

Free Indeed

If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed
— John 8: 36 —

FREEDOM IS DEFINED in many ways. It depends on your point of view: you may consider yourself to be at liberty or enslaved. You may think that you are overworked and underpaid, that your daily life is a drudge. Indeed, millions look for financial freedom in a state lottery ticket. Some look for freedom through renewed self-esteem in a fashion makeover. Fame-seekers in reality television look to gain freedom from obscurity. Others view freedom primarily in a political sense, while for others, religious freedom is all-important.

When emigrants arriving in America at Ellis Island gazed up at the Statue of Liberty, they were excited at the prospects of freedom that awaited them in their new country. Today, we might easily take our freedom for granted. In spite of any personal disadvantages we may have to contend with, we recognize that the freedom to come and go unmolested by the civil authorities is a considerable one. We assume it is a right, and so it has become, but we should be grateful for it, nonetheless. Most of us were born into this fortunate condition, without being called upon to struggle to secure the franchise or campaign for better working conditions. We accept as natural the freedom to speak our mind and to make our own decisions.

Freedom of person and freedom of action gives rise to many charitable and generous impulses. Not everything done in our country is of a selfish nature. Although many complain about one thing or another, our society has an underlying foundation of good will and compassion.

Freedom Dearly Won

June 6 was the 60th anniversary of the Allied Normandy landings of 1944, an invasion that led to

freedom for the European continent from Nazi occupation and, in 1945, brought about the end of the war in Europe. Following was a period of repression in Soviet bloc countries as the "iron curtain" descended and imposed hardships for those on the wrong side.

With the ending of the Cold War and the realignment of political interest in Europe and around the world over the past decade, freedom in many aspects has mushroomed, certainly of the political and social sort. Increased opportunity in developing countries, and widening access to the technologies of computers and mobile phones has opened up possibilities of material prosperity for millions.

The Only Freedom Worth Having

But in the Christian sense, freedom is more than congenial circumstances and freedom of movement, as desirable as these are.

Because of wise civil statutes, forged in the white heat of controversies, civil strife, and religious persecution in the early life of this country, Christians in the United States have freedom to assemble and to express our beliefs unhampered by the authorities. True, most people are indifferent to the Christian message, but we have our precious liberty. The Apostle Paul encourages the Christian to give thanks for a generally benign national state of affairs, that we may demonstrate our assent and desire for a continuation of it (1 Tim. 2: 1-6).

The course of the Christian is from slavery to sin and self, to emancipation in Christ. Ironically, this freedom is gained only by a further enslavement — the subordination of our own will to that of Christ. This paradox — to be truly free we must be a captive of Christ — is the central fact of the Christian life.

All Scripture references are to the King James Version, unless otherwise stated.

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The Bible Standard is published monthly by the Laymen's Home Missionary Movement, Ralph M. Herzig, General Editor. Published regularly since December 1951. Mailing Address: The Bible Standard, 1156 St. Matthew's Road, Chester Springs, Pennsylvania 19425-2700, U.S.A. Postage paid at the post office in Chester Springs, Pennsylvania 19425-2700. Web Site: www.biblestandard.com Rates: single issue — \$2.00; by subscription (12 issues annually) — \$12.00.

- 31. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;
- 32. And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.
- 33. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?
- 34. Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.
- 35. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.
- 36. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

— John 8: 31-36

BORN FREE?

The context of John 8 shows that Jesus was preaching in a public place at the Temple in Jerusalem, probably the Court of the Women, near the Treasury. By this point in His ministry Jesus had antagonized the cadre of Jewish leaders who regarded Him with suspicion and a threat to their power and influence. They looked for ways to silence the troublemaker, to seize Him by force, but opportunity did not present itself, Providence preventing (v. 20).

The Evangelist's account sparks with the obvious tension that existed between our Lord and the religious rulers. To understand the conversation between Jesus and the Pharisees (v. 13; also called "Jews," v. 22), we need to keep in mind that it alternates in its reference to these who were hostile, and, on the other hand, to those who listened sympathetically (the believers, v. 30). To this eager audience, the Lord proclaimed the liberating power of the Truth (v. 32). In v. 33, the Pharisees responded to this statement, though it was not addressed directly to them. In hypercritical fashion they seized on it and were affronted by the implication it carried.

The members of this hierarchy considered themselves to be the preferred of God, the natural inheritors of the Divine promises. To a certain extent, this was true; but over the centuries the Mosaic Law had been perverted to serve the self-interest of certain parties — used, in short, as a means of controlling the general populace. The people of Israel were not well served by their leader class, who had become smug and self-righteous. It was to this attitude that Jesus spoke, no doubt expecting the reaction that He met.

Bad Habits of Power

It is not unusual for any one party or group, long used to power, to become arrogant and self-serving. The general low esteem in which professional politicians are held, in this and other countries, reflects general cynicism produced by official misconduct and the untruthfulness of elected and appointed representatives. Of course, there are many sensible and well-meaning politicians, but the general judgment is often painted in broad strokes and does not always make such nice distinctions.

Returning to the rulers in Israel, we can judge from their response that they were affronted by our Lord's implied accusation. Having Himself been brought up under the Law, and a keeper of it, and possessing a mind like no other, He understood how the "system" worked. And here He was to reprove them — a neophyte and a rebel (as they saw Him) setting Himself against their great body of knowledge and experience.

"We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" (v. 33). In His usual way, Jesus drilled immediately to the problem: "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (v. 34). What were they to say? That they did not commit sin? They who harried the people with lectures on obedience to the Law and enforced penalties against infractions of it — were they now to claim that they were themselves perfect? The people knew better, and so did they.

