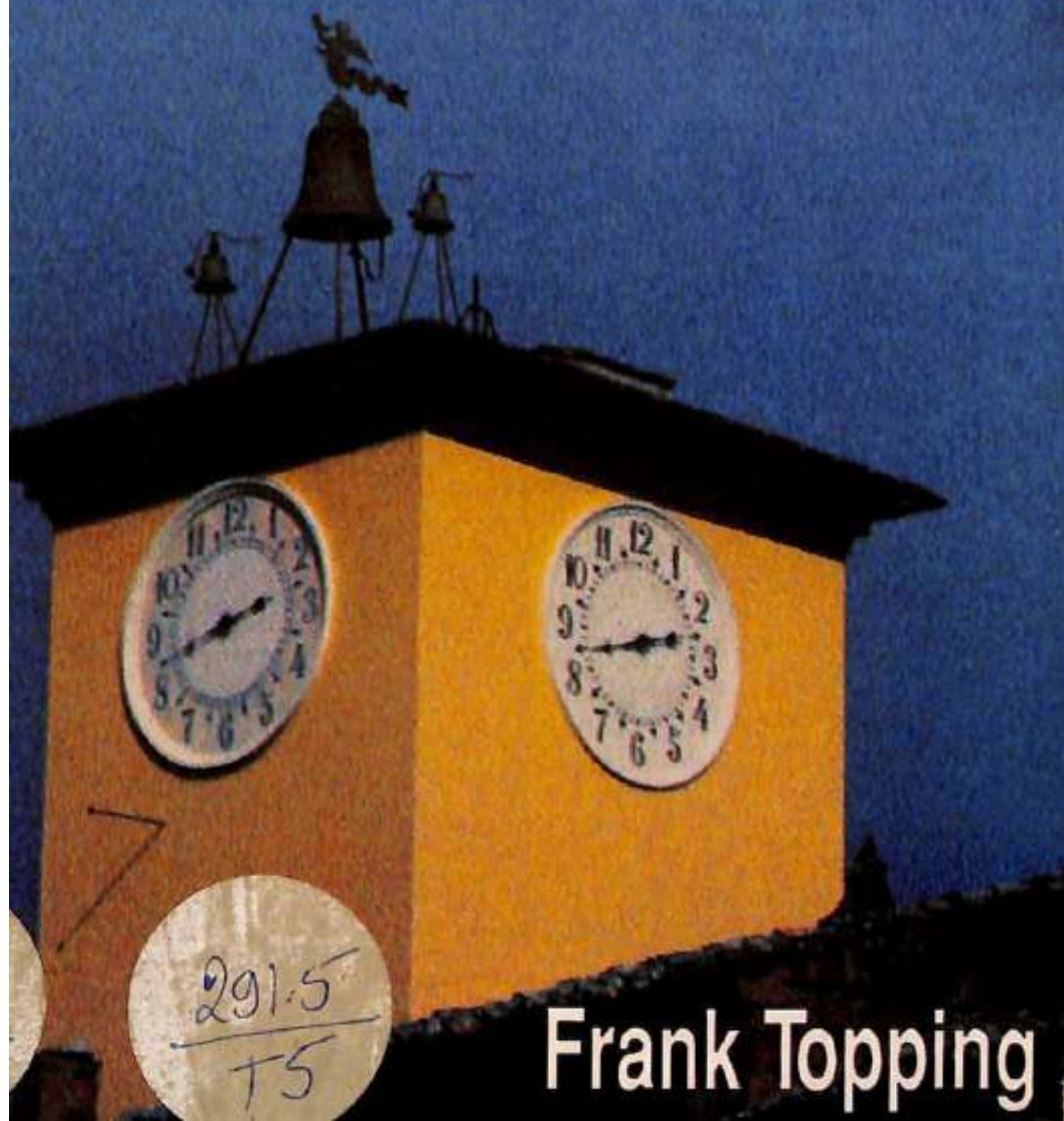


# PRAYER TO THE LORD OF TIME



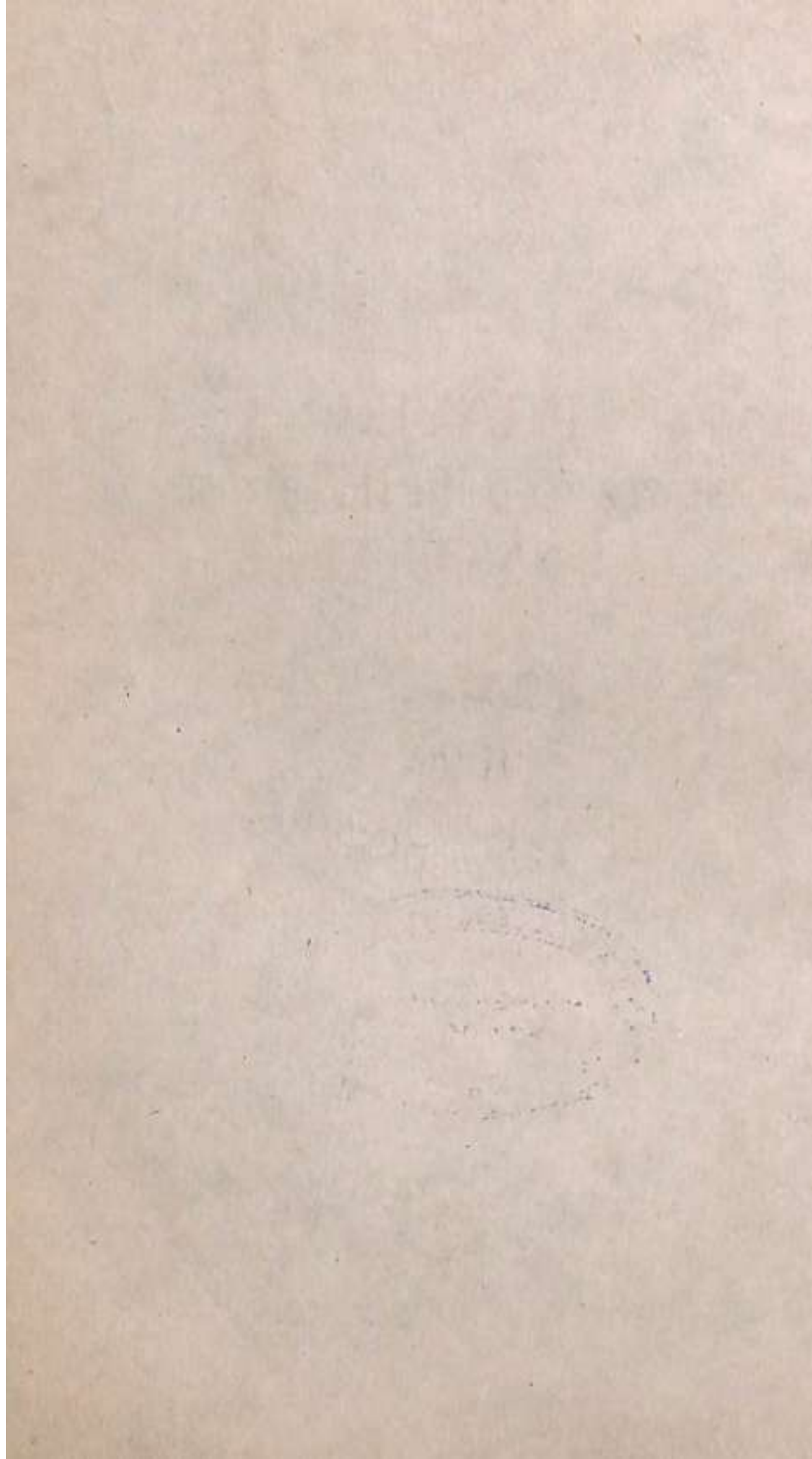
Frank Topping



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PRAYER TO THE LORD OF TIME





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# PRAYER TO THE LORD OF TIME

