

PENDLE HILL PAMPHLET 127

Thou Dost Open Up My Life
Selections From The Rufus Jones Collection

EDITED BY Mary Hoxie Jones



PENDLE HILL PUBLICATIONS
WALLINGFORD, PENNSYLVANIA

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Foreword

This pamphlet of notes for sermons and talks given by Rufus M. Jones during the 1930's and 1940's represents a selection drawn from four cartons containing sermons written out on cards, now in the Rufus Jones Collection at the Haverford College Library. Rufus Matthew Jones was born in South China, Maine, one hundred years ago on January 25, 1863, "into a world," he wrote, "where love was waiting for me, and into a family in which religion was as important an element for life as was the air we breathed or the bread we ate." *Thou Dost Open Up My Life* has been prepared to commemorate this important event.

The original organization of the cards was done in 1954 by Ruth Hays Smith, a Pendle Hill staff member 1958-1962, when she assisted me in the preparation of the Collection. She brought order out of chaos by sorting the cards whose elastic bands had disintegrated and whose clips had fallen away. Each complete sermon was tied together with a more enduring piece of string, so that my task of selection was, in comparison, fairly easy. I was a chooser, not a detective, and I have been grateful for Ruth Smith's help both then and now.

The dating has had to be somewhat arbitrary. The earlier selections were written on cards whose original purpose was to serve as invitations, advertisements, announcements or even as enrollment blanks for Haverford College students. Wherever a date appeared on the reverse side it was safe to assume the sermon was written during that year or later. But about 1939 Rufus Jones either exhausted the current supply or grew tired of these windfalls with their unequal shapes. In any case, he began to purchase packets of cards, all uniform in size but, alas, lacking the interesting information on the reverse side. The handwriting provides some clues, for by 1946 it began to lose its bold, clear form and showed a tendency to waver.

Rufus Jones never appeared to use notes when he was speaking. The cards may have been in his coat pocket or at home on his desk. In church services they may have been lying, unseen by the audience, on the pulpit before him. They served primarily to fix a central idea firmly in his mind and were only a spring board from which he took off into larger and freer environment as he began to speak.

As far as I have been able to ascertain, this selection does not repeat any of the sermons which have appeared in books and articles. The choice of sequence was not difficult. The first one seemed right for the opening, the last one right for the end, the others fell into their obvious places in between. They all seem to bear the unmistakable hallmark of the author. Whether the occasion was a Friends meeting for worship, a more formal church service, an academic gathering in a college chapel, or the intimate group at South China; whether it was a time of joy or sorrow, Rufus Jones had a simple, direct manner of speaking and bringing his message to his listeners, who like Francis Howgill, an early Publisher of Truth, knew that the Kingdom of Heaven had gathered and caught them as in a net.

Mary Hoxie Jones

Thou Dost Open Up My Life.¹

When I was eight years old, I read the Psalms entirely through. Much of it was over my head and I missed its meaning but the exalted nature poetry thrilled me as it would any boy who loved the outdoor world. I could feel the difference between that written by the scribe and that written by the true poet and prophet, though I could not tell what made the difference.

The scribe is legal. He glorifies the past and wants to preserve what *has been*. The prophet is always seeing new dawns, new sunrises, new hopes and new worlds. He opens the gates to the future. There is very much of this note of the prophet in the Psalms. The sense of wonder—*Selah!* You find this note of the prophet where you would least expect it in Psalm 119. It was too long and too legal to suit a boy of eight. But all of a sudden in the thirty-second verse you find in modern translation these great words: “I will obey thee eagerly *as thou dost open up my life.*”

Our great slogan today is self-expression, and in the right sense of the word it is a genuine aim. But it is useless to talk about self-expression until we have got a self to express and we are all the time confronted by the question, which one of our thousand possible selves shall we express? In order to do that you must first of all hatch out your desire; in other words, you must discover what you want most.

The primary issue after all is how to get a rightly fashioned life that is truly worth expressing. That is what this Psalm is talking about. How to open out the possibilities of life. There are many things religion does for us, but this is one of the most striking ministries it brings to us. *It opens up life.*

The Way Of Growth²

“He shall be like a tree planted by brooks of water” (Psalm 1:3). The Psalm is saying that a certain kind of man is like a certain kind of tree. They are alike in just one point. They both *grow*.

Let me stop and say a few words about this Psalm. It is the first one I ever learned. It was in the old Hall on the South Road, about ten rods south of the present G.A.R. Hall. Uncle Jeremiah Jones was my teacher. Will Brown sat on one side of me and Wess Jackson on the other. Each one said it and then we said it in concert. I immediately located this tree. It was a willow down by what we called Tannery Brook. It got just what it needed for abundant growth — good soil, plenty of water and the quickening light of the sun.

Did you ever stop to think how much the Bible has to say about *growth*? Consider the lilies how they grow. They toil not, they spin not. They just let the forces of life operate. They never know how it happens. They simply find themselves beautiful. It was that sentence in the Gospels that brought Kagawa, perhaps the most influential Christian now living, to Christ. We puff and wheeze, we struggle and discuss. We have endless committee meetings. But Jesus said where two or three meet in my name I am there in the midst and then they grow like the lily or the tree by the brook. It isn't effort, it isn't struggle that makes persons grow. It is *life*. It is contact with the forces of life that does it. Growth is silent, gentle, quiet, unnoticed, but you can't have growth until you have the *miracle of life* and until it is in contact with the sources and the forces of life — soil, sun, water and air.

