

# FOUNTAIN

WINNIPEG CHINESE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP



THE FOUNTAIN is published once every six weeks. It is supported by free-will offering from Christian friends who have the burden to see the Word of God reach as many as possible. We depend on the all sufficient grace and providence of the Lord to meet our every need. The magazine is free of charge and is sent upon request.

OUR AIM is to unite all Christian brothers and sisters who have the same burden to preach the Gospel unto all nations. We preach none other than Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

WHAT WE BELIEVE The Bible is the basis of our faith. We believe that the whole Bible, every chapter, every verse as originally given is inspired by God.

"You (Jesus) are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16)

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (I Timothy 1:15)

"And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God -- not because of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8,9)

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"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts." (Zechariah 4:6)

"When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'" (Matthew 9:36-38)

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"Remember also your Creator in the days of  
your youth, before the evil days come, and  
the years draw nigh, when you will say,  
"I have no pleasure in them."  
- Ecclesiastes 12:1 -

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We welcome written contributions both expository  
and evangelistic in nature. Articles may include  
testimonies, short reflective prose, stories,  
biographies, book reviews, Bible studies, topical  
discussions, poems, translated works and news of  
Christian groups. Please avoid adopting a didactic  
approach. The name and address of the author must  
accompany all contributions. Pseudonyms may be  
used, but anonymous articles will not be published.



# 'TODGIE' TIEER

Down from the plane I trod,  
To earn a degree was my only thought,  
To win for myself glamour and fame,  
Ready to plunge headlong into the competing game.  
Yet, yet, deep in my mind a question remained,  
Was that the final goal I was striving to attain?

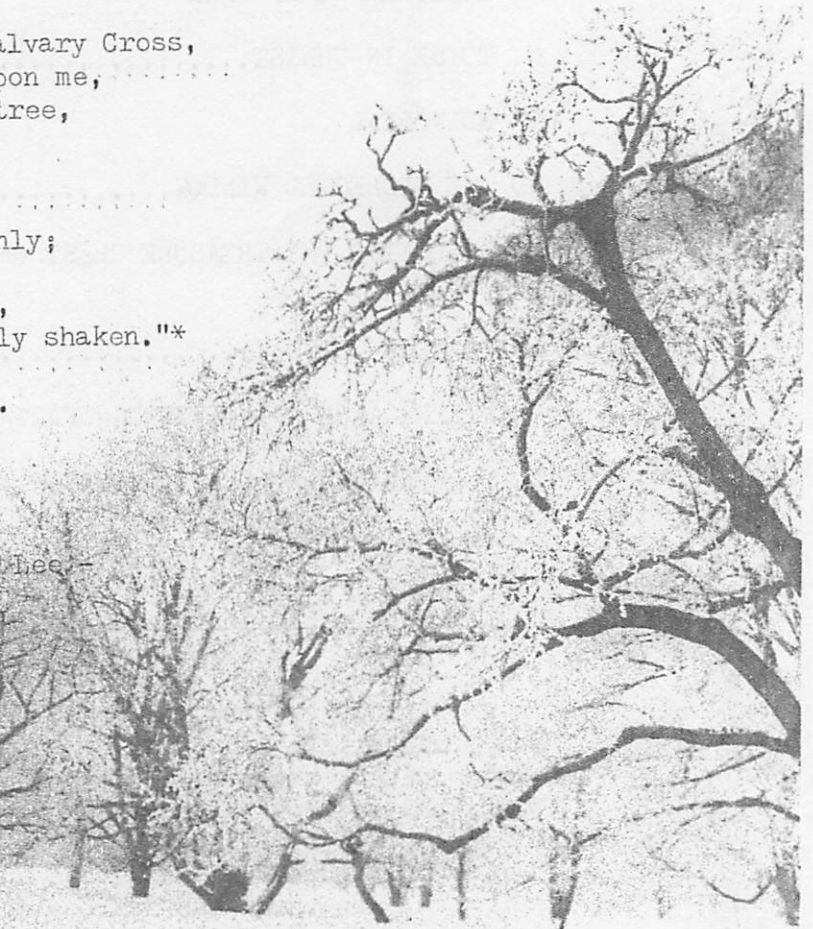
When the year came to its finishing note,  
Happy, self-satisfied and confident was I.  
Saturated with future plans that my mind could not rest,  
Drowning in the sea of success.  
Yet, yet, deep in my mind a question remained,  
Was that the final goal I was striving to attain?

Until that day when my eyes saw  
The dying agony of the One on the Calvary Cross,  
His feeble, yet loving eyes gazed upon me,  
A sinner whose sins He bore on the tree,  
"Repent, and follow me," He cried.  
Jesus, yes, myself do I deny.

"My soul waits in silence for God only;  
From Him is my salvation.  
He only is my rock and my salvation,  
My stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken."\*  
So I press on toward the goal,  
To please Him with my body and soul.

\*Psalm 62:1-2

- Edward Lee -



# WIE'LL WALK



With a broken dream and a shattered ego, I left my home town. Thousands of miles from my parents, I set feet on a strange land to redeem the dying confidence and self-esteem.

I felt so strange when I first went to my classes. What happened? My classmates were not of my kind. Blond, brunette, red hair and white faces! Where were the yellow faces and black hair?

One year passed. How much had I gained? I worked hard in my studies, but I was extremely disappointed. "Fight on," I told myself. But where could I find the courage to carry on?

Another year began. Things weren't getting any better. I studied day and night, only to increase my tension and nightmares. Then I met someone with a Bible in his hand. I started reading the Bible and became interested in it. Reading the Bible had strange effects on me---it calmed and soothed me. From the Bible, I have found God. He says, "...Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

I hadn't forgotten about my studies but they ceased to be my God.

-Christopher Man -



I was brought up in a non-Christian home. Christianity sounded remote and unreal to me. Last year when I first came to Canada to study, I failed to get into any of the residences on campus. As a last resort, I boarded in the home of a Canadian couple. I was isolated from the Christians on campus. Nobody spoke to me about the Gospel and going to church was something I never did.

However, the Lord really has His way of bringing me to know Him. One night my landlady's friend invited me to the evening service at a local church. That was the first time I ever went to church. That night I was fascinated by the sincerity of the speaker and very much impressed by the choir. The speaker spoke about the hardship and trials he had faced during his mission in Africa. The faith and sureness he had in God set aflame my search for a real God.

