



Lecture 1940

William Penn

*Sharpening
the Edge
of the
Spiritual
Message*

Allen D. Hole

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**Sharpening the Edge of
the Spiritual Message**

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by
Allen D. Hole
Professor of Geology, Earlham College

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The name of William Penn has been chosen because he was a Great Adventurer, who in fellowship with his friends started in his youth on the holy experiment of endeavoring “to live out the laws of Christ in every thought, and word, and deed,” that these might become the laws and habits of the State.

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Sharpening the Edge of the Spiritual Message

The idea that words and the truth behind them have a strikingly penetrating, incisive power is not new. It has been expressed in various forms, figurative and direct. For example, there is the familiar text in the fourth chapter of Hebrews:

“For the word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

There is also the record left by George Fox of the results of his preaching in the “steeple house” at Carlisle, in north England, where according to the account in his Short journal “a mighty power of ye lord god there was yt made people to Quiver and Tremble, yt it shooke them againe, that some thought the very steeple house had shaken.”

But it is not enough to be conscious of the fact that truth as it comes into the minds of men works with irresistible power. It is also as a practical matter necessary to recognize the additional fact that, so far as human agents are concerned, the form in which the truth is presented, the circumstances and conditions under which it is presented, together with other attending factors, are all a part of the essentials involved. Each of these must make its contribution if the

presentation of a message freighted with truth is to fulfill its mission in the incisively penetrating, regenerating manner which Isaiah pictures in these phrases: “My word ... shall not return unto me void,” saith the Lord, “but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”

The importance of the form in which the truth is presented has been emphasized repeatedly, so that little more need be said on this phase of the question. It is well to note, however, that from the time when the apostle Paul pleaded with the members of the church at Corinth to speak of spiritual matters so that those who heard could understand what they said, there have been at intervals, discerning men and women who have in general repeated the same admonition. Nevertheless it seems to be true that in each generation, there tends to be a crystallization of that truth in sets of phrases which come gradually, in effect, to transform the piercing, powerfully incisive two-edged sword of truth into an instrument so blunt and ineffective that in some men’s minds there seems to be formed the conviction that truth, itself, has lost its power.

If considerations such as these upon which we have started are to have more than a mere academic interest for us, it is of course clear that the current of our thought must be turned to an examination of the experiences of men and women of this, our own generation – experiences especially of those individuals and organized groups who pray and plan and work with all their power to be incarnations of changeless spiritual truth here and now in this wonderful world, where each individual is being given

the opportunity of sharing in the creation of a reality which is but feebly forecast in such figurative phrases as:

- the coming of the Kingdom of God upon earth;
- the establishment of a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,
- hastening the time when The Kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.

And as we examine such experiences, it will perhaps be most helpful to dwell here upon those which seem to record in clearest fashion effective results in the presentation of spiritual truth, and particularly some of those showing results which illustrate the effectiveness of forms of presentation within the range of human choice and human planning. Manifestly, within the time at our disposal today only a few concrete instances can be mentioned, which may be considered typical and illustrative not only of our specific objective of helping to propagate truth in such a manner as to allow it to exert its living, active, regenerating power, but also in the process to lay bare to ourselves some part of those eternal unshakable foundations which, in reality still exist and upon which we may with unreserved confidence take our stand even in these days when the very atmosphere seems charged with a feeling of doubt in every field of thought and experience.

For us who are gathered here today, it is fitting that we choose illustrations for these concrete instances from wordings recorded in the Bible such as these:

Sentences found in Judges, fifth chapter and twentieth verse:

“From heaven fought the stars,
From their courses they fought against Sisera.”

The seventeenth verse of the sixth chapter of II Kings:

“And Elisha prayed, and said, ‘Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see.’ And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.”

I

The various phases of truth embodied in the quotations from the Scriptures just cited, are so interdependent that it is difficult to think about them separately; but for the sake of being as concrete and definite as possible it will be well to undertake such separate consideration as seems practicable.

First then as to the sentences from the fifth chapter of judges:

“From heaven fought the stars,
From their courses they fought against Sisera.”
Judges 5:20

The quotation is from the song of the prophetess Deborah; this is a song of exultation because of the victory won by

Barak over Sisera – Sisera with his “nine hundred chariots” and his army that held rule over Israel for twenty years.

