

"CONTROLLING LIFE FROM WITHIN"

Christ Church

January 10, 1936 7

## Introduction

In the Book of Proverbs we read the following statement:  
"Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

We might change one word to clarify the meaning, and say:  
"Keep thy inner life -- keep your thinking with all diligence, for out of it come the issues of life."

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Each of us lives in two worlds:

The first is the outer world of everyday activity and bus

The living which we do in this external world can be observed by all those about us.

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Then, there is another world: THE VERY PRIVATE WORLD OF OUR OWN MINDS:

It is here that we do some of our most important living;

This is the world involving our thoughts ,  
imaginations, attitudes, and hopes;

No one can directly share this world with us. it is our own and we rule over it ourselves.

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It is of this inner world that the author of the text is speaking when he says: "Keep thy heart (keep your inner life) with care and attention -- for out of it comes the issues of life."

Here, ~~we are~~ <sup>the suggestion is made</sup> reminded that there is a very definite relationship between the INNER AND THE OUTER WORLDS;

between the life we live in our minds -- and the life we live in terms of externals.

At first, this thought may impress us as being rather commonplace -- BUT IF WE THINK IT THROUGH WE SHALL SEE THAT FAR-REACHING IMPLICATIONS -- CAPABLE OF TRANSFORMING ALL AREAS OF LIFE:

→ This text is telling us that <sup>life</sup> WHAT IS FOR US IS DETERMINED NOT SO MUCH FROM THE OUTSIDE IN TERMS OF EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES --- AS FROM THE INSIDE IN TERMS OF INTERNAL ATTITUDES.

IT IS TELLING US THAT THE BEST PLACE FROM WHICH TO CONTROL LIFE AND TO FIND HAPPINESS IS NOT FROM WITHOUT --BUT FROM WITHIN.



In the first place, we are confronted by the fact that FOR THOSE WHO SEEK THEM, THERE ARE A MULTITUDE OF SATISFACTIONS WHICH BELONG ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY TO THIS INNER WORLD -- TO THE LIFE WE LIVE IN OUR MINDS.

The enjoyment of a good book;

the ability to see beauty in the commonplace;

the zest born of a wholesome curiosity in the world of nature; *about us*

the sense of wonder inspired by the millions of miracles, daily performed in the world of nature;

the capacity to carry on an interesting thought-conversation with oneself -- to enjoy one's own Company:

ALL THESE ARE SATISFACTIONS WHICH BELONG PRIMARILY TO THE LIFE WE LIVE IN OUR MINDS---

and they are among the satisfactions which transform routine existence into adventurous, expectant living.

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If we look into the lives of those individuals WHO IMPRESS US MOST AS LIVING DEEPLY AND ENTHUSIASTICALLY almost invariably we find that they are persons who have cultivated AN INNER LIFE ----

they have come to possess an appreciation for those things which STAND IN THEIR OWN RIGHT --- quite apart from the fluctuations of the stock market --- the weather --- or the latest news story.

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To be sure there are multitudes of people who go through life with little or no INNER LIFE OF THEIR OWN; with their physical needs well taken care of --- they find their chief interest in life in the passing and changing fortunes of their business --- and in the passing items which happen to be filling the front pages of the newspapers at the time.

*have* To be sure such persons MAY ACHIEVE A CONTENTMENT -- but they are missing out on a world of inner satisfactions.

That probably is what Albert Wiggam is getting at in

The thoughts we think are the pictures which we hang on the walls of our minds --- and some times our inner lives are barren of

his work "The Marks of an Educated Man" when he says:

"I feel sorry for the man who has never gone without his dinner to buy a book of poems, a ticket to a concert."

and it is probably what underlies that famous definition of happiness quoted by Wm. Lyons Phelps: "The happiest person is he who thinks the most interesting thoughts."

Charles Darwin, the scientist, was a man who lived for one interest -- and one interest alone. That was his own line of scientific research.

He lived to regret the fact that he had not cultivated a wider and deeper inner life. At the age of 70 he wrote: "If I had my life to live over again, I would make it a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once every week. The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness."

One of the tragedies of our generation is that we TRY TO FILL UP LIFE IN TERMS OF EXTERNAL THINGS AND IN TERMS OF ACTIVITIES.

Indeed more than one person would be quite at a loss if he were faced with the necessity of spending a full evening at home --- in conversation with the other members of his family. (Particularly if all ~~good~~ were ~~gone~~)

We have built streamlined trains to carry us in great speed from one part of the country;

We have sent exploratory expeditions to the North and South Poles;

By means of deep-sea diving technique we have far down into the ocean;

We have even ascended up into the stratosphere in quest of new knowledge ----

BUT HOW MANY OF US THERE ARE \*\* WHO HAVE LEFT ALMOST UNEXPLORED THE MOST INTERESTING WORLD OF ALL -- THE INNER WORLD OF OUR OWN MINDS.