FRANK TOPPING



ST PAUL PUBLICATION

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To A S Berry  
with gratitude for adventures shared  
from the Solent to the Sea of Galilee

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## TIME TO LIVE

Lord,  
I would like my life  
to be full.  
I would like  
to learn things,  
to have a keen interest  
in an absorbing subject,  
to have friends,  
to enjoy company,  
to travel,  
to be fully alive.  
There are so many things  
that I tell myself  
I would really like to do,  
but I can see the years slipping away  
whilst I do nothing more adventurous  
than talk about life,  
rather than live it.  
Lord,  
the gift of life is precious.  
Let me not waste  
the years I have been given.  
Lord of time,  
I do not hope  
to change the world.



But every day  
I have the chance  
to change my world.  
I know that it is never too late  
to start again.  
Give me the energy  
to tackle new ideas,  
the courage to make mistakes,  
the strength to climb out  
of my comfortable rut,  
to contribute to the world about me,  
to come to life.  
Lord,  
I know that if I put myself  
at your disposal,

if I say,  
'Lord, guide me, use me',  
then my life will change.  
But I find it difficult  
to offer myself wholeheartedly.  
At the back of my mind  
I have so many reservations.  
If I say,  
'Lord, take everything I have',  
I do not really mean *everything*.  
If I say,  
'Let me do what you want,  
providing that it's not too demanding.'

Lord,  
in spite of my reservations,  
in spite of my nervous commitment,  
in spite of my weakness,  
in spite of myself,  
hear my prayer,  
and bring me to life.

## TIMES REMEMBERED

In everyone's life  
there are times that are remembered  
above others;  
moments of excitement and delight;  
recollections of the beauty of a place,  
or a face,  
or a time of immeasurable peace.  
And always,  
times remembered  
are times shared.  
For such elation, such lifting of the spirit  
can only scale the peaks of joy  
in the company of others,  
or in the awareness  
of the presence of God.  
I can remember  
learning to swim, and shouting,  
'Look, look, I can do it!'  
And smarting eyes and swallowed water  
could not reduce that moment of triumph.  
I can remember singing songs  
on Christmas Eve,  
in a room full of uncles, aunts and cousins  
and wishing it would never end.  
I can remember the incredible joy



of two people discovering  
that their love was mutual.  
I have shared dawn breaking over the sea  
with a solitary bird,  
and with the King of Creation,  
in times remembered.  
Lord,  
you have been present  
in every moment of happiness.  
The laughter of a child  
is your laughter.  
The bond that unites  
families, friends and lovers

is forged by you.  
Times remembered  
are times when  
the eternal love which surrounds us  
is experienced  
for a brief moment.  
Lord, the giver of joy,  
may there be, this day,  
at least one brief moment  
to add  
to my times remembered.

## TIME FOR QUESTIONS

There are times  
when everything seems pointless.  
I find myself asking,  
'Why am I alive?  
Where am I going?  
What am I doing with my life?  
What is the point of my existence?  
Am I merely existing,  
Simply passing the time  
between waking and sleeping?  
Is there something I have to do,  
to achieve, to learn?'

Dear God,  
Do not let me live to be useless.  
There must be more to life  
than earning money,  
eating food, buying clothes,  
watching television.  
In my head, over and over,  
I hear the words,  
'Do not be anxious  
about what you shall eat,  
or what you shall drink,  
or what you shall wear.  
Your heavenly Father knows

You need these things.  
Seek first the kingdom of God.'  
Is that why I am alive,  
to search for meaning,  
for God?  
I have searched,  
but at this moment  
I seem to have taken a wrong turning,  
I am in a blind alley, lost.  
Lord,  
if this search leads from here to eternity  
I do not ask to see that far.  
Simply show me the next step.  
If your kingdom starts here,  
guide me along the path  
that I might not merely pass the time,  
but find purpose and meaning  
today.

## MORNING TIME

Some people are like larks,  
and others, owls.  
I wish I were a lark,  
greeting the day blithely,  
with a spring in my step  
and a song on my lips,  
attacking life  
with vigour and confidence.  
Instead, I'm like a bear,  
a grizzly bear,  
with half-closed eyes,  
shuffling and grunting and irritable.  
Lord,  
at the start of this new day,  
refresh me.  
Refresh me Lord,  
prevent me from growling  
at people struggling  
into their new day.  
I have so much to be grateful for.  
If, in the first hours of morning  
I cannot sparkle,  
help me, at least, to smile.  
If I cannot make conversation,  
help me, at least, to listen,

quietly and with patience.  
Lord,  
you know what it is  
to spend sleepless nights.  
You spent them on mountains  
and in the wilderness.  
You faced weariness,  
suffering and crucifixion,  
and met each of them  
with love, or healing or forgiveness.  
Lord,  
this morning  
refresh me with your spirit  
that I may know  
your forbearance,  
your patience,  
and your peace.

## TIME FOR LAUGHTER

Thank God for laughter.  
How dull is the day that passes  
without a smile;  
how long the hours  
without a spark of humour.  
How subtle of God  
to create beings  
who can laugh at themselves,  
even when things go wrong.  
And if we are made  
in the image of God,  
is he a laughing God?  
When God is not weeping  
does he laugh at the antics of man?  
Blessed are the laughter-makers  
for they bring heaven to earth.  
Blessed are those who greet us with a smile.  
Blessed are those whose laughter  
lives in our memories.  
Blessed are those  
whose chuckles and laughing eyes  
tug the corners of our mouths.  
Blessed are those who see  
the funny side of things  
for they redeem mistakes and failure.

Blessed are those who make us smile  
for they reveal the face of love.  
Blessed are those who make us laugh  
for they reveal the joy of heaven.

Lord, help me  
not to take myself too seriously.  
If I am being pompous,  
prick that balloon  
with laughter.  
If I am being intense  
about little things,  
remind me, with a nudge,  
how ridiculous I am.  
When I am alone,  
let me see the sky and smile,  
let me see trees and flowers  
and laugh for sheer joy.  
Let me know  
that to be alone with God  
is to be in the presence  
of a father  
who comforts us with love  
and heals us, with a smile.

