

The High Calling

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Egypt—Not My Home

By Stan Key



Tony Evans tells the delightful story about an eagle that was raised by turkeys.[†] Somehow an eagle's egg was knocked out of its nest and found itself on a turkey farm. When the little eaglet broke out of his shell, he looked around and saw a bunch of turkeys

and drew what seemed to be a logical conclusion: "I must be a turkey." He began to eat like a turkey, walk like a turkey, gobble like a turkey, and even smell like a turkey. Occasionally, when he would gaze at his reflection in the water or stretch his wings, he would wonder about who he *really* was, but the daily grind of life on a turkey farm kept him locked in his turkey identity.

One day, a majestic eagle flew over the farm. Seeing the eaglet among the turkeys below, the eagle swooped down and said, "Hey, what are you doing in a place like this?"

"I'm hanging out with my family, the turkeys," the eaglet replied.

"Who told you that you were a turkey?" asked the eagle.

"Well," said the eaglet, "I was born with turkeys and raised by turkeys. I walk, eat, gobble, and smell like a turkey; so, I must be one of them."

"Someone has lied to you," said the eagle. "Stretch out those wings! Now flap!" Obediently, the eaglet did as he was told. As he did so, he began to rise above the farmyard. Flapping harder, he rose higher and higher. "Now, follow me," shouted the eagle.

As the eaglet began to rise into the sky, one of the turkeys looked up and said, "Where do you think you're going?" The eaglet looked back over his shoulder and said, "I'm going to be what I was created to be, you turkey!"

[†] Tony Evans, *The Promise: Experiencing God's Greatest Gift the Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), 173.

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Finding your way on the journey of life

Homesick

By C. S. Lewis (1898–1963)



Perhaps the most respected and widely read Christian author of the twentieth century, C. S. Lewis wrote on a wide variety of topics. But in nothing was he more eloquently perceptive than when he spoke of the deep sense of homesickness that lies within each of us; the longing for our true home. The following article is taken from *The Weight of Glory*

(Simon and Schuster, 1975: 28–30).

In speaking of this desire for our own far-off country, which we find in ourselves even now, I feel a certain shyness. I am almost committing an indecency. I am trying to rip open the inconsolable secret in each one of you—the secret which hurts so much that you take your revenge on it by calling it names like Nostalgia and Romanticism and Adolescence; the secret also which pierces with such sweetness that when, in very intimate conversation, the mention of it becomes imminent, we grow

awkward and affect to laugh at ourselves; the secret we cannot hide and cannot tell, though we desire to do both. We cannot tell it because it is a desire for something that has never actually appeared in our experience. We cannot hide it because our experience is constantly suggesting it, and we betray ourselves like lovers

at the mention of a name. Our commonest expedient is to call it beauty and behave as if that had settled the matter. Wordsworth's expedient was to identify it with certain moments of his own past.

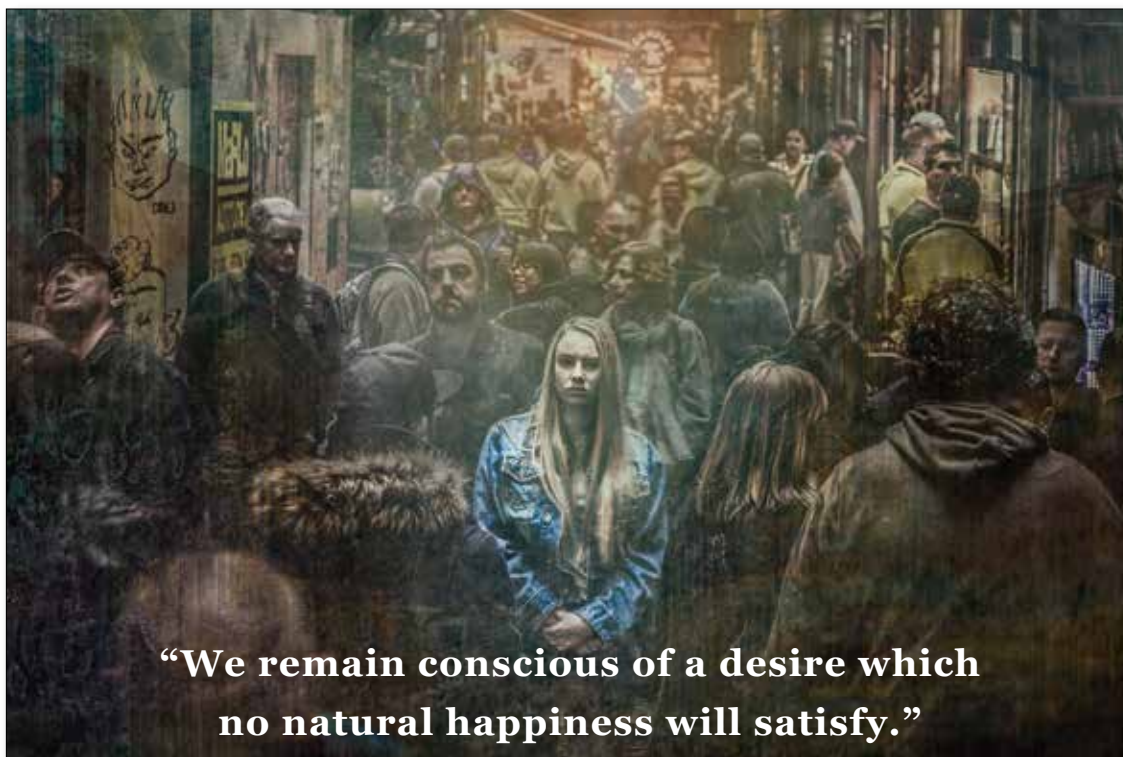
But all this is a cheat. If Wordsworth had gone back to those moments in the past, he would not have found the thing itself, but only the reminder of it; what he remembered would turn out to be itself a remembering. The books or the music in which we thought the beauty was located will betray us if we trust to them; it was not *in* them, it only came *through* them, and what came through them was longing.

