

SPIRIT in ACTION

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“On Being Yourself” by Rev. John Seaman Garns

The following is a transcript of a radio talk given by Rev. Garns in the late 1930s or early 1940s on the Minneapolis, Minnesota radio station WTCN. This lesson is part of a series of talks, entitled “Your Power is Within You”. Several more of these transcripts will be presented over the next few months.

Don't you sometimes get tired of being just yourself? Doesn't it get desperately monotonous doing the same thing, meeting the same people at breakfast, business, on the street? Don't you sometimes feel like the old lady who committed suicide and who left a note saying: "Just plain tired out of buttoning and unbuttoning." Of course nowadays, we'd say, "zipping and unzipping."

Yes, the outsides of life coming in grow frightfully oppressive and frustrating at times. If we let things, work, routines and people dictate existence, we are bound to get "plumb tired out of buttoning and unbuttoning."

Yet there are people who succeed in making life shine with radiance while they do the most menial and monotonous things and they always seem very wonderful to me. No downs, no blues, no bad days, just a wonderful consciousness of living life masterfully and beautifully. Isn't that the art of arts, and wouldn't it be wonderful to be that way?

Dr. Richard C. Cabot somewhere tells of a conductor with whom he rode for many years,

commuting on the Boston and Maine Railway. This conductor would take his ticket, Dr. Cabot said, and punch it, giving the distinct impression to every person in the coach that, he, the passenger, was a person of distinction, and that the conductor was a gracious host welcoming this famous individual. "I traveled with this man for years and I never saw him fail to give this note of distinction to putting a punch in a ticket."

How would you feel about punching tickets all the rest of your life? Perhaps you are in some other zone. The repetitious side of life of course crowds in upon almost all of us, but wouldn't it be marvelous to be able to give distinction to all those monotonous repetitions like tapping the typewriter, sweeping the floor, washing dishes, or ringing up sales on the cash register?

Yes, there is an art of transcending conditions. What is it that makes life endurable, nay, even radiant and significant, a daily adventure, with every opportunity of finding the new and unusual? Basically, isn't it the feeling that your life and mine are significant? Yes, that's the word. The moment I begin to feel that my life is not significant I am ready to die, and the moment you and I feel that we are doing something without which the world would be poorer and that our little contribution to existence serves others and brings real significance into life, then life becomes really radiant.

Don't you suppose that the conductor, if we knew his history, had reached the very apex of his

ambition and was proudly aware that he was a man who had attained? Don't you imagine he might have been a brakeman first, then a fireman on the engine, perhaps then he graduated to being a conductor on a freight train, and when he finally reached the marvelous position of being conductor on the Boston and Maine passenger train that was the very apex of significance in life for him? The president of the United States would have nothing on him.

You see it doesn't matter so much how really significant in the cosmic order you and I are, but it matters in the deepest kind of way that we feel our significance, and that we are aware that what we are doing, is more or less a complete expression of the worth within ourselves.

But do you and I have any control of this consciousness of significance in life? We certainly do. My attitude toward the things I do each day makes all the difference in the world as to how much happiness I get out of each day's duties. Isn't that the way with you? If I keep looking away to faraway pastures and carp under the conditions and the things I am working, I am not only minimizing the significance of my work but I am making myself a very little person, with a feeling of my non-significance in the universe. After all, let me say it again: The whole thing is getting the feeling of significance within us, about ourselves, and over that you and I have almost absolute control. May I show you?

After all, the fundamental attitudes and activities of being are only three. Yes, you can strip life down to three activities in consciousness. Isn't that strange, and you yourself have control of these three activities, every one of them. Now who says we do not have control of life, and who' says that if we went definitely to work we could not change ourselves and change the significance of existence. What are these three attitudes you ask? Well, let's set them down:

- 1) Life is to us what we receive into consciousness.
- 2) Life is what I am interpreting myself to be—my consciousness of significance to myself and to my universe.
- 3) Life is to me what I accomplish in action, and my consciousness of my significance of this expression.

