

Enduring Sentiments

Global Wisdom, Quotes and Quips
in Memory of Thornton Lewis

March 30, 1991



Kathmandu, Nepal 1979

Compilers Introduction

When I was twelve years old, I became disenchanted with Methodist Sunday School and wanted to quit going. My father, to that point a life-long agnostic whose shadow had hardly ever darkened a church door, said that in that case he would take me to other churches to see what else was out there. Challenged, amazed and outflanked, I could not refuse. We went to a synagogue. He invited a Hindu for dinner. We went to Catholic Mass, heard screaming Baptist preachers, and even tried the Lutheran church. I eventually concluded that Methodists weren't so bad after all. And when I returned to Hialeah Church, it was Dad's turn not to back out.

He always thought that he was first "called" in the midst of my crisis and from that point onward in our lives, over the subsequent twenty-five years, I had the privilege of having my father take active interest in my spiritual investigations. He supported my interest in the East (and later visited me with Dandy in Nepal), read Alan Watts on the inner spirituality of Christianity, and sought to understand Hinduism and Gandhi.

I could share many pages on the particulars of this mutual relationship, one that endures in my own choice of profession, in the hours of video tape we made in the 1980s, in the lives of our students and friends. What I hold dearest and share here is my father's openness to freedom and imagination. Such a gift of love, adventure, and conviction!! This was always the area — as opposed to politics! — where we would immediately strip all away and connect. As Thornton might say, the Lord works in mysterious ways.

And so this little book is made to celebrate Thornton as an individual and to share this world of ideas we explored. Many quotes here originate in a personal hand-written anthology I have maintained since college, a volume that I had long shared with my father. A few of our video sessions were devoted to conversations on many ideas from it that we both pondered. The organization of these pages is based upon his favorites and these are also spiced with some comments he once penciled into my anthology. What's bound here then is a partial, personal portrait, the legacy of a special father-son exchange.

Like similiar memorial volumes my Nepalese friends make for their elders, this book is centered on paying tribute by pointing to the spiritual. Compiling these marks one year of mourning in sadness mixed with gratitude. Beyond the sense of loss, I now want to walk on in the life-exulting and unique spirit of my father, and continue to feel connected to his life's wisdom and works. I hope that sharing these thinkers, lifting up their insights and challenges, might inspire others. The spirit is light and open...as it so often was when Thornton reflected on life's open questions, eternal verities, mysteries and joys.

Todd Thornton Lewis

-- PART 1 --

The real voyage of
discovery consists not in
seeing new places, but in
developing new eyes, view-
ing the universe with the eyes
of another, a hundred others.

-- Marcel Proust

All truly wise
thoughts have been thought
already thousands of times.

To make them truly
ours, we must think them
over again honestly, til they
take root in our personal
experience.

-- Goethe

First and Foundational...

Earth in Perspective:

a small planet
of a minor star
at the edge of an inconsiderable galaxy
in the immeasurable distances of space.
-- Archibald MacLeish

**Thornton Lewis: "...the
outer immensity of space,
the inner immensity of the
atom: What a sense of
wonder is our life, in such a
vast universe..."**

Don't squander the gold of your days, listening to
the tedious, or giving your life away to the ignorant and
common.

Live !

Live the wonderful life that is within you.
--- Oscar Wilde

Use Failure...

Failure should be our teacher
not our undertaker;

It should challenge us to new
heights of accomplishment,
not pull us to new depths of despair.

Failure is delay, but not defeat;
It is a temporary detour,
not a dead-end street.

-- W.A. Ward

**Thornton lived all his days, despite a record of
accomplishment in civic, ministerial, and admin-
istrative domains, ever scarred by his sense of
failure at not living up to the standards of his
father. He realized that he had made many
serious mistakes in his early years and knew that
his natal family never really forgave him for
them. Once he found his true vocation at 56, he
finally broke through this, felt grace, and as a
minister emphasized loving forgiveness, non-
judgementalness, and the importance of learning
from past errors ...**

Home...