## TIME TO BE

Somehow, over the years  
I've become conditioned  
to fill every minute  
of my working day  
with activity.  
I've convinced myself  
that doing nothing  
is a waste of time.  
But ceaseless activity  
eats away my life,  
gulps down whole days  
so greedily  
that weeks, and even months,  
disappear,  
with nothing to show  
except the vague memory  
that I was very busy.  
Lord of time,  
help me to make  
time to be.  
Every week,  
I fill my diary  
with people to meet  
and things to do.  
I keep on the move,

I make little lists  
of tasks that must be done.  
I wonder if  
I'm afraid of being still?  
I wonder if  
I keep myself busy  
to avoid the real questions?  
I wonder if  
my activities are an unconscious attempt  
to prevent any kind of real thought?  
Am I afraid  
of simply being me  
without an excuse?  
Lord,  
slow down my aimless race.  
In my hurry,  
my vision is blurred.  
Slow me down, Lord.  
Enlarge my life with stillness.  
In serenity, help me to take stock,  
to enjoy what is close at hand,  
to delight in lingering  
in the company of those I love,  
to appreciate and to enjoy  
every precious moment.  
Lord of time, slow me down.

## TIME TO PRETEND

I heard a story once  
of a man who was so ugly  
that he wore a mask,  
a handsome mask.  
In time he fell in love.  
He was afraid to remove his mask,  
but when he did  
he was amazed to find  
that his lover found his face  
as beautiful as the mask.  
He had become  
like the mask he wore.  
I wish I could wear a mask  
that would make me more loving than I am.  
Yet I do wear masks  
and I do become  
the mask I wear.  
If I have to be friendly  
when I'm not feeling friendly,  
a few minutes in my friendly mask  
and I become — like my mask.  
If I need to be patient,  
even when I'm irritable  
if I wear my patient mask  
in a short time

I become like the mask I wear.  
In other words,  
if I behave in a kindly manner,  
provided that my mask does not slip,  
then I stand a chance  
of becoming kind.  
Suppose I dared to wear the mask of Christ.  
Could I bear it?  
Could I, like him,  
die to myself?  
Would I,  
through the eyes  
of the mask of Christ,  
see the needs of people  
and behind that mask  
be moved to compassion,  
to generosity, to forgiveness?  
Lord,  
you have offered me the mask of Christ,  
but I am afraid;  
give me the courage to wear it  
that I may die to myself  
and live in him.

## TIME FOR MYSTERY

Lord of time,  
we are surrounded by mystery,  
from the vastness of galaxies  
measured in millions of years,  
to the flight of a migratory bird.  
There is mystery  
in the laws of the universe—  
in laws that have existed  
before man—  
in laws that are defied  
at our peril—  
laws of space, of earth, of sea,  
of life itself.  
But without mystery,  
what quality of life would we have?  
Lord of time,  
teach me not to be afraid of mystery.  
Don't let my thoughts  
be confined by reason,  
by black and white lines of logic.  
Let me rather  
explore the rainbow gift  
of imagination.  
Children are perhaps  
nearer to the Kingdom of God

because a child's hours and minutes  
are splashed with awe and wonder,  
and mystery is their delight.

Lord,  
if man is the highest form of life,  
then the universe shrinks  
to the size of the human mind.

So thank God for mystery.

There is hope in mystery;  
there is a promise of the future  
in the mystery of the Infinite.

Lord,  
in my press-buttoned,  
computerised,  
time-table dominated world,  
let there be  
time for awe and wonder.



## TIME FOR CARING

The world news  
is so often disheartening,  
that perhaps  
we could be forgiven  
for avoiding it,  
and for saying  
'I can't see, and so  
what I can do about it?'  
But if I close my mind  
when papers print  
news from far away,  
will I turn my back  
on things nearer home?  
I can't avoid  
the society in which I live,  
nor detach myself  
from the world.  
But what can I do  
that could affect the world?  
What is the news?  
It's what people are saying and doing  
to each other,  
for each other,  
against each other,  
with each other.

No matter how much I want to,  
I can't shut my ears  
or close my eyes  
to the human race.  
I can't bury my head in the sand,  
like the ostrich.  
But does any action I take,  
anything I say or do  
contribute to the world?  
It must do:  
no man is an island.  
Lord,  
when Mother Teresa  
gave her first cup of water,  
it was not world news.  
When Francis of Assisi  
embraced a leper,  
he didn't make headlines.  
When, from the cross,  
you forgave the sins of mankind,  
the world shrugged its shoulders,  
and yet the world was changed forever.  
Lord, help me to see  
that every act of kindness,  
every word of forgiveness,  
every gesture of love,  
seen or unseen,  
is good news—  
world news.

## TIME FOR A CHILD

For Julia  
a single day  
embraces all the adventure,  
laughter, pain and tragedy  
of a life-time.

With nine birthdays  
notched on her Brownie belt,  
each new day is a world  
to be explored, suffered  
and conquered.  
In games with her friends  
her chatter  
is bright and incessant,  
stilled only by crouched contemplation  
of a primeval snail  
labouring from stone to stone  
in a meadow pond.

For Julia  
heart-rending tears  
flow with inconsolable grief  
for a broken toy,  
a lost doll,  
or a tiff with a bosom friend.

For Julia

justice and injustice  
are sharply defined  
with a clarity beyond the fathoming  
of time-blunted grown-ups.  
Her simplicity and directness,  
her freshness,  
her unconscious closeness  
to her creator  
convicts me  
as worldly-wise and weary.



Yet in her innocence  
is so much hope  
for the world  
and for me.  
'Unless you become  
as little children,  
you shall in no way  
enter the Kingdom of Heaven.'  
Lord,  
grant me patience  
to learn from little children,  
to feel again  
the wonder of discovery,  
to share the magnified minutes  
of make-believe,  
to know the joy  
that brings hand-clapping,  
shouts of delight,  
to see your gaze  
in the eyes of a child,  
to hear your voice  
in the love and truth of a child.

## AGEING TIME

We grow old differently  
on the inside  
than we do on the outside.

On the outside  
there are signs of wear:  
the hair is thinner,  
the face is lined,  
the limbs won't do  
what they used to do.

The flesh may be frailer,  
but the inside of me,  
the real me,  
is not weakened by age  
but strengthened.

I am not old, but older,  
and the older, inner *me*  
takes disappointment  
in a stride.

Traumas,  
that twenty years ago  
would have stopped me in my tracks,  
hardly slow me down  
today.

