

**NORMAN VINCENT PEALE**  
**THE FATHER OF POSITIVE THINKING**  
*by Ian Ellis-Jones*

AN EXPANDED VERSION OF AN ADDRESS  
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Nelson Rockefeller, longtime Governor of New York and later Vice President of the United States of America, said this about the Reverend Dr Norman Vincent Peale:

He has done more good for more people than any man alive.

Former United States President Jimmy Carter has written:

People will be reading Dr Peale's book (*The Power of Positive Thinking*) a thousand years from now.

Dr Billy Graham, a longtime friend and admirer of Peale, spoke of how Dr Peale "compelling reveal[ed] the reality of Christ's power at work today through a totally committed life". Although many ultra-conservative Christians mercilessly and viciously attacked, and still attack, Peale, accusing him of everything from moral pragmatism to heresy and even total apostasy, Billy Graham never doubted for one moment that Peale was a true committed Christian, and said as much in his autobiography *Just As I Am*. The publication *Bible for Today* (#565) quotes Dr Graham as saying in a speech at a National Council of Churches luncheon held in 1966, "I don't know anyone who has done more for the kingdom of God than Norman and Ruth Peale, or have meant any more in my life from the encouragement they have given me." At the time of Dr Peale's death in December 1993 Dr Graham said:

Everything about him was positive and uplifting. Once a long time ago, I spoke with Norman while I was facing personal difficulties. He reminded me that faith, a belief and trust in God, will solve any problem. No one lived that message better than Norman Vincent Peale. And though he will be missed, his inspiration will live on forever.

Australia's Dr Gordon Powell, also a longtime friend of Peale, wrote:

He's more than a man, he's an industry. ... [H]e is a wonderful advertisement for the power of positive thinking, a phrase he introduced into the language.

Norman Vincent Peale, the "Father of Positive Thinking", and acclaimed "Minister to Millions", was born in the small Greene County village of Bowersville, Ohio on May 31, 1898, the son of the local Methodist minister. The family moved frequently, in the Methodist itinerant tradition. They were not wealthy, and young Peale grew up helping support his family by delivering newspapers, working in a grocery store, and selling aluminium pots and pans door to door. This was the man who would later become one of the top 5 most influential religious figures of the 20th century.

As a young boy, Peale faced a fight against strong inferiority feelings when growing up. Indeed, he confessed to having "the worst inferiority complex of all". Over the years he developed and refined the message that anyone could put the principles of positive thinking and strong faith into practice and improve upon their own life dramatically.

Graduating in 1920 from Ohio Wesleyan, a Methodist-founded college, with an AB (later, a DD, in 1936), Peale worked as a reporter on two newspapers, the Findlay (Ohio) *Morning Republican* and the *Detroit Journal*, for about a year before deciding that his life work lay elsewhere. Ordained to the Methodist Episcopal ministry in 1922, he received an AM and an STB (Bachelor of Sacred Theology), both in 1924, from the theological school at Boston University (from which Dr Martin Luther King Jr later graduated). Faculty members at Boston University were religious liberals, many interested in the relationship between psychology and religion--a life-long concern of Peale's. Whilst at Boston University Peale also came under the influence of the philosophy of personalism which flourished in the early 20th century at BU in a movement known as "Boston Personalism" that was led by theologian Borden Parker Bowne, who emphasized the person as the fundamental category for explaining reality and asserted that only persons were real in the ontological sense and had both value and free will. Although Peale had certain intellectual difficulties with Boston Personalism you can see its influence in many of his writings, especially in his first book *The Art of Living*, published in 1937. (Martin Luther King Jr was greatly influenced by personalism, as was Pope John Paul II.) Although the ideas of Borden Parker Bowne had an influence on Peale, it was William James, Ralph Waldo Emerson and William Wordsworth (especially the latter's "Intimations of Immortality") that were to have the most profound and lasting influence upon him and his emerging theology and philosophy of living.

Peale served as pastor at a succession of churches that included Berkeley, Rhode Island (1922-24), Brooklyn, New York (1924-27), and Syracuse, New

York (1927–32) before changing his affiliation to the Dutch Reformed Church (later known as the Reformed Church in America) so that he could become the pastor of Marble Collegiate Church in New York City. That church, founded in April 1628, is the oldest continuous Protestant pastorate in the United States of America. The Collegiate Church (more precisely, the Collegiate Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of the City of New York) is also the oldest corporation in the United States.

