

Sarah Farmer Monologue

created by Anne Perry

2005

“There is a legend in Eastern countries that when a man first becomes conscious of his true nature as a child of God, he makes a pilgrimage still further eastward until he finds a green spot in which under the grateful shade of trees, he can lie down and, in his mind, see a vision of the City of Peace. Such a spot is our Green Acre—a place where beside still waters one may realize the peace that passeth all understanding—the peace which the world can never give nor take away. This is the place; the Idea is too great to be put into words—it must be felt. Those to whom it has become a living reality can be numbered in the thousands. . . . It has been our privilege to stand with open door, calling to all who hunger and thirst for the abundant life, and be assured that it is possible to find it now.”

Good evening, Dear friends. What a pleasure it is to be here amongst such a progressive and modern assemblage and what an honor to share the platform with our esteemed **President**, who has done so much to facilitate international arbitration. Because of his role in the recent treaty between Russia and Japan, he will be lauded for years to come.

I greet you with a full heart and hope that you, like me, value peace above all things. This is surely the greatest issue of our age, though many do not realize it. When I think of suffering humanity—the children and widows of soldiers who have died, of the victims of war and famine and deprivation, I am inspired to redouble my own efforts, and I hope this motivates you, too.

This year we celebrate a major victory—the Treaty of Portsmouth as a material manifestation of an underlying spiritual truth. I have been blessed to come to know this truth, through many years of commitment to it. I was first awakened to the need for peace and equality as a child, when our home was one of the last stops on the **Underground Railroad**, where slaves could escape their bondage. And why were they bound? Simply because of a misconception—that color of skin provided a division among the children of God. My own dear **mother** joined the Abolitionist Society only four days after her wedding, and I was blessed as a child by meeting **Sojourner Truth and Harriet Beecher Stowe** when these two remarkable ladies visited us in Salem. To hear **Sojourner** speak was truly memorable. She was illiterate, but she spoke out fearlessly. I can still hear her voice, speaking out on women’s rights: *“If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them.”*

I was raised to be a free thinker, committed to peace and justice and inspired by the transcendental ideas of Emerson and Thoreau. **My father** was an inventor who did not patent his inventions because he felt that they were the thoughts of God in the universe to be freely picked up by sensitive minds. He said **invention is inspiration**. Why, picture this, on my twelfth birthday while others were using candles and kerosene lanterns, Father surprised me by lighting up our home with electric lights. Thomas Edison, usually credited with the light bulb, was only 12! Father invented the fire alarm pull box, rolling skates, the electric trolley, and many other things. It has been my privilege to help him in his life’s work.

My mother taught me to be a reformist and a humanitarian. She established Rosemary, a home for underprivileged women and their children, and has brought relief to many orphans and other unfortunates. I learned to **“never despise any rung of the ladder by which another is rising.”** We set up a work-and-education project at Eliot, whereby Negro families of the south would come to Maine to be exposed to a more liberal environment. We also helped to revive the **Eliot Library**

Association and hold fetes on its behalf. Many people including **John Greenleaf Whittier** have been inspired to donate collections of books as a result.

But I wasn't always given to lofty causes. For some years we lived in **Newport**, where father had a prestigious job. I had beautiful clothes, intellectual and artistic companionship, suitors. O my! I was seen as quite a catch by numerous young men. But when Father's health collapsed, we moved to Eliot, Maine, which I first perceived as an utter wasteland. Mother's health worsened, and away from many of the joys I had known and with the burdens of caring for both of them, I had a nervous collapse, but then benefitted by the popular cure of an extended trip to Europe. It was on the ship that I had an image of myself as vain and selfish—caught up in the material things of life. I vowed then to devote my life to service and remembered what Mother had pledged when I was two and almost died. She told God that if I lived, my life would be dedicated to God. So perhaps it was destiny that I awoke to my path of service.

It hasn't been easy, I can tell you. I came back and had the audacity to join four men in partnership to run the Eliot Hotel, which they saw as a profitable venture. For my part, I saw it as a place where people could escape from their harried lives in the city and enjoy the country air. Whittier came often. One day, he said, "We have heard of God's acres, but I call this Green Acre." I liked the name and it stuck. Later I had a vision that it should be a place where all could come to learn about different perspectives and be refreshed spiritually, not just physically.

