

THE ELEVENTH
JAMES BACKHOUSE LECTURE
1975

**A TIME TO REAP, A TIME TO SOW
---- RETIREMENT**

WINIFRED A. M. McNAUGHTON

Each stage of our lives offers its own fresh opportunities.- Advices and Queries of London Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends.

We begin to measure our experiences not by what life gives to us, not by the things withheld from us, but by their power to help us grow in spiritual wisdom .- Evelyn Sturge quoted in Christian Faith and Practice in the experience of the Society of Friends.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Winifred McNaughton is a third generation New Zealander. Born, brought up and educated in Dunedin, she graduated M.A. (in Latin and English) from Otago University in 1932. All her gainful employment has been in the field of education, mainly teaching in secondary schools and careers advising, but with fifteen years from 1943 as Senior Vocational Guidance Officer for Auckland and District when this service was being pioneered on a national basis by the New Zealand Department of Education.

In 1967 she attended the Friends World Conference in the U.S.A. as a representative of New Zealand Yearly Meeting. While in America and later in Britain she was able to follow up her concern that retired people should have some form of preparation or orientation to help them live fully for what could be a considerable part of their life span. Her subsequent work in Auckland owes much to the generosity of many individuals and institutions in those countries in giving her their time and material on retirement.

Following her return to New Zealand, Winifred McNaughton worked during 1968 with Ruth Fawell (author of "Growing Old in a Changing World") and with Mr. S. R. Morrison, then Director of the Adult Education Department of the University of Auckland, in planning the first "Preparation for Retirement" course to be held in Auckland (given first in 1969 as a nine lecture course and continued ever since).

In 1970 the Retirement Association, Auckland, was formed and Winifred McNaughton has served on the committee of the Association from the beginning. In 1972 Community Volunteers, Auckland co-opted her on to its committee to act as a contact for retired people. She is also at present one of a group working on the orientation and training of volunteers.

Having moved away from the traditional Presbyterian connections of her family she joined the Society of Friends in 1951, being accepted then as a member of Auckland Monthly Meeting. She was for many years a member of the Race Relations Subcommittee of the New Zealand Friends' Service Committee. Within Auckland Monthly Meeting she has served at one time or another as Clerk of the Meeting and as Overseer. She is at present Clerk of Auckland Friends' Centre Committee.

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THE JAMES BACKHOUSE LECTURES

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

This lecture was delivered in Adelaide on January 5, 1975 at the time of the holding of Yearly Meeting.

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

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

ERIC B. POLLARD, Presiding Clerk*
Australia Yearly Meeting

* Eric Pollard was Presiding Clerk at the time of delivery of the Lecture but has now been succeeded by Margaret F. Roberts.

Introduction

In the records of the Society of Friends we are told of many who lived fully to the glory of God. But Friends' attention is also called to the tragedy of those men and women who in their middle age "cease learning, cease growing, give up and resign from life". Here are the symptoms of invisible wounds, perilous for the person and a drain on his community. For not only do we lose the energy and leadership he could give but we are likely quite soon to be called on to support him, either in an institution or through some community service.

Friends have traditionally been early in their awareness of social needs. In this decade more and more people are going to be asked, without any help being given, to be responsible and creative in their use of more and more hours, weeks, months, years, of unstructured time.

Awareness of a need has to be followed by study of ways of meeting it and then by work to make such possibilities into realities. It is hoped that through this paper Friends may come to some understanding of what is involved for persons entering on retirement. The life values and attitudes and leisuretime skills that are helpful in retirement are valid for other situations and stages of life and can be of use for individuals or groups with whom Friends are connected. It is for each Friend to decide how best to use any new insights whether in helping himself and others or in working in his city or community to get needs recognised and opportunities provided.

Background:

"A 16th century Englishman could expect to live 30 years and he worked and struggled throughout his span. A 20th century New Zealander can expect to live 75 years and spend 15 of these in retirement." So says the introduction to an Auckland Preparation for Retirement Course. Women are likely to have an even longer life span. What do we do with this treasure? How faithful will our stewardship be? Friends entering on this third period of their lives, the phase of life fulfilment, have probably, like others, been swept on through the stages of their lives, in conscious or unconscious response to pressures and expectations. Now comes freedom of choice and self-activation. We feel instinctive sympathy with the prophet who saw himself left to be independent, no longer following, but expected to be self-sufficient. "A double portion of thy spirit" was his cry to his predecessor. We are going to need a double portion of the Spirit, the Enlightener,

the Enabler. Within the self and its circumstances there is to be change, with all the attendant uncertainties, but on the world scene our encircling communities are undergoing their own changes and we emerge from any time of self-preoccupation to find we have to run to catch up with what happened last week, let alone get ready for tomorrow. Here are a few broad statements as a framework for our more personal thinking.

- * Profound transformations have taken place but have not yet been reflected in the institutions of our society since institutions move at a necessarily slow pace. This makes for frustrations, conflicts, anxieties.
- * Areas of stress include national and racial tensions, food and energy crises, population problems (imbalance of age groups as well as explosion), group versus individual, individual versus establishment, depersonalising fears, pollution, inflation.
- * Since 1945 there has been a tremendous speeding up in travelling, communication, killing, calculating. The momentum is increasing and is likely to move into other fields.
- * Mobility of families is taken for granted. The worker moves geographically in order to move vertically in his career. Friends and family can no longer be counted on automatically for proximity or support.
- * The feeling of being in harmony and balance with nature and one's environment is not the comfort it once was. (Motorways, tearing down of buildings, high-rise apartments, urban sprawl.)
- * Stereotyping of the Retirement Person stresses what has been given up and thereby points up the values of our society. (Youth, health, gainful employment, productivity, contribution to society.)
- * Retirement age tends to be set arbitrarily (at present usually 60 to 65, though in Japan "No-fault retirement" is often 55). The arbitrary age factor makes for resentment. Compulsory leisure is not as attractive as leisure snatched from work. Unemployment experiences or fears linger on and make us devalue compulsory leisure.

There is a new expectation of education as being liberal enough to enable young people to emerge as well integrated, well balanced people with a sense of

adventure, a sense of proportion - able to be unknown people for an unknown future. The life-fulfilment person, taking up the development of his third phase, has to have the same expectations for himself but he will have to be largely self-educated. He has reached "an impasse, a crucial point in growth, where environmental support or obsolete inner support is no longer forthcoming."

I. THE STAGE AND THE PLAYER

We do not enter the life-fulfilment phase empty handed. We take with us all that we have been, the self-images we have cherished.

Worker Roles:

It is good to feel we matter, that we have a definite role, that we have certain skills within a definite field of work. By our work we feel related to the community. The community recognises our worth as a worker - our friends recognise this. Our families have a place and sometimes even prestige because of the worker's importance in his area and they respect the worker accordingly.

Work has given security to worker and family, a pattern for day and week, a settled routine, a feeling that the family was immune from change and disruption. Friends felt this too. As long as the worker kept on going there was hope for those in his age group. If he gives up they feel vulnerable, uncomfortable, almost as if he has let them down.

There was companionship in the work situation. It may not have been at a deep level but there were human beings to talk to, there were easy relationships based on the work situation, worker to worker, functioning in a known way in a known environment.

The worker "knew" people. He was able to exercise influence, sometimes over trivial affairs, sometimes over great. He was in touch with his community and his community was often "the" community.