You see I have used the word, "consciousness" in each of these three categories. Life is after all consciousness and I have control of that consciousness, and so do you.

It is just as simple as breathing – In breathing;

one receives air for the sake of taking oxygen. One halts for a moment, a brief second, to realize and complete the reception while the "I" realizes who it is that breathes. Then one exhales with either a passive sense of letting go or with a dynamic consciousness of speaking a word into action.

Now my contention is that we could live with a hundred times more joy and happiness, not to speak of efficiency and power, if we could attack our problem of skimmed-milk-living, right here at these three points.

I want my life to be rich cream, don't you? Of course, we are told that even a cat would founder on cream if she had nothing else, but I have always contended that I'd like the chance of dying that way – just foundering on the cream of life, wouldn't you? It's easy enough to go back to skimmed milk and cottage cheese if you didn't like the cream. If we allow life to run us all the time and become merely conscious of being that which life seems to dictate to us, it does get to be a very skimmed milk sort of affair.

So let's find some way of breaking the molds of these three zones of life.

RECEIVING – BEING – EXPRESSING

Are you ready to adventure with me? First, you must escape from life as it is. Now I don't mean escape as Emily Dickinson says, she means it. "I never hear the word, 'escape'" she says, "without a quicker flood of sudden expectation, a flying attitude all through my body." Well, that's one way of escape, but that isn't the kind I mean. Sometimes escape means to me a relaxation of every muscle, a deep sigh, a closing of the eyes, a giving of myself up to the soothing motion of a full-length hammock, or the lazy vibration of a canoe with my body supine, my eyes up toward the stars and the lazy lapping of the water, lulling me to rest. I mean of course in imagination, for you don't need to have the canoe or hammock to move off into whatever condition of life you choose. Of course imagination is a wonderful vehicle, the most marvelous power that man has, the single ability by which he can over-leap the ugly present into the ideal life in which he wishes to live.

Don't think for a moment that this is fantasy. The kind of escape I mean is deliberately to free oneself from the hindering limitations of existence as it has built itself up around us. Perhaps I should say, as we have built it ourselves, though we don't always feel responsible. So the first movement is an escape.

Come on. Let go while I talk, will you? Can't you catch the feeling of these words of John Galsworthy, the great English dramatist, and can't you register them in your body and in your deepest spirit, as I speak them? Listen to what he says:

*"Brother! Behold! The stars are lit forever
The land and sky are like a symphony of great music,
The spirit goes forth and enters the harmony of things, and drinks the magic of the world.
If the mountains cannot teach us, and the wide night skies above them, sparkling with other worlds, then nothing will.*

For on the mountains and beneath such skies man feels at his greatest, flies forth in fancy, and dreams his dreams of nobility."

Doesn't that help you to escape in the best sense of that word, to move out of the old drudges into a universal, world that transcends your little personal world? Yes personally, I have to escape from things and duties and enterprises, and from my own narrow feeling about life, to another kind of feeling – a feeling of the greatness of the world and all that it suggests of significance to me.

But I don't like to leave myself there for it leaves me too relaxed. That's merely the first elemental action which corresponds to inhaling, and I do not need always to inhale with a sense of complete "letting go."

I can drink in the oxygen, the new feeling about myself and my significance in this great universe and that's the second step in finding our freedom under this first elemental action of "being-receiving." If I can never get away from myself, so I must enlarge and expand this conception of myself by drinking into mind and body a consciousness of greater significance.

Will you try a second experiment with me? Will you close your eyes as you sit there listening, and dwell with me upon some images by which we may not only escape but enlarge and perfect ourselves. With closed eyes, say to yourself as you inhale:

How would I feel if perfect healing energy and life were pouring into my body this moment?

Say it again:

How would I feel if perfect healing energy and life were pouring into my body this moment?

That phrase "How would I feel" has a magic formula, for it releases man's power of imagination to over-leap the actual into the realm of the real.

