



ANTIIPHONY
Meditations in
Contrasting Moods
Leonard Mason



Bold Antiphony

BOLD ANTIPHONY

Meditations in Contrasting Moods

by

Leonard Mason



THE LINDSEY PRESS

The Lindsey Press, 1-6 Essex Street, London WC 2

© The Lindsey Press 1967

Distributed in USA and Canada by The Department of
Publications, Unitarian Universalist Association

25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass 02108

Designed by Grenville Needham and Andrea Pugh

Set in Monotype Albertus and Joanna

Printed in Bath, England, by Lonsdale & Bartholomew Ltd

Contents

Foreword

8	Smooth Pebbles	Words of Flint	9
10	Invocation	Evocation	11
12	Affirmations	Unbelief	13
14	Surmises	Facts	15
16	Other People's Sanctuary	My Own Place	17
18	The Gathered Church	Recess	19
20	Wisdom from the Ages	Novelty	21
22	Sacrament of Silence	The Impiety of Sound	23
24	The Poetry of Living	Prosaic Litany	25
26	Inheritance	Bequest	27
28	The Well is Deep	Winds on High	29
30	Whirlwind of Submission	Precipice of Protest	31
32	Simplicity Unspoilt	Riotous Complexity	33
34	All Saints and All Souls	Unsainted Selves	35
36	People Commingled	The Centred Self	37
38	United Nations	Our Own Land	39
40	Metropolis	Forest	41
42	Chalice of Service	Hands	43
44	Time Off	Vocation	45
46	Landscape	Inscape	47
48	Spring	Autumn	49
50	Quiet Ecstasy	Assimilation of Sorrow	51
52	Silent Tomb	And Yet He Lives	53
54	Summer	Winter	55
56	Legend in the Skies	Neon and Nativity	57
58	Morning	Evening	59

Foreword

The phrases and litanies of public worship tend to consist of words which have become well-rounded and worn. They convey their deepest significance perhaps to those who have become initiated to liturgical moods by many years of faithful worship. As smooth pebbles are a comfort to the touch, so traditional phraseology woos the mind as much by its familiar assonances as by its deposit of wisdom. Meanings are obscured by familiarity.

Many people nowadays are no longer nurtured in the faith of the fathers, and it must not be assumed that they can assimilate the traditional nourishment as if it were their natural diet. Worship needs to incorporate a certain roughage, or, to change the metaphor, it needs new chippings of truths recently grasped and a poetry of emotions aroused by present experiences. While such flint-phrases may be rough and angular, they can cut into the uncarved block of religious assumptions.

Liberal religious worship in particular is marked by a blending of tradition with novelty. Traditional moods need re-interpretation in order to connect them with modern concern. Equally, the rugged phraseology of contemporary speculation needs to be set in a context of continuing meanings in order to avoid novelty just for the sake of novelty. Hence the antiphonal arrangement of these meditations. Contrasting moods are presented, not in naked opposition, but in mutual balance, to represent the tensions that are characteristic of people open to many dimensions and options of belief.

The following collection is the fruit of public worship conducted by me in Unitarian churches over many years during which meditation has gradually replaced more formal prayer. Thoreau once said that he loved a broad margin to his life. I love a broad margin to the page of public worship. I need room for

unhurried pause during which the wide world, the flow of time past, the syncopated accents of the present and unpremeditated intimations may break into the smooth order of habitual piety. I hope that congregations may find my marginal meditations useful in their communal worship, for if they evoke response, each participant can proceed from them in his own way and mount the stairs of his own aspiration. Every man can become his own priest.

At the same time meditation is an intensely personal activity, and this collection represents the gathering of many quiet hours removed from my professional duties. In private perusal I hope that the reader may be able to stand awhile where I have stood, may see what I have seen and feel what I have felt. Privacy shared in this way gives an added dimension to one's thought and aspiration.

Other antiphonies are detectable in the collection. Its foreground is Canadian, its background is English; its accent is secular, its intent religious; its predominant phraseology is humanist, its tone an undisclosed theism.

The ways of holiness are many;
Man that travels along them
Shall one day learn to kneel
Each in his brother's sanctuary.

Leonard Mason
April 1966
Montreal

Smooth Pebbles

Firelight is dancing on the water
and the second moon is spread
like silver scanlines on the lake.
Pebbles nudge each other to alertness ;
they feel the first lazy caress
from the horizontal pulse of light and water.

I have heard pebbles lapping up the night,
long time rolling with the rounding earth.
They are not complaining that they will soon be sand,
nor harking back to their glinting fracture
when they were high on tumbling hills.
They are smooth and satisfied.

Prospector and geologist will gather
gaunt and crystal rocks,
to prove their value in a pan,
or plot their structure by a microscope.
Pebbles are for children, matching colours,
gathering wishes, wealth and wonder.
Pebbles are for lovers in lieu of jewels,
like pearls upon the bosom.

Pebble-words can calm the terrors of a child :
Lu-la-lay, my little one ;
you are lapped and wrapped
in warm waves of love.

Pebble-words can chafe away the gaucheries of youth :
Come over here, my little wolf !
The world's a thousand miles away ;
only me and you are here upon the strand,
with the night stock-still.

Pebble-words are the abacus beads of common
conversation between two whose lives have been worn
smooth with each other's roiling.
So long, my love, good night.

Pebble-words are wearing down to sand
and soon will trickle through the hour-glass.
No more talk from lips gone cold,
no tilting gesture from the mask of death ;
only memory of moon and idle water.

Waters of the world have run down
and carved lower beaches.
Pebbles once moonlit are no longer laved,
but lie buried beneath grass.

Yet firelight is frozen in their secret core
and liquid pulse is locked within their grain.

Words of Flint

Before the skins of record were unrolled,
or sun-dried reeds took imprint of their desire,
men flaked their flint-words from the rock,
the rock of their own digging.
Palaeolithic poets, unrecognized,
carved their songs in air.

I make and sing ear-words:
thunder-thunder like growling ghosts;
sharp shouts of hurt and happiness;
brute-beats and hissing water
make my two ears prick and tingle.
My two ears sleep when ghost-growls
sink in heavy night.
I hear sleep-sounds, far sounds
from mouths not moving,
think-sounds from eyes not blinking.

I chip and chant eye-words:
green growing things and red-running;
legs and limbs on white water;
blue breathing and diving dark;
black where all things stop.
They turn and run again, sparking.

I break me running words and feet words:
tracks with no trace of hearing;
sand sifting through toes;
grass like sleep and no more running;
feet like fingers falling on warm clay
make marks that shout, Ola!

I fashion finger-words:
Touchstone, my little mana, make rain go
and sun shine on my wrist.
Touch me top of cloud and tip of fire;
Let me twine the hair of Lila.

I browse with brain-words:
dream in the dew under slanting tree;
intoxicate with brew, the borders burst;
counting steps along the lonely trail,
I lull my hunger and see an antelope.

Words of coming, words of flying;
Make-words, shaping and bringing;
I sing and shout
To make a morning!

Affirmations

We affirm the unfailing renewal of life.

Rising from the earth and reaching for the sun,
all living creatures shall fulfil themselves.

We affirm the steady growth of human fellowship.

Rising from ancient cradles and reaching for the stars,
man the world over shall seek the ways of understanding.

We affirm a continuing hope, that out of every tragedy
the spirit of man shall rise to build a fairer world.

We affirm the goodness of life

available to all the children of men,
and realized in human love.

We celebrate the joy of life

in the splendours of the outward world
and in the fellowship of friends.

We engage in the journey of life

accepting the demands of labour
and the discipline of duty.

We revere the mystery of life

in birth and death, in activity and stillness,
and in powers greater than we can comprehend.

We affirm our loyalty to lovely things,

to quiet places of earth given to us as home,
and to the busy places where our work is done.

To the deep confidences of friendship

and all true human sympathies.

To the subtle achievements of art,

to the crisp facts of science,
and to the solid strength of great character.

Religion spoke in the flame of ancient altars

and still shines in the candle of our devotion.

It shaped the solemn temples and the soaring spires

and still we build its sacred spaces.

Its words of inner command are penned on ancient scroll

and more, are graven in the heart.

We will not diminish our devotion

nor shrink in spirit.

We affirm the powers that made us

and the potency within.

Let religion be confidence at the centre of every life

and love at the core of our communities.

Let its voice be raised in gladness

for the glorious light of day

and for the splendid silent night.

Unbelief

Bold antiphony is the background music of our time.

Seeing the dust risen to man ;
seeing the ungainly foot transformed
into grace of horse upon a plain ;
seeing the puny weeds of time exalted
to the beauty of a rose at dawn ;

I believe.

An eagle, mighty and imperial, cleaves the sky ;

a tiger keeps his burning watches
in the forest and the grass ;
unearthly fish plumb the ocean's deeps ;
earth is peopled, niche and cranny,
with intense living and valiant dying ;

I believe.

Yet eagle is merciless when swooping to his prey ;

the tiger pulls down a gazelle, unmoved
by the liquid pathos in her eyes ;
the rose's beauty will soon pass,
hanging limp, discarded on its stem.

Help thou my unbelief.

Summer and winter will long continue ;

blooms will breathe on desert air ;
oceans will roll their undying chant.

Wiser men, chastened by the tremors of our time,
will learn to live in peace and plenty
beyond imagining ;

I believe.

