

MATURITY

If we observe a fruit tree in the springtime when it blossoms, first we see a flower which slowly blooms and dies, then the flower is replaced by a small fruit which grows. If we watch the fruit we see it not only grows, it also changes, as it grows it changes. If we pick a piece of fruit in its early stages it is quite different from the later stages, there are obvious differences, and if we pick it at the right time it has the right taste. This fruit goes through a maturation process, after maturation there is decay. At a certain time the fruit will fall, the stem can no longer hold its weight, it can no longer take nourishment; fulfilled, it falls to the ground. Once separated from its sustenance, the process of rotting begins. Initially, the rotting is actually maturity, for awhile it is sweeter, but the sweetness becomes rot. People are not like fruit although they do go through certain processes just as a piece of fruit does. One problem with people, unlike fruit they do not necessarily become sweeter with age.

A human being starts as a small child in need of nurturing by its mother, it cannot exist on its own without nurturing; incapable of caring for itself it must be cared for, this continues for some time as the child slowly grows. That part of growth is more or less automatic, as it increases in size other things happen as well. When children mature physically their shape changes, their features change, they become capable of reproducing, they grow through different stages of life we label teenager, adolescent, young adult, adult, middle age, late middle age, then the senior years, old age. Like fruit, people change in appearance with the passage of time. A piece of fruit has just a single season, human beings live longer, although we can still equate this to a single season.

As a human being becomes older the world thinks of him as no longer immature, and we have laws which define maturity. In some places we are considered mature at thirteen, in other places at eighteen or twenty-one. In dealing with immaturity it is commonly said we are not responsible for our actions, the treatment is different for someone who is mature, who is responsible. When we reach the age of responsibility we are answerable for what we do.

Laws in most civilized societies are merely basic outer laws which deal with stealing, maiming or hurting, laws to keep us within the definition of what we call civilization. There is another kind of maturity, another kind of responsibility for human beings involving maturity which has to do more with ripening than growing old. Understand there is a difference between growing old and ripening, ripening leads to sweetness, growing old brings the decay which does not necessarily produce sweetness.

We need to mature as human beings. What is maturity, when do we become whole, complete as human beings, when do we become what we are supposed to be, what path takes us to what we were intended to be, what do we need to assemble in our life for that? As we grow older physically certain things happen to us, our body changes; first it grows more stable and then it becomes less stable. We acquire the experience to deal with the world we are thrown into, things we could not handle as infants. Suddenly we have been here for ten years, thirty years, fifty years and more, the world and everything attached to it become more familiar, more commonplace. I have seen that, I have done that, I have experienced that, it is no longer new. As children we are constantly plunged into new experiences, a sense of wonder because we have not seen these things before, we have not experienced them yet, we have no memory of them.

When we are older, just as we once knew only how to get from our house to school, we now know the direction to many places, we seem to think we know our way around, but this is shallow knowledge. We see and recognize, therefore we know, as if seeing and recognizing were knowledge, as if seeing and recognizing were understanding, as if they gave us even a measure of understanding. In one sense, of course they do give us a little understanding, they do let us find our way around now when we were lost as a child. Whose knowledge are we comparing with ours, a three-year old's? Is this our standard, we know more now than we did when we were three or five or seven? Now we have experience, we have seen a few things. Is this a significant level of experience, a significant level of recognition, of knowledge, understanding? We have the technology to take us from one place to another faster than before. Does this constitute understanding?

We seem to be satisfied with surface things, with manipulating surfaces, manipulating form on that surface, manipulating what we see. Do we consider what we do not see? When we have a pear, before we bite into it, can we see how sweet it is? Do we see the sweetness of other people, do we see the source of sweetness for the world, do we see the source of all created things when we look at them? What happened to the wonder we had as we grew up when we saw things for the first time? What happened to that time before we were bored, what bores us now? How often do we stand in awe before a blade of grass, how often do we miss the blade of grass in the field as we walk across? Especially in springtime when everything starts to bloom again, how much time do we spend recognizing the wonder all around us? What was dormant is suddenly alive again, what seemed to be dead is different.

This is a springtime revival, but do we study the revival in our own state of being? Do we have a seasonal revival of our understanding, where we came from, what sustains us, how we bloom, do we bloom? Do we die more and more or are we more and more alive? Which path have we chosen, are we stagnant or are we revived with the recognition we are born again, today, for the first time, today, for the first time recognizing our vitality in the history of today? Or have we done that already, has that vitality run through us once before and that was enough? Maturity is the understanding phase; if that maturity is to develop we need to be young again, to return to the place of wonder, the place of awe which has seen nothing before, the place which discovers the route every time we go as if it were the first time. Is it a miracle that everything has remained stable since we saw it last, is the rising of the sun something we take for granted because it happened yesterday? Do we have the right to take things for granted? If we do we have fallen asleep, we are no longer moved by the wonder of creation, no longer moved by the wonder of everything around us, no longer moved by the beauty of our friends on the path.

We are no longer moved by the love in the heart of a bird and the song it sings, no longer moved by the squirrel climbing a tree with a nut in its paws, no longer moved by the things we see which we have seen before, still as amazing as the first time we saw them, yet we have lost our sense of awe. Maturity is the ability to stay in a sense of awe, to understand what we do not understand. Maturity is not falsifying our perception of the self, but seeing it as it truly is. It is looking at who we are, simultaneously understanding our limits and our glory, giving credence to what created us. Maturity is understanding that we have not yet fallen from the branch, we are still attached to it like unripe fruit.

Maturity is understanding that our life is given, given to us every second, again and again. Maturity is understanding our true place in creation, coming to grips with it, being astonished by it and praising the One who created it this way.

When this state emerges, when this awe prevails, when that praise comes from our heart with true thankfulness and gratitude we have entered a place of true youth. May humanity enter our hearts, may it waken us to true humanity. May we be in perpetual awe, in wonder of Him, in wonder of His creation. May He guide us, make us mature and bring us closer to Him.