It is the same way with spiritual growth, It begins with life from God and it grows through light and truth and love which have their source in Him. A good many persons expect

the Kingdom of God to come by a sudden relief expedition from the sky, but Jesus said it would come like the growth of a tiny seed. It is like mustard seed or yeast. You start a tiny germ of life and the *growth* is sure to follow — first the blade, then the stalk, then the ear and finally the full corn in the ear. It grows while the farmer sleeps, he knows not how. It is a mystery, but not a miracle. When it comes to the Kingdom, we men are the soil, we are God's farm. God shall come like rain on the mown grass. He shall come as dew.

Breadth And Length And Depth and Height³

The only prayer of St. Paul's is in the third chapter of Ephesians and is one of the greatest on record. It comes out of prison. I want especially to call attention to the dimensions of life for which he prayed. William James used to talk of the importance of opening out in new dimensions — finding new levels. Brother Lawrence has referred to a new amplitude.

Paul forgets to say what his dimensions refer to. Length and Breadth and Depth and Height hang loose without any *object*, as though they are realities in themselves. That needn't trouble us. In the pictorial imagery of the city of the soul, it is said to be *foursquare* with the length, breadth and height equal and this prayer may be taken as an aspiration to have a life that fits the celestial city.

What I am thinking about especially this morning are the two types — the horizontal and the perpendicular. You notice the difference in books as well as in persons. Some books have wide scope in length and breadth. They are all right horizontally, but they lack height and depth.

There is a striking instance of it in the New Testament — the Book of James. I learned it by heart. It is one of the

most perfect instances of style in the New Testament. The writer has taken great pains with its literary creation and it is a sermon rather than an Epistle. This is a fine illustration of what St. Paul calls the gift of teaching for it is fresh, vivid, finished, rich in literary figures. The author is familiar with the Sermon on the Mount, especially what seems to him the new law, the new commandments. He has fifty-four imperatives in his little book. He is a pragmatist — everything is tested by action. He disagrees with Paul about faith, for action is the life of all. If thou hast not acted thou hast done nothing, and his pet word is “doers.”

I am all with him in these and all his other practical injunctions. But it is all horizontal. It is not dynamic and there is no explosive power. It is thin in depth and height. It has no mystical feeling or color. Luther called it an “epistle of straw.” It is not that. It is a noble book, but you feel at once that the perpendicular dimension is missing. Contrast it for a moment with this prayer of Paul’s in Ephesians — strengthened by might by his spirit in the inward man that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. Ye being rooted and grounded in love. That ye may know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge. Filled unto all fullness of God. The power that worketh in us.

There you have the mystical note — the depth and height that makes a great horizontal life possible.

Not A Book Religion⁴

Jesus came back from his temptations in the wilderness to Nazareth and read his program in the synagogue: He hath anointed me to set the oppressed free, to bring deliverance to captives, to preach the Gospel to the poor. *Then he closed the book.* [See Luke 4:18-21.]

It was not going to be a book religion and he said: *This day this is going to be done.* What a revolution there would

be if every preacher did that! He had settled the main line of his life, He was not to turn stones to bread and live by magic. He was not to leap from the pinnacle of the temple and dazzle men by his spectacular power. He was not to be a political messiah. He was to win by love and tenderness and sacrifice. He was to conquer by the Cross.

He came back to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. He had just emerged from that stupendous moral struggle which we call the *temptation*. When it was over and he came back from it there was a mighty *release of power*. I think, in our smaller way, we have felt something like it. When you conquer *you more than conquer* — you get strength for the next battle — there is a surge of inward energy.

It was in this time of uplift that Jesus read his *program*. He closed the Book. When we go back to headwaters, it is a Person not a book that confronts us. Our religion begins with life, not with theory or report. The *life* is mightier than the book that reports it. The most important thing in the world is to get our faith out of a book and out of a creed into living experience and deed of life. That is exactly what Jesus did in the synagogue when he read the program of the Lord's servant. He translated ancient words into life.

It cannot be done unless we get beyond speeches and articles and radio addresses and translate this jubilee program, this reign of God into life and action. The dry bones must take on breadth. We must close the book and say: This day this is going to be done!

To Whom Shall We Go?⁵

What is the alternative? What is the substitute for Christ? To whom would you turn in your personal crisis, in your agony, when everything seems to crash in on you? When you come to a dead end? What is your major support, your undergirding stay and prop?

When this question was asked Peter leaped to the front with the right answer — the *only* answer there is. I like Peter. He could blunder and fuzzle, but in the main his heart was in the right place. He knew there was no alternative to Christ.

The scene which brought this question marked a crisis in Christ's mission. He had left Judea because the crowds there flocked to him with a wrong expectation. They wanted to use him as a miraculous healer, or as a bread king, or as a leader of political movements. It was another situation like that which confronted him in his early temptation. It is the old temptation, and the ever new one, to use gifts for material advantages.

I tremble to think what the publicity people would do if Jesus came back today. There would be "records" of his voice, movies of his miracles and headlines of every scene.

He had hardly withdrawn into Galilee and begun his ministry when the same thing was repeated. The crowds took him as a wizard of healing and a miraculous food purveyor. They wanted to make him a political king. They crowded in on his retreats for rest and communion. They showed the traits of scoop-news getters we are so familiar with today. Everything was done that could spoil a prophet, a spiritual guide of life.

John introduces here a speech of Jesus interpreting his mission: "I am the Bread of Life," he says. He makes it plain that his mission is wholly *spiritual*. I have come, he is saying, to reorient your life, to make your life significant, to bring inspiration, to kindle life with aim and purpose and direction, to be the inward food of the soul, the sustenance by which you live. With that declaration the crowd began to leave him. He at once lost his following. Then it was that he said to his little intimate group, will you also go away?

