

Booklet of Sermon Notes

Earl C. Davis

Petersham, MA

1938¹

June 26, 1938

"Religion Ordinary"

[Readings:] Genesis: 32:22-32; Micah

[Hymn Numbers:] 79, 225, 394

"Experience is not what happens to a man. It is what a man does with what happens to him." Aldous Huxley²

Dean Sperry: "Sing the Lord's song in a strange land."³

"Reformation without Tarrying for Any"⁴

¹ For the years 1938 through 1947 Davis collected his sermon notes in more-or-less annual hand-bound booklets. These are all notes, not full-text sermons, and are somewhat harder to interpret.

² Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) British Author. This quote is from the introduction to his 1932 *Texts and Pretexts*.

³ Willard L. Sperry, then Dean of the Harvard Divinity School delivered the baccalaureate sermon for the Class of 1938 at Vassar College on June 12, 1938. He took this passage from Psalms 137:4 as his text. According to the *New York Times* account, he said, "Nothing is more sure than that the future has in store for all of us journeys into what will be culturally far countries, perhaps even mental exile in alien space."

⁴ This phrase, "Reformation without Tarrying for Any," is the title to a pamphlet published in 1582 by Robert Browne (1550-1633). It concerns the need to press ahead to see one's ideals emerge in reality. See also Davis' 1917/18 sermon, "Reformation without Tarrying for Any,"

<https://wordpress.clarku.edu/dbaird/sermon-reformation-without-tarrying-for-any/>.

July 3, 1938

First use of "Hymns of the Spirit" given in memory of Robert Collyer Douthit⁵

First Order of Service

Readings: ??? :78-119; Psalm 150; Browning's "Abt Vogler."⁶

Hymns: New: 14, 63, 280; Old: 24, 80, 335

"Tis we Musicians Know"⁷

A fitting combination, "Hymns of the Spirit" in memory of Robert Collyer [Douthit]

2—Strains of feeling intimately related in all your minds.

1—Hymns of the Spirit

- (a) Sources of ??? 535-549. Every race + every child.
- (b) Folk songs and melodies. Out of the singing heart of man.
Hymns the ???.

Tis we Musicians

Through this doorway of music, Robert Douthit entered into the inner chambers of life's mysterious ways. It gave to him, and to his life and ministry, those endearing qualities of courage, understanding and faith, which he wove into the very fabric of this community's life.

⁵ On the page opposite this set of sermon notes is a blank book plate with the following text, "The First Congregational Parish, Unitarian, in Petersham. In Memory of Rev. Robert Collyer Douthit, 1869-1932. Faithful and beloved Minister to this Church and Community, 1898-1902 and 1912-1929. Also in music ministered he unto them. This book was given by _____."

⁶ Robert Browning (1812-1889) English poet and playwright. His 1864 poem, "Abt Vogler," is about Georg Joseph (Abt) Vogler (1749-1814), a German composer. In his poem Browning imagines him older and meditating on the purpose and value of his life. Davis has previously quoted from this poem; see his August 2, 1908 sermon, "For the Joy of Living,"

<https://wordpress.clarku.edu/dbaird/for-the-joy-of-living-august-2-1908/>.

⁷ A line from Browning's poem "Abt Vogler."

July 10, 1938

200th Anniversary of Morning Service

Readings: # 2—Page 8; Matthew 7:7-14; Gal 5:13-14, 25; 6:10

Hymns: New: 496, 9, 371; Old: 573, 29, 397

???: Look for the clear light of Truth.

Subject: "Freedom Under a Covenant"

"Those that were faithful, spoke often one to another."

Difficulty of capturing the spirit, visualizing the circumstances.

Nothing but hills, trees, brooks, springs, and a great dream.

The meeting house, first common task.

A physical necessity, and a symbol of a great faith that dominated their lives.

Common characteristics

1—Freedom under a covenant

Meaning of gathering a church.

Freemen exercising full rights in the field of religion.

2—Those that were faithful spoke often one to another.

Councils, neighborly advice, giving and taking.

The spirit of a democratic society in the making, a great heritage to be used, developed and transmitted.

3—Under a Covenant.