In 1894 I dedicated **Green Acre to the ideals of peace and unity**. Then we raised our enormous white flag with Peace in green letters under the American flag on the pole near the tent. The first peace flag in the world! And I said: "In looking for an emblem we wanted something that would be a call to everybody. . . . And we felt that the message that had been brought to the world by Prophet after Prophet was the message of 'Peace.' So we have put on a large banner over our heads, Peace. Thirty-six feet long, it flies on an 85-foot flagpole that was once a ship's mast. It was four times the size of this one. (*gesture toward flag*)

Our flag has been flying all during this long and brutal war and was visible from the spot where the peace treaty was negotiated. A few weeks ago, **Major Clark** from Washington DC alluded to it, and he queried whether or not the fact was significant. For my part, I am convinced that Green Acre had something to do with the treaty settlement and it was entirely appropriate and not accidental that Roosevelt should choose the Portsmouth Naval base across the river from the Inn as the site for the signing of the treaty.

We at Green Acre have been at the forefront of the movement to help end the war since its beginning. **Last summer**, fully a year before the treaty, our closing program included a concert at which Mrs. Emma Thursby in Japanese costume sung the national anthem of Japan, after which the audience rose in a body and, led by Mrs. Mary Burnham Moore, sang the national anthem of Russia, with the prayer in all hearts that the people of these two great nations might soon clasp hands in brotherly love and peace. And now we have just witnessed restored peace!

We had a wonderful gathering on **August 31** to celebrate the victory of the treaty signing to come and visit by the Japanese delegates. **Minister Takahira, Secretary Hanihara and Mr. Ishikawa**, a reporter with a Japanese newspaper, will surely never forget their day at Green Acre. They were very struck by the **Peace Flag**—which we had flying above the ensigns of the two countries, which intertwined in the breeze. Why, there must have been 300 people gathered in the tent that day. We prevailed upon the Japanese to **sing a verse of their national anthem**, and the **newspaper report** commented on “the plaintive strains . . . which sounded like weird echoes from the patriotic army camped among the Manchurian hills.” **Minister Takahira** made his first public utterance at Green Acre! He said that the **Japanese did not love fighting, but that war is sometimes necessary if the progress of civilization is not to be impeded. “Peace rather than war is what [Japan] desires,” he said. “Because war is an enemy to progress.”**

Mr. Ishikawa also made a speech, which was rather humorous. And the Japanese were introduced to a number of former subjects of the Czar, now American citizens, and were thanked for the kindness of Japan to the Russian prisoners. Such an astonishing day! Why, Ali Kuli Khan, our visiting Persian translator, called it the most important day in Green Acre's history. And there have been so many important days. . .

Now you would like to hear about the signing of the peace treaty at the Navy Yard. . . . Yes? Oh, the **drama of the large Russian ambassador—he was six foot seven inches—Mr. Witte and the diminutive Japanese foreign minister Komura—only five foot tall--** coming together to settle the terms. The newspapers have made much of their size differences. As personality types, they were very different, too. Mr. Witte was expressive, emotional, spontaneous, and Mr. Komura much more restrained. You can imagine how hard it was to negotiate the treaty. But finally, it came to pass. And I—**the only woman there to witness it**—hidden completely from view.

You may wonder how I came to be there, as I was not one of the invited guests. They were all men—**Secretary Pierce**, the personal representative of the president, **Commandant Mead** of the Navy Yard, who signed my autograph book and granted me a pass to the shipyard though it was under strict surveillance that day, **Captain Winslow** of the Mayflower, **Governor McLane** of New Hampshire, and the **Mayor Marvin** of Portsmouth. I felt a great instinct to be there—even if my gender made me conspicuous. But **I chose to be discrete** so as not to alarm the men, who are only used to meeting with each other and not fully considering the other half of the world.

It was around 3:45 when the delegates entered the conference room. They bowed to each other and took their accustomed seats, the invited witnesses forming a large circle around them. **Mr. Witte** and **Baron Komura** reached for pens from the center of the table at almost at the same moment the and signed their names, and the copies were then signed by **Baron Rosen** and **Mr. Takahira**. The room was

absolutely quiet. Then, throwing his pen aside, Mr. Witte, without a word, reached across the table and grasped Baron Komura's hand. Others followed suit and the Russian and Japanese delegates remained for a moment in silence, their right hands tightly clasped across the conference table. **I was so overjoyed** that I almost fainted, as you can imagine. The war was over; Russia and Japan were once more friends! Guns, ironically, were fired and bells rang. The whole world would celebrate this victory on **Sept 5, 1905 at 3:50 pm** in the Portsmouth navy shipyard.