Will you join me again by saying, "How would I feel if refreshing and healing life were pouring into my deepest being?" Don't you feel relaxed, enlarged, refreshed and sustained?

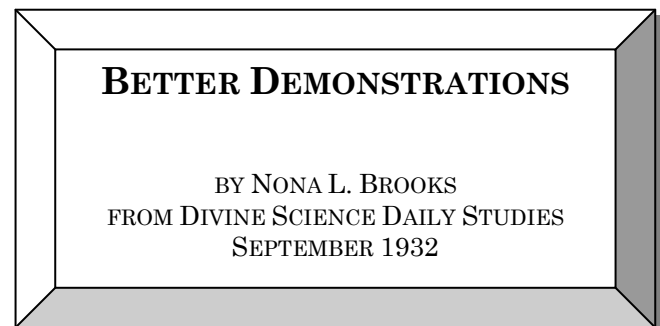
Now when I have finished, will you turn off the radio for a moment and do the same exercises through, using the word "Peace" and then the word "Harmony?"

How would I feel if peace were pouring into my body right this moment?

How would I feel if harmony were pouring into my body right this moment?

Then before you cease take also the thoughts behind the words, "Freedom" and "Power."

Now this is the first adventure in escaping the little self and enlarging life. Under those three headings, of "Receiving" "Being" "Expressing," I want to experiment with you, in the next few talks, on enlarging the significance of each one of us. Won't that be fun? And I think you will find it more than fun. You will find the significance in yourself.



My thought has been turned to demonstration lately with an earnest longing that Truth students everywhere should be more powerful and more instantaneous in their healing works. There are many demonstrations today, I know; but there should be more and they should be accomplished more quickly and more easily.

In the East and West I have been delighted with the demonstrations I have found in every group of students I have contacted. Personally I have had many evidences of the power of the Spirit, in my own life, among my friends and in all of my affairs.

I am grateful and rejoice in this; yet I am sure that all of us can bring our healing to a higher level. Let us think it over together.

I am well aware that demonstration is not the main thing. I know that we should not fix our attention upon outer results to the dimming of the light that brings well directed spiritual growth - the greatest experience that can come to one; but Jesus said we should do the works that he did and even greater works.

We should be doing these greater works. Are we? I think you will agree with me that we are not. I feel that the life of every student should radiate such power into the world that the harmony of Life would be more in evidence than it IS today. Some are doing it, but I am speaking to laymen as well as to outstanding workers. All should be evidencing more power. Why are we not?

Perhaps we are contented with a passive faith; perhaps we expect only partial demonstrations. Our mental attitude determines our experiences. For instance, at one place in the West, a bright-eyed little lady came for an interview. I had noticed her in the meetings; her face showed strength of character and possessed the inner light, evidence of spiritual consciousness. I thought, there is a powerful woman. I was not surprised that she was spoken of as being unusual. I was pleased when she asked for interview; I wished to know her better.

Imagine my surprise when she told me that she and her husband had lost every cent they had. "And now," she went on, "my husband has lost his position and can get no other. He is discouraged and despondent and I cannot seem to help him. We are in debt and are borrowing money to live on. Something is wrong. What is it? I have been healed and have helped others to health and peace but I have never had a financial demonstration."

In my astonishment I exclaimed, "But you know Truth. How can such conditions be in your environment?"

"Yes," she replied, "I know Truth and I try to live it. My inner peace has not been disturbed,

not for a moment; but I know I should demonstrate supply as well as health and joy."

We had several interviews, and here are some of the things I discovered which would account for her present problems:

Before studying Science she had believed that Jesus was poor and that poverty was a Christian virtue. She looked upon money as a necessary evil; the excess of it must be avoided. After she was partially convinced that this attitude to money was a mistake, she was afraid to treat for supply lest she should distract her attention from the spiritual. She treated others for health and had good results but sent them to some one else when the problem was a financial one. She could take no interest in it for, "Perhaps the seeker needed the discipline of poverty to develop character or to bring forth spiritual qualities."

Another mistake, you see. I found that her husband had never been a money-maker. They had been forced to practice strictest economy through the twelve years of their married life. However, she said she had never complained for when they were married he was poor and she knew what to expect.

This dear woman had done what many others have done, she had accepted Truth and applied it in certain directions only; she did not realize that its saving law should be applied to every situation in life.

We had several long talks. I felt it to be vital for a person of her strength of character and integrity of purpose to be rounded out, balanced in all directions. I remembered that in the early years of my own study I had applied the Principle I had learned to health alone. That God healed was such a new idea to me, and such a remarkable one, that it filled my entire mental horizon. It took me several years to realize that the Law of Life, God in action, could be applied in every direction; that one who limited the Law to one part of life only did not perceive Truth clearly. I also saw that, we were not saved from world conditions until we were certain that every phase of our experience was included in God and must have Divine Wisdom applied to its

solution.

I told my friend this and much more. I showed her that the moment one accepted God's universal presence as the keynote to health, as the assurance of bodily harmony, if he were logical, he would carry his thought further and know that the same Law that brings to one health and happiness will bring also the quiet certainty of supply and prosperity in all directions. The one who can say, "God is the health of my body," can affirm with equal certainty, "God is my immediate and abundant supply." Since the first affirmation is Truth the very Principle upon which we base our certainty of health gives us our assured confidence in changeless supply.

The thing that deters many from realizing prosperity and permits them to suffer today from world disturbances is that they have not applied their understanding of Truth definitely and concretely enough to the problem of finance, to demonstrating along that line. Poverty is just as great a mistake as disease. I like the story in second Kings, fourth chapter: A widow appeals to Elisha for help. She is very poor and her two boys are to be taken for debt. This was not unusual in those days. The prophet asks what she has in the house. She has only a pot of oil. She is told to borrow from her neighbors every jar that she can get, to shut herself and her sons in and to pour the oil into the empty jars. The woman did as she was told, and the oil poured "*until it filled every jar that she had set.*" Life is always doing this; it always meets our every positive expectation; every jar that we set is filled.

In the early days, I set my jar for health and got it. Now I set many jars – for supply, joy, companionship and many other God-given blessings.

I told the questioning lady of a healing that took place several years ago, a healing which illustrates the point I am emphasizing. A cultured lady who was known to be exceedingly spiritual became an invalid and was confined to her bed for fifteen years. During all of this time she was poised and cheerful; a wonder to all who knew her. Finally a friend persuaded her to see a practitioner. After the first visit she asked for treatments. Improvement

began immediately and in a few days she was well and began to study earnestly the Truth that had brought her this great blessing. Her friends came with hearty congratulations; it was a time of rejoicing.

I was present one day when one of her former church friends said to her, "I cannot understand. If God heals why have you not been healed before? You have been an earnest Christian for years, why has God let you suffer so long, if He can heal?"

I can see now the happy face of my friend as she answered, "I have believed that God sent sickness. That, for some good reason, this had come upon me and that I should be ill as long as God willed it; then I should be restored to health or released from suffering through death."

"This dear one," she continued placing her hand on the arm of the one who had treated her "has shown me something different. I now know that God does not send sickness; that God has already given us every good gift, Health has always been mine but I have not known it. All is ours but God does not force anything upon us. He is ever at hand and ever ready to respond to our call. I see now that wrong thinking and wrong attitudes bring inharmony. I am responsible for my long years of suffering. I now know the Truth and am free. My cup is filled with blessing that I might have had long ago if I had known what I have learned during the past few days."

Marvelous demonstrations are taking place frequently; healings that must convince even the skeptical of the mighty power that is at hand. Nevertheless there are some failures, and some times the healing process is so slow that the one who does not wish to believe can say, "Time heals many things," or, "Nature could have done the work in that time." I have heard just such things said.