The men who had followed Barak, the ten thousand, had “jeopardied their lives unto the death”; they had made due preparation, neglected no detail. But the climax of the exultation comes in the phrase, “the stars from their courses fought” – that is, Deborah says that the Israelites found themselves allied with absolutely unconquerable forces. What exultation could be greater? Marching in unison with the irresistible force of the stars on their way – no wonder that the victory was thorough and complete.

When this statement about events in Palestine is brought to us here – a transfer from many centuries before Christ to this year 1940 of the Christian era, and when we begin to examine it in the atmosphere of twentieth century practical, scientific thought instead of thinking of it in oriental mood, we come into some danger of missing the truth, and into danger also of missing much of the beauty and the inspiration which the story contains.

We think we know that the stars are great spheres of glowing matter so far away that we must measure their distance in light-years. We think we know that the amount, the sum total of all the energies that reach the earth from all of the stars is so small as to be less, probably, than the force exhibited by a single one of the chariots of the warrior Sisera. How foolish, then, to talk about the downfall of Sisera’s army having been even in the remotest degree, due to the influence exerted by the stars!

Or again, we may be inclined to take the view that the language is merely figurative and imaginative – merely a poetical way of saying that Sisera met a force which all the power of his army and his famous chariots could not overcome, even as it must be true that anything which opposes itself to the stars must be overcome by their irresistible march.

Perhaps in addition it might be found to be true that Deborah's song was cast in the form which has come down to us because it was skillfully fashioned with just the imagery which would appeal to those for whom it was written, written in form to challenge the imagination, to rouse the courage, and to transform desire into determination in the hearts and minds of a long-suffering, subjugated people.

Yes, an analysis of Deborah's song in the light of the revelations of twentieth century science, and by methods and standards of literary criticism often applied today would, no doubt, lead to interpretations of the sort which have been suggested, and each in some measure would be correct and just and right.

But even while this is true, there is also another interpretation which may be suggested – another interpretation which is also true – true in a sense far deeper than any of those which have been named. It seems as if Deborah saw perhaps dimly the outlines of a great truth of which Tennyson was certainly conscious when he wrote: "I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs." – a truth about which no one perhaps can

be wholly clear, a truth which defies satisfactory definition and statement, but a truth which must be made up of parts such as these:

1. The great stream of forces which flows in and through Nature has a set toward righteousness.
2. He who sets his face with all sincerity toward righteousness finds himself inevitably allied with the great trend upward, manifesting itself now and again in most astonishingly helpful incidents and occasions. With him, the way though not always clear, grows brighter and brighter.

In the light of some such view as this, and remembering that in her song Deborah identified the cause of the Israelites with the cause of righteousness, the poetic expression. "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera," takes on an appearance of sober truth and reality which otherwise it could not possess.

Here, then, is one conception of a reality, of conditions as they actually are in this universe of which we are a part, namely, that the forces of Nature (including those which we call human forces), all together as a net result, are moving, infinite in amount, and therefore irresistible in power, toward a result which is step by step continually more and more perfect, more and more beautiful, more and more satisfying. Furthermore, the essential part of this conception, or this picture, so far as humanity is concerned, is this, namely, that the only way by which human effort can come to that happy fruition which we

call success – real success – is by mankind’s directing its effort in such manner as to move with, not against, this infinitely powerful, in most cases invisible, stream of the forces of Nature, a stream which is irresistibly moving upward to a destiny continually more beautiful and more perfect.

As we consider this conception – this conception with its two-fold aspect, that is to say, its general aspect, and its specifically human aspect – there is a most important question we must ask ourselves. Is this conception imaginary or real? Is this irresistible, upward-trending stream of force a fact – a fact in the sense that any man or group of men deciding upon a course of action may rest assured that in the end victory or defeat will be the result, depending specifically upon whether the decision made launches one with or against the upward-trending current?

If we are giving thought to matters which are within the range of reality, there is no more important question we can consider today. Is this upward-trending current a reality? How are we to know? Can its existence be proved? If so, how?