"Owning the Covenant"

A Volunteer

The Sovereignty of their God.

God's will

Whatever the language used, this is the ultimate fact in this mystery and adventure we call life.

The substance of their faith was that beneath all the transitory demands and events of life, there is a meaning and a purpose, whose full significance we do but most imperfectly see, but we press forward to the prize of the High calling of God.

Thus, they built, thus they lived.

What will the generations to come say of our fidelity to that freedom they so deeply cherished; that speaking often one to another; that faith in a purpose in life, in God's will that includes yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Announcements.

Program.

Signing the Guest Book.

Between services guests will be cordially welcomed:

at the Nichewaug Inn

at the Library

at the Historical Building

at the Ingersoll Parsonage

at Lyford Fells, the homestead of three early ministers

at Mr. and Mrs. Edward O Coolidge.

Owning the Covenant. Fitting at this time. Next Sunday Morning.

July 17, 1938

Readings: John 4; "Self Reliance," "What I Must Do;" Divinity
School: Closing paragraph⁸

Responsive Reading 61-P. 111

Hymns: 2, 312, 408

"In Life + In Reality"

Christmas Day, 1832. Emerson sailed on a trading Brig for the
Mediterranean, tired, in poor health. He was 29.

"All things have two handles, beware of the wrong one."⁹

1835 bought a house in Concord.

The Over-soul. The flowing river of nature.

(The Over-soul) when it breaths.

Be yourself. But your best self. The channel of the Over-soul.

⁸ Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1885) American writer, founder of
Transcendentalism. Emerson's essay, "Self-Reliance" is in his
Essays, First Series, first published in 1841. He delivered a
speech before the senior class of the Harvard Divinity School on
July 15, 1838. In it he sharply critiques traditional
Christianity. The final paragraph that Davis calls for here
reads, "I look for the hour when that supreme Beauty, which
ravished the souls of those eastern men, and chiefly of those
Hebrews, and through their lips spoke oracles to all time, shall
speak in the West also. The Hebrew and Greek Scriptures contain
immortal sentences, that have been bread of life to millions.
But they have no epical integrity; are fragmentary; are not
shown in their order to the intellect. I look for the new
Teacher, that shall follow so far those shining laws, that he
shall see them come full circle; shall see their rounding
complete grace; shall see the world to be the mirror of the
soul; shall see the identity of the law of gravitation with the
purity of heart; and shall show that the Ought, that Duty, is
one thing with Science, with Beauty and with Joy."

⁹ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar: An Oration
Delivered Before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Cambridge, August
31, 1837" in *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, New
York: Sully and Kleinteich, 1883, pp. 82-116. This quote is on
p. 86.

July 24, 1938

Readings: Matthew 5:17-20; Acts 24:10-16; Whitman, Song of
Myself¹⁰

Hymns: 28, 294, 311

Subject: "Faith in Human Nature"

Not just a slogan, but in concrete human beings.

*Our Town*¹¹

Justice Cordozo¹²

Lawyer that considered suicide.

Two handles: Everything, even life as a whole

Handles always together.

"There's something way down deep that's eternal about every
human being." *Our Town* 101¹³

On going back to earth.¹⁴

"Choose the least important. It will be important enough."¹⁵

¹⁰ Walt Whitman (1819-1892) American poet, essayist and
journalist. His poem, "Song of Myself" is included in his book,
Leaves of Grass, first published in 1855, with several
subsequent editions.

¹¹ *Our Town* is a 1938 play by American playwright Thornton Wilder
(1897-1975).

¹² Justice Benjamin Cardozo, American lawyer, served as Associate
Justice of the Supreme Court from 1932 until his death, July 9,
1938. According to the New York Times account, "New Heart Attack
Fatal to Justice; Warned after Illness 3 years ago that return
to bench would bring early death; knew work mean death."

¹³ This is a line from Wilder's *Our Town*, New York: Coward-
McCann, 1938, p. 68.

¹⁴ Most of these notes are in pen. After "Earth" the word "Day"
is written in pencil. Earth Day was first celebrated in 1970.
So, it is unclear what this pencil mark is about.

¹⁵ This is a line from Wilder's *Our Town*, New York: Coward-
McCann, 1938, p. 76.