But when the swelling sun shall reach beyond
its present girth, and shall have swallowed up
in vapour the glory and the striving of the earth ;

Help thou my unbelief.

In subtle forces borrowed from the giant gestures
of the universe, flowing into fingers
and into wit of man ;

in high intelligence that lets us grasp
enduring truth, and touch the nearby miracle ;

I believe.

But when hands grow cold with no more fashioning ;
when eyes are closed with no more seeing ;

when mind ceases to study and to scan,
and all its gallantry is gathered to the grave,
or dismembered by the purifying fire ;

Help thou my unbelief.

Surmises

Beyond the dim horizons of civilization
was there man or woman
who saw a swan gliding upon green water,
and because of its pure white arches
would not slay it to appease the hunger of the belly?
Did they take from it instead a newer kind of hunger,
hunger for liquid motion and the arch of peace?

Was there a hunter knapping busily his flint
who heard a thousand times the song of stone on stone?
Did he listen to the unborn sound
of pile-driver, piston and metal press
and wonder why the earth itself did not split?

Was there a bedouin child who dragged his toes through
sand,
a river child who pressed his thumbs in clay?
Did he feel the secret stylus in his blood
and see the figure and calligraphy
of signs not dreamed?

Whence come the myriad accomplishments of men,
the mixing and the melting, fusing and fermenting,
transformations thrice removed from raw stuff?
Did they come from clanging gods who melted into shade
when they had bestowed their cunning?
Or from peculiar men who shunned the shade
to wonder in the clarity of day?

Beyond the far horizons of the dawning years
will there be man or woman,
seeing a necklace of unfamiliar stars
will want to unthread the jewels of space
and take one when the earth is dead?

Will there be a son of man with forceps delicate
who will uncoil the helical threads of life's molecule
and spiral them afresh to shape an embryo of form
fairer than Venus?

Will there be a sister of mercy to distil a potion
from the cup of future alchemy,
and lave the synapses of brain
till fear and mischief and the cult of crime
are dissolved?

Who shapes the days we shall not see,
their glorious promise and their ghoulish threat?
Is it fate beyond our spelling out?
Or the grain and gamut of the universe
which holds untold surprises in its wrap,
And throws a single one into the air
whenever man is ready to think
and grasp the incredible?

Facts

Some facts are as large as the whole earth
taken in one sweep,
a man in capsule can compass it within an hour or so.

Some facts are as large as a galaxy,
a smudge on the image of a telescope,
yet years of light across, arm to swirling arm.

Some facts are smaller than thought can penetrate;
neutrino, from the belly of the sun,
passes right through interstices of earth
to the other side of space;
yet captured, one hundred trillion of them
scintillate on man's cunning tally.

Phi meson, spending all its life,
in two ten-thousandths of one trillionth
of a second, is scarcely there.
Can anything so brief be reckoned as a fact?
Yet its presence fills a gap
in the noble eight-fold path of the nucleus.

Some say the world of facts is tedious catalogue;
much calculation and too many zeros
beyond remembering.

How many colours to the rainbow?
How many planets round the sun?

How many species of ants?
How many synthetic hydrocarbons?
Who wants to be a walking encyclopaedia?

Give us meanings and far-flung purposes;
things to love and things to die for.
You can keep your facts in a cupboard;
but love and enterprise run out into life
for engagement and involvement.

But facts, I think, have the last word.
They are grit and roughage of our diet,
and grist to the mill of our minds.
They are always there to confound the pompous
and to court the comical.

"The Ground of all is God," he said;
"It's mesons." I replied.
"And what in hell are they?" he asked;
"I'll show you; come inside."

The dyno hummed, the cyclo tronned
And made unholy clatter.
He saw the purple blips, and said:
"My God!—and anti-matter!"

The Gathered Church

We gather again from sundry places.
Some have cleaved the far spaces of the air.
Some have crossed the lanes of the sea.
Some have steered a tortuous way
through the busy roads of the land.
Some have trodden the paths of quietness.

We have seen sunshine and storm.
We have taken our ease beside still waters.
Our children have played the summer through.

We have read the unfamiliar face,
heard the foreign tongue,
seen the tiered city of other men's affairs
and the good fields of their husbanding.

Back again.
We open our lives to the pressure of our daily work.
May we stay strong to face our tasks,
large-minded to do them well,
large-hearted to try uncovenanted works.

Ingathered.
Let meditation lead us to sources of strength.

Creative energy moves swiftly through space,
turns the cone of night to glorious morning,
tilts the season of the year to ripening.
Its power has poured upon our planet
till rugged crust, toiling water and seething air
have brought life to stem and limb,
and uncertain thoughts flashing across the brain of men.

May we be instruments of that power
and shape the unfinished earth
into playgrounds of peace
and homes of quietness.

An hour is not enough
to reach the bounds of creation,
nor tell the valiant story of men,
nor mingle with our brethren of the earth.

Yet a minute can be too long
to bear ecstasy or grief.

Let us learn the timelessness of time
while gathered to our sacrament.

Recess

No day is wasted in which our senses
touch the fabric of the earth,
and spirit resonates to its forms
of loveliness.

Let us be free awhile to see the dawn.
No special pilgrimage
to some mount of transfiguration ;
but find our daylight in a favoured field,
or in a city's morning mist
where sleepers have not rubbed their eyes
to wakefulness.

Let us count the stars and mark the ones that fall,
and see a man-made satellite forge a straight course
across the slow revolution of night.

Let us bend to the blowing of winds,
watch the waters pocked with rain,
go to the mirror of the lakes
and see two worlds counterpoised.
Take companions by the fire
and watch smoke rise,
signal of our aspiration.

Our ways turn outwards to hills and fields,
to waters of river and lake and sea,
to native places enlarged by memory.
Let us renew our tattered selves
and make them whole again.

In all our going and coming
let there be occasions for pause
when we rehearse ideals that have faded
during our busy days.

Pause is prayer if we reclaim eminent moments
which have lifted us out of ordinariness :
a song blowing in the wind,
a march to the peak of protest,
a discovery that a human being
may be called Thou.

In the time of your leisure ;
may days of warmth enfold you,
may quiet beauty hold you,
another's searching find you,
another's loving bind you.

Wisdom from the Ages

Let us imbibe the wisdom of the ages.
What other men have learned, we will learn
and build into the fibre of our living.

On his island, surrounded by wine-dark seas
One man said, All things are water!

We too will chant:

Water of blood and lung and limb,
help us to flow to cathedral cloud,
to torrent and to tide.

Wash us clean that we may give
a cup of water to him that is athirst.

Another said, All is ever-changing fire,
in measures kindling and in measures going out!

We too will sing:

Flame of flesh and warmth of moving muscle,
kindle our hearts to the burning sun
and to the lava-flow, earth-maker.

Turn us to hearth and altar.

Burn us clean that we may kindle
lambent life in him whose heart is ashes.

A third said, From the Boundless all comes,
and to it everything returns!

We too will pray:

Unbind our minds, unleash devotion
till it encompass the circle of the earth,
till it lift us to the bowl of heaven
and to the lens of infinity.

Unbind our understanding that we may give
wonder to him whose windows are shuttered.

A thousand have said, The Good abides
though mountains fall and rivers run dry.

We too will make supplication:

Stammering word of love's avowal,
Unsought tear of human pity,

Pierce the darkness,

That every spark of furtive dream

Become a sun for Adam's dawning,

And every fleck of weary dust

A world new-making.

The ages pass; but do not pass away.

They are woven into the texture of our heritage.

We tread a soil which other hands have tilled;

We speak a word which other lips have shaped;

We turn a page which other thoughts have printed,

And etch thereon our own biography.

Novelty

The turning earth rolls out of the shadow of night
and a new day is born.

The wheeling earth tilts northern lands
to the growing warmth of sun
and a new year is born.

We pray in hope for all new creatures :
wind-blown, water-spawned, cell-divided,
sheath-split, enzyme-locked, womb-wrapped.

We pray in pride for all new ventures :
child newly-born, that he may find a corner of love
and a steady pathway to his maturing ;
young man and maid falling in love,
that they may find themselves in each other
and each other in themselves.

May those with fresh employment and new responsibility
grow and deepen in accomplishment.

May those who are newly-wed find strength in sharing
and patience to honour their vows.

May those who travel to fresh places
learn understanding towards the stranger ;
for they themselves are strangers.

May those who stay where the years have placed them
avoid the canker of boredom
and find surprise in the familiar.

Any who fear the pull of change, face a new problem,
or encounter a strange challenge,
let them draw on tasks surmounted
and gain self-confidence.

Any who are on the edge of decision,
let them seek wise counsel,
And then be prompted by their own will.

Any who falter because the times are out of joint,
let them know that times were always so,
yet human venture never ceased.

Any who dread the plunge because they remember
how chill the water,
Let them also remember the blood's swift response
and intake of welcome breath upon the surface.

Tired and cynical, an ancient sage declaimed,
There is nothing new under the sun !
We will reply, Every day is new !
and every hour of it.

Sacrament of Silence

Each man measures his own time of silence
and knows the place where he may be folded in
quietness.

But as we move with others we recognize the common
moments when voices are lowered and even the
whisper is stilled.

In shrouded woods when the last bird's song lingers
only as an after-sound in the mind.

Darker still upon a lake when paddles are lifted
into the canoe lest the drip of water break the spell.