Any answer that can be given here today to this question is, of course, subject to serious limitation of time; certainly no complete proof could be presented in the fractional part of an hour which is at our disposal. Furthermore, it is probably true that even with unlimited time, complete proof could not be given, if in “proof” is meant a compelling conclusion such as a perfect proof in the mathematical sense requires.

But there are weighty considerations not a few, bearing on the question, which can be stated in brief form, such as these:

First, one of the most marvelous of the revelations of modern science has to do with the unlimited amount of force or energy which is present, no matter in what direction we turn. Some of this force has been known for a long time, as when bodies fall from a height, called since the time of Sir Isaac Newton the force of gravitation. Some of this force has also been known for a long time, as when water enclosed in a container freezes, bursting the container, called now the force of crystallization. Other forces have been known by certain other manifestations also for long ages, but not well understood until James Watt invented an engine for using the force of expanding steam, and in another field until Faraday and Edison and a host of other workers brought under control the force we know as electricity.

And now other investigators tell us that the sober truth is that all substances of which we know are made up of extremely minute particles in a state of movement and agitation quite impossible for us to comprehend, but in reality exerting a force so immense in its total amount as to justify some such statement as this: "If all the energy contained in a ton of ordinary coal were available for use safely, only one ton of coal would be needed to provide all the heat, light, and power which all the homes and all the factories, and all the power plants in the United States would need at the present rate of consumption for forty years."

There is no lack of positive proof of the presence of energy in infinite amount existing all about us everywhere in a state of constant movement and change, the ebb and flow of a veritable stream of energy in amount so great as to be irresistible if it should trend in any one direction more than in another.

Second, as to the direction in which this infinite stream does move, there are great groups of ascertained facts that indicate so clearly dominant trends, that many an observer finds himself impelled to a conviction which seems unshakable. One group of well-ascertained facts showing as net result a definite upward trend in a period of time covering some hundreds of millions of years is typified by those periods of earth's history in which reptiles predominated among the animals of those times, followed by periods (including the present) when mammalian forms of animal life predominated.

Briefly the facts, fully substantiated are these:

1. Reptiles (represented on the earth today by snakes, alligators and lizards) appeared first as small insignificant animals, few in numbers and in activity and in strength surpassed by other animals, lower in the scale of life than themselves.
2. The reptiles, although much weaker than these other predominant forms, nevertheless managed to survive. The result was that after the lapse of some hundreds of thousands of years these reptiles in succeeding generations became stronger rapidly until they finally far out-distanced

those companions of theirs that were earlier dominant. In turn, the reptiles became the masters of the animal world, and maintained that rank for a longer period than had the other forms which they out-distanced.

No group of vertebrate animals appears ever to have been so nearly universally distributed over the surface of the earth; and among the almost countless kinds of reptiles there developed the largest individuals ever to live on the lands of the globe. Among their number were included some of the best armored animals that have ever lived, as well as some that seem to have been among the most successful in pursuit and attack. Furthermore, at the time they first appeared as small and insignificant creatures they were the most highly organized animals on the earth — much higher in rank in this respect than their companions and predecessors who for a time remained as their physical masters.

3. But, most significant from the standpoint of the question we are considering today, in the early part of the period in which the mighty reptiles lived as masters of the animal world, there appeared the first individuals of the group of mammals. Mammals today are far superior to reptiles: for example the dog, the horse, the tiger, the elephant, and such like. But the first representatives of the mammals were exceedingly small, few in number, and lacking in many of the characteristics possessed by the well-developed, present-day mammals.

4. These small, weak, apparently poorly equipped mammals had to live in a world crowded with successful,

vigorous, powerful reptiles. Yet, when hundreds of thousands of years had passed into the tens and perhaps hundreds of millions, the reptiles had been outdistanced by the mammals. The mastery again passed from an apparently unconquerable group, to a group which at first was chiefly marked by weakness and insignificance.

Remember that during this time there were no human beings on the earth who might conceivably have aided the weaker mammals to rise to mastery. Here was only the earth, the ocean, the rivers, the ponds, the marshes, the lakes, clouds, storms, sunshine, teeming life both plants and animals, up to a certain level or rank. And yet the weak overcame the mighty: creatures that before were not, actually brought into subjection creatures that were before them. Why this marvelous result except it be true that there is, in reality, a great, mostly invisible, stream of energy flowing through all Nature, which tends irresistibly to bring into being and through stages of weakness and insignificance to nurture to perfection, higher, and more beautiful and wonderful forms?