I started going to the Chinese Christian Fellowship meetings on Saturday nights and attended church regularly. Even so for months I still was proud and wilful. I just could not accept the fact that there was a mighty One above me.

Then one Sunday morning, I heard a sermon on Luke 15: 1-10 which was about the parable of the lost sheep. It stroke me like lightning. Wasn't I like one of His lost sheep? He actually looked for me to bring me back to Him! My heart was illumined. The stubborn me finally gave way and I accepted the Lord as my personal Saviour. As I look back, I see that the Lord has been leading me in every way and I can't help praising Him.

- Eman Chiu -



Buildings behind buildings,  
People pushing people.  
Rushing -- to school, to work; from school, from work.  
Winter comes quietly,  
And goes noiselessly.

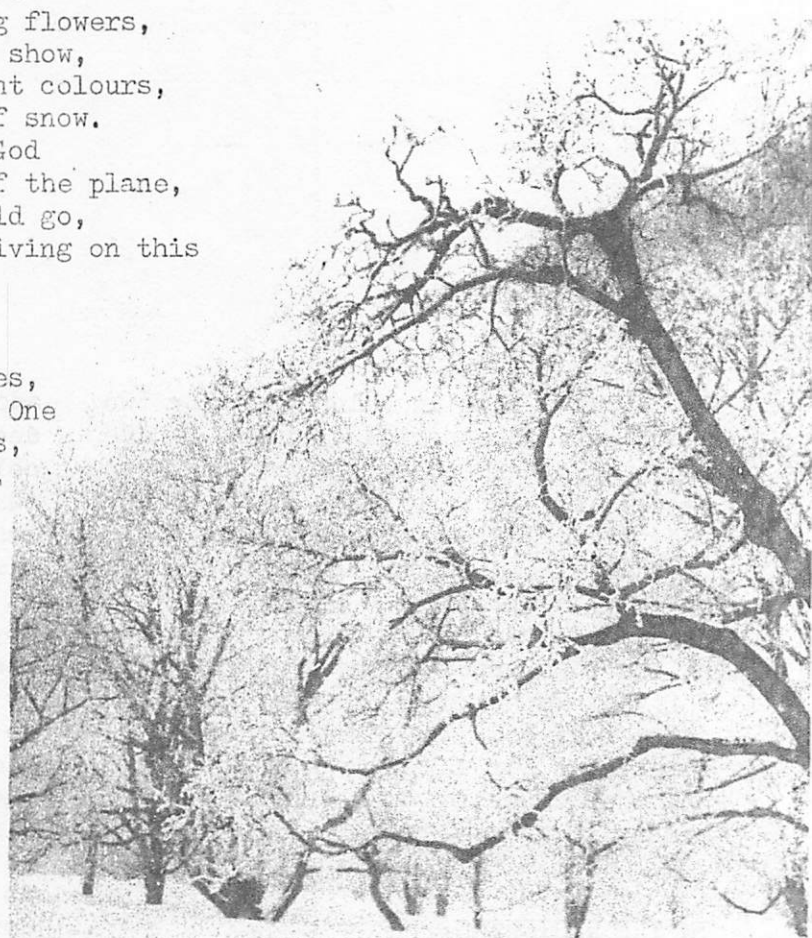
Classes, Examination; Classes, Matriculation.  
To study abroad: visa, passport; packing, airport.  
Before I realized the fact,  
I was in Winnipeg.

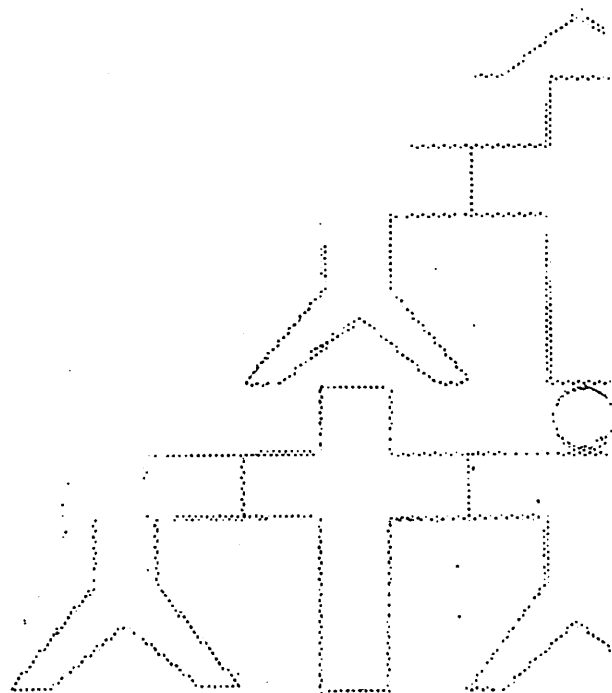
A green, flat piece of land,  
Enlivened by nature's band.  
Leaves turn gold, yellow,  
red and purple.  
Then the snowflakes fall --  
winter's present to all.

Going at a slower pace, life gives me time to think --  
I think of the beauties created by God  
Who clothes the grass and blooming flowers,  
composes songs for the birds' show,  
paints the leaves with different colours,  
and designs patterns for grains of snow.  
I think of the love I received from God  
Who sent help as soon as I got off the plane,  
gave me a home to which I could go,  
led me to Christian friends living on this  
plain,  
and showed me life's real goal.

So though I am away from my beloved ones,  
I can feel the everlasting love of the One  
Whose soothing words wipe away my tears,  
Whose guiding hand drives away my fear.

- Ruby Ng -





# To be in Christ

- George Y.K. Lo -

I have been in Winnipeg for two years. In this period of time, I have had many experiences but nothing can be compared to my experience with God. The kindness that God has shown me is beyond all measure because He has moved my heart to know Him. I want to mention these events in my testimony so as to express my gratitude to God for what He has done for me. The existence of God the Creator, His constant love for us, and Christ's death on the cross to gain redemption for mankind are absolutely true.

