

Consider  
the Days

 MAUDE ROYDEN 

# Consider the Days

FROM THE WRITINGS OF  
DR. MAUDE ROYDEN, C.H.

*Doctor of Divinity, University of Glasgow;  
Assistant Preacher, City Temple, London, 1917-1920;  
Order of the Companions of Honour.*

Compiled by DAISY DOBSON

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## FOREWORD

THERE IS ONE QUESTION that every sane person is asking today — “What can I do to make this a better and very different world?” Maude Royden, whom many of us have known and loved and looked up to for twenty years, gives us the answer in this book. It is to “Consider the Days,” to think on those things which give spiritual power and richness to the days of all life.

Within the book, for which the selections have been made by Miss Royden’s secretary Miss Dobson, we find Dr. Royden’s clear insight into truth, her passion for honesty, her hatred of sham, her love for beauty and her sensitive understanding of human nature, all with the background of her love for God, and her life-long determination to do His will.

Although Miss Dobson has arranged the book for daily readings, one could not think of stopping with these small bits. One reads the book all through first, rejoicing in its clarity and power, and then one comes back to it for daily meditation and guidance. It is a book to give thanks for, and it is a privilege for the Young Women’s Christian Association to be its channel to American Christians. But it is not a book for “Christians only.” It is a treasure to share as well with those who for one reason or another have not called themselves by His name and have not come within the shelter of His Church. And when we have read and reread the book, the next word Dr. Royden would bring to our remembrance, I am sure, is, “Ye know these things — happy are ye if ye do them.”

“Through the war the world must be reborn. Is it not my duty to be reborn first of all?” This was the question asked by a great Frenchman at the close of the first World War. We all echo his question and know that he was right. We, each one of us, must be reborn, born into a new life of righteousness and truth and power and love, if the world is not to be destroyed. And the only way to this new world is to think on these things, and then to do the will of God with all our heart and soul, mind and strength.

EMMA BAILEY SPEER

## INTRODUCTION

THIS BOOK, which contains quotations from my sermons and writings, has been compiled by my friend and secretary, Daisy Dobson.

I offer the book to the Y.W.C.A.'s of America with my best wishes for their great work, and in gratitude for all their kindness to me since we learned to know one another at Hot Springs, Arkansas, in 1922.

MAUDE ROYDEN

*Bayley's Hill*  
*Sevenoaks*  
*Kent, England*

*CONSIDER THE DAYS*



*January 1*

I wish you a very happy New Year. . . . I wish that the things you are afraid of may never happen, but I wish still more that you may cease to be afraid of them, because then only will you be safe. I wish your anxieties may be dispelled. I wish your loneliness may be relieved. I wish you love and friends and work, the work that you would like to do. How I wish these things — yet do not wish them a hundredth part so much as God wishes them for us all.

*January 2*

"I will arise and go to my father. . . . When he was yet a great way off his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him."

It has only struck me comparatively recently what a miserable motive the prodigal son alleged for his return! His father's hired servants had bread enough and to spare, while he perished with hunger; therefore let him return to his father and say, Make me as one of thy hired servants. And yet when his father saw him coming, he was beside himself with joy.

The saints tell us that we must desire God for His own sake and for His sake alone; not for anything that we can get out of Him. I realize now that, although this must be our goal and ultimately we shall reach it, if not in this world yet in another, it *is* the goal — not the beginning. The beginning, I suppose, is always the desire to get something which we feel only God can give us. We may want actual bread, or health, or security, or freedom from fear or anxiety. These are poor motives, say the saints. True: yet they are good enough for God. Not only are they good enough for Him but, when we obey the impulse which the saint and the psychologist can so relentlessly analyze down to its meanest components, God sees us when we are yet a great way off and is filled with joy as He comes to meet us.

I know that people say their self-respect prevents them from acting like the prodigal son. What is the use of having self-respect in the presence of God? It is silly, it is childish, it is preposterous.

*January 3*

The first time anyone told me that God liked me it was such a joyful surprise that I cannot resist at intervals handing it on to other people. I was brought up to believe that God loved me, but



it never occurred to me that He could possibly like me; and all of us want to be liked as well as loved.

#### *January 4*

When you come up against the hard places of life, either in your own life or in the life of those whom you love, when much depends upon your courage, upon your action, words, or thoughts, you will find — many of you have found already — that in that hour nothing counts but your spiritual power. What you say is nothing, even what you do is not much; but what you are is everything. To have power at such a moment, to face life when it is most hard, or to help others for whom life is cruel, is worth a lifetime of preparation. You will find that the power of your spirit, which depends on the training and the discipline to which you have subjected it, is all that you have to meet that hour, or to help that friend.