These things—the beauty, the memory of our own past—are good images of what we really desire; but if they are mistaken for the thing itself, they turn into dumb idols, breaking the hearts of their worshippers. For they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never

yet visited. Do you think I am trying to weave a spell? Perhaps I am; but remember your fairy tales. Spells are used for breaking enchantments as well as for inducing them. And you and I have need of the strongest spell that can be found to wake us from the evil enchantment of worldliness which has been laid upon us for nearly a hundred years.

Almost our whole education has been directed to silencing this shy, persistent, inner voice; almost all our modern philosophies have been devised to convince us that the good of man is to be found on this earth. And yet it is a remarkable thing that such philosophies of Progress or Creative Evolution themselves bear reluctant witness to the truth that our real goal is elsewhere. When they want to convince you that earth is your home, notice how they set about it. They begin by trying to persuade you that earth can be made into heaven, thus giving a sop to your sense of exile in earth as it is. Next, they tell you that this fortunate

event is still a good way off in the future, thus giving a sop to your knowledge that the fatherland is not here and now. Finally, lest your longing for the transtemporal should awake and spoil the whole affair, they use any rhetoric that comes to hand to keep out of your mind the recollection that even if all the happiness they promised could come to



**“We remain conscious of a desire which
no natural happiness will satisfy.”**

man on earth, yet still each generation would lose it by death, including the last generation of all, and the whole story would be nothing, not even a story for ever and ever . . .

Do what they will, then, we remain conscious of a desire which no natural happiness will satisfy. But is there any reason to suppose that reality offers any satisfaction to it? “Nor does the being hungry prove that we have bread.” But I think it may be urged that this misses the point. A man's physical hunger does not prove that that man will get any bread; he may die of starvation on a raft in the Atlantic. But surely a man's hunger does prove that he comes of a race which repairs its body by eating and inhabits a world where eatable substances exist. In the same way, though I do not believe (I wish I did) that my desire for Paradise proves that I shall enjoy it, I think it a pretty good indication that such a thing exists and that some men will. A man may love a woman and not win her; but it would be very odd if the phenomenon called “falling in love” occurred in a sexless world. ✱

Wretched Greatness

By Peter Kreeft



In the following article, Peter Kreeft, philosophy professor at Boston College, summarizes Blaise Pascal's understanding of the human condition without God (Egypt). Though he lived over 300 years ago, Pascal (1623–1662) understood the postmodern secularist like few contemporary thinkers today. Abridged and slightly edited, this article comes from Kreeft's book *Christianity for Modern Pagans: Pascal's Pensées* (Ignatius Press, 1993: 47–70).

Pascal begins his apologetic with, and rests its argument on, one simple and undeniable fact: that we are unhappy. The point is obvious yet full of surprising consequences. Pascal is going to argue that man is like a very strangely shaped lock, with weird protuberances and indentations; and that Christianity is like a key—an equally strangely shaped key—that fits the lock; that Christianity alone explains man's greatness and his wretchedness; and that Christ alone can actually lead us from wretchedness to happiness. That is the “bottom line” or fundamental point of the whole argument of the *Pensées*.

Wretchedness, or unhappiness, is the opposite of blessedness, or happiness. Unhappiness is perhaps the most obvious and pervasive feature of human experience. Though this is life's most obvious fact, it is also the fact that Americans and Englishmen cover up the most, as if it were a disgrace, like a running sore.

Paradoxically, this fact of unhappiness is both the strongest argument against belief in God (if there is an all-good, all-loving God, how could he let his children suffer so?) and also the starting point and premise for Pascal's argument for faith in God. The human predicament is summarized nicely in song by that quintessentially American philosopher Mick Jagger (actually, he's British): “I can't get no satisfaction.” As Pascal expressed it:

Wretchedness. Solomon and Job have known and spoken best about man's wretchedness, one the happiest, the other the unhappiest of men; one knowing by experience the vanity of pleasure, and the other the reality of afflictions.

