



The wider life *By J. R. Miller (Pt 1)*

“Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes!”—*Isaiah 54:2*

We do not realize half our possibilities. We do not more than begin to possess our inheritance. Our hills are full of gold—and we only scratch the sand and the shallow soil on the surface! We live in little bungalows in the valley—when there are splendid palaces waiting for us on the hilltops.

We should never be content with a narrow life. We are made for breadth and fullness, and we rob God when we fail to reach our best. Some people assert that Christianity’s ideal for life is narrow. They say it cramps and limits us. It has no place, for example, for

physical or intellectual development. It says nothing about art, music, science, or the many phases of human activity. It presents only the moral side—conscience, obedience to heavenly laws, spiritual attainments and achievements.

The answer is that while Christianity may not definitely name the things of the intellect, or distinctly call men to noble achievements in art, in exploration, in invention, in research, in the culture of the beautiful, it really includes in its range everything that will add to the fullness and completeness of life and character. It excludes nothing but what is sinful: disobedience to law, impurity, selfishness, uncharity, and these only narrow and debase, do not broaden and enrich life. It includes “whatever things are true, whatever things are honorable, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report.” Is this a narrow life?

Our faith places no limitation whatever on life—except what would mar, blot, or debase the character. Japanese horticulturists have a trick of stunting trees, and the world is full also of stunted men, only dwarfs of what God made them to be. But the call of Christianity is always for whole men—men reaching up to their best, and out to their broadest in every way. ... Christianity seeks the fullest development of every power and capacity of the being. Jesus Christ, our pattern, would have us become full-grown men. As leaders of others, as teachers, as simple believers—our influence should be toward the enriching and broadening of lives. ... There is no way in which we can prove ourselves better friends to others—than by such influence over them as will make their lives fuller, truer, more loving, more helpful. ...

There are many people who live in only one room, so to speak. They are intended to live in a large house, with many rooms, rooms of the mind, rooms of the heart, rooms of taste, imagination, sentiment, feeling. But these upper rooms are left unused, while they live in the basement!

A story is told of a Scotch nobleman who, when he came into possession of his estates, set about providing better houses for his people, who were living huddled together in single-roomed cottages. So he built for them pretty, comfortable houses. But in a short time each family was living, as before, in one room, and letting out the rest of the house.

They did not know how to live in larger, better ways. The experiment satisfied him, that people could not be really benefited by anything done for them merely from the outside. The only true way to help them is from within, in their minds and hearts.

Horace Bushnell put it in an epigram, "*The soul of improvement, is the improvement of the soul.*" It is not a larger house that is needed for a man—but a larger man in the house! A man is not made larger by giving him more money, better furniture, finer pictures, richer carpets, an expensive automobile—but by giving him knowledge, wisdom, good principles, strength of character; *by teaching him love. ...*

(to be continued..)