## IN THE BEGINNING...

I studied in a Catholic school but the correct image of God had never been conveyed to me. In fact, my misconception about God and the Redemption was great. I was taught that in

addition to acknowledging Jesus' redeeming grace, I had to be good to receive my salvation. The biblical truth that salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ alone was ignored. Prayer was a matter of formality and thus it had no meaning at all. As I grew up, I was more occupied with my studies and the idea of God vanished from my mind. At the same time, I began to see many who claimed themselves dedicated to God behaved very poorly. Their outward devotion made me feel disgusted. Because of this, I developed a subconscious feeling of despite to those who claimed the very name of God.

## I WAS LOST IN TIME AND SPACE...

To receive higher education, I came to Winnipeg. In a strange new



place without a friend or relative, I began to come into contact with the real meaning of life.

I began with a feeling of excitement and freedom since everything was new and I could do what I chose to. I promised myself that I would depend on myself to build up my dreams. At that time, my principle of life was purely materialistic and worldly. I tried to do my best academically just because I thought that would give me a good security in future. I failed to conceive that the future of man was in the hand of God.

As time went by, I began to discover that I was wrong. Life was full of struggles and disappointment and I started to get tired of it. I had been too anxious about little gain or loss. Consequently, when failure and disappointment came, I was thrown into agony.

The modern world around me was also a complete failure. Ever since materialistic ideas took over man's former belief in God, most have considered the development of science and technology as man's ultimate salvation. Science has been used to cope with problems of values, meaning and purpose in life but in vain. In this era of "Spiritual Vacuum", man is doomed to depersonalization and annihilation.

For if we regard ourselves as merely a bunch of living cells derived from evolution, our existence in this world is really miserable and aimless. Our existence is short and yet we have to face so much suffering and disillusionment. People may think that since their existence in this world is so brief they should satisfy themselves while they are still alive. This is by no means right because physical death is not the end. For our souls are immortal.

It is the dissatisfaction with life that plunges us into chaos. We go in vain to satisfy ourselves physically. Some take drugs; some exert violence; some indulge in sex and liquor but all end up in despair. Materialistic life is not fulfilling enough for us because life without God loses

its meaning and direction. Without God in me, I was lost in time and space...

#### ON CAMPUS

On campus, I had the chance to meet Christians and the Gospel of Jesus Christ was preached to me. These Christians based their faith on the Bible and they believed that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God and only by whom can all men be saved. Their sincerity and warmth won my friendship. Their witnesses were overwhelming. I began to realize that the despite I had for all those who claimed God's name was unjustified. And the name Jesus Christ was implanted in my heart.

#### SEEK AND YOU SHALL FIND...

As time went by, I began to feel the urge to know about Christ. I remembered one cold winter night, I was restless and could not sleep. I had just read a book about a great evangelist. I was totally overwhelmed by his tremendous faith in God while he carried out his missions and by the fact that God answered his needs. The reality of God was deeply imprinted on my mind. I learned that we could reach out to God only by faith through Christ, the only Mediator between God and men. At this moment, I was deeply moved and made the greatest decision in my life: I decided to accept Christ and prayed that He would come into my life.

God is merciful. Those who wish to know Him shall find Him. And to those who wish to know Him more He will show them the way. There was a Bible study in my residence and thus I had a chance to know more about the Word of God.

Most people confute the idea of God's existence because they have not attempted to seek Him. They are drunk in their own ego and think that accepting God will degrade them. But after all we are just "grains of sand" in

the universe. Who are we to ignore our Creator? If they humble themselves and try to seek God, they will acknowledge Him and His glory.

#### TO BE IN CHRIST

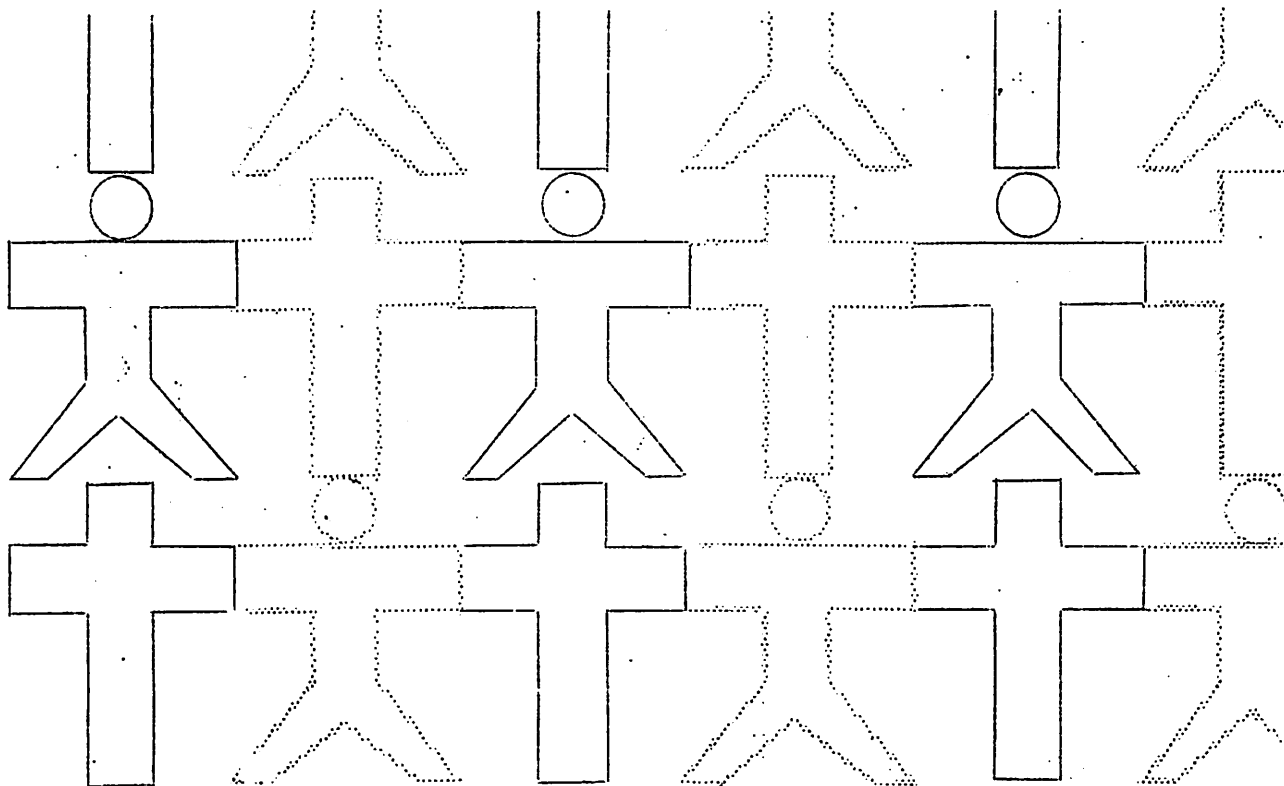
In this meaningless world, the only hope is to be in Christ. He has given me salvation and delivered me from despair. As promised in the Bible, anyone who receives Christ will have the right to become the child of God.