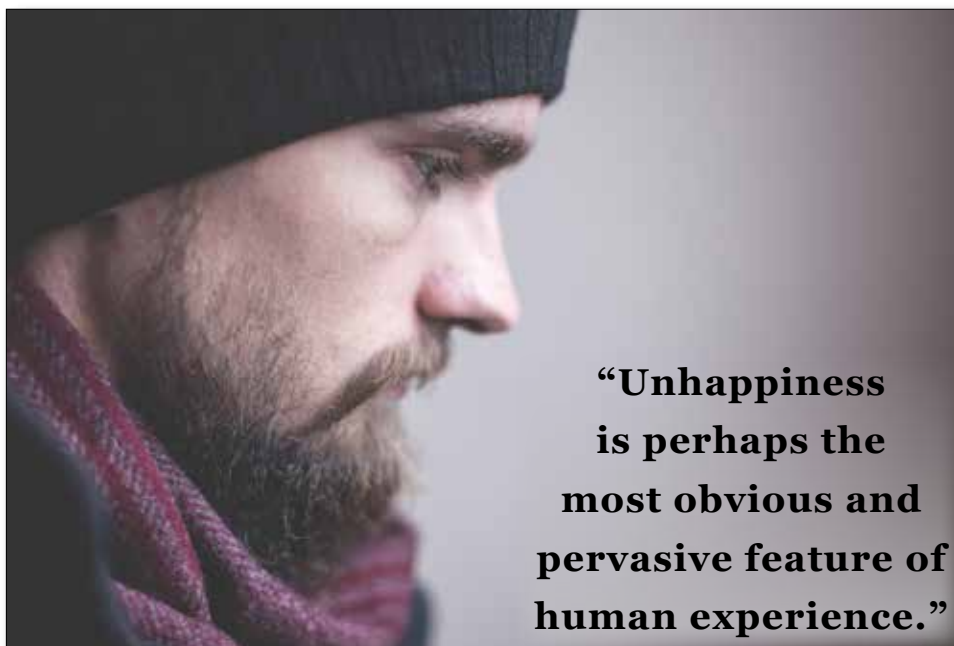
Pascal, however, does not say our wretchedness is total or as bad as it can be; only that it is real and ubiquitous. Because while man is wretched, he is at the same time great. We cannot call Pascal, therefore, a pessimist, but we can call him a paradoxicalist; someone whose vision is wide-angled enough to see deeply in both directions at once. Most philosophers by comparison are flat and one-dimensional because they

cover one eye. They are optimists or pessimists, rationalists or empiricists, spiritualists or materialists. Not Pascal, he sees reality through both his eyes.

Man is neither angel nor beast, and it is unfortunately the case that anyone trying to act the angel acts the beast.

It is dangerous to explain too clearly to man how like he is to the animals without pointing out his greatness. It is also dangerous to make too much of his greatness without his vileness. It is still more dangerous to leave him in ignorance of both, but it is most valuable to represent both to him.

Modern philosophy has lost its sane anthropology because it has lost its cosmology. Man does not know himself because he does not know his place in the cosmos; he confuses himself with angel or with animal. He is alienated, “lost in the cosmos.”



One who had never been a prince would not be unhappy to be a peasant. But a dispossessed prince would never be happy as a peasant. We are not happy as we are—that is, as fools, wretches, and sinners. Therefore, we must have some dim collective memory of a time when we were wise, happy, and innocent.

For instance, animals “accept” death as natural, like good Stoics or pop

psychologists, while man does not. Animals struggle against death, of course, but they are not scandalized or outraged by it. But man is—if he still has a heart that pumps blood rather than psychobabble, and if he listens to his inner prophet rather than to his outer prophets, social propaganda from secularist ideologies. His outer prophets tell him to “make friends with the necessity of dying” (Freud); but his inner prophet tells him: “Do not go gentle into that good night. Rage, rage against the dying of the light” (Dylan Thomas). The same applies to sin and suffering as to death.

Pascal teaches that we are to despise our selves, but we are not to despise our souls. In other words, we are metaphysically very good and morally very bad. Modern paganism says exactly the opposite: it tells us to despise our souls but love our selves, our “rights” and desires and passions. Its euphemism for passion is “freedom.” That is, it identifies freedom with what is really enslavement.

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Joseph the Egyptian

By Leon R. Kass



Physician, scientist, and professor at the University of Chicago, Leon R. Kass is the author of numerous books on bioethics, science, philosophy, and theology. Jewish in background, Kass acknowledges that his studies (especially of Scripture) keep him moving from “Athens” toward “Jerusalem” in his own spiritual journey. The following article, abridged and slightly edited, is taken from his commentary on Genesis, *The Beginning of Wisdom* (University of Chicago, 2003: 538–40, 563–73, 616, 630–33).

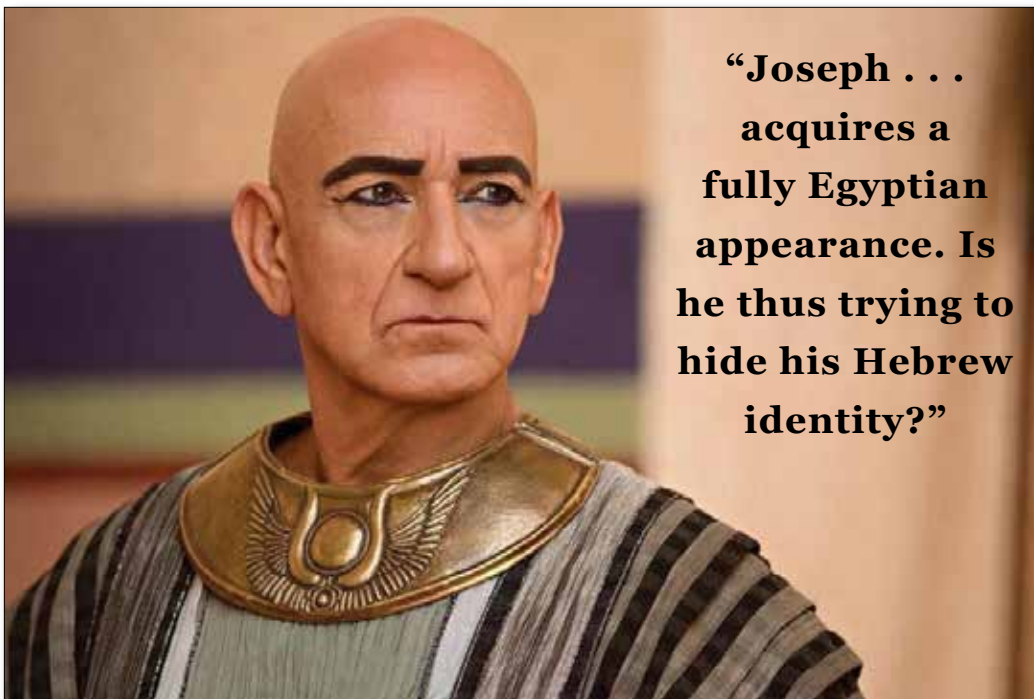
The story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as told in the book of Genesis illuminates the difference between the way of Israel and the way of the world and explores the permanent question facing the way of Israel: should we separate from the world or assimilate with it? No place exemplifies more successfully or more fully the way of the world than does Egypt. In no place is assimilation to the way of the world more tempting. With the arrival of Joseph in Egypt these considerations receive central attention.