#### *January 5*

I have heard critics complain of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. Those who brought no oil were no doubt foolish, they declare, but were nevertheless much less disagreeable people than those who brought oil and refused to share it. Folly is, after all, preferable to meanness. But this is folly indeed: for Jesus is dealing with truths that life proves to be facts, even if hard facts. What is the oil with which we feed our lamps to light our path? Clearly it is wisdom. But can wisdom be shared as if it were a cake that can be sliced up and handed round? Or a cruse of oil into which everyone can dip his measure and take his share? Oh, no — it is not of this nature. Wisdom is bought not with money but with life, with blood and sweat. No one can give it to us: we must win it. The wisest and most loving parents can indeed advise their children from their own wisdom. They can, with their own lamps, shed a little light on the paths their children must tread. But that is all. The time will come when they would give their very eyes to impart to their children the wisdom they have so dearly bought, and they cannot. They can only say, "Go, and buy for yourselves."

#### *January 6*

Do you know a hymn that begins: "O Master, *let* me walk with Thee"? It often strikes me as an extraordinary thing that we should sing that, as though it were God who had to be entreated to allow

us to walk with Him, whereas it is we who do not take the trouble to walk with Him. How long have any of us tried to walk with Jesus — one day even? From the moment when you wake in the morning to the moment in which you go to sleep? It is easy to sing a hymn as though it were Christ who had to be entreated. It is we who do not really take the trouble to do it.

I would challenge any of you to try for one day, and at the end of it think: "Did I really walk for more than a few minutes at a time with Christ?"

### *January 7*

Why did our Lord condemn to eternal loss the Pharisees, the "righteous" men? . . . it was because all they did or renounced doing centered in themselves. They were absorbed in saving their souls. That is the danger of all religious people.

### *January 8*

Human nature is susceptible to love, and if it does not seem so, at least this is certain — that it will answer to nothing else. If love fails, it is because nothing can succeed, for there is no other universal appeal to men than love, and I believe that it never does fail. It may to the end of life seem to fail, as it did with Judas Iscariot. But in some other world beyond the reach of our human vision, it does not fail, any more than the Crucifixion of Christ, the supreme instance of love, could fail. Therefore when our Lord says to us, "Love your brothers. . . . Do unto them as you would that they should do to you," He is not appealing to a vague idealism but to the most practical common sense. Appeal to what is base, and you get a base reply. Appeal to what is noble, and you will redeem humanity.

### *January 9*

What can we ask God for? Everything! Two things we cannot, in all our prayers, overestimate: one is the will of God to give, and the other is the enormous obstruction that we put in His way — our dishonest prayers, our pretense that we want things we do not want, our dreadful misconceptions of God's will for us, our fears, our anxieties, our agony of mind. Then let us take heart and pray —

"Our Father which art in Heaven . . . give us this day our daily bread."

*January 10*

The knowledge that we have helped to make the great sum of evil; that the sea of the world's tears is a little deeper and a little saltier for the tears that we have made others shed; the sum of the world's pain and sin heavier, its darkness greater because of us: this is hell.

*January 11*

"Commit thy way unto the Lord and put thy trust in him; and he shall bring it to pass."

Do you sometimes feel when you are tired that you *cannot* lift up your heart to God? This is the way that desolation often takes me. I feel hindered so greatly that I cannot do anything — I cannot look for God until I feel better. *I* look for God? But God is looking for me! I do not have to lift myself up — I should not reach Him if I did — but He is reaching down to me. "He bowed the heavens also and came down."

*January 12*

*Use your brains.* Use your brains to set the world in order with one-tenth part of the passion that men have used their brains to control the material world, and we shall have the Kingdom of God.

*January 13*

You are an immortal spirit, and before you stretches eternity. There is no point in your life at which you shall say, "There I give it up: I cannot now do anything." If you are sixteen or sixty, or more, it does not matter. You are an immortal spirit. Do not give yourself up but start again. All eternity before you, and you only on the threshold of it, whatever your years in this world!

You will have to go back some day and undo all the harm you do. You will have to retrace your steps some day and do again what you have done wrong. You must at last retrace with bleeding feet the path on which you now go from failure to failure. "As a man soweth, so shall he also reap."

But if you take your immortality as a divine inheritance, if to you it is a great thing and a glory, it is because you are *now* beginning to retrace your steps, and it is glorious to think that you have eternity in which to grow godlike.

*January 14*

In my experience of human nature the fool will not learn in any school at all, and it is a wise man who is able to learn even from experience.