Dr Peale stayed on as minister of Marble Collegiate Church from 1932 until 1984 - a remarkable tenure of 52 years - thereafter serving as minister emeritus for the rest of his life. During that time the church's membership grew from 600 to over 5,000, and he became one of New York City's most famous preachers.

With Marble Collegiate Church as a base, Peale launched far-reaching innovations in the decades of the 1930s, 40s and 50s.

Randy Frame, writing in *Christianity Today*, wrote:

Under [Dr Peale's] leadership, the church [Marble Collegiate Church] took the innovative and landmark step of combining psychology and religion in ministry.

Indeed. It was Norman Vincent Peale who was the person most responsible for bringing psychology into the professing Church. He pioneered the merger of theology and psychology which became known as "Christian psychology" and co-founded the first school for pastoral psychology. *Current Biography* (October 1974) wrote that Dr Peale was "[o]ne of the first clergymen to understand the relationship between religion and psychiatry".

In 1937 Peale established a religio-psychiatric clinic with the Freudian psychiatrist Dr Smiley Blanton in the basement of the Marble Collegiate Church. *Webster's American Biographies* points out that this was the nation's first service combining religion and psychiatry for the sake of mental health. (Dr Blanton brought with him the "extensive experience" of having undergone psychoanalysis by Freud himself in Vienna in 1929, 1935, 1936, and 1937.) The clinic was described as having "a theoretical base that was Jungian, with a strong evidence of neo- and post-Freudianism" (Carol V R George, *God's Salesman: Norman Vincent Peale and the Power of Positive Thinking*, p 90). It subsequently grew to an operation with more than 20 psychiatric doctors and psychologically-trained "ministers," and in 1951 became known as the American Foundation for Religion and Psychiatry. In

1972, it merged with the Academy of Religion and Mental Health to form the Institutes of Religion and Health (IRH). It is known today as the Blanton-Peale Institute.

Psychiatrist Smiley Blanton had this to say about Peale:

Dr Peale is a great pioneer. He was one of the first men – if not the first – to combine the new science of human behavior known as depth psychology with the discipline of religion. As a result, he has been able to help more people than either religion or depth psychology could help, acting alone.

Harold Ellens, founder and editor of the *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, wrote:

It is a very significant fact that Dr Peale was three-quarters of a century ahead of the times with his emphasis on the relationship between psychology and religious experience. He saw psychology and Christian experience as very compatible ... [H]e had the courage to stand pat on this position in spite of the opposition of the entire Christian church for nearly half a century. His genius was that he ... translated psycho-theology into the language of the people.

Dr Newton Bigelow, former Commissioner of the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene said:

It's hard to overestimate the importance of what Dr Peale has done as a practical preacher using new mass media. His methods reached many more people than are reached through the usual counselling channels. This I know personally from contacts with many individuals. Secondly, he has helped to establish psychiatry as a "respectable" branch of medicine, has demonstrated the fact that, in order to help people, psychiatrists and clergymen must often work together and has assisted in putting a little Godliness into the practice of psychiatry.

Dr Peale was also one of the first ministers of religion to accept and publicize the "disease concept" of alcoholism as well as the wonders of Alcoholics Anonymous. He spoke at a number of early important AA rallies and public meetings, and provided other much-needed assistance to the fellowship in its infancy. He knew not only Bill Wilson, one of AA's two co-founders, but also Dr William Duncan Silkworth, the chief physician of the Charles B Towns Hospital in New York City, who was quoted by Peale as having said that the Great Physician, Jesus Christ, could cure alcoholics who were declared hopeless.

Peale's theology was very much a "theology of man". Peale variously described God as "the life force from, or from whom all life comes", "life", "energy", "the Source", "the Great Physician", "the Creator and Re-creator", "inward power" and "our deepest desire". He also proclaimed that God presided in the subconscious mind, in the inner area of consciousness. God is in us. In each of us is God. The life force in each of us is but a fraction of the great universal Life Force that we call God. For Peale, the "Kingdom of God" was a state of existence characterised by all of the attributes we ordinarily associate with God, such as strength, integrity, protection, goodness, faith, and love.