Emotions that shook my frame  
are harnessed, tempered





by bitter-sweet experience.  
Paradoxically,  
the ageing, inner me  
can now recapture  
something of the carefree nature  
that came before the passions of youth,  
in childhood and innocence.  
Dear God, Holy Spirit,  
the things of the spirit  
are the only realities  
that age cannot weary.  
And the spirit that  
reaches out to Spirit  
is, in time, set free  
from the flush and quiver  
of ambition,

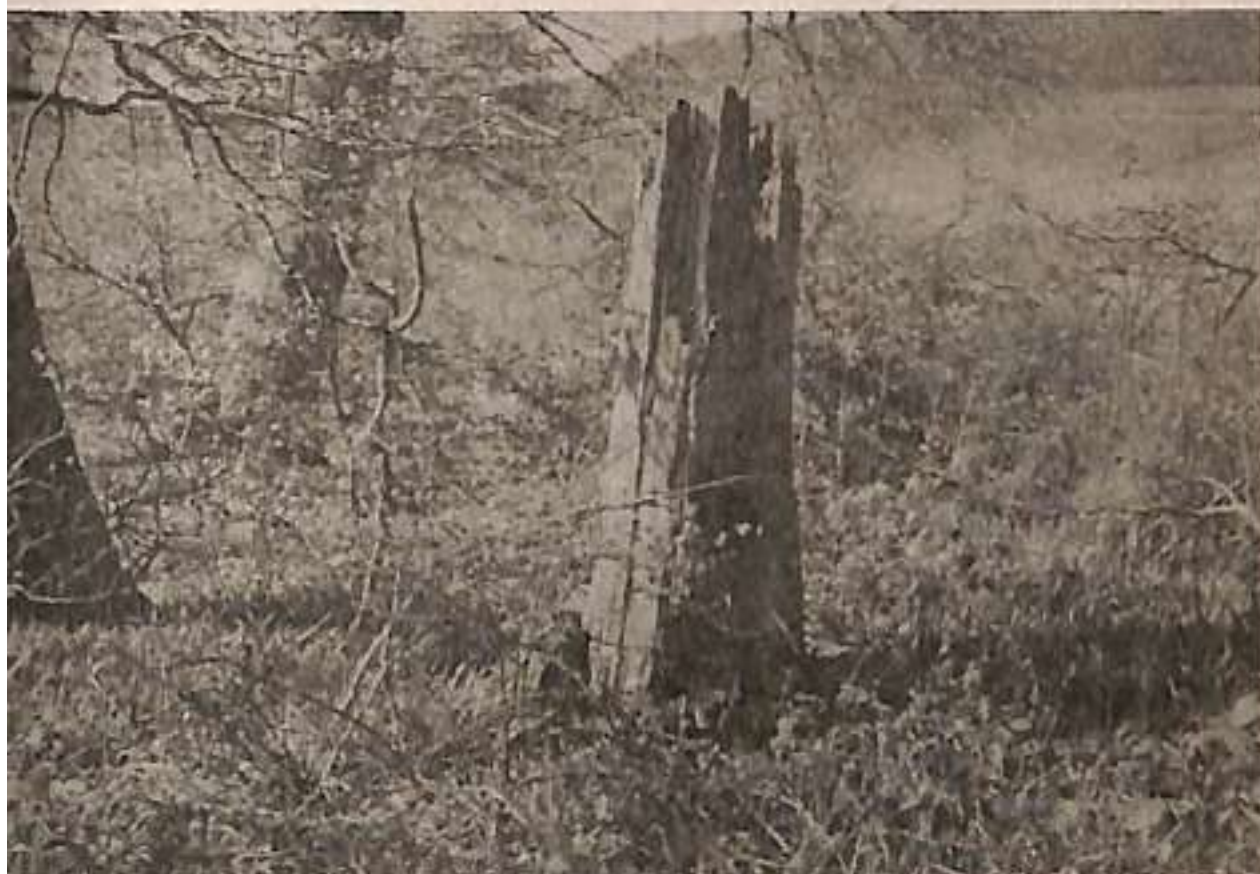
the fleeting joys of status and possessions,  
and the physical indignities of age.

Lord,

as I grow older,  
may I be blessed  
with faith enough  
to make the journey  
from ageing body  
to ageless life.

## TIME FOR RENEWAL

Sometimes I wish  
I could wipe the slate clean  
and start again,  
start a new life,  
have a new personality.  
It's only a fleeting thought,  
because there are  
so many things that I treasure  
and wouldn't like to part with.  
No, I don't want to wipe  
everything from the slate—  
just the bad days:  
the sadness, the anger,  
all the mistakes.  
It would be good  
to blot out every failure,  
every hasty and wrong decision,  
every row,  
every pain I ever caused;  
to reassemble, to recreate my life,  
with all the good and acceptable facets  
of my character.  
And yet, without the faults,  
without the flaws, without the pain,  
would life be so rich,  
or love so deep?



I know that I can't go back  
and change one day of my life.  
Yet I have only to ask,  
and in your eyes  
my sins and failures are removed,  
not merely forgiven, but erased  
as if they had never happened.  
Even though I stumble  
and offend against goodness  
every day of my life,  
your love does not weary.  
So, Lord,  
once again help me with the love that cancels  
every fault;  
help me  
to re-fashion my life  
in your image.