SLAVES TO A HARD MASTER

By His words, Jesus revealed the truth of salvation: that it has nothing to do with works. It is not how handsome, beautiful, or proficient one is; it is not how much work you can do, how well you present yourself to others, or how much you know. How *do* you appear before God?, that is the question. And how do the Scriptures answer? "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3: 10). No, not one. These three words exclude boasting by any. All are guilty, all are servants, slaves of sin, bound up and chained by its influence.

"They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Psa. 14: 3). Sin may be a matter of degree as to the outward form, but that is of little consequence from the Divine point of view. As noted elsewhere, "death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5: 12). No exceptions, no excuses, no release for good conduct. We are all captives of the curse.

We cannot do anything to win our salvation; but our response to the reward of justification is naturally to align our heart and mind with this new and exciting truth.

FREEDOM FROM SELF

The liberty that Jesus offers is not of the ordinary sort. Our civil, social, political, and religious freedoms are precious and have been dearly bought by social pressure or force of arms. All national legends celebrate the courageous pioneers of their history, from suffragette to soldier, who have won the rights and privileges we now enjoy. But the battle for the freedom that Jesus speaks of here is to be won by an even tougher one: the combat against Self. So deeply entrenched are our habits that it requires commitment and an extraordinary effort of will to root them out. We cannot do this unaided. Nor do we have to. Assuming that we recognize sin as the chief problem, and that we are willing to do something about it, we are promised all the help necessary.

This "knowing the truth" sort of freedom is the highest liberty of all, but can only be attained by *enslavement* of the will to Christ. To be a self-server is to be in the worst bondage of all — it is a dead-end and can never bring the perfect peace and rest for which our troubled hearts yearn.

From our recognition of the problem we move on to accepting the solution — by faith to recognize that Christ is our Deliverer, the *only* one capable of bringing deliverance. This is to possess the Son, to acknowledge His claim in our life. Here is justification by faith. From this point we move forward, secure in the knowledge that God now looks at us in a different light. Through Christ's advocacy we stand before Divine Justice free from condemnation (Rom. 8: 1). Of course, in this life we can never be sin-free and will always fall short of the ideal of the perfect Christian. But we are in a forgiven state, and may always be assured of our acceptance by the Heavenly Father because we love the Son (John 14: 21).

Happy Day

Our first recognition of this forgiveness brings a thrill like no other. This is the coveted "joy of salvation" (Psa. 51: 12). It gives us an impetus to press on to secure the arrangement by obedience. Not that we can *do* anything to win our salvation; but our response to the reward of justification is naturally to align our heart and mind with this new and exciting truth — to "continue," as v. 31 puts it.

"Continue." It is a common word, generally used in the passive voice. Serials and television programs "continue." Golf tournaments "continue." The word could better be rendered as "stay" or "remain." Verse 35 uses the equally accurate "abide[th]." Here the contrast is between the hired servant or slave and the true child of God. ("Son" is incorrectly given a capital letter; Jesus is not here referring to Himself.)

Prodigal versus Loyal Son

In a similar scenario, in Luke 15, the wandering boy lands back home, to his father's arms, and is quite rejected by the stay-at-home brother, who, for all his industry and constant domestic attendance, had not learned the art of forgiveness. So focused was he on *his* position, *his* rights, that his heart had become crimped and narrowed, nothing to overflow toward his repentant sibling.

This picture aptly describes the Pharisees of our main text. Wrapped up in *their* interests, protective of *their* standing, they little cared for the needs of the people. But it was the "common people" who listened to Jesus with delight. These, destitute in spirit, burdened with guilt and shame, desperate for guidance, found in the Redeemer liberation from their pathetic state. They were eager for sonship. The carefully crafted officialdom of the Pharisees, however, would disappear in the prophesied destruction of Jerusalem that was to come.

Such a Little Word

In verse 36, Jesus offers freedom, to which is superadded the word "indeed." This word affirms that a thing is so, reinforcing a basic assertion. Various Greek words, with slight differences in meaning, are so translated: Matt. 26: 41; Luke 24: 34; John 6: 55; 2 Cor. 11: 1.

It conveys the meaning of a more-than-ordinary freedom. It is as if Jesus had said, "Not only will I make you free, but you will be given a special type of freedom, one which you cannot get from anywhere else." Like the wisdom that comes from above, or the peace that the world cannot appreciate nor take away, the freedom that Jesus offers is unique (James 3: 17, 18; John 14: 27). The truth that sets free is the truth about Christ and His salvation work. It is the summary of the

Word of God, which is the revelation of God's Plan to mankind, the central theme of which is the Gospel — the good news of Christ's redemptive office. This is the truth that leads to eternal life.

THE FREEDOM YET TO COME

Probably one of the most-overlooked features of God's Plan is that of the salvation of the non-elect. Many Christian creeds have not allowed for the possibility of being "saved" beyond this life. But a review of the Scriptures assures us that the deliverance of those who do not now accept Christ as their Savior and King — the majority — is one of the main features of God's plan of salvation.

The Apostle Paul makes this clear in his miniature treatise on the history of mankind's condition in Rom. 8: 20-22:

- **20.** For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,
- **21.** Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.
- **22.** For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

According to the Apostle, the purpose of this glorious reward for the elect, the Church, is to be a blessing to the remainder of mankind. This is apparent from the linkage between vs. 18, 19:

- **18.** For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.
- **19.** For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

The Greek word translated "creature" is *ktisis* and is rendered similarly in Mark 16: 15 and Col. 1: 23 (King James Version). From its use here it is apparent that it refers to people and, by extension, to *all people*, or all nations.

From the Biblical point of view all mankind is corrupted — physically, morally, mentally, religiously. Unaided, man is not able to ascertain God's Truth, and instead substitutes for it bankrupt philosophies. Not that the race is without reason or cleverness. But, lacking access to the Divine mind, they are forced to try to make sense of this world and the complexities of life using their own logic and social experiments. Despite their astounding progress in various practical and the-

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oretical areas of science, the natural inability to appreciate the Divine mind (or to even believe that there is one), leaves mankind empty and — from the eternal point of view — renders their efforts futile.

