

THE FOURTEENTH
JAMES BACKHOUSE LECTURE
1978

WISDOM: THE INNER TEACHER

MARGARET WILKINSON

About the Author

Margaret E Wilkinson was born in Bishop Auckland, Durham, England in 1912.

Because of her seriously defective eyesight she did not commence her formal education until she arrived in Melbourne, Australia with her parents at the age of twelve. After five years the eye specialist considered it inadvisable for her to continue studying.

Unable to take up any academic profession, she trained as a Mothercraft nurse. This training was the basis of her many and varied experiences while working with children - which she had always wanted to do.

For more than thirty-five years Margaret was involved in the care of children - in charge of a Children's Home - nursing victims of poliomyelitis - and, during the war, running a community nursery school.

Throughout these years she attended lectures and courses whenever possible and became an Executive Member of the World Education Fellowship, her practical experience being accepted in spite of her lack of academic qualifications.

When Margaret and her husband and children moved to Tasmania, she was invited to assist with the organisation and running of the first school for mentally retarded children, and later, with the kindergarten for partially sighted children. In 1965 her sight had so far deteriorated that she had to give up the actual teaching of children.

Among her many social concerns was the work of counselling with the Marriage Guidance Council, and after the great bushfire disaster in Tasmania in 1967 Margaret was seconded from the Council to assist in rehabilitating the victims of the fire. This work she continued for two and a half years and was a representative and supported financially by the Society of Friends.

As a member of 'Life Line' Margaret is still working in the field of personal counselling.

After a lifetime of searching for spiritual freedom, Margaret, together with her family, joined the Religious Society of Friends in Hobart in 1950, and continues to take a very active part in the life of the Society. In her position as a Governor of Friends' School, Margaret is able to continue her lifelong concern for children and young people.

THE JAMES BACKHOUSE LECTURES

This is the fourteenth in a series of lectures instituted by Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends on the occasion of the establishment of that Yearly Meeting on January 1, 1964.

This lecture was delivered at the Guildford Grammar School, Perth, on May 14, 1978 at the time of the holding of Yearly Meeting.

James Backhouse was an English Friend who visited Australia from 1832 to 1838. He and his companion, George Washington Walker, travelled widely but spent most of their time in Tasmania. It was through this visit that Quaker Meetings were first established in Australia. James Backhouse was a botanist who published full accounts of what he saw, besides encouraging Friends and following up his deep concern for the convicts and for the welfare of the Aboriginal inhabitants of the country.

Australian Friends hope that this series of lectures will bring fresh insights into truth, often with some reference to the needs and aspirations of Australian Quakerism.

Margaret F. Roberts
Presiding Clerk
Australia Yearly Meeting

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Introduction

When I was approached by the Backhouse Lecture Committee and asked to deliver one of the lectures in the immediate future, I completely rejected the concept as being beyond me - not for the physical problem of my approaching blindness, but because in all my life I have never done such a thing as to deliver a lecture. Teaching and counselling have been part of my life for many years, but the preparation of anything so serious as a lecture seemed out of the question. But I was persuaded to think the matter over, as the Society of Friends felt that I had something to contribute to the life of the Society at this present time. I took the matter into the silence and shared my thoughts with some friends whose judgement I trust, and I then felt that I should accept this invitation.

Because my life has been directed along paths different from those of most people and because we are moving into an unknown future where the normal landmarks will be unrecognisable, I can perhaps give hope to those who are full of fear, and encouragement to those who feel inadequate. Most of all, I can share my experience that, walking in the path of wisdom, there is no age barrier - there is complete oneness between people of all ages and I have never known what it means to feel apart from the younger generation.

Life has always been rather strange for me; being partially blind all my life, I have never been quite sure that the physical world was what it appeared to me. I saw objects that were sometimes space, and there were unseen obstacles that I sometimes fell over or bumped into, because nobody had diagnosed my problem. So I just lived in this rather strange world. I lived by a faith and learned to rely on the inwardness and the guidance of something that was beyond the seen. And I found that it worked! I am a very practical person, and my life has been spent among children and young people and has always been very active. so I am not speaking to you about any airy-fairy ideas, or anything that is unreasonable for others to follow if they choose to work on inner discipline.

One of the things I had first to think about in this lecture was, 'What is it that I can shine?', and I realised that the many, many people who come to our home in search of counsel, comfort or companionship - especially young people - nearly always say the same thing: 'We want to talk to you because you are wise'. What does 'wise' mean? What has it meant to me? This is the question I shall try to answer in this lecture. Preparation has become a group experience because, as I

can no longer read, friends have had to search through the papers that I have kept, reading to me parts of old diaries and thoughts that I had written down - sometimes with great difficulty - because my writing has deteriorated so much that often I am unable to read it myself. Others have done typing, recording and writing letters. Many people of all ages have helped with what I am now going to share with you and, again, this is going to be a group experience.

Many years ago I read verses 20 and 21 in Isaiah, chapter 30,

And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not they teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers;

And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying 'This is the way; walk ye in it, when you turn to the right hand, and when you turn to the left'.

Ever since, this promise has been my guide through many great difficulties and great darkness - in fact the basic truth on which my spiritual life has depended.

At quite an early age I learned to follow the promptings of love within my heart. I learned to follow, when I thought a thing was right, by testing it by the standards of love portrayed in the life of Jesus of Nazareth and the great spiritual teachers - to 'follow' when I felt sure within me that what was to be done was right. So, when I joined the Society of Friends about twenty-three years ago I gained added wisdom by sharing some of my concerns with the Meeting. This is one of the great experiences that the Society has to offer - to help people to keep balance, by sharing.

Much of the wisdom that I have gained has come about by learning to obey an inner direction. In Hobart, Friends know that I can select a book from the shelf; I can go into a shop and stand still and know if there is something there that is necessary for me or for someone else, and I can put out my hand and take a book without even reading what its title is. This has come by obeying the discipline unquestioningly, in faith, knowing that if I did not understand the reason for the direction then, I would be shown it later.