He was often an alert person, having to acquire new skills, understand new machines, new processes. Even daily travel to work kept him aware of what was happening to roads and buildings and his general environment.

He was the "consultant", the one who knew how things had been done, how to get the best results with the minimum of time and effort. He was the "memory bank". He was often the taker of decisions, able consciously or unconsciously to have power over things and lives. He may have been ambitious for power, or recognition. He may have been a climber of ladders for the ladders' sake.

Family Roles:

One was born a son or a daughter and how that relationship was worked out can still affect retirement attitudes. Dependence or independence in excess, resentment of authority in others (quite all right in oneself), suspicion of advice or necessary help, a constant need for recognition - these can be seen in the child or the older person. Someone has said that the best gift a child can receive is to be helped to a mature regard for his parents as another two struggling human beings. To be a mother figure or a father figure is to have a grave responsibility as well as emotional satisfactions. There is the power of the purse, the power of the food-and-home provider, the holiday and luxury provider. The family activities revolve around the worker. Management and executive roles criss-cross from one parent to another and back again. Either may be the organiser but wheels have to be kept turning, sometimes at a dizzy speed. So many interests of so many people divided among only so many waking hours of the day.

Care of older relatives has often fallen to the unmarried, be they male or female. This responsibility, carried along with that of gainful employment, will also have made its mark. There has been little chance of adventure, of change. Patterns of fairly elderly living have settled in before their time. Work may be clung to as an escape route from extra time in the home routine. Conversely, the death of the older person may shatter the whole life structure of the younger.

The New Drama:

We may not feel that any of our work or our relationships have had much significance as yet. That is probably fortunate, in some ways. Even small achievements are going to be relished and larger ones will be positively exciting. "Lord" said Ophelia, "we know what we are, but we know not what we may be". Taking this statement well out of context it seems an admirable attitude towards retirement opportunities. The habit of success may, on the other hand, be something we have to live down or to learn to evaluate by new standards. We are moving into unexplored territory.

Our personal drama may be well into its Final Act or there may be much more to come. We cannot tell. All we know is that we are in it to the end.

II. COMING TO ONESELF

One does not need to have been a prodigal son to undergo the process of coming to oneself. In a minor way we have had it repeated within us as fresh insights led us to new ways of life. But our great liberation at retirement may still prove unexpectedly disturbing, likely to reach down into our basic assumptions about life and ourselves. All things may not be made new but quite a few certainly will be. It is no time to be harsh with ourselves. We must have faith that our debts will be forgiven as much as those of our debtors.

Ours has been a work-oriented society for so long that work values have come to be the only ones by which we judge ourselves or others. We need to become more person-oriented. In the poster "Desiderata" which has so appealed to younger people there is sound thinking for the retired and pre-retired. "You are a child of the Universe. You have a right to be here".

The worker has always been a person though quite often the round of work has made for narrow channelling of talents and energies. Retirement gives a chance to become more of a person, to explore the other roads we did not take. We can put ourselves in some learning situation and find a surge of fresh vitality, a delightful rejuvenation. We can acquire new skills or blow the dust off ones that we regretfully laid aside so many years ago. People may say in surprise "I never knew you had any interest in that". This is good for them - and us. Evidence of new life is always exciting.

We must try to see this as a time when our horizons can widen out; when we say "Why not?" when a new idea presents itself instead of barricading ourselves behind what has always been done up till now. Opportunities come to those who are flexible enough to make use of them.

It is a time to develop a feeling for life-perspective, to see the stages of life through which one has gone and through which others are going. Up to 20 we (and they) are likely to have concentrated on equipping ourselves for living and earning. (We are fortunate if that was the order of emphasis.) From 20 to 40 we had family and career responsibilities. From 40 onwards is, or could be,

stocktaking time. Women are more likely to surface and take a look around now, for this is often their First Retirement, the day the last child begins school. Their Second and Third are ahead (the day the last child leaves home to be married or takes up flatting - the day their husbands retire). If they are gainfully employed then their own retirement has also to be met. There is not the same impact on the father of this growth cycle of the children. He is likely to stay submerged. Yet this would be a good time to hold joint discussions on changing life patterns, and so lead on to really constructive retirement planning in the 50s. The mother's Second Retirement may then be at hand and the father's First has the beginnings of reality on the horizon. Let none of us despair because stocktaking and surfacing and planning seem to have passed us by. A deal of unconscious preparation for retirement goes on all through our lives. There is no doubt, too, that many a plan made in the 50s has to be modified in the 60s. Yet the more we understand of the basis for planning and the broad generalities of the retirement phase of living the less we feel singled out to undergo a time of testing: "I only am left, and they seek my life, to take it away". The more help also we will be able to give others who are moving towards the same experience.

It has been said that every human being has these basic needs:

- Security (house and home)
- Response (affection and friendship)
- Appreciation (worthwhile place in his society)
- Adventure (stimulus of fresh development).

These needs are not dead just because a person has retired from gainful employment. Any life plan must keep them in mind.

There are *feelings of loss* for which compensation has rightly to be sought. The player who gives up his past roles has not given up the theatre. In the "resting" period before the new role or roles emerge there are bound to be feelings of loss not to be glossed over but worked through. Any or all of these may cause real and sometimes prolonged suffering.

- Loss of status, of a known place in community and family.
- Loss of sense of usefulness.
- Loss of companionship.
- Loss of habitual level of income.
- Loss of feeling part of the ongoing life of the community.

The "Loss syndrome" may, if we do not take ourselves firmly but gently in hand, quite overshadow our recognition that we have been *delivered from bondage*. There is a lifting, of course, of the obvious restraints of set times of meals and travel to and from work and from the work load itself. But if we look also at the list of expectations to which we felt we had to respond we will find a gratifying number which can now be ignored or greatly modified. We are foolish indeed if we hug these chains, or, worse still perhaps, feel guilty because we no longer keep to a self-made tradition. True deliverance, however, is never merely "from" but also "to" or "into". For instance we are delivered from the need to be super-efficient, the need to be always in the right. And what happens when the pressure lifts? We become, we hope, amiable human beings knowing ourselves fallible and therefore much less censorious and critical than we were. We can be delivered too from the giving of expensive gifts into the real costliness of involvement, of sharing in the joys and sorrows of real people. Again we may be delivered by poor health or lack of money from running a car. We will then have been delivered into public transport and are inclined to be as sorry for ourselves as our friends are for us. We can be thankful for what is good about public transport but what is bad about it needs to be changed. We are probably the only ones with the time not only to document the need but also to organise for change. And so on. No door shuts but another opens. It is an exercise in imaginative thinking to identify the secret openings and closings.

It fortifies us against our own self-criticism as well as the tactless enquiries of friends and family if we keep in mind the stages by which a retired person usually establishes a new and satisfactory life pattern. These could be listed as recuperation, exploration, commitment.

Recuperation:

This may take up to a year or less depending on the work load carried during the last years before retirement. Many organisations expect the employee not only to do the ordinary quota of work but also to undertake some special project for which he is uniquely qualified and in addition to train his successor. The fatigue and nervous tension will be cumulative and it will take many months before genuine energy (as opposed to artificial driving of oneself) begins to make itself felt. When the energy returns it is like the sap rising. The life is stirring. Till then it is best to be, and to be seen to be, dormant.