After I have received Christ, I feel the change taking place in me. I have the peace and joy which I never had before. Having been released from the enslavement and bondage of sin, I feel the urge to follow the will of God. Worldly problems and troubles will not beset me because of my faith in Christ. God will guide me in all matters and life is meaningful through doing the will of God.

#### THE REALITY OF GOD

Many people sneer at Christians and demand the evidence of God's existence. However, God has revealed Himself to us in many ways. He has sent Jesus Christ, His only Son, to the world to save mankind and to witness for Him. He gives us His Word, the Bible, which remains forever unchanged. I have seen Him move the hearts of people and they believed in Him and I am one of them. I know about devout men who put their lives in the hand of God, walking fearlessly and righteously. The Gospel is spread out on and on and the number of Christians increases day by day. Should we ignore these as the work of God?

Christianity is not a religion; it is the ultimate Truth for everyone to gain in this entire world. In the course of about a year, God has been revealing the Truth to me for which I am thankful. ☐



# EDITORIAL

There is a strong conviction in the heart of young people that future is in their own hands. They despise mediocrity and are determined to strive to meet their high aspirations. They have a fervent zeal for life and would commit themselves whole-heartedly to a cause which they think is meaningful. They are ready to meet every challenge that this world gives.

Then they encounter reality. Some are disillusioned, for their aspirations are stifled. Some reach their goals, but are still caught by an inexplicable feeling of emptiness. Then some start to look for something more fulfilling, something that would give them the correct perspective on life.

But all are perplexed.

There are certain young people. Like others, they too have their times of disappointment. They too may have their aspirations stifled. But they are not perplexed. For they have found a new orientation to life. It is not

that they have found something which provides an outlet for them to escape from reality, but that they have found a cause which enables them to face the challenges of life unflinchingly, and to which they know they can commit themselves totally.

Within the heart of every man there is a dimension which only One can fill, One who claims, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." He is the One who offers the new orientation to the perplexed.

He is Jesus.





# the neglected window

- Ivy Tong -

I find it easy to say that I have faith in Christ, but putting that to practice, to me, is something different altogether. It involves a new way of life, a total trust in and commitment to God. One thing I have recently learnt is that faith involves relying on God even in my studies.

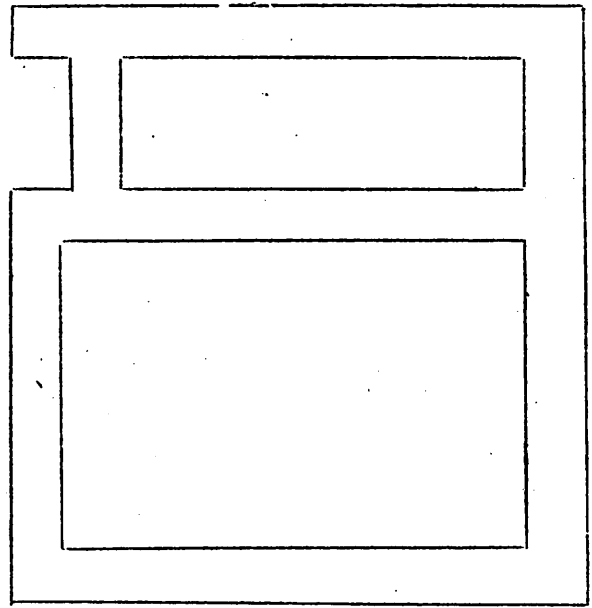
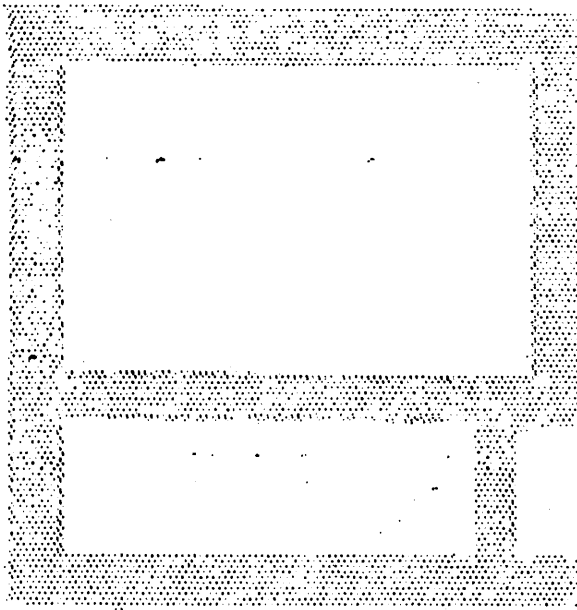
For my first two years in the University, I relied very much on myself in my studies and it never occurred to me that I had to rely on God even in this matter. After finishing the first year, I was faced with the problem of whether to go into Honours programme or not. Since I was not sure where my interest really lay, I satisfied myself by taking up a double major. The end of the second year came and the problem of choosing my programme arose again. This time, taking the advice of a professor, I went into Honours.

This past year has really been a hard time for me. No longer could I have time to settle down and review what I had learnt. The texts that I bought simply sat there on the shelf and every time I looked at them, they seemed to stare back and ask, "When

are you going to need us, at the end of the year?"

What had I been doing then, simply fooling around and taking it easy? Certainly not! I had been trying my best to cope with the numerous assignments and projects that I had. The question that occupied my mind was: "Can I finish this project in time? There are only 5 days left...now 4,.... oh, 3 only..." I found myself counting the days as they flew by, and trying to keep pace with time. Before I realized it, the first term had come to a close. Now I had to decide whether I should go to a Christian conference or stay and do my project which was due three weeks after the Christmas holidays. What should I do? How could I finish it if I attended the conference? Deep in my heart I knew that I wanted to go. For as I looked back, I found that I had been occupied with my studies and attending meetings for the past few months. I really longed to quiet down before the Lord and spend more time in studying the Bible and prayer.