Alone at home, wondering—

about the day to come and the young family asleep
and friends upon distant journeys.

Moments of undivided attention to the written page,
to the tool's application when precision is desired,
to the baton before a symphony begins.

Recalling these in silence,

may we learn how, like grass, we grow
and soften the ground of our living.

Out of the silence there is sometimes a cry of pain
and a sound of death.

When they are heard the hard shell of our security
is pierced and fear makes us more human.

Out of the silence there has come rattle of gunshot
and thump of explosion ;

Men stand at arms to defend what they have won and
to keep what they fear they might lose.

How long? How long before the shattered silence
turns to human peace?

Out of the silence there is sometimes nothing but silence ;
minds turn in upon themselves to listen to their own
reverberations.

If there is still silence, the emptiness becomes unbearable.

But if there is a gathering of memory, a summoning of
resource and a building of the ground for self to grow
upon, then silence is a minister of grace.

Some make loud acclaim of their good intentions ;

Some take oaths to bind upon their wills ;

Some recite the credo of their doubt and affirmation ;

Some assault the courts of heaven to plead their cause.

The silent one assaults no one, not even himself ;

He allows action to flow unimpeded from the springs
of self.

The Impiety of Sound

“Praise him upon the loud cymbals :
Praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.”

“I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies.”

Blow, trumpet of salvation !
Proclaim the holy resurrection !
Shake the catacombs and crypts,
Split the coffin lids !
Rise up and shout, ye bones !

Burned, interred, you have been pressed into dust ;
You have learned the elements.
Tell, oh tell of the elements, seven or a hundred and seven.

The elements rage, they thunder and spout,
They spin and split. Tell us of the nucleus.
An atom they say is silent and colourless,
But when its fragments fuse or come asunder
The very air blossoms red and the thunder is louder
than ten thousand cataracts.

You who have been merged in fire,
Tell us of the noise of fire.

We know the crackle of forests ablaze,
Tell us of the sound of the sun as the swept-up debris
of the universe crashes into its corona.
Tell us of the super-nova bursting its bonds and
searing galactic night.
Tell us of the quasi-stars out on the fringe of things
that flame into incalculable brightness.
Is it the clash of matter annihilating its foe,
Anti-matter ?
Was there a Big Bang at the first minute of creation ?
And did God find it very good then ?
How could he walk in the cool of the evening
with all that megaton mêlée ?

Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness ?
Ha ! Life is fickle and bizarre ;
It has rampageous wonder and arching lust,
it is full of shocking surprises and curious people.

Let jugglers and clowns cartwheel down the pew-tops
of your comfortable churches !
Let elephants caparisoned in bells sway through
your Gothic naves.

“I hate your solemn assemblies.”

The Poetry of Living

Come, let us leave behind the prose of our living :
leave the close routine of coming and going
by familiar ways,
the work of calculation, the fractions and the
endless points,
the blue-prints of security and the tomes of
heavy regulation.

Let us be immersed in the poetry of living :
poetry which captures for us the hinges and the
fringes of the universe,
which lifts expectation to the whirl and curl
of time's unravelling
and sings to us of the dowry and the dirge,
of man and woman
as they flow together and fall apart.

Poetry is life's making, love's waking,
Limb's playing, heart's praying.
It comes like a tremor in the head,
Like a joke not seen while the story was being told.
It comes like a bubble in a fumarole,
From the sulphur mud.

Its words are there before the meaning.
Its meaning is there nevertheless, playing hide-and-seek.

It is already laughing before the tears are dry
And already weeping while the merriment still ripples.
It begins without fanfare ;
But when it ends there is little more to be said.

Poetry is life's making and a good life is a poem
well-turned.

You need not clash the cymbal loud
Nor blow the fluted horn ;
Just scoop a spindrift off the sea
When he is born.

You need not pipe : Come back again
My fledgling son !
Just stand and watch, and grip your heart
Till he is gone.

You need no diapason play
When he is wed ;
Just draw the curtain, modestly,
Around his bed.

You need not chant the shepherd's psalm,
Nor roll the muted drum ;
Just watch the sunlight on the wave
When death has come.

Prosaic Litany

Let us turn aside from the erratic flight of poetry:
from the dactyl and the anapaest,
and from the free loose limbs of symbol.

Living is not looping-the-loop all the time;
It is walking with determined tread and firm purpose.

Let us turn to platitude and truths well-tested,
to adage and maxim and the sonorous beat
of undramatic tale.

Adam begat his sons only when the garden of bliss
was barred.

Outside the rapture of innocence and the rupture of
temptation Adam dug and Eve span.

For every mountain that lifts its head above the clouds,
there are leagues of plain lying patient underneath the sky.

For every cascade that whitens water and turns sunlight
into rainbow, there are meandering miles of sluggish river.

For every jackal-pool of water and circle shade of palm,
there are shimmering miles of sand on every side.

For every masque and festa there are a hundred days of
shovel and saw, of scribbling pen and stenograph.

For every minute of food well-tasted and wine-sipped,
there are hours of buying and bargaining, paring and
cooking; the grape is a long time maturing on the bough
and longer in the cellar.

Every day light comes and we waken to work or leisure.
Every day hunger comes, but earth and human toil
provide for our wants.

Every day the measures of time are laid out and we fill
them with achievement or mar them with failure.

Every day comes with challenge to our fidelity, appeal
to our honour and demand to our strength.

Find dedication and dignity in the self, for on him who
has found composure others may rely.

Find strength among mature comrades, for a rope of many
strands is stronger than a single thread.

Build strength into the affairs of men, for where work
is honest and skilled a multitude may thrive.

Put charity at the core of community, for when the house
shatters a corps of builders will be there.

Spin wisdom into the cords of learning, for sound sense
will banish the spectre of fear.

When days of rapture have withered,
we still have unsanctified weeks in which to live.

By constancy in our work,

By generosity in our friendship,

By reverence for the least of those whom we encounter,

Let us walk in the ways of quietness.

Inheritance

Wide waters have called man's spirit
to the farthest rim ;
Our fathers founded cities where the harbours lay ;
Beside the rivers of earth they built
their homes and settlements.

From the forests of earth
they fashioned ship and wheel, paddle and sled,
and moved across the bosom of the land
and ploughed the waters.
They took lithe limbs of trees and learned
to navigate the dark spaces of the sky.

In quiet places and beside still waters
they found rest ;
And there we shall lie at the end.

O spirit that moves the flesh of men,
Bless our going out, our coming in,
and our stillness.

O spirit of transforming power
Lead us yet to the unmastered,
That earth may yield a finer harvest
and a fairer man.

By mines and fires we have forged the metals of
civilization and tempered the steel of progress.
By secrets of nature and of science we have illumined
our darkness and lightened our labour.
By medicine of herb and formula, by the healing of
cell and the nourishment of blood, we have been
patient to still the pain and mend the broken body.
By assembly of men in court and parliament,
by industry and commerce, we have built community
and bound it by contract and by law.

Teach us how to temper the steel of failing character.
how to melt the ores of hatred,
how to fuse the sundered elements of society,
how to bridge the faults of division,
how to heal the wounds of prejudice.

Lead us further still :
By rivers of quietness in the mind ;
By hills of aspiration in the soul ;
And by valleys of decision in the will.

Bequest

To you, my sons, I leave the earth.
I cannot give you pick and parcel of it.
My patrimony knows no moities,
No dividing by degree, or minute, or second.
I will be magnanimous and bequeath to you
The whole.

Already I have given you eyes.
Pick your own possession of land or sea or sky.
Fill your gaze with morning's curtain,
With noon's high enterprise,
And with the purple stains of night.

I have given you limbs.
Pace out your parcel starting from the Pole.
Tread out your claim in ice and snow.
Top the summits of your chosen peaks with cairns.
Stake out your bounty in acres of sweet grass.
March your measures across immeasurable sands.

I have given you hands.
Hold your inheritance with tender grasp;
Do not bury it in cold and careful vaults
Away from the touch of you.

Feel the grip of agglomerate rock
And silk serenity of sea-wet pebble.
Let warm grains of sand trickle through
The hour-glass of your fingers.
Feel the roughness of unplanned timber
Yield its golden grain to your dusty hands.

I have given you mind
To make the codicils of eye and limb and hand
Into a rich bequest.
Go; possess the earth twice over;
Once in wide surveying
And once in wise remembering.

I have given you family.
Have faith that all are kin under the broad skies
of earth.
Honour the company of those who nurture the bequest
of beauty.
Hold conversation with those who make the languages
of men a legacy of life.
Invest your gain in the bonds of brotherhood.

The Well is Deep

Living water runs in the veins and cells of man ;
it brings nourishment to muscle
and carries fluid signal to nerve ;
it washes the brain with charged perception.

Man is athirst for the waters of the earth,
but cannot smell the spring from afar ;
he follows well-worn paths of knowing beasts
and treads the tracks of human divination.

Wells that were dug by ancient man are ancient still,
their waters often stale or choked ;
new man longs for fresh strikes
which bubble up from deeper sources.

Give me to drink !

It was easy to drink when rope was short
and windlass a simple drum ;
but now the well is deep.

Man is athirst for knowledge
and dips into infinity.

A billion years are not enough to plumb the depth of it.

Divination has given way to precise soundings
right into the turbulent nucleus of things
where motion sprints and leaps
across orbits of incongruity.

Nevertheless, give me to drink !

Sir, you have nothing to draw with.