Exploration:

Trial and error methods are ideal in retirement planning. Time and energy can be invested freely. If one is wise, only a small budgeted amount of money will be laid out on each venture. List making before launching will take up a pleasurable amount of time, as will plenty of visits and assessing of possibilities. There are various ways of being helped with assessment of oneself and one's background situation. Then it is over to each person to match his findings and make a fresh list, this time of "Possibles" - a distinct piece of progress from the "Find out about" list that was the first move forward.

Commitment:

This is first of all commitment to serious planning, to making out a programme that can be worked on and through, can be modified if necessary, can be discarded if proved faulty. It is also a commitment to the other people affected by our programme, to the wife who has already survived two retirements (and has now established strong but separate interests), to the husband suddenly disorientated and at a loss for purpose. A wife can be far ahead in her own retirement programme, having weathered two life-adjustment crises. Now routine is going to be changed again. A husband's offers to help with cooking or cleaning, unless made with understanding, can come as a shock, and may be received with more dismay than thanks. Let us be mindful of the two great divisions on which all enterprises are founded, the things needed and the persons involved. When we have worked out these and their likely action and interaction we then are ready to sit down with our nearest and dearest and put forward our ideas, speaking as those open to new light, and what is more, meaning it too. If such real communication is at the back of a programme it has great chances of succeeding. But if it still proves a failure there is no loss of face for the planner. He has his allies, ready for a new venture, a new plan.

It is reasonable to expect a good programme to furnish many and if possible almost all the things the work situation gave, and which the retired person can miss so sorely - a chance to exercise our skills (maybe not the old ones but skills just the same) - a pattern for our day and week - companionship - something to keep us alert and in touch with the community. It would hardly do to expect one organisation or connection to give us all of these but through two or three and particularly through small groups the total needs can be met. We must be careful, however, to keep the balance between doing nothing (valid for the recuperation period but not to be extended indefinitely) and over-commitment through

excessive zeal or fear of having time on our hands. One woman, newly retired, took so seriously some well meant advice on keeping herself occupied that she joined every helping group in her town. Naturally she ran into trouble and in order to extricate herself had to uproot herself and shift house and home to a totally strange locality where she was able to keep her helping talents better under control. A wise person, after listening to one of these "helping" experts said mildly "I hope there is something you do just for fun". That helps the balance too. Our allies in planning need to remember this for us in case we are reverting to the "unliberated" outlook, seeking once again to prove ourselves to ourselves and to all who see us.

Once liberated into the glorious freedom of the children of God we have really only one programme, to be open to what is required of us for this present moment, this day. Putting this into action is perhaps what was meant by "working out our salvation".

III. REAPING

No matter what else we have left undone we will have developed one thing, consistently if unconsciously - an attitude, a value judgment about retirement and retired people. We are going to reap what we have sown in that field first of all. If we have lived by stereotypes, and dismissed retired people and their state as of no consequence, we begin our own retirement with a severe handicap. If we have been fortunate to have had around us some vigorous concerned over 60s, over 70s, we are ahead, well ahead. If it has dawned on us that there is as wide a range of abilities and characteristics among retired people as among other sections of the community we at least start level. Our past experiences condition our retirement receptivity to future learning, growth and development.

Our past experiences also offer *points of reference for future decisions*. The ability to see similarities in past and present situations is one of the functions of intelligence. This tool, like many others, can be useful or dangerous. The habit of referring back needs to be firmly hooked on to the need for positive, constructive thinking and action. If we exist only to perpetuate what has been done we limit our possibilities.

Our past *religious insights* lead us on to fresh ones and give faith that new light will be given for our new situation. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us" was

on the stone set up in memory of a victory. Each of us has these monuments to the grace of God in our lifetime, these milestones in our spiritual pilgrimage.

Those in the retirement age group could be expected to have acquired and be able to retain some, if not all, of these characteristics:

- * An understanding of our society and of our place in it.
- * An interest in human nature.
- * Special areas of wisdom because of our experiences, enabling us to be of help to others facing such experience for the first time. (Serious illness and disability, hospitalisation for lengthy periods, bereavement, grief and mourning.)
- * Ability to listen, to help people clarify their thinking on situations and problems. This is to act in an "enabling" role, not a "managerial" one. At our stage of life we would hope that our own need for power or self assertion is on the wane and so we are safe as consultants.
- * Ability to recognise opportunities for growth even in situations that are painful or hazardous.
- * Tolerance of necessary routine and the patience to carry on with some worthwhile scheme till results begin to show themselves. Tenacity of purpose.
- * Attitudes of hopefulness, a dynamic approach. Past crises survived give confidence for weathering future ones.

So much for our age group. What about the special harvest, the things that are our own individual wealth? We have our very personal environment (house, garden, car perhaps, clothes, furniture, equipment). We have our memories and also the "memory bank" of things that we and other workers need. We have sets of skills (learning skills, work skills, leisure interest skills, organisational skills, problem solving skills). We have sets of personal relationships (family, friends and Friends, neighbours, groups).

All these, in action and interaction make for the unique quality of the person, demanding a unique way of looking at the move from full-time gainful

employment to retirement. * It is vital to come to a realistic awareness of our own selves, including our strengths and our limitations. We also need to know how much of our time, energy and money is already committed and also where or to what. Only then can we see what changes must be or can be brought about, how much of the status quo is to be maintained. Once we come to know within what limits we are working we can list our goals and priorities as being attainable almost immediately or as needing some long-term preliminaries. There will probably be some of both. Putting these findings together is a highly individual matter but we can expect there to be some questions in common.

[* For Worksheets A and B, "Development of Potential". See Appendix.]

1. How do present demands tie up with the demands of any new schemes? With our health limitations?
2. Is there demand overloading? Could there be some re-organisation? Is some of the load being carried from habit? Or because we need to be needed? Or because we would feel guilty or perhaps less important, if someone else took a share?
3. Are the demands really there? Or are we living in the past because of our deep regret that someone dear to us has gone? The old demands though outmoded seem to keep these much loved people still in the household.
4. Are we simply trying to fill in the days? Have we unused potential in time and energy?
5. Are we disappointed that we need list quite a few limitations and low-level personal ratings? Are these all permanent? What can be done about some of them? Or are we clinging to such good reasons for withdrawing from life?

Most of us will turn out to have given ourselves average ratings and we all know of the comforting saying that God must have loved ordinary persons very much because he made so many. In the parable of the talents there was no condemnation for being only a one-talented person. It was the burying of what was meant to be used that was singled out for judgment.

IV. SOWING

Reaping is one thing. After all the stuff is there. But when it comes to sowing we need to feel it is worthwhile making the effort. For what purpose are we sowing? Will it be "to plant pears for your heirs" or do we stand some chance of a catch-crop for ourselves, a second harvest? We are, of course, committed to sowing as part of the instinctive drive of the human race. A French writer felt death would find him in his "unperfect garden" but "still setting out the cabbages".* We are also undertaking sowing in order that our lives may have continuing significance. We sow ourselves as seed - we are ourselves the harvest. Lives lived with significance are needed no matter what one's tally of years. People younger than we are seem to get encouragement and support as much through the way we live as by the things we can actually do.

In our sowing programme we will be dealing with *tangibles and intangibles*. Because the quality of life, not just existence, is so important let us consider the intangibles first.