To Die that Others Might Live

The development and exaltation of the Church, says the Apostle Paul in the verses quoted earlier, are necessary to the rescue and recovery of the race as a whole. He makes the same point under a different figure, in 1 Cor. 15: 29, 30. Here he speaks of the figurative baptism for the dead:

- **29.** Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?
- **30.** And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?

The dead of this verse are the same ones referred to in Rom. 8: 20 — the world of mankind, dead in trespasses and sins. By their consecration and faithfulness the members of the Church prepared themselves for the privilege, with Christ, of blessing and uplifting mankind in the Millennial Kingdom.

And so, by their general condition of distress, the world of mankind make mute appeal for deliverance. One translation puts it in a charming way: "the whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own" (*The New Testament in Modern English*, J.B. Phillips).

Where There's Life, There's Hope

Though God sentenced Adam and Eve to death, He held out to them the possibility of a deliverance in the distant future (Gen. 3: 15). This hope was embedded in man's constitution by repetition — through the early patriarchs, the Jewish prophets and teachers, the Apostles, and the innumerable preachers and ministers of all sorts throughout the Gospel Age, who passed on the message from generation to generation by the spoken and printed word.

Although the Bible's explanation on the nature and condition of man is largely ignored today, with the advent of the teachings of evolution and a secular approach to science and cosmology, nevertheless, the true state of affairs is ample witness against the conventional human wisdom.

Instinctive Yearnings for Life

Every funeral, with its train of mourners, poses the question, "why do we have to die?" From the elaborate state funerals of presidents and monarchs to the less public cremations and burials of the rank and file of earth's millions, the picture is clear: we are a dead and dying race.

If evolution, with its accidental progress by replacement, were fact, and death is natural, we might have expected that the race would long ago have reconciled itself to this; bereavements would be greeted with composure and easy resignation. But shared and expressed grief, public and private, is common in all cultures.

Within each of us, religious or not, lurks the suspicion that death is *ab*normal — it certainly does not feel natural. Expected and usual, yes — but not natural. Certainly we go out of our way to postpone it and attempt to lighten its stark reality with dark humor. This refusal to go gentle into "that good night" demonstrates that vague hope which God has implanted in us.

Children of God

And the final outcome? The hope will be gratified (Rom. 8: 20). To the non-elect world: the possibility of becoming children of God (v. 21).

It ill befits the Christian to deny salvation to the rest of mankind — the elder son showing disdain for the returned prodigal, the day workers complaining that the latecomers were not entitled to the same pay (Luke 15: 25-32; Matt. 20: 1-16).

Of course, God is not careless in His manner of dispensing the blessings of salvation, but like the seeds that are scattered by the early spring breezes or that spiral down from the trees, He is prolific in salvation blessings, and there are plenty for all. He rejoices at the one-in-a-hundred sheep that is found; in the sinner who turns from his or her wayward path to righteousness.

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

How then is this freedom to come about in a practical way? How will God usher into liberty this vast and wayward world of the ungrateful and unrighteous?

¹ Dylan Marlais Thomas (1914-1953)

Christ Jesus has a bride, bought with His own blood. His Church is identified under various terms — the Little Flock, living stones of the temple, Christ's Body, Priests, Kings — and it is as Kings under the King of Kings, Christ, that they will rule the world in that day to come. As already seen, they were prepared for their future work in this life. That is why they had to suffer.

Because of their faithfulness they will be a practical blessing to mankind. Here we see God's principle of interdependency in operation. "Am I my brother's keeper?" The implied answer is, yes. Each of us is dependent on others. The beautiful acts of charity and compassion that we see all around us are proof of the proposition. Such deeds collectively affirm our belief in the process of recovery, of making whole, of *rescuing* — in short, the elements of salvation — reflections of the mind of God.

But man cannot complete this process. God can, and will. And it is to be accomplished through the Redeemer Christ, who, by His completely unselfish offering of Himself for mankind manifested the greatest act of compassion in the history of the universe and became the Example in whose footsteps His followers have walked.

God will not squander the value of Christ's ransom-sacrifice. Christ died for *all*: the benefits so far have come to a relative few in this life, because of their exercise of faith in Christ; it will come to the rest, the non-elect, in the Millennial Age, the day appointed.

Speaking of Christ's kingdom under the figure of a mountain, the prophet Isaiah says (25: 6-9):

And the Lord . . . will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

THE HAND OF GOD

THE HUMAN HAND is a most remarkable appendage. It is an instrument perfectly suited for conveying the creativity and intelligence of the human mind. From playing the piano, to grasping a hammer, to threading a needle, it is a consummate tool, a minister of the mind, for it does the bidding of human thought unconsciously.

To be a "right-hand man" is to hold a worthy place of service.

With our hands we express our emotions . . . demonstrate our friendship and solidarity with another by shaking hands . . . commit to canvas our artistic observations . . . write or type our thoughts and imaginations . . . build a boat . . . climb a tree and pick its fruit . . . button up our coats

against the winter wind . . . throw a ball to our children . . . greet a friend.

Our hand expresses who we are and demonstrates the power of an intelligent Creator.

Christ is the Hand of God. Just as our hand expresses our will and intention, so Christ, as the right hand of God, makes known the Heavenly Father to us and, as God's Mighty One, accomplishes the purposes of His Plan. All things are *of* the Father, *through* the Son (1 Cor. 8: 6).

By Christ, His Hand, the Father draws us to Himself . . . lifts us out of the pit of death . . . protects us from spiritual harm . . . fashions us as a potter shapes the clay . . . wipes away our tears of sorrow . . . gently pushes us on when our courage fails . . . chastens us when we go astray . . . pats us on the back and says, "Well done!"

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.

— 1 Pet. 5: 6 —

of interest . . .