July 31, 1938

"Live a life of Faith and Hope."

R.R. 51-P. 105

Readings: Luke 15; Johan Bojer, *The Great Hunger*, M.R. O+P. Page 207;¹⁶

Hymns: 16, 42, 351

"Two Great Assumptions of Living"

1st Divine Power

2nd We are so related that we can discover its ways and carry on.
Ought.

Begin right here.

Roots of Right Living.

¹⁶ Johan Bojer (1872-1959) Norwegian novelist. Published his novel, *The Great Hunger* in 1916. I can find no obvious reference for "M.R. O+P. Page 207."

August 7, 1938¹⁷

"Sixth Order of Service" R.R. 10-79

Readings: Matthew 16

Hymns: 1, 235, 250/296

Subject: "Contrast of Towns"

"God Wills it." 1095¹⁸

Christmas 1299. Boniface VIII¹⁹

Except your righteousness

What power had Jesus?

¹⁷ On the back side of the sheet with the sermon notes for August 7 were the following notes: "Church School. Picnic. Thursday July 25. Rae Hunter Conf. Social Club. Soron Party. Tuesday night on common, in connection with Band Concert."

¹⁸ Likely this refers to a speech given by Pope Urban II (c. 1035-1099; Pope 1088-1099) at the Council of Clermont. This speech was influential in launching the first crusade.

¹⁹ Likely this refers to a decree of Pope Boniface VIII (1230-1303; Pope 1294-1303) that "Holy Years" would take place at 100-year intervals, and this prompted significant numbers of pilgrims visiting the basilica in Rome. According to the decree, those who wished to obtain a plenary indulgence had to visit the basilicas of St. Peter and St. Paul for 30 days continuously..."

August 14, 1938

"By way of contrast"

R.R. 37-97

Readings: John 5:1-20²⁰

Hymns: 33, 349, 272

??? ???

Charles F. Adams + C.W.E. letters²¹

2-Fairness: Money; ???

2-Industrialists: Fine products; large profits

3-Gov't

4-Religion: What one can put in; What one can get out.

²⁰ Also listed but crossed out: Luke 12:1-8; Gal 2:18-21; Luke 5:19-21.

²¹ Charles F. Adams (1807-1886) U.S. diplomat who played an important role in keeping Britain neutral during the Civil War. I do not know who "C.W.E." refers to.

August 21, 1938

"An Honest Prayer"

Some personal reflections on a question asked.

R.R. 41-P.99

Readings: *Soul of Bible*, pp. 275-6²²; Matthew 6:5-8; from
Kipling's "The Explorer"²³

Hymns: 32, 54, 235

St. Augustine "Thou has made us for thyself and our heart is
restless until it finds rest in thee."²⁴

Sunrise from

- (a) out of doors
- (b) from a closed room

Or compared with the whole of truth, and understanding of life.

We live; one lives in an enclosed room.

- (a) ??? never get away from them
- (b) Fear

Behold I stand at the door and knock.

But the door is opened upon the inside by us.

Prayer: Looking out

or if we have the courage of a free soul, going out to the
sunrise of a new day

²² *The Soul of the Bible: Being Selections from the Old and the New Testaments and the Apocrypha Arranged as Synthetic Readings*, Ulysses G. B. Peirce, ed., Boston: The Beacon Press, 1908. On pages 275-6 are chapters VIII and IX of the Wisdom of Solomon: "Now when I considered in my heart; How that in kinship unto wisdom is immortality, ..."

²³ Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) English novelist, poet, journalist. "The Explorer" is an 1898 poem of Kipling's.

²⁴ Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430) theologian and philosopher, Bishop of Hippo Regius in Numidia Roman North Africa. This quote is from Book 3 Chapter 1 of his *Confessions*.

August 28, 1938

"The Creative Soul of Man"²⁵

R.R. 39-P.98

Readings: Luke 11:53-12:7

Hymns: 90, 329, 337

Creative Coordination

The fact of

??? Relig + M.M. Page 80.