[* Montaigne; quoted by Margery Fry "Old Age looks at itself".]

Intangibles:

We have been told that we cannot add a cubit to our stature. Growth, like grace, is the gift of God. We know his eagerness to give good gifts to his children, but we ourselves can put obstacles in the way of our receiving the gift. We do it through anxiety. (Are these decisions/activities the right ones?) We do it through self-preoccupation. (Are they right for promoting my growth? Am I growing? How will I know?) We do it through pushing for power and prestige in the new situation. We do it by living in the past.

What will help us to be open to receive?

(a) First of all there is the *conscious taking hold of the present*.

There are at least four things we can do to make this real to us.

1. We look freshly at each day as it comes, as though it were a great gift.

2. We expect something lovely and good to come from within its hours.
3. We recognise and salute these lovely and good things as they occur. ("Whatever things are lovely - think on these things".)
4. We give thanks often, better still "always, for all things".

(b) There is the *conscious offering of obedience*.

1. We say with full intent "This is your day, Lord. I am your person, to do what you wish. Accomplish in and through me what can be done".
2. We tackle what is shown us, but ask over and over for help so that the doing is not of ourselves.
3. We keep pretty quiet over anything that was achieved through our being obedient. There is always the risk that self-glorification could mar both what has been done and what may be ready to develop out of it.
4. We do not start to feel we have earned a rest from obedience. Our vow has to be renewed daily with frequent reminders to ourselves as the hours go by. "Your day, Lord - your person".
5. We put on one side the fear of getting tired. If it is of ourselves and for ourselves, the thing we are attempting, then we could easily be exhausted to the stage of illness, even though it may well look both worthy and essential. If it is of God, we can expect energy to be given and to keep flowing. Not to mention finding a few labour-saving ideas if we stop rushing around and deliberately ask to be shown how this piece of work is to be tackled.

Positive attitudes lead to our gaining satisfaction from our retirement years and also counter the stereotyping of the retired person as leading a miserable purposeless life given over to longing for the return of past years, "the days when Saturn was king". We need to acquire consciously happy and optimistic moods and attitudes, habitual expressions of zest rather than apathy, likely-to-be-achieved goals instead of despair over unfulfilled fantasies, a positive self-image instead of harping on what we used to be and no longer are, attitudes of resolution

and fortitude rather than resignation, the habit of drawing on our inner resources through periods of solitude and meditation and prayer, opening ourselves to the energising power of the Holy Spirit.

If these inner changes are achieved and maintained they can be harvest enough in themselves but they also have a profound effect on our chances of "some fast-coming harvest" from the time and energy we devote to "the tangibles".

Tangibles:

These are changes that are basic to survival, to surmounting the retirement "impasse", and changes that can give an added dimension to living, that can make it dynamic instead of static. Though it is convenient to list them separately they may in reality be found to overlap or be undertaken concurrently. The basic changes that are most urgent for us and the added dimension ones that we can begin with least effort should be identified so that we do not create an impossible "Demand Load" for ourselves. Nor by-pass the essential in favour of several attractive, well able to be deferred, non-essentials.

(a) Basic.

A **structure is needed for daily living**. So much time to be allotted for maintenance, interests, group activities and so on, depending on the individual. We are aiming at a flexible timetable but one that is strong enough to give support. The former household routine, built around worker needs can be looked at for possibilities of change. It is valuable to have something by which the beginning and ending of the day are marked. One wonders if this was a side benefit of the former Family Prayers pattern. The Telephone Calling Group (see V. Affairs in Order) is a help to structure as well as to the combating of loneliness.

Married couples need to set aside time for joint discussion of how retirement will affect daily routine, the sharing out of tasks, the planning for activities that will be of interest to both and the cheerful acknowledgment of there being interests that each will want to keep up separately. Done early and openly enough this discussion gives a feeling of confidence in a shared adventure. If avoided, for fear of feelings being hurt, then misunderstandings and resentments can quite easily occur.

It is time to undertake surveys; health, housing, finance, are key areas.

Health: What is our present level of physical fitness? Our potential physical fitness? Is there some remedial treatment which we have been putting off because we hadn't time to see about it? Have we had advice about some form of physical exercise? Are we going to walk more and drive or be driven less?

Housing: Have we looked at our present housing, checking its suitability for our growing older? Is access difficult? Are there ways of "upgrading for safety"? (handrails, grab rails, different lighting arrangements, different shower and bath arrangements, eliminating of high cupboards, installing of two-way light switches, having equipment easy and safe to handle, having doors wide enough for wheelchair use in case of accident). Has the more modern unit we are looking at any/enough/or none of these in actuality or possibility? It is possible to divide or share the present house and garden? Are there housing schemes to be investigated? Is there a Housing Advisory Service to be consulted?

Finance: What are our retirement resources? Are we planning within these or just coasting along? Have we some budget in mind, general or detailed? Have we charted our real financial needs? Are we keeping up previous spending habits on a reduced income? (expensive hospitality, gift giving, holidays). Have we realised that we are now in a position to give time and energy to the needs of people and organisations instead of cash? Are we thinking in terms of public transport since our time is now less structured? Do we need a car or is this just another expensive habit? Have we really admitted to ourselves our changed and changing circumstances? Or to others? Are we open to new ways of using our resources or augmenting them?

We will need to face the fact that whether we wish it or shrink from it we are going to be representatives of, ambassadors for Retirement with a capital R. Our lives will speak. In addition, however, because of general lack of knowledge of what is practically a new phenomenon we must be ready with the self-evident truths, the vocabulary to make clear what it is all about.

The three stages of recuperation, exploration, commitment, are part of the vocabulary. "Experiment" and "trial and error" are also there. We are not ashamed to say that we all take it in turn to give and receive support. And that just now we are in need of that support from family and friends and are pleased to say we are getting it too, bless them. We announce how far on we are in "Exploring", how long we are giving ourselves in the "Recuperation" stage. We are not going to

skulk behind closed doors, but we are not bluffing ourselves about our having the secret of perpetual youth either. We are what we are but we are also (as are others) in process of becoming.

(b) The Added Dimension.

It is important to take up any of the suggestions for retirement activities with two firm convictions:

1. We are not committed to any of them for ever and ever (reappraisal after a length of time that we ourselves set will show whether to continue or drop an activity).
2. At different stages of our life some activities will be more suitable to our strength and faculties than others. (We can have our private list that says "Now", "Later", "Physically Demanding", "Outdoor", "Indoor", "In Groups", "By oneself", "Within walking distance".) It is good to count on having one or two that seem likely to stand up to the wear and tear of time, where diminishing energies can be used in shorter or longer spells. If for no other reason, this continuity factor should lead us to value the life and service of prayer.

Whether we have family ties and obligations that expand surprisingly at this stage or not we can and should look into other sources of enrichment and service. Our families will benefit from our new interests and they will be relieved of the worry that we are living at secondhand, dependent on their doings for stimulus. There is something naive but touching also in the pride with which one's family surveys the accomplishments and community involvement of the over-60s among their ranks. It is apparently something we can still do for them.

For ourselves the added dimension will be likely to come in one of a combination of four types of activity: by the continuing of our own education, by our work in and through existing groups and organisations, by our acting as originators or activators in the community, by our being "People for People".