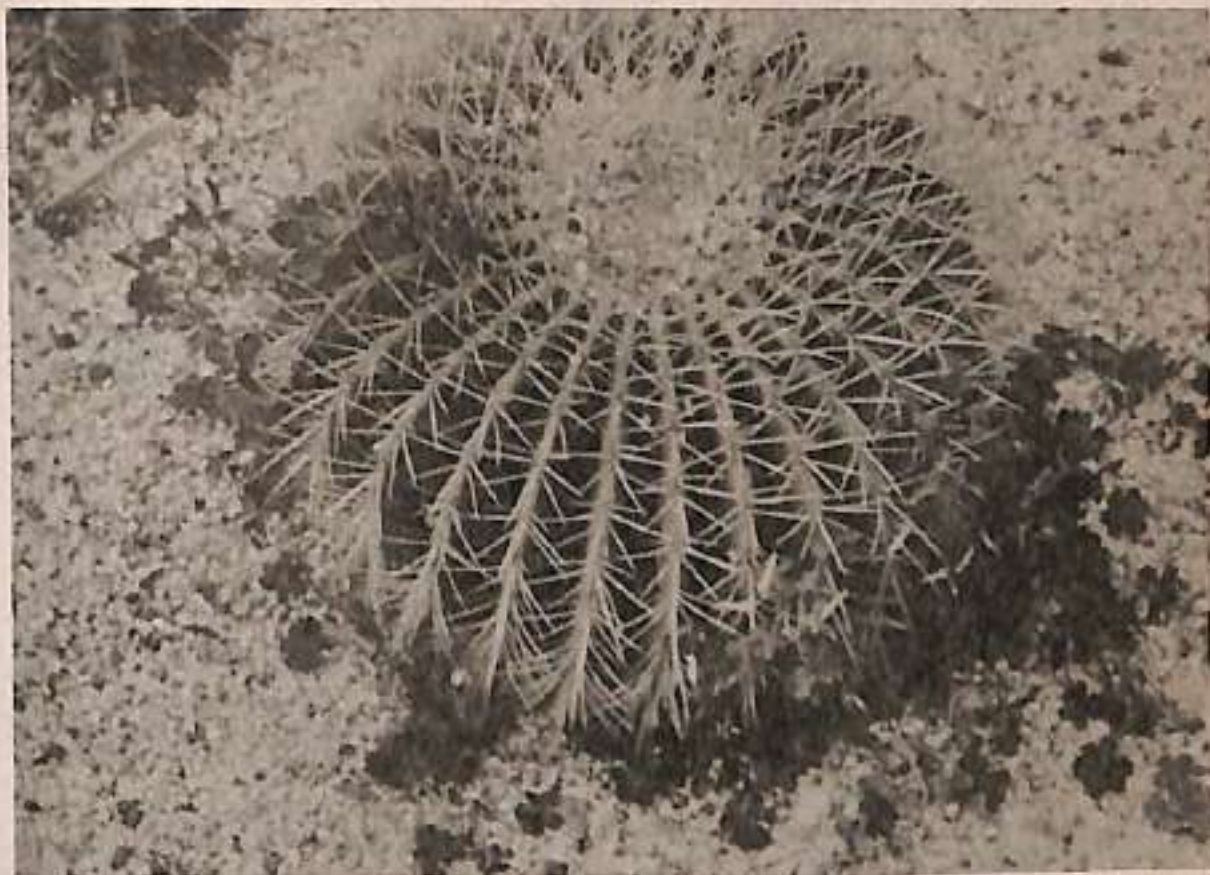
## TIME TO SEE CHRIST

If I say the name  
*Jesus Christ*,  
what images  
leap into my mind:  
hundreds of pictures,  
northern Christs,  
serene, fair-haired and blue-eyed  
Italian Christs,  
dark and curly  
oriental Christs,  
African Christs,  
bearded,  
sometimes clean-shaven—  
I see him breaking bread  
with his disciples,  
agonizing in the Garden of Gethsemane;  
or perhaps, I see a crucifix  
too cruel to contemplate.  
The image of Christ  
can't be captured on canvas,  
nor can sculptor's skill  
confine him to wood and stone.  
For Christ wears the face  
of a hungry child.  
He looks through

the bars of prisons.  
He is with the dying  
and the newly born.  
He is in refugee camps  
and in ordinary homes.  
He is glimpsed in compassion,  
in healing,  
in every act of selfless giving.  
He is love—resurrected.  
Risen Lord,  
let me live my life  
aware of your triumph over death;  
let me see you  
whenever I see need,  
that I might respond as I ought.  
Let me see you in my work,  
that I might witness to your presence.  
Let me see you in my home  
that I might speak and act  
as a child of God.  
Let me know you in my heart,  
that the thoughts of my mind  
might reflect your love.

## TIME TO BE HONEST

How difficult it is  
to say, 'I was wrong',  
to make a straight-forward confession.  
Even at the suggestion of fault  
my every instinct  
leaps to rationalize  
every action, every word:  
my deeds are misunderstood,  
my words misinterpreted.  
I'll say, 'I had no option;  
I had to do that.'  
I'll prevaricate:  
'If she hadn't said that,  
then I wouldn't have replied  
as I did.'  
It's hard to say, 'I was wrong.  
Forgive me.'  
What complex arguments,  
what involved explanations  
we launch into,  
rather than admitting  
we are at fault.  
How defensive I am  
if any statement of mine  
is questioned.



How aggressive I become  
if blame looks like  
stopping at my doorstep.  
Perhaps it's the instinct for survival,  
or perhaps it's simply pride  
that makes me believe my own excuses,  
that convinces me that I'm always right.  
Lord, help me to face the truth about myself.  
Help me to hear my words  
as others hear them,  
to see my face  
as others see me;  
let me be honest enough to recognize  
my impatience and conceit;

let me recognize  
my anger and selfishness;  
give me sufficient humility  
to accept my own weaknesses  
for what they are.  
Give me the grace—  
at least in your presence—  
to say, 'I was wrong — forgive me.'

## TIME TO BE STILL

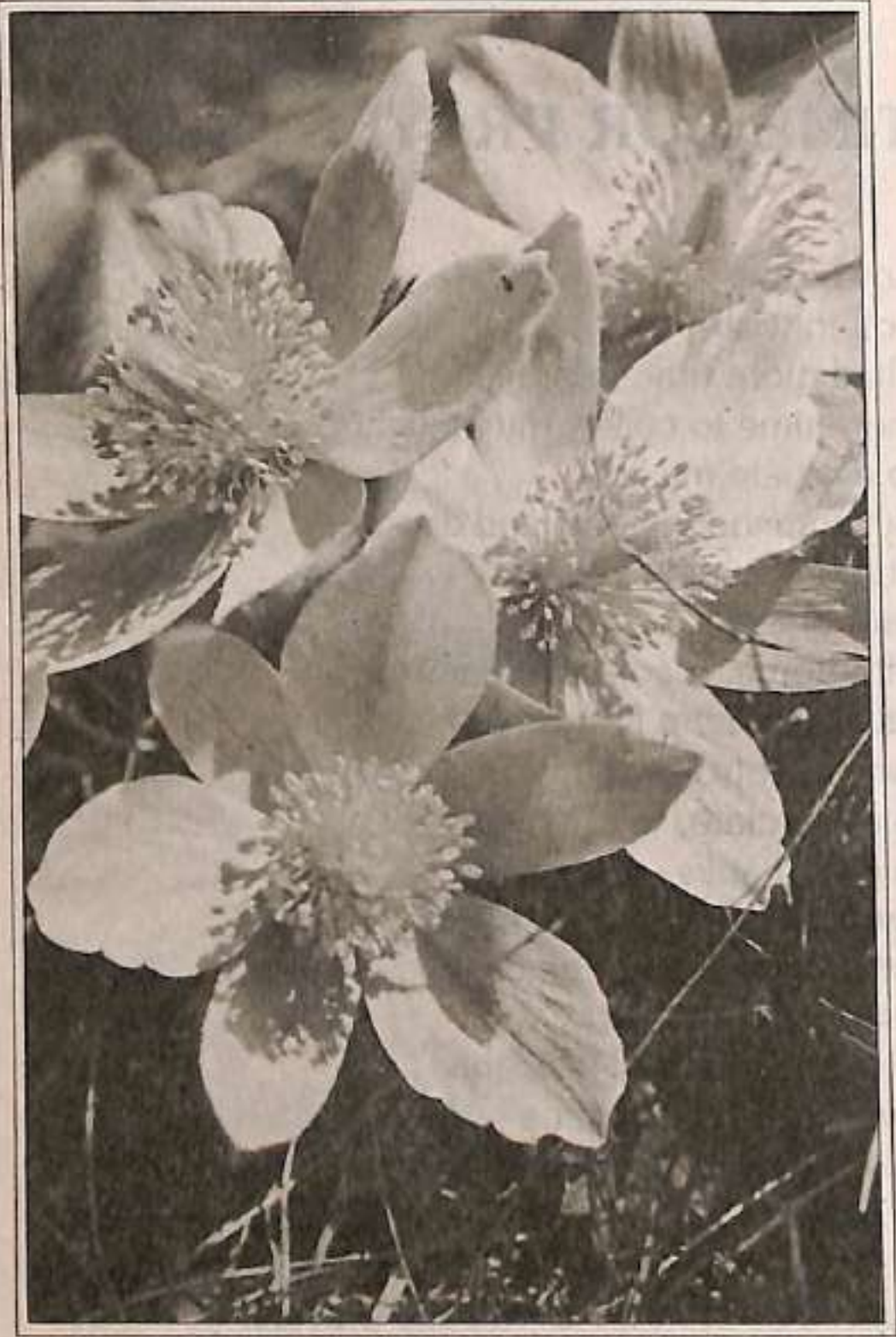
Holidays should be  
refreshing, restoring, renewing.  
Holidays should *recreate* us;  
that's what recreation means.  
Yet so often they exhaust us.  
We come back in need of a rest,  
making jokes  
about needing a holiday  
to get over the holiday.  
But sadly, it's not really a joke.  
We really are unrested.  
Is it because we do not know  
how to relax,  
how to be calm,  
how to be still?  
We seek out  
quiet and beautiful places;  
but quietness around us  
does not mean quietness within.  
Even in silence  
our minds are chattering,  
arguing, planning.  
'Be still, and know that I am God.'  
If only we could  
be still in our minds,