Joseph’s entrance into Egypt is described as a descent (Gn 39:1)—all going to Egypt is described as a “going down” (see

shaving. The Egyptians alone among the people of the ancient Near East shaved their faces and also their heads, and Joseph here for the first time acquires a fully Egyptian appearance. Is he thus trying to hide his Hebrew identity?

After Joseph interprets Pharaoh’s dream and provides him with a justifiable plan to consolidate his power and to appear as the savior of his people, Pharaoh provides Joseph with all the accouterments of power, making him second in command over all Egypt. Invested with the king’s seal, bedecked in ceremonial dress, and riding in the royal chariot, Joseph, the new prime minister, goes as a virtual god before the adoring people. Joseph has made it to the top.

Joseph’s Egyptianization is completed by a renaming and an arranged marriage, both directly provided by Pharaoh himself. “And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphenath-paneah. And he gave him in marriage Asenath, the daughter of Potiphra, priest of On” (Gn 41:45). Joseph, the son of Israel, renamed as sustainer of life and tied through marriage to the sun god, reaches the zenith of human possibility in the world’s exemplary civilization.



In Egypt, Joseph has two sons:

Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph. Asenath, the daughter of Potiphra priest of On, bore them to him. Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. “For,” he said, “God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father’s house.” The name of the second he called Ephraim, “For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.” (Genesis 41:50–52)

Joseph’s words betray his predicament. His naming of his sons shows his attempt to celebrate his new beginning. As the text stresses the Egyptian character of his wife, so too Joseph is thinking like an Egyptian. He seeks to close off the past, to forget his

also Gn 12:10; 26:2). We sense that the descent is not only geographical but also moral-political. Joseph, unlike Abraham, does not “go down” to Egypt voluntarily; he is *brought* down by the Ishmaelites as a slave. The first look into Egypt thus reveals open slave trading; the first Egyptian man we meet, Potiphar, serves his master, Pharaoh, but buys and masters other human beings. Lordship and bondage are the most evident Egyptian way.

When Joseph is brought out of prison to interpret Pharaoh’s dream, he first shaves and changes his clothes (Gn 41:14). These changes are hardly trivial. Change of clothing to improve one’s appearance is, of course, entirely appropriate when one is called into the royal presence. But change of clothing also represents change of custom. Joseph not only adopts Egyptian dress. He also adopts the peculiarly Egyptian practice of

hardships and his paternal home, and he focuses only on his new and fruitful life in Egypt. Yet even as he tried to forget, he cannot do so. By naming one son “forgetting,” he will always have before him a reminder of that which he sought to put out of mind. Joseph cannot, even if he wishes it, escape his Israelite past and his Hebrew roots.

But the very same famine that elevates Joseph in Egypt threatens to destroy his family in Canaan, driving them toward a new encounter with Joseph, this time on Egyptian soil. What will be the result of their meeting? More generally, what will happen when Israel meets Egypt? Can survival and prosperity be achieved without a loss of morality or piety? Will the Children of Israel remain true to the covenant, or will they, like

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Out of Egypt

By Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892)



First preached on August 20, 1882, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, Spurgeon helped his listeners to see how “Egypt” represented that worldly context out of which Christ longed to deliver them. The text for the sermon is Hosea 11:1, “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.” Spurgeon’s sermon (No. 1675) has been abridged and slightly edited.

Egypt occupies a very singular position towards Israel. It was often the shelter of the seed of Abraham. Abraham, himself, went there when there was a famine in the land of his sojourn. To Egypt, Joseph was taken that he might escape from the death intended for him by his envious brothers. Into Egypt also went the whole family of Jacob—and there they sojourned in a strange land. There Moses acquired the learning which was so useful to him. It was out of the spoils of Egypt that the furniture of the Tabernacle was made—as if to show that God intended to take out of heathen hands an offering to his own glory.

But while Egypt was, for a while, the shelter of the house of Israel, it became, later, the house of bondage and a country fraught with danger to the very existence of the elect nation! The people of God had to smart beneath the lash and faint beneath their labor—their bondage became so cruel that an exceedingly great and bitter cry went up to heaven. Yet, when the heaviest burdens were laid on their shoulders, the day of liberty was dawning! When man had come to his extremity, God stepped in and led Israel out of Egypt!

The point that the prophet Hosea makes in our text is that Israel, God’s son, was called out of Egypt, for it was not possible for them to mingle with the sons of Ham without losing their separate existence. The children of the Lord cannot remain among such a people, for the Lord desires to make of Israel and of all believers, a people separated unto himself.