One night I was awakened with the strong feeling that I must go and read the Apocrypha - chapter 7 of the Wisdom of Solomon. I had never read the Apocrypha and I realised that the only copy in our home was the one in the family Bible, which is very difficult to read - with the old-fashioned Ss and Fs - in a great, weighty volume on old, old paper. But I felt so strongly that I should read it

that I got out of bed and turned to chapter 7 (New English Bible), as I had been directed. And here I found, set out most clearly, the true meaning of wisdom:

I too am a mortal man like all the rest, descended from the first man, who was made of dust, and in my mother's womb I was wrought into flesh during a ten months' space, compacted in blood from the seed of her husband and the pleasure that is joined with sleep. When I was born, I breathed the common air and was laid on the earth that all men tread; and the first sound I uttered, as all do, was a cry; they wrapped me up and nursed me and cared for me. No king begins life in any other way; for all come into life by a single path, and by a single path go out again.

Therefore I prayed and prudence was given to me; I called for help, and there came to me a spirit of wisdom. I valued her above sceptre and throne, and reckoned riches as nothing beside her; I counted no precious stone her equal, because all the gold in the world compared with her is but a little sand, and silver worth no more than clay. I loved her more than health and beauty; I preferred her to the light of day; for her radiance is unsleeping. So all good things together came to me with her, and in her hands was wealth past counting; and all was mine to enjoy, for all follows where wisdom leads, and I was in ignorance before, that she is the commencement of it all. What I learned with pure intention I now share without grudging, nor do I hoard for myself the wealth that comes from her. She is an inexhaustible treasure for mankind, and those who profit by it become the friends of God, commended to him by the gifts they derive from her instruction.

God grant that I may speak according to his will, and that my own thoughts may be worthy of his gifts; for even wisdom is under God's direction, and he correct the wise. We and our words, prudence and knowledge and craftsmanship, all are in his hand. He himself gave me true understanding of things as they are; a knowledge of the structure of the world and the operation of the elements; the beginning, and end of epochs and their middle course; the alternating solstices and changing seasons; the cycles of the years and the constellations; the nature of living creatures and behaviour of wild beasts; the violent force of winds and the thoughts of men; the varieties of plants and the virtues of roots. I learnt it all, hidden or manifest for I was taught by her whose skill made all things wisdom.

For in wisdom there is a spirit intelligent and holy, unique in its kind yet made up of many parts, subtle, free-moving, lucid, spotless, clear, invulnerable, loving what is good, eager, unhindered, beneficent, kindly towards men, steadfast, unerring, untouched by care, all-powerful, all-surveying and permeating all

intelligent, pure and delicate spirits. For wisdom moves more easily than motion itself, she pervades and permeates all things because she is so pure. Like a fine mist she rises from the power of God, a pure effluence from the glory of the Almighty; so nothing defiled can enter her by stealth. She is the brightness that streams from everlasting light, the flawless mirror of the active power of God, and the image of his goodness. She is but one, yet can do everything; herself unchanging, she makes all things new; age after age she enters into holy souls and makes them the friends of God, and prophets, for nothing is acceptable to God but the man who makes his home with wisdom. She is more radiant than the sun and surpasses every constellation; compared with the light of day, she is found to excel; for day gives place to night, but against wisdom no evil can prevail.

Wisdom is the truth to live by, day by day. It comes from dwelling deep; we find and know it as we learn to 'dwell deep'. Wisdom is the light within made manifest in action. We discover the reality of our own inner light of wisdom through the constant practice of returning to the inner stillness which does not always need to be the outer stillness of quiet. Our speech and actions depend upon our own ability to be still and know. . .

How does one know? Just as the scientist, the poet, the writer or the artist is aware of touching or being touched by the spirit of creativity - of something beyond themselves, so each person can bring this new sense of direction to bear on every aspect of living. Only constant return to the centre, and then translating the knowing into action, can assure us that we have found 'the pearl beyond price'. For too long, modern people have allowed doubt and scepticism of their own inner direction to twist and warp their thinking and their actions. From earliest times the truths by which people live have been represented by saints and seers; but the truth that is for every person is, it seems, too difficult to accept.

Do we as Quakers really believe the truth which George Fox discovered? Ordinary men and women travelled most of the Western world, suffering loss of home and possessions, freedom and life itself. . . cheerfully. . . wanting all people to know that each person has an inward teacher - a light - a wisdom. And this is as true today as in 1660. Some of those ordinary people, who had been given extraordinary insights, wrote of their experience in words of utter simplicity and conviction - words as applicable to us today as they were to 17th century men and women - words with light to guide our lives. Others who have found their way to wisdom since those days have written as scientists, as psychologists. The words change, but the light and the wisdom are eternal. I propose to link these beams of light that I have discovered with a glimmer or two of my own experience of

wisdom, so that none may feel that those from whom I quote were in any way special or chosen people prior to their experiences, but people who chose to work on these experiences and make them part of their everyday lives. It is in this way that they are special.

I hope I can clarify the path I found through simply following each new light that had been tested for its truth by men and women of various backgrounds, yet who 'spoke to my condition' and brought me inward peace and strength. Until this quiet inward peace and strength becomes a part of every detail of life, the depths of underlying harmony beneath remain unused, for wisdom only develops through use.

The Wisdom of One of the Early Friends

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges to following the inner directions came when I was at Woodbrooke Quaker College in England in 1972. We were studying Quaker history, and there were many references to pamphlets written by early Friends. I had a strong feeling that I wanted to read some of these (have them read to me of course), and I went to the library to enquire about them. The librarian looked and searched in many places and said 'No - the ones that I think you need are in the big library at Friends House in London'. And yet the feeling never left me; it nagged underneath that there was something in that Woodbrooke Library that I must read. The term went on until three weeks before I was due to come back to Australia; we'd long since finished our Quaker History, but I still had this feeling within. The librarian was ill and a friend of mine had taken her place for a few weeks; she came running to my study and said 'I've found what you were looking for!' An American friend, who was in the next room, came down with us. With the help of my friend, who came from Finland, I brought the big ladder to get right to the top of a bookcase which had been presented by Neave Brayshaw many years ago. This bookcase was indexed in a different system, and that was how the normal librarian had missed them; here, right up next to the ceiling, was one after another of calf bound pamphlets in their original printings from the 1600s. They were difficult to read because, apart from the printing being rather poor, they were so tightly bound that there was a curve in the book and you had to turn your head on one side to try and read it. And there were dozens of them - there were dozens of books with dozens of pamphlets inside, and I thought 'How on earth am I going to know what I am looking for?'. So I said 'Read me the titles of the first book you picked up; I've just got to somehow know which is right'. She went through, and then I said 'That's it - "The One Good Way of God" '.

