relates in our textbook.

The error of thinking that we are growing old, and the benefits of destroying that illusion, are illustrated in a sketch from the history of an English woman, published in the London medical magazine called *The Lancet*.

Disappointed in love in her early years, she became insane and lost all account of time. Believing that she was still living in the same hour which parted her from her lover, taking no note of years, she stood daily before the window watching for her lover's coming. In this mental state she remained young. Having no consciousness of time, she literally grew no older. Some American travellers saw her when she was seventy-four and supposed her to be a young woman. She had no care-lined face, no wrinkles nor gray hair, but youth sat gently on cheek and brow. Asked to guess her age, those unacquainted with her history conjectured that she must be under twenty.

This instance of youth preserved furnishes a useful hint, upon which a Franklin might work with more certainty than when he coaxed the enamoured lightning from the clouds. Years had not made her old, because she had taken no cognizance of passing time nor thought of herself as growing old. The bodily results of her belief that she was young manifested the influence of such a belief. She could not age while believing herself young, for the mental state governed the physical.

Impossibilities never occur. One instance like the foregoing proves it possible to be young at seventy-four; and the primary of that illustration

makes it plain that decrepitude is not according to law, nor is it a necessity of nature, but an illusion.⁵

Isn't that clear, folks? There is no reason to bow to the inevitability of aging. It is not law, it does not involve matter; it is entirely an experience of belief, and we have the Science of Life to rescue us from belief, or illusion!

Don't we subject ourselves to the effect of belief, or illusion, when we actually *celebrate* birthdays, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and those anniversaries that rest on the passing of years; that date back; that lead thought to entertain the various stages of the aging process?

Mrs. Eddy says plainly, "Many sleep who should keep themselves awake and waken the world."⁶ As Christian Scientists we must be awake to the fact that neither biological substance nor material personality is the real man, and ponder what the Master meant when he said, "Call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven."⁷ Heredity is not a law of God, and belief in any phase of it indicates man's ignorance of his eternal, divine sonship. The man of God's creating, the only real man, is a living, loving, intelligent, wholly spiritual reflection of God. This man is without beginning or end. For the man God knows co-exists with Him, *now*. And an alertness to this universal belief of ancestry puts us on our guard about accepting even the little harmless or pleasant-appearing effects of this so called law. People look at the new baby and say delightfully, "Oh, he has his father's nose!" Or his mother's disposition; or his grandmother's chin, or dimple, etc.—all the way down to the last toenail. Such pride in seeing the partial little replica of ourselves! We've even seen people exchange knowing looks when a child appears to express temper or some other family "curse." But in these cases we're quick to attribute it to the other side of the family. One lady remarked with surprise, "I didn't know how many faults my husband had until they all began to come out in the children."

We cannot accept these effects without at the same instant accepting the cause, for the cause and effect cannot be separated. If we accept a physical

effect or condition as reality, as substance, we have accepted a material, mortal mind cause and its fallacious, devastating law (of *belief*).

Another one of the hydra-heads of mortal mind's serpent of birth is that of astrology. It comes into play when we recognize a birthday. There are hundreds of millions of deluded believers of astrology today who are claiming a multitude of laws relative to their so-called "birth" days. The laws, or limitations of astrology are found on almost every store counter, in newspaper and magazine, asserting their baseless claims. They even have it on the computers now. Its particular lies are a part of the package of material beginning and therefore requires specific corrective work.

Mortal mind points today with pride to a greater life-expectancy—and how it has been raised through modern techniques. These life-expectancies are a part of the world of probabilities, seen wherever men gather statistics and actually wager upon them (as in insurance policies). It is this law of probability that is a part of the whole false concept of ancestry which, if accepted, spells out the limits of our life and activity. Isn't it ridiculous to base a man's capacity, his activities, his health, his appearance, on how many trips the world has made around the sun (called years)? Yet if, and I say *if*, these laws are accepted as such, we are as much under their domination as if they *were* facts.

There's a story of a political prisoner in medieval times who was placed in a dungeon and for twenty years fed through a slot in an iron door. He never left his prison cell. Finally, one day he tried the door, and to his amazement it swung open. It had never *been* locked. He walked by the guards and out into the sunlight unopposed. He had never been imprisoned by anything but his acceptance of belief as fact. And so it is with us, if we accept beliefs or illusions as facts.