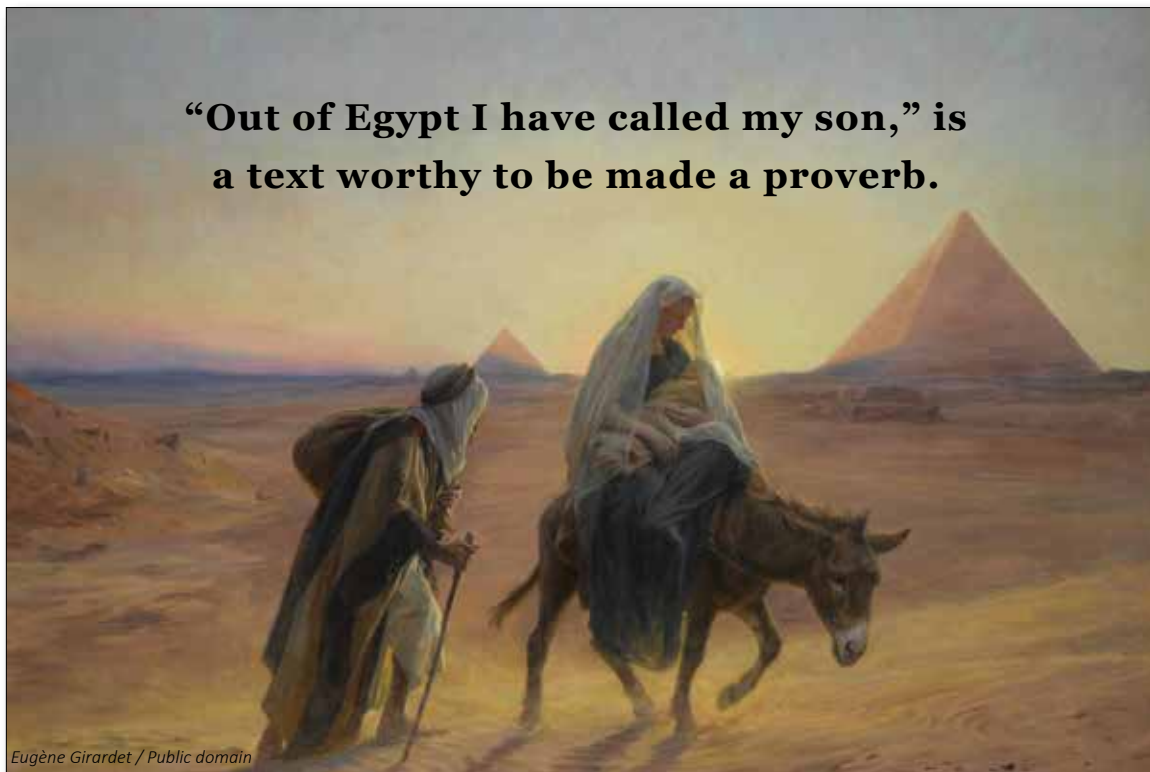
“Out of Egypt I have called my son,” is a text worthy to be made a proverb, for it is true all through the history of the chosen seed. They are called out from among the surrounding race of rebels and when the call comes, none can hold them back. It would be easier to restrain the sun from rising than to hold the redeemed of the Lord in perpetual servitude! “Out of Egypt”—and out of anywhere else that is like Egypt; out of the worst and vilest places; out of the places where they are held fast in bitter bondage, out of these—“have I called my son.”

My brothers and sisters, we are not citizens of “the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where our Lord was crucified” (Rv 11:8). The best thing in this present evil

world is not your portion or mine. Friendly Egypt, sheltering Egypt, was not Israel’s inheritance. Though they might dwell in the land of Goshen for a while, this was not their home. If we are tempted to make this world our home—and to take up with the riches of Egypt—we must, by grace, be taught to put all this behind our back. On his deathbed, Jacob insisted that he would not be buried in Egypt (Gn 49:29–32). And Joseph also commanded that his bones should not remain in Pharaoh’s land (Gn 50:25). You and I must be separated from the world and all its associations—truly severed from it—if we are ever to come to know the Lord our God.

At first, God’s people did not want to leave Egypt. Ah, brothers and sisters, the chief work of God with us is to make us willing to go out, willing, by faith, to follow Jesus—willing to count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt! He did make them willing and they went out, at last, joyfully, marching in rank like a trained army. Moreover, the Lord made them able to go, as well as willing. He that gave them the will, also gave them the power! Rest assured that God, the Holy Spirit, who has given you the will to leave Egypt, will also give

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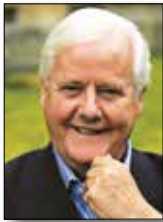


you the strength—and you shall come marching out, having eaten of the Passover Lamb!

The spiritual meaning of all this is that God is still calling people to himself, out from under the power of sin and Satan and the seductions of this world. God is still calling forth those who belong to him. They shall not abide in the land of Egypt! Sin shall not be pleasant to them. They shall not continue under Satan’s power, but they shall break his yoke from off their neck! The Lord will help them and strengthen them, so that they shall escape from their former slavery. With a high hand and an outstretched arm he will save his own and they too shall praise the Lord for his deliverance from Egypt: “I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and rider he has thrown into the sea” (Ex 15:1). ✠

The Haunting Question

By Os Guinness



In his influential book *The Call* (Word, 1998), social critic and author Os Guinness gets at the heart of humanity's lost condition by wrestling with the question "Who am I?" It is only when we see the bankruptcy of alternative solutions that the glory of the Bible's answer can truly shine. The following is a slightly edited abridgment taken from chapter three, "The Haunting Question" (20–25).

Part of our contemporary crisis of identity can be summed up by saying that modern people are haunted by an inescapable question of biography: Who am I? From magazine covers to psychiatrists' couches to popular seminars, we are awash with self-styled answers to this question.