Another group of facts has to do with the development of human civilization. As one set of cases, observe the history of what we call reform movements. Note what one recent writer called “the underlying thrust of events that could not be arrested.” Note also that each successful major reform movement has stages strongly reminiscent of the stages in the first appearance and final rise to mastery of the mammals. For instance, the anti-slavery movement was so weak at first that its early protests were ignored.

Why should such weak protests be noticed? Slavery was

entrenched behind bulwarks of law, custom, financial interest, religious sanction and respectability. But the protests became stronger, so that they could not be ignored, and a campaign of ridicule was launched against them; later denunciation followed ridicule; then the forces up to that stage predominant, fought bitterly with all the weapons known to the most resourceful. But in spite of what seemed in the beginning overwhelming odds in favor of the perpetuation of slavery, in some way, no one knows exactly how, the anti-slavery cause increased and the pro-slavery cause decreased. A movement that according to all appearances was at first weak and insignificant finally overthrew an institution which seemed powerful and mighty.

What is the explanation here unless it be the “underlying thrust of events,” which is evidence that there is, in reality, a great, mostly invisible, stream of energy flowing through all Nature, and that this irresistible, invisible stream has an inevitable and a powerful upward trend ?

Lest what this presentation is attempting to illustrate should be misunderstood, there is perhaps need at this point to call attention definitely to the fact that no attempt is being made to give a critical explanation of the song of Deborah as recorded in the book of Judges. Not that at all. What is being attempted is to find a way to present to our minds today truth, identical essentially with that contained in the song of Deborah which will cause us to feel inspired and triumphant and unfailingly assured in our minds as to the final victorious outcome of the struggles which tax our strength and our faith, even as Deborah’s song must have

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inspired hope and confidence in the minds and hearts of those who heard her words and of those who read them for generations after they had been made a part of the written records of that time.

II

Similarly the eternal truths contained in the story of Elisha at Dothan are sorely needed as we again and again face dilemmas which seem to demand as the price of solution the sacrifice of righteousness. It is of course inevitable that when these truths are transferred from the language in which they have come down to us, and the attempt is made to express them in our modern phrases, there is necessarily lost some of their forcefulness, and something of their poetic beauty. But it seems necessary to attempt to express in language with which we are familiar, a language prosaic rather than figurative, a language somewhat narrowly scientific rather than freely poetic, these same truths, which, we must believe apply to mankind whether in Palestine, or in Europe, in farther Asia or in the Americas; which must also apply to the doings of mankind whether in the present century or in the centuries some thousands of years earlier in the history of the world.

In the first place, then, note that the story of Elisha at Dothan is essentially a statement in narrative form of a far-reaching truth which when worded somewhat abstractly, might be put in this way: The presence in a community of righteousness crystallized, materialized in the lives of men and women has immeasurably greater power in determining what eventually happens in that

community than can be exercised by the massing of any amount of force, which is dissociated from righteousness. Not only so, but it seems to be less important to be able to count a large number of righteous individuals than to be certain that the righteousness, even of the few, is real and unshakable. So far as the record shows there were only two righteous men in Dothan.

But how shall we here today – in this era of dependence upon the invariable, exact behavior of physical forces which serve or destroy impartially both the criminal and the good citizen under identical condition – show that we can be really convinced that righteousness is any sure bulwark? It does not aid us much to quote other incidents from the Biblical record, as, for example, that Sodom would not have been destroyed if even ten righteous persons could have been found within the city.

Perhaps no one should hope to be able to present proof wholly convincing to everyone that real righteousness is unconquerable. But there are some facts which must at least be weighed carefully before deciding that the preponderance of evidence is against a belief in the redeeming, eternally saving power of righteousness in the lives and institutions of mankind.