This question, “to whom shall we go?” means *what is the alternative?* Who is the equivalent? Christ or what? Christ or who? Is there anyone or anything that can say to us, *Come unto me and I will satisfy you, I will restore you, I will give you rest, the power to live by?* It cannot possibly be science that is going to satisfy us. There is no discount to what science has done. It has enlarged the range of our thought of the universe. It has increased the comforts of life and living. But! All its paths lead up to boundaries where its researches end and the things we most profoundly *want* lie beyond those boundaries. Until science can learn *how to ennoble the soul and give it over-brimming joy in life*, it cannot be an alternative to Christ.

It isn't a *what* that we want, for no *thing* is adequate. Peter is right in saying to *whom* shall we go? It must be *some one* who can “speak to our condition.” Quakerism was born in the *discovery* that there is no alternative. “When all my hopes ... in all men were gone,” George Fox said, “so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could I tell what to do, then, Oh! then, I heard a voice which said, ‘There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition.’ ”

When I was forming my life, multitudes of youth were going to Herbert Spencer as their guide. Imagine anyone turning to Spencer today for light and guidance on the deepest issues of life! He does not speak to the condition of any man's soul today. How many of our other guides seem equally hollow or dead? They are hardly more than phantoms now. Peter put his finger on the real point when he chose Christ because he had the words of *eternal life*. He spoke and still speaks to the deeps in us. He makes us aware of eternal destiny. He will reveal the secret of many hearts. He was and is the cure of souls. He knew human nature, through and through, and *yet he expects* so much of us.

These Elders saw God and they did eat and drink. They had their great experience and they came back to the normal, everyday business of life, no doubt on a new level of life and significance. I think they did just the right thing. Most of us are meant to be normal persons, living here in the world, carrying on a daily round of business and ordinary occupations. They are apt to grow dull and dreary. We especially, even more than the seers and prophets, need the lift of vision and the inspiration of contact with God. But the experience ought not to set us apart or take us out of the normal business of life. It ought rather to gird and equip us for the everyday round of life.

We want outstanding persons who are unique and peculiar in their leadership but we no less need to have the level of the rank and file raised to a new level of life and power. We need to have the persons in ordinary life, in the home and the offices and on the farms, touched with fresh inspiration and quickened with new vision.

We all remember that the great prophet of the exile said that they that wait for God and find Him will renew their strength. They will mount up with wings as eagles; they will run and not be weary; they will walk and not be faint. This walking, this business of daily, repeatable duties of life is the climax. It is another way of saying they see God and they come back to the ordinary round of meals and labor.

St. Paul knew this principle very clearly. In his Epistle to the Colossians he says: your life is hid with Christ in God; and then he proceeds to speak of the practical results, how they should conduct themselves in daily life in the home, with the children, with the servants and how this should affect the relations between husband and wife and parents and children. All the lowliest duties are transformed by this discovery of the Divine Presence. There ought to be no

separation between the sacred and the secular. They are two indivisible aspects of one life. St. Paul was quite right when he said whether you eat or drink do it all to the glory of God.

The Father's Business⁷

“Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” [Luke 2:49.] We have just one glimpse into the hidden years of Jesus between the scenes of his birth and the beginning of his ministry in Galilee. We cannot be too thankful to Luke for having preserved for us this precious story. It is interesting to Friends to know that, according to tradition, the place where Joseph and Mary turned back to look for their lost boy was where the Boys School at Ramallah is situated. They went back full of anxiety and they searched three days before they found him. There he was all the time, undisturbed and unworried, listening to the learned men and asking them questions, and when his mother chided him for getting lost he naively said: Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business? That is, busy with the affairs of God, with things which concern the divine life? He was twelve years old. He had probably begun to learn the carpenter’s trade in the tiny shop at Nazareth. He belonged to the humble peasant class, but he belonged to the group of persons who are called the quiet in the land, the poor in spirit, the people who were expecting the Kingdom of God to come, who were waiting for the Dayspring from on high and the Consolation of Israel.

In that poor but devoted family he had grown in wisdom, in favor with God and with men and already at twelve the grace of God was upon him. In that poor but spiritually devout home he was saturated with the ideas and hopes of the Old Testament and no doubt knew the Psalms by heart.

He was a God-taught child but we must not forget how important was the influence of what we have come to call “the holy family” upon him. He was the child of a spiritually high-powered and richly dowered home. And at twelve he had discovered his mission — which was to be about his heavenly Father’s business.

I want to bring this mission before us as the true principle of life — the true aim and purpose of us all. Life here on earth ought to be in a variety of ways devoted to the *Father’s business*. It may be done in the temple and it may be done in the carpenter shop. No matter what the vocation may be, the avocation may well be promoting the Father’s business.

In this early period of Jesus’ life his main business was *preparation* for his mission. He was growing in grace and wisdom and in the discovery that God was Father. That process is perfectly natural and normal for children at that age. I have formed friendships with a remarkable list of children in almost all lands, many of whom write to me and come to see me whenever they can. It is their native religious interest that has drawn us together. They want to find their Father. They want to “belong.” That old theory of the depravity of children is blasphemy. Let them come unto me, Jesus said, for they belong to the Kingdom. He saw in children what he had felt as a child — that it is perfectly natural to be open souled to God, to see the Jacob’s ladder joining earth and heaven and to be preparing for the main business of life, which is being an organ of the Spirit.

One of the most distinctive things about our Quaker faith is this settled purpose to be about our Father’s business. You see this aim everywhere in George Fox’s *Journal* and no less in John Woolman’s. But more important than the fact that a few outstanding leaders strove to be “clear,” to be “wholly clear” in this great business of life is

the way the ordinary, everyday, humble-minded Friend has made his life and his daily occupation a ministry of love and service.