I am making a plea for better demonstrations not because the outer healing is the most important of all things, but because the outer attests the inner consciousness. "These signs shall follow them that believe," said Jesus. This is a statement of law. I paraphrase the oft quoted, "As

a man thinketh in his heart so is he," in this modern language: As one believes with deep conviction so does he experience. The supreme value of the individual to himself and to others lies in his understanding of Truth and in his conviction of the immediacy of God's presence and power. If he knows with Paul, "There is one God and father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all," he has in his own consciousness the basis of the works that Jesus did. Jesus claimed no personal power, "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." You remember John's words when speaking of Jesus, "As he is, so are we in this world."

The Spirit of God is within us as it was in Jesus. We have innately the Power to do the works. God's Spirit with its power is within us and It is active in our lives and in our affairs to the degree that we are conscious of It.

We may accept this truth intellectually merely and do but little with it. So long as our belief is purely a passive mental assent, we have only the letter and not the vital Essence of Knowledge. Intellectual recognition can do but little for us. It is somewhat better than former ignorance, but not much. It is only as we change this intellectual acceptance into vivid and dynamic realization that real power is evidenced. How shall we do this?

There are certain words, which were discarded in the early years of advanced thinking. These must be restored to honor before we can accomplish what we seek. In those days we said, "Are we not free-born souls? Away with the thought of obedience and its necessary discipline." We had glimpsed the freedom that belongs to the child of God. We remembered Paul's injunction, Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free. We remembered it but we did not understand it. A certain lawlessness prevailed with many. They carried this thought so far that they did not correct children when they made mistakes. And there grew up some very pitiable children who lacked all self control.

This has changed during the past few years;

but not yet have we learned the full meaning and value of spiritual discipline. Only as we exercise this discipline in our thinking and living do we prepare ourselves for life's highest values, its purest joys.

There is no lawlessness in Life. In order to gain power we must be obedient to the law by which power is demonstrated. Our houses are lighted, and motors are run and many marvels are in our world because men have *studied and obeyed* the laws by which electricity can be demonstrated.

In the mental and spiritual realms, growth, power, is gained only as we come to understand and obey the law of their expression. Nothing is attained in our present place of development without self discipline and obedience to the Law.

Jesus: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfill." Our power in demonstration depends upon our fulfilling the law.

Paul speaks of the law as a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ – obedience to spiritual law leads to Christ-consciousness. Then we are no longer under the law but stand in the liberty of oneness with the Father, our true Sonship, our Christhood.

I am not satisfied with what I have written. It does not seem as simple and clear to me as it should be. Let me state the Truth as I have come to understand it; and then give the Law by which Truth becomes powerful in our lives –

In seeking Reality, I find that every line of investigation leads us to one conclusion: Back of the many expressions of Life there is one Universal Being. The many are the creation, the manifestation, the out-pressing of the One.

Since I was brought up religiously – for which I am most thankful – the most satisfying term for this One is "God." To me "God" is the most valuable word in the Anglo-Saxon language; it has the widest sweep of meaning and the richest content. However, my concept of God has changed; I have grown from my limited and limiting belief in an anthropomorphic being to some comprehension at least of God as Universal Presence.

In this thought of God's all-inclusiveness, I realize the Truth of the universe; I love to say, there is only God and God in action. In this idea of God each one of us can say, I and my world are God imbued. Yes, still more than that we can say: I and my world are the very presence of God.

Jesus, seeing this, said: The kingdom of God is within you; the kingdom of heaven is at hand. This Truth, this fundamental Reality never changes.

Man, the expression of God, is endowed with God and the universe. Within him is Divine Being, which we sometimes call the Christ; without is the Infinite Expanse, the formless ocean of God-Wisdom, God-Intelligence, God Power—and Nature, God in action. He is one with it all.

Nothing is forced upon man. He is left to discern Truth as he will; to discover God and himself. He is doing this. Everything is open to him; there is nothing hid, from God to his tiniest creation.

Our lives are rich and satisfying according to our understanding and use of the treasures within and without.

We have discovered one great law of growth, of self-development. It is the one I have already given. *As a man thinks with deep conviction, so does he experience.* We have come to see that it behooves us to know the Truth and to live the Truth that we know. We realize that Jesus stated a law when he said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Thought is the instrument used in our mental and spiritual unfoldment. Here is where obedience, self-discipline, comes in. A Truth discerned must fill our thoughts and must be lived. We must seek earnestly to know Truth and persist steadfastly in living the Truth we know.

Thought-training is necessary for our highest good; our thinking must be brought to recognize at all times the Truth we have perceived. Here it is in simplest form: God is changeless Life, Harmony, Abundance, and Power. I am an expression of God-Nature; my universe abounds in good. I live in God. The universe is God's kingdom. There can be no lack in God's kingdom.

In every thought I acknowledge these truths. When friends, family, or world conditions present the reverse, I insist that my thought remain true to Reality; it shall not be enticed by appearances.

Better demonstrations? They will come from the two things I have emphasized;

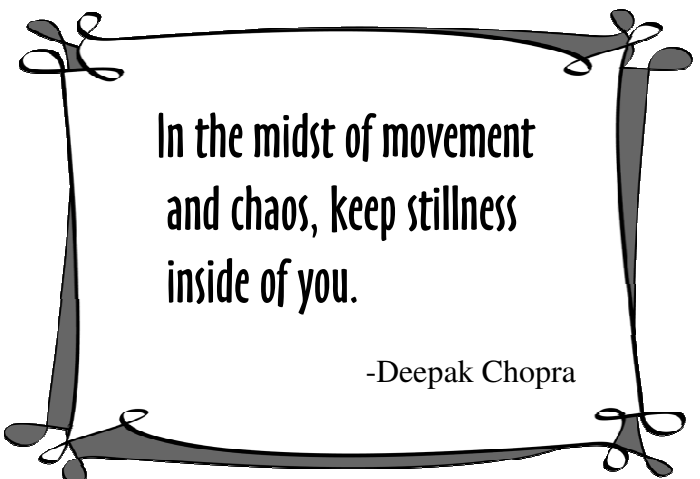
- 1) God includes the fullness of my life. Every phase of my existence may and should manifest the power, abundance and harmony that belong to me as a child of God. This means health is mine and supply for every need; companionship and every good gift. But
- 2) I must know this and think it steadily, unwaveringly, persistently, until I establish the attitude of faith in my unchanging good, if I wish to develop the consciousness that means limitless power.

This inner glory is sometimes called illumination; sometimes, the Cosmic Consciousness; sometimes, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said to his disciples: "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."

With God all things are possible—when we think Truth we are thinking with God. We become saturated with God-Consciousness; no inharmonious condition, no dark cloud of opinion can exist in this light.

I know of no other way of bringing about Better Demonstrations, for this is the Law of Life.