if only we could, truly,  
'rest in the Lord.'  
Lord,  
teach me how to still  
my racing thoughts.  
Help me to come to you  
arguing nothing,  
pleading nothing,  
asking nothing,  
except to be still  
in your presence.  
Give me the faith  
that will enable me  
to lay my burdens at your feet,  
and to leave them there  
in exchange for the peace  
which passes all understanding.

29/5/15

## TIME FOR PRAYER

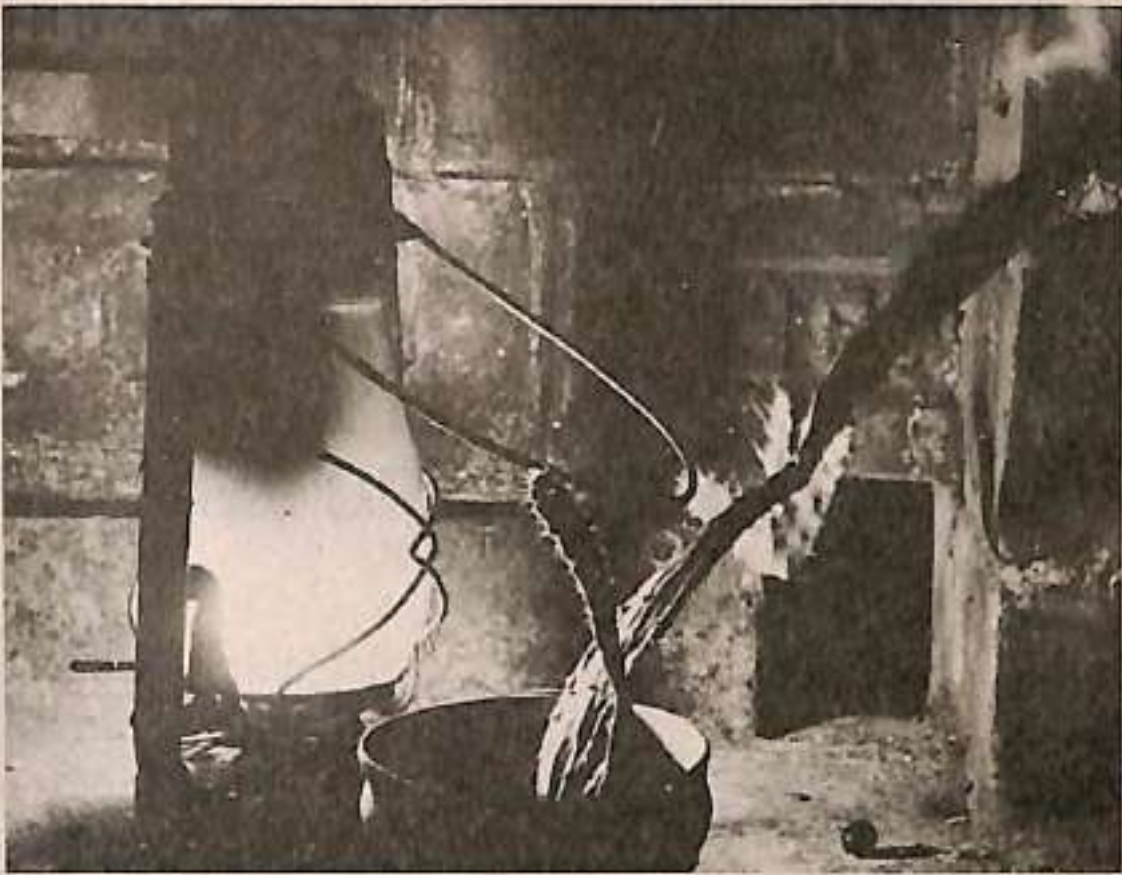
Lord,  
I often wish  
I had more time to pray,  
more time to collect my thoughts,  
to evaluate my life.  
But somehow, hours and days  
slip through my fingers.  
I am blessed  
with home, food and friendship,  
yet I take them for granted.  
I wish I could take time  
to appreciate, to remember,  
to give thanks — to pray.  
I wish I could intensify my life,  
rather than letting the days  
disappear in a blur  
of unremembered incidents.  
I wish I could take time  
to see beauty and rejoice,  
to hear laughter and give thanks,  
to see people and pray.  
I wish that even if I do not say prayers,  
I could at least  
look and listen prayerfully.  
Lord,



help me to be alive  
to your presence.  
Help me to see you  
in the faces of those about me.  
Help me to hear you in the wind,  
in the ripple of a stream  
and in the voices of friend and stranger.  
Help me to come alive.  
Give me the courage  
to stand in the path  
of the wind of God  
that I might pray with my life  
and my life may become a prayer.

## TIME TO MAKE PEACE

Lord of time,  
I want to make my peace with a friend.  
But it's hard to bite back the arguments  
that have crossed and re-crossed my mind,  
to choke the cutting remarks  
I've rehearsed in my head.  
Life is too short  
to waste precious hours  
in ill-humoured conflict.  
Lord,  
help me to be truthful  
in looking at my own failures;  
help me to be generous-hearted  
and to make my peace.  
Lord,  
forgive me for letting petty disagreements  
grow into full-blooded rows.  
Forgive me for being so full of myself  
that I can't resist retaliating;  
forgive me for the pride  
that hardens my mouth,  
for my meanness of spirit,  
and the words I've spoken  
that have caused pain or distress.



Forgive me for expecting apology  
instead of saying, 'Sorry.'  
Lord,  
help me to make my peace with you.  
Every expression of anger  
is a denial of your love.  
Every unlovely thought  
is part of your Passion.  
Every sin against my fellow  
is part of your crucifixion.  
Lord,  
even from the cross  
you forgave, and offered Paradise.

Help me to recognize  
the love you offer,  
and to share it  
as generously as it is given.  
Help me to make my peace,  
and to live in love.