Perhaps you don't believe that I was actually there? Here's what dear George Harriman wrote in my album: **"It gives me great pleasure as well as honor to write in this album belonging to Miss Sarah J. Farmer, who saw the signing and dealing of the 'Treaty of Peace' between Russia and Japan at Portsmouth Navy Yard Sept. 5th 1905—May peace and happiness ever be hers in her glorious works."**

Five days later, we held a peace celebration at which **Mr. Ishikawa** and **Mr. Kawakama**, spoke, each claiming that Japan had gained all they hoped for, though we know that on both sides there were concessions and it was not a one-sided victory. **Professor Clark** from the Imperial University at Tokyo, then spoke of the widows and orphans of the island empire and told of plans to collect funds in this country for their relief. Then a poem was read.

THE CHILDREN OF JAPAN
By Larry Chittenden, San Antonio TX

From beyond the Yalu River
And the islands faraway
Comes the booming roar of cannons,
And the world is sad today.

Sad alas! for suffering thousands,
And the thousands who have gone

To the lands beyond the Sun Rise
To await the final dawn.

But the children of the soldiers/
Ah the little children's cries
Are re-echoed by the night winds
Till the sea is sad with sighs.

Yes, across the weary waters,
Leagues and countless leagues away,

There are orphans by the thousands
And the women weep today.

Oh! My brothers they are dying
Famishing for want of bread,
For their guardians' the Reservists
Are all at the front—or dead!

Would you leave them in their anguish?
No!—the Brotherhood of Man
Call aloud for aid and succor

For the children of Japan.

We have preached and prayed for ages
On the little line of creeds;
But now my Christian brothers
'Tis the time for kindly deeds.

Till Fuji's lofty mountain—
And the Yalu River free
He echo Christ's great precept
"Ye have done it unto me."

War, dear friends, requires costly sacrifice, and we must offer the practical aid and sympathy that will help both sides care for the thousands of widows and orphans of their slain soldiers.

Oh--let me read you what Kawakami wrote in my autograph book: "The Peace Treaty of Portsmouth is neither the victory of the Mikado nor the victory of the Czar; it is the grand triumph of Humanity, of Civilization, of the inflexible law of Progress." Isn't that a marvelous thought? To get beyond national interest and welcome all with the light of unity! Why, that is the very reason **Green Acre** exists. Now, perhaps you want to hear more about Green Acre.

Many **well-known people** have come to visit and give lectures—Annie Bessant, Edward Everett Hale, Mary Hanford Ford, W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington—oh yes, we believe in eradicating the color barrier, despite some fierce opposition--Jane Addams and Julia Ward Howe, who are both great proponents for peace, Ralph Waldo Trine, Phoebe Hearst and many others, including swamis from the East, like Vivekananda and Dharmapala, with their colorful robes. In my mind, a good Greenacrite throws off sectarian feeling and does not hesitate to participate in the ceremonies of alien faiths. We have had candlelit processions with guests dressed as eastern sages wearing bed sheets for robes and turbans—and all kinds of ideas expressed, which has made the town of Eliot a bit nervous, as you can imagine.

Amidst the cosmopolitan crowd, we have had some interested characters over the years. There is Dr. Moore, who lives in a tree house and eats only fruit and nuts. There was one German doctor who believed in hydro-therapy. He advocated walking barefoot in the early morning dew. Some of us dew walkers have gotten a reputation with the Eliot farmers, who have hidden behind our stone walls just to get a peak as we lifted our skirts to our ankles.

Of course, there are people who are quite serious about philosophy—the Emersonians and Whitmanites and disciples of Thoreau, who come to Green Acre every year, and there are those from every religious background and persuasion. **Transcendentalists, radical Unitarians, Reform Jews, progressive Quakers, Spiritualists, questing psychologists, New Thought optimists, Vedantatists, Theosophists, Christians, and Bahá'ís.** I entreat every one to listen to all with an unbiased mind. And so our great experiment will be the basis for a university of the future, where all will study and also excel in practical arts.

And speaking of art, Tolstoi has admirably said that true Art is that which brings human beings into a common consciousness. . . .” “It is clear that this true Art is, and must always be, a direct realization of our ideal of peace and human oneness; and we shall always regard Art in that light, and seek to use it to that end.”

“The very atmosphere of Green Acre breathes, or is the breath of Art. On the rim of the Piscataqua, with its strangely rapid tides, the pines close at hand, which seem like trees of sacred growth, it is not strange that artistic studies and talks are inwrought into Green Acre life. But the Green Acre sessions are all the spontaneous outbreathings of those who come to impart the treasures of brain and heart, to give out that all may share in the riches of the world's beauty and thus keep step with the New Life and Light of the wonderful Day now dawning.”
[PAUSE]

Though Green Acre is a haven and created for the purpose of peace, I have been sorely tested by those who claim to love it.