Now came the problem! It was three weeks before I was due to come back to Australia - and this very difficult writing - and there was very little time for people to decipher it for me. Then a young Scots girl who was in the library said 'Let me try'. She has a gift; she read in a beautiful soft Border voice, almost without a falter, this old, old language. We were all held spellbound, because this book, written in 1660, in so many places applied to something which spoke to our condition today. We only read a little in the time we had, and the rest was photocopied and sent on to me. I used it in many different ways, using the tapes in meditation groups, but always felt that I must share it more widely. Then when the opportunity came in this Backhouse lecture, I knew the time had arrived.

Little is known about this man - 'One known by name of Richard Hodden from Kinsale in Ireland'. We tried different research libraries, and Friends in Dublin, to find out something about him. Little is known, except that he was the loving Governor of a garrison. There are mentions of him in some earlier Quaker writings but, to our knowledge, nothing has been reprinted of this little gem of a book. Some of it doesn't speak to our condition today, but a great deal of it is of the standard of other books such as *The Cloud of Unknowing* and *The Scale of Perfection*.

To some of you who are not used to the old English ways of quoting the life of the spirit, it might be a little difficult to follow, but there are many of you who will agree with me that here we have, as one of the chapters is called, 'A Pearl Without Price'.

The One Good Way of God

Preface

'With loving warnings, exhortations and cautions to all sorts of men concerning their souls, and to be at peace amongst themselves, by one that truly loves them in and for God, known by the outward name, Richard Hodden. Printed by J. C. and are to be sold by Richard Moon, bookseller in Wynn Street in Bristol, 1661.

'Friendly reader. I have here made mention to the good cause and way of God, in plain words, according to the knowledge of his Son, revealed in me, with much love to all men, that they might with their eyes see and with their ears hear the voice of the beloved Son of God. If thou be willing to know this' one way for thine own soul with the true state thereof,

turn in thy mind to the pure light of the Lord Jesus, to the word that is near thee, in thy mouth and in thine heart. Commune there, and be still to obey it, that thou mayest know thine own teacher. Learn thine own lesson, feel and find how thy soul prospereth and travelleth in its journey towards the holy land. of heavenly love and blessed rest, to enter there in and cease from thy own works, as God did from his. And thus prepared, read on considerately, that thou mayest feel the love and favour therein (not to get words) and ever mind the present stirrings in thy heart, to love and long after the Lord's knocking at thy door for thee to open, that the King of Glory may come in and show thee what his good pleasure is in thine own particular for thy good, without running into others' conditions to lose thine own strength; that thou mayest walk in obedience thereto by the leading of His blessed spirit of holiness, and so feel and find what advisable part of the ensuing treatise may concern thy present state. And therein wait, and abide faithful, until thou shalt hear the voice saying, 'Come up higher', and then follow it. For the eternal life, here but hinted at, cannot be truly tasted or sweetly savoured so long as the soul remains ignorant of itself and its true teacher. The enlightened soul desires nothing but union with the Light, and to know and do what thou willeth in Him; and therein seeketh to bring all others into the same heavenly frame and happy estate of endless joy and blessed love, without hope of reward or fear of punishment.

'Because this pure path is ready prepared and ever open, waiting to embrace and conduct the soul that so cometh, all willing, weary and watchful souls that truly love Him in His least appearance may come to Him, and in His pure pleasure and light find refreshment.

Thy Friend,
RH.

Soul

'Seeing the business in hand is of soul-concernment, it is absolutely necessary that the soul should know itself, with the faculties, virtues and powers thereof, by its turning into and watchful keeping in its pure principle of the light of Christ Jesus in the conscience; to love that light, and observe its motions as it shall be lead by the Holy Spirit into all truth, and thereby restored into its primitive purity, fit to enjoy the sweet presence of God. For a miserable and wretched man is he that knoweth not the workings, worth and worthiness of his own soul, it being the most excellent creature the Lord God formed for his service and glory. This living soul is

not any corporeal substance, but a life invisible (as God is invisible), for it is of the breath of God, and so is God's (in an especial manner) that by its virtue beareth up the body and quickeneth it, and so the spirit formed in man is .said to be the candle of the Lord, useful there in searching the inner parts and knowing the heart's secrets. This soul consisteth of reason, mind, will and other faculties fit to receive and retain God in its understanding and knowledge, without forgetting Him or being distracted by any creature or creaturely thing; and as the reason is enlightened and becomes clear and bright, free from error and darkness, and the will and affections are turned into the love and light of Christ Jesus, the soul becomes an innocent life of conversing with God. The reasonable souls is a life immortal as well as invisible, and hath a power and pure light of Christ of itself, to see, know and love the truth and true good, which is God only; and the more he becomes acquainted therewith in this manner, the better he seeth and knoweth himself and others also, and the more meek, humble, lowly, loving, tender and compassionate will he be towards all men and creatures. And when the soul is brought into this heavenly harmony it truly loves God and all creatures spiritually; not fleshly as in its former ignorance.

'But how hard and difficult it is for the soul which is unacquainted with itself and accustomed to temptation to enter this strait gate to the knowledge of itself in its true light is evident by the ignorance of most and the small numbers of those that find it. For most men that would find entrance and know their souls, instead of turning in into the light of Christ turn their thoughts with imagination into their bodies, to seek for their souls. Now if a man should covet to know his soul and that earnestly, and seek for it in that manner in his body, he may not possibly find it in himself; but the more he seeketh to feel and know it by studiousness, the farther shall he be from it by that seeking. The soul needs to seek for a higher knowledge of and in itself, in the light, and to know that it is invisible and immortal, of the breath of God, knowing that God is to be seen spiritually, which is a great mystery, not to be expressed in words.