In an interview with *Modern Maturity* magazine (December 1975 - January 1976), Peale was asked if people are inherently good or bad. He replied:

They are inherently good -- the bad reactions aren't basic. Every human being is a child of God and has more good in him than evil -- but circumstances and associates can step up the bad and reduce the good. I've got great faith in the essential fairness and decency -- you may say goodness -- of the human being.

Elsewhere, Peale wrote, "We are gods in miniature, for we are made in God's image" (*Plus*, April 1991). At his very first appearance in 1955 at what was to become many years later the Crystal Cathedral, but which was then only a small church operating out of the Orange Drive-In, in Orange County, California, Dr Peale thundered:

If Jesus himself were standing here today talking to you, do you know what he would tell you? What do you think Jesus would say to you? Do you think he would tell you what a bunch of miserable sinners you are? No, he wouldn't. He wouldn't call you a bunch of miserable sinners. Jesus never called you sinners. He never called one of you out there a sinner. Look it up. Look it up in the Bible. You won't find it anywhere, because Jesus never called one person a sinner. You are the light of the world. Let your light so shine that everyone may see your good works. I think Jesus would immediately begin telling you what great people you can become if you will only let his Holy Spirit of faith, hope and love fill every ounce and fibre of your being!

Peale, who once wrote, "Christianity was not founded by clergymen," saw Christianity in these terms:

The Gateway to Christianity is not through an intricate labyrinth of dogma, but by a simple belief in the person of Christ.

Peale loved Jesus – of that there is no doubt. He said:

The greatest thing that can happen to anyone is to accept Christ, to find Him, to have him explode in your mind, to become identified with Him. He is not merely the head of a religious faith or someone whose picture is in stained-glass windows. He is a vital principle. And when this principle connects with a human being, a great transformation takes place. There is romance in the way people's lives can be changed through Christ.

For Peale, Jesus was “forever [among us] as a guiding spirit of love and forgiveness”:

He lives in those of this world who have turned away from the way of evil to the way of good, and are willing to lay down their lives for Him.

He also wrote, “You will never find happiness and peace in this tense world without first finding Jesus Christ.”

In what was, I think, his final address to the congregation of his protégé Robert Schuller's Crystal Cathedral, when he was about 93, a somewhat frail Norman Vincent Peale finished with these emotionally-charged words:

Brothers and sisters, bring Jesus back into the life of our time.

Where did Peale actually stand on the Christian theological spectrum? Peale once said in a sermon in the early 1960s:

I have been accused of belonging to both branches [the fundamentalists and the modernists], and that is a fact, I do.

Writing in *Christianity Today* (June 21, 1993) Tim Stafford stated:

Peale has belonged to both and neither party, because he represented something genuinely new; the first example of nondenominational, entrepreneurial, communications-savvy, pragmatic, populist religion that rose out of the fundamentalist-modernist split.

Dr Peale knew where he really stood. He once said:

I'm a conservative, and I will tell you exactly what I mean by that. I mean that I have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. I mean that I believe my sins are forgiven by the atoning work of grace on the cross. ... Now I'll tell you something else. ... I personally love and understand this way of

stating the Christian gospel. But I am absolutely convinced that it is my mission never to use this language in trying to communicate with the audience that God has given me.

Peale himself credited his doctrine of positive thinking to Ernest Holmes, founder of the United Church of Religious Science. It seems Peale borrowed the phrase "positive thinking" from Charles Fillmore, cofounder of the Unity School of Christianity, now known simply as Unity. In chapter 2 of his book *The Tough-Minded Optimist* (1961) Peale expressed dissatisfaction with both his liberal seminary education and with fundamentalism. He states that way back in the 1920s he began to read "spiritual literature" from Unity, Religious Science, Science of Mind, Christian Science, and from various other "metaphysical teachers". Peale related how he almost resigned from his pastorate when his teachings came under heavy criticism from some fellow clergymen. He indicated that his father, also a Methodist minister, persuaded him to continue by saying:

You have evolved a new Christian emphasis out of a composite of Science of Mind, metaphysics, Christian Science, medical and psychological practice, Baptist Evangelism, Methodist witnessing, and solid Dutch Reformed Calvinism.