I have a spoon ; it takes but little to satisfy me.
I can drink with my eyes and see the mote and beam.
I can drink with my brain and think my way to the stars.
I can read the saga of matter's mystery
and man's prospecting in the dark.
I taste and see the images of my own thinking
and enter into another's thirst
through the portals of his eyes.
I draw with delicacy from the living waters
and find them fresh as mountain springs,
sweet as dawnlight.

Sir, give me to drink of this living water.

So I kissed her
and both of us found a newer thirst.

Winds on High

Prostrate he lay upon the ground,
his forehead to the dust ;
until the King said, Stand !
for I also am a man.

Trembling he heard the wind in the tree-tops
and feared that it might say,
From the north come chariots against you.
But the wind rode high
and spring was in its breath.

The cone of the mountain was red
and its throat muttered smoky threats.
He stood and waited for the world to end,
but when the blast came and split the air,
he found the world was just beginning.

He stood a mite beneath the stars,
and could not count their number,
because his integers ran out.
But one star fell and withered
in a spear of light ;
he knew his task of reckoning
was eased by one.

He watched a single wisp of cloud evaporate
against a desert sky till there was only blue
and he was drowning in it.

But a bird wheeled and caught the light.
There were two who shared the infinite.

He drove his wagon to a scarp of rock
and through a cleft saw peaks remote
and ice-falls inaccessible.
But when he heard the chatter of a stream
chiding the low boulders of its bed,
he knew there was a way.

He rode his capsule through the changeless day
and through the unfamiliar night,
until his planet-goal loomed large
and filled the circle of his sight.
Come back ! the telemeter spat,
your mission is accomplished.
He knew that he would leap again.

The greatest leap is not by rocket thrust,
or by missile untenanted by man.
He leaps the galaxies by spectrum band
and radio telescope.
He has not touched the limits yet.

It is high ; I cannot attain unto it !
Yet not too high to listen
and to cogitate.

Whirlwind of Submission

Who speaks from the whirling wind?
Devils of fury tearing the seams apart.
They tell me horses are tossed, cart and all,
high into the fountains of tumult.

Who speaks from the whirling wind?
The still voice.
They tell me it is pianissimo soft
and lifts babies from their prams,
delicately delivering them
unharmd a mile away.

Who speaks from the whirling wind?
The Almighty.
He flung his question at the head of Job,
“Where wast thou when I laid the foundations?”
—expecting the answer, Nowhere.

Job did not shout with the sons of the morning
when creation flooded through chaos.
Job could not bind the cluster of the Pleiades,
nor loose the bands of Orion.
Job could not put together
the living flank of a stallion.

Neither can a whirlwind.

It was a pity that Job quashed his plea
and retracted his controversy.
Vile, he abhorred himself and repented
in dust and ashes.
He cursed not God, but mute,
became example of obedience.

Men still cower before the whirling wind
which cuts a swath of splinters
across brown plains.
They cower now from caution, not from holy dread,
until the twister has subsided to a sob.

Backroom boys are listening-in
to the primal bounce of creation.
They measure the diameter of galaxies
greater than Pleiades.
They balance soaring craft on updrawn thermals
and mount the flying flanks of many horse-power.
Why repent when there are worlds to conquer
of knowledge and free fall?

Precipice of Protest

They said the human race was perishing
before it had even explored its own potential.
But in the time of Titans, Prometheus came
with fire stolen from the chariot of the sun.
He gave the glowing gift to mortals
who learned its mystery
to melt and to amalgamate.

Prometheus was pinned upon a precipice
where vultures might gouge his liver.
But at the fixing of the chains he cursed
and cursed again the jealous Zeus,
and would not still the controversy.

“Proud master of the thunderbolt,
Strike! and do thy worst.
Though thou lay on me the stoutest chains
Which bind the stars together and prevent them
From spilling into the dark whirlpool;
Though thou gather all the wings of night
And shape them into monstrous bird
To plough in my vitals;
I will not yield thee sovranly
Over the pains of mortal men.
I have given them fire!

“But before thou strike the links fast,
I with thee will strike a bargain.
I will tell thee of rebellious sons
Who live in the far shadows of darkness,
Who wait to tear thy brightness from the sky
Till Apollo's realm become as dark
As the chambers of hell.

“Only let me go to roam the pastures of men
Instead of being impaled upon this precipice.
Let me tread the paths of sheltering trees
Instead of withering in the noonday glare.
Let me smell the pungent fires I have bequeathed
Instead of this carrion stench of blood.

“I yield thee place in the towering sky:
Yield thou me room in the crucibles of earth.”

Out of the heart of valiant protest
Prometheus countered the thunderbolt of Zeus.
Vultures evaporated into the dark hills,
The chains fell down and slid like an avalanche
to the murderous clefts below.

Prometheus unbound bore the pain of release
and carried his scars to oblivion.

Simplicity Unspoilt

Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they shall see God.
They shall see him in all things unspoilt;
in child and flower and love unblighted,
in mountain's stream and ocean's pearl.
And they shall call him beauty and truth.

From unperceptive eye,
From blindness of soul,
From hardness of heart,
Deliver us, good Lord.

Fill our veins with richer blood,
Fill our nerves with responsive energy,
Fill us with the vividness of life.

When winter storm has ceased its raging
and dawn breaks cold and clear,
snow has piled in curling drift, or lies
unbroken in level range.

Wind will not churn its surface,
but only winnow it gently,
or carve a fluted crest.

Sun will not bake it brown,
but only tip each crystal
with refracted light.

It is man who mars even while he stands
to worship the white wonder.

When mountain beck has poured its laughter
into a rock-rimmed cup,
and its bubbling dance into a dappled pool,
the surface of the stream is silken motion,
the depth a gathering of clarity.

Nothing from the hills will fracture the stillness
nor cloud the mirror.

It is man or boy who hurls a rock
to carve his signature with a splash
and to listen to the double sound
of shattered surface and reverberating depth.

When rain has washed the tender leaves of garden
and early evening towels away the rising mist
and slowly dries the torso of the ground,
a single drop of rain is held
cupped in the green palm of lupin leaves,
like a tear lingering on its lashes.

Plant will not roll the drop away,
nor air disturb the balance.

It is man who swishes with impatience
and breaks the mating of cloud and chlorophyll.

He misses the jewel in the lotus.

Riotous Complexity

Look at the river flowing past your feet,
But think of crazier floods:
Columbia, Fraser, Colorado,
of deeper draughts:
Ganges, Yangtse, Amazon.
Earth is that.

Look at your familiar hill,
But think of the highest:
Rockies, Andes, Himalaya.
Earth is that.

Look at your green valley,
But think of the greatest clefts:
Grand Canyon, Yellow Gorge, Great Rift.
Earth is that.

Look at fireworks on the day of your feast,
But think of Nature's pyrotechnics:
Vesuvius, Stromboli, Pelee, Krakatoa.
Earth is that.

Look at your child's sandpit in the garden,
But think of the arid wastes:
Sahara, Gobi, Kalahari, Valley of Salt.
Earth is that.

Look at the first blade of wheat,
But think of prodigious growths:
Dinosaur, drosophila, plankton, polyp.
Life is that.

Listen to the infant's first syllable,
But think of multi-patterned music:
Fugue, oratorio, mass, symphony.
Man is that.

Hark the schoolboy counting up to thirteen,
But think of calculus and formula:
Em cee squared, root of minus one.
Man is that.

Mark the stammer on a nervous lip,
But think of the unexpressed:
Equations not yet solved, poems waiting.
Man is that.

Mop up the trivial spill of milk,
But think of many wasted lives:
Idiots in the twilight cells,
Soldiers underneath the poppies.
Man too is that.

All things interlock and shape each other.

All Saints and All Souls

Let us remember that great men hallow a whole people
and lift up all who live in their time.

Let us be proud that lesser men can grasp the greatness
and give honour where the merit is sure.

O wealth of living and mystery of dying!
All who have died have left their memorial
with the living.

While we live, let us cherish every deed
whereby one has lifted the burden of another.

Pay tribute to outstanding men and women
who have expanded the horizons of human knowledge
and deepened the springs of human compassion.

Share silence with the common folk
who have broken bread in gratitude
for others' more strenuous hands
and more fertile brains.

Be contrite in the presence of martyrdom.
Martyrs of religion at the stake,
Martyrs of politics in camps of concentration,
Martyrs of race in gas-ovens of insanity,
Martyrs of exploration in frozen seas,
in searing deserts and mountain passes,
Martyrs of knowledge whose wisdom was derided
and whose books were burnt,

Martyrs of experiment who tested on themselves
the serum of inoculation
and forced their living cells
to the limits of endurance.

They still endure in the sinews
and in the consciences of living men.

We give thanks for all who bear the mark
of martyred time in their living works.
For all who heal the human body and the mind.
For those who search the pathways of flesh
and nerve, of bone and blood, to make us whole.
For those who have uncovered the delusions,
fantasies and fears in the minds of men.
For those who, with gentle touch and gentler word,
have shown sympathy with pain.

We give thanks for all people who serve us
with their daily occupations.
Those who work in field and prairie,
Engineers who make our modern world,
All who fulfil their civic duty with honesty.

All Saints and All Souls are legion,
and countless are their ministries.

Unsainted Selves

We pray for all sorts and conditions of men,
that they may meet the challenges of their day
with resolution and despatch.