Nature of Man: Transcript

- (1) "The Kingdom of God and History" Oxford Conference²⁶
- (2) *Harper's* "In an American Factory"
1934, Yugoslav, Page 263
"Only gradually did I begin to grasp the deep significance of American inconsistencies which so strike the set, static mind of a European. To realize that they were real symptoms of growth, showing a slow trend of the nation toward ever increasing democracy."²⁷

²⁵ Crossed out above the title is "An Aggressive Hum..."

²⁶ See Charles Harold Dodd (1884-1973) and Herbert George Wood (1879-1963), *The Kingdom of God and History: Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work*, Oxford, 1937, Willett, Clark & Company, 1938.

²⁷ Stoyan Pribichevich (1905-1976) Yugoslavian immigrant to America, journalist. This quote is from his *Harper's Magazine* essay "In an American Factory."

September 4, 1938

"Labor and Life"

R.R. 60-111 9th series

Readings: *Soul of Bible*, 296²⁸; Matthew 7:1-2; *Mutual Aid a Factor in Evolution*;²⁹ G.C. p. 395³⁰

Hymns: 49, 99, 238

I:

Substance of wisdom prayer

Substance of Matthew 7

Need of an understanding mind

Louis A???'s Grandson

Boys' method of coming together: Fight it out

²⁸ *The Soul of the Bible: Being Selections from the Old and the New Testaments and the Apocrypha Arranged as Synthetic Readings*, Ulysses G. B. Peirce, ed., Boston: The Beacon Press, 1908. On page 296 is a version of part of Luke 2.

²⁹ This refers to Peter Kropotkin's 1902 book, *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution*. Davis took extensive notes on this book; they can be found here <https://wordpress.clarku.edu/dbaird/notes-on-mutual-aid-a-factor-in-evolution-by-p-kropotkin-no-date/>. In 1933, he also wrote a short one-page reflection on this aspect of evolution in how people helped each other during the Depression; see <https://wordpress.clarku.edu/dbaird/mutual-aid-a-factor-in-evolution-1933/>.

³⁰ "G.C." refers to *Great Companions: Readings on the Meaning and Conduct of Life from Ancient and Modern Sources*, edited by R.F. Leavens, Boston: The Beacon Press, 1927. On pages 395-6 is a short excerpt from Peter Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution*.

September 11, 1938

Reverend Charles P. Wellman conducted the service.

September 18, 1938

"By Liberal/Noble Things Shall he Stand"

R.R. 58-110

Readings: Psalms 61:2 "Lead me to a rock that is lighter than
I."

Hymns: 3, 248, 289

"The shadow of a great rock in a weary land."³¹

In the days when these words were written all the security of
life rested upon the kind of a king.

We have come to have faith in another order, where the security
of life depends upon us.

³¹ Isaiah 32:2.

September 25, 1938

The Sunday after the tornado.³²

"Steeple Still Stands"

Service 4. Page 17. R.R. 17-P.84

Hymns: 22, 85, 312

"Make straight in the desert a highway for one God."³³

³² Davis refers to the "Great Hurricane of 1938" which struck central Massachusetts on Wednesday September 21, 1938. The Ware River, not far from Petersham, overflowed its banks and caused considerable damage. This storm should not be confused with the 1953 Worcester Tornado.

³³ Isaiah 35:8 refers to a highway of holiness. Otherwise, I can find no source for this quotation.

October 2, 1938

"From Generation to Generation: The Prayer for Peace"

R.R. 13-83

Readings: Psalms 32; Emerson "Compensation," "You cannot do wrong without suffering wrong."³⁴

Hymns: 47, 75, 317

We are born into a world in which are operative all the accumulative imperfections of the past, as well as all the accumulated achievements.

Low and High

³⁴ Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) American writer, founder of transcendentalism. This quote is from his essay, "Compensation," in *Essays, Lectures and Orations*, London: William S. Orr and Co., 1851, p. 51.

October 9, 1938

Sojourner's League convention at Petersham.

Dr. Charles E. Park, Preacher³⁵

Service 2.1 R.R. 58-110

Hymns: 88, 342, 318

Service conducted by E.C.D.

Sermon by Park

³⁵ Charles-Ed-Park (1873-1962). Longtime minister of the First Church in Boston, 1906 until 1946. A close friend of Earl Davis.