1. Continuing Education:

The concept of "Lifelong Education" is one which has recently had a fairly full share of attention in world thinking and national educational conferences. The

special needs of other groups such as immigrants, racial groups, second starters, people in isolated rural areas, are pinpointed but the numerically significant group of retired people is often passed over. There are some special retirement subjects and problems meriting attention but so far it is mostly left for groups outside the general educational framework to meet the need. Where such courses are offered it is obviously in our interest to join them and pick up through lectures and discussion a sound basis for our retirement planning.

In many cases our continuing education is a matter of our getting to know what is provided by University Extension, Workers' Educational Association and secondary school evening classes. The subjects they offer will have to have a wide appeal. This has great merit as attracting a range of age within the group. Some retired people shrink from possible competition with younger, presumably more potentially able students. In reality the learning capacity of older students has been proved to have as wide a range as that of the young. The older person may not memorise so quickly but has more life experiences already stored away with which to relate his new learning. One group which was asked to comment on whether a course being proposed should be open only to retired people or open to all adults provided these interesting statements. "Open to all" was preferred by a large majority, "Why exclude other interested people?" "Why not welcome them?" "Variety of interests is possible in mixed age group". "Broader basis of communication". "Not get isolated from the main stream of life". "Against segregation". "Encourage age groups to meet and enjoy one another". "Greater stimulus". "Combine enthusiasm and experience". "More balanced". Some of the replies also spoke of the needs of other groups, lonely housewives, shift workers, convalescents.

If it is possible let us have these other groups and retired people considered together to justify a daytime learning programme. Many people, not just in the older age group, dislike the effort of turning out at the end of the day and coming home in the dark, perhaps to an empty house. If it seems nothing is offering then let us explore what is offered by correspondence sections of Education Departments. With the "lifelong" policy being aired at present there is less rigidity about accepting pupils beyond school age. For example, there was great enthusiasm in the response to a grandmother's request to take up the study of Maori and embroidery. Extramural students are also sometimes accepted for some university courses. As taxpayers we should make a point of using the education system our taxes support. That lets us know pretty quickly what reforms are needed or where a bigger allocation of government spending is essential.

Our education does not need to be through formal classroom methods. Self-education is valid education and museums, art galleries, public libraries exist to further our cause. We can begin at any point that sparks an interest and be ready to follow on from there. It is fun to take advantage of displays and demonstrations that are open to the public, whether these set out to improve our do-it-yourself capabilities or our appreciation of some craft. Most cities produce a list each month of what would interest a visitor and what would interest a visitor can help a citizen.

A Learning Exchange has been set up in some localities for the informal passing on of skills or knowledge. Lists are published weekly or monthly of topics divided into "I want to learn" and "I want to teach". An organiser accepts requests from potential "Learners" and "Teachers" and puts the information and the people together.

In some cases we have no option but to continue our education whether we want to or not. With early retirement there is need for refresher courses or out and out re-training to equip us for earning. We may not find any courses specially named as "Retraining". We will then need to use organisations which offer advice primarily for the school leaver but which might also be helpful in our situation. Pride must not be allowed to stand in our way. Vocational Guidance Offices and Labour Department Employment Advisory Services have been set up by taxpayers' money to give service to those who need it. They are there to do the best they can for us without bias or pressure from financial interests. We can discuss problems with people who either have some of the answers already or who will try to find them. This is better than spending miserable hours over newspaper columns. We can remember that lifelong education, including practical training for employment is recognised as a basic right.

There are ways of preparing for service which can also be thought of as continuing education. Red Cross, St. John's Ambulance and some hospitals and organisations mount courses which get us ready for the emergency situations of life and death and serious accident and injury. As ordinary bystanders we can then give intelligent help in crisis situations. This is really a vital part of citizen training and if it has passed us by up to the time of our retirement we now have a "second chance". In whatever way we launch ourselves into the continuing learning adventure we are going to be surprised at how much younger we feel, and how much more aware of what is going on around us. This seems to be one of the fringe benefits of placing ourselves in a learning situation, no matter what the subject or environment may be.

2. Groups and Organisations:

We have one thing in common, no matter how varied may be our background. We are all citizens and able to take some part in the democratic process. This does not mean we have to offer ourselves for parliamentary or local body elections though some who are qualified might well consider this. There is plenty of work to be done behind the scenes to back up candidates, produce reports, organise deputations and petitions about matters of public concern.

Some people have a gift for working through government channels and this can be used on behalf of forward-looking groups. There is also a move in some areas to set up Community Committees to bring matters of neighbourhood importance before central city authorities. This is a valuable antidote to the feeling that our destinies are settled by "faceless men". A retired person on a Community Committee is going to give valuable service and also have the great interest of getting to know in detail and some depth the strengths and needs of the area around his home. He will, as a bonus, make some new friends of all ages in a way that only shared enthusiasm and a respect for the other's commitment could bring about so naturally and rapidly.

There may be some group of people whom we would wish to serve and to join others in this service. In most areas there are lists of the social services offered through statutory and voluntary agencies and it is not hard to make contact. It is helpful to have a clear idea before we approach an agency of what exactly we are in a position to offer how many hours a day, how many days a week, any skills we have, routine work we are happy to do (filing of cards, information, copy typing), whether we have our own transport, whether we would need mileage allowance or transport costs, whether we need paid work, whether we can take a preliminary course of training, when we can start. We are not helping busy people if we go to them without this being done. Our general uncertainties can be ironed out beforehand in discussion with a friend or adviser competent enough to cover the broader implications. The individual agency need be asked to deal only with what is relevant to its own work and structure. Asking to see what work is done would appear quite sensible to most agencies before a person decides to join as a worker or volunteer. So would the idea that perhaps a given length of time might be set at the end of which the agency and the worker/volunteer could review how things have gone. In some places there is a Community Volunteers organisation which provides a middleman service for

those wishing to take up some form of community work. It is based on similar lines to Volunteer Service Abroad but concentrates on areas of service within one's own country. Older people are valued as volunteers. Once the organising of any such new movement is settled, part-time as well as full-time projects should be available. Being a Community Volunteer widens one's contacts beyond the special agency in which one's work lies and also gives some form of training in community and personal values and resources. So do the training courses for workers in Citizens' Advice Bureau. In fact it might be said that as a general rule the group or organisation that is really serving the community also sets out to give training in how to serve. This is what many retired people are looking for and will find very valuable. There are also groups that come together because of a shared special interest. These can be sporting interests, artistic and craft interests, special disabilities, special needs (solo parents, pensioners etc), special animal and bird interests (Siamese cats, dog training, canaries etc.), special gardening interests (herbs, irises, roses, etc.), social-plus-service interests (Rotary, Lions, Zonta, Federation of University Women, etc.), educational interests (committees for schools, kindergarten, play centres), support groups for service agencies (Crippled Children's Association, Hospital Auxiliaries, Plunket Society etc.). Once again most districts have lists of societies and groups and it is usually possible to do some sampling by going along as a visitor to one or two meetings before applying to be a member. It is also probably wise in this area too to give oneself a time limit for experiment and then review. It is also a point to remember that one need not be an actual participant in a sport. Coaching, transport of teams, organising of billeting, are valued too. Committee work for any group is a real contribution as long as it does not lead us into delusions of power and the error of remaining beyond our time of usefulness.