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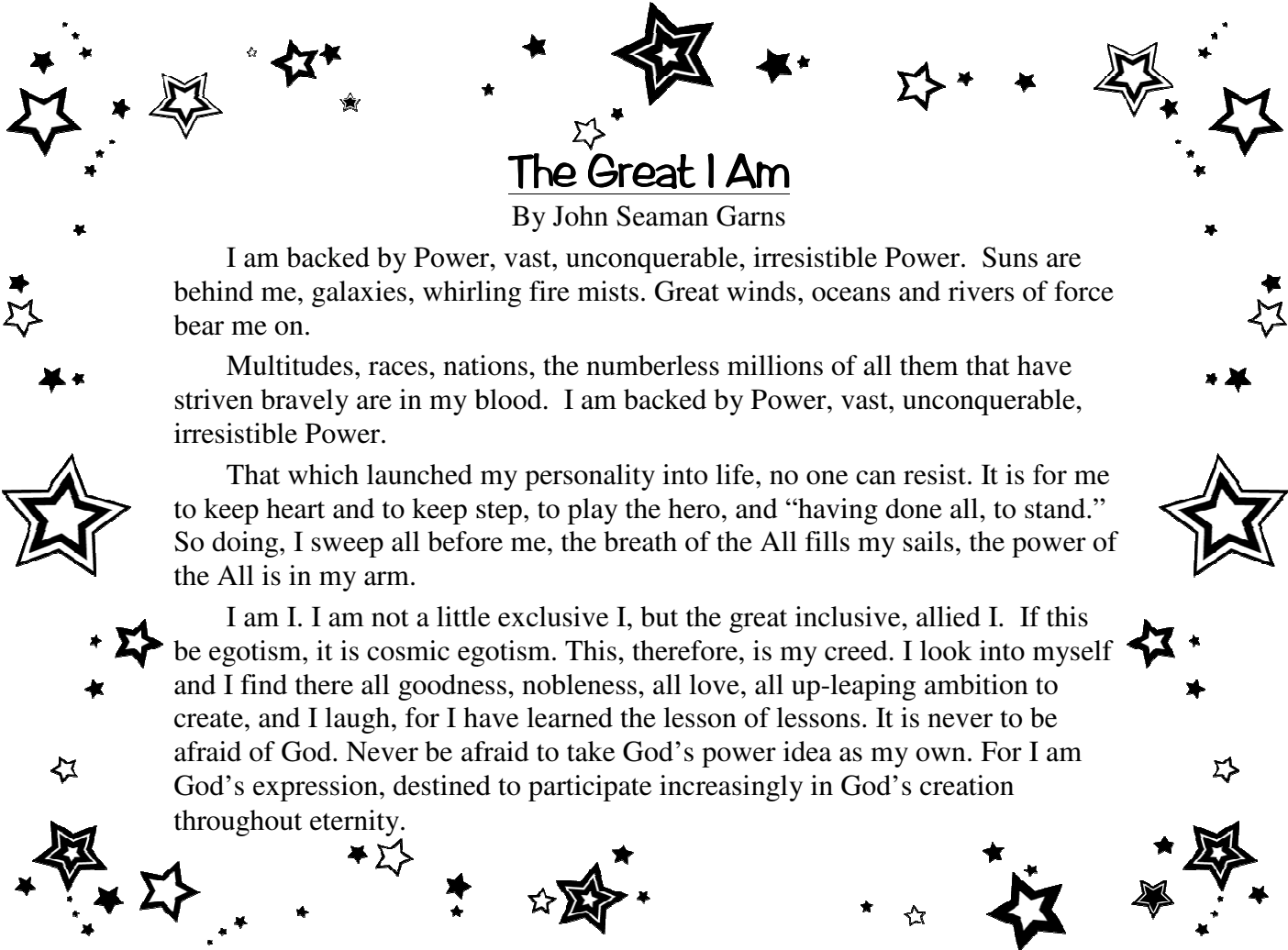
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The Great I Am

By John Seaman Garns

I am backed by Power, vast, unconquerable, irresistible Power. Suns are behind me, galaxies, whirling fire mists. Great winds, oceans and rivers of force bear me on.

Multitudes, races, nations, the numberless millions of all them that have striven bravely are in my blood. I am backed by Power, vast, unconquerable, irresistible Power.

That which launched my personality into life, no one can resist. It is for me to keep heart and to keep step, to play the hero, and “having done all, to stand.” So doing, I sweep all before me, the breath of the All fills my sails, the power of the All is in my arm.

I am I. I am not a little exclusive I, but the great inclusive, allied I. If this be egotism, it is cosmic egotism. This, therefore, is my creed. I look into myself and I find there all goodness, nobleness, all love, all up-leaping ambition to create, and I laugh, for I have learned the lesson of lessons. It is never to be afraid of God. Never be afraid to take God’s power idea as my own. For I am God’s expression, destined to participate increasingly in God’s creation throughout eternity.