October 9, 1938³⁶

R.R. V= 56

Hymns: 49, 225, 396

Roger S. Forbes

October 24, 1878, ???

???

Harvard, 1900

H.D.S, 1903

Dedham, 1903-1908

Dorchester, 1908-1914

Germantown

Personal Approach

1. Winsome personality
2. Orderly mind
3. Friendly
4. Heroic courage + Fidelity

³⁶ Curiously there is a second page with notes for a sermon on the same date. Perhaps Davis planned this second sermon and then didn't give it, lettering Charles E. Park preach the sermon instead. But an anomaly.

October 16, 1938

Seventh Order of Service: 30

"What is Truth"

40-99

Readings: Scripture: Luke 23; Luke 15; Prodigal son

Hymns: 25 2nd ???, 238, 294?

Not personal, only, but as clear [a] illustration of Jesus' attitude of discovering the "will of God."

"The portion of thy substance that falleth to me."³⁷

³⁷ See Luke 15:12.

October 19-20, 1938³⁸ Senexet³⁹

Evening Chapel, October 19, 1938

Invocation

Hymn 109

Reading

Matthew 7:7-12

Doom, Religion and Modern Mind

Talk

Prayer

Lord's Prayer

54

Benediction

Evening Chapel, October 20, 1938

Prayer

Hymn 280

Reading

John 4

Kipling's "The Explorer"⁴⁰

Curie's Credo

³⁸ For the years 1938 through 1947 Davis collected his sermon notes in more-or-less annual hand-bound booklets. Most of these booklets were well-ordered and inclusive of only sermons from one particular year. The exception was the booklet of sermon notes for 1941, which was out of chronological order, and included sermon notes from multiple other years, 1934 through 1945. In all, only 30 of the 41 sermon notes were from 1941. The notes transcribed here were found in that collection, now returned to their correct year.

³⁹ Senexet was a retreat used by Unitarians mid-twentieth century, 276 Senexet Rd., Woodstock, CT. A brief description of an earlier, 1934, Senexet retreat can be found at <https://wordpress.clarku.edu/dbaird/a-pilgrimage-to-senexet-1934/>.

⁴⁰ Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) English novelist, poet, journalist. "The Explorer" is a poem he wrote in 1898.

October 23, 1938

200th Anniversary of Gathering of the church.

"A Church of the Free Spirit"

Service V: R.R. 75-Page 121

Readings: Isaiah 32

Text: Isaiah 32:5: "The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful."

Text: Isaiah 32:8: "But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand."

Hymns: 23, 366, 407

King Hezekiah, 726 B.C.⁴¹

300 years ago

200 years ago

100 years ago

Principles vs. Persons

Rule of God

⁴¹ King Hezekiah (c.739 BCE-687 BCE) King of Judah according to 2 Kings, Isaiah, 2 Chronicles. In c.722 BCE (perhaps this is Davis' reference to 726 BC) he witnessed the destruction of the northern Kingdom of Israel by Sargon's Assyrians.

November 6, 1938

"Man of Integrity"

1st p. 3; R.R. 17-84

Readings:

Hymns: 103, 365, 261

Meaning of "Integrity"

Old arithmetic: integers, whole numbers, not a fraction, but
whole, no part missing

False front

"All wool and a yard wide."⁴²

Wood + Bond

⁴² An expression dating back to the Civil War that indicates something of high quality, or a person who is friendly and honorable.

November 13, 1938

"Hunting for Neighbors; Hunting for ???"

Service p. 2; R.R. 10-P.79

Readings:

Hymns: 12, 280, 245

This may seem trivial, but at bottom it suggests the very essence of life.