A new study on the global state of Jews, conducted by the Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI) claims that the Jewish population is approaching zero growth. The comprehensive study shows that Jews are well off physically — some 92 percent of the Jewish population live in countries that are in the top 20 percentiles of standards of living. While this allows them many advantages, it also increases the likelihood that they will assimilate into those countries and lose their Jewish identity. The problem is particularly acute in America, where the community "is experiencing an alarming erosion of communal identity, with much of its population doubting the need to maintain its distinctiveness."

The study's statistics show that in 1970 the number of American Jews stood at 5,686,000, while in 2003 there was a slight drop to 5,671,000. In 2020, according to the study, it is expected that the US Jewish population will have dropped to 5,581,000.

In Canada, though, Jews have maintained their Jewish identity while participating in an open Western society. Their population has grown from 286,000 to 371,000. In 2020 the number will rise to 381,000. But overall, the JPPI said, the future for Jewish growth looks bleak: "Trends clearly move in the direction of decline."

"Jewish population growth approached zero, at 13 million people in 2004. Between 1970 and 2003 the world's total population grew by nearly 2.5 billion, an increase of over 70 percent. In contrast, the total Jewish population increased by only 250,000, or 2 percent," said the study. The JPPI said it is worried about the demographic future of Jews in Israel as well, even though the population has grown from 2,582,000 in 1970 to 5,094,000 in 2003, and is expected to reach 6,228,000 in 2020.

Equally worrisome is the significant threat to the Jewish character of Israel because of demographic, social, and ideological trends, said the study. On the positive side it noted that committed Diaspora Jews are better educated than ever and that more Jewish parents are choosing to send their children to Jewish day schools.

— Jerusalem Post

As a Tree

I think that I shall never see A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day, And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in Summer wear A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain; Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me, But only God can make a tree.

— Trees*

THE SHIPS that carried the Apostle Paul on his missionary journeys, the Conestoga wagons that lumbered westward over the American plains, and the cross on which Jesus hung were all made

of the most remarkable material from that most remarkable of God's creations, the tree.

Throughout the ages the tree has been the chief source for fuel and construction. In recent years, we have come to appreciate the tree as a vital component of our planet's health: earth's forests constitute the planet's lungs, taking up much of the carbon dioxide which otherwise would invade the atmosphere, and possibly contribute to worldwide climate change.

Centuries ago, forests that once covered the continent of Europe, habitat for the bear and wolf and a stunning variety of flora, were decimated by the expanding populations and civilizations of the later Middle Ages, the rapacious Industrial Revolution, and the numerous sieges and wars that savaged mankind. Today, the tropical rain forests are undergoing steady destruction as they are cleared for habitation, agriculture, minerals, and the expanding lumber market.

The wood of the tree, that amazing fibrous matter, with its adaptability and beauty, wonderfully suited for man's use, is a creation of the Divine mind.

The Literary Tree

Given the ubiquitous nature of the tree and its importance to man's existence it is not surprising that it is a frequent theme of literature. The poem that appears at the beginning of the article is but one example.

The Hebrew Scriptures contain numerous references to trees, in poetic, allegorical, or parabolic ways, of which some follow:

- The tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2: 9).
- The fragrant cedars of Lebanon, tall and spreading wide, are extolled as part of God's creation (Psa. 104: 16); they were used in the construction of Solomon's temple (2 Chron. 2: 4, 16).
- The prepossessing appearance of the Amorites is likened to the majestic cedar and oak (Amos 2: 9).
 - The dissolution of Israel following the death of Gideon, their warrior deliverer, is cleverly presented in the allegory of the trees and the bramble (Judges 9: 1-21).

The Olive Tree

In the New Testament, as in the Old, the versatile olive tree is alluded to many times, and in a classic passage from the book of Romans, the Apostle Paul likens Israel to the

native variety of that tree, and draws out an important doctrinal lesson. Addressing the Gentile Christians, many of whom had disdain for the Jews, the rejected covenant people of God, he writes (Rom. 11: 17-24):

- 17. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert graffed in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;
- **18.** Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.
- **19.** Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in.
- **20.** Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:
- **21**. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.
- 22. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.
- **23.** And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in: for God is able to graff them in again.

[•] Alfred Joyce Kilmer (1886-1918); published 1914

24. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert graffed contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be graffed into their own olive tree?

The prime import of this passage to the modern Christian is its assertion that fleshly Israel has not been discarded for ever; that the time will come (indeed it has begun!) when God will turn His attention to the deliverance of His ancient people. For a detailed explanation of this passage along this line, see our May 2003 issue.

The Fig Tree

Under yet another figure, unfruitful Israel is likened to the fig tree (Luke 13: 6-9). And in another place, in a severe judgment against the obstructive character of the entrenched leaders of Israel, our Lord warns them that their entire political-religious structure was about to be cut down (Luke 3: 9; *compare* Ezek. 15).

The Romans passage establishes the notion of God as a Master Pruner, removing defective branches, grafting in others, and generally tending the tree that it might grow in a healthy and productive way to match His eternal purpose. Here we see the carefulness of God, who will hurt, but not to destroy. As Christians, expected to bear the fruits of the spirit, we may draw useful lessons from the imagery.

The Christian as a Tree

Depending on when we became a Christian we will have spent more or less of our years growing in this world, its mores, its way of thinking. Our early roots will have been set down into and nourished by the elements of this world — its soil, so to speak — and our character and personality formed accordingly. When we present ourselves before the Lord we come laden down with sins and all sorts of problems — a rather awkward and unattractive offering.

Like a twisted and ragged tree, heavy with useless, dead branches, we are in need of adjustment. When we are eventually turned by faith toward the heavenly sunlight of truth, our unpleasant contours are brought into stark relief. We must now be made to grow in a different direction, and the useless attachments — worldly affections and vanities and lusts — must be removed.