Many of the categories people offer to explain or heal us today are too general. Marxists interpret us by categories of class, Freudians by childhood neuroses, feminists by gender, and pop-commentators of all sorts by generational profiles—such as the "silent generation," "baby boomers," "Generation Xers." And so it goes.

In each case the perspectives may be relatively true or false, helpful or unhelpful, but they do not address the deepest question: Who am I? Why am I alive? Being general, the categories never address us as individuals. At best our individuality is lost in the generality. At worst, it is contradicted and denied. All attempts to explain human individuality in general terms can be summed up as varieties of being "constrained to be." Their inadequacy is obvious. We become "prisoners" of our category, be it gender, class, race, generation, or ancestry. Our individuality is ignored.

A second and opposite position has equally obvious weaknesses—varieties of "the courage to be." As this view sees it, we all have the freedom—some see it as the terrible freedom—to be whatever we want to be. All it takes is courage and willpower. We can actually, we are told, "invent ourselves." This position beckons to us in countless ways today. In a high society version, a French perfume maker currently sells its fragrance to the English-speaking market under the byline "*La vie est plus belle quand on l'écrit soi-même*" (Life is best lived when we write our own script). Closer to home this position often comes across as "be all you can be," or more simply "just do it," "follow your dream," or "if you believe in yourself, you can accomplish anything."

Unquestionably, the most dangerous but alluring version of "the courage to be" comes from Friedrich Nietzsche and his disciples. "God is dead," they assert, so meaning is not revealed. We must start from the abyss of a world without meaning and by sheer will power, create our own meaning out of nothing. At a more suburban level, "identity" has become our most important private project, and devotees of the grand pursuit of "identity construction" focus first and foremost on the body. Hence the enduring fascination with cookbooks, fitness manuals and diet programs, and the mind-boggling fortunes made through health foods, plastic surgery, body-care products, exercise gadgets, and "teach yourself" books of every kind.

The absurdity of this position is obvious for all but the rich, the strong, the wealthy, the young, and the fanatical. For one thing, even if we can do what we want, the question remains: What do we want? The near-omnipotence of our means of freedom

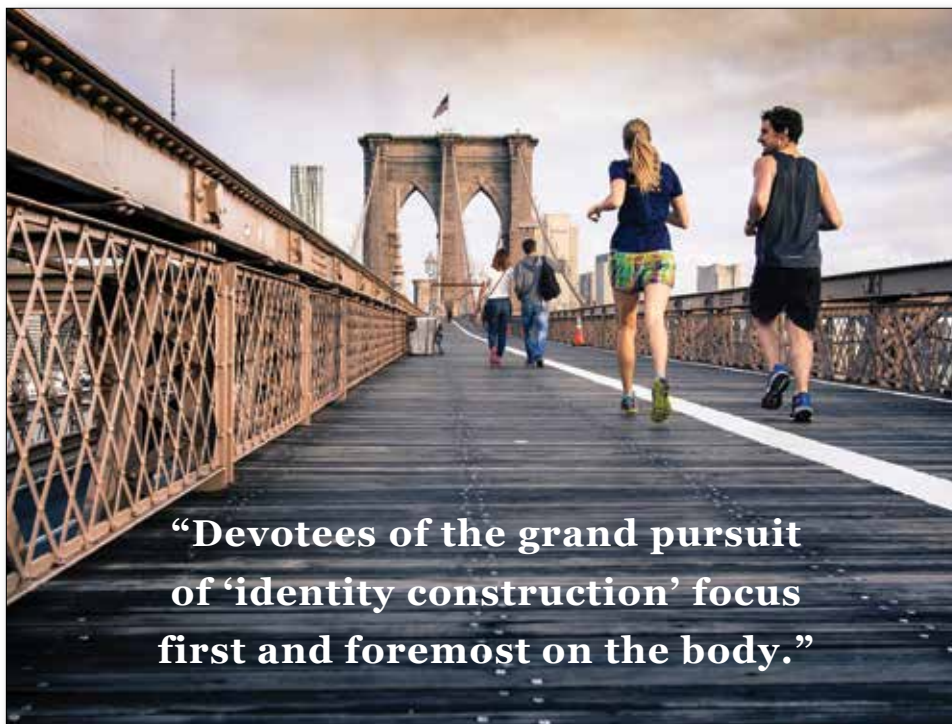
doubles back to join hands with the near-emptiness of our ends. We do not have a purpose to match our technique. So, ironically, we have the greatest capacity when we have the least clue what it is for.

This third perspective views individuality as a matter of being "constituted to be." From our very birth, we are told, we bear the seeds of our eventual character; we carry the script of our life stories. Often described as the "acorn theory" the purpose of life is

to become the oak tree that each of us are constituted to be—by our personal destiny, or fate.

Each of the three positions contains a grain of truth. To some extent we are all "constrained to be." An understanding of the many forces shaping us is invaluable. To that very extent we must also have the "courage to be"—if we are truly to be ourselves and not prisoners of our past and victims of our circumstances. And to a certain extent the "courage to be" will lie along the trajectory of what we are "constituted to be."

Each of these perspectives falls short or heads in the wrong direction because each one ignores the reality of God's call on our lives. Instead of being "constrained to be," we are "called to be." The Caller sees and addresses us as individuals—as unique, exceptional, precious, significant, and free to respond. He who calls us is personal as well as infinite. So we who are called are addressed as individuals and invited into a relationship



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Jacob's Ladder Touches Earth in Your Egypt

By Ravi Zacharias



If we are as lost and blind as the Bible says we are, how, oh how, can we find our way home? In his book *Can Man Live Without God?* (Word, 1994), Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias tells the story of the English poet Francis Thompson (1859–1907). The story reminds us that getting out of Egypt is ultimately possible only because of God's amazing grace. This article, slightly edited, is taken from pages 89–91.