## TIME FOR OTHERS

Lord of time,  
I'm quite good at saying,  
'Something ought to be done about it'  
but not so good  
at taking the initiative  
and doing something myself.  
I hear myself saying,  
'She's lonely.  
She needs to get out and about  
and meet people',  
yet I do not invite her  
to my home.  
I can't afford the time.  
When I say,  
'She should meet people',  
I really mean, *other people*,  
not me.  
Lord,  
forgive me  
for my half-hearted concern.

Forgive me  
for being so miserly  
with my time,  
for being impatient  
in conversation with the elderly.  
Forgive me  
for groaning inwardly  
when I see someone who is troubled  
approaching me.  
Forgive me  
for not listening wholeheartedly,  
for mentally looking at my watch,  
inwardly tapping my foot  
and backing away.  
Forgive me  
for the hypocrisy  
of pretending concern  
whilst making sure  
I will not get involved.  
Lord,  
you have always taken the initiative.  
You did not delegate others  
to visit the sick,  
or to comfort the sorrowful.  
You came into our lives;  
you healed  
by listening, talking, touching.  
You could not resist  
the crisis of the lonely and the troubled;  
you gave not only time,  
but your last breath.

Lord,  
help me to respond to need generously.  
As you have time for me,  
may I have time for others.



## HARVEST TIME

At this time of year  
churches and chapels  
are so filled with the fruits of harvest  
that ministers must tread carefully  
across overflowing sanctuaries.  
Communion rails and altar steps  
are festooned  
with flowers, hops and ferns.  
Choir stalls rise  
above hills and pyramids  
of apples, pears and tomatoes.  
Cucumbers are positioned  
with green-fingered pride  
beside bread shaped as sheaves of corn,  
for it is time to be thankful.  
As farmers look at the fruit of fields  
and gauge its worth,  
so I must consider my harvest—  
the harvest of days and years—  
the harvest of time.  
Taken in all,  
it has been good.  
There have been doubts and fears,  
mistakes, and pain,  
but they have withered



overcome by deep-rooted trust,  
overshadowed by the blossom  
of laughter  
and friendship.

Like the farmers, I've been known to complain,  
yet, through all the disappointments,  
the harvest of the years  
has been rich in experience and love.

Lord,  
your harvest  
is the harvest of love;

love sown in the hearts of people;  
love that spreads out  
like the branches of a great tree  
covering all who seek its shelter;  
love that inspires and recreates;  
love that is planted  
in the weak and the weary,  
the sick and the dying.  
The harvest of your love  
is the life that reaches  
through the weeds of sin and death  
to the sunlight of resurrection.

Lord,  
nurture my days with your love,  
water my soul with the dew of forgiveness,  
that the harvest of my life  
might be your joy.

## THE TREASURES OF TIME

Another day's post  
stares up at me from the breakfast table.  
Without opening them  
I can see from their cellophane windows  
that they are about Insurance, Assurance,  
Renewals and Bank Statements.  
There is one, thank God, hand-written,  
from one of my sons.  
And suddenly it is very clear  
what things matter most.  
Insurance companies may go bust,  
money is worthless  
in itself,  
status a shallow fraud  
but love is without price.  
The older I get,  
the more I'm inclined to be obsessed  
with security and safety,  
taking precautions  
against poverty in old age.  
But this morning's post  
makes it very clear  
that the greatest investment  
I can ever make



is love:  
in the love of my wife and children,  
in the love of friends,  
in the love of God.  
For love bears all things,  
hopes all things, endures all things;  
Love never ends.  
In itself,  
money is worthless.  
Without laughter and familiar faces  
time is meaningless.

Without faith, and hope and dreams,  
the future is poverty-stricken.

Lord,

may I never seek  
the security of things  
at the expense of those I love.

Teach me instead  
to store up days that never fade,  
shared minutes

that moth and rust cannot corrupt.

Bills and bank balances  
may come and go,  
but the treasures of time  
are measured in love.

## TIME TO FORGIVE

How terrible are the words,  
'I'll never forgive him.'  
Withholding forgiveness  
reduces people,  
scars the face with bitterness,  
cripples the mind,  
gives root to a bitter canker  
that grows within,  
hell-bent on self-destruction.  
How terrible the words,  
'I'll never forgive him.'  
The time to forgive is now,  
immediately, unconditionally;  
for unforgiving memory  
rekindles anger that deafens and blinds;  
unforgiving memory  
relights the fires  
of pains past.  
Only forgiveness  
can open the flood-gates  
of pent-up hurt and irritation.  
Released, their force is spent  
in the deep, broad surge of forgiveness.  
The time to forgive is now.

Lord,  
your forgiveness is always immediate:  
'Go, your sins are forgiven you.'  
'Rise up, your sins are forgiven you.'  
'Father, forgive them.'  
'This day, you will be in paradise with me.'  
You do not forgive seven times,  
or even seventy times seven;  
your forgiveness is never ending.  
As I turn to you,  
knowing that I will receive your forgiveness,  
wipe clean not only my sins  
but erase forever from my lips  
the words  
'I'll never forgive him.'

## TIME FOR FRIENDS

When I was young,  
I used to think  
I had lots of friends.  
Time sorts them out;  
time's seeing eye  
examines them, tests them  
and measures them.  
Through distance, work, adventure and experience  
time reduces the number,  
drawing a line through some names  
and underlining others.  
The final count is very small.  
With some friends  
ten years' separation is as yesterday;  
time cannot dim the flame.  
With others a year, or even a day,  
is all time needs  
to extinguish friendship forever.  
Time tests most severely  
when things go wrong.  
When there are accidents and failures,  
when marriages fall apart,  
when jobs are lost,

When I heard once the  
thing reveals who is true and who is not



when loved ones die,  
time reveals who is true and who is not.  
Only a few friends stood at the cross,  
only a few stood firm  
in spite of everything.  
Lord,  
when I have failed friends  
I have failed you.  
Give me the courage to be a true friend.  
In those times when friends are needed,  
let me not be afraid of opinion, nor of failure.  
Let me not run from sorrow or grief,  
but let me stand, with you,  
beside my friends  
in their hour of need.  
Let my friendship be a pledge  
of my faith in you.

## A TIME OF FEAR

Fear is such an unaccountable thing.  
I don't mean fear of pain,  
or loss, or future things.  
I mean the fear that sweeps down  
and covers me like the black shadow  
of some great albatross  
hovering unexpectedly  
and without reason.  
And all I want to do is close my eyes  
and hope that everything  
will go away.  
But that solves nothing.  
Fear is irrational.  
It feeds on doubt and darkness,  
hides behind the eyes.  
So I must face my fear  
and come to terms with it.  
The moment I find courage  
to think and reason,  
fear recedes.  
If I can smile at myself  
fear retreats even further.  
If I can do one unselfish act of love,

then fear is defeated.  
Lord,  
in the Garden of Gethsemane  
you shared with everyone  
who has ever been afraid.  
You conquered fear with love  
and returned saying,  
'Do not be afraid.'  
In the light of your love  
death has lost its sting  
and so has fear.  
Lord,  
may your love  
be the key that releases me  
from fear.

## TIME ALONE

Surrounded by those I love,  
it seems ungrateful  
to want to be alone.  
It is not merely a selfish desire,  
there is a need to be alone;  
to be away from the comings and goings  
of family and friends;  
to be free from the never-ending voice  
of city and town:  
to escape the incessant clamour  
of newspapers, radio and television.  
I am not cynical or tired of life,  
I simply need to hear my own conscience,  
to reassess, to find myself.  
I am tempted  
to escape from thought  
by being so busy and involved  
that vital questions  
are pushed into a dust-covered mental recess  
marked pending.  
Crisis and sorrow,  
triumph and success  
need to be prepared for,  
need to be considered before the event.

It is foolhardy  
to push away ultimate questions  
about my own life and existence  
until the flame of my years  
begins to stutter.

It is self-evident  
that the deeper the question,  
the greater is the need  
to be alone.

Standing on a hill  
overlooking a city  
I see bricks and concrete  
surrounded by fields  
like a small cluster of stones  
on a green baize table;  
and the big city is not so big.  
Sitting in the timeless silence  
of an ancient chapel  
I hear the still small voice  
that has been drowned in the roar of humanity.  
And returning, I find  
I am no longer alone.

## TIME FOR JOY

So much of my time  
is spent not seeing,  
not hearing, not enjoying.  
I can drive through sweeping hills  
and lush green fields,  
and hardly notice them.  
Deaf to the sound  
of breeze and bird song,  
some fretful thought shuts out  
a world of beauty  
and a chance of joy is lost.  
Lord of time,  
in whose presence a minute  
can be measureless,  
let me not waste my life  
on small concerns.  
So much of my time  
is spent in needless hurry;  
in saying, 'Excuse me;  
can't stop, sorry,  
—so much to do; must rush.'  
The joy of casual conversation  
is cut short,



because somehow  
I think *chatting* is merely  
wasting time.  
My efficiency robs me of pleasure.  
Lord, teach me  
that time spent talking  
of books, or sport,  
of last night's television,  
is not time lost,  
but time enriched.  
In my self-conceived sense of hurry,  
my self-important bustle,  
there is no time to talk,  
no time to listen, or to look,  
no time to enjoy;  
no time to be aware of the peace of God  
in places, people,  
or within myself.  
Lord of time,  
help me to rest in your presence,  
to find time to share,  
time to smile,  
time for prayer,  
time for joy.

## TIME FOR GOD

Dear God,  
so many of my decisions are impulsive;  
so many of my judgements are ill-informed;  
so much of my understanding lacks wisdom.

When I have decisions to make,  
help me to decide calmly.

When I am about to make a judgement,  
let me see what is good and positive.

When I interpret the words  
and actions of my friends,  
may I be as generous to them  
as you are to me.

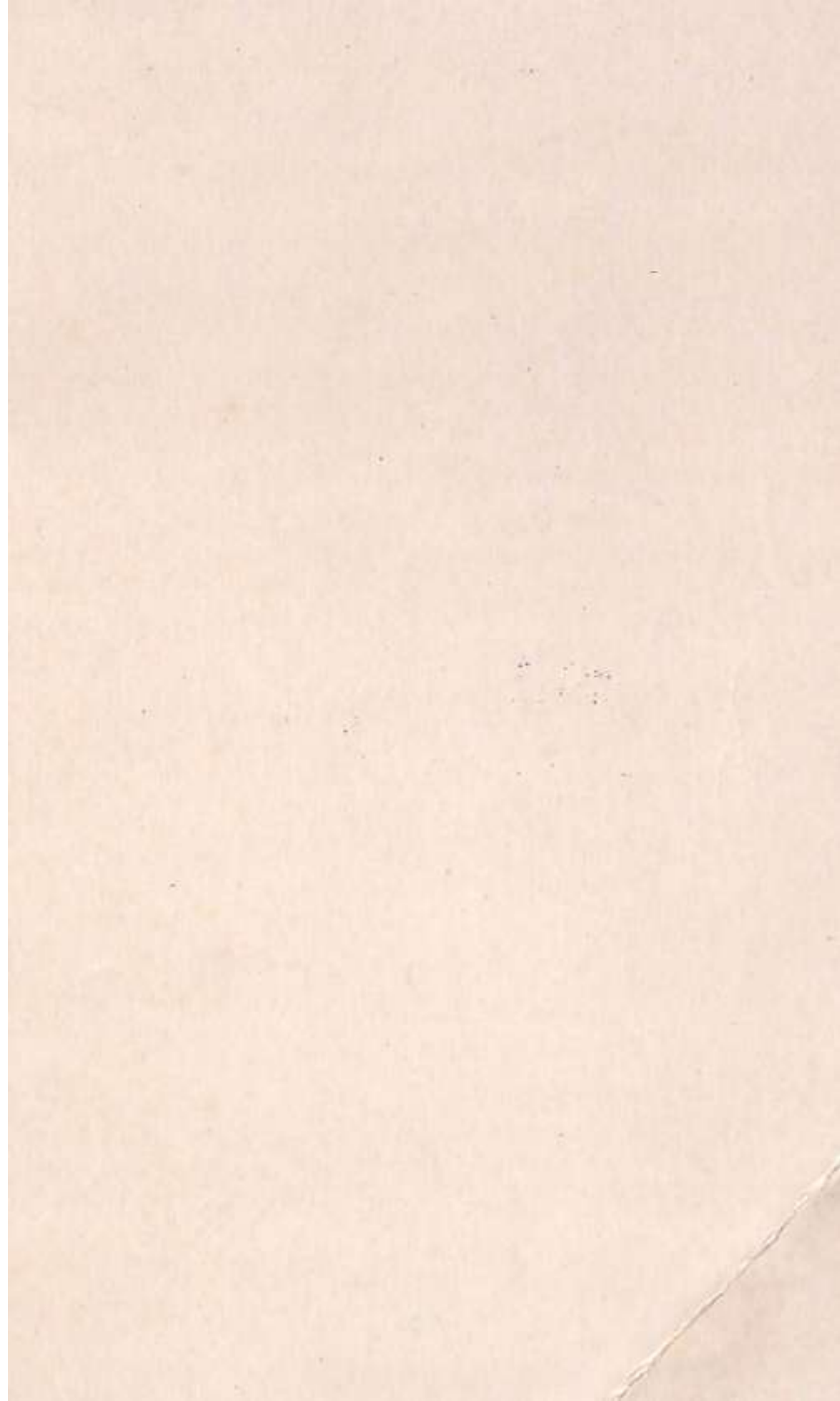
Dear Lord,  
my eyes deceive me,  
my ears mislead me,  
my tongue lets me down,  
my thoughts are confused—  
unless you are with me,  
unless you direct  
my looking, speaking, hearing,  
all I think

and say and am.  
Lord, I ask you to possess,  
to enter that fraction of time,  
that millionth part of a second  
before I think or speak,  
so that the knowledge of your presence  
may influence all I do.

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# PRAYER TO THE LORD OF TIME



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