On the natural fruit tree, the sprouts that pop out from the trunk can divert sap from the tree if left to grow. Early on, they are easy to remove. So it is with us. Some of our worldly attachments and habits are weakly formed — perhaps we have longed to be rid of them anyway — and we feel little or no discomfort when the Lord, by His test-

ing providences, snips them off, and diverts our attention to spiritual things. We begin to feel the sweet influences of the holy spirit working in us, enlivening our interests and appreciation of godly themes.

So much for the watersprouts: the big branches are the problem. The lines of thought, modes of conduct, habits of speech and contemplation, encrusted over with the selfish things that we treasure so — all the non-productive (dis)graces by which we identify our natural self prevent us from growing as a healthy Christian, a re-made man or woman. Having these branches removed is a painful business.

When the rough-tooth saw begins to bite into the bark, the wood resists. As the cut deepens, gravity takes over, the limb declines ever so slightly, then a little more, and eventually the slot opens under the weight, as if to invite the completing of the process.

And so we yield to the Father's wounding, relinquishing those parts of our character that rightly fall back to the terrain from whence they grew. By our humble surrender we encourage Him to proceed and sever from us the encumbrance that hinders our growth and that renders us unfit for His purpose. Better to let the spurious — if cherished — appendages of our character go than to grow malformed and diseased and to be dragged down to the earth entire.

Growing and Growing and Growing . . .

The disciplined Christian, pruned by the Master Hand will be a beautiful, useful adornment in the house of God, rooted and grounded in righteous habits and thoughts, not running to wood-making, but vital and productive (Psa. 52: 8). To stand straight and strong and tall as one of God's trees is to provide shade and a windbreak for the others, the smaller, younger Christians growing around us.

If we are following Christ, much of our suffering is a result of the character changes that God must effect in us. This is the blessed chastened lot of the Christian, one that the worldly mind cannot appreciate. "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1: 29).

We cannot make ourselves acceptable to God. If we try, we will fail. We *need* the gentle severity of the Master Pruner. So let us resolve to yield ourselves to His gentle severity, knowing that

only God can make a tree.



SAVED BY IGNORANCE?

Will the heathen and others be saved by their ignorance?

We believe not, for there is no power in ignorance to save anyone. Ignorance, rather than being presented in the Bible as a ground of salvation, is set forth as a reason for alienation from God and for rejection (Eph. 4: 18; Hos. 4: 6; Rom. 2: 12). Instead, the Scriptures show that knowledge is essential to faith and salvation (Rom. 10: 14-17; Acts 4: 12).

The salvation process requires the activity of the intellect, affections, and will — a matter that concerns one's character and requires one to take the steps of repentance, faith, and consecration. That is why the Church was commanded to teach — make others *know*, so that those taught by their knowledge might gain salvation (Matt. 28: 18-20; John 17: 3).

The theory that the heathen and others are saved by their ignorance is quite unreasonable. Why send missionaries to teach them the way to salvation, if they are saved by ignorance? According to this theory, to teach them would cause most of them — those who will not believe — to be lost who otherwise would have been saved by their ignorance.

Do we preach the Gospel of Christ to them because God commands it? Yes — evidently so that they might gain what otherwise they would not gain — salvation (Acts 4: 12; 10: 42, 43). To leave mankind ignorant would defeat God's own desire to bless every member of the human family. Clearly, the thought that the heathen are saved by ignorance is unbiblical, unreasonable, and unfactual.

Knowledge Necessary for Salvation

God's way of saving the Church, the "elect," during the Gospel Age has been "by the foolishness of preaching" — teaching, giving knowledge of things pertinent to salvation (1 Cor. 1: 21; 1 Pet. 1: 2).

Furthermore, the Apostle Paul assures us that God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2: 4). And His way of saving the non-elect world in the Millennial Age will also be by the power of teaching, enabling them to understand, lay hold on, and use the restitution processes for their uplift. Such knowledge — now and in the future — will develop in people the only condition of heart and mind in which eternal life will be a practical and beneficent provision — a character like God's, that from its very make-up translates its knowledge into suitable thoughts, words, and acts, to God's glory and to the profit of self and of others.

PURSUING RIGHTEOUSNESS

In 2 Tim. 2: 22 (Diaglott translation) we read: "Pursue righteousness, fidelity, love, peace, with all those who invoke the Lord from a pure heart." Will you please give some comments on this admonition?

We need not only to start right, but also to pursue a right course. We may not follow unrighteousness even for a moment; whatever it may cost, justice and righteousness must be our goal. But here a difficulty may arise with some. Perhaps they do not know how to judge righteous judgment — they are too apt to judge according to rumor or appearances, or to accept the judgment of those like the scribes and Pharisees, as did the multitude which cried, "Crucify Him! His blood be upon us and upon our children." Had they followed righteousness, they would have seen the Lord's character in His good works and in His wonderful words of life. They would have seen that — so far from being a blasphemer — He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. 7: 26). They would have seen that His accusers were moved by envy and hatred.

It is still as necessary as ever to follow the Lord's injunction, "Judge righteous judgment" (John 7: 24).

Whoever neglects it brings down "blood" upon his own head and becomes a sharer in the penalty due to false accusers. For as the Lord was treated so will His "brethren" be treated. The purer our hearts, the less will they be affected by slander, backbiting, and evil-speaking, and the more will we realize that those who have bitter hearts, from which arise bitter words, are impure fountains in which is the gall of bitterness and not the sweetness of love.

Next comes fidelity — that is, faithfulness. The Lord declares His own fidelity or faithfulness and declares Himself "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov. 18: 24). Even the worldly recognize fidelity as a grace: by such it is often given first place, for many would commit theft or perjury through fidelity to a friend.