For the first time in my life, I realized that I had lost the confidence I had in myself concerning my studies.



Then it suddenly dawned on me that to acknowledge Christ's Lordship in my life includes the handing over of my studies too. I should let Christ be Lord over every area of my life if I called Him Lord. It is true that I needed to do my part. But so long as I tried my best in doing my projects, the results, good or bad, should not bother me. I should be contented with what I would get because they were given to me by my Lord and He would give me what He knew was the best for me.

All along it seemed that I had locked myself up in a room and opened just a few windows, thinking that this was sufficient for me. The fact was that I had only committed certain areas of my life to God. No wonder my life was not in resemblance to the abundant life promised in the Bible,


"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10B)

The promise was there, but I did not claim it. I had satisfied myself with a mere stunted spiritual growth. So after praying to God for a long time, I decided to open this long neglected and closed window of mine and handed

my studies over to God.

I decided to go to the conference. When I came back, I would do my best in my project.

Oh, how great my experience was when I saw God working in another area of my life! The peace and concentration that I had in doing this project were such that I had never experienced before. I finished the project in time and not only that, I even had time to cope with a few other smaller assignments and a mid-term test.

God is faithful. When I committed my studies to Him, He honoured my decision. I have experienced this personally. Many a time I have neglected this faithful aspect of God, only to find myself deep in misery and worry. Through this past year's experience, I have learnt that faith does not simply rely on facts or head knowledge of the Word of God. It is more than simply memorizing a few verses but it involves a practical application of the verses to my daily life. By exerting the simple faith of a child in God's faithfulness, I can walk safely and boldly through this world of oblivion. 

There they are, hidden within a small capsule of thoughts -- the very treasures for which this frustrated world of struggle, fear and emotional insecurity is groping! With a bit of careful meditation, we can grasp these riches -- peace of mind and confidence to face the pressures of today's turmoil.

In the New American Standard Version of the Bible, this verse reads:

"Trust in Him at all times, O people;

Four out your heart before Him;

God is a refuge for us."

By considering the verse in three sections, we can grasp the treasure within it more easily.

Section 1 "Trust in Him at all times, O people"

A. Trust is shown in its true importance when we compare this instruction with the verse of Hebrews 11:6,

"Without faith it is impossible to please Him."

Let's give God at least the same courtesy we ourselves expect. Can you remember how insulted you felt the last time someone hinted either by remark or attitude that he or she didn't really trust you? How logical it is that God also expects us to believe He really means what He says or promises.

Further definition of faith or trust is found in Hebrews 11:1,

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for,  
the conviction of things not seen."

Because God is really God, we can know for sure that His promises are even now "in the making" though we do not see them before our eyes in concrete form. Therefore, we might say that trust is basic and vital for communion with God. The reality of God is the foundation of our whole trust in Him; otherwise it is meaningless to think of trusting Him. Furthermore, if we notice Numbers 23:19,

"God is not a man, that He should lie,

Nor a son of man, that He should repent;

Has He said, and will He not do it?

Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

-- the integrity of God is unquestionable.

B. in Him -- this phrase states the direction or focus of our faith.

This eliminates our pinning confidence on people, material resources, our own personal capacity or whatever. Therefore, my security lies in all the attributes of God Himself, since my trust is "in Him". It is His prerogative to use any or none of the "visible means of support" within the scope of my own understanding. Therefore, it is really a bit stupid for me to assume "all is lost" and there is no hope, simply because my small brain cannot conceive of a possible procedure for God to follow! I need

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# UNLOCKING



not know how He will solve my problem or meet my need -- it is my glorious privilege to relax in His faithful integrity, and depend upon His promises and know that He is able to do all that He said He would do.

C. at all times -- we are to trust in Him at all times. This includes times of:

fear ---- "Do not be afraid of sudden fear, nor of the onslaught of the wicked when it comes; for the Lord will be your confidence, and will keep your foot from being caught." (Proverbs 3:25-26) We need not fear the sudden fear that comes upon us, nor do we need to fear the violent attack and the unfair opposition of the wicked, for God is in control, the Lord will be our confidence.

perplexity - "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5-6) Here we have access to His guidance when we do not know which way to go, or how to make a wise choice on the basis of our wisdom. James 1:5 says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God..."

physical strain, weariness - "...for the joy of the Lord is your strength." (Nehemiah 8:10) Our joy in knowing how wonderful He is lifts the load. Isaiah 40:29 says, "He (God) gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power." (Look at the verses that follow as well.)

opportunity - "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13) When we are confronted with an opportunity, sometimes our first inner reaction is one of terrific inadequacy. Yet we have the assurance that with His help we can do all that He wants us to do.

temptation - "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able; but with the temptation will provide the way to escape also, that you may be able to endure it." (I Corinthians 10:13) When the storm sweeps over us, we can remind God that He promised not to let it be too much, and ask Him to show us the way of escape He promised to provide.

joyful anticipation - "...no good thing does He withhold from those

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# THE TREASURE CHEST

uneventful routine - "For He Himself has said, 'I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.'" (Heb. 13:5B) How precious is our security in Him, even when there isn't anything particularly exciting going on -- just the regular old daily routine -- still it is a good time to "trust in Him." We are never without Him!

Here it is most revealing to set up a chart to show the contrast existing between communication with people and with God. There are times when we simply must talk to someone -- the human heart demands a degree of communication and reciprocity in order to maintain emotional stability. But there are so many problems involved in dealing with people. Sometimes we find ourselves keeping all these struggling thoughts bottled up within ourselves -- and the next thing we know, we have a prime specimen of an ulcer or two! Consider the difference in communication:

Immediate communication. Accurate knowledge of our meaning. God doesn't need any explanations -- He sees it all like it is!  
(Romans 8:26-27)

God's omniscience -- complete knowledge means that nothing can be hid from Him. Even if we don't mention a particular thing to Him, He knows our thoughts anyway and can see the whole thing.

Complete trust and confidence is in our talking with God. He won't tell a soul and that is for sure! What we tell Him is for His ears alone.

# PSALM

52:88

Fear of careless attitude and lack of interest. So many "friends" will only say, "Oh, that?! I don't see why you worry about that!" Some merely toss our burden aside, "So what else is new? We all have our troubles."

Genuine personal concern. God will never "brush us off." He invites us to "pour out our heart before Him," because He really cares what happens.

Limited ability to help. Once in a while some friend really cares but here we often meet the problem of human limitation.

Endless resources and power. There is nothing too hard for God. He is able to really handle our need in a practical way.

### Section 3 "God is a refuge for us"

When we think about what our refuge is really like, it seems to have at least three characteristics:

- A) Constant accessibility -- Matthew 28:20 quotes Jesus as saying, "I am with you always." There will never come a moment when He is away, "out for lunch" or there is "a busy signal on the phone line!" We can have instant refuge in Him at any time.
- B) Impregnable safety -- Proverbs 18:10 tells us, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it and is safe." "The righteous" are His redeemed ones -- those to whom He has given His righteousness.
- C) Unrestricted location -- When we need His refuge, we don't have to hurry to some specific geographic location. "Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9) Therefore our refuge in Him is continuously accessible. It cannot be invaded. We are perfectly safe in our trust in Him, and we can seek His refuge anywhere on earth.

Now that we have opened the treasure chest, let us eagerly grasp each jewel in it and carry them with us back into the noise and traffic of the daily demands we face. The problems and pressures are still there, but they don't have the same effect on us as they did before. Happy treasure hunting to you all! ☐

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- Dottie -



"Do your thing"  
Is what they said.  
And first time through  
It looked to me  
Like THIS IS IT --  
The source, the key,  
The way to really come out free.

I tried it  
Sort of casually,  
Unconsciously, I'd even say,  
By simply following my nose  
To act my feelings, serve my rights.  
I'd do what seemed appropriate,  
I'd taste the tastes and see the sights.

Why did it all become so drab?  
And why this empty sense inside?  
I'm doing it the way I want,  
Why can't I have the joy beside?

A troubling word  
Stuck in my craw  
And forced me to examine it  
Until I recognized its worth,  
Until I saw the pieces fit.

Obedience  
Was what I lacked,  
The free man's basic founding fact.

To "do my thing" WAS SLAVERY,  
For every choice was forced, you see,  
By fickle appetites, unrul'd  
By anyone, unrul'd by me.

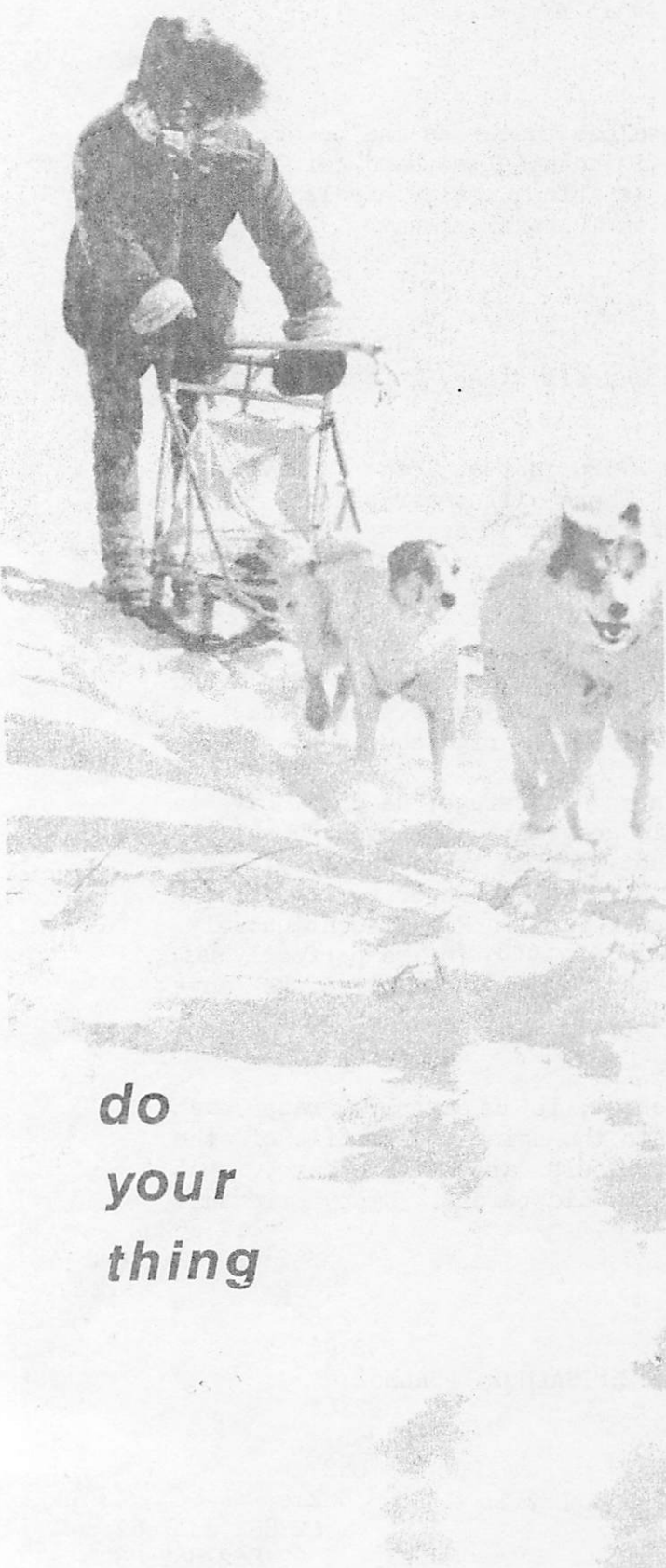
Obedience could make me free,  
Just it alone, twas in a sense  
A secret of the universe --  
The freedom of obedience.

But still there's more,  
Beyond the fact,  
Obedience to whom, is asked?  
The kindly benefactors shown  
Obedience rewards its own.  
But that's like clinging to the prod  
Designed to spur me on to God.

Obedience I long to give  
The One who made it in me live,  
Against whose worth my life is priced,  
Obedience to the love of Christ.

