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A Little Child Shall Lead Us The Theology of the Child

by

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Mother-child attachment in the early years of life lays the foundation not only for personal security and relationships, but also for spiritual life. The implications for society are enormous. Moreover, theologians and philosophers have developed reflections about the state of childhood that reveal realities about our relationship with God and our spiritual state. Our psychological experience and our spiritual experience mutually enlighten each other. These theological developments are an inner window which shed light on the deeper meaning of maternal-child bonding.

Swiss theologian Hans urs von Balthasar brought attention to the theological importance of childhood, particularly in his small book, *Unless You Become Like This Child (UYB)*¹. He says:

It occurred to no one [in earlier cultures] to consider the distinctive consciousness of children as a value in itself. And because childhood was ranked as merely a "not-yet" stage, no one was concerned with the form of the human spirit, indeed the form of man's total spiritual-corporeal existence, that preceded free, moral decision-making. But obviously, for Jesus, the condition of early childhood is by no means a matter of moral indifference and insignificance. Rather, the ways of the child, long since sealed off for the adult, open up an original dimension in which everything unfolds within the bounds of the right, the true, the good, in a zone of hidden containment which cannot be derogated as "pre-ethical" or "unconscious," as if the child's spirit had not yet awakened or were still at the animal level—something, it never was, not even in the mother's womb. That zone or dimension in which the child lives, on the contrary,

reveals itself as a sphere of original wholeness and health, and it may be even said to contain an element of holiness, since at first the child cannot yet distinguish between parental and divine love. (UYB,12)

Balthasar points out that this time holds dangers for both child and adult:

Childhood is fully vulnerable because the child is powerless, while those who care for him enjoy an all-powerful freedom. Instead of leading him rightly, they can lead him astray in a variety of egotistical ways, oftentimes in a manner which is quite unconscious of its moral indifference. Hence Jesus' terrible threat to such a seducer: "It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone round his neck than to lead one of these little ones astray." Lk.17:2 UYB,12-13.

Part One: What is a Child?

Being as Given

The first most basic reality is the fact that a person does not cause himself to come into being but is given his being. At some point, the person can come to the realization that he has been created and therefore there exists a Creator. But the infant first experiences this as being from his mother. His experience of himself, both within the womb and after birth, is one of intimate connection with another who is not himself. He receives all he needs for his growth from that one whom he himself is not. He is from another. His potential for growth is actualized through the help of this other one. German philosopher Ferdinand Ulrich comments that the human person is one who from the beginning has been himself with and in another. He arrives at himself only in return from another. Only from the other does he arrive at consciousness and at the experience of himself. He must thus set out to "become himself in receiving himself." (F.Ulrich, *Der Mensch und das Wort*, 113, 135)²

Will this one who is "other" give him what he needs so that what he is within his unique being will blossom in a healthy way? In the drama of the earliest moments of human life, the child depends on the quality of that other being whose heartbeat he already knows from within the womb.

"A little child awakens to self-consciousness in being called by the love of his mother," says von Balthasar. It is "the mother's smile," he says, that tells the child his being is good, and welcomes him to a world of being and to a world in which he is loved. It is in the security of the womb and of the welcoming, enfolding love of the mother that he grows. Even though at

first he hardly distinguishes himself from her, he has within him a vital drive to be himself, distinct from her and from any other being. Her smile, her love, her response to his needs tells him that his is a being worthy of respect and love, so his drive to be himself is confirmed as good. His experience is telling him that existence is good.

The link between woman and child thus lies in being from... It is through the mother's smile that the child learns to rest and feel secure in existence: learns thus that existence is intrinsically beautiful and good... The meaning of childhood thus lies simply in being – from-the-other and with-the-other.

David L. Schindler

Heart of the World, Center of the Church, 270³

Receptivity of the Child

The child is a unique being who reaches out to the world around him in order to grow. The child's growth depends on receiving from that which is other than himself. Through his body, he receives not only his mother's milk, but also the confusing experiences of sight, sound, smell, taste, emotions and spiritual intangibles like love and/or indifference. The child is open, dependent and vulnerable in this receptivity. All of his future development depends on the quality of what is given him and how it relates to his own internal needs and desires.

In this receiving and giving relationship, the mother's role is obviously critical. When she receives the child with joy and gives to him unconditionally the love and care he needs, the child internalizes a model of personal relating that will affect his relationships for his entire life.