From quiet homes and first beginnings,
Out to the undiscovered ends,
There's nothing worth the
wear of winning,
But the laughter and the
love of friends.
-- Hilaire Belloc

Thornton Lewis: "Whatever you believe as a Christian, whatever else you do, the home should be the place of loving kindness and generosity. If Jesus said that all are brothers and sisters, doesn't this mean that our families should always be welcoming outsiders?"

Definition of Spiritual Courage...

Courage to go they know not where
By a road they know not of ...
-- Philip Kapleau

In retirement, Thornton looked back over his life and said that he thought that one enduring theme was his being a rebel. He emphasized that it is important to have the courage to go against the stream.

Give me but one firm spot on which to stand,
and I will move the earth.
-- Archimedes

For Thornton, becoming a minister gave him a firm center around which to build his life. Coming from a high status background, and giving up a lucrative career in insurance, this choice of living for others meant economic sacrifice. I will always respect this fearless leap of faith, turning away from basing life on mere monetary reward and in a business that cared little for clients and high moral principles. Thornton did what was right, and was blessed.

God is great!
See the lilies of the field:
they neither toil nor spin
yet Solomon in all his glory
was not arrayed like one of them.

-- New Testament

The Crucifixion gives eternal life because it is the giving up of God as an object to be possessed, known, and held to for one's one safety, "for he that would save his soul, shall lose it."

-- Alan Watts

Thornton Lewis: "True faith means accepting risk, to oneself, to one's image of oneself, opening up to others."

And if you can't be with the ones you love:
Bless the ones you're with.
-- Anonymous

Grown-up people reconcile themselves too willingly to a supposed duty of preparing youth for the time when they will regard as illusion what now is an inspiration to heart and mind. Deeper experience of life, however, advises their inexperience differently. We should exhort them to hold fast, their whole life through, to the thoughts that inspire them. It is through the idealism of youth that human beings catch sight of truth, and in that idealism possess a wealth that must never be exchanged for anything else.

-- Albert Schweitzer

Thornton Lewis: "As a life member of the Optimist Club and a believer in its creed and focus on youth, I feel that never losing your idealism is one of the greatest challenges in life."

On Singing...

For the beauty of each hour
Of the day and of the night
Hill and vale, and tree and flower,
Sun and moon, and stars of light
Lord of all, to thee we raise
this our hymn of grateful praise.

-- A Hymn

Day is dying in the west;
Heaven is touching earth with rest;
Wait and worship while the night
sets the evening lamps alight
through all the sky.

Holy, Holy, Holy
Lord God of Hosts!
Heaven and earth are full of thee!
Heaven and earth are praising thee,
O Lord Most High!

-- A Hymn

I can still visualize Dad, on the porch, raising his hands
as he sang these hymns...

On Preachers...

He preaches well that lives well....
that's all the divinity I understand.
-- Cervantes' Sancho Panza

Thornton Lewis: "The best way to judge a minister's sermon and authenticity is to count the number of times he/she uses the word "I".

My life has prospered when I have
remembered to pursue
the Essential and
the Eternal.
-- James Broughton

No man is an island entirely of itself.

Every man is a part of the continent,
a piece of the main. If a clod
be washed away by the sea, Europe
is the less, as well as if a man or
thy friends or thine own were.

Every man's death diminishes me
because I am involved in mankind.
-- John Donne

Thornton Lewis (9/88): "Religion is binding oneself to find God."

Man's dearest possession is life; and since it is given to him to live but once, he must live so as to feel no torturing regrets for years without purpose; so live as not to be seared with the shame of a cowardly and trivial past; so living that dying, he can say - all my life and all my strength was given to the finest cause in the world - the salvation of mankind.
-- Lenin

Thornton Lewis: "He was wrong about almost everything, but right about having the courage to live a meaningful life."

A true man of God is one who has penetrated into the heart of the mystery, who takes life, love, and God so seriously that he takes everything else lightheartedly.
-- Father William McNamara

Thornton spoke most comfortably of God with me as "The Eternal." His faith was that the revelations of science and the genuine revelations of Christianity (and all religions) were inevitably compatible. He disdained the simplemindedness of Fundamentalism and oft quoted the Harry Emerson Fosdick story of the true message of the Gospel being like fruit in the basket: the task of the disciple was to learn to savor the fruit and avoid eating the basket. He was a Christian who felt that faith must be lived in loving, caring actions and less in the words we speak.