It is said that there was once an old schoolmaster who was very poor in material things --- but over the door of his humble home ~~was~~ were these words:

"Welcome -- within this house dwell Shakespeare, Moliere, and Dante." Indeed there are a multitude of riches that belong to the inner world of our minds and imaginations

Such a person possesses something which is taken away - a rich inner



"The Marks of an Educated Man" : "I feel sorry for the ~~man~~ person who has never gone without his dinner to buy a book ~~or a ticket~~ or a ticket to a concert."

It is what Charles Darwain, the scientist, was getting at when he wrote at the age of 70: "If I had my life to live over again, I would make it a rule to read some poetry, and listen to some music at least once every week. The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness."

Wm. Lyon Phelps quotes with approval that famous definition of happiness: "The happiest person is he who thinks the most interesting thoughts."

All these individuals are emphasizing the satisfactions to be found in cultivating THE LIVE ONE LIVES IN HIS OWN MIND. "Keep thy heart with diligence - for out of it come the issues of life."

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One of the tragedies of our generation is that we so frequently try TO FILL OUR LIVES IN A PERMANENTLY SATISFYING WAY -- WHOLLY WITH MATERIAL THINGS OR WITH ACTIVITIES.

*External Someone forgetting desire*  
We have built streamlined trains to hurry us to the far corners of the country;

We have sent exploratory expeditions to the North and South Poles;

We have gone far down into the ocean;

We have even ascended up into the stratosphere in quest of new knowledge;

BUT MILLIONS OF INDIVIDUALS HAVE LEFT ALMOST UNEXPLORED THE RICHEST AND MOST INTERESTING WORLD OF ALL --- THE INNER WORLD OF THEIR OWN MINDS.

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It is said that there was once an old schoolmaster --- very poor in material things -- but over the door of his humble were these words: "Welcome - within dwell Shakespeare, Moliere, and Dante."

Such a person possesses ~~something~~ certain enjoyments and satisfactions which cannot be taken away.

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A famous singer of our own day recently made this statement: "Don't be afraid to ~~be~~ be alone! Until you mean something to yourself, you can't be important to anyone else. One must live the good alone-life in order to develop."

This is just another way of saying what the author of the text said hundreds of yrs ago: Keep thy heart with diligence - for

## II

In the second place, ~~the~~ THE LIFE WE LIVE IN OUR MINDS PLAYS A MOST IMPORTANT PART IN DETERMINING THE KIND OF CHARACTERS WE POSSESS.

Matthew Arnold once said that conduct is  $\frac{3}{4}$  of life. ~~It is certain that most people know us in terms of our conduct from day to day.~~

But Matthew Arnold did not go far enough -- HE FAILED TO POINT OUT THAT WHAT OUR CONDUCT IS IN THE LONG RUN -- MAY BE TRACED BACK TO THE LIFE WE LIVE IN OUR MINDS --

The thoughts we think;

The ideals we ~~have~~ aspire to;

the goals we are working toward;

John Cowper Powys has stated it very well in his "The Philosophy of Solitude" --- "What we steadily, consciously, habitually think --- that we tend to become."

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Some of the most powerful forces tending to tear down strong moral character ARE TO BE FOUND NOT OUTSIDE -- BUT WITHIN OUR OWN MINDS;

➤ After the Greeks had failed by all other methods to take Troy --- they finally achieved their goal by ~~building~~ moving a huge wooden horse into the city which looked harmless enough; but within were hiding soldiers, who slipped out during the night -- and took the city. From within

So it is that many an individual who has learned to take care of himself against all obstacles in the outer world of affairs ---- FALLS VICTIM TO THE ENEMY WITHIN HIS OWN MIND.

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On the other hand --- STRONG CHARACTER CAN BE BUILT FROM WITHIN -- as well as torn down.

➤ It is said that in one of the European art galleries is a statue of APLLO -- A SYMBOL OF PHYSICAL PERFECTION.

As the visitors come into the room -- many of them with careless, slovenly postures ---- THEY LOOK UPON THIS STATUES and unconsciously straighten up.



So it goes:  
the books we read;  
the plays we see;  
the conversations we carry on;  
the personalities whom we select to admire  
and seek to exemplify most;  
the ideals we hold before us;

*thought we live*  
all these things go TO MAKE UP THE LIFE WE LIVE  
IN OUR MINDS -- and in their PRESENCE WE UNCONSCIOUSLY  
GROW SMALLER OR LARGER IN CHARACTER.

"I hold it true that thoughts are things  
Endowed with body, breath and wings.  
And that we send them forth to fill  
The world with good results or ill.