Peale, however, did not believe he had formulated anything new. He once wrote:

In formulating my simple philosophy of life I found my own answers in the teachings of Jesus Christ. ...Jesus Christ was the most positive thinker this world has ever seen.

Does positive thinking really work? Well, there is a growing body of scientific literature confirming what Norman Vincent Peale wrote about more than half a century ago in *The Power of Positive Thinking*. Optimists not only lead more enjoyable lives than pessimists, they live longer as well. This was confirmed in a Mayo Clinic study that examined the lives of a group of people over three decades and showed that the optimists lived almost twenty years longer than the pessimists. The research appeared in the February 2000 issue of *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*.

*Contemporary Authors* points out that Dr Peale was one of the first religious leaders to recognize the potential of mass media.

In 1945, Dr Peale, his wife, Ruth Stafford Peale (who, by the way, turned 100 on September 10, 2006), and Raymond Thornburg, a Pawling, New York

businessman founded *Guideposts* magazine, a non-denominational forum for celebrities and ordinary people to relate inspirational stories to provide a spiritual lift to all readers. For its launch, they raised \$1,200 from Frank Gannett, founder of the Gannett newspaper chain, J Howard Pew, a Philadelphia industrialist and Branch Rickey, owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers. Today, the full-colour magazine is the 13th largest paid-circulation magazine in the country with a circulation of around 4.5 million. It is acknowledged as the world's leading inspirational magazine.

Though he wrote much -- including some 47 "inspirational" books -- *The Power of Positive Thinking* remains by far his most widely read work. First published in 1952, it stayed on the *New York Times* bestseller list for 186 consecutive weeks. The book, which became the model for a flood of self-help books that followed, has now sold over 20 million copies in 42 different languages, and is second only to the Holy Bible in overall world sales. Now, here's something really inspirational. Peale threw out the manuscript of the book, because he thought it wasn't good enough, but his wife rescued it.

Some of Peale's other best known works include *The Art of Living, You Can Win, A Guide to Confident Living, The Amazing Results of Positive Thinking, Enthusiasm Makes the Difference, The Positive Power of Jesus Christ, The Tough-Minded Optimist, Positive Imaging, Stay Alive All Your Life, You Can If You Think You Can, Adventures in the Holy Land, Power of the Plus Factor, The Healing of Sorrow, This Incredible Century* and *Inspiring Messages for Daily Living*.

Peale applied Christianity to everyday problems. He said, "through prayer you ... make use of the great factor within yourself, the deep subconscious mind ... [which Jesus called] the kingdom of God within you ... Positive thinking is just another term for faith."

Peale recognized the powerful impact of mass media. For a record-setting 54 years (from 1935 to 1989), Peale also hosted a weekly NBC radio program entitled *The Art of Living*. There were a number of subsequent radio programs including *The American Character* and *Positive Thinking with Norman Vincent Peale*. His down-to-earth message of courage, optimism and faith in God's abiding love for the human individual helped countless millions all around the world find confidence and inner peace.

Under the sponsorship of the National Council of Churches Peale moved into television when the new medium arrived. His TV program *What's Your*



*Trouble?* aired from 1952 to 1968. He also appeared in *Guideposts Presents Norman Vincent Peale*, and there were many other appearances.

His sermons and messages were mailed to over 1,000,000 people monthly from the Peale Center for Christian Living in Pawling, New York - which I visited in January 1999 - and, by 1993, over 31 million copies of his inspirational booklets were distributed yearly. In addition, there have been released many audio and video recordings of his sermons, addresses and books.

He was also a dynamic motivational speaker on countless platforms.

He even found time to lecture in homiletics at the Reformed Church national seminary in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

A member of the Episcopal Actors Guild, Peale was the subject of the 1964 film, *One Man's Way*, and was a technical adviser representing the Protestant Church on the 1941 film *One Foot in Heaven*. He also appeared in the Dartnell training films *What it Takes to be a Real Salesman* (1962) and *Dr Norman Vincent Peale on How to Raise Your Batting Average in Selling* (1968) and hosted, wrote and served as production consultant to the 1986 home video production of *The Power of Positive Thinking*.

In addition to conducting religious services at the White House, he also performed a similar role at the Pentagon, and on cruise ships such as the SS Lurline and the QE II.