"God offers to everyone his choice
between truth and repose.
Take which you please - you can never have both."
-- Emerson

Thornton Lewis: "I like the definition of one of your professors: 'Religion = Preparation to Receive Truth.'"

-- PART II: Ecumenics --

Before Chinese religious thinkers, as before modern Christians, there hovered a vision of the Kingdom of God, expected to be realized through LOVE. Let us not minimize what we thus find of Christian ideals among non-Christians of remote centuries or in remote countries. To do so would not be in accordance with the spirit of Jesus. Let us rejoice in the truth, wherever we find its lamp burning.

-- Albert Schweitzer

One of the earliest memories I have of my father's standards of human greatness was regarding the great musician and scholar turned doctor-missionary, Albert Schweitzer. He called this man "one of the great humans of the 20th century" and told of how he had given up everything -- wealth, fame, social standing -- to go and serve in a leper colony in Africa. Besides his father, the example of Schweitzer's Christian service inspired Thornton Lewis.

Traveler's Tales...

My father's trip to Asia with Dandy in 1979 was a major event in his life. Not only did he see distant places; by seeing other worlds he discovered more clearly where his own life and work fit into the whole. In Nepal he met moral, caring people, non-Christians all, whose spiritual grace and love for others was unmistakable. He returned with a more ecumenical theology: there had to be many paths up the mountain and Christians should be open to the truths of Hinduism and Buddhism. He was also inspired by the work that Christians did in Asia.

The sea god of the north sea said: A frog in a well, restricted in his environment, is unable to talk about the ocean. A summer insect, confined to its season, cannot talk about ice. A poor village priest, restricted by his doctrines, cannot talk about the Universal source.

Now when someone leaves his own cliffs and river banks to gaze upon the mighty ocean, he is able to perceive his own pettiness and can then begin to discuss the Great Eternal Source.

-- Chuang Tzu

**WE HAVE NOT CEASED
FROM EXPLORATION
AND THE END OF ALL
OUR EXPLORING
WILL BE TO ARRIVE
WHERE WE STARTED
AND KNOW THE PLACE
FOR THE FIRST TIME.**

-- T.S. Eliot

In a hundred ages of the gods, I could not tell thee
of the glories of the Himalayas. As the dew is dried up by
the morning sun, so are the sins of mankind by the sight of
Himalayas.

-- Skanda Purana

Thornton Lewis: "or on seeing the Taj Mahal." Thornton
often quoted the poet Tagore describing the Taj
Mahal as "a tear on the cheek of time." His visit to the
Taj Mahal was an emotional one and throughout the
remainder of his life, when talking about the Taj, tears
would well up in his eyes.

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

-- Shakespeare Hamlet

Listening to Hindus...

Gandhi

For Thornton, Gandhi's truth was that Hindus -- and
all humans -- can live a Christ-like life, sacrificing their
own happiness to witness for love, understanding, and
brotherhood under the Eternal. He must have watched
the film "*Gandhi*" over twenty times and challenged
Christians to measure this man and still insist that this
was not "a man of God."

My uniform experience has convinced me that there
is no other God than truth...

To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of
Truth face to face, one must be able to love the meanest of
creation as oneself. And one who aspires after that cannot
afford to keep out of any field of life... So long as a person
does not in free will put self last among his fellow crea-
tures, there is no salvation. Non-violence is the furthest
limit of humility.

The law of love will work, just as the law of gravita-
tion will work, whether we accept it or not. For the force of
love in non-violence is more wonderful than all the forces
of nature...

This body therefore has been given to us, only in
order that we serve creation with it. In this sense we are
debtors all of our lives and thus bound to dedicate ourselves
to serving the universe... It is a natural and pleasant and
desirable state, as long as we realize our proper place in
God's scheme.

For a bowl of water give a goodly meal;
For a kindly greeting bow down in zeal;
For a simple penny pay back with gold;
If thy life be rescued, life do not withhold.
Thus the words and actions of wise regard;
For every little service tenfold thy reward.
But the truly noble know all men as one,
And return with gladness good for evil done.