Every person born possesses an archetypical model in keeping with which he is to direct his conscious life....always with the memory of his origins before him.... Between the mother and the child she bears in her womb there exists an "archetypical identity".... Behind the "archetypical identity of mother and child," moreover, there emerges an even deeper "archetypical identity," based on their non-identity, which at birth makes itself plain to all. UYB, 15

This experience of unity in distinctness will be an important model for an openness to receiving the other person as different and yet united in some positive way with oneself. It also lays the groundwork for an understanding of God as Trinity and of marriage as two in one flesh.

Anyone who watches an infant or small child growing and changing is struck by the inner drive toward self-development. The self-perfection of

which Thomas Aquinas speaks is particularly dramatic and noticeable at the beginning of life. We see that the child is wholly himself and yet wholly receptive to what is given him in his environment. Rev. Stefan Oster, S.D.B. comments:

It is an awe-inspiring experience to follow the development of speech in a child, from his first stammering to the moment when he says "I" for the first time. In this occurrence, the return to self happens in a primitive sense: *becoming oneself through the other....* This "becoming oneself as receiving oneself" (F. Ulrich, *op cit.*) comes about not just through other things but above all through *another Thou....* If this occurs in an atmosphere of original trust, then the child experiences that his own being, as one who is communicated and surrendered to the world and to the other, is accepted and affirmed through the other, from the very beginning.... When the parents attend quite concretely to the child, giving themselves over to what he does and what he needs, they mediate to the child a deep and fundamental Yes to himself: through them, he is allowed *to be*.

And because acting follows being, the child is also allowed to act, to communicate himself, to express himself in his neediness, to experience himself in his own acting. His being and acting elicit an answering love in the world and in his parents; it effects change in the living and breathing space of his parents, and vice versa: the parents' acting toward their child effects and encourages ever new action in the child, toward his discovering the world and himself. The parents affirm the child in his quite concrete situation and no other, because it is these parents and no others. In being accepted by his parents, the child discovers that he is given back to himself precisely in⁸ and through this being accepted.... In receiving himself from and through another, the child becomes what he has been from the beginning.

Stefan Oster,

*The Other and the Fruitfulness of Personal Acting*⁸

This positive interaction between child and mother and father lays the ground for social life, not only within the family, but also within the wider communities of school, work, neighborhoods, church and, most particularly, with God. By reflecting on this, we see that receptivity to the "other" is not only the root of positive interpersonal relating, but also the critical element in the development of society generally, and in development of spiritual understanding. Is this the result only of receptivity in childhood, or is there a receptivity that continues to be important in adult life? When, as adults, we reflect about the fact that we did not create ourselves or the world around us, and that as created beings dependent on a Creator we receive all that we

have and are from His hands, we realize that we are in the same position as the child who receives all he needs from "the other." In relation to God, we are His child. Von Balthasar reminds us that a central message of Christianity is our birth from God. This has important implications for our spiritual life. What are the traits of a person who lives as a child in relation to God? One implication is that our spirit grows not from grasping after something, but from openness to receiving from our Father in heaven. We can learn something important for ourselves by studying the child.

Giver and Gift

One can often observe a small child handing an adult some precious item such as a favorite doll, a ball, or maybe just a pebble he has picked out from others on the ground. The child carefully observes the adult's reaction. The child has received this item as a gift and gives it to the other just as he himself has received it. He has experienced himself as a gift from another and now is giving something of himself to this adult. If the adult receives the item as a gift and the child as a gift, appreciates each before handing back the item, this is enough for the child. He sees that both he and his gift have been received.

Accepting a gift in a truly receiving way will affirm the giver of the gift. The child has experienced his mother's acceptance of himself as a gift and that he has been given back to himself because of her receptivity to him. "It is precisely in and through the mother's receptivity, revealed in her smile, that the child discovers itself as gift and in turn existence as a whole as gift." (Schindler, 270) The child naturally continues this relationship of giving and receiving with others and, when received positively, experiences the world as one of givers and gifts, freely given out of love and respect. Above all, this interaction is personal; it happens between persons and contributes to a relationship.