A cynic once remarked that anyone could get anything done provided he was prepared to have someone else take the credit for it. Retired people need not be in competition for praise or recognition and this is a blessed relief both to us and to any group within which we are operating. We are there with that group of people to give what service we can through ideas or action. Group responsibility is a shared affair, and recognition, if it comes, will surely be also a group matter, not an individual one. Such a philosophy, latent or expressed, can be part of our contribution, and an important part, at that.

3. Originator, Activator:

One need become an originator in the sphere of social welfare only at points where a genuine need is not already being met. Facts must be gathered and

discussions held with other people who know the facts too and feel as we do about them. We are then in a position to make an experiment, talk about it again, modify our first ideas and try again. By working as one of a group we draw on resources beyond what one individual can offer and we have the great advantage of having tried out our scheme against the criticism of interested and informed people. We also move out into our community with more assurance and with less likelihood of being dismissed as another crank with another do-gooding notion.

One's immediate neighbourhood is the most fruitful for the "originating" exercise. We are more likely to get facts easily, to be in touch with organisations conscious of needs not being met. If we are already known to them then people will be more frank in confessing where something ought to be done but cannot be attempted, for some reason or other. In a situation already fairly familiar to us we are also less likely to produce hare-brained solutions for complex problems. The neighbourhood setting provides a chance to work realistically, with a chance too of making at least some progress.

Some opportunities for the neighbourhood "originator" might be:

Setting up a Neighbourhood Information Exchange so that newcomers to the district and newly retired people, could find out easily what groups and activities were going on and where. Providing some activities for children who had to fill in time before school began or after it ended because parents were at work.

Help form groups for mutual service (solo parents, relief care of housebound to allow family a break, servicing equipment, household tasks etc.).

Work towards a scheme for adopting of families by older people or of older people by families.

Work out some means of making it easy for households to re-cycle waste.

Start a campaign for opportunities for leisure-time activities use of available buildings, employment of Community Activities staff.

"Originating" can also be based on an age group, either one's own or one with which one has special ties. If work for one age group can

also be seen to benefit another then this doubles our chances of getting results.

Within the retirement age group action might be taken on:

- (a) Urging a flexible retirement age.
- (b) Having re-training schemes able to take in considerable numbers and offer a wide range of subjects. This could take in other age groups, Second Start students, rehabilitation cases.
- (c) Sheltered employment; also likely to benefit rehabilitation cases and those unable to fit into ordinary working conditions.
- (d) Study of public transport and recommendations for improvement; also likely to benefit mothers of young children, students, young workers.
- (e) Listing of non-earning leisure time activities of varied expense level with notes on any tuition available; also of wide application through most age groups.
- (f) Campaign for daytime learning opportunities; also useful for shift workers, housewives, convalescents.
- (g) Getting mass media to present a less stereotyped picture of the older person. Emphasis on personal values might help other groups suffering from stereotyping.

4. People for People:

We may find when we get to retirement that we have acquired a formidable list of people whom we once knew well but with whom, even though they live in the same town, we are in touch only at Christmas time and then only by card. Now there is no longer the excuse of pressure of work. If we are not firm with ourselves, however, we will let the non-communication state continue till we are called to attend their funeral or they ours. Some breaking of the ice is needed. Imaginative people will work out some un-Christmas card to tell our world that we now are surfacing and hope to be in touch once more. Then our telephone call will not come as such a shock to our friends and we can begin to catch up with all

the important happenings of the years. It will be worth the effort for we were once part of another's life and probably both of us need freeing from the guilt of unavoidable separation.

Among the family members there are bound to be some who need special caring and support at some time or other. This is true also of our close friends. We should beware of involving ourselves so much in groups and committees and causes that we do not notice anything amiss, are not told of trouble, because we are assumed to be too busy. Or if we do happen to become aware of their need we are so committed elsewhere that we cannot answer it. As retired people we have a more grave responsibility than most in estimating where our time and energies are to go. We have a constantly shifting list of priorities, depending on the human needs of the people around us. Many of those with whom we work on community projects begin to trust us with other matters of importance to them, their son's plans for a career, their conflict with in-laws, their worry over a threatened spell in hospital, their feelings of inadequacy, their crowded timetable of family sport and music and ballet, all having to be fitted in somehow with house and garden maintenance. We are the discreet, sympathetic listener from whom probably no solution of problems is expected but who cares enough to hear the whole thing through and can be trusted to repeat none of it. And quite often the mere telling brings out something fresh that alters the situation. As the Greek dramatists were fond of telling us:

"The end men looked for cometh not,
And a path is there where no man thought".

-- Bacchae of Euripedes; Gilbert Murray translation

We are also involved with others in the life of prayer, particularly in the upholding of those in trouble, in grief, in serious illness. We make ourselves available, reaching out to the Holy Spirit on behalf of those in particular need of strength and comfort, asking that what is best for them may be brought about, giving thanks for the love of God that is surrounding them. The more we give ourselves to this service the more we know it to be one of the most important things we can do for one another. It can also be offered for others even when we ourselves are diminished physically. It is therefore doubly precious among the gifts that we inherit in the Third Era of our lives. But if it has up till now been unknown we still have the time and, for the sake of others and of ourselves we must make time, to open ourselves to receive the gift and undertake our part in the ministry of prayer.

V. AFFAIRS IN ORDER

We tend to think of getting our affairs in order as the preliminary to hospitalisation, serious illness and death. It is just as necessary for our ordinary life and for our service to others. The years of our retirement will be more fruitful if we can advance on the things we want to do and the service we want to give without having to deal with or be rescued from recurrent avoidable crises. It is a duty to reduce our personal nuisance value as far as possible out of humanitarian consideration for others. This means that we make intelligent use of the resources around us and also of our own mental, physical and material resources.

There is no selfishness, necessarily, in our giving thought and making provision for our own self-maintenance because the more responsibility we take for this the less falls on other people. The better our self organisation the more it frees us and others for service. These are some of the points any good self-maintenance programme could include:

1. A health regime that has been worked out to keep our bodies in as good working order as possible, that helps us minimise handicaps, that has doctor support where needed. It should be a regime that can be so well established that it is able to be ignored and is never made into a main interest in one's life or topic for conversation. The regime is there to serve, not to dominate, and can undergo changes according to need. Sensible and adequate diet is part of the regime and is equally to be a servant and not a tyrant.
2. Housing that makes for ease of maintenance and accomplishing of household tasks, that has built-in safety factors in physical surroundings and work planning. It can then be the background to our activities, not a source of anxiety and constant attention. We will have plenty else to give our minds and memory to without having to say to ourselves and others "Watch that step" or "Be careful not to slip getting out of the bath" or "Don't trip on that rug". Rails, grab rails, anti-slip mats, abolishing of scatter rugs, mending of broken steps and paths, organising to avoid indoor climbing to reach lights and cupboards would help many of us to live easier, safer, more freely active retirement lives.
3. Getting legal and financial matters sorted out, with budgeting as well as the making of a will looked at. Easy ways, through bank or other schemes, of

having regular payments made for recurring items (rent, insurance, rates etc.) could lift part of the load. It helps to know and list resource people to advise us, whether these are part of a community free service or have to be paid for their professional services. To have arranged for someone to have a power of attorney can be helpful in the event of our having a long and incapacitating illness.