An unnamed saint in the fourteenth century expressed the aim in his words: "I would fain be to the eternal God what a man's hand is to the man." And Brother Lawrence discovered that in the kitchen washing pots and kettles he could "practice the presence of God" and could reveal amplitude of mind in this humble service. The country doctor, the city street sweeper, the lighthouse keeper, the mother, the toiler, in any field may make life a ministry that carries on the Father's business.

The Constructive And Prophetic Service Of Religion⁸

The world peculiarly needs today the constructive and prophetic service of religion. When it is vital and creative it brings man up into relation with God. It dignifies and ennoble him through that relationship. It expels cynicism through faith and hope and justifiable expectation. It releases energies of life. It turns sunsets to sunrises. It gives marching power to those who are torchbearers. It is a profound source of ideal vision.

President Eliot of Harvard was once happily called a serene and adventurous spirit. Those are the two qualities we need. There are persons who are serene but not adventurous, and persons who are adventurous but not serene. We need this fusion in a single life.

Contact But Not Communion⁹

I love to see a sower striding across a well-prepared field and flinging out his seed broadcast with a prodigal hand. There is bound to be a host of *waste* but he is thinking

only of the returns at the harvest. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." [Psalm 126:6.]

Every parable is a bit of autobiography. Imagine the keen boy watching the striding sower throwing out his grain and later drawing on this memory for his parable of the soils. Some of the grain was bound to fall on the hard cart wheel track or worse still on the dry, solid roadway where it would form no vital relations with the moist soil.

There is another autobiographical note in the story. Jesus himself is now the sower. He is flinging great truths broadcast and he sees that some of them go to waste. He is watching the effects as he speaks. Some of his truths fall on minds that are hard and dry like the road or the pavement. They roll off like hail on a tin roof. The *hard* life, as Jesus sees it, is not the life of the hardened sinner. It is the life closed by prejudice, or beaten solid and impenetrable by habit. Gospel-hardened souls are the hardest to reach. The seed never gets any rootlets started. It bounds off. The cart wheel track of routine and repetition makes the soul impervious. Too much religion is as bad as too little.

The real trouble is that there is *contact* but not vital *communion*. The seed is pregnant with life. It carries within itself immense possibilities. *The miracle of transmitting life lies within it* but it will not germinate without the cooperation of the soil. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." [John 12:24.] The seed alone cannot give birth to life. There must be a mutual and reciprocal correspondence of seed and soil. The seed lies on the hard soil unquickened, unfruitful. There is contact but no vital communion.

How often this tragedy happens in life! Truth is laid alongside a soul but there is no vital response. God may be as near as the seed is to the hard cart track, but nothing happens.

This tragedy is often presented in the great *Epics*. Sir Percival came into the very room where the Holy Grail was. He was within touch of it but failed to ask the question that would have revealed it to him. He was near enough for contact, but he missed the vital communication. How often hands touch, but the mystic communication of hearts fails to occur.

The world lived for centuries under a conception of God as remote absentee. Through endless struggle and pain we won, once more our faith in divine immanence. But God may be ever so close, ever so near and yet we may miss Him. There may be contact but not communion. The radio gives us many instances of this. But it is Jesus who shows us the way to find both contact and communion when he talks not only about seed but about doors. "I am the door," he says. "By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture ... I am come that (men) might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." [John 10:9-10.] That they might have contact and communion.

Caring Matters Most.¹⁰

It often takes a whole lifetime to learn the meaning of the greatest words we use. Those that are shortest are often the most difficult to fathom. We have all learned how to conjugate the verb *to love*. Some of us know it in several languages — amo, αγαπω, j'aime, ich liebe. But to conjugate love as verb and to know what it means to *love* in spirit and in truth are very different things.

There are very few words that have so many *levels of meaning*. Drummond said that love is the greatest thing in the world. And yet it is too a word that has been "soiled with all ignoble use."

I wish we might lift it up and see it in the light of its divine possibilities. I think perhaps sharing and caring take us up to the truest meaning of love — to the very heart of it. Baron von Hügel's last words were: "Caring is the greatest thing. Caring matters most. Christianity has taught us to care."

It is the last word of desolation to feel that no one cares. Love means identification of interests both in the possibilities of joy and pain. It is companionship that enriches both lives. And it is *caring* beyond all known limits, for what concerns another.

What Men Live By.¹¹

I went once to Cana of Galilee and visited there the house where the famous wedding took place and the water was changed to wine. It was a little disturbing to find that there were two houses which claimed the honor and two sets of water pots in which the miracle occurred.

But the immortal story is as significant as ever. The fact remains that where that spirit of Christ is present and where love is triumphant this event of the marriage of two persons becomes charged with wonder, and the water from the ordinary well is changed to the sparkling wine of life. Whittier has said it all in his lines of beauty:

But warm, sweet, tender, even yet,
A present help is He;
And faith has still its Olivet,
And love its Galilee.

from *Our Master*, J. G. Whittier

Yes, Cana is repeated in this Meeting House.

Tolstoy wrote his most beautiful story with the title, "What Men Live By." The phrase comes from the *Book of*

Isaiah: 38:16. And in recent times my friend, Richard Cabot, has written a rare book with the same title. They all agree that love is what men live by. One of the mystics, Richard Rolle of Hampole, said, "Love is life that lasts always."

Love is a supreme solvent of selfishness. It makes sacrifice easy, natural and joyous. To enter upon it is the most important step of life. If God is love the most perfect approach to Him is through a true and beautiful human love.

There is a very ancient Ritual which prays in these wonderful words: "May God bless us and keep us and may we live together in such a spirit of love that God can enjoy our life together."

The Christmas Texts¹²

The New Testament has many ways of heralding the great event of Christmas. The most thrilling was in story form. There are two immortal stories, one of which tells how shepherds found the Child in the manger: "There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field." The other story tells how magi, expert star-watchers, came from the remote East to Bethlehem.