We're never imprisoned by anything but an illusion, and this is proven quite literally by the experience of Paul and Silas, of the woman who walked out of the Prisoner of War camp after discerning that a spiritual idea cannot be

imprisoned, and in the countless testimonies by those who have gained their freedom from the bonds of sickness and disease. Mrs. Eddy writes:

The illusion of material sense, not divine law, has bound you, entangled your free limbs, crippled your capacities, enfeebled your body, and defaced the tablet of your being.⁸

And she resolves physical conditions into those of beliefs when she says:

The lame, the deaf, the dumb, the blind, the sick, the sensual, the sinner, I wished to save from the slavery of their own beliefs and from the educational systems of the Pharaohs, who to-day, as of yore, hold the children of Israel in bondage.⁹

A hypochondriac told his doctor in great alarm that he had a fatal liver disease. "Nonsense," said the doctor. "You wouldn't know if you had it or not—there is no discomfort with that disease." "I know," gasped the patient, "that's my symptom exactly."

If we enter into the great conspiracy of heredity and the hypnotic and enslaving beliefs connected with it, it has the effect of a fact, even though it is an illusion. How can a knowledge of this help us attain, right now, right where we are, a better sense of harmony and activity and joy and strength and agility? Well, the answer lies within our own consciousness, doesn't it? How willing are we to part with this concept of soul in body and replace it with the spiritual concept of Soul *governing* body?

One little Sunday School student was told what she could expect when she went to heaven. She cried and said, "But I don't want to go. I like hamburgers, and cartoons!"

Often we simply want to be more comfortable in matter. One French philosopher observed, "Everyone wants to live longer but no one wants to grow old." So often, consciously or unconsciously, we cling to what we

consider the pleasurable aspect of the package of heredity and the fond maternalism and paternalism—unwilling to seek a more mature spiritualization of our thought.

But the limitations on our spiritual development, on our freedom from this false sense of life and its claims (good or bad) is dependent on our willingness to release it, to leave the old for the new. One doesn't have to mentally pick up that package of mortality, but there must be a willingness *not* to, based on an alertness to its nature and its deceptions. How does the temporary pleasure of a birthday party, Mother's Day, Father's Day, anniversaries, all the gifts, attention, really compare with the freedom from the process of aging; from the fastening of false laws of immaturity, lack of judgment, carelessness, etc., on the young, and the limitations of decrepitude on the mature? Too young, too old. What fallacies! Since when did an idea of God, an eternal idea, become old or young? "The measurement of life by solar years robs youth and gives ugliness to age," Mrs. Eddy says.¹⁰ "Robs youth," she says, and truly it does. So it is important to our children and our grandchildren, as it is to us, that this "birthday ritual" be intelligently laid aside, and its claims reversed so that the individual shall not be "robbed" of his natural productivity, harmony, opportunities of expression. For the claim of aging starts, of course, at the earliest of ages. "Oh well, a little birthday party and some nice gifts won't hurt them—and they enjoy it so—and all the other kids are having them," etc. It's not hard to rationalize about it, but is it really the highest sense of love of which we are capable? We're here to *ble*ss mankind, not to *pl*ease mankind.

How about the common practice of guessing or surmising the age of the people we meet, sometimes audibly, but more often to oneself? This is the kind of reciprocal malpractice that is harmful to all concerned. Yet, if we are not aware of it, it slips in on us as one of these innocuous habits that keeps one enslaved—a recurring type of hypnotic suggestion.

Mrs. Eddy was very definite about this, "Never record ages." She says: "Time-tables of birth and death are so many conspiracies against manhood and womanhood."¹¹

In *Miscellany*, page 235, starting on line 15, our Leader says:

Is God infinite? Yes. Did God make man? Yes. Did God make all that was made? He did. Is God Spirit? He is. Did infinite Spirit make that which is not spiritual? No. Who or what made matter? Matter as substance or intelligence never was made. Is mortal man a creator, is he matter or spirit? Neither one. Why? Because Spirit is God and *infinite*; hence there can be no other creator and no other creation. Man is but His image and likeness.

Are you a Christian Scientist? I am. Do you adopt as truth the above statements? I do. Then why this meaningless commemoration of birthdays, since there are none?

She continues:

Had I known what was being done in time to have prevented it, that which commemorated in deed or in word what is not true, would never have entered into the history of our church buildings. Let us have no more of echoing dreams.