Those who are timid lest the skies fall
and the nucleus of the elements erupts,
let their timidity turn to courage
and their insignificance to gathered protest.
Those who have fallen prey to indolence
because purpose has drained out of their lives,
let them recall how once they carried children
on their backs across deep water.

There are still children waiting on the other side.
Those whose words are full of complaint
because their will has been frustrated,
let them look and listen to the trees
which swing back to their stations
when the gusts have passed.

We are not the lordly ones.
But neither are we like sheep gone astray.
Cry not for the crook of comfort
nor for the pens of safety,
which are but instruments and places
prepared for the fleecing.

Fly the flock! Climb the corrie!
Surge to the summit!

Let a right spirit be renewed!

How long shall we struggle to surmount
our unsainted selves?

Shall life be sweating all the way?
No alp for pasturing? No cirque for camping down?

Time for that when pace begins to slacken.
But even then . . .

To those who have found the mellow tranquility of years,
let there come a turning back to people of impatience
that they might teach them of their serenity.

To those who are glad and strong because they have found
the measure of their accomplishment,
let there come occasions for the sharing of their strength
to those who falter, and a giving of gladness
to those who haunt the valley.

Let religion be to us a renewing challenge
calling us to carry confidence
to unsainted selves,

People Commingled

Here let no man be a stranger!
Let him accept himself with dignity
and others will accept him in gratitude.
If he see an unfamiliar face, unaccustomed eyes or skin,
or hear a strange accent,
Let him know that beneath all difference
there is manhood, womanhood, the same in all places.
Let him know that there is one journey
upon which we are all engaged.

The peoples of the earth increase their numbers
and spread into each others' places.
Inventions of men shuttle people back and forth;
the earth is ribbed with lines of freight.

Men of islands in the sea find the solid heartland
of continents and ride congealed waves of rock.
Men of jungle villages see great and towering cities
and return to bid their people grow.
Peoples of the sun ride its energy
and land upon a clearing in the snow.
Men from eastern houses of meditation
carry the whirlflow of their thought
into the restless surge of western wizardry.

Faster than the shadow of the sun
men move to their rendezvous,
Voices in many tongues carry across wave-bands of space,
and we know upon the moment their joy or tragedy.

Precision tools of brotherhood have been forged.
Who is the brother who will wield them?
He who breaks the shell of narrow loyalty
And finds the yolk of human promise.

This be a litany of brotherhood.

East of me are brothers, though they march to the song
of a revolutionary poet.
West of me are brothers, though they pile their stock
of lethal weapons and deter with overkill.
North of me are brothers, though clad in furs
and sharing their wives with travellers.
South of me are brothers, though they leap
from junta to junta.

I am brother.
I try to contain multitudes
Within my house of reconciliation.

The Centred Self

Guitar-sadness haunts the streets of new men.
In the morning of their lives
It is always evening, eve of destruction.
Their songs are blowing in the wind.

When dying wind blows through their strings
And darker night turns them to solitude and home,
The dirge they hear is that God is dead ;
He has died without fulfilling the promise.

Neither by lightning from East to West,
Nor by trumpet blast and earth shake,
Has newly-minted Eden from a godly press
Come to pacify the pain of man.

Myth lies prostrate in the land,
Its requiem is blowing in the wind.
It blows through me and stirs a furtive phantom.

Where before have I heard the fractured sound
of universal sadness ?
From the footfall of Buddha !

They built stupas over his footprints
And halted the erosion of his eight-fold path.
Winds flutter the lonely prayer flags of the passes,
And remote bells sound their paradox.

When asked of God, Buddha maintained a noble silence.
When asked of Soul, he folded his arms.
When asked of the great peace to sweeten the salt,
He said : not until every blade of grass has found
Enlightenment.

Let each man plumb himself ; the deepest need
is where the closest knowledge is,
at the centre of your thought and the core of your pain.
Find that, and you find the inner consciousness of all.

Centre down and reach the single point ;
Be lamps unto yourselves, clean-flamed.
Having touched the awakening of one,
You touch a multitude, and in yourself
Mankind of many faces dwells.

You know the pathos of a paddy field,
The raucous terror of an asphalt jungle,
The phosphor-scars of delta battle,
The ghetto of impotence.

No need to march to embassies ;
Yourself an ambassador of man.

United Nations

Men of old said :

The Lord created every race of man of one stock
to inherit the face of the earth.

We are all his offspring.

Men today declare :

All human beings are born free and equal
in dignity and rights.

All are entitled to those rights without distinction
as to race, colour, sex, language, or religion.

Let no man cringe and cower before a mighty assailant,
and none draw a cloak about him fearing the defiling
shadow of a passer-by.

Let every man help to win each other's freedom in the
world.

Let every movement flourish which calls a cease-fire
and provides the courts of compromise.

Let a reviving mood of optimism replace the years of
mistrust, and nations negotiate through mutual respect
rather than by the brandishing of strength.

Let United Nations move beyond the forum of debate
to the market-place of help.

Peace comes not with pious visions alone,
nor with discussion in instant translation ;

It comes with food and commerce, with education
and shared skills,
With resources flowing freely on the open tide.

The differences which divide are obvious.

One is black and one is white ;

One is rich in this world's goods and one is bent
to the earth to scratch a livelihood ;

One is bulging with knowledge and one cannot read
a single line ;

One is sovereign in his holdings and one is held
in servitude to state or money-changers.

But floods of change surge round the world.

Each race despised and each nation of poverty,

Each area of ignorance and each state of slavery,

Has arisen in our time to demand the human rights.

Guns and speeches may hold back the flood ;
but the dam will break.

Let United Nations speak for the rising tide ;

Let it assemble in a new spirit, gird the will

against disaster and find channels

for the streams of human hope.

Our Own Land

In quiet churches of the land men have unfurled
their nation's flags,
to honour the valiant story of their folk.
They have chanted victory, mourned defeat
and grieved for the dead.
Their land was purchased at a price and drooping
standards crimson the white flesh of crucifixion
at the lance-point of worship.

Cleanse the chancel, strip it bare,
and start afresh with symbols of the future.
Blue be its vault like the open sky of peace;
let an uncarved block stand for an altar of hope,
that each may see therein fairer forms of sculpture
moulded from his own dreams.

Our own land is precious still
and fit for sacrament.
But let us bring to our holy place
the pasture not the pomp,
the thriving not the threat,
of our land.

Its rocks are a granite shield spilt out
before a nation was.
Its waters carved their grooves into the gulf
before the galleon proudly anchored here.

Its plains were bedded silently in sea
before the plough was forged.
Its mountains shouldered to the snow
before the creaking wagon passed.

We have a treasure which we must not boast,
since it was borrowed from the hand of time.
Nor must we claim a privilege withheld from other lands.
The same granite girds them.
The same waters are their solace.
The same soils yield crop and settlement.
Their hills rise and fall by the subtle motion
of a common earth.

I love my land, not because it is mine,
nor by ancestors possessed.
I love my land because it gives itself to me
in sunshine and in snow,
in a thousand moods and weathers.
It does not ask the colour of my creed
nor accent of my lip.
It is large to take the overflow
of other's crowds and of their tragedies.

We bring a simple tapestry to our country's shrine,
and bid the cunning loom weave on it
the heraldry of earth and banners of the sky;
that everyman may look his fill
and know he is not alien.

Metropolis

In the midst of the modern city let there be
a place for quietness,
a sanctuary for meditation,
a shrine for sincerity.

At the centre of each busy life let there be
a pause for recollection,
a point for beginning,
a radius of authentic will.

City towers rise clean and straight
to catch the light of westering sun.
Citadels cluster in commerce and dwarf
both merchant and his merchandise.
The flow of wheeling people is turbulent,
its noise stammers and stutters,
flaying the nerves.
The purposes of the city are obscure,
expressing old longings in new flesh.
May there be giants in the land again !
And giants grew, all body and no limbs ;
high, slab-sided, clean, rectangular.
Petrified functions of slide-rule and plumb-line,
defiant against a frosty sky
and unsubdued by cloud.

But when their solid sameness palls
and men begin to mould their urban dreams
in curvilinear form,
They turn to spiral-flow and concave frontispiece,
to undulating roof, paraboloid.
They seek serenity in symbols of growth and flight,
not a four-square tomb of death.

The dream takes substance, larger than life.
But before the dream has turned to steel,
Itself must find serenity.

Withdraw into the citadel of the mind
And contemplate for good
The form and fibre of life.

We are not giants,
But people of medium stature.
Measure the city against our hopes and fears.
Make its ways safe for young and old,
Its mood a comfort to the lonely,
Its pleasures a sidewalk of urbanity.

Forest

Voices of the forest are quickly told :
barely audible voices in a vast silence,
unlocated sounds of leaf and branch,
root and underbrush ;
gale-noise drowning thought,
fire-noise thundering like stampede.

Add human sounds :
ring of axe and buzz of saw,
thump as trees are felled,
grumble of powerful machines,
and Halloo !

And the sound of primal silence.

We pitched our tent beside a giant redwood.
It was an open glade, but the eaves of the forest
were near enough to be magnetic.

Great trees attract silence as a magnet iron filings.
Our tent was in the field of their silence,
so profound I could not sleep for it.
There was a faint moon and many stars.
Often these have been companions of my vigil,
but their influence was remote.
It was the dark phalanx of the trees
that gave the night its substance
and brought two thousand years about my ears.