First, let us recall that phrase with which we are all familiar, “The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church.” The martyrs in the early days of the Christian Church were certainly unshakably righteous men and women. They were a part of an organized body of adherents to the Christian religion, Against this body of

believers was massed the overwhelming power (so it seemed) of a government hostile to their organization. With great ingenuity and long-continued, persistent effort members of the early Christian Church were threatened, bribed, imprisoned, tortured, until the broken bodies and the extinguished lives were numbered by the thousands. Individually righteous men and women perished by the thousands; but for every death tens, hundreds of living men and women, who looked on or who heard of those deaths, became possessed of the same sort of unshakable righteousness. The systematic, long-continued efforts to destroy the early church resulted, it is true, in the removal from this life of thousands of the righteous; it also resulted in the increase many fold of the number of individuals imbued with the character of those who had perished. Is righteousness conquerable or not? If you were asked the best method of guaranteeing the perpetuation of an organization of human beings would you choose unshakable righteousness as a quality of membership, or would you choose a company of spies, and policemen and soldiers, it may be, to protect the organizations from attacks from without?

In the second place, observe the results of careful studies that have been made in the attempt to provide scientifically accurate data on the effect of righteous habits of living on succeeding generations of men. Of course it is true that no completely scientific conclusions can be reached, for the degree of uprightness of character cannot be accurately known by any investigator when the lives of many people in successive generations are being

considered. But something is known about the working of the laws of heredity. Certain tendencies toward the better, and certain tendencies toward the worse can in some cases be recognized, and their effects noted in successive generations. Both classes of tendencies have been observed thus to appear in generation after generation. But the significant fact in this connection is that some studies, at least, seem to give definite support to the conclusion that an infected or tainted blood-stream, if it can be continued for a few generations, becomes measurably purified. In biological terms, the “evil” tendency seems to be a “recessive” – a less powerful characteristic, in general; while the “good” tendency, on the other hand, seems to be a “dominant” – a more powerful characteristic. So that in time the maladjustments tend to disappear from the life-stream, or at least tend to become relatively less numerous – to decrease – while the more perfect adjustments tend to increase. Biological science seems, therefore, to be discovering in its own way the truth which one of the prophets, as recorded in the Bible, expressed in substance as follows:

“The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those that hate me, saith Jehovah: but His mercy is extended to the thousandth generation of those that love Him and keep His commandments.”

This poetical statement has been put into modern form as follows:

“The seeds of evil die out in the third or fourth generation;
But the seeds of good go on re-sowing themselves to all eternity.”

In view, then, of the history of the early years of the Christian Church together with the results of these studies in heredity, is it too much to say that we, now, here today, may believe that righteousness is more powerful than mere force however brutally and persistently applied; that we believe that righteousness is one of the indestructible, imperishable realities, whose beneficent, healing, fruitful effects extend far beyond the immediate presence of those men and women who move among their fellows in very truth as righteousness incarnate?

In the next place, observe that the record regarding the situation at Dothan contains these two pictures: First, a picture which could be perceived by anyone who, like the servant of Elisha, arose early and looked about; the scene is one of horses and chariots and an armed host occupying the hills and valleys in every direction; and second, a picture which apparently was perceivable only to Elisha and his servant, namely, the mountains full of horses and chariots of fire. Two sets of forces, first the visible, easily seen by anyone, and second, those not seen at all by most observers, the invisible forces. And note the result: from those who could see the invisible as well as the visible forces, fear vanished.

If this part of the story is, in reality, a parable of the actual situation in this embattled world today, in 1940, what

words can be used, in our modern prosaic speech, which will carry conviction to ourselves as we use them? How shall we state the facts, including the invisible realities, so that we shall feel in our heart of hearts assured that the outcome of the present fearful conflicts must, of necessity, enlarge the borders of justice among mankind on the earth?

If we attempt the task of translating the truth from the poetic, figurative diction in which the story is told in the Bible into modern, everyday speech, perhaps we should begin by reminding ourselves of the fact which has become well established within relatively recent times, namely, that for every external form that exists, easily visible in the ordinary sense of that term, there exists also in invisible form what may be called its counterpart, pervading and accompanying the visible portion; and furthermore that this invisible portion is in absolute control; that is, it is overwhelmingly the more powerful, and any attempt on the part of the visible portion to escape this control will, if persisted in, lead to destruction.