-- Hindu text

From the unreal lead me to the real !
From darkness lead me to light !
From death lead me to immortality !

-- Upanishads

Listening to Buddhas...

Impermanent indeed are all compounded things;
Whose nature is to rise and pass away;
Having arisen they are destroyed
Their being stilled is pleasant.

-- Paranirvana Sutta

Not indeed by hatred does hate cease at any time;
Hatred is brought to an end by love:
This is eternal law
-- Dhammapada

Thornton Lewis: "Does not the existence of the "golden rule" across the world demonstrate the universality of God's love ?"

In short, at all times and all occasions: be not separated from these three, namely devotion to your teachers, an open heart to the world and all it contains, and compassion to sentient beings.
-- a Tibetan lama's advice

For Great Beings' minds retain their balance by giving preference to beings' welfare, by dislike of beings' suffering, by desire for the various successes achieved to last, and by impartiality towards all. And in order to avoid doing harm, they undertake precepts of virtue. They practice renunciation.... They perfect their insight for the purpose of dispelling confusion about what is good and bad for beings. They constantly arouse energy, having beings' welfare and happiness at heart.

Buddhaghosa's
Visuddhimagga

Chinese Sages...

The ideal of the Confucian scholar:

"One who is first in worrying about the world's troubles
and last in enjoying its pleasures."

-- Fan-Chung-Yen

"The great man is he who never loses the heart of the
child."

-- Mencius

**Thornton Lewis: "And isn't this also another universal
message in religions: an individual should never lose the
child within? Keeping the child within means not to
become aged or worn in spirit."**

When asked whether there was one word
which could serve as a rule of
practice for the whole of one's life,
Confucius replied: "Is it not
reciprocity? What you would not want
done to yourself, do not do to others."

That which brings the living to birth itself never dies. That
which transforms all things is not itself subject to change.
Before born, one is at one with the principle of transforma-
tion. Death and life are continuous, and at death one returns
to the source of all things. If one knows the happiness of
being unborn, he will not fear death. The sage leans upon
the pillar which cannot be uprooted, and learns from a
teacher who never dies.

-- Lao Tzu

On Leadership...

A good leader does not boast
The true warrior does not get angry in the midst of strife;
The best employer of people

puts himself below his employees ...

Although leading, he entrusts according to instinct:

He comes last in line but they feel--

"Oh look what we have ourselves accomplished" ...

-- Lao Tzu

**Dad saw this quote as stating the
sound administrative principles
that he learned from his father. He
saw being a manager as a calling,
requiring a commitment to each
worker's best interests, wisdom in
seeking group synergy, and involv-
ing everyone in the work as the
means to mutual happiness and
success.**

Listening to Muslims...

The moving finger writes, and having writ
Moves on: nor all your piety and wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line
Nor all your tears wash out a word of it.
-- Omar Khayyam

When I open my eyes to the outer world,
I feel myself as a drop in the sea;
But when I close my eyes and look within,
I see the whole universe as a bubble raised
in the ocean of my heart.
-- Inayat Khan

As Allah needs no service,
but serving His creation is serving Him,
I promise to serve humanity in the name of Allah.

Vow of non-violent Pathan
Muslim, Abdul Ghaffar Khan

Do not imagine that you will preserve a sound intention in
your pursuit of service while there is envy, hypocrisy, or
arrogance in your heart."

-- -- al-Ghazali

God is nearer to you than your jugular vein.

-- Koran

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Thornton Lewis' interest in comparative religion deepened his sense of his own faith's inner truths and sacred history. Seeing Hindu holy men -- who live homelessly, surrounded by disciples, and on the charity of others -- reminded him of John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth. The Indian "namaste", a prayerful greeting invoking a sense of divinity in the other, to him expressed Jesus' 11th commandment to love one's neighbor. But beyond a half serious "OM" chant, Dad never actually did take up Yoga, Zen Buddhism, or mysticism. My presentation of his ecumenical values must conclude with saying that he always remained, at center, a Christian.