I heard the muted bourdon of the forest :
some men come to be alone,
some come to cut and haul away,
some come to hide and some to hunt,
some to carve a name and make furtive love,
some to play Tarzan,
some came tortured and hanged themselves,
some were mercilessly strung from the hanging-tree,
some came to die with falling leaves for funeral.

Trees of the forest have welcomed all
without blame, without judgement.
They have seen everything before
and are not buffeted.

When you come down aisles of soft tread
and feel the gothic architecture of the world,
do not bow or genuflect.
Stand and know yourself and a thousand other selves
who have come and left their thoughts among the leaves.

Know the count of time, the bole-rings of the years.
Know ages spanned by living arms that reach for light.
Let present pass while leaves sink silently.
All your years are folding in your loam
where other feet will softly tread.

Chalice of Service

Our lesser lights are fragments of the distant sun.
We light them not in feeble imitation,
for if across our little flame a single sunbeam falls,
it turns it into shadow.

We light our chalice to illumine our debt
and to kindle our desire.

Desire for the flower of sweet passion ;
desire for the flame of forgotten love ;
desire for bright space and orbit round the sun ;
desire for life's burning and its rest.

See the cup with curling flame.
Air bathes it and bends its light,
and shapes it like a petal on a stem.
Air is consumed in it, but not possessed.

The cup is wide and shallow ;
its profile like arms outstretched to receive.
From all the world comes the oil of burning
and the gathered pool of it
is a well of wisdom
serene as eternity.

Let meditation be still
as a flame in a windless place.

Flame curls from the chalice cup
like a gesture of prayer,
until prayer turns into service
sent from hands of sympathy
to fill the emptiness of other hands.

Our lesser lights can easily be quenched
by boisterous wind or heavy hand.
But none can extinguish the flame of service
which runs from a man to his neighbour.
Another cup is lit from the proffered light.

Light the common lamps
in windows so that men can find their way,
along the streets so that robber fear may fly,
above the rocks so that ships may miss the jagged tooth,
at touch-down so that planes may run to rest.

When daylight comes,
walk in trust beneath the larger light.

Hands

By the stilling of your turmoil in quietness,
by the stretching of your minds in wonder,
by the girding of your lives with good,
by the lifting up of hands in praise,
come and worship.

Creative powers move silently through space
and on the crust of earth
bring motion, life and mind to birth.
Mind-tremor runs invisibly through our limbs
until it touches our hands
and moves our fingers to the weaving of their skills.

May the work of our hands match the mode of their
making.

Hand-clasp bringing friendliness.

Hand-soothe bringing help and healing.

Hands that come with garlands of beauty,
cunning with brush and chisel, deft with pen,
virtuous with instruments of music,
graceful to poise a flower in its bowl.

Hands that bring shelter,
making home for homeless
and sanctuary for wandering minds.

Hands that make the fabric of our time,
spanning the rivers with steel
and skies with silver wings.

Hands of applause for work well done
and words well taken.

All Hands! in time of trouble.

May the work and touch of our hands
be as prayer in the temples of the world.

Forget not calloused hands and do not spurn
the man of lowly toil.

Turn not your back upon a beggar's hands;
he asks for the dime of acceptance.

Stand not aghast at the slayer's hands,
but find asylum for him
and level justice.

The hands of a thief are fit
not only for the manacle,
but also for the bow,
that he may turn his indignity
into a song upon strings.

Remember hands that were pierced with nails
where all might see the agony.

Banish gibbet and bring the sufferer
to lie upon the ground.

May the guilt of our hands be expunged,
not by wringing them in despair,
but by setting them to the plough.

Time Off

We live from day to day by habit, custom and necessity.
We grow hard and in our hardness hope that we may be comfortable in our caves of unconcern.

In time of meditation let us break the crust of hardness and crack the shell of our comfort.

Lips are soft.

Let there be upon them greetings of kindness and smiles of encouragement.

When morning washes away our staleness, let words of encounter be clean as dawn.

When noon has caught us up in high involvement, let there be a lingering of courtesy.

When evening rounds the day, let there be pause for gratitude, thank-you words for those who serve.

Hands are gentle.

Let there come from them gestures of graciousness.

When times have passed for gripping the tools and pushing the instruments of power, let there come caress and clasp.

Feet are slow.

Let them take us to quiet corners and to sidewalks of dalliance.

When they have ended their mechanics on brake and clutch, their accelerator flip and escalator tread, let them

go upon the journey that only love compels and take the extra mile upon the call of duty.

We come to the house of worship immersed in the merry-go-round of life's inconsequence.

Let us find a still centre at the heart of the whirl.

We come clad in the garments of fashion, but plead to be shriven of unnecessary pride.

We come beset with the uncertainty of our busy decision but hope to find a wisdom beyond the need for decision

Going from our worship, may we emerge from meditation strong to endure the trivial, glad to embrace the commonplace, earnest to attempt the unattained.

Time off to hold a fragment of the world, to see its single parts and how they lose their loneliness in the binding form. See light and shadow and how each defines the other and takes strength from it.

Time off to explore the unfrequented, to find clarity close-by, lines and shapes like driftwood on the shore
Fill the void with pulse and plenty.

Reach beyond the given.

Time off . . .

Vocation

Whatever vocation we have chosen,
or whatever vocation has chosen us,
let us put forth resolution to pursue it well.

Student in his learning, teacher in his giving;
craftsman in his making, merchant in his selling.
Each one to his own skill, deeply and with pride.
Child with his growing, woman with her grace,
man with his strength.

Let us give ourselves to our employments.

I saw him standing solitary on a parapet, a building
half erected soared above the sidewalk. No motion
in his body, but the composure of relaxed awareness.
All eyes, he watched a swaying bucket dipping down
from the rigid arm of cantilevered steel. When it
neared the men below, who were mixing concrete and
profanity, he did no more than raise his palm an inch
or so in signal to the pulley-man aloft.

The bucket, ten times the weight of all the men together,
swung and stopped, waiting its fill within an ace of
crushing them. Their banter did not cease, nor their
spades to ply the mix. He alone held their lives in
the palm of his hand, and they, not for a single moment,
doubted his vigilance.

Many say that underneath are the everlasting arms.
But on the surface there are eyes and taut wires
and wordless trust.

It is easy to close your eyes and see nothing,
but you cannot close yourself. You contain the promise
of your genes and the potentiality of your stock.
It is easy to stop the shuffling of your feet,
but you cannot stop the march of yourself.
Circumstance and the thrust of your desires
make openings through which you must go, or die.
It is easy just to be alone and still, but you cannot
stay that way. You cannot make love alone nor discover
what you are without engagement with another. You
alone cannot make the products of life. Raw materials
come from someone else's digging, and the finishing from
their abrasions.

In your vocation be not lonely in a crowd,
but let life crowd in upon you.
Be girded with its strength
and clad with its compassion.

Landscape

Four elements father us :

Earth of our bone, air of our lungs,
water of our blood and fire of our thought.

Where shall we stand to feel the four
each in its elemental place?

Nothing but earth, who can find?

Must we wait till we are buried deep
and clods caress our loveless flesh?

Before I die, let me live

confronted by clean slabs of towering rock
whose shoulders shut out sky.

Already I have clambered in a covert chimney
and scaled a buttress of earth's bone.

Nothing but air, who can find?

Must we wait till we are transformed
into pale phantoms?

Before I die, let me live

in the abrasion of great winds.

Already I have heard them howling
up flutes and gullies of high hills.

Released from chafing obstacle,
they flung themselves with fury
into unimpeded space.

Nothing but water, who can find?

Must we wait till the second flood of wrath
rolls everything below the thighs of Ararat?

Before I die, let me live

perched upon a rock at land's end
with green-blue waves pounding in
from beyond the limits.

Already I have seen billows

green and grey with menace
blunder past the cork of my cunarder.

I have stepped behind the roaring curtain
of dramatic waterfalls.

Nothing but fire, who can find?

Must we wait till ancient fears rekindle,
and the nether fires of Lazarus torment us?

Before I die, let me live

burning with expectation.

Already I have seen moorland fires that flash
then smoulder to the root,
and bitter fires of war
that pierced the droning night.

But there are others which raise no shattering alarm :

sunset fire on level water,
or over incandescent salt ;
dawn fire tipping the white icicles
of morning mountain ;
golden fire on burnished plains of wheat.

Inscape

Many have seen a polished maple floor ;
many have seen a vase of flowers ;
many have seen tall candles burning ;
most have heard music in a lofty place.

Singular events these, which by themselves
excite no special emotion,
but fold them all together,
an inscape of meditation,
and thought unanchored sweeps out upon the flood.

Maple once stood on the shoulder of a hill
braced against the blizzard,
its sap gently rising.
Something of gold ran fluid through its limbs
and expert hands persuaded gold to shine
anew in the floor-boards.

Flowers were forced to transcend almost
the genius of their genes,
to flower outside their normal time of bloom.
Arrayed in studied elegance, they are still-life
where no winds shake.

Candlelight is undisturbed by wind.
Candle and flame alike are carved in still air.
But thought is not still.
It leaps from the straight white columns

to candle-moulds in some ecclesiastical assembly-line,
to stills and cracking plants,
to oil oozing through buried sands.

Music is a medley of airs and pipes and fingers
deftly interpreting the measure of a dream
from composer long since dead.