*January 15*

Our Lord spoke nobly of human love, and especially of sex love which (He says) is even greater than the love of parents. That, for an Eastern, is an amazing teaching. A Chinese woman told me once that she thought the greatest saying in the whole Bible was this: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife"! At one blow, she said, that broke the bondage of the family which in the East is so great as to be a tyranny. It has its beautiful and noble side indeed, but there is something more. So beautiful is the love of man and woman that it must supersede, it must surpass the love of parents for children and children for parents. There is in Christ no element of that cruel contempt for sex love and sex desire that is found in so many spiritual teachers. But in this also, man is above all a spiritual being. The whole principle of the love of lovers must be that it is the physical expression of a spiritual love, and therefore it must be faithful because the spirit is undying.

*January 16*

Have you never been conscious in other people of a mulish refusal to follow a line of thought which is really due — whether they know it or not — to an unwillingness to take the appropriate action? Have you never been conscious of it in yourself? Conscious that, when someone is urging upon you a course which is going to cost you a great deal, your mind instinctively puts up one intellectual doubt after another, one intellectual difficulty after another, because you do not *intend* to be convinced? Because, if you were, you would have to do something about it?

*January 17*

To give ourselves to God is to give ourselves to life, for God is the source and the author of life. To give ourselves to Him, so that all our strength, our energies, our desires become unified in a flight toward life, toward God, that is to know joy, and that joy no man taketh away from us. It is something which is above the reach of

circumstances. It is something which no tragedy can take from us, because our nature is now at one.

### *January 18*

Gerald Heard believes that the human race has come to a point at which it must either rise spiritually or fall. What do we mean by "spiritual"? I think most people think of a spiritual person as one who is very indifferent to material things, who has trained and disciplined himself by prayer, meditation and contemplation, who has taught himself to be indifferent to material things, who can dominate them and, if necessary, do without them. Very often one associates the word with something rather remote, rather withdrawn from ordinary human contacts and human feelings, so concentrated on God that He seems far away from us; and we think this remoteness is due, not to lack of heart and feeling, but to great spirituality.

I think this is where we make our first mistake. According to our Lord, that person is spiritual who is full of love, and the spirit He speaks of is the spirit of love. Translated into terms of human kindness it is such a homely, domesticated kind of virtue that we hardly associate it with great spirituality. Yet if God is Love this is what it is to be "spiritual."

I suppose that is why the surprised and startled sheep who were placed on the right hand of God were so astounded. They didn't know that spirituality was love. No one has taught us this as Christ did, and still we find it hard to believe.

### *January 19*

Love is not blind. There is no critic in the world so sharp-sighted as the person who truly loves, because he is sensitive to every fault. Yet that justness is the very soul of love. Those people who love us will never give us up. They will redeem us from the very gutter, they will pluck us from the very wreckage of humanity, because love finds it impossible to believe that we cannot rise at last.

### *January 20*

Why do people think it is a compliment to be told they look fifty when they are seventy, or forty when they are sixty? Why do they go to beauty parlors to have all that life has put on their faces wiped out? To wipe out all that is in your face because you want to look younger than you are! What! If you have lived through

much, do you want to have it all obliterated from your face and form? I feel more inclined to say with Richard II:

*"No deeper wrinkles yet? Hath sorrow struck  
So many blows upon this face of mine  
And made no deeper wounds?"*

The body of an old person should be like the sword of an old warrior. It should be scarred; it should be scratched; it should be notched; it should look as if it had been *used*. The desire to look as though you had never lived at all is very strange to me.

#### *January 21*

It is the desire in your heart that is prayer. Not what you say with your lips, but what you hunger and thirst after unceasingly — that is prayer.

#### *January 22*

I believe that God loves all nations and all people equally. And I do not think that His love is increased by our goodness or diminished by our badness, but that it is always the same and always perfect.

We ourselves cannot help liking some people better than others, though even we sometimes deplore the fact that we cannot regulate our love for our friends in proportion to their solid worth. In our parents we may even see something like the reckless love of God. Ideal parents (and all of us know some of these) persist in loving all their children, and sometimes love them equally; or even love best the least deserving. I do not accuse God of this, believing that He loves us equally. Perhaps He does not see such a difference between the good ones and the bad ones as we do.

#### *January 23*

I do not say that if Christian people did what Christ did they would be popular; I am quite certain they would not; but their unpopularity would be a vital thing, a challenging thing.

#### *January 24*

How many times in the history of our race have men prayed and wept and offered burnt sacrifices to God for guidance, and the Guide has come, and they have rejected Him! The Messenger has

come and they have not heard Him. The Messiah has arrived, and they have crucified Him. Has it not often struck you how tragic it was that every pious Jew was praying for the coming of the Messiah and, when He came, while they still prayed, they crucified Him? Over and over again on a smaller scale that has happened in the world.