Righteousness Given Precedence

But notice that God's Word puts righteousness *first*. Fidelity, love, and peace must be exercised only in harmony with righteousness; and if unrighteousness is not proven against a brother, our fidelity, love, and peace toward him must continue, and indeed must increase in proportion as envy and slander and all the fiery darts of the Wicked One assail him "without a cause." This valuable prescription will help to keep our hearts free from the poison lodged in the roots of bitterness which the Adversary keeps busily implanting (Heb. 12: 15). Justice is *purity* of heart — freedom from injustice. Righteousness is *purity* of heart — freedom from unrighteousness. Love is *purity* of heart — freedom from selfishness.

SACRIFICE NOT REQUIRED

What is meant in Psa. 40: 6 — "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire . . . burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required"?

In any translation from one language to another there is a danger of failing to express the original thought in its simplicity and completeness, even as here. The succeeding verses also throw light on the meaning of v. 6. The thought seems to be that although God desired and intended the establishment of the Law Covenant with its sacrifices and arrangements for the people of Israel, that was not the full completeness of God's intention and desire.

For instance, the Passover lamb sacrificed annually was not the end in view that God desired, but merely a typical sacrifice *foreshadowing* the great sacrifice of "Christ our Passover" (1 Cor. 5: 7).

Justice is purity of heart — freedom from injustice. Righteousness is purity of heart — freedom from unrighteousness. Love is purity of heart — freedom from selfishness.

The annual Atonement Day sacrifices of bulls and goats could neither take away sin, nor satisfy the requirements of the Law as the redemption price of sinners. But a *human body* was specially prepared — separate and different from others of the human race — yet corresponding perfectly to the body of Adam.

Christ came, as a New Creature offering His human flesh a sacrifice for sin, fulfilling the demands of God's Law and satisfying His attribute of Justice. The offerings of animals had been accepted by God as a substitutionary measure, to give a temporary and typical justification only, and as the Apostle Paul explains, these were merely "a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image [substance] of the things" (Heb. 9: 9-14; 10: 1-10).

Old Testament Sacrifices Typical

We see therefore that the sacrifices and offerings that God ordained or authorized for the time being under the Law Covenant were not an end in themselves — were not the end or completion of God's purpose or desire in respect to sacrifice for sin. They merely foreshadowed that great desire which would be fulfilled in Christ. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire," that is to say, was not *all* that God meant.

He did accept the annual Atonement Day sin offerings and burnt offerings, and He did grant the Jews year by year a national forgiveness, and an opportunity to try again to keep the Law, but these things were not the end in view of God's desire or intention. He had in mind the better sacrifices — the sacrifice of Christ, the great Redeemer, and then the sacrifices of the Church, the Body of Christ, joined to His sacrifice, sharing in His sacrificial cup. This is what God had as His great purpose, and the other was merely the typical, the foreshadowing of it.

Servants of God and Man

The seventh in a series of articles on godly men and women from around the world, whose lives have shaped the cultures in which we live

TOYOHIKO KAGAWA

1888-1960

"Verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world"

— Romans 10: 18 —

When 15-year-old Toyohiko Kagawa heard the sound of the Gospel message, received it gladly, and gave his life in consecration to the Lord Jesus, these prophetic words of the Apostle Paul were exemplified.

Born in 1888, son of a well-to-do Japanese government minister and his geisha mistress, both of whom died when he was four years old, Kagawa was sent to live with his father's legal wife and her mother on the family estate. It was an unhappy situation. Unwelcome and ill treated, he helped with the work on the estate, which produced dye from the indigo plant, and unrefined sugar from sugar cane.

Although he liked school and study, Toyohiko from a very early age developed a love of the natural world — the seasonal work of the farm, the country-side surrounding his home, the fields, the plain, and the sand dunes along the river Yoshino. But this phase of his life came to an end when the son who had inherited the family fortune on his father's death utterly dissipated the estate. Toyohiko was sent to live with a wealthy uncle in Tokushima.

The young Buddhist

At primary school he had learned the fundamentals of the Buddhist faith. His sense of being an outsider had led him to find his own amusement, and discovering in a storehouse a repository of ancient ancestral curios, relics, and numerous books dating back to the Japanese Renaissance, he spent many happy hours browsing among these treasures.

Toyohiko's upbringing and love of learning had given him wisdom beyond his years, and at the Boys' Middle School in Tokushima, more often than not he found himself repelled by the conduct of the other boys. On their part they made him a target of their bantering and laughter and he felt increasingly lonely. But life for Toyohiko was soon to be radically changed. In order to learn English, he enrolled at a Bible Class—and learned much more than the English language.

The young Christian

At this point in his life Kagawa came in contact with Christian teachings, at first through a Christian tutor in his school, and then through two missionaries who were influential in his conversion to the Christian

faith — Dr. H.W. Myers, whom he regarded as his father in the faith, and Dr. C.A. Logan, whom he acknowledged as his counselor and guide.

Japanese students were welcomed into the homes of these two missionaries. In the friendly, cheerful atmosphere, with cups of tea and cakes, with music and singing, students were introduced to the English language and, above all, to the teachings of a book — the Bible. And through the Bible they came to know of a Personality — God — which brought new enlightenment to their minds and new hope to their hearts.

Kagawa joined other students visiting the missionaries' homes. Dr. and Mrs. Myers and Dr. and Mrs. Logan took the lonely boy to their hearts and fathered and mothered him. From Dr. Myers, Kagawa learned of a God who cares. As he read the Bible to learn more he was deeply impressed by Matt. 6: 28, 29: "Consider the lilies of the field . . ." and learned the whole chapter by heart. Finally he prayed, "O God, make me like Christ," and was converted. His life took on new meaning, and the 15-year-old lad felt quite sure he had been given a divine mandate to serve the poor. He was baptized at 16, and his future course in life was determined.

Bitter opposition developed in Kagawa's family. Refusing to yield to the demands of his uncle to give up his new-found faith and purpose, he was disinherited and driven out of his uncle's home with nothing but the clothes he wore.