Put these together, not singly like brick on brick,
but like past moments mingling with the wrist-watch
ticks of now, like motion from another place that
has wandered into here and become no longer motion,
like people from their separate selves become communion
and confederacy of selves.

When the elements are compounded can it be
that music is the diapason floor on which I stand?
that maple branches array their leaves
in a keyboard of melody?
that flowers flicker with a single flame
and do not wither till the wax is spent?
that candle wick grows bells and trumpets
and shoots into riotous summer?

It can be so ; but only for me.
My inscape is a pearl
whose bivalve opens only at my touch.

Spring

She planted a residue of garnered grain
in ground that dogs had scratched.
She did not know she was planting an idea
which would change the history of man.
But ploughing and reaping, granary and barn,
poetry, legend and religion
sprang from her seed-burial.

He dug a hollow in the high hills
and plastered it smooth with clay
to catch the evening dew or morning shower.
His sheep would not go thirsty in a thirsty land.
He did not know that he was digging
a city's reservoir.
But cistern, dam and aqueduct
made Babylon and Rome;
urbanity sprang from his spade.

He cut tall reeds from the river's edge
and left them drying in the sun.
He reaped them for a cattle bed
and made his mark upon the pile.
He did not know of manuscript or scroll.
But prophet penned the burden of his dream
and steward kept the tally of his store.
Scholar shaped the order of his logic
upon the shepherd's papyrus.

Human spring was a sudden growth
after a long winter of naked bough and stone.
Summer is long delayed
while nomad, nome and nation
compete for a place in the sun.
The varied crop of tribe and clan
of priestly barn and royal granary
supported courts of privilege,
while unnumbered fed on husks.

Man learned his spring from nature
which thrusts all its shoots into the air
with prodigality.
Sickly stem, surpassed by lustier growth,
falls back into anonymous earth,
or survives in the crannies of chance.

Man must find a better way.
Let careless might cease darkening lesser folk
with ricket fear, and leave them unpossessed.
Let cellular spread of creed and greed
cease blighting its victims.

Grain is not for hoarding,
nor latter rain for the few.
The art of writing is no élite accomplishment.
Earth waits still for universal spring.

Autumn

Let the spirit be stripped bare,
with mind cleared of sophistries,
with desire cleared of envy,
with passion cleared of pain,
with emotion cleared of fear,
with mood cleared of stubbornness.

Leaves are being stripped from the trees ;
their falling is sombre and sad.
Many feel the melancholy of autumn
and are reminded that ripeness
is prelude to death.
Each leaf is a blow to their optimism.

But leaves dance as they fall
and their colours are a full palette.
The earth is glad to receive them
for its own renewal.
When dry leaves are gathered to a funeral pyre
their blue fragrance is a sharp joy.
When they fall from parent branches
slanting sun draws fresh figures,
pencil sketches to fill the pad of winter.

Times come when we are stripped of leaves ;
the bole and bark of us is evident.
Embarrassed at our nakedness,
vulnerable in our starkness,
saddened at our loss of illusion,
what comfort shall we find in the fall ?

There is always sleep at the season's end,
forgetfulness and oblivion.
It blankets embarrassment
and weaves fresh illusions in the mind.

But man does not hibernate ;
he lusts through every season
and clothes his nakedness against the winter.
He finds the sturdy certainties that were hidden
beneath pleasant verdure.

Held by a firm earth, hailed by stalwart friends,
breathing crisp air and plying tested talent,
Let us stand our ground and wait for future spring.

Quiet Ecstasy

Ecstasy is a stance outside oneself;
it is watching the world take shape
from a different perspective.

Deliberate concentration can be ecstasy.
Middle-moves in games of chess,
foot and finger holds when climbing rocks.
Not pure ecstasy, for in the permutation of the play
and in the delicacy of balance,
I still regard myself and look for elegance.

Relaxation this side of sleep can be ecstasy.
Reading books; thinking another's thought
after him, sharing his taste and enjoying
his tale, identifying with his characters;
I am expanded. Coming back into myself is anti-climax.
I do not normally live at that intensity.

Physical relaxation is ecstasy.
The finish of long walks, strenuous swims,
sharp contests; resting on grass, soaking in baths.
Body is totally occupied with its own recuperation,
it intrudes upon the mind only with muscle resonances,
with idle brain scannings.
Mind is free to move at its own pace, disengaged
from effort.

Absorption is ecstasy.

Absorbed in spectacle of theatre or sport,
I am caught in movement, meaning and excitement.
Give me a clear undulating road, a gentle curve,
good vision, beautiful day and my car in good trim.
I will not hesitate to call it ecstasy.
I become less me; more pure motion.

Being absorbed is ecstasy.

By Nature, not in any tame mood, but in its large
and overpowering aspects. Give me mountains;
best to be in the middle of them, approaching
or leaving them second, on top third.
I lose my size, my shape and my tempo.
I become poetic and know myself grounded,
air-mantled, light-bathed, wind-weathered.
Outside myself; ecstatic.

What stands outside?

A larger self with unmarked boundaries,
a bigger-muscled self swelling beyond the ring
of the normal.

When self returns to its former shape
its contours are clean;
there is no regret.

Assimilation of Sorrow

Rachel weeping for her children ;
She refuses to be comforted,
Because they are not.

The children are gone into exile.
They have furrowed the sands
And scuffed the sharp stones
On the long march.
They serve the pleasure of princes
And suffer the vendetta of captains.

They will return again with fatness,
Say the comforters.
Your daughters with milk-tipped breasts,
Your sons with carven beards
Defying Babylonian sword.

Rachel refuses to be comforted.

Songs have ceased about her house.
The counting and the spelling stones
Are scattered . . . aleph, beth and gimel.
Frail heads no longer on the pillow
Make night more lovely than the first
When He divided light from dark.

There will be other songs
Ringing down the street and in the temple.
Rudiments of letters will be mortared
Into poems of a hundred pairs.

Sleep will come into your house
Like seas subsided
Relaxing loins of love.
Time will give you back the broken times
Of days uncounted and of fractured nights.
Take time's gift.
Accept its solace.

Rachel refuses.

She takes a jar of bitterness
Upon her sloping shoulder,
And fills it from the lifeless well
Where no greeting is exchanged.
She sweeps her floor clean again today
As yesterday she swept,
Though none disturbed the dust.
Hours stretch out long with remembering.

Scars of sorrow are not healed by words,
Nor knitted by what might have been.
Shoulder to the jar,
Hand to the broom,
Pacing and pondering,
Alone will weave fresh tissue.

Silent Tomb

The tomb is always silent save for the heart-break
of those who watch.

They hear the fading tread of familiar feet
and listen unbelievably for the voice they knew.

Bereavement is always hollow save for the proud minds
of those who remember.

They remember incidents of sound and gesture,
and even the course delicacies of a man,
but expunge from thought the gestureless end.

Who will roll away the stone?

Not professional mutes who wear the ribbon of grief;
not bland purveyors who proclaim eternal solace;
but the donors of life's continuities.

They give food and friendship, employment and mirth.

They show by their common deeds
that life is not irreparably fractured.

They are the living cells,
scar tissue for the healing of grief.

The tomb is always silent.

Out of the silence let there come a living image
of the dead which we dare not lose,
lest life that was vanish for ever.

Out of the silence let there come a reckoning.

The dead have left a trace of love in the flesh
of those to whom they bequeathed life.

They left a touch of wisdom in the minds
of those who listened to them in quietness.

They left a mark in places made their own
by tool and spade
and by the craftwork of their thought.

We will speak of immortalities

as far as thought can reach.

Of light that carries from the nebulous boundaries
to the centres of creation,

Of motion that follows the grain of time and space
to bring a system of promise,

Of earth that outlasts and outwears
the living limbs that clamber on it.

Man has come a long way and death will not obliterate
the venture.

Each one makes his reckoning and passes.

Light comes at dawn,

Motion turns within the womb.

Earth will roll away the stone.

And still the tomb is silent.

And Yet He Lives !

He was buried in the dark tomb
and joined his dust
to the mould of all men.
But they could not forget him.

Some he had healed.
He came into the outcast loneliness of many.
Some let a word of his fall into their minds
like a grain of mustard seed
which grew tall in their hopes.
Some had seen him smitten, but he did not rebuke.
One had said, I know not the man !
though last night he shared the broken bread ;
He fled before the withering glance.

While morning dew was still upon the ground
and shadows lurked about the sepulchre,
There were some said he lived
beyond the nights of dissolution.
Behold ! A rumour went forth !
It ripples still
across the ponds of man's credulity.

He lives ! Of course he lives.
But in no trivial place where throne is topaz.

He lives in centuries of human strife and failure.
He lives wherever vengeful shots are fired
in the futile hope of ending valour.
He lives where shuffling marchers
try the patience of privilege.
He lives in priestly chants and anthems of requiem.
He lives in any human life which has been captured
by his prayer or parable.

All who are remembered by their deeds
long after they have passed into the earth
or back into the elements by purge of fire
Live, while living thoughts retrace their steps
and call to mind their substance or their shadow.

Only he is forgotten
whose words found no attentive ear,
whose touch was rejected,
whose work passed for nothing.

Of even him perhaps the earth bears traces
and forgives.
The earth remembers more deeply
cautions more wisely
and renews the failures of its bearing.