4. It is useful to look round the neighbourhood for some casual help for household cleaning or lawn and hedge cutting etc., and have such work done either intermittently or on a regular basis if this can be afforded. School pupils are quite capable of doing odd jobs in this way and if the job is shared with them our experience in how to tackle it and their physical strength can get quite good results. We should not expect to get experts to whom we can delegate the whole responsibility. We are not likely to have the money to pay them anyway, except occasionally.
5. It is good for morale to have a small mutual support group of which we are part. Keeping in touch should be a regular part of each day. Members can do this by telephone, taking it in turn to be responsible for making phone calls at a pre-arranged time. If the other does not answer then it is assumed that some accident or illness is preventing the reply and help can be summoned. Good relations with one's immediate neighbours help too, with some arrangement about a sign in the window if help is needed. Often, however, the retired person is the only one in the street who is not out at work and the telephone group is more reliable as a means of getting help to someone. There needs to be a known pattern of operating any support group with each member able to be relied on, and committed to keeping the group and the idea functioning.
6. Most of us are going to suffer some period of illness and quite a few are going to be in a house on their own at such a time. It is sensible to have on hand the medical supplies we know we need for minor illnesses and also an emergency food supply that will tide us over without having to bother friends and neighbours. If the period extends itself then there is reason to ask for help but by taking a little thought beforehand we can be self-sufficient. For more serious illness we are going to need help straight away and we should have worked out ahead of time what are the resources round us. Details of any medical insurance we hold should be easily found by anyone helping us as well as the name and phone number of the doctor or nurse who usually looks after our health problems. The last stage of our

responsibility to ourselves for ourselves is to provide as far as we can for the foreseeable changes that will lead from the frail ambulant stage to the need for being cared for and thence to final illness and death. There are formalities which will attend these changes and we can make things easy or difficult for ourselves and those to whom responsibility for our affairs will come, depending on how much we have set down and discussed with them about our wishes and plans. If we and they can manage to have had open discussions and a frank appraisal of this part of our future we will have earned an honourable discharge from our life responsibilities.

There is also the *ordering of our affairs for service*.

1. In money matters budgeting for donations makes us aware of what proportion of our income is really being set aside to help other people, within our own country or overseas. One person recommended that we should run a separate current account into which we put at the beginning of the year the amount we had worked out for donations. By operating from this account we could tell instantly how much we could give to special appeals without jeopardising usual donations. If anything was left after appeals had been met it was to be given away, not absorbed into ordinary expenses.
2. The making of a will is a test of our responsibility to our family and friends and the community work in which we have shared. Groups and organisations need to be realistically assessed as to how likely they are to continue in being, how reliably they operate, how sound is their sense of stewardship towards the projects undertaken as opposed to their self-perpetuating drive.
3. Housing tends to be thought of as one's own problem but the housing shortage means that we should probably take a good look at our situation as it may affect others. Are we able to make suitable arrangements for sharing our house with others? Are we able to work with others to set up housing projects that would benefit a range of age groups that have housing needs? Would our moving to a small house/unit make our house available for a family with several children? If we are going to share the house, have we attended to all the safety features outlined for self-maintenance, since these will effect others now as well as us?

4. When it comes to our possessions it usually seems easier to go on contending with them than to begin eliminating a good proportion of them. It is only when shifting house that we really come to grips with this particular problem. Yet our possessions are here for service too. They are part of our stewardship programme. If some items have lain unused for over a year and they could be of use to someone then it is our job to find the "someone". De-cluttering ourselves and our surroundings will make our own lives easier and we will have more time to give in service to others as against our former service of our things.
5. There is real service in our aiming to avoid bringing crises on others. Our affairs may have to be taken over in some emergency and we can have shown thought beforehand for those who may be involved. A business-like list for their sake should include:
 - (1) where documents are kept (birth certificate, copy of will, bank books, insurance policy, etc.),
 - (2) names and addresses and telephone numbers for doctor, lawyer, next-of-kin, person holding power of attorney, members of family,
 - (3) any instructions about funeral arrangements. Getting these things ready for the sake of others inspires us to tackle what we might let slide if we felt it was just for ourselves.

We are not likely to embark on all of these pieces of organisation the moment we give up gainful employment. Some tidy-minded people will already have coped with at least half of these items while they were still workers, and what is left will present little problem to them. Others of us may have to use the first upsurge of retirement energy to set out the priorities in the list and try to work faithfully through them. No one is going to be found perfect perhaps, but it is well to have the goals set and be working towards them. Telling other people what we are aiming at can help to reinforce our weak resolve.

VI. FLEXIBILITY - ADAPTABILITY

Change or the prospect of change need not be seen as a threat. It can be an opportunity for further growth, for fresh insights, even for new service. The

changes associated with aging are particularly dreaded. A 17th century poet has neatly summed up just this matter of fresh insights and diminished strength:

"The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,
Lets in new light through chinks that time hath made".

-- Edmund Waller - "Old Age".

It is also good to remember an old nun who was radiant as she faced what might have daunted anyone less spiritually disciplined. "Fancy" she said joyfully to a younger worker in her order, "Just fancy, at my age, being asked to give up something for Him," She was giving up being one of the convent and school to which she had given her life and in which she had looked forward to staying till her death, looking out on loved familiar places, sharing of a loved familiar way of life, surrounded by known caring people. Now, for well judged reasons of organisation, the older nuns were to be transferred to a convent hundreds of miles away. There was nothing suspect about her joy. She had been given status, she felt, the status of those from whom something is asked. Such a response is the fruit of training and conscious, continued outgoing selfless devotion. We may not be at present in such a state of grace but it is something to hold before us as we move into our own series of changes.

An older American Friend had the thought that true humility lay in the impartial observation of oneself. This was to be applied to the assessing of one's energy, routine, priorities and commitments. According to what we "impartially observed" so we were to make changes that appear to be needed. Change that is assessed without panic will bring its blessings. There are ways of looking at approaching change that help us move on "to" or "into" as well as "from":

- * Assessing the facts about the present situation, and possible alternatives open.
- * Assessing room to manoeuvre, time within which change must be or will best be accomplished.
- * Assessing assistance available, physical, mechanical, personal.
- * Deciding on a way of acting likely to bring the most helpful results and making plans to implement the decision.

We may have to deal plainly with our own self-expectations, with family and group expectations but these can be transcended. The Holy Spirit, the Enabler, is able to make all things new. One interpretation of "the sin against the Holy Ghost" the unforgivable sin, speaks of it as being the frame of mind that sees people (including ourselves) as being unalterably fixed in patterns of behaviour, as never to be changed by the working of the Holy Spirit, by the breathing into them, and into us, of the breath of life. Thought habits patterned on "I always", "You always", "He or she always" may be coming dangerously near to the unforgivable.

When changes are impending there are two extremes open to us as well as the happier middle course. We can adopt the head-in-sand attitude and refuse to take action till a crisis situation forces us to do so. Or we can wrong-headedly bring about self-induced changes, moving physically from place to place, changing house and garden details, taking up new philosophies only to drop them in a week or two, moving hastily from one group to another. We are really attempting to escape from reality, passively or actively. The Hound of Heaven is going to catch up with us sooner or later, and we may well see then how foolish and uncalled for was our flight.