Both groups found their light and guidance when they were busily engaged in their normal occupation. They were in the humble path of duty when the light broke on them.

It seems very fitting that the first scientists who came to Christ — the magi — should have been star-led. The human race has always found its path, has always gone on to its true goals by following the star, the vision, the ideal that has shaped its destiny, the star of faith, of hope, of knowledge, of truth, of love and of beauty. These two stories have inspired art and poetry and song and have charmed

and quickened the minds of children more than any other stories that were ever written.

St. John's Gospel opens with a totally different approach. It is the approach of philosophy. "In the beginning was the Word." We are not at the manger looking at a little child, we are in the exalted realm of thought and we are thinking of the way God revealed Himself to the world by an eternal outgoing expression of Himself that became human and dwelt among us and brought authentic tidings of the ultimately Real. The doctrine of the divine Word, the Logos, was the meeting, the fusing of the centuries of thought of Greece and Judea and Rome. It was the fruit of the travail of ages from Heraclitus to Philo.

What St. John quietly announces is the fact that this eternal outgoing expression of God has at length in the *fullness of time* become the visible incarnation of the Divine, the Light of the world which no darkness can put out.

St. Paul, in his turn, has given us his account of Christmas, not as a story; not as a philosophy, but as an experience. "Because we are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father." [See Galatians 4:6.]

This is the climax, this is the goal of the long process of the ages. This is the meeting of God and man in a personal experience. We do not go to Bethlehem to visit the manger, we do not speculate about the Logos, we discover that we belong to God, that He has forever been seeking us and at length we know that He has found us and we cry "Father."

O holy Child of Bethlehem
Descend to us, we pray.
Cast out our sin, and enter in,
Be Born in us today.

from *O Little Town of Bethlehem*,
Phillips Brooks

Behold!¹³

We of the modern time live much more in the attitude of interrogation than of exclamation. We so blur our world with question marks that we lose the sense of wonder and sometimes even of vision. It is refreshing to note how frequently the great spiritual teachers of the New Testament introduce their message with the word “behold!” They speak because they see and they want their hearers and their readers to see. Their “behold” is more than an interjection — it has the force of an imperative, as though they would say: “Just see what I see. Open your eyes to the full meaning of what is before you,” which is the method of all true teachers.

This was the great service of John the Baptist. He makes his disciples see what he sees. “Behold!” he says to them as Christ comes toward them. “And when they heard him speak they followed Jesus.” [John 1:35-37.]

The great interpreter of Christianity whom we call John, who says himself that his eyes saw, his ears heard and his hands handled the Word of Life, is another teacher who tries to make us see what he sees. “Behold what love the Father has bestowed on us that we can be sons of God.” [See I John 3:1.] Learn to live with your eyes open on the reality of the enfolding love of God. That is the way to an optimism a man can live by.

“I saw an ocean of darkness and death,” is George Fox’s way of saying it. “I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love which flowed over the ocean of darkness. In that also I saw the infinite love of God.”

“Behold, I set before you an open door,” cries another of these New Testament teachers. [Revelation 3:8]. Just see the opportunity before you! Look at what you can make of your life, if you see the Light and follow it!

Not of the sunlight,
Not of the moonlight,
Not of the starlight.
O young mariner,
Down to the haven,
Call your companions,
Launch your vessel
And crowd your canvas,
And, ere it vanishes
Over the margin,
After it, follow it,
Follow the gleam!

from *Merlin and the Gleam*,
Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Underneath The Everlasting Arms¹⁴

For a moment on the soul
Falls the rest that maketh whole,
Falls the endless peace.
There is no more pain and crying,
There is no more death and dying,
As for sorrow and for sighing
These shall flee away.

from *Sunrise*, Frederick W. Myers

There are certain occasions that hush the soul and make words seem well-nigh impossible. The more I see of loss and sorrow and death and separation, the less easy I find it to talk of such things in words. The pathos and tragedy of life have been deeply scarred into my soul and I cannot lightly speak of such things. This is one of those occasions and the best we can do is to come with our love and tender sympathy.

Once more we have had to discover the fact we are so

prone to forget — how fragile is the container of all our most precious treasures. We have here no continuing city. We are tenants in God's world here — not permanent residents. In the Father's house are many dwelling-places and we pass on, from our abode here to the next in order. And as Tennyson has said, "Transplanted human worth shall bloom to profit, elsewhere."

I think the most sublime words ever written are those in Deuteronomy 33, "The eternal God is our home and underneath are the everlasting arms." It is caught up in the great 90th Psalm: "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place" — our home — "in all generations."

Death cannot be an enemy — it must be the way of fulfillment, the way into richer life and greater love.

That death is but a covered way
That leadeth into light
Wherein no blinded child can stray
Beyond the Father's sight.

from *My Psalm*, J. G. Whittier

Faith In Immortality¹⁵

"It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."
[I Corinthians 15:44.]

One of the most noticeable features of our time is the weakening of faith in immortality. The reason for this changed attitude is due to the disintegration of all the old ways of thinking of life after death. We have lost our "imaginative material." The "heaven in the sky" is gone. The thin and ghostly future life of *animism* makes no appeal to us. The resurrection of the body seems to us crude and materialistic.

It seems strange that St. Paul's great spiritual conception has never quite got into man's consciousness. It

is a marvelous insight. It fits our new world outlook better than any other suggestion that has been made. St. Paul holds that we are all weaving a permanent soul-structure while we live and think and act here in the body. It is an inside self, not composed of atoms, of molecules, or of corporeal stuff. It is an immortal, eternal, spiritual heavenly sheath which gives form and covering to our spirits so that they are not naked when they lose their outside tent. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tent were dissolved we have" — not *shall* have — "a building God made, not constructed by hands, eternal and heavenly." [II Corinthians 5:1.]