The intellectual Christian

With help from Christian missionaries, in 1905 Kagawa began studying at the Presbyterian College in Tokyo. He had read books by Kant, Darwin, and Ruskin before entering the College, and his desire to read continued unabated. During his two years' stay there he read virtually all the important books in the library. Later at Kobe Theological Seminary, and eventually at Princeton Theological Seminary, U.S.A.,

Kagawa prepared himself for a wider field of service than he at first expected to undertake.

The practical Christian

Along with his passion for books he developed a passion to put his ideals into practice. He rescued the castaways and the homeless — from an abandoned kitten, to a beggar in the street. He shared food and bed with them, and to any in need he gave away his money, his shoes or his clothes to relieve their distress.

Kagawa became a champion of unpopular causes, advocating socialist principles and practices at student meetings. After reading Tolstoy he became an ardent believer in non-violence. At a critical stage in the Russo-Japan war he fearlessly expounded his pacifist views and openly opposed the war, was labelled a traitor as a result, and ostracized by his fellow students.

Work in the slums

Though far from robust in health, while studying each morning at the Kobe Theological Seminary, Kagawa spent his afternoons and evenings preaching in the streets of Shinkawa, Japan's most infamous slum. Working for the poor, he lived most of the time between 1910 and 1924 in a tiny six-foot-square hut, where the destitute were always welcome. Through sharing his bed with a beggar he contracted trachoma, which nearly robbed him of his sight. Preaching God's love by word and example, Kagawa discovered beneath the poverty and squalor a strong current of humanity, a bond of brotherhood willing to help those in need.

Parents sought his advice, young people came for his counselling, and criminals made him their confessor. He opened a small hospital and dispensary, and a shelter for down-and-outs, while still living in his small hut.

A talent for writing

Drawing on his own fight against tuberculosis and his experience in the Kobe slums, Kagawa wrote a best-seller, *Across the Death Line*, which brought him recognition and funds to further his work. More books followed: *The Psychology of Poverty*, a *Life of Christ* for children, poems, articles on economics, and a magazine was launched. *Pillar of Cloud*.

Justice for the people

In his early thirties Kagawa saw destitute laborers beginning to realize their worth, and helped to organize trade unions among farmers and factory workers. During a labor strike in the Kobe Dockyards he organized the strikers into a union, resulting in his imprisonment for 13 days. In rural areas he saw the plight of small farmers and peasants, and toured Japan, championing their cause, arousing the hostility of landowners, and sometimes the police.

He worked for universal male suffrage (granted in 1925) and campaigned to improve the laborer's lot — the right to labor, to freedom of residence, opportunity for mental development, freedom of marriage, freedom of migration, recreational privileges, liberty of speech, and religious freedom.

Official recognition

People in high places came to acknowledge the wisdom and ability of Kagawa, and after the 1923 Tokyo earthquake he was asked to join the Imperial Economic Commission to organize the reconstruction work. Not a party politician, he served in various government bodies if he felt the people would benefit.

His pacifist activities led him into trouble with the authorities during World War II, but his services were still valued afterwards as a Cabinet Adviser. In 1955 international recognition came when he was nominated a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

Co-Worker and Life Companion

In 1914 Toyohiko Kagawa married Haru Shiba. From the day of the wedding she gave him her untiring support in all his undertakings. Of lowly origins, she graduated at the Yokohama Bible Training School and did much valuable work in her own right, demonstrating her strong Christian commitment.

Kagawa in 1927 launched an immense crusade, the "Kingdom of God Movement," aimed at converting so significant a number to Christianity that the inward transformation of the souls of men would bring about the social reforms he saw as necessary for their blessing.

Today, it is estimated that only about 1% of the Japanese are of the Christian faith. But nothing is wasted in God's economy, and we may be sure that when Christ's Kingdom is established on earth, Kagawa's preparatory work will come to fruition, and he will see his crusade at last accomplish all that he had hoped for.

"It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."

— Romans 14: 21 —

T. PAUL in Rom. 14: 10-21 marks out the path of Christian conduct in harmony with the second great commandment of the Law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The lesson may be applied in a measure to everyone, but it applies particularly to the followers of Christ. All people have wills of their own, and it is important that all should learn to use them wisely. As a man wills, so is he! Those lacking any personal will — the supine, the apathetic, are not truly men and women, but nonentities, The Power of the Will

subject to the will of others.

To succeed in life means to — Romans 14: 10-21 have a will, and in proportion to its correctness and strength the personality will be influenced. Children should not be trained to have no will — rather, to have a will, but to submit it to the proper rulers and guides of life, at first to parents and teachers and later on, to the Divine will.

The Apostle is addressing those who submit their wills to the Lord — those who have accepted the Divine will, as instead of their own. The noblest and best of the people of God are those who have strong, iron wills, which they have fully submitted to the guidance and direction of the Lord — through the Bible, the holy spirit and Divine Providence.

DEVELOPING WILL POWER

Some are born with strong wills; others are rather weak-minded. In the world the latter sink or swim, survive or perish, in the vicissitudes of life. Inequalities of birth are frequently accentuated by life's experiences often disastrously. Some of the strong-willed become executives, politicians, managers of large enterprises, and some become criminals — the outcome depending largely upon haphazard channels.

The only safe course for any mariner on the sea of life is to take on board the great Pilot, the Lord Jesus. He will rarely guide into a haven of earthly riches or popularity, but, if permitted, will bring us safely to the proper haven. Under this Pilot the human will is like a strong vessel with powerful engines. The greater the power, the greater the capacity, and the more useful. The proper Pilot will guide us safely past the rocks of disaster and shoals of sin, to the haven of everlasting life, joy, and peace, to fellowship with our great Creator.