-- Ross Olson --

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**do  
your  
thing**

# KIERKEGAARD AND CHRISTIAN FAITH

Daedalus

"Subjectivity is the Truth."

- Kierkegaard -

The word "Existentialism" has been frequently misinterpreted with a too simplistic conception. In recent years the literary appeal of Jean-Paul Sartre has been penetrating the masses, and the result is that existentialism thus comes to bear the connotation of being Sartre's brand of atheism. Yet Søren Kierkegaard, who is regarded as "the father of existentialism," represents a completely different notion of the existential philosophy. For Kierkegaard was foremost a dedicated Christian.

Christianity in nineteenth century Denmark had lapsed into a mere doctrinal system. Formality had replaced genuine devotion. Kierkegaard was greatly appalled by the apathy and hypocrisy that were existing in the Christian Church of his country, and set out to assume a corrective position. He viewed the Christian Faith as one which requires a subjective commitment

on the part of the believer. To him, Christianity is an "existential communication" between God and man. It is impossible to be a Christian by merely accepting intellectually even all of the Christian theological doctrines. In fact, Kierkegaard's philosophy of religion is a formulation based on the central idea of a genuine and subjective attitude on the part of the believer towards God. To Kierkegaard, faith is the highest form of expression of this attitude, for he holds that "faith is the highest passion in the sphere of human subjectivity." (1)

Kierkegaard sees a vast qualitative difference between God and man. God is infinite and Almighty, while man is just a transient existing creature. The fact that man has sinned against God and has separated himself from God further accentuates this difference. It is like a yawning abyss existing between God and man. Thus

(1) Søren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1941, p.118.

man cannot reach God by his own capabilities. To man, God is obscure and cannot be comprehended. Then Jesus Christ the Son of God came to earth to become man. Kierkegaard regards this as "the Christian Paradox" in that an individual man is at the same time God, and he draws the conclusion that no ordinary human knowledge can comprehend this paradox. Following this line of thought, Kierkegaard proceeds to propound the idea that it is absurd to gather adequate historical information concerning Jesus Christ, for man could not understand the paradoxical God-man personality of Jesus. So, in the final analysis, historical research and the use of reason have to give way to faith if man is to know God. "Faith begins precisely there where thinking leaves off." (2) God cannot be brought to light by objective historical research, for "God is a subject, and therefore exists only for subjectivity in inwardness." (3) Faith in this respect thus amounts to a "risk", for Kierkegaard says that "Christianity also requires that the individual risk his thought, venturing to believe against the understanding.. this is the absolute venture and the absolute risk." (4) Ultimately, then, faith for Kierkegaard means a subjective commitment of the will, disregarding the support of objective evidence.

It should be conceded that Kierkegaard's emphasis on the importance of faith does express one of the most crucial elements in Christianity, that of the need for a real personal involvement and commitment. Knowing all the historical facts about Christianity does not lead to any transformation in the individual's life. However, if the individual genuinely accepts Christ as his personal Saviour, then he will have the privilege of becoming the child of

God and can possess eternal life. The decision of accepting the reality of one's sinful nature; of believing the fact that Christ has come to die for man's sins; and of receiving Christ into one's life as Saviour and Lord are indubitably all acts of the will. One cannot become a Christian by a mere intellectual acknowledgement of the historical evidence of Christ's Resurrection.

Yet while the Kierkegaardian stress on faith encompasses the value of being a corrective element against the tendency of viewing Christianity impersonally, ultimately it seems that Kierkegaard has carried the whole notion of faith to too far an extent. In one of his works, Kierkegaard gives his definition of "truth": "An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of the most passionate inwardness is the truth." (5) Subjective commitment is sensible only when there is an objective basis. If there is only an "objective uncertainty," then a passionate subjective belief is something akin to blind belief. Kierkegaard also holds that "without risk there is no faith. Faith is precisely the contradiction between the infinite passion of the individual's inwardness and the objective uncertainty. If I am capable of grasping God objectively, I do not believe, but precisely because I cannot do this I must believe." (6) It is true that God cannot be grasped by a mere objective approach. But faith is not a "risk" in the sense that God is "an objective uncertainty." If one does not have the least evidence of whether God exists, then to have faith in God would be preposterous. Kierkegaard's point is that objective evidence is actually meaningless and one needs to ignore it and adopt a solely subjective

(2) Søren Kierkegaard, Fear And Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death, Princeton University Press, 1954, p.64.

(3) Postscript, p.178.

(4) Ibid., p.384.

(5) Ibid., p.182.

(6) Ibid., p.182.

attitude. "Faith" for Kierkegaard indeed means a "leap" towards God when one virtually can see nothing concerning the objective reality of God. But the objectionable point remains in that even after this "leap" one still cannot find a firm basis on which one can rely one's belief.

The biblical verses of I Corinthians 15:13-14 states that "but if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." These verses point out clearly that Christian faith is based on the historical certainty of Christ's Resurrection from the dead. Otherwise, all Christians would have believed in vain, for if Christ has not risen, then the belief that Christ is a living God is a mere self-deception. Colin Brown comments on Kierkegaard in his book Philosophy and the Christian Faith, stating that "the absolute antithesis which Kierkegaard draws between the objective and the subjective is one which no biblical writer or speaker ever drew. The biblical writers summon men to faith not because it is absurd but because there are good grounds for committing oneself to Christ. These occur, for example, in the signs he performed and the fact that God raised him from the dead." (7) What Kierkegaard emphasizes is not the object of faith, but faith itself, and as such, Kierkegaard's concept of faith rules out the crucial relevancy of the objective and rational elements, and eventually leads to the extreme of blind acceptance.

The genuine Christian faith is a reasonable faith. It is true that God cannot be grasped by a mere exertion of human intellectual efforts, and God wants man to have faith in Him, as

stated in the Bible in Hebrews 11:6, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Nevertheless, God has also revealed to man the objective basis for man's faith. Jesus Christ the Son of God has actually intruded history to become man. He has actually died and has actually risen. Hence those who believe in Him can have a real solid basis to place their faith on. They can tell themselves why they believe.

Christian faith is beyond the grasp of reason, but not against it.



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(7) Colin Brown, Philosophy and the Christian Faith, Tyndale Press, London, 1971, p.131.