Francis Thompson, best known for his most enduring work “The Hound of Heaven,” lived a very turbulent life. Having left home in conflict, he lived the life of a vagabond on the streets of London rather than go to college, wandering through two areas of the city. During the day he would satisfy his opium addiction, fitting in among the losers and the lost in London's Charing Cross district. At night he would saunter over to the River Thames and lie down to sleep by its banks. Periodically he would pick up a newspaper from the overflowing trash in the area and scrounge for a piece of paper on which he would write a letter to the editor of the newspaper in response to some article he had read. The editor became frustrated and at wit's end because he recognized the genius of a Milton behind the writing but there was never a return address.

Throughout his constant and deliberate running from God, Thompson kept in touch with the Scriptures, and one passage began to haunt him—the story of Jacob, who spent most of his life on the run. The Scriptures tell of a dream Jacob had one night in which he saw a ladder between heaven and earth and the Lord himself at the top of the ladder. When he awakened from that dream he said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it” (Gn 28:16). As Francis Thompson continued to dwell on that story, something remarkable happened, and what can only be called a dramatic conversion of his life took place. Listen to these incredible words:

*O world invisible, we view thee,
O world intangible, we touch thee,
O world unknowable, we know thee,
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!*

*Does the fish soar to find the ocean,
The eagle plunge to find the air—
Do we ask of the stars in motion
If they have rumor of thee there?*

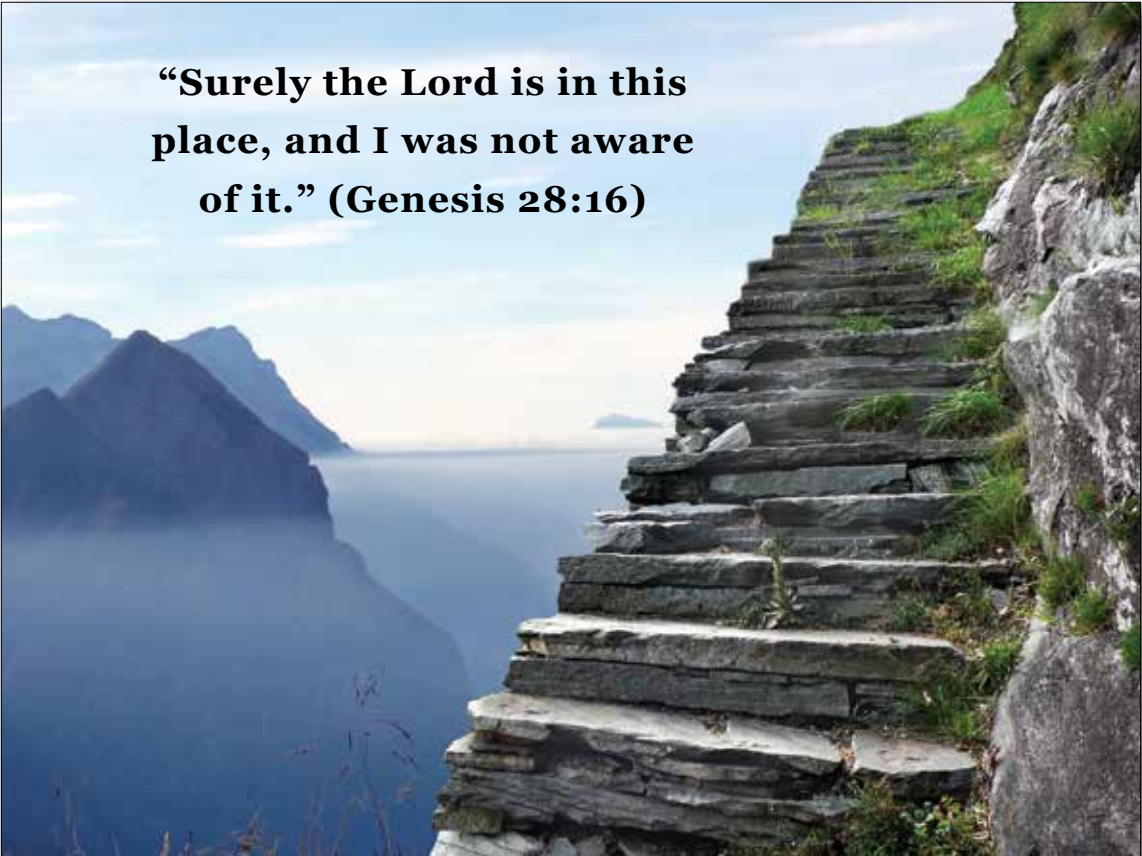
*Not where the wheeling systems darken,
And our benumbed conceiving soars!—*

*The drift of pinions, would we hearken,
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.*

*The angels keep their ancient places—
Turn but a stone, and start a wing!
'Tis ye, 'tis your estranged faces,
That miss the many-splendored thing.*

*But when so sad thou canst not sadder
Cry—and upon they so sore loss
Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
Pitched betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross.*

*Yes, in the night, my soul, my daughter,
Cry—clinging heaven by the hems;
And lo, Christ walking on the water
Not of Gennesaret, but Thames!*



**“Surely the Lord is in this
place, and I was not aware
of it.” (Genesis 28:16)**

God met Francis Thompson where he was, restoring wonder and meaning to his life. Nietzsche said he went looking for God and couldn't find him—nihilism was born. The psalmist David said in Psalm 139:7–8, “Where can I flee from Your presence? . . . [wherever I go] You are there.” Hope was born. Francis Thompson's writings tell of the wonder that filled his life when he stopped running from God—and a relationship was born.