That is what the great passage in II Corinthians means. It has been materialized and turned into an argument for a resurrection of the body. But it is stoutly spiritual in its meaning.

It seems to St. Paul absurd and foolish to suppose that the old body with its rheumatisms and disfigurements, with its changing sizes and stages of decay will be restored and preserved. In a vivid figure the apostle shows how life moves on from stage to stage and always has a form which fits the realm it inhabits. The seed that is planted is a bare grain. It dies, and a new creation comes out of it, with a form quite unlike the original seed. Over the most extraordinary bridges new forms of life creep across into worlds that fit them.

There is no scientific wisdom by which an expert with his microscope can tell the difference between the germ plasm which makes a man, an animal and a tree. And yet all the traits of heredity come over that tiny bridge into the world that fits them. There is one body for men, another for beasts, another for birds and another for fishes. There are celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial. There is one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon and another glory of the stars. And one star differeth from another star in glory. "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in dishonor,

it is raised in glory ... It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." [See I Corinthians 15:37-44.]

This does not mean that a natural body is put into the ground and a spiritual body comes up out of it at the resurrection. It means that the spirit is sown a natural body at birth but slowly under divine influence it grows and is transformed into an inner spiritual substance which is at home with God as soon as it is freed from its old encasement. Man is essentially a "migrant" built for the great deep.

Out of the deep, my child, out of the deep,
From that true world within the world we see,
Whereof our world is but the bounding shore —
Out of the deep, Spirit, out of the deep ...
Thou comest, darling boy.

from *De Profundis*, Alfred, Lord Tennyson

The new-formed nature is the same kind of reality as God. It is no more difficult to think of our new sphere of life than it is to think of God's life. If one can be real, the other can be. The entire universe in its deepest nature seems to be a realm of spirit.

Our real problem is what is *space* and *time* and *matter*, not what is spirit, for we ourselves at bottom are spirit and know what it is by *being it*.

The baby new to earth and sky,
What time his tender palm is prest
Against the circle of the breast,
Has never thought that "this is I:"

But as he grows he gathers much,
And learns the use of "I" and "me,"
And finds "I am not what I see,
And other than the things I touch."

from *In Memoriam*, Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Take No Thought For The Morrow.¹⁶

I suppose few things would make life more impossible than to set out to take the Sermon on the Mount literally. You can see some of the effects of the difficulty if you follow the life of Tolstoy, though he was far from following it all the way in complete literalness.

The interesting thing is that Jesus himself did not follow it literally *à outrance*. He did not live like the sparrow and the lilies without planning and taking thought for the next day. He had a treasurer who carried the community purse and bought their food. There were five loaves and two fishes when they went across the lake.

What one needs to remember throughout in reading this Sermon — all of Christ's sayings in fact — is that they are marked everywhere by *oriental exaggeration*. He loved paradox, as most oriental persons do. Think of his picture of a camel trying to get through the eye of a needle! It is not merely humor, it is eastern love of exaggeration.

These sayings are no more to be taken as a cold, hard, literal guide than the greatest poetry is to be taken literally. One does not read Dante or Milton or Wordsworth in that way.

This Sermon has been called the Magna Charta of the Kingdom. That misses the heart and essence of it. That turns it into a new law, a new legalism. It is first of all a new spirit, a new joy, a new radiance, a new thrill of living — not the burden of a new legal system. We are nearer the truth when we call Jesus a poet than when we call him a law-giver.

Christ's major point throughout the Sermon on the Mount is to get rid of fears and anxieties. It might almost be said that the substance of his mission as a teacher was to set men free from the slavery of *fears*. "Why are ye so fearful?" he keeps saying. Stop your unnecessary worries. Cut out your excessive anxieties. It has been well said that the most

ruinously expensive of all our emotions is fear. It is that very emotion of fear that has thrown our world out of joint and brought us to this unspeakable calamity.

Be not anxious for your life. He is not against ownership as such, only against excessive worry over things that moth and rust corrupt and thieves and depressions sweep away. I believe his attack on fear and anxiety is absolutely sound. We need this gospel much more than these Palestine peasants needed it. But that was by no means all that these words of his about *tomorrow* signified.

The real issue which Jesus is discussing here is: in what does your *life* really consist? In Luke this discourse is linked up with the man who built bigger and ever bigger barns and piled up his goods and forgot to make any provision for his *soul*. This night thy soul is going to be searched.

He is making a powerful plea for clarity of vision, for a place for inspiration in our lives, for insight of *real values*. If your eye is single you can find your way to life, but if you see double and are clouded in your estimate of true values your whole life will be full of darkness.

What matters most is the recovery of the radiance of life. We need to have buoyance and radiance in place of worry and anxious care. That is the substance of the great sermon of the man who, in two years, was going to be crucified and who has strangely been called “the man of sorrows.”

Mary And Martha¹⁷

“Mary hath chosen that good thing which never will be taken from her.” [See Luke 10:42.] Through all the Christian centuries Mary and Martha have stood for two alternative types of life, as Rachel and Leah did in the Old Testament. Mary is taken to represent meditation, or that loftier state called contemplation, while Martha personifies action.

But really these are not two sane alternatives of life for us to choose between. Neither one alone is an end in itself and either one separated from the other is futile. If contemplation is good it is good because it leads to a still greater good, and the same is true of action. Action is not for action's sake but the achievement or the attainment to which one acts. They are not goals, they are ways to goals.

In any case, either way of life is poor and thin without the other one. We are all too familiar with the rushing, bustling actor who has no time to reflect, to ripen his wisdom. He is always in a whirl. But hardly more to be commended is the person who is withdrawn from the currents of life, who "lives all inward," strives after his own "interior plentitude" and does nothing with the insights that come to him in his periods of calm and gestation.

If Mary and Martha represent two ways of life, then it is quite obvious that they must be fused into one before a complete life is obtained.

But in the original story they do not stand for action and for contemplation as alternative ways of life. They are real live persons made of flesh and blood, not two abstract types. One lives in a turmoil of worry and bustle with a life divided and distracted by a complexity of secondary aims, and the other is calm and powerful with singleness of purpose and concentration on an intrinsic good that cannot be taken from her by any process or by any catastrophe.

It is the fuss and worry, the bustle and distraction that Jesus criticizes in Martha — not her action. She is wearing herself out and losing her patience over the preparation of an excessively complicated oriental meal when a single dish with love and fellowship would have been better and would have given them a chance to enrich their lives. The whole point of the story bears on one's central choice or focus of life.

Mary, Jesus says, has chosen "the best dish" — the one simple thing that makes life inherently good and that

lasts on through all the mutations and vicissitudes. Henry James said once in a letter to a friend: "Let your soul live; that is the only life that isn't on the whole a sell." The severest test of life is our selection of the menu at the banquet that is set before us. It is not *table d'hôte*; it is *à la carte*. You can choose a whirl of secondary aims or you can concentrate on intrinsic riches. Mary was absorbed in hearing what made *life really life*. Her one dish was food that made the wings of the soul grow.

There is just one chance at such an intrinsic prize. Every time the soul catches a glimpse of eternal truth or beauty it quickens its powers to catch more. Every time one gives himself out in love and service it becomes easier to love and sympathize and be tender.

It is no accident that it was Mary who broke her alabaster vase out of sheer love.

Blessed Are The Meek¹⁸

You will note that it is a striking feature of each of these beatitudes that the blessedness inherently attaches to the trait of character itself. The quality of spirit is good, not because it will some day win a much desired reward — it is good because blessedness is essentially conjoined with that trait of character, with that kind of person.

The beatitude-trait that has perhaps most puzzled this strenuous and militant world is *meekness*. The very law of survival seems to refute its worth.

I believe, however, that the method of modern science has given us a fresh revelation of the worth of meekness. The most elemental qualities of fitness for true scientific, or historical research are traits of meekness: utter absence of bluster and assertiveness, restraint of mind which will not go beyond the facts, unwearied patience in the effort to find what is actually there, and readiness to be merely a humble and submissive reporter of things as they are.

Christ's meek man is, in the same way, a person who has calm and absolute confidence in the eternal nature of things, in the moral and spiritual laws of the universe and in the goodness of the divine Heart. He will not strive or cry, he will not storm or rage or become hysterical. He expects God to work all things up to better. He will mainly endeavor to get into parallelism with celestial currents. He will show endless patience and noble restraint, and he will confine his proclamation to what his soul's sight and his heart's deepest experience augustly affirm to be real.

But having found his rock-base he will stand immovably on it, like Abraham Lincoln, who is America's foremost example of the meek man who can win his victories in the world.

The Plumb-Line¹⁹

"I saw God, the Eternal, holding a plumb-line in his hand." [See Amos 7:7.] The man who had this vision of a plumb-line held up to test the moral quality of the nation was *Amos*. He was the first of the spiritual seers to pass beyond the idea of a tribal god and to realize that God is the God of the whole earth, that He will use Assyria to discipline Israel. He is one of the spiritual geniuses of all time. And yet he was a very simple, humble man, a country Friend.

He lived in one of the poorest regions of Palestine on the ridge of Tekoa, about twelve miles south of Jerusalem. He was a shepherd of a small, scrubby type of sheep that lived on the rocks, and he was a pincher of sycamore figs. He was a product of the desert, stern, unafraid but with a strange power to see beyond the visible horizons and to feel the eternal behind the temporal.

He suddenly appeared one day at Bethel, about two days' foot-journey from his home. He would be a strange figure among the ritual clad priests and the holiday throng

at the famous shrine. He fiercely attacked their hollow religious ceremonies, like George Fox at Nottingham. He told them that their sacrifices were vain and futile, that sacrifices and offerings and priestly ritual were human inventions. He swept aside the whole elaborate system of ceremonial worship and called for plain, simple justice, what we call today *a religion of life* — “Let righteousness roll down like a river.” [See Amos 5:24.]

But the extraordinary thing about Amos is his insight in reference to the vast, universal moral law which operates everywhere in the world. He is the Newton of the spiritual realm. God holding a plumb-line is his unique figure. It means that there is a great moral law of gravitation by which every individual and every nation is tested. There is no appeal, no wheedling, no escape. The law cannot be broken.

Is it so? Is it real? Is it true? Has Amos struck his finger on a sound principle? The greatest figures in history confirm it. It is the subject of Plato’s Republic. It is the significant note in every one of the plays of Euripides and no less in Shakespeare. Christ gave a vivid picture of two houses, — the one founded upon a rock, which fell not in a great storm, and the one built upon the sand, which did fall. It is once more the plumb-line which Amos recognized.

A Living Hope²⁰

“I should have fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of God in the land of the living.” [See Psalm 27:13.]

Many of the Psalms, in fact most of the great ones, begin on a high note of faith. Everything seems settled forever, and God is as sure as Mt. Hermon, and then the dead strain of life comes on. “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” [Psalm 23:1.] “Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.” [Psalm 73:1.] Then you come into a twilight zone. “Yea, though I walk through

the valley of death.” [Psalm 23:4.] “But as for me, my feet had almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped.” [Psalm 73:2.]

Well, the 27th Psalm is one of the most striking instances of this sudden shift from the highest faith to a dark night of the soul. It is a condition we are all familiar with. It is a most moving outcry of the human heart. Here is the high note on which it began — “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? My heart shall not fear even though war should rise against me, I will still be confident.” [See Psalm 27:1-3.]

Then come doubt and agony and he faces the mystery of evil, the divine silence, the loss of assurance and exaltation — the dark night of the soul. But out of the dark tunnel he gasps out his trembling faith, “What if I had not believed to see the goodness of God! Wait for God! Be strong! Have courage in thy heart! Wait, I say, for God.” [See Psalm 27:13-14.]

His phrase “goodness of God in the land of the living” is significant. The Psalm was written before there was any clear hope of personal life after death. That hope comes only very late in the Old Testament. We are in another world when we can say with the first Epistle of Peter, “Blessed be the God and Father of Jesus Christ who according to His great mercy has begotten us to a *living hope*.” [See I Peter 1:3.]

That is a new note. If life opens out on a new stage and we are transplanted to bloom to profit in a new epoch where everything comes right in a Fifth Act, we can stand the mysteries and the defeats of life. But I agree with this psalmist that we must at least have clear intimations that the goodness of God can be counted on, as my father used to say, here and now in the land of the living.

I am as eager as anyone can be about *immortal life*, but the basic issue after all, now and forever, is the goodness of God. It is enough to be able to say with Whittier,

Yet in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed trust my spirit clings;
I know that God is good!

from *The Eternal Goodness*, J. G. Whittier

There is no other supreme issue. This old psalmist has his tiger on the central nerve. Is the universe fundamentally significant? Has it produced and will it answer the deepest longings and strivings of our human hearts?

I have always maintained that the essential aspect of man's aspiring spirit is of God, is a divine bestowal, that we can trust it as the mariner trusts his compass, that the black squares are on a white background and the ocean of light and love flows over the ocean of darkness.

If love is at the heart of the universe we can stand the Euroclydons and at least stammer, *All is well*.

The Challenge Of The Closed Door²¹

Christ did not say, did not promise, that the door to the things we most desire is an open door. The policy of the open door is not in the Gospel. He brought, rather, the challenge of the closed door. He said: "Knock and the door *will* open." [See Matthew 7:7.] It isn't open to begin with. None of the things we want most are within easy reach. None of them are waiting for us through open doors. You must not only knock but you must often besiege the door and endure a long wait before it opens for you. One of the first laws of life is: you must seek, you must want and then you must eagerly and patiently knock.

It seems strange that the things we want most are not furnished ready-made. If God is good and loving why didn't He meet our deepest wants with open doors to them? The world might have been made so that all you would need to do would be to go through an open door and there would wait for you what you want. You are at once disillusioned over that happy idea as soon as you see some youth whose rich parents have given him everything he wanted and who never had to struggle for anything. Few things are more pathetic than a spoiled boy.

The apocalypses all take the easy line of expectation. Everything is to be done for us without any effort on our part. "Behold I set before you an open door," the Apocalypse says. [See Revelation 3:8.] All you have to do is walk through. There is no more struggle, no more work, no more crying or tears. Instead of praying for the Kingdom of God to come, instead of toiling for it with knees and heart and hands, it comes all of a sudden ready-made as a relief expedition from the sky.

The trouble is, these apocalyptic worlds are only in books. They are not anywhere to be seen with the eyes. And they reverse all that we know of God's usual methods of dealing with us.

It looks to me as though Christ put His blessing on the slow, hard way. The beatitudes emphasize the blessedness of *wanting*, not of easy attainment already gained. The main trouble with Scribes and Pharisees was that they didn't have *wants*. They had *arrived*. They were at their easy goal. They had received their reward. Christ was talking about the glory of the imperfect, the glory of going on.

Some things are finished and final. You cannot change atoms, or the mathematical order, or the concatenations of atoms to form molecules, nor perhaps the moral structure of the universe, nor the emergence of mutations.

But everything in the sphere of social ideals, everything that concerns the *world order* is in our human hands. God does not fulminate from the sky the plans for cities or the organization of the nation. We ourselves are the builders of the world we are to live in. There is no open door to our new world order. We must face the challenge of the closed door.

Notes

1. Written in 1933 or after. The quotation is from Psalm 119:32, and is in James Moffatt's translation. The King James version reads: "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." Throughout the pamphlet I have kept Scripture quotations in Rufus Jones' wording. A simple reference indicates that the quotation is from the King James Version. [See ...] indicates that the quotation is not exact.
2. Probably given at South China, Maine, in 1933 or after. The Japanese Christian, Kagawa, is no longer living.
3. Probably early 1940's. The prayer of St. Paul is found in Ephesians 3: 16-19.
4. About 1934.
5. Probably 1940's. See John 6:35-69.
6. Probably between 1945-1948.
7. Late 1930's or early 1940's.
8. Probably late 1930's.
9. 1934 or after
10. Early 1930's.
11. Early 1930's.
12. Probably mid-1940's. The central texts are Luke 2:8 and Matthew 2:11.
13. Probably in late 1920's. R.M.J. may have given this at Harvard University Chapel. It is written on Harvard stationary from the Preacher's Room.

14. Late 1930's or early 1940's. Deceased person not known. R.M.J. did not note the particular verse of Whittier from *My Psalm* at the end of this talk, but simply wrote "Whittier." He frequently did use this verse.
15. Probably early 1940's.
16. Written between 1939-1945, during World War II. See Matthew 6:34.
17. Probably late 1920's.
18. Probably in late 1920's. This was also written on Harvard stationery from the Preacher's Room. Matthew 5:5.
19. Early 1940's.
20. 1942 or later.
21. Probably mid-1940's. The reference to atoms would indicate it was written before Hiroshima.