People say that to err is human and to forgive is divine. We all have guilty feelings at times. In the following discussion, we will consider the concept of forgiveness and its practical applications.

The need for forgiveness starts from early childhood. Violations of restrictions imposed by parents give rise to punishment which in turn causes frustrations in the self-centered, pleasure-seeking child. The child becomes anxious and angry because he does not know how to handle frustrations. Since he cannot direct his anger towards his parents, which might cause further punishment, he deflects his anger onto himself. Thus anxiety and ambivalence build up in the child. In order to get relief from this anxiety, the child seeks "forgiveness" in the process of being punished. For him, this is the only way to obtain forgiveness. Only when he has been punished can he feel easy again. This is the so-called punitive model of forgiveness which involves the payment of a price for the wrong deed.

When the child grows, he begins to develop personal relationship with people. When he goes against the will of his parents, he will not worry much about getting punishment from them as before. The consequent broken relationship with his parents, on the other hand, will bother him very much. The driving force for the resolution of guilt is the deprivation of love. The process of forgiveness involves the restoration of the broken relationship, and no compensation will suffice.

# TO FORGIVE

The forgiver has to accept the guilty person back into the love relationship in order to forgive the latter. This is the reconciliation model of forgiveness, which involves the conscious wilfulness of both sides.

We need forgiveness because we have guilt. Guilt has been described as the most difficult and at the same time the most important problem in the whole realm of psychology.(1) Guilt can be divided into two kinds; objective guilt and subjective guilt. Objective guilt is independent of our feelings whereas subjective guilt is an inward experience of regret.(2)

Objective guilt can be further classified into three categories. First, civil guilt or social guilt. This has to do with the codes and laws of the society. Social guilt is man-made and impersonal, and has no necessary relationship to morality. A socially esteemed person may be immoral in many ways. The second type of objective guilt might be called psychological guilt. This arises when one fails to reach one's own standard. An athlete who decides to run a mile ev-

(1) Reported by Busby, D., "Guilt," from Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation, Vol. 14, 1962, p.113.

(2) The following classification of guilt is adapted from: Dr. G. Collins, Overcoming Anxiety, Key Publishers, 1973.



# & TO BE FORGIVEN

- Lai -

every day is guilty if he fails to keep up his practice. He is guilty because he has not reached his own standard. The last type of objective guilt is often termed spiritual guilt. It refers to our standing before God. It is not a feeling, but a situation. It defines man's estrangement from God -- man's denial of the fact that he is a created being and his pretension to be his own deity. According to the Bible, we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.(3) All of us have disobeyed God, ignored His voice and refused His lordship over us. In other words, we all have a disturbed and broken relationship with God. It is important to distinguish this type of objective guilt from the social guilt. Many people regard themselves upright just because they have never been fined or imprisoned. This is because they fail to realize that the genuine measure of morality is not the ever-changing social codes and conventions,

but rather the standard set down by the Creator of mankind.

It is well to emphasize that these three types of objective guilt are not feelings or affects. We can be driving eighty miles an hour in the city without feeling guilty about it. But the lack of feeling does not make us less guilty. Similarly the fact that some people don't feel that they have a broken relationship with God would not make them less guilty before God.

Subjective feelings of guilt may be appropriate or inappropriate. Guilty feelings are appropriate when they are in proportion to the seriousness of the mistake. Inappropriate feelings of guilt may either be too much or too little. The task of psychotherapy is to help a person to master his guilty feelings and may have nothing to do with real moral values. In other words, successful psychoanalysis is no guarantee of a moral man.

It is rather thought-provoking to observe how people try to obtain forgiveness. Public or semi-private confessions are meant to help the guilty individual to face up to his personal responsibility. But confession may be misused to deny responsibility. One may confess to a group, hoping that they will share in one's guilt, and group acceptance might be mistaken as approval and forgiveness. In one study of marital group therapy, it was noted that a husband confessed his shortcomings to the sympathizing group and thereafter expected his wife not to hold him responsible for his deeds because he had "come clean" in front of everybody.(4)

Others try to obtain forgiveness by self-condemnation. According to the punitive model of forgiveness, this is the deflection of anger from the person who imposes restrictions onto oneself. This inward hostility is often expressed outwardly as de-

(3) Romans 3:23.

(4) E. Mansell Pattison, "On the Failure to Forgive or to be Forgiven," from American Journal of Psychotherapy, XIX (1965), p.109.

pression and suicide. Such manifestation may be reflections of one's failure to mature beyond the infantile punitive concept of forgiveness.

The ability to forgive is closely related to one's ability to be forgiven. To forgive is to extend one's love to the person who has violated the love relationship and it involves accepting the guilty person just as he is. To accept another, one must accept and experience the meaning and agony of mutual separation. In accepting the forgiveness, the guilty person acknowledges his dependence on the love of the forgiver. Such unqualified love, in a sense, is humiliating because it reveals one's inadequacy. But it is also the requirement for reconciliation to occur.

The concept of spiritual guilt is much emphasized in the Bible. We have guilt because we have sinned and the wages of sin is eternal separation from God.(5) The New Testament tells us that if we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves.(6) It is important to realize that the biblical idea of wrath and judgment does not refer to divine hostility but to the determined opposition of holiness to

evil. There is the danger of projecting our familiar punitive model of forgiveness onto God. Actually God's plan of salvation illustrates the reconciliation model of forgiveness very well. God has extended His forgiving love to us while we were still sinners. The Bible says: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."(7) Christ had a full taste of the agony of the guilty when He died on the cross, thus qualifying Him to forgive. For in order to forgive, the forgiver must share the guilt, anguish and estrangement of the sinner.(8) Christ did not only share our guilt. He bore all our guilt. Through the forgiving love of God we can thus be restored into the relationship intended for man and his Creator. This is in accordance to the promise of God: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name."(9) Our duty as the guilty party is to ask for such unqualified love which, as mentioned, is the requirement for reconciliation. The Forgiver is ready. Are you? ☐

(5) Romans 6:23.

(6) I John 1:8.

(7) John 3:16.

(8) Ferenczi, S., Final Contributions to the Problems and Methods of Psychoanalysis, Basic Books, New York, 1955.

(9) John 1:12.

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