The child adopts the mother's giving attitude unquestioningly as the right one, and he gives spontaneously when he has something to give. He shows his little treasures without hiding any of them; he wants to share because he has experienced sharing as a form of goodness. The fact that he can make this attitude his own presupposes that he does not need to distinguish between the giver and the gift, since both at the mother's breast and in other things given him the two are one: in the gift the child directly recognizes the love of the giver. (UYB, 22)

Dependency and Trust

The child is totally dependent on the mother for his well-being. But his helplessness calls forth care from her. When her response is consistent, appropriate and loving, a relationship of trust is established.

Love, too, is what enables the child to experience its absolute neediness as something other than a threat, since it is lived as the situation in which the mother's ever-latent love may be realized always anew. (UYB, 18-19)

The natural community of mother-father-child provides a stable environment for the interaction of dependency and trust to develop into the personal "I-Thou" relationship. This "I-Thou" relationship already existed between the mother and the child in her womb, but is now made more explicit, face to face and expansive. The father is involved as well, forming a trio and establishing his own unique "I-Thou" interaction with the child. The trust that is built up is critical to the child's spiritual development. "A confident and trusting expectation of the good has its basis in the experience of already having received it." (UYB, 25) At some point, he will separate out from his experience of love a recognition of God as a loving Father, one who loves him with a motherly tenderness, and one whom he can trust to care about his needs and desires. As a result, his dependence on God is not seen as something negative, something to resist, but rather as an opening to a relationship of trust and love.

The Old Testament continually conveys to the people of Israel that God is a loving Father, tender in mercies, responsive to their needs, always present and always faithful. *"Can a woman forget the child at her breast, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you,"* the Lord tells us, according to Isaiah 49:15. The child of God can depend on Him. From such trust springs spiritual growth throughout life.

Love and Intuition

The child and the mother together establish a way of knowing that is rooted in love and acceptance. As their awareness and knowledge of each other grow in the context of concrete interaction, the bond of love strengthens, and the truth of personal being is established as well.

The child at its mother's breast is, first of all, something of a repetition of their bond while in the womb. And yet this unity in love persists even when the mother's face smiles at the child at a distance. Here is where the miracle occurs that one day the child will recognize in its mother's face her protective love and will reciprocate this love with a first smile. Before making any judgement or coming to any conclusion, we must marvel as at a miracle at the perfect and immediate intuition which is here operative. Love is understood to be the most pristine source of all. This understanding opens up in the child the dormant bud of self-awareness. The love between a thou and an I inaugurates the

reality of a world which is deeper than simple being because of its absolute boundlessness and plenitude. And, since this opening up occurs on the basis of love, unbounded being is seen to be the reality that makes sense, that is self-evidently right; in short, the truth which is identical with the good. We call this an "intuition" and not a discursive process of reasoning because the mother's smile is not interpreted as love subsequently; it is intuition, too, because in the awakening spirit the understanding of being as such is always awaiting the moment of realization and this precisely in the concrete event that is offered through ever-open, ever-watchful senses. (UYB,18)

In other words, love is the element that leads to an understanding that truth is first of all personal, concrete and intuitive before it is the subject of logical reasoning. The child responds to the concrete love of his mother and of his father with his own spontaneous love. For him, the mother and father represent all goodness, truth, and love. This experience is not separable from God at the beginning, but contains the seed of this knowledge. If the parents love God as well as their child, they will gradually reveal to the child the distinct Person of God upon whom they, the parents, are dependent as well, and to whom they owe thanks. When they do this lovingly, the child is enabled to expand his love and gratitude to God and to understand this relationship as one of reciprocal love, of otherness that is nevertheless united to him in a generous, giving love which has been reflected to him in his parents' care.

For this opening up to perdure to the ultimate, the transparency of the *imago trinitatis* among father, mother and child must be as perfect as possible. Any disturbance the child begins to sense—whether between the parents or one parent and the child—confuses and clouds over the horizon of absolute being and, therefore, also its bestowal of all creaturely being as a gift of God. Such a vision becomes troubled, too, because the child can grasp the gift of all existence only with the concreteness of its relationship of love with its parents within the peaceful realm of the familiar space it inhabits. Any violence in this realm of wholeness inflicts wounds in the child's heart which for the most part will never heal..... Only seldom do adults realize what immeasurable harm they thus inflict on children... (UYB, 19-20)

Since we live in a world of original sin and imperfection, the wholesome experience of the child as well as the healthy wholeness of society are frequently in danger. The mother cannot always respond to the child perfectly. There seems always a possibility that the life of love could end—and to the small child hours can seem like forever. As the child grows, he can appreciate the effort and self-sacrifice his mother has had to make to

be there to respond to his needs. This may increase his understanding of the gift of love, or it may introduce him to the hardship of earthly life. In his examination of this situation, von Balthasar brings out the relationship between love and duty. A mother and father may generously respond to their duty to care for the child, living out:

an obedience to the laws of existence that is inextricably united with fatherhood and motherhood. But there is also involved a part of free willingness that has to be achieved through personal decision.... For, in his helplessness, the child has a sacred right to be cared for, but only love can do justice to such a right. Thus, the child has a right to something that transcends the juridical dimension and which can be satisfied only out of a free initiative and gift of self. In the beginning the child cannot distinguish between absolute goodness, which is divine, and the creaturely goodness he encounters in his parents. Consequently, this right to goodness is a sacred right whose satisfaction can occur only on the basis of a most intimate bond between the parents and the mind of God. (UYB, 21)

Wonder, Amazement and Gratitude

Through the senses, the child receives the world and in the depth of his heart he is moved to wonder and amazement at what he perceives. The seeds grow, the birds fly, insects appear in their multiple forms.... And why? To delight the child? What fun to be a child again and see all the amazing splendor of creation for the first time. Taking this a step deeper, von Balthasar says,

For the person who is open to the absolute, there exists another kind of amazement with regard to nature as we know it outside ourselves. To be sure, the seed shoots up. Spring returns again, and we take note of all the varieties of animals. But is it not amazing that all of this is? UYB, 47

Such wonder leads naturally to contemplating the Creator and giving Him thanks for all that exists. Since the child is dependent on all being given to him,

plea and thanks are still indistinguishably one. Because he is needy, he is also thankful in his deepest being, before making any free, moral decision to be so. And when he grows older and we say to him "Say please," "say thank you," we are not teaching him anything new but only trying to bring into his conscious sphere what is already present from the beginning. He should not be taught to be thankful only for specific things received, but his original awareness that he himself—his "I"—is something

given and that he must give thanks for it, should be also transposed into the sphere of the maturing consciousness. UYB, 49

The mother's role in this is important because it is through her responsiveness and love that the child learns of the beauty and goodness of the existing being that surrounds him. The woman, who is particularly drawn to the inward nature of things and their contemplation, is especially suited to leading the child toward the contemplation of nature and all being which brings forth his sense of wonder and gratitude.

The key, once again, is the essentially receptive and interior and contemplative dimension of the maternal act: the "taking in of the other and letting the other be," from conception to birth, from the suffering of childbirth to the smile that greets the newborn baby and thereby liberates him or her to enter the family (the immediate family but at the same time the human and indeed entire cosmological family).... It is through the mother's smile that the child learns the gratitude that "founds" the meaning of service: to be for the other. It is through the mother's smile that wonder and amazement are gradually evoked in the child. It is through the mother's smile that the child learns to rest and feel secure in existence: learns thus that existence is intrinsically beautiful and good, and that its fundamental act must be "playful." Schindler, 266-267, 271

Play

Childhood is particularly associated with play. What does this mean for the child's spirit and for ours? Play appears as the opposite of pragmatic, "useful" work. Yet it may be precisely this "uselessness" which is critical because it tells us something about being and about time. Its value lies in recognizing that simple existence is precious in itself and that contemplating relationships in this context are important. Play is the child's form of contemplation. Observing a child at play, one can see an interiority expressed through activity. Also we observe that time can have a different meaning, as it does for a child.

The child has time to take time as it comes, one day at a time, calmly, without advance planning or greedy hoarding of time. Time to play, time to sleep. He knows nothing of appointment books in which every moment has been sold in advance.... The child is not afraid at the fleetingness of the present moment: stopping to consider it would hinder us from accepting the moment in its fullness, would keep us from "buying it up," from ransoming it. Play is possible only within time so conceived...

A child knows that God can find him at every moment

because every moment opens up for him and shows him the very ground of time: as if it reposed on eternity itself. And this eternity, without undergoing change, walks hand in hand for the child with transitory time. UYB, 53-55

Freedom and Love

The child is only free to become himself from within the secure and loving relationships of his family, as we saw in our reflection on the child's being as received and given. This convergence of dependency and freedom often goes unrecognized in contemporary society. What makes the connection possible is always love. Dr. Schindler points out that the "liberation of humanity" involves a retrieval of

a primacy of receptivity in the creature as the condition for realizing its own end... that receptivity be affirmed as a perfection of being, indeed of the primary feature of created being... In spiritual terms, liberation entails a renewed sense of interiority and contemplation as anterior to all human thought, action and production. In cultural terms, liberation requires recognition of the central place for women and children, and thereby for families: recognition, in a word, of the indispensability of the mother's smile for understanding all of reality as gift. Schindler, 272.

Even more explicitly, von Balthasar relates freedom and love:

Through all ages of life the interpersonal *thou* abides as an unmasterable reality, which from the Christian perspective,... remains an occasion for amazed awe at the freedom of the other, precisely because this freedom is to be approached only under the sign of love. UYB, 46

Part Two: Christ, the Eternal Child

These realities of childhood will be understood more completely and deeply within the context of reflecting upon who Jesus Christ is. Christ, who reveals what man is, reveals also what a child is at the most profound level because Christ is the One who has always been and will always be a Child, the Son of the Father. As Jesus grew into manhood, He never ceased being a Child at the bosom of His Father.

In the Child Jesus, this experience [of childhood], the basis for all that is precisely human, must have been a direct transparency of his experience of being at home in the bosom of his Divine Father: separate from him as the Son, receiving his being as Son

from the Father, but within this separation inseparably united in the common Holy Spirit. UYB, 30

As Son of the Father, Christ has already experienced His Being as a gift from the Father, a gift eternally being given. As Son, He is always receiving from the Father and always giving love and gratitude back to the Father. He is always dependent on the Father and perfect in His trust of the Father. "The Son can do nothing on his own initiative; he does only what he sees the Father doing." (John 5:19) This trust is tested in the temptations of the desert, the agony of the Garden, and the final abandonment of the Cross. But even in this abandonment, the trust is not broken but glorified. Here Christ rests in the Holy Spirit, the bond of love between Father and Son.

In his exploration of this, von Balthasar addresses the question of the relationship between Christ's human experiences as child of Mary and His experience as divine Child of the Father.

How, in this Child, can the primal experience of being at home in the Mother's bosom so to speak, "double up" in the simultaneous primal experience of being at home in the bosom of the eternal Father? An initial answer would be that, in the depths of this Child's soul, there slumbers the awareness of being the divine Son, and that, when the Mother awakens him, the opening up of the whole horizon of reality is experienced not only as something holy but as the realization that in the depths of this opened fullness of being there radiates the personal Face of his Father, personally turned toward him. UYB, 31-32

This permanent childhood as the Son of God, gave Christ "a unique understanding of childhood and made him exult so highly the condition of being a child." (UYB, 33) The question we face today is: how can an adult human person act with mature responsibility and still maintain the childlike attitude that Christ asks of us when He says: "Anyone who does not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." (Mark 10:15) A key is given when Jesus says as well, "Whoever welcomes such a child in my name welcomes Me." (Matt. 18:5) Thus the mystery of Christ is identified with a child. The mystery is opened up when we reflect on Christ's identity as that of a Child who abides always with His Father: "He who sent me is present with me and has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him." (John 8: 29)

The Son, then as child, has his room for play, and as the wisdom of God he can "play in his presence continually, play throughout the wide earth" (Prov 8:30f). But it is the Father's good pleasure that wholly fills this room for play, so that the Son always does

what pleases the Father and "exactly fulfills his command."
(John: 14:31) UYB 35-36

But how can sinful humans become childlike before God in the way Jesus is Son of the Father? This is a spiritual problem. Nicodemus asks Jesus: "Can someone then return to His mother's womb and be born again?" To which Jesus responds: "A man is born through water and the Spirit.... What is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3: 4-6) God adopts us as children in baptism and gives us the same Spirit which is the bond of love between the Divine Son and His Father. Christ's adult ministry shows us how this is lived, receiving all from the Father: "for I do not speak on my own authority; no, what I was to say, what I had to speak was commanded by the Father who sent Me." (John 12:49) Thus we see that receptivity and obedience to the Father, dependence and trust, are the childlike qualities that are the spiritual bequest to the members of the kingdom of God. These are precisely what we have already observed in the child who is reared by a loving mother and father. For those who have been deprived of this positive experience, there is hope because the child of sin has still a loving Father in heaven who can give him new birth in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit will guide the renewed child of God into a receptive and obedient relationship to God, upon whom he can now depend and trust. This is why the sinner restored by grace is overcome with the wonder and gratitude typical of the child of loving parents. He is now free to love, to play in the garden of God's kingdom. In this grace won by Christ's redemptive Cross, the new child becomes one with the Incarnate Son of God, a new son in the Son, a member of the Body of Christ, with the Church as mother. Now in the Spirit of Christ, the child of God calls out "Abba" to His Father.

The secular world has tried to label "infantile" or "childish" the Christian's loving dependence on God. But it was in Christ's full maturity and throughout His unselfish and responsible dedication to our salvation, even to the ultimate self-sacrifice on the Cross, that His childlike submission to the Father's will is most evident.

The more we identify ourselves with the mission entrusted to us, in the manner of the eternal Son, the more thoroughly do we become sons and daughters of the Heavenly Father.... In the figures of the great saints the truth is crystal clear: Christian childlikeness and Christian maturity are not in tension with one another. Even at an advanced age, the saints enjoy a marvelous youthfulness. UYB, 41

This says something also regarding the education of children "From his very origin the child possesses something like an incontrovertible faith-

instinct, and this instinct provides an incalculable "capital" for the education of the child in Christian faith...(UYB, 42) This "capital" should not be squandered by teaching a child skepticism, but should rather reward his natural trust with the food of certain truth revealed by Christ. When imbued with this truth, the child when grown will be equipped to recognize lies and evil for what they are.

Christ has shown us that childlike wonder and amazement are good. In His adult ministry of healing and teaching with authority, He left the people amazed, yet He himself gazes with wonder and amazement at His Father: "The Father is greater than I" (John 14:28)

We can be sure that the human Child Jesus was in amazement over everything; beginning with the existence of his loving Mother, then passing on to his own existence, finally going from both to all the forms offered by the surrounding world, from the tiniest flower to the boundless skies. But this amazement derives from the much deeper amazement of the eternal Child who, in the absolute Spirit of Love, marvels at Love itself as it permeates and transcends all that is. UYB, 45-46

At the same time, the Father gives the gift of freedom to be one's self, even while showing us, through the Son that one most realizes the fullness of this selfhood in giving oneself to another.

This freedom is to be approached only under the sign of love.... No motion of love on the part of a created freedom, even in the case of a thing that has been given the ability to give itself, can ever be wrested by the receiver into his power. UYB, 46, 47

The natural response to this love is gratitude: "Father, I thank you for having heard me." (John 11:41)

The most decisive act of thanksgiving by Jesus takes place precisely...at the moment when he gives himself away, and this is something that should remain present to all who utter the word Eucharist. (UYB, 48)

We, therefore, never outgrow our need to ask for help and to give thanks. Jesus presents us with this task in these words: "When that day comes, you will make your request in my name, and I do not say that I shall pray to the Father for you, for the Father loves you himself." (John 16:26) Jesus hands on to us the responsibility of asking and thanking, and of relating directly to the Father's love, even while Jesus Himself stands alongside this as a guarantor of this love.

The total redemptive deed with its emphatically "adult" earnestness can, in the last analysis, be accomplished only by virtue of the childlike stance of the God-man and within the childlike faith of his bride, the Church.... To be a Child of the Father, then holds primacy over the whole drama of salvation... The apparently abstract law is put by God in a childlike heart so that it becomes as concrete as it was originally. UYB, 64, 14

To come full circle, then, we need to know and appreciate the child, both the ordinary human child and the eternal Child, Jesus Christ. This reflection on the spiritual aspect of childhood underscores the critical importance of the early period of the child's life and the quality of maternal and paternal love. We can now see the relevance of theology to psychological studies, and, at the same time, better appreciate the confirmation that psychological research provides regarding the unique and precious time of childhood. When the role of mother and of father are fully understood in their particular importance for spiritual development, and our destiny to be a child of God eternally, then society may blossom according to the model Jesus Christ has shown us.

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