Meditation

'In every spiritual work and employment man's will, reason and earthly affections are to be left behind. So all you who would draw near to the Lord God, cast aside and leave behind you your own selfishness, will wisdom and imagination with every thought that exalteth itself and keeps your souls from closing with the Lord in his holy service, that you may be, by Him,

prepared to meditate, watch, pray and give thanks in all things and at all times and embrace. all divine counsel and heavenly help thereby in the pure light and tender touches in the conscience, that by the stirrings of grace you may come to a knowledge of Him spiritually, which gift is common to all. The Holy Spirit oft stirreth to meditations in God which worketh a kindly work in their souls to be waited in, and the fruits of the Spirit to be received, and all in Jesus Christ, as the pure power, endless love and wisdom of God that sets the heart upon hungering after his virtue and spiritual discoveries. And so meditation, watching and praying have no rules, bounds or limits set by man unto them. He draws in their souls to be made wise in waiting, knowing and obeying Him spiritually.

'It is no easy thing to love with all the heart until the heart be renewed; for this work will be found painful and laborious at first, by the pressing in of vain thoughts; and a full hard task it is for him that feels no grace to be long waiting, meditating and watching in his soul, and much will he be encumbered with running and roving thoughts, as having gotten no sure hold on his heart, and therefore is the heart to be kept unto God in the Light.

'For every man's meditations and thoughts, to him that is of a heedful mind what he is; and so what he thinketh and meditateth on, and loveth is his God. Therefore he ever sets his heart and mind spiritually upon good to know what He willeth, and to please Him, know Him, have, love and enjoy Him by His grace, and by degrees more and better. And as the soul ever keeps to these desires it will be shown plainly, in the Light, what is evil and what is good, what is pleasing to God and what is contrary to him, and teach him all needful things. Christ Jesus did not say that they should be known by working miracles, casting out devils, preaching, teaching or praying, which should be more minded by those who now desire signs and wonders (that they may otherwise see if they shut not their eyes). True love and meekness are the greatest of miracles in these last and perilous times, wherein men strive to resist evil, not to suffer it, to avenge wrongs rather than to forgive them as Christ commanded. But meekness as in pure love and spiritual affections is perfect meekness, and he that hath this is a meek man, that knows himself as he is and ought to be known, and loveth all others in or for God; but where grudgings are in the heart towards any, or unquiet thoughts, the heart is not clean, the conscience is not pure nor the walking charitably or with God. Observe how he himself did by Judas, for all his wickedness. Neither do I read that he reprov'd Judas openly, but rather waited for his repentance to the very last. And the more like to Jesus

Christ thou art herein, the more thou lovest thyself only in God and not out of him, and so thou lovest truly. In the first place thou lovest God in man, and in the second place thou lovest man for God.'

Wisdom and Reason

Another light upon my path came through the writings of Caroline Stephen of Cambridge, England (1834-1909). Her book *Quaker Strongholds*, which has recently been republished, had in no wise 'spoken to my condition' yet, during a sale of secondhand Quaker books in 1962 I felt impelled to buy a copy of her book *The Light Arising* for the sum of sixpence.

Her family was deeply involved in the Church of England, but her questing mind was restless under doctrinal pressures. Eventually her search for truth was ended in the simplicity of the Quaker Meeting where, for thirty years, she came to know the power that sprang from *a deep quietness of heart and mind, a laying aside of all preoccupations with passing 'things, a resolute fixing of the heart upon that which is unchangeable and eternal.*

The clarity of her thinking has remained a constant challenge to me. Research shows us that, coming from a family which had made outstanding contributions to the formation of legislation in Eastern Australia as well as in other countries, she too contributed to the journals of her day, and throughout her life was engaged in philanthropic work.

From *The Light Arising* by Caroline Stephen

'On "The Central Radius: Quakerism and Free Thought" Now we come here upon the very origin and essence of the peculiarity of Quakerism as compared with other forms of Christianity. The distinguishing peculiarity of Quakerism undoubtedly lies in its mystical character. By this much-abused word "mystical" I mean the view of life which springs from a consciousness of illumination from within. It is a temper of mind, as we all know, which may be found in combination with every variety of religious, perhaps even of non-religious, belief. Inward illumination is certainly not dependent upon any kind of orthodoxy. But the tendency, or It the faculty, as it existed in the founders of our Society, was in point of fact 'combined with a belief in Christian doctrines such as made it inevitable that they should identify the Light shining in their own hearts with that glory which

they saw "in the face of Jesus Christ". Quakerism is the recognition of this identity of the Light within the "Light of the World" - it is a fusion of the historical and mystical faiths.

The rays of light from within and from without are not indeed always precisely distinguishable from one another. They seem to meet and blend in some central region of our being. It is only in proportion to our openness to both that we can have the humble yet well-founded assurance of having rightly interpreted Divine Guidance. The perfect blending and consensus of both sources of illumination is the final warrant for entire conviction. Let me dwell for a moment on this thought of the distinction and the combination between the Inner and Outer Light. By the outer light I mean all the abundant instruction of experience, history and observation - reaching us partly through our own and partly through other minds. Such reflected or indirect light reaches us all from all quarters and is mostly common property, amenable to the judgement of reason and concerned with matters of fact, with events, and with the laws of nature. But in the central innermost region of our minds there shines one pure ray of direct light from the very throne of God; one ray which belongs to each one individually; which is for that one supreme and apart; the ray which, shining from the heavenward side of conscience, and so enlightening and purifying it, must of necessity dominate the whole being. The light reflected from the broad fields of experience would be incomplete without the direct and supreme ray from the source of Light; and the heavenly light itself not only welcomes but demands the admission of reflected light from without, as a preservative against personal bias, and spiritual pride and self-deception.

I should say that the mystical consciousness is immediately aware of, and is profoundly affected by, that to which Reason gives a name, and points as it were from afar off. No doubt the sense of assurance which specially belongs to the intuitive faculty (be that what it may) is apt to overflow into the opinions held by each individual mystic, and not only into opinions but into symbols and allegories of all kinds; and those who have not learnt to analyse their own mental processes often fail to distinguish their inward sense of certainty from the possession of an intellectual warrant for positive statement.