I once heard of what looked like the beginning of a spiritual movement in a little pagan village, where there had seemed to be no spiritual life at all. I was told with much amusement, by some people living in the squire's house, that there was a man who had come to preach in the village from near by and quite a lot of people were going to hear him, although — ridiculous to relate — this man was a plumber! I very nearly said to them, "Not a carpenter this time?" Not Jesus who lived among us here on earth and earned His living at a carpenter's bench?

#### *January 25*

The fact that our Lord saw, with such penetrating clearness, the faults of those He loved best, as well as their virtues, must have made His friendship such a comforting and strengthening thing.

#### *January 26*

Our Lord said: "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." By being "lifted up" I think He meant, and His hearers understood Him to mean, "If I am crucified," and I suppose many of us have felt that the Crucifixion has drawn us to Christ even more than His power or His beauty. It has been His experience of the dreadful suffering which falls on so many human beings that has moved us to adoration; and it is by going through the things of this world, and not recoiling from them, that we too shall be able to move the world at last.

#### *January 27*

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Turning their incommunicable pain into understanding, they become the healers of the world. The rankling, festering grief of the mourner who hugs his grief to himself, sure that there is no other in the world so great, is turned by them into a deep and moving compassion for men and women everywhere who suffer equally — or less — or more. And in this turning outward, suffering becomes

divine; it becomes godlike. God Himself suffers like that. Therefore He gives His strength to these His children. They do not cease to suffer. There is no way in which suffering can cease for the world until the world is altogether God's, and the more godlike men are the more they suffer. Every great lover will tell you that love means pain, and we can only escape pain by escaping love. But while pain continues it becomes redemptive, and the feeling that it is purposeless and senseless disappears.

### *January 28*

It would seem likely that religious people would not ask very glibly for the prayers of others if they realized what prayer was or accepted what our Lord declared it to be. I think that every "religious" person, and certainly every minister of the Gospel, must often have been repelled by the extraordinary glibness with which people ask or rather demand their prayers. In many cases they do not seem to have a notion that they are asking for anything of great value or anything which costs much. On the other hand my heart has often sunk at the expression evoked on the faces of churchgoing Christians when I ask for their prayers!

### *January 29*

It is sometimes said that modern religion does not make people realize the awfulness of sin. If that is so, it is a grave defect in modern religion, for there on the Cross, we see what sin does — little, miserable, pettifogging sins to start with, and then the great swelling wave of misapprehension, the refusal to see or understand.

### *January 30*

There is no one who has not felt that desolation of not being understood. It is not by any means always due to the fact that people do not think well of us. It is sometimes the knowledge that they think far too well that leaves us with a sense of loneliness.

### *January 31*

Love brought light out of darkness, order out of chaos and life out of death — animate out of inanimate nature. Love can create courage in the heart of the poltroon, and purity of spirit in the prostitute and the rake. It can give the grace of a free spirit to the mean-hearted, and release the egoist from his galling chains and narrow prison.



*February 1*

"A dear old lady in London was asked whether she could sleep through the blitz. 'Oh yes,' she replied, 'I ask the Lord to keep an eye on me and then I say to myself that there is no sense in two of us keeping awake, so I go to sleep.'"

There is another story, much older, which conveys something of the same idea. One of the soldiers who most faithfully followed St. Joan of Arc was named La Hire. It is said that when he woke in the morning, he knelt down and said: "Lord, I am going into battle. If I forget Thee, do Thou for La Hire what he would do if he were God and Thou wert La Hire."

*February 2*

During the last war, a friend said to me, "God is not interested in justice, He is only interested in love."

It gave me a shock; but it gradually dawned on me that if I had ever taken our Lord's teachings about justice seriously (I do not say literally, but seriously) it would not have been shocking to me but a mere commonplace.

In the Sermon on the Mount this is made quite clear. Jesus said: "Ye have heard that it has been said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; But I say unto you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.'" This is not simply a condemnation of a barbarous standard of ethics. It is a call to go forward from a good standard to an ideal one. ("Be ye therefore *perfect*, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.")

*February 3*

These burdens you and I carry were not imposed on us by God, but are the consequence of our social and individual disorders; of those failures and wrong ways of living which are responsible for all the pains into which men and women are born, or from which they suffer.

*February 4*

We notice how it is said of the disciples again and again, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." Yes! and I am sure that is true; it is true today. But there is another side to it, is there not? Do you always want Christ to be present — *always*? Has