How do you find that wonder? May I suggest to you, dear friend, that it is not in argument, nor is it in mere dogma. It is not even found in the church. There is a clue to meaning in our experiences—that clue is in relationships. The centerpiece of history, says the Bible, is Christ himself, and you will find unending wonder in a relationship with him. ✠

Hope for Lost Intellectuals

By J. Budziszewski



J. Budziszewski is professor of government and philosophy at the University of Texas, Austin. He specializes in the interaction of ethics and political philosophy with theology. In the Preface to his book *The Revenge of Conscience: Politics and the Fall of Man* (Spence, 1999), Budziszewski shares his testimony, recounting vividly the nihilism that characterized his lost condition (Egypt) and how

God's grace reached even there. The following is abridged and slightly edited (ix–xix).

My purpose, as a way of introducing this book, is to tell how I became a nihilist, and how I escaped from nihilism. I had multiple motives for becoming a nihilist.

One was that having been caught up in the radical politics of the late 1960s and early 1970s, I had my own ideas about redeeming the world, ideas that were opposed to the Christian faith of my childhood. As I got further and further from God, I also got further and further from common sense about a great many other things, including moral law and personal responsibility.

That first reason for nihilism led to a second. By now I had committed certain sins that I didn't want to repent. Because the presence of God made me more and more uncomfortable, I began looking for reasons to believe that he didn't exist. It's a funny thing about us human beings: not many of us doubt God's existence and then start sinning. Most of us sin and then start doubting his existence.

A third reason for being a nihilist was simply that nihilism was taught to me. I may have been raised by Christian parents, but I had heard all through school that even the most basic ideas about good and evil are different in every society. That is empirically false—as C. S. Lewis remarked, cultures may disagree about whether a man may have one wife or four, but all of them know about marriage; they may disagree about which actions are most courageous, but none of them rank cowardice as a virtue. But by the time I was taught the false anthropology of the times, I wanted very much to believe it.

A fourth reason, related to the last, was the very way I was taught to use language. My high school English teachers were determined to teach me the difference between what they called facts and what they called opinions, and I noticed that moral propositions were always included among the opinions. I thought that to speak in this fashion was to be logical. Of course it had nothing to do with logic; it was merely nihilism itself, in disguise.

A fifth reason for nihilism was that disbelieving in God was a good way to get back at him for the various things which predictably went wrong in my life after I had lost hold of him. Now of course if God didn't exist then I couldn't get back at

him, so this may seem a strange sort of disbelief. But most disbelief is like that.

A sixth reason for nihilism was that I had come to confuse science with a certain world view, one which many science writers hold but that really has nothing to do with science. I mean the view that nothing is real but matter. If nothing is real but matter, then there couldn't be such things as minds, moral law, or God, could there? By this time, I was so disordered that I couldn't tell how disordered I was.

A seventh reason for nihilism was that for all of the other reasons, I had fallen under the spell of the nineteenth-century German writer Friedrich Nietzsche. I was, if anything, more Nietzschean than he was. Whereas he thought that given the meaninglessness of things, nothing was left but to laugh or be silent, I recognized that not even laughter or silence was left. One had no reason to do or not do anything at all. This is a terrible thing to believe, but like Nietzsche, I imagined myself

one of the few who could believe such things—who could walk the rocky heights where the air is thin and cold.

But the main reason I was a nihilist, the reason that tied all these other reasons together, was sheer, mulish pride. I didn't want God to be God; I wanted J. Budziszewski to be God. I see that now. But I didn't see it then.

When some people flee from God they rob and kill. When

others flee from God, they do a lot of drugs and have a lot of sex. When I fled from God, I didn't do any of those things; my way of fleeing was to get stupid. Though it always comes as a surprise to intellectuals, there are some forms of stupidity that one must be highly intelligent and educated to commit. That is how I ended up doing a doctoral dissertation to prove that we make up the difference between good and evil and that we aren't responsible for what we do. I remember now that I even taught these things to students; now *that's* sin.

It was also agony. You cannot imagine what a person has to do to himself—well, if you are like I was, maybe you can—to go on believing such nonsense. St. Paul said that the knowledge of God's laws is “written on our hearts, our consciences also bearing witness.” That means that so long as we have minds, we *can't not know* them. Well, I was unusually determined not to know them; therefore, I had to destroy my mind.

How then did God bring me back? I came, over time, to feel a greater and greater horror about myself. Not exactly a feeling of guilt, not exactly a feeling of shame, just horror: an overpowering *true intuition* that my condition was terribly wrong. Finally, it occurred to me to wonder why, if there was no difference between the wonderful and the horrible, I *should* feel

Continued on page 11

“There are some forms of stupidity that one must be highly intelligent and educated to commit.”



A Displaced Person

By Malcolm Muggeridge (1903–1990)



British journalist, author, and media personality, Malcolm Muggeridge converted to Christ as an adult. In his book *Jesus Rediscovered* (Doubleday, 1969), he shares his testimony of coming to faith. His story underscores how his sense of alienation and homesickness for another country were the original triggers that caused him to put his faith in Jesus Christ. This article is a slightly edited abridgement taken primarily from the second chapