

IYM 2024

## **Learning From Each Other**

*Wayfaring: A Guide To Guidance*

Good evening everyone. My name is Larry Southard, and I'm a member of Cork Monthly Meeting.

I have recently published a book entitled *Wayfaring: A Guide To Guidance*.

I would like to thank the Clerk and the Organizing Committee for inviting me to speak to you about the book, and I do so in the spirit of this evening's theme, "Learning From Each Other."

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In the South-western state of New Mexico in the USA is a very large array of radio telescopes all with their dishes pointing skyward.

Each is collecting its piece of the cosmic puzzle and integrating it with what all the other telescopes in the array are detecting.

Working together in concert they achieve a sensitivity and versatility that produces a picture of great resolution.

This evening we sit together, an array of seekers, hoping to search the deep Divine.

Each has collected over time a segment of Divine reality, and we integrate those segments by learning from each other's experience.

Through each seeker in our array telling her or his story as an offering do we get a glimpse of the vastness and intricacy of the entity we call "God".

I speak to you as one in that human array, and *Wayfaring: A Guide To Guidance* is what I have to offer.

I shall be talking about the book itself, and within that I shall talk about what the book talks about.

When I finish, I shall ask you please to take part in a small-group exercise.

And finally in open session anyone who feels so moved will have the opportunity to respond to what they have heard in their groups and from me.

Let me assure you that any wisdom that happens to be in the book comes from the array of its sources ... the author has merely focused the gleanings.

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*Wayfaring* envisages God as verb rather than noun, and refers to God in verb aspect as “the Way”.

The book perceives God not as an object at a remove in which to believe, but as interactive hyper-intelligent process, as a sagacious unfolding in which to participate.

*Wayfaring* explains how we can align our lives with Divine Process to allow it to guide us.

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It all started on 14<sup>th</sup> October, 1946.

I was born and raised in the Bible Belt in the southern United States.

As a youngster I was taught the importance of divine guidance as described in the Bible.

But as an adult what I needed to know was how to access that guidance.

For me to remember anything I was going to have to write it down,

So I was pretty sure the outcome was going to be a book.

I even had the title before I had the text.

So my quest can be characterized as a title in search of its book.

Consequently my title headed the expedition and we went searching until we finally discovered one single simple sentence elegantly stated in Philadelphia YM's *Faith & Practice*.

That sentence became the premise of the book, and everything in the book turns on that one sentence:

*If you truly want to be led you **must** put yourself in a position that allows following.*

*If you **truly** want to be led you must put yourself in a position that allows following.*

That sentence gave me the purchase I needed to begin writing, and it afforded me the direction I needed to take.

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As I wrote, various influences helped to shape the book.

Hillwalking is one of these.

For a number of years I was an enthusiastic member of a hillwalking club.

The book takes its title and its theme from my wayfaring days traversing the hills and valleys of Munster.

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The Bible and the Gospel of Thomas play a large part in shaping the book.

I was particularly interested in those passages concerning how to follow the will of God.

Jesus is the moral standard for the book, but not as the Christological messiah who started a new religion, but as a first century wayfaring Jewish rabbi and religious reformer whose wisdom teachings pertain to following the Way.

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Daoism has been a major influence on the book.

Daoism is a school of thought and way of life that existed in China 500 years before Jesus' birth.

The word "Dao" translates as "Way".

The *Dao De Jing* is the foundational Daoist text and the second most published book in the world after the Bible.

Its title *Dao De Jing* translates as "The Way and Its Virtue".

Let me state clearly that I have no interest whatsoever in evangelizing for Daoism, nor is that the focus of the book.

*Wayfaring's* interest in the *Dao De Jing* exists for two reasons.

Firstly the Daoist text speaks directly to *Wayfaring's* premise, namely it describes *par excellence* how to put oneself in a position to allow following.

The second point of interest is that Jesus' teaching coincides substantially with that of Lao Tzu, the author of the *Dao De Jing*.

Appendix 2 in *Wayfaring* lists 32 themes over ten pages comparing texts that show the doctrinal convergence of these two masters

Jesus may indeed have been influenced by Daoist teaching.

Even though such a claim lies beyond proof, the book details why Daoist influence on Jesus is a possibility.

But at least one thing can be stated for certain –a textual analysis of the literature shows that the teachings of these two masters are closely related.

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How could Quakerism not be a huge influence on the book.

As Friends we wayfare through life taking S.T.E.P.S. to follow our testimonies of Simplicity, Truth, Equality, Peace, and Service.

These steps, these testimonies accord with the effective force of the Way, and have taken their place within the book

The book's structure takes the form of advices and queries, a format with which Friends are well acquainted.

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Bringing to bear no small influence on the book is the Hoolooovoo.

And what is the Hoolooovoo?

The Hoolooovoo is Douglas Adams' fictional character in his *Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*.

The Hoolooovoo is the hyper-intelligent shade of the colour blue.

In an imaginative leap, Adams attests through his Hoolooovoo that intelligence need not be corporeal—that is, consciousness doesn’t need a body to exist.

The significance of the Hoolooovoo for us is this: (to paraphrase GTh 13):

By drinking from the “Bubbling Spring” Jesus has made to gush out, we align our lives with the flow of a non-material Divine Consciousness called “the Way”.

Mechtild of Magdeburg, the 13<sup>th</sup> C. mystic, describes this Divine Consciousness as: *an overflow which never stands still and always flows effortlessly and without ceasing.*

The Way’s flow is the fountainhead of the Bubbling Spring. Jesus has made to gush out

To align our lives with that flow is to **delight** in divine guidance.

Hillwalking, the Bible, GTh, Daoism, Quakerism, & the Hoolooovoo have all served to help shape *Wayfaring: A Guide To Guidance*

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There are 3 major concepts in the book that a Reader will meet.

The first is God-as-verb – a.k.a. the Way.

Why does the book prefer the moniker “the Way” instead of using the word “God”?

The word “God” has long characterized divinity as a noun, a thing, as a being cast in a human mould.

That which is God is neither human nor is it humane.

Human beings are not the centrepiece of its creation meriting a God cast in our image.

Like the word “God”, the word “Way” has also been around for a quite a while.

Lao Tzu, the Daoist sage uses the term.

He says, “A man of the Way identifies with the Way”.

Jesus 500 years later uses the same term, and identifies himself in John 14:6 as “I am the Way...”.

The earliest Jesus movement during his lifetime was called “The Way. “

Thirteen hundred years after Jesus, Rumi, the Sufi mystic, states

*As you start to walk on the Way, the Way appears.*

So here is a Daoist, a Jew, and a Muslim, over a period of 18 hundred years all talking about God-as-process.

For all these reasons the book prefers the moniker “the Way” to portray the Bubbling Spring that is flowing through this hall at this moment, in which we can bathe our lives.

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Wayfaring is the second major concept the Reader will encounter.

Wayfaring is the act of participating in God construed as omniscient Divine

Action

We participate in Divine Action by

- Sharing in its attributes
- Entering into its virtue and
- Involving ourselves in its processes

To participate in the Way as pure act in the service of others, becomes the basis for religious engagement rather than believing in a personage who abides in the beyond.

To pattern the Way, is to wayfare down city streets and country roads, to wayfare through checkout counters, and to wayfare from our kitchen into our living room.

Wayfaring becomes a way of life.

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Action Nouns are the third major concept Readers will encounter in the book.

Here's a bit of divine grammar.

We are taught in school that a noun names things and that a verb expresses actions.

An action noun instead of naming a thing names an action.

To name an action freezes its complicated unwieldy flow, and makes that action a lot easier to talk about.

The significance of Action Nouns in the present context is that both the book and the Bible use action nouns to specify spiritual processes. For example:

- If we were to delete the process of animating, we delete the Spirit
- If we were to eliminate the process of creating, we eliminate the Logos
- If we were to exclude the process of enlightening, we exclude the Light
- If we were to prevent the process of evolving, we prevent the Way

In other words, if we were to scrap these process, there would not be a bunch of spiritual beings left stand around with nothing to do.

When we read these nouns in the Bible or the book, they more properly refer not to things or beings but to spiritual processes in which we can embody and participate.