In 1947, Peale co-founded, with educator Kenneth Beebe, "The Horatio Alger Association", whose aim is to recognize and honor Americans who have been successful in spite of difficult circumstances they have faced.

Other organizations founded or co-founded by Peale over the years include the Peale Center for Christian Living, the Positive Thinking Foundation, Guideposts Publications, the School of Practical Christianity, and the Center for Positive Living, all of which aim to promote Peale's theories about positive thinking.

When Senator John F Kennedy ran for United States president in 1960, the Southern Baptist Convention unanimously passed a resolution voicing doubts that Kennedy or any Catholic should be president. Elsewhere, Kennedy continued to face a barrage of questions from a predominantly Protestant

public, such as, "How do we know you can separate your Catholic beliefs from your political responsibilities?" A number of Protestant clergymen, under the auspices of the National Association of Evangelicals, co-founded the National Conference of Citizens for Religious Freedom in September 1960. Its aim was to dissuade voters from electing Kennedy as president, the concern being that the history of Roman Catholicism had shown that the Catholic Church consistently attempted to break down the wall of separation of church and state. It was Peale's friend Dr Billy Graham who encouraged Peale (a Nixon supporter) to attend the meeting of the National Conference of Citizens for Religious Freedom. Peale understood the conference to be on the theme of religious freedom. (Incidentally, he had been chairman of the Committee for Constitutional Government in 1939-40.) Unfortunately, because of his national stature, Peale somehow ended up becoming the group's de facto spokesperson.

"Faced with the election of a Catholic," Peale bravely declared, "our American culture is at stake." The so-called "Peale group" went on to issue a statement, signed by 150 Protestant ministers and laymen, stating that a Catholic president would be under "extreme pressure from the hierarchy of his church" to align US foreign policy with that of the Vatican: see Thomas Maier, *The Kennedys: America's Emerald Kings* (2003). Peale quickly withdrew from the group once it became clear that other participating clergy were more interested in bigotry than religious freedom. He was warmly commended by Cardinal Cushing of Boston for his action.

Sadly, however, the damage was done, and Peale was denounced, rather unfairly, as a religious bigot almost everywhere, and it did great damage. In some ways, Peale never really recovered from the incident, at least personally. The uproar resulting from his involvement in this matter caused him to back off from further formal partisan commitments.

Was Dr Peale anti-Catholic? I have made a comprehensive study of this matter over many years, and, on the basis of my research and my communications with his wife and daughter, I think it's fair to say that he was only anti-Catholic to the extent to which he feared, rightly or wrongly, that Catholicism might impact adversely on the constitutionally guaranteed rights of religious freedom and separation of church and state, but not otherwise. On one occasion back in 1934, when Fulton Sheen (who, by the way, later became a very good friend of Peale's) had asserted the supremacy of the Catholic Church and its version of Christianity, Peale thundered back:

The Protestant Church needs a Martin Luther to drive another nail in the famous theses he tacked on the church door at Wittenberg; to tell the world that we believe in Protestantism and it is here to stay until the gates of St Peter must rust on their hinges.

Peale, in an undelivered 1960 sermon entitled "What a Protestant Should Do Today," wrote:

Protestantism and Freedom were married in Geneva, and John Calvin performed the marriage ceremony.

Of course, all of this took place in very different times, and in a pre-Vatican II world. The truth is Dr Peale devoted himself all his life to combating intolerance and bigotry. He made it a special point to try to develop harmony among the leading religious groups in the United States. In his 1948 book *A Guide to Confident Living* Peale wrote that "[i]t is not important what church you attend – Protestant, Catholic or Jewish". He was a close friend of numerous Catholic dignitaries. Peale's interfaith magazine *Guideposts*, read by Catholics and non-Catholics alike, regularly included references to Catholic holy days and often featured stories written by Catholics.

*Time* magazine, in its January 10, 1994 milestone on the death of Dr Peale, referred to him as being "anti-Catholic". Even Peale himself, with uncharacteristic self-pity, had written in his autobiography, *The True Joy of Positive Living* (1984), "I have no doubt that when I die, this horrible incident [the Kennedy matter] will be raked up and printed despite all I have tried to do to advance the ecumenical spirit". I wrote a long letter to the editor of *Time* protesting about what they had written about Peale. My letter was never printed, although I did receive a personal letter back from the editor thanking me for my contribution and regretting my disappointment with their appraisal of Peale's actions during the 1960 Presidential campaign.