I believe it to be as truly a duty to submit every impulse to the discipline and test of reason as it is to keep burning the pure flame of devotion to the Most High by which alone Reason can be raised to the

level of Wisdom. We can cultivate the power, more or less latent, I imagine, in every mind, of passing at will from surface to depth and from depth to surface. I do not know how far others may be conscious of a power to sink into the depths of their own minds.

If we are to have even a glimpse of the innermost and unspeakable joys of the spirit - if we are to rise above pain and sorrow and bitterness into pure serenity of the heaven within - if we are to "know that He is God" we must be still. This necessity is as much rational as mystical; no deep wisdom can be attained without deliberate thought. No clear impressions, either from above or from without, can be received by a mind turbid with excitement and agitated by a crowd of distractions. The stillness needed for the clear shining of light within is incompatible with hurry.

'Quietness and obedience are in truth one. We may of course talk of obeying anything, even our whims; but it is only the unchanging, the unseen and eternal things which can truly and permanently rule us, and give us that "quietness and confidence" which is our strength. To be faithful to the Light we have is the one certain way to have more. All Light is from God, and that which shines into the innermost region of heart, mind and will must necessarily radiate thence in all directions, spreading its purifying, healing power to the very outermost range of our atmosphere. This light does not run counter to the dictates of reason, of conscience, of common sense, propriety or wisdom. It inspires, harmonises and transfigures them all. It is indeed the very light of life - the light which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world - to walk in which is to walk with God.

'The Light within is spiritual, not merely intellectual. But, as its radiance is shed upon the comparatively outward region of intellectual divergence it does, no doubt, lead each obedient spirit nearer and nearer to the truth; and obedience to truth after truth as it comes in sight is, no doubt, the path which leads to the highest and clearest understanding of spiritual realities.

'In these days of shaking of all that can be shaken those may be thankful whose faith is not bound to any definite form of words.

'There is an obvious danger in laying stress on that meaning of the word "within" which implies limitation, so that the idea of a light shining only within the four walls of our own minds is substituted for the great

truth that Light is in its very nature a radiating energy; that the 'radiancy Divine' springs from the very Centre of Life and must ever stream forth in all directions. Too often people have allowed themselves to think of "the Light within" as an exclusive possession of each individual, and have so misunderstood the verbal teaching of obedience to it as to think they were called on to find instruction in a solitary introspectiveness which but too easily becomes morbid. This innermost Light is in its very nature dominant. The attempt to increase it by exclusion of that which is without is suicidal. Not by the exclusion of lesser lights but by obedience to the one Supreme Light do we increase the measure of inward illumination.

If we are to obey this Supreme Light, we must of course learn to recognise it; and in order to do so we must be quiet. True inward quietness is not that which may be produced by shutting out all outward causes of distraction - a process which, when carried out too severely, may intensify the inward ferment of the mind, especially in the young. It is rather a state of stable equilibrium; it is not vacancy, but stability - the steadfastness of a single purpose.

Inwardness and true quietness indeed appear to be but two aspects of the same thing - of a "truly centred" life. In the innermost region of life there is perpetual calm; perturbations and excitements belong to the comparatively superficial part of our natures. In cleaving to the Centre we cannot but be still; to be inwardly still is to be aware of the Centre. This may be mystical language, unfamiliar to those to whom it has not occurred that all parts of our nature are not on one level, and do not respond to the same plane in our environment; but it is also the language of hard commonsense. The Centre means whatever is most unchangeable, most real, most truly important. Notwithstanding all possible dangers from perversion or exaggeration in the teaching of quietness, the need for it lies too deep in human nature to be forgotten while the search after Truth and the God of Truth holds its place among us.

If the Society of Friends can open wide its doors, not so much to new members as to new ideas and new sources of knowledge, without losing its ancient and deep hold on eternal truth; if it can maintain that inward quietness which belongs inevitably to immediate access to the Divine Presence, without losing its kinship with all that is human, it may fill a unique place in the present struggle of faith.

'That eternal sunshine which we know by occasional glimpses belongs of course to the innermost region of our being, and the central region of all being. But the very words of our Master which I began by quoting seem to show that this is not a region in which, in this life at least, we can consciously abide always. The very injunction to enter into our closet and shut the door, the very words "when thou prayest", seem to show that He is speaking not of our habitual consciousness; not of any mental attitude which can be maintained "without ceasing", but of something necessarily occasional - of isolated acts of worship. Such times are as peaks catching the sunshine while the level lands are wrapped in mist. It is, I believe, the same not only with acts of worship, but with all our moments of inspiration and revelation. They come and go - we can neither command them nor retain them.

'We certainly cannot dwell permanently on the heights or in the depths, but we can dwell permanently in view of them. We can cultivate the habit of looking towards them and recognising their existence. We can make a practice of judging events and characters as far as may be from within with reference to the Divine and eternal standards, not to the superficial "appearance". The outer regions of life, even its most trivial and transient interests, have their place and function. Both as affording links with our fellow creatures, and as tending to preserve sanity and balance of mind, it seems essential that they should not be disregarded.

'There are others who feel, and I think rightly, that whatever limits may be set to our range of thought by want of time or of capacity, the voluntary exclusion of disturbing influences is a very dangerous resource. Sincerity forbids us to pick and choose - as to read only what we know will serve to strengthen our foregone conclusions. We need better principles of selection than the mere desire to avoid disturbance. It is by the shaking of what is shakeable and the sifting of what is mixed that the residuum is tested 'and guaranteed. And we learn, sooner or later, that if we have but a germ of the faith which means a real anchorage of the soul, the shattering of successive outlines and boundaries of belief does but throw us back with a firmer confidence upon an ever-widening foundation of trust.

'Love is a plant vigorous enough to thrive on all soils, taking a new beauty from the rocky uplands as well as from the rich and sheltered pastures. Love can thrive and grow strong by absence as well as by presence. I believe it does best with alternations of ease and difficulty. At any rate it is clear that we have to prepare for and to contend with a great

variety of outward conditions. Our wisdom therefore must lie in learning not to shrink from anything that may be in store for us, but so to turn everything to good and faithful account.

'All love in its measure casts out loneliness. The supreme Love of God casts it out absolutely and for ever.'