For example, there is universal agreement among members of the medical profession and, indeed, among scientists generally, that in the human body as well as in the bodies of all the higher mammals a mechanism for maintaining a nearly uniform internal body temperature is found, which is essentially the continual burning of literally millions of little fires in practically all parts of the body. Chemically stated, carbon and some other elements are being oxidized continually at these millions of points, thus liberating heat. But oxidation in this sense when it happens to coal or

wood in a stove is a fire. Therefore it is entirely accurate to say that there are always millions of little fires present within the body.

Now it is an absolute impossibility to separate this assemblage of little fires from the body in which they exist, but the following conception is possible, namely, to think of these countless little fires as visible (which they are not); and let us consider all the visible portions of the body, except these little fires, as removed. Do you see what general form the countless little fires would, in the aggregate, produce? Identically the same form fashioned thus out of invisibility, which the visible body itself has. Here, then, is in literal truth an invisible body of fire, permeating, and fitting the form of the visible body which all can perceive. And note also the additional fact which is known to medical science and to common experiences alike, that if for any reason the external visible body should attempt to go beyond the controlled, balanced zone marked out by the laws of nature written, that is, found existing as part and parcel of the tissues of the body itself, then this body of fire either blazes more and more fiercely until bodily functions cease, or the fires die down and produce the same result. Of course it is true that we are accustomed to think of the fever or the chill which precedes dissolution as only a symptom of something else which we may consider properly as the real cause. But we must remember that in this wonderful universe in which we live cause and effect follow each other through labyrinthine paths only to come back again and again to any given starting point. So for the purpose of our thinking

today the presence of these complicated chains of cause and effect does not invalidate the general truth we are discovering, namely, that there is a visible body, and that there is an invisible body; a most important relation linking these two bodies, put into them by the very fact of their creation, is that the invisible body is the controlling, the overwhelmingly dominant part.

So it seems that the phrase “horses and chariots of fire” round about Elisha is to be considered not only as a poetic and figurative way of expressing truth, but that such a phrase may also be a prosaically expressed, matter-of-fact truth as well.

If time permitted, demonstration could also be made of the reality of an invisible, all-powerful counterpart of every material object whatever, whether the material be wood, or stone, or flawless, matchless gem. The invisible world of the atom, the proton, the electron, and the other invisible dynamic particles known to science would furnish evidence which, even in the imperfect state of knowledge in this realm, would seem to be conclusive.

There is likewise insufficient time to attempt to make clear the absolutely controlling, invisible counterpart of our modern armaments and armed forces. The demonstration in this area, though inconceivably more complicated, could be positively made. The wealth of evidence at hand for such a demonstration can be indicated by suggestions such as these: The extraordinary efforts required to create and maintain morale; the elevation of propaganda to a major department of activity, becoming increasingly

important as the plans for military control expand; the record of the rapid disintegration of every great military enterprise the world has seen, in spite of apparent sweeping success for a time; the apparently universal failure, in the long run, of rule by force to win to loving, loyal obedience those who have first been regimented by fear.

All of these and other similar considerations seem to point clearly to the fact that even nationally there is an invisible counterpart of the visible, easily perceived forts, airplanes, battleships, armed forces, organized boards of strategy, and all other arms of government, and that this invisible counterpart permeates and controls all as if by a consuming fire. The end may, in some cases, seem to be long delayed, but finally history as well as prophecy unite in saying:

“All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.”

III

It is of course to be understood that only a part of the truth contained in the song of Deborah, and in the story of Elisha at Dothan has been included in what has been said so far. A discussion exhaustive in the sense that all phases of the message contained in those two passages have been fully set forth is clearly impossible under the circumstances.

One other phase is, however, too important to be omitted entirely. It is the truth clearly implied in both passages, namely, that the human soul needs and may have personal companionship with the Lord God. And this relationship involving this sort of companionship is possibly the most important single condition giving to the spiritual message that incisive, penetrating power, which has been so far illustrated chiefly by changes in the form in which the message has been cast.