Action Nouns, Wayfaring, and God-as-verb are the 3 major concepts in the book.

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Jesus says in GTh 17,

*I shall give you what no eye has seen and what no ear has heard and what no hand has touched  
and what has never occurred to the human mind....*

In light of the inscrutable enigma he is offering, that which is God lies beyond anything we can imagine.

So how can we come to realize in our lives what is inconceivable, incommunicable and is unimaginable?

The answer is ... we imagine!

We imagine a model – a framework that ascribes

- a structure
- attributes
- and an approach

to a divinity that otherwise cannot be directly perceived.

The efficacy of any model can be judged by

- how well it facilitates access to the divine,
- how well it aids communicating with others, and
- how well it helps adherents to live an insightful, inspired and meaningful life.

But no model, however well regarded, can express the depth of richness and vitality of the Divine as met in personal experience, and that includes Wayfaring ... as well as the Old and New Testaments.

The model itself is not Divine reality, but is a tool that points to that which can be met beyond the model.

To confuse the model for the Reality is to cup that which is God in our hands like a butterfly we've trapped against a window pane ... got it, right here y'all, God in full and ours ...

... instead of allowing it to flutter-by, spiriting wherever it will.

By allowing the butterfly to guide us, we live adventurously discovering its destinations rather than following an itinerary we prescribe.

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Wayfaring's model follows the butterfly.

- Jesus is the Way ... if you want to get close to Jesus, get close to the Way so that by walking the same path he walked you walk closer to him.
- By incarnating God as verb we perceive the reality of the Divine through living it, rather than relying on second-hand hearsay.
- Because the Way is always immediate and at hand, right here right now, it is easier to discern and follow leadings rather than trying to decipher instructions from afar.
- The Way's guidance resembles an on-going two-way conversation with the Divine rather than a hopeful monologue.

- Wayfaring enhances the feeling of “God-with-me” to the point it can become palpable.

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To sum up:

The Way is God, but in verb form – divine process rather than divine object

The basis for religious engagement is to embody and participate in God rather than “to believe” in God

To put it another way, if you want God, incarnate God! Jesus did!

And how do you do that? – by putting yourself in a position that allows following.

That’s the way it’s done, and anybody – anybody at all – can do it, because the yoke is easy, and the burden light

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I’ll finish by reading the first two Advices from Wayfaring:

### ***A1: God As Verb***

*The Way is God as Verb, God as interactive Hyper-Intelligent Process, God as Prescient Principle, God as Supremely Being rather than a Supreme Being. The Way is how things coalesce while still evolving. To experience Divine leading that is immediate and first-hand, adopt the Way as your guide. Start from where you are, start today, start now. Taste and see. Take the first step, go Wayfaring and see what opens.*

### ***A2: An Interactive Guiding Path***

*The Way is known by experiencing reality as an interactive guiding path or road or course – and we travel the path by “Wayfaring”. If you allow the Way to steer you, and you refrain from backseat driving, the Way will take you where you need to go; show you what you need to see; and*

*point out what needs to be done. By allowing it to guide you, you align yourself with the world's natural rhythms and transitions. Obsessions, desires and addictions will dissipate in the presence of a simplicity that accomplishes everything. You will stand at rest even in the midst of the ambiguities and uncertainties of life, and peace will settle your days.*

Taste and see ...

Perceive and participate

Allow ....

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The following are 9 queries for serious consideration:

These 9 queries are some of the questions I've had to face in my own search ...

1. Where does being divinely led rank in your priorities for daily living?
2. How effective is your present approach to the divine in affording you guidance in daily particulars?
3. What measures can you take to put yourself in a better position to allow divine guidance?
4. How close to the reality of God do you see your present conception?
5. How difficult do you find conceiving of God as process rather than object?
6. Which do you find more satisfying – maintaining your present approach to God, or trying new approaches?
7. How open are you to new revelation outside of scripture? Do the two have to agree?

8. How comfortable are you with using an unfamiliar vocabulary in a spiritual context?
9. To what extent does language determine our concept of God? Is it possible to conceive beyond language?