Between Armistice Day and Thanksgiving

1st Neighbor: nigh dwellers

2nd But the thicker they are the fewer they become

3rd Three rules:

- a) Hunt for the hat in your nigh neighbor
- b) In books + lives
- c) The last is God as neighbor

November 20, 1938

"Union Thanksgiving Service"

Order of Service #15, Page 58; R.R. 64-113

Readings:

Hymns: 1, 314-Camden, 367

Rev. James T. Carter

Offering for Refugees

November 27, 1938

"The Freeman's Oath"

See Soul of Bible, Page 567;⁴³

Service 9-P.36; R.R. 46-103

Readings:

Hymns: 27, 313, 349

Bill of Rights

Civil and Religious Liberty

Two points:

1. No shutting off of minorities
Right of Petition
John Q. Adams in Congress
2. Both church and state are creations of man

⁴³ A confusion here. The book mentioned is *The Soul of the Bible: Being Selections from the Old and the New Testaments and the Apocrypha Arranged as Synthetic Readings*, Ulysses G. B. Peirce, ed., Boston: The Beacon Press, 1908. This book does not have a page 567. However, on page 567 of another book that Davis frequently uses—*Great Companions: Readings on the Meaning and Conduct of Life from Ancient and Modern Sources*, edited by R.F. Leavens, Boston: The Beacon Press, 1927—is a short passage, "The Citizen's Vote" from "The Freeman's Oath," which appears in the handwriting of Thomas Dudley, second governor of Massachusetts Colony: "I doe promise to give my voice for the electing of such psones and psones unto voide places as I shall thinke to be the wisest, godliest, & ablest for the discharge, men of wisdom & courage—feareinge God & hateing covetousness." This clearly fits the subject of the sermon.

December 4, 1938

"Which way Religion?"

R.R. 75-121

Readings: Matthew 23:1-12; Matthew 16

Hymns: 47, 75/76, 286

This extra-Gospel passage is quite true to the heart of Jesus' teaching.

Translated into modern language it means:

1. Every day brings up against the infinitely complicated problem of living.
2. By "escape."
3. By facing up.

December 11, 1938

"Advent, Coming"

9th-P.36; R.R. 5-75

Readings:

Hymns: 151, 152, 362

"Beneath the stone. And within the split timber."⁴⁴

"Where two are together they are not without God, and where one is alone, behold, I am with him. Lift up a stone and you will find me, split a timber and I am there."

From the sayings of Jesus outside the Gospels, by Harnack

"Living Age" Page 364 (1921)?⁴⁵

Advent

Out of our limitations, one's shortcomings, our failures, our sufferings. We look for a better:

Some people like ??? wail for it to turn up; wail for God to send a Messiah.

The point of Jesus' attitude was quite different.

Not there but here: Not out of Royal Palace in the shape of a carpenter.

Illustrations:

1. Joseph Lister: Born April 5, 1827; Antiseptic Bandage
2. Louis Pasteur, December 27, 1822. 1868, Dale Jena, France
3. Luther Burbank, Lancaster, Massachusetts, March 7, 1849, Potato⁴⁶
4. Sir James ???

⁴⁴ Possibly a reference to the Gospel of Thomas.

⁴⁵ The correct reference: Adolf Von Harnack, "Sayings of Jesus Outside the Gospels," *The Living Age*, Vol. 319, No. 4142, p. 366. Carl Gustav Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930) was a German Lutheran theologian and church historian.

⁴⁶ Luther Burbank (1849-1926) American botanist and pioneer in agricultural science. He developed more than 800 varieties of new plants, including the Burbank potato.

December 18, 1938

"From Trivial Illusions to a Majestic Faith"

Morning

11-42; R.R. 73-119

Readings: Matthew 2:1-11

Hymns: 154, 155, 153

Town Hall Forum

Meaning of the story of the wise men

Old Religions

Jesus' Answer

??? 8 166

December 25, 1938

"In the Fullness of Time"

Morning

Xmas service No. 12, p. 45; R.R. 73-119

Readings: Luke 2:1-20 Chant p. 517

Hymns: 163, 169, 180

Prayer

Anthem

Notice: N.Y. Open House

Offering

Hymn 169

Reading

Hymn 180

Benediction

Conducted by Annie F. Davis

Doxology

Mr. Davis not quite equal to coming today, so I hope you will bear with me.

Xmas Service No. 12, p. 45

Followed by hymn 163

Prayer p. 48

Anthem

Scripture Reading

Notice

Regretfully announce that we cannot hold our usual N.Y. Open House

Offering ???

Hymn 169

Reading: Religion says you can

Hymn 180

Benediction p. 164