No abstract truth, however profound, however well established or however essential to a victorious life can ever make a life victorious without the directing, sustaining power of personal companionship for which we have no more perfect word than love. Love, and the personal expression of love which we know as loyalty, cannot possibly exist between a person and an impersonal truth. Love exists only as a mutual outpouring of spirit between two personalities. Admiration for high ideals, profound philosophical thinking – these may exist in one person alone. Love, which in the phrase given currency more than a generation ago by Professor Drummond, as the “Greatest Thing in the World.” comes only when there are two. The unshakable righteousness of which we have already spoken is possible only when an individual finds answering response in the great Unseen Father, so that it is possible to maintain a feeling, an experience of victory even unto death. “Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him.”

All logic, all merely scientific insight, fails to prove the presence of the Lord God of Elisha. But countless devout,

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unshakably righteous souls have again and again in succeeding generations said, "I know that my redeemer liveth." Our quest for the truth that will be wholly satisfying, must be a quest which stops not until there is found an experience which one may express in one way, another in another way, but an experience which has as its essence loving companionship: a "presence closer than breathing"; a sense of security as of being upheld by the "everlasting arms," and of hearing the words, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." The quest must not stop for anyone of us until we, each one, in that inner sanctuary of the soul where no one else can enter, meet and find the infinite, yearning, loving God.

How shall we find Him? So little can be said in answer. Each one must set out on the quest alone. But this is the word: "He that seeketh, findeth."

And here is what a poet has said; and in these words he has truly marked out the universal gateway through which all who will may enter:

"I sought his love in lore of books,
In charts of science's skill;
They left me orphaned as before –
His love eluded still;
Then in despair, I breathed a prayer;
The Lord of Love was standing there."

About the Author

Allen David Hole (1866-1940) was born August 6, 1866, in Bridgeport, IN, the son of Benjamin Hole and Isabel Wilson Hole. He married Mary D. Hole on September 9, 1908, and the couple had two children, Allen David Hole, Jr. and Francis Doane Hole.

Hole was a Quaker school teacher for many years at a number of schools including schools in Bridgeport, IN, Friendswood, WI. After a year in Wisconsin, Allen returned to Indiana and attended Earlham College. After graduation, Hole was the principal and sole teacher of the Sand Creek Seminary, and later became a professor at Earlham College. Allen David Hole died August 23, 1940 in Richmond, Indiana.

About the Lectures

The William Penn Lectures started as a ministry of the Young Friends' Movement of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. In the beginning of the last century, "Young Friends" was the community of young adults from both the Hicksite and the Orthodox Philadelphia Yearly Meetings, which reunited in 1955. The Young Friends Movement began the lecture series "for the purpose of closer fellowship; for the strengthening by such association and the interchange of experience, of loyalty to the ideals of the Society of Friends; and for the preparation by such common ideals for more effective work through the Society of Friends for the growth of the Kingdom of God on Earth." The name of William Penn was chosen because the Young Friends Movement found Penn to be "a Great Adventurer, who in fellowship with his friends started in his youth on the holy experiment of endeavoring 'To live out the laws of Christ in every thought, and word, and deed; and that these might become the laws and habits of the State.'"

The first run of William Penn Lectures were given between 1916 and 1966, and are warmly remembered by Friends who attended them as occasions to look forward to for fellowship with our community, inspiration, and a challenge to live into our faith. The lectures were published by the Book Committee of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting has granted Pendle Hill and Quaker Heron Press permission to reproduce the lectures as free ebooks.

Although it was [announced](#) in 1960 that the series would be discontinued several lectures were published in the early '60s. It appears that the lectures given between 1923 and 1931 were never published. If we come upon manuscripts of these lectures, we hope to publish them in future.

In 2010, the Young Adult Friends of PYM revived the series, officially launching the second run of the William Penn Lectures in 2011. [The series was renamed](#) the *Seeking Faithfulness* series in 2016, as part of the Young Adult Friends of PYM's concern for dismantling racism within the yearly meeting and the wider society. It no longer felt rightly ordered to have a major event named after a slaveholder. The [Seeking Faithfulness](#) series is hosted by the Young Adult Friends for the benefit of the whole yearly meeting community, and invites a Friend to challenge us all to explore new ways to practice our Quaker faith. The Seeking Faithfulness series seeks to nourish our spiritual lives and call us to faithful witness in our communities and throughout the world.