Some people **think I am insane** and want to have me put away in some sanatorium. Some are jealous of what we have at Green Acre and want to see it fail. There was even one man who **stole plumbing** from the inn, so that the Inn would cease operating, and others who have stolen money. Some believe I should never have gone to **Palestine**, where I met Abdu'l-Baha and became convinced of the Baha'i Revelation and how it relates to the fundamental oneness of all people and all religions. They accuse me betraying liberality and turning to sectarianism, which I have for so long shunned. They "**cannot realize my point of view**. My joy in the Persian Revelation is not that it reveals one of the streams flowing to the great Ocean of Life, Light and Love, but that it is a perfect mirror of that Ocean. What, in Green Acre, was a *vision* and a *hope* becomes, through it *a blessed reality* now. It has illuminated for me every other expression of Truth which I had hitherto known and placed my feet on a Rock from which they cannot be moved. And it is the Manifestation of the Fatherhood—Bahá'u'lláh—who has taught me to look away from even the Greatest and find within the One, 'Powerful, Mighty, and Supreme 'who is to be the Redeemer of my life. It is a Revelation of Unity such as I had never before found. By means of its Light, as shown in the life of the Master, Abdul Behá, I have entered into a joy greater than any I have hitherto known.

Green Acre was established as a means to that end and in proportion as we lay aside all spirit of criticism of others and seek only to live the Unity we find, shall we be able to help others to the same divine realization."

"In human history, especially in the lives of the white races, no cause has led to such bitter wars as difference of religion; Yet of all things, religion should most bind men together. It is not religion which has been the cause of strife, but the failure to understand and realize religion, and the divine truth which lies at its heart."

"The Green Acre work is, in the largest sense, non-partisan and non-sectarian. Its keynote is Fullness of Life. . . . The White Flag of Peace floats over the grounds and symbolizes the aim of the Green Acre movement—a federation of diverse

interests devoted to the common end of making all life fuller and [more complete], in more harmonious touch with the Divine Source of all strength and beauty.”

But I find few who understand. They want the old days at Green Acre—where anyone and everyone had a platform. But Abdu’l-Baha told me it is best for some of the superstitious beliefs to be left behind. . . . yet people think I am wrong to uphold this new standard. What is to become of Green Acre, my child?

So many people have been drawn to Green Acre—intellectuals, artists, educators, and simple folk. I remember one Jewish woman—**Esther Davis**—from Atlantic City. She had been disappointed in love, and a psychologist told her, “You should go to Green Acre.” I remember receiving her letter and then writing to her and giving her directions. But it seemed impossible that she could actually travel so far from home. Later, events turned out that made it possible for her to spend the summer here. We became great friends.

One time she attended the meeting of our “The Sunset Group,” a group of us who loved sitting out on the porch of Miss Mansfield, watching the sunset over the Piscataqua. We sat silently watching the glowing ball of fire disappearing over the water. Then each one of us gave a short, spiritual message she had been given through the spirit. Esther later said she was silent because she felt stupid and empty. Nothing had come to her, and it was her time to say something. Then suddenly the place seemed filled with a great light, and she saw an immense pair of wings over this place. A hand seemed to push her to arise, to go forward towards me, and say, **“Miss Farmer, I see an immense pair of wings over this place. They are especially over you, as if to protect you.”** At that time she knew nothing of the difficulties I was laboring under. I was trying to do more than my strength allowed—and there were the financial problems, and ill health. There were those who felt I had betrayed Green Acre because of my interest in the Persian Revelation. I was much troubled and felt that I had enemies all around me, trying to take over my programs. And the inn wasn’t making enough money because I kept inviting people who couldn’t pay anything. But I told her, **“Oh my**

child, you are seeing the wings of the cherubim. It is my symbol! See. Put your hands upon me, and give me the blessing, for you know not how much I need it.”

Abdu’l-Baha over the years has always consoled me at my darkest times. His letters arrive when I most need them.

“O maid-servant of God! Verily opposition will wax fierce upon thee and denial and unbelief will day by day increase. People will arise to oppression and . . . torment thee. . . . Be not distressed at this; Opposition shall surely pass away, the dark clouds in all regions will be At that time your value shall appear among the nations of the world and tribes and people will arise to praise you. . . .”

“O maid-servant of God! . . . Be not disheartened if thou hearest the murmuring of the deniers, the clamor of the hypocrites, . . . withstand their oppositions with . . . all cheerfulness . . . and . . . exaltation. . . . Be thou a light to every darkness, a dispeller of every sadness, a healer for every sick person, a quencher for every thirst, a shelter for every refugee, a refuge for every captive. . . . Trust in the grace of thy Lord. He shall surely assist thee with a confirmation whereat minds will be amazed and the thoughts of the men of learning will be astonished. . . .”