Age is one of the most persistent suggestions in the world of mortal belief. People believe they get over other diseases but do they really believe they get over the belief of age? Or the concept that they must die from it? WE SHOULD BEGIN NOW TO HANDLE THE BELIEF OF AGE—without thinking that it is beyond our ability to do so. Give up that common sentiment that death is as unavoidable as taxes. We should recognize now that LIFE is inevitable. You CANNOT escape it, no matter what you do. Declare the counter fact that “life is inevitable” rather than that “death is inevitable.” Do this regularly. Life is unavoidable. This understanding, which is itself so alive that it could not possibly believe in anything contrary to its aliveness, will help to handle death. So our work is to daily declare the inevitability, the unavoidability, the eternity of the Life that is your life. Every time a suggestion of aging or

inactivity is presented to ourselves or to anyone else, review the attributes of Life. One at a time, if necessary. It's immediately effective.

Let me give you an example of this use of the "counter fact" that Mrs. Eddy refers to on page 233 of *Science and Health*: "The counter fact relative to any disease is required to cure it."

One weekend I had six heart attack cases that, from mortal mind's viewpoint, looked to be very serious and fearsome. I became aware that it was the fear of death that had to be annulled and what could do this but a better understanding of Life, its "counter fact"? So I got out a pad and began to list all the words that came to me when I considered "Life," i.e.: movement, freedom, energy, activity, strength, joy, expression, etc. I kept working until I had some 65 words listed. Then I took each word and carefully considered it. Many I looked up in the *Concordance* and read what Mrs. Eddy had to say on them. Then I wrote out a brief sentence or two relating this to me, to man, specifically. By the time I finished this work I became aware that "Life" was all that I was aware of. I knew more about it than I ever had before. It put me in a wonderful position to then treat each case individually, from the standpoint of this new and more convinced understanding. There was a great peace and confidence. And all six patients were back at work Monday morning.

Perhaps our denial of heredity may include some of these thoughts:

1. I was never born into (therefore I can never die out of) matter.
2. I am not Spirit encapsulated in flesh or a sack of skin. I am the reflection of a God who is all-Spirit. As Mrs. Eddy says, "Man is not a material habitation for Soul; he is himself spiritual."¹²
3. I am not a "biological" accident, but a purposeful, intelligent, harmonious idea of God.
4. I am not predestined, except to express the Mind which created me.

5. I am not subject to any so-called laws of ancestry or heredity—known or unknown, individual or universal. I am guided, controlled, directed, sustained by the law of Mind which created me. The only law.
6. I am under no family “curse,” no line of material development nor ancestry. As God’s child, I am His heir...heir to every quality and function of God.
7. I am not a mortal child or parent, but a divine idea from a perfect Father-Mother God.
8. There is no law of astrology that relates to my spiritual identity, and I am not subject to its false signs or superstitions. There is no law but God’s law.
9. There is no occultism, witchcraft, nor Orientalism; it can’t come nigh my dwelling for I dwell in the “secret place of the most High,”¹³ at peace in the kingdom of heaven.
10. I am not subject to the aggressive mental suggestions of others—known or unknown, individual or collective. I cannot be influenced by or subject to the thinking of others, nor will I accept into consciousness what I think others are thinking, or fear it. I can be influenced by nothing but God, good, and I know it. And I know I know it.

Now let’s sum up this false dream of ancestry: Man is not born of the dust of the ground, nor is he a biological descendent of protoplasm. He is not bound about with fetters of hereditary laws and genetic rules, not at the mercy of genes and chromosomes. No superstitions of astrology or preordination can, by ignorant, popular acceptance, become a law unto him. In short, man simply is not in nor of a body of matter, regardless of all the sense testimony, history, and human statistics. Man made in the image and likeness of God is spiritual, and we have Christ Jesus’ clear proofs of this.

Spiritual consciousness precedes birth. Life has no beginning, no interruptions, no ending.

Life is not the result of something. It is the cause of all things!

This whole subject of ancestry and heredity brings to light a most important aspect of healing—the willingness to turn loose of a cherished but false human belief. The mental limitations held secretly will, of course, limit our present demonstrations proportionately. But isn't it wonderful to know that regardless of what we think of man (ourselves), no matter how limited or distorted our views are, it isn't going to change or even slightly affect what God has created: perfection, eternal because reflected identity!

All, absolutely all, that our thoughts can change or affect is our *view* of man. So let's get in the elevator and rise to a better view!

Thank you.

¹ 228:3

² Leon E. Rosenberg of Yale University, "Finding and Treating Genetic Diseases," Science News (August 29, 1970).

³ Mis. 299:2-3

⁴ 177:25-8

⁵ 245:1-31

⁶ '02 17:12-13

⁷ Matt. 23:9

⁸ 227:26

⁹ 226:25-29

¹⁰ 246:10-11

¹¹ 246:17-20

¹² 477:6-7

¹³ Ps. 91:1