Readiness to change is not a matter of estimating by logic or by crystal ball what may be going to happen but rather of establishing habits of thought and response that give us a chance of acting constructively when changes come. Such self-training might include:

1. Responding to new requests, new groups, new ideas by giving "Yes" answers where we can. "Yes, I'll think about that", or "Yes, I'll give it a try", or "Yes, I'll come and see if it is something I can do". This habit may take some time to become established since from self preservation and our love of sliding smoothly up and down our rut we can be habitual sayers of "No".
2. Life plans, including those to which we have said a recent "Yes" are to be viewed as experiments, some of fixed duration, some open, which are likely to need modification or even radical change at some time. This makes for acceptance and avoids waste of energy in resistance.
3. Being ready to disrupt the daily or weekly timetable. We made it for ourselves as a structure to help us move from the work situation to the self -

determining situation. What we invented we can alter. As part of the disruption experience and our campaign against our own rigidity and isolation there is merit in practising residing with other people, taking holidays, visiting and having visitors. If we have later on to give up our home or share it we have at least had some practice and do not come to this particular change as though we were hermits undergoing shock treatment.

4. Recognising in general the changes likely to move in on one and the possible counter measures that could be taken. These could include:

(a) The narrowing of one's physical world.

Countered by keeping one's mental faculties alert, using radio, television, books, newspapers, to be in touch with a wide field, such as politics, history, arts, sciences, community needs.

(b) Bereavement, loss of one's marriage partner, of the peer group of one's friends.

Countered by taking an interest in the needs of younger people whether members of one's family or not. Being available as an interested sympathetic person, but emphatically not possessive or parasitic. Trying to understand, not condemn mores, problems.

(c) Loss of possessions, shifting from one locality, leaving one's family home.

Countered by enjoyment of more free time, saved from the time and energy spent on maintenance. Regarding the experience as like the "wrenching" of a tree for transplanting, a forcing of new root formation for new growth. A chance to remind ourselves that "Here we have no continuing city,"

(d) Lessened mobility, having to give up driving a car.

Countered by more interest in one's immediate neighbourhood. Formation of neighbourhood groups. The "walking distance" criterion for activities and the expansion of these for the sake of others too. Beginning of home groups for discussions and service.

- (e) Intermittency of energy.

Countered by good planning for accomplishing of necessary household, self-maintenance tasks. Variety of activities or interests to be chosen according to energy level: long-term, short-span, done while resting on couch, sitting at table, standing, moving. One at least should be in the "small" category, small in bulk and demands on energy and strength. Activity to be chosen to fit in with energy level.

- (f) Dependence.

Countered by expanding the areas of self-determination, exercising choice wherever possible, not giving in to "I don't care", "It doesn't matter. Whatever you say". Being active in prayer for others, being aware of the dignity of being able in this way to uphold those who are serving us. Giving time to meditation.

In all the ramifications of change we can strive to keep open the channels between ourselves and our situation and the life-giving energies of the Holy Spirit. This means that continuous creativity is available and can be reckoned on to inform and transform both inner and outer life.

VII. UNTO THE CENTURIES OF CENTURIES

We will never know the full impact that our lives may have on those with whom we have lived in close or casual contact and, through them, on generations to come. We bear the responsibility that is often pointed out to young people entering the world of work. We are to be ourselves but we are also to be representatives. Some racial group, some faith, some skilled or unskilled workers are to be judged on how this young person acts and thinks and talks. The retired person carries his own extra responsibility. He represents his age group, and how he functions will have a profound effect on the next age group following him and so on till the end of time. Oral tradition still exists within families and groups and communities.

"Meet we shall, and part, and meet again,
Where dead men meet, on lips of living men".

-- Samuel Butler, the Younger; "Life after Death".

The grace of God in the lives of committed people will always have its testimonies whether written or silently stored up in the hearts of those who beheld it. It is a strength to many of us to remember such people and to feel their influence as a continuing factor in our own lives. We recognised the grace of God while they were with us but later it seemed even more telling as we recalled it.

"The communication of the dead is tongued with fire,
Beyond the language of the living".

-- T. S. Eliot "The Four Quartets".

A Friend who was sitting through a funeral service became caught up in contemplation of the statement in Isaiah about the word of God. "It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it". The life that was gone and the lives that remained seemed all to be the words of God, returning as they accomplished what they had been sent to do, returning not empty-handed. The willingness to be sent, to live as committed people was seen to matter tremendously.

Through such lives of obedience the secret and powerful word of God is spoken, bringing us into renewal of life and an answering obedience. This is part of the continuing revelation, the witness of the Spirit with our spirit that, whatever our age or situation, we are still the children of God.

APPENDIX

DEVELOPMENT OF POTENTIAL - WORK SHEET A

Looking at ourselves.

Facts: (Fill in as many items as you can under each heading. Put them all down.

Some that you think unimportant may just have that germ of potential.

Present skills, qualifications:

Present hobbies, interests:

Past skills, qualifications:

Past hobbies, interests:

Special health factors, limitations:

Unfulfilled plans, ambitions:

Unexamined assets (material and personal):

Attitudes: (1 = good; 2 = medium; 3 poor.

Honest self-assessment will help planning).

(a) Work, paid or voluntary:

Starting work (), keeping going (), finishing (), working in a group or team (),
working by oneself (), supervising other workers (), accepting supervision ().

(b) New versus old:

Interest in, acceptance of, new work methods ().

Interest in, acceptance of new environment, housing etc. ().

Open to new relationships with people: own age group () others ().

Working out solutions to problems in living, working ().

Ready to start afresh, shedding grievances, disappointments ().

Interest in new community developments, short-term (); long-term ().

Seeing new things, ideas etc in relation to previous ones ().

(c) Independence, maturity as a person:

Having only moderate need for praise (); recognition (); position of
importance ().

Acceptance of help, advice, without feeling inadequate ().

Decision making: collecting relevant facts (); assessing relevant facts ();

taking appropriate length of time for thought ();

meeting deadline for decision (); sticking to decision ();

revising decision in light of new facts ().

DEVELOPMENT OF POTENTIAL - WORK SHEET B

Looking at one's situation.

(The demands **made** on us, our time, energy and money.)

The Situation:

We are going to try to do this assessment in terms of the demand per week made on our time, our energy and our money. There is no idea of being specific, only of giving a guide for thinking.

(1 = great, 2 = medium, 3 = little. Aim again for as honest an appraisal as possible.)

	Time Demands	Energy Demands	Money Demands
Job of work:			
Paid	()	()	()
Unpaid	()	()	()
Looking after people in one's home:			
(show how many - e.g. 2 teenagers)			
Invalid, semi-invalid	()	()	()
Well adults	()	()	()
teenagers	()	()	()
children	()	()	()
animals, birds, etc.	()	()	()
Keeping in contact (show how many)			
with dependent relatives	()	()	()
dependent friends	()	()	()
other dependents	()	()	()
Personal upkeep:			
Food (getting, preparing)	()	()	()
Clothing (washing, mending, making, buying)	()	()	()
House upkeep (repairs, cleaning, painting, etc.)	()	()	()
Garden upkeep	()	()	()
Car upkeep	()	()	()
Other transport	()	()	()

Belonging to:

Church organisations	()	()	()
Welfare organisations	()	()	()
Sporting organisations	()	()	()
Social Clubs	()	()	()
Special Interest Clubs	()	()	()

Attending:

Special Interest Classes	()	()	()
Training Courses	()	()	()
Continuing Education	()	()	()
Other hobbies and interests	()	()	()

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