Peale was president of the Protestant Council of New York in the years 1965-69. In 1969 and 1970 Peale was president of the Reformed Church in America, notwithstanding that he and his theology were almost entirely devoid of denominational colour. Close friend President Richard Nixon (who was a member of Marble Collegiate Church) sent Peale to Vietnam in 1969 as a special Presidential envoy. Peale often conducted services at the White House during the Nixon years. When asked why he continued to do so during Watergate, Peale replied, "Christ didn't shy away from people in trouble."

Peale also officiated at the wedding of Julie Nixon and David Eisenhower in 1968.

Peale was, of course, a political conservative, and a lifelong Republican. He did, however, have close friends in high places on both sides of politics, and knew all of the Presidents beginning with Teddy Roosevelt. Back in the 1930s, and for many decades thereafter, Peale preached that communism would eventually destroy itself because freedom, liberty, and the recognition of God were, he said, essential for sustenance. Any nation built on force and authoritarianism would perish. In one of his later books, *This Incredible Century* (1991), Peale enthusiastically wrote:

...[I]n the last months of 1989 and the first months of 1990 Communism proved to be the gigantic flop of the ages, and the world vigorously repudiated it. ... With Christianity outlawed for decades, the moral structure of Communistic countries had deteriorated. Their lives in shambles, the people of those ancient states rose en masse to abolish Communism and embrace democracy and religion. ... These history-making, almost simultaneous uprisings in country after country were like nothing that had ever before occurred in the history of the human race.

Other positions held by Peale included president, American Temperance Society, vice president, International Society of Christian Endeavor, and chairman, Horatio Alger Committee, American Schools and Colleges Association. He was also a member of various commissions of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, a member of the executive committee of the Presbyterian Ministers Fund for Life Insurance, and a trustee of Ohio Wesleyan University and Central College. A Rotarian and 33<sup>o</sup> Freemason, he was also a member of the Mid-Century White House Conference on Children and Youth, and the President's Commission for Observance of the 25th Anniversary of the United Nations. In his later years he was a board member of the Hope for a Drug-Free America Foundation, and a member of the international board of the Robert Schuller Ministries, also having the honorary title of "Pastor Emeritus" of the Crystal Cathedral. He founded the Norman Vincent Peale Awards for Positive Thinking in 1990.

Peale visited Australia on four separate occasions, for speaking engagements, conferences and the like, in the years 1971, 1978, 1980 and 1986. My wife Elspeth and I heard him preach at St Stephens Church in Macquarie Street in 1978, and I was there to hear him speak again in the pulpit of that great church in 1986.

After he retired from the pulpit of Marble Collegiate in 1984 Peale remained as active as ever. For the next 7 years he spoke to an average of 100 groups a year (a live audience numbered in the millions) and made frequent television and radio appearances as well as overseas visits. He was a frequent guest preacher at Robert Schuller's Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, California. During this time he also produced more than a dozen new books.

Despite some earlier views to the contrary expressed in his 1966 book *Sin, Sex and Self-Control*, Dr Peale had this to say about homosexuality when interviewed by *Publishers Weekly* in 1984:

The God that I believe in is very big. He's above all these little human distinctions. He loves everybody equally; it doesn't make any difference who they are, what they've done, He loves them.

*Publishers Weekly* (September 28, 1984) noted that "his failure to call down fire and brimstone on homosexuals has led to his mailbox being flooded with irate letters".

For his contributions to the field of theology, President Ronald Reagan awarded Peale the Presidential Medal of Freedom (the highest civilian honor in the United States) on March 26, 1984. President Reagan said:

With a deep understanding of human behavior and an appreciation for God's role in our lives, Dr Norman Vincent Peale helped originate a philosophy of happiness. Through the American Foundation of Religion and Psychiatry and his many books, Dr Peale became an advocate of the joy of life, helping millions find new meaning in their lives. Few Americans have contributed so much to the personal happiness of their fellow citizens as Norman Vincent Peale.