Wisdom and a New Approach to Psychology

In the mid-sixties, I was introduced to some of the 'New, Age' writings and there discovered the clear link between past, present and future in the work of Abraham Maslow.

Henry Geiger says in his introduction to *The Farthest Reaches of Human Nature* -

'Abraham Maslow 1908-70 was one of the prime movers in the emergence of modern psychology, helping to establish the humanistic third force in psychology in the mid-nineteen-fifties. In the late nineteen-sixties he and others brought forward a fourth force in the study of man - transpersonal psychology.

'Maslow must first be thought of as a man, and then as one who worked very hard at psychology, or rather who rendered his growth and maturity as a man into a new way of thinking about psychology.

'It is evident that his life was filled with humanitarian concern, and in his last years with continuous reflection on what might make the foundation of a social psychology that could point the way to a better world.

'We must remember he said in one place that knowledge of one's own deep nature is also simultaneously knowledge of human nature in general.

'We can study today what happened in the past, then explainable in supernatural terms only. By so doing we are enabled to examine religion in all its facets and in all its meanings in a way that makes it part of science rather than something outside and exclusive of it.

'The private religious experience is shared by all the great world religions, including the atheistic ones like Buddhism, Taoism, Humanism and Confucianism.'

From *The Farthest Reaches of Human Nature* by Abraham Maslow

'I shall begin with an explanation of what I have called peak experiences because it is in such experiences that my thesis is most easily and amply demonstrated. The term "peak experience" is a generalisation for the best moments of the human being, for the happiest moments of life, for experiences of ecstasy, rapture, bliss, of the greatest joy. ... I use the one term - peak experiences - as a kind of generalised and abstract concept, because I discovered that all of these ecstatic experiences had some characteristics in common. . . .

'My own boiling down and condensation of the multitude of words, and the many descriptions of the way the world looks to them, from perhaps a hundred people, during and after peak experiences would be: truth, beauty, wholeness, .., aliveness process, uniqueness, perfection, necessity, completion, justice, order, simplicity, richness, effortlessness, playfulness and self-sufficiency.

'These are the ways in which the world is variously characterised when seen in peak experiences. There may be differences in stress or in degree, ie during the peak experiences the world looks **more** honest and naked, **more** true, or is reported to look **more** beautiful than at other times.

'It is the chemist, the biologist or the engineer who will continue to have trouble with this old/new notion that truth may come in this old/new way in a rush, in an emotional illumination, in a kind of eruption, through broken walls, through resistances, through the overcoming of fears. We are the ones who specialise in dealing with dangerous truths, with the truths which threaten self-esteem.

'Now we make our big jump: this same list of described characteristics of reality, of the world, seen at certain times, is just about the same as what have been called the eternal values, the eternal verities. We see here the old familiar trinity of truth, beauty and goodness. That is to say, this list of described characteristics is also simultaneously a list of values. . . .

'Exactly the same statement about the way the world looks is also a value statement. These are the most inspiring values of life; these are the ones that people are willing to die for, these are the ones that they are willing to pay for with effort, pain and torture. . . . These are the definitions

of the higher life, of the good life, of the spiritual life, and, I may also add, these are the far goals of psychotherapy, and the far goals of education in the broadest sense. These are the qualities for which we admire the great men of human history, that characterise our heroes, our saints, even our Gods.

'What we have learnt is that ultimately the best way for a person to discover what he ought to do is to find out who and what he is, because the path to ethical and value decisions, to wiser choices, to "oughtness", is via 'isness', via the discovery of facts, truth, reality, the nature of the particular person. The more he knows about his own nature, his deep wishes, his temperament, his constitution, what he seeks and yearns for and what really satisfies him, the more effortless . . . become his value choices. (This is one of the great Freudian discoveries, and one which is often overlooked.) Many problems simply disappear; many others are easily solved by knowing what is in conformity with one's nature, what is suitable and what is right. . . .

'Do you want to find out what you ought to be? Then find out who you are! "Become what thou art!" The description of what one ought to be is almost the same as the description of what one deeply **is**.

'Here value. . . of the end towards which you are striving, the terminus, the Heaven, exists right now. The self towards which one is struggling, exists right now in a very real sense, just as real education, rather than being the diploma that one gets at the end of a four year road, is the moment-to-moment-to-moment process of learning, perceiving, thinking. Religion's Heaven, which one is supposed to enter after life is over - life itself being meaningless - is actually available in principle all through life. It is available to us now and is all around us. . . .

'My study of the failure of most Utopian efforts has taught me to ask the basic questions themselves in a more practical and researchable way. "How good a society does human nature permit?" and "How good a human nature does society permit?" Very important today, in a topical sense, is the realisation that plateau experiencing can be achieved, learnt, earned by long hard work. It can be meaningfully aspired to. But I don't know of any way of bypassing the necessary maturing, experiencing, living, learning. All of this takes time. A transient glimpse is certainly possible in the peak experiences which may after all come sometimes to anyone. But, so to speak, to take up residence on the high plateau of Unitive consciousness,

that is another matter altogether. That tends to be a lifelong effort. It should not be confused with the Thursday evening turn-on that many youngsters think of as the path to transcendence. For that matter it should not be confused with any single experience. The "spiritual disciplines", both the classical ones and the new ones that keep on being discovered these days, all take **time, work, discipline, study, commitment**'.

The concept of peak to plateau experience was the verification I was searching for - I no longer felt alone - it gave me confidence to ponder and define my own experiences, And so discover that for me the way was into a flow of light attained by learning to lift up my whole being - in thanksgiving by an ever-developing awareness to the whole of life. And acceptance of living in the moment; the time is now!

Wisdom for a New Age

A young person of this age has an urgent need to prove, to experiment and to experience, to find out to which world he belongs. The acceleration of the whole of living has lead him to search for his truth, sometimes along strange and tortuous paths, because he has not been exposed to the wisdom of New Age truths.

This is a wider problem affecting all ages. David Spangler, a young American science teacher and lecturer, who specialises in biochemistry and genetics, has become known during the last ten years as a visionary with a practical philosophy, writing and lecturing on the coming of the next two thousand years. In his book *Revelation: Birth of a New Age*, David Spangler vividly states:

'Such a person is susceptible to "stress diseases" such as heart attack, nervous breakdowns, strokes and so forth. His body loses its inner resiliency, its power to upbuild itself. Already more people are dying of these stress diseases than ever before, as people's bodies begin literally to disintegrate under the impact of the increasing stress of modern society and rapid change.

' . . . There is no conflict with the past, for the past is seen as the womb of the future. The forms in which Life has expressed itself in the past may have to change, to expand in order to adapt to the expansion of that

Life itself, but change of this nature is evolution, growth, not conflict, not opposition. Forms always change, but the essential Life within those forms goes on eternally. . .

' . . , Throughout the world a great sifting is taking place, not between those who are "saved" and those who are "lost", for these are meaningless terms in the light of the Revelation of Limitless Love and Truth, but allowing consciousnesses to find the level of teaching and activity where they can best be reached by the Christ impulse that seeks to lift all mankind into the New Age,

' . . , In some cases, the individual takes only as much from other cultures as he needs to more powerfully resist and express his rebellion against his native pattern. An example of this is the person of the West who studies under an Indian holy man who employs a discipline and rhythm of life built up over centuries, practising scrupulous cleanliness and order and peace. The Westerner learns what he wishes and returns to the West. He has only skimmed the surface of a teaching but has not entered the deeper rhythms of the culture that produced that teaching, rhythms, which are the very heart and soul of the teaching. . .

' . . Man, confronted with challenge or frustrated or uncertain where to turn, may seek to run away_ This was possible in the past when man had lots of room to expand and plenty of natural resources to draw upon. . _ Many people, dissatisfied with the establishment about them, unable or unwilling to adopt a new culture, retreat. They run into psychic realms if they cannot run to new physical ones. This manifests as the problem of addiction.

' . . . Drugs often are used for just this purpose in order that the individual can run into a private world of fantasy or at least dull the frustrating impingement of the outer, uncomfortable world. They can also be seriously used as a hopeful means of becoming aware of higher levels in which the individual is not so much running away as seeking something beyond himself. The problem here is that while certain drugs can bring about, for some individuals, an experience of higher levels of consciousness, after taking drugs, the consciousness still has to integrate the experience into the wholeness of the Self if it is to have any real value; unfortunately, the effect of the drug is to weaken the integrative powers of the Self. . .

'Addiction, though, refers to more than just drugs. . . It represents a weakening of the integrating, unifying powers of the individual, making it increasingly difficult for him to feel at one and whole within himself and thereby intensifying his search for that wholeness through linking himself with some outside form or power. Addiction is part and essence of the phenomenon of escape. One can be addicted to people, to things, to sports, to literature, to meditation, to "seeking spiritual truths", in short, to anything that will occupy some level or fragment of the Self and give the illusion in the moment of "being fulfilled and busy" . . .

Seeking the Vision

' . . . The consciousness of man must be reorientated away from the past into the future and into the present as the creative moment in which the future is realised.

' . . . Indeed, just as Jesus was rejected by many who thought that He did not fit into the classical expectations of a messiah and could not perceive the fullness of what He represented, so the Christ manifestation for this New Age could go unrecognised and rejected by many who are thinking of a Second Coming as a repetition and reinforcement of the past. We are in a New Age. We must be prepared for change and for receiving into ourselves the uplifting challenge of the unknown.

' . . . Oneness is a key concept. In a spiritual sense, the world has always been one. All that lives upon it and within it is linked by a common life, a common evolution.

'.. . Oneness is the only reality, and diversity its apparent manifestation. Love is the realisation of this. Love is not an action or an energy; **it is a vision from which an action can spring. It is a recognition.** Two people do not fall in love. They suddenly catch the Vision, the realisation of their Oneness and this vision sets into motion the mental, emotional and physical energies to reflect that essential Oneness in the world of form. . . It may be easier to manifest Love in one's life if one does not think of it primarily in terms of actions but in terms of vision. One must realise the Oneness, the wholeness of which he is a part, and allow that realisation to inspire and direct his actions. Then, instead of straining to generate feelings of love, which many people find difficult to do, one

releases oneself to the Oneness and Love that naturally flow between all of us.

' . . . As a culture, we have fallen into the habit of sitting and waiting for our leaders to offer us the materials of life which we need or think we need . . . We go to lectures, to conferences, to discussions, to meditation sessions, to books; we take in and take in and take in until many of us can discuss most learnedly the New Age and all it will offer. Few of us are actually attempting to create that New Age in practical action either in our own lives or in society. We await some event that will make it easier for us, an event that will 'usher in' the new cycle. We fail to realise that the New Age is a living presence within us seeking externalisation. It is like a holy breath within our lungs waiting to be breathed forth upon the clay of a world which might then take on new life.

Glimpses From My Inward Wisdom

I have come to know, through living experience, the limitless power of lifting heart and mind in exaltation and praise to God. This can be the answer to every personal problem - for this is to return and draw strength - this is the inbreathing of the source - the beginning and the ending of life. This life eternal is continuous, ever flowing in, through and around; the Word made manifest.

Seek and we shall find,
Knock and it will be opened,
Ask and we shall receive.

Because in losing our life we find it; losing it in the
stream of Loving Kindness, of Light and Love and Wisdom.

This truth is so simple that only the trusting acceptance of a childlike faith
dares practise it.

This return to the source of our being:

'Lift up your hearts, It is meet and right so to do.

That at all times and in places we should lift
our hearts up unto the Lord.'

When I was in any difficulty, from sleeplessness to despair -
Never did it fail.

Only I failed to remember to 'Lift up'.

At times I wallowed in self-pity

But when once I was recalled,

All was well.

Self-Acceptance

We can never find stillness within until we learn that forgiving others, and understanding and accepting God's forgiveness are incomplete unless we can forgive ourselves.

Most of us set ourselves high standards, and pride makes it hard for us to face failure when we do not live up to these standards.

Peace within comes when we cease to do violence to ourselves and accept ourselves as we really are.

Prayer - Upholding

We often forget to grow up in our prayer life.

How can we pray for others?

The words of the Query 'to hold in the Presence of God' tell us what we need to do.

Not to pray for any particular thing, for no person knows what is right or when it is right for another person.

But remember that person in quietness before God.

Not just the quietness of a meeting for worship, not just the quietness of when we are alone, but in the midst of work, travelling, and pleasure, to hold the person before God in the eternal quiet of our inmost being.

Live in Love

When Christ Jesus was preparing for His Ministry, He withdrew into the wilderness.

A way to sway the whole world with His miraculous powers was shown to Him.

He refused it and came among people to show them how to live with one another.

The only safe way to change which can be lasting is:

Through human relationships.

How we think, feel and act towards our everyday neighbours.

Until we can live in harmony with our own community, we cannot expect

Nations to do so.
Let your Life speak here!
The time is now!
It will not come again!
We are here to Learn to Live in Limitless Love.

Transfer Experience Into Action

At some time or other most of us see the Light of God, whether with others; when we are alone and quiet; or sometimes in the light shed from one who has accepted great suffering.

When we experience the Light, we are fearful that we will lose the vision and often do not want to descend to the demands of our busy lives. Jesus recognised this so well in his disciples that he felt the need to touch them, so that he reassured them by the reminder that spiritual experience must be translated through the physical body.

If we live in awareness of God we will be constantly reminded that the Spirit of Christ Jesus, which is Love, can only work in the world through our feet and our hands and our voices.

He will touch us so that we become aware of the need of the seen, and more deeply the need of the unseen troubles of humankind. As we learn to respond to this touch, so we shall find the fruits of the Spirit working out in our own lives:

' . . . the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering,
gentleness, goodness, faith,
Meekness, temperance . . .

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.'

New Wisdom

Not through Revolution
But evolution.
Not by non-violence
But by Living Awareness.
Not by dividing into units
But by living in Wholeness.

Not by communities
But by Communion.
No longer developing mind and body
But Body, Mind, Soul and Spirit in Balance with Earth, Water, Air
and Space,
That we may be one in Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness
and Meekness.
Into the fullness of the knowledge of God which we see in Christ.
'I am in the Father, and the Father in Me', and I am in you
A new Heaven and a New Earth, as we move into a New Dimension.

New Dimensions

I am the New Age.
From my heart
Are born beings of love,
Part of man,
Part of earth,
Part of sky.
I am that One,
That One am I.
Planted in the ground of my being,
New seeds shall grow
Cleansing the raped earth
As planted in love they flow
Into the Light
And again Man and Sun and God are One.
And as Man learns to love the dust on which he treads,
And each created thing on which he lays eye or hand,
So all Kingdoms of earth shall expand;
Animal, mineral and vegetable
Will grow and flow into light and wisdom.
Through Man into wholeness and unity,
Into God, into Essence, into Spirit, into Eternal Life.
I am that One,
That One am I,
Part of Man,
Part of Earth,
Part of Sky,
But first man must love himself in others,

The work of his hand and all things created.
Love without limit
Creates through wisdom
Light without limit,
And the upward surge of gratitude to the all
Sweeps his consciousness
Upward into higher levels.
Then he knows
That he flows
In oneness with all created life.

Psalm of Gratitude and Joy

Great and Glorious art Thou
Oh God of the Endless Universe
Oh God of the perfection of a tiny flower.
Who am I that thou shouldst bend and take me in thy hand
And open up to the eyes of my heart the hidden secrets of thy joy?
As freed from the tyranny of a million million words
I learn to live in awe and wonder
In the place where words come from.
Oh great vast secret silence of the hidden universe of the spirit
Yet throbbing with such vibrant life as yet scarce touched by man
My whole being is filled with wonder at this Glory bestowed upon me.

My Guidelines - A Discipline

Continually remembering to 'Lift up my Heart' - at times really working to
find reasons for joy, thanksgiving or praise.
Living awareness not of what happens to me, rather what happens to others
through me. First another, then me.
Listening, observing awareness of the inner and outer needs of others.
Listening with my inside ears, seeing with my inside eyes.
Always to build up to the light.
Live in joyous appreciation.
To hold relationships and material possessions loosely so that they may
flow.
To rely on the strength beyond, to carry me through every situation when
I reach the end of my own resources.

To keep my mind open to the flow of new truth, that it may keep the
light of the wisdom of my inner knowing.
To **be**, not to **expect** and so become disappointed.
To live and move in wholeness of all life, and beyond separation.

Conclusion

You may wonder why I have used frequent and even long quotes - these men and women have been my teachers, they have spoken to my condition in an especial way, clarifying my thoughts, confirming half glimpsed visions into certainties leading to action. Above all, gradually, I have learned when to trust inner promptings, and when to let them lie awaiting further sifting.

My first memory of relying on the creative interior source of wisdom was some thirty years ago while teaching small children. I found at times it was as though a silent, shared experience between us gave birth to new methods of teaching, new experiences in learning. Not one child ever failed to learn to read - even when there were serious emotional or visual problems.

Later, in personal counselling and social work during the aftermath of the Tasmanian bushfire disaster, I found that if I could speak from the still centre within - not from reasoning or commonsense - miracles happened in the lives of those I was with. But always it seems essential if we are to use wisdom, that our own personal ideas, physical discomforts and critical judgements must be laid aside and we must be in a state of loving awareness - an accepting flow, able to respond to the need in the person and their situation.

I have found that the more I enjoy living - the more I learn to lift up my heart - the easier it is to accept life cheerfully, because it means living from the deep joy of inward peace. But the price is to feel the pain of the world more acutely. But if we live in the flow of balanced inbreath and outbreath nothing is too difficult. That is why much of the teaching of the New Age is so rewarding to study. It is towards balance and must be studied from known truths so that unknown thoughts can be tested by wisdom.

How to distil this outpouring of wisdom into a working blueprint? The following have become my basic essentials:

There has never been a time in human development when so many paths, and so many truths, have been so freely available.

There will be no-one, as David Spangler reminds us, 'suddenly appearing and saying, this is the right path'.

We must each of us define our own path out of the truths which we have been exposed to and follow it in practice, never forgetting that we must be open to change.

'Learn where is wisdom, where is strength, where is understanding: that thou mayst know also where is length of days, and life, where is the light of the eyes, and peace.'

1 Baruch 3:14
(Apocrypha)

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