That what we call our secret thought  
Flies to the earth's remotest spot;  
Leaving its blessings ~~or~~ its woes  
Like tracks behind it as it goes."

WHAT OUR CHARACTERS ARE MAY BE TRACED IN LARGE PART  
BACK TO THE LIVES WE LIVE IN OUR MINDS.

*So in another sense - rather spoken - truly*

"Keep thy heart with all diligence -- for out of  
it come the character you possess."

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### III

Finally -- the life we live in our minds WILL DETERMINE  
IN LARGE PART -- ~~THE ATTITUDE WHICH WE TAKE TOWARD LIFE~~  
AS A WHOLE: whether that is in ~~the~~ *the* ~~of~~ *of* PESSIMISM, *call*  
STOIC INDIFFERENCE, OR ENTHUSIASM, *all*

When John Quincy Adams was 80 years old -- a friend met  
on the streets of Boston one day and asked: "And how is  
John Quincy Adams today?"

Now Mr. Adams at this time was a tottering old  
man -- ~~a~~ *a* physically-worn by an unusually busy life

At the question his face lighted up, and he said:

*To which the tottering old man --  
was in body, but not in spirit replied.*

Finally, the life we live in our minds ~~will~~ DETERMINE IN LARGE PART --- OUR REACTION TO LIFE AS A WHOLE;

it goes far in determining whether we face life PESSIMISTICALLY, STOICALLY, OR ENTHUSIASTICALLY.

When John Quincy Adams was 80 years old, a friend met him one day on the streets of Boston, and asked:

"And how is John Quincy Adams today?"

To which the tottering old man - worn in body, but not in spirit, replied:

"John Quincy Adams is very well, thank you. But the house he lives in is sadly dilapidated. It is tottering on its foundations. The walls are badly shattered, and the roof is worn. The building trembles with every wind, and I think John Quincy Adams will have to move out before very long. BUT HE HIMSELF IS VERY WELL."

And with a wave of the hand -- he was on his way again.

Most of us would give a great deal to possess and to maintain through all the years --- AN ATTITUDE TOWARD LIFE AS WHOLESOME AND ENTHUSIASTIC AS THAT.

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But to maintain such an alert enthusiasm through all the years demands more <sup>than</sup> a small group of separate interests and loyalties.

ABOVE ALL ELSE IT DEMANDS ~~THE~~ AN ABIDING FAITH -- AN ABIDING TRUST in what Robert Louis Stevenson called:

"the ultimate decency of things."

→ Enthusiasm for life -- Demands Faith & Life.

And so, at the end of this sermon, -- we find ourselves standing FACE TO FACE WITH RELIGION.

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The life we live in our minds may bring us many satisfactions --- but these are not worth much unless with them there goes a STRONG CHARACTER.

But the abundant life demands more than a strong character -- ~~MORE THAN THE WILLINGNESS TO ABIDE BY THE RULES OF ETHICAL AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY~~ <sup>ethical - moral</sup> ~~-----~~

Enthusiastic Outlook

IT DEMANDS A GENUINE EAGERNESS AND ENTHUSIASM FOR LIFE ITSELF --- AN ENTHUSIASM WHICH LIFTS ONE OVER THE



HARD PLACES OF LIFE -- and sends him on his way rejoicing.

*But there is only one way to such*

~~BUT WHERE DO WE LAY HOLD OF SUCH AN EAGERNESS FOR LIFE?~~

~~There is only one place~~ --- IN THOSE DEEP INNER RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS

THAT THIS IS GOD'S WORLD ---

and that WITH GOD, OUR OWN LIVES HAVE AN ETERNAL DIGNITY AND MEANING.

*Religious*

Convictions such as these cannot be held by HYMNS, OR CREEDS, OR RITUALS, --- AFTER A TIME THEY BECOME A PART OF OUR OWN INNER LIFE --- A PART OF OUR OWN PERSONALITIES

determining our reactions and attitudes toward LIFE WITH ALL OF ITS CHANGING CONDITIONS.

*Religion becomes a part of our very nature*

One ship drives east - another west  
With the very same wind that blows --

'Tis the set of the sails -- and not the gales  
That decides the way we go.

Like the winds of the sea -- are the winds of Fate  
As we journey along through life --

'Tis the set of the soul -- that decides the goal  
And not the calm or the strife."

*(Pause)*

And so ---

Because some of the richest satisfactions in life are at stake

Because our very characters are at stake ---

Because our VERY SPIRIT -- our attitude toward life is at stake;

Let us listen carefully to the admonition of the author of our text when he says:

"KEEP THY HEART -- KEEP THY INNER WORLD -- WITH ALL DILIGENCE; FOR OUT OF IT COME THE ISSUES OF LIFE."

*Good!*

*the heart is the source*