Not only the strong-willed need this Pilot; the weak-willed naturally need Him just as much, for though they might not run upon the rocks with the same degree of force and make equally bad shipwreck, they are as likely to be caught upon the shoals of sin and, in a purposeless manner, fail to achieve anything in life.

Those who make a full surrender to the Lord receive new life as the will is brought into subjection to the will of God. The lessons of God's Word and all our experiences under Divine supervision are promised to work for our good — to strengthen our wills if too weak, to make us properly pliable if too rigid, and to make of us the most that is possible of godliness in this present life, in preparation for the life that is to come.

St. Paul exhorts the Lord's people not to judge

one another in the sense of condemning them, but rather to judge and criticize themselves, make of themselves shining examples,

and thus help the brethren and set a noble standard before the world. All must give an account to the Lord sooner or later, and our judging of others is unnecessary. If we have judged or criticized one another in the past, we should avoid this in the future and keep a watch upon our own words, deeds, our thoughts that nothing in us shall put a stumbling block in the pathway of another.

THE LAW OF LOVE CONTROLS

The ceremonial cleanness or uncleanness of food, referred to by the Apostle, is nothing to the Christian, who is free from all law except the Law of Love. But this controls us, and forbids us to stumble or even to grieve a brother less well-informed on a subject than ourselves. How could we, controlled by love, either eat or drink, act or speak in a manner that would cause injury to another? It is good to have liberty, but let us so use it as not to injure those less advanced.

Not being under the bondage of the Jewish Law, we have greater liberty under Christ. But would we say that the advantage of our relationship to the Lord consists in liberty to do as we please, though others might be stumbled? Surely not! Rather, our chief blessing consists in our "justification and peace and joy in the holy Spirit" (v. 17).

Let us appreciate our highest blessings and privileges of the present time, for then we shall be wellpleasing in God's sight. Let us follow after the things which make for peace and do our best to help one another. We must never risk injury to the cause of righteousness and the work of God's grace in others by using our liberties in any manner contrary to their welfare, counting it a privilege to surrender even our just rights under Christ, that we may glorify God and bless His people.

THE MAIL BOX

To whom it may concern:

I recently read your ad in a magazine. Please send info about why God allows people to suffer. I've been wondering what the answer is for a long time. Thank you.

Respectfully, M.M., California

The Bible Standard:

I received my first issue of *The Bible Standard* and I'm enjoying it. I found advertised in the back, literature I could order. I would like to have the complete set of the clothbound "Bible Keys" of *Studies in the*

Scriptures. I would like to have these books and booklets Use the extra amount for someone who can't pay. Thank you very much.

I. W., Kentucky

Dear LHMM:

I have heard much about your *Studies in the Scriptures* series of books. Please send me the complete set, and also a catalog. Thank you and may God continue to bless your ministry.

C.P., Georgia

* *

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At-a-glance

France: (All at Barlin) July 30-August 1; October 30, 31

Germany: Altleiningen, October 1-3

Nigeria: Osusu Amukwa, September 26; Lagos, November 5-7;

Aba, Abia State, November 26-28

Poland: Susiec, July 9-11; Rzeszow, July 12-14; Wroklow, July 16-18; Bydgoszcz, July 19-21; Katowice, August 27-29

United Kingdom: *Hyde*, August 6-8; *Sheffield*, October 30, 31 United States: *Philadelphia Area*, July 3-5; *Ohio*, August 13-15; *Illinois*, October 1-3; *Oklahoma*, November 12-14.

Details

United States

Philadelphia Area (Lionville), July 3-5 (Saturday-Monday)

Site: The Inn at Chester Springs (formerly known as Best Western), Route 100 (south of route 113), Lionville, PA 19353; telephone: (610) 363-1100 Rates and Reservations: For 1-4 people, \$74.00 plus \$5.92 tax. Please make reservations for all four nights through our office; and make checks payable to LHMM. Our address is 1156 Saint Matthew's Road, Chester Springs, PA 19425-2700; telephone: (610) 827-7665

Athens, Ohio, August 13-15 (Friday-Sunday)

Site: Ohio University Inn, 331 Richland Ave., Athens, Ohio 45701; telephone (740-593-6661). *Rate and Reservations:* \$77.00 per room plus 13.25% tax. Reservations must be received by July 14, 2004.

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The General Editor, Ralph Herzig

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-5

Richard Blaine

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-5; Ohio Convention, August 13-15

Robert Herzig

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-5; New Haven, Connecticut, August 15

John Wojnar

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-5; Chester Springs, Pennsylvania, July 25; Boston, Massachusetts, August 22

John Detzler

Phoenix, Arizona, July 11; Broomfield, Colorado, July 18 Leon Snyder

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-5; Chester Springs, Pennsylvania, July 11; Ohio Convention, August 13-15; Chester Springs, Pennsylvania, August 22; Minneapolis, Minnesota, September 18, 19

Baron Duncan

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-5; Springfield, Massachusetts, August 1

Tom Cimbura

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-5; Ohio Convention, August 13-15; Grand Rapids, Michigan, September 11; Muskegon, Michigan, September 12

Don Lewis

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-5; Ohio Convention, August 13-15; Chicago, Illinois, August 28, 29

James Shaw

Mustang, Oklahoma, September 12

Jack Zilch

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-5; Ohio Convention, August 13-15

Evangelists' Services

Robert Branconnier, Keystone Heights, Florida, September 12; New York City, September 19

Jon Hanning, Beechgrove, Tennessee, July 24, 25; Sand Ridge, West Virginia, September 11, 12

Dan Herzig, England, August 6-8; Chester Springs, Pennsylvania, September 19

Harold Solomon, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, August 8Robert Steenrod, Derry, Pennsylvania, August 29; North Canton, Ohio, September 18, 19

William Sturges, Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania, September 12

Edward Tomkiewicz, Minneapolis, Minnesota, July 18, 19