At 90 years old Dr Peale gave a speech entitled "Seven Ways to Renew Your Energy." Here they are: strive for wholeness, think positively, read the book of energy (the Bible), overcome unhealthy habits, develop a calm centre, use the power of affirmation and joy, and keep interested in life. Peale never retired. He had this to say about age-based retirement:

Age-based retirement arbitrarily severs productive persons from their livelihood, squanders their talents, scars their health, strains an already overburdened Social Security system, and drives many elderly people into poverty and despair. Ageism is as odious as racism and sexism.

Dr Peale continued speaking all over the United States until 1992, and his last speaking engagement was the commencement address at his old alma mater Ohio Wesleyan University on the 72nd anniversary of his graduation. By this time it had been estimated that, in his thousands of sermons, addresses and talks throughout his lifetime, he had spoken to more than 30 million people.

Dr Peale enjoyed good health all his life up to the last year of his life (1993) when symptoms of Parkinson's disease manifested. In the last year or so of his life he eloquently defended Freemasonry against vicious attacks that had been launched against it by the Southern Baptist Convention.

Dr Peale died on December 24, 1993, at the age of 95, at his home in Pawling, New York and, after a service in his beloved Marble Collegiate Church, was buried in Christ Church Cemetery, Quaker Hill, Pawling.

United States President Bill Clinton paid tribute to Dr Peale, releasing the following statement:

Statement on the Death of Norman Vincent Peale

The name of Dr Norman Vincent Peale will forever be associated with the wondrously American values of optimism and service. Dr Peale was an optimist who believed that whatever the antagonisms and complexities of modern life brought us, that anyone could prevail by approaching life with a simple sense of faith. And he served us by instilling that optimism in every Christian and every other person who came in contact with his writings or his hopeful soul.

In a productive and giving life that spanned the 20th century, Dr Peale lifted the spirits of millions and millions of people who were nourished and sustained by his example, his teaching, and his giving. While the Clinton family and all Americans mourn his loss, there is some poetry in his passing on a day when the world celebrates the birth of Christ, an idea that was central to Dr Peale's message and Dr Peale's work. He will be missed.

William J Clinton  
*December 25th, 1993*

As I said earlier, Dr Peale had – and still has - his critics and detractors. Someone once said that he outlived his enemies, to which came the retort,

"No, he out-loved them." Even Peale himself, ever a humble man, was willing to concede that he had made some mistakes:

Maybe I have made it all sound too easy ... That certainly wasn't my intention, because Christianity isn't easy; it's so tough that nobody lives up to it fully. I always tried to emphasize that fact. And maybe I have stressed the tangible, visible rewards of faith too much. But here again, it wasn't because I was trying to appeal to selfishness. It was because I've seen fantastic transformations take place in people who, through self-surrender and the agony of spiritual change, find themselves and become balanced personalities. I've seen these things happen over and over again. I wanted everyone to know about them, to experiment and find out for themselves. ...

The privilege of reaching great numbers of people with this message is a gift the Lord has given me and I have used it to the utmost of my ability.

In addition to receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom, Dr Peale received during his lifetime some 22 honorary doctorates, various high-level Masonic honours, and over 30 major awards and honours, including, just to name a few, several Freedom Foundation Awards, the Horatio Alger Award, the American Education Award, the Salvation Army Award, the International Human Relations Award, the Clergyman of the Year Award, the Paul Harris Fellow Award from Rotary International, the Christopher Columbus Award, the Theodore Roosevelt Distinguished Service Award, the Humanitarian of the Year Award, the Award of Merit from National Religious Broadcasters, the Eleanor Roosevelt Val-Kill Medal, and the Pope John XXIII Award. He was listed in the Top 25 "Most Influential Religious Figures" (PBS Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly, 1999) as well as the Top 20 "Greatest Preachers of the 20th Century" (*Preaching* magazine, 1999). Even 29th Street, New York City, from Fifth Avenue to Broadway, in the vicinity of his former church, has been named "Norman Vincent Peale Way" ... and what a way it is!

Perhaps the greatest tributes that have been paid to Norman Vincent Peale are the thousands, if not millions, of letters he received, and his widow continues to receive, over the years from ordinary citizens all around the world, like this one from a teenager from Fresno, California:

Thank you, Dr Peale, for helping me find my way to God.

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