Men of learning be astonished . . . by me? Frank Sanborn, a man of learning and a transcendentalist, is now critical of my turning to the Baha’I Revelation as a derailing of his own designs, others question my own mental balance—They ask how a woman like me—active, vigorous, reform-minded, independent—can find salvation through *obedience* to a mortal representative without seeing His divinity. Ah, and His letter from last year, after Bittersweet was burned down. My dear family home. What a terrible test it was, to lose everything—even father’s invention papers.

“O Bird without a nest! . . . There is a hidden wisdom in the burning of the house which before long will be clearly known. Divine attractions and

heavenly bounties alone cause happiness to the hearts. . . . Some of the weak souls thought that this dear maid-servant of God was attached to this house and to this perishable world. Now the house is burnt, all will realize that thy attraction is increasing, thy steps are drawing near, thy flag is raised higher and thy condition more excellent. Show forth such happiness and joy that all will be astonished.”

I try, Lord, I try. But He doesn't know I am so tired, so lacking in those qualities that make a saint. Be with me, Abdu'l-Baha!

“Know, verily, I was with you in spirit during your assemblage in the meeting. . . under the Standard of peace” My peace flag! It has proved easier to raise the banner than to fully realize the message. Ah, here's a precious passage:

“. . . As to [the people of color] verily the faces of these are as the pupil of the eye; although the pupil is created black, yet it is the source of light. I hope these black ones [will be] the glory of the white ones. . . .”

You see--I have been right to proclaim the unity of race, despite the resistance and opposition from so many. In the future I visualize all people mingling together—regardless of station in life, race, religion, or gender. That will create the necessary conditions for world peace. Now listen to what Abdu'l-Baha says about women:

“O maid-servant of God . . . Know . . . that every true woman who is attracted by the fragrances of holiness in this most glorious age will surpass even the most developed men of previous centuries. . . . I hope that . . . thou wilt become the lamp of the society of Green Acre and wilt . . . become the envy of the queens of all regions and wilt be the rival of all the celebrated people of the world.” The envy of queens? The rival of celebrated people?

He also says:

When . . . the equality of men and women is realized, the foundations of war will be utterly destroyed. . . .” “In truth, woman will be the greatest factor in

establishing universal peace and international arbitration. Assuredly, woman will abolish warfare among mankind.”

This reminds me of the ideas of our dear Julia Ward Howe. Have you read her proclamation on Mother’s Day—eternally linking the cause of peace to the importance and strength of women? Now there’s a thought—to put women in charge of making some of the important decisions in the world. Perhaps that would hasten world peace. She says:

"Our husbands will not come to us, reeking with carnage, For caresses and applause. Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn All that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy and patience. We, the women of one country, Will be too tender of those of another country To allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs.”

Then she calls upon women to “take counsel with each other as to the means whereby the great human family can live in peace . . . to promote the alliance of the different nationalities, the amicable settlement of international questions, the great and general interests of peace.”

That, dear friends, is just what we are doing at Green Acre! We seek to eliminate the very foundations of war. And so I am supremely happy, though many troubles still surround me.

Tonight is a special night for me, as tomorrow is my 58th birthday. Last year Charles Malloy, one of our transcendentalists, wrote a poem for me, which I believe I have right here:

We cannot say she’s nearer Heaven
Now she’s come to fifty-seven
I think indeed, we’d better say,
She’s been near Heaven all the way.

For Heaven is not a distant star—
Heaven is heaven in what we are,
And Heaven is Heaven in what we make it—
That's why 'tis so easy to mistake it—
In making Heaven we live alone
And everyone must make his own.

If you would become a Heaven maker,
The place to begin is at Green Acre.

Green Acre is indeed, a spot where the peace that passeth understanding may be realized. And soon, I hope, this will ripple out to the whole world.

“PEACE to all beings: this is the ideal. That men should no longer try to settle their differences, like warring beasts, by taking each others' lives and destroying each others' homes. Our Conferences [at Green Acre] have helped to make known the work of the **great Peace movement**, which for centuries has slowly been making its way in the world, instilling its message into the hearts of men. . . . **The cause of Peace** has made great strides, and is destined to conquer the world, making organized murder, and the false ideal of glory bound up with it, things of the past.”

I hear many people say that we can never achieve peace in the world. Of course we all feel discouraged at times. But the future is bright with possibilities. I am convinced that the equality of women, universal education, international arbitration, economic opportunity for all people, the complete end to religious and racial prejudice, will lead to international peace. Poets and Prophets have given us hope for our task at hand. This should be the governing passion of our lives. I thank you all for inviting me here this evening to share these thoughts with you.

And I will end with a single word: PEACE.