Summer

The city was not made for summer time.
It has paved the soil of pleasure with wormless concrete.
It has covered the sweet grass with the pressure of wheels.
It has piped the open rivulets through hidden conduits,
And we are strangers to the earth.

The city has carved its spaces on high
And limited the living air.
It has focused sunlight into ovens of restlessness,
And hewn down trees of shade and respiration.

Therefore we will open the doorways of our being
To unfettered spaces and flowing grass,
To trees of music and of silence,
And to waters that sparkle in the sun.

Our earth is not yet covered by the blight of man,
Not yet is distance filled with habitation.
Let summer be the time when we renew ourselves
At older shrines, unchoked by commerce,
Unsmearred by trade.

Wine-winds upon the shoulder of hills,
Sun-drench beside the roll of seas,
Pool-plunge down crisp waters,
Shade-sleep in dappled woods,
Ribbed caverns in dissolving rocks
And lawns of graciousness running down to water
meadows.

Let these be secular retreats
Where we can worship in careless ease.
As we take our fill of the wonder of the earth,
Let us leave the land undimmed and undiminished.

Whether we travel near or far,
May we respect the will of all who share the earth with us.
May we go with care that none may be injured by our
haste or harmed by our negligence.
The good earth supported other lives before we came
and will abide when our tracks are washed out.
Let no growing thing or living creature
be wantonly destroyed by us.
Let us leave no incongruous spoor
dropped as tokens of our passing.

By our labour through the busy months we have earned
our keep.
In our leisure thanks be for things we have not earned:
The companionship of the ancient elements,
earth, air, fire and water;
The surprises of our journeying,
sudden views of loveliness
and animals at play;
The fellowship of friends at day's end,
the task's end when a look is enough
to reveal our contentment.

Winter

Let this be a time and place
where we not only inquire about life,
discuss its elusive purposes,
wonder about the meaning of ourselves,
or the fraught destiny of our times ;

Let it also be a place where
we accept ourselves,
our times and our conditions.

Let us learn to live with what we are,
before we rehearse what we might become.

We accept the snow of winter.
It lies about us like immortality.
We learn to see its beauty in the dance of its falling,
in the strangeness of its clinging,
in its even silence on the level land,
in the six-fold pattern of its smallest flake.
We see it reddened with a frosty sun
and streaked with purple shadows.
We learn to frolic on its slopes
or to live within its limitations.

We accept the winter of ourselves.
But even so, hemmed in by immobility,
we learn how much we contain.
Fallow, we await the germination.

We accept the contours of the earth
and its degrading forces.
Pressure of many seasons' snow, grind of glaciers,
and the tumbling havoc of melting water ;
they have worn down the eminences
to lay a carpet of common earth.

We accept the starkness of the earth.
Serac, crevasse and comical contortion,
peculiarly are we carved.

We accept incongruity.
The pompous and the placid,
the down-at-heel and smartly-groomed,
the amazing variety of us,
we chortle at Adam's brood.

We accept what we cannot assimilate.
The tardiness of truth,
magnanimity too slow unmelting,
justice congealed in winter's discontent,
this is the grain of us.

But when the reckoning shall be made
we know that more than ten can be counted good
in the city of destruction.
The hand of wrath is stayed.

Legend in the Skies

Legend draws heaven and earth closer together,
weaves man and beast into one tapestry,
leaves nothing out of star and firelight,
cave of rock and canopy of velvet,
angels' song and cattle's breath,
the sharp, sweet wail of birth
and Rachel uncomforted, weeping for her children.

Let legend live on winter's song
and carol waken dreams across the snow.
Let the swift flight of ancient time
liberate the cockle-crawl of our souls.

Tree Worship.

He planted a garden eastward in Eden
And there set the tree of life,
With roots soil-snaking and brown bark wrinkled
As though it were born of strife.
But high on the breeze, where green leaf quivers
Blue-bathed against the sky,
A man looks up from the dust and demons
As the Lord of Heaven rides by.

He planted a garden southward in Eden
And there set the tree of shade;
In glowing sand shone a pool of water
Where jackals once had played.
And under the tree a strong son of Esau,
Filling his water jar,
Looks up through palms in the cool of evening
To the spear of a Holy Star.

He planted a garden westward in Eden
And there set the tree of birch;
Air through its branches and bark of its body
Sent restless men on their search;
By deep-roaring rapid and rimless prairie
To the pulse of a western sea
Dip paddle, and cleave the clean air of heaven
Back to the silver tree.

He planted a garden northward in Eden
And there set the tree of pine;
And straight it grew like an arrow to heaven
Where Dipper and Pole Star shine.
A man with his firelight alone in the darkness
Watching the wood smoke rise
Looks up, and sees by shimmering aurora
The bounding deer of the skies.

Neon and Nativity

Without vision a people perish.
Without hope days are a succession of dreariness.
Without festival seasons come and go uncelebrated.

We will sing and carol the yuletide,
the turning of the sun.
We will make mirth in the dark of the year.

One by one the trees of Christmas come alight
till all the city sprinkles the snow
with petals.
Lighten our darkness!
that human love so easily extinguished
may illumine our night for a season.

One by one the cards of Christmas tumble through our
doors from across the street and across the world.
How beautiful upon the mountain are the feet of him
that bringeth good tidings!
He brings remembrancers of brotherhood
across the frontiers of the world.

One by one the gifts of Christmas crackle
and make our children wake for joy.
It is more blessed to give than to receive.
May they be tokens of our winter warmth
shared through all seasons and all weathers.

Amid the merry round and mirth
Of Christmastide at fullest swing,
Beneath the fluorescent glare
Of merchandise and wassailing;

When mammoth stores are disney-full
And market square is loud with cries,
When pianos strummed in public bars
Change beat and croon of angel skies;

When music makers mendicant
File Indian-wise along the street,
And 'Noel' greets the gring of gears
And 'Holy Night' the swish of feet;

When tinselled spruce of aldermen,
As high almost as Martin's spire,
Sets civic seal on Bethlehem
And burghers' boon on Mary's byre;

Leave then the lure of mammon's ware,
And by your fire or in your pew
Remember still a wayside inn
And shelter for a lonely Jew.

Morning

O morning, that fills our eastern windows
and throws fresh light on the riddles of yesterday,
fill also our minds with fresh appreciation
and new desire.

While it is yet day we will stand forth
in the presence of each returning joy.
Love light on cloud and light on snow
and quiet light on faces wakening from sleep.

Where there are those who are anxious
about what the day will bring,
about food and where to eat,
about clothes and where to go ;
Let there be other work to think about ;
a child in doubt about the way,
a friend who has lost the will to love,
a neighbour forgotten in the whirl.

He who serves them with understanding
and shares the morning of himself,
overcomes his own anxieties.

Where there are those who complain
because life has lost its sparkle,
or times of consequence have passed them by ;
Let there come a challenge on this day.

The streets are full of crisis ;
he who turns the panic into competence
restores the thoroughfare.
For him time will not be heavy.

Where there are those, rare souls,
who are at peace with themselves
and in glad rapport with the world ;
Let their joy be caught upon the wing
by those whom they greet.

Where there are those who are lithe of limb
and plunge into their enterprises
with a shout ;
Let them go free to undiscovered hills,
that, when they return,
their tale will kindle the hours of evening.

O morning, that meets and melts the clouds,
lead us into the noon of our accomplishment.

Evening

We have set a time for labour and a time for rest,
and evening is the time between.

It is a time for savouring the busy hours,
for replenishing the body at a friendly board,
for filling the storehouse of the mind,
for being at ease beside the mellow lamp
of learning.

Evening is the time of lightly-moving talk,
the give and take of narrative ;
Exaggeration of our trivial day,
the proffer of a theory
and a chuckle when it's tossed aside.

We have set a time for shouting and a time for sleep,
and evening is the time between.

We shouted to carry a request
across the din of industry ;
but in leisure sotto voce is enough.

We shouted to hail an accomplice across the street,
but by evening he is at our elbow.

We shouted to fill the hall with oratory,
but friends at home are not amused by speeches ;
only table-talk.

We have set a time for spending and a time for reckoning,
and evening is the time between.

We bargained in a basement amid the clutching hands,
but at home enjoy the purchase.

We spent our substance on the loot of day,
but in the evening we ignore the price.

We have set a time for learning
and the time of forgetting will soon come.
Evening is for recollection in between.

Gather the hours into a glass and drink ;
you will enjoy your past a second time.

Gather the days into a book and read ;
you will find the chapters never end
because they were scarce begun.

Gather the years into an album and browse ;
you will find that you are episodes
in a dynasty of life that holds you
by each hand.

O evening, that quietens and yet judges us,
lead us into night of trust.

Leonard Mason is minister and mountaineer, father and grandfather, a quiet and thoughtful speaker and a profoundly original writer. He studied at Manchester, England, and Harvard, USA, and was minister to Unitarian congregations in London, Norwich and Leicester before leaving England in 1960 to take up his present appointment at the Unitarian Church of the Messiah, Montreal.

In his foreword to this collection of "antiphonal meditations" he writes that "its foreground is Canadian, its background is English; its accent is secular, its intent religious; its predominant phraseology is humanist, its tone an undisclosed theism." These writings will be found of value both for public and private use and grow out of a wide range of interests in all aspects of human endeavour.

A companion to this volume is a collection of verse and prose writings *Hinge of the Year*, with illustrations by Andrea Pugh who has designed the cover for this.

7s 6d