Thus, Thornton always felt that it was Jesus who had entered his life and transformed it. But he was not convinced that today's scriptures fully captured the picture of Christ's nature and so he kept an open mind and fiercely defended the rational mind's attack on childish, narrow-minded belief. The scriptural injunction "do not judge others" for him meant keeping an open heart; the scriptural requirement of loving others meant respecting their beliefs. His sense was that Christianity's true ideal was broad and inclusive; he felt that being a citizen of the world was the highest calling of the modern disciple of Jesus.

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-- PART III: Keeping the Faith --

Humans may make of their own history
a hopeless inferno,
a junkyard of events,
or
an enduring value.

-- Simone de Beauvoir

Enthusiasm...

Enthusiasm is one of the most powerful engines of success. When you do a thing, do it with all your might. Put your whole soul into it. Stamp it with your own personality. Be active, be energetic, be faithful and you will accomplish your object. Nothing whatsoever was ever achieved without enthusiasm.

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Whatever you can do, or dream
you can do, begin it
Boldness has genius, power,
and magic in it.
-- Goethe

Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs even though checkered with failure, than to take rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much [who] live in the grey twilight that knows not - victory or defeat.

-- Theodore Roosevelt

Never to fail a friend,
Nor to fight a foe but fairly.....

-- Central Park Monument

Somewhere, someplace, sometime...

You are going to have to plant your feet,
make a stand,
and kick ass.

When that time comes, you do it.

-- Don Shula

Don't flinch, don't foul, but hit the line hard

-- Thornton Lewis Sr.

Retirement...

Teach me to number my days so I will have a heart full of
wisdom when I'm old. -- Psalm 90

"Use it or Lose It." -- Thornton Lewis

Read and reread Jesus' Sermon on the Mount:
so do not worry about tomorrow:
for tomorrow will take care of itself.

No person can have a peaceful life
who thinks too much about lengthening it.
-- Seneca

My teacher once said to me:

- become one with the knot itself
till it dissolves away.
 - sweep the garden, any size.
- Gary Snyder

Our deeds will travel with us from afar
And what we have been makes us what we are.
-- George Eliot

To laugh often and love much;
To win the respect of persons
and the affection of children...
To know that even our life has breathed easier
because you have lived ---
This is to have succeeded.

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Mortality...

You can't predict everything.....
You walk the face of the earth,
and you take your chances.

-- R.W. Travis

Every extraordinary person has a particular mission which he is called on to fulfill. When he has accomplished it, he is no longer needed on earth in the same form, and Providence uses him for something else ... so that others might still have something left to do in a world created to last a long time.

-- Goethe

Thornton Lewis:

"It would be hell to physically live forever."

It is impossible that anything so natural, necessary, and so universal as death should ever have been designed by Providence as an evil to mankind.

-- Jonathan Swift

Fear not the sentence of death; remember them that have been before thee, and that come after: this is the sentence of the Lord over all flesh. And why dost thou refuse, when it is the good pleasure of the Most High ?

-- Ecclesiastes

Grief

The wife of Chuang-tzu died and his disciple came to console him. Chuang-tzu was found sitting with his legs spread out, pounding out a hymn on a tub while singing. His disciple, shocked at the Master's mourning behavior, questioned Chuang Tzu for his lack of respect for one who was a loyal, life-long companion. Chuang-tzu replied, "At first when she died, how is it possible that I should not have felt grief? But then I pondered over her beginning before she was born; not merely before she was born but when as yet she was no body and not even a vital spirit. Within a formless confusion, there took place a transformation and there was vital spirit. The vital spirit was transformed and there came forth form. And then from the form she came forth into life. Now once again there is a transformation and she has died. What has happened may be compared to the progression of the four seasons. Now she is at peace. For me to follow after her wailing and weeping would be an indication that I had no understanding of human destiny. So I stopped grieving.



If I should go before the rest of you
Break not a flower nor inscribe a stone,
Nor when I'm gone speak in a Sunday voice
But be the usual selves I have known.
 Weep if you must,
 Parting is hell,
 But life goes on,
 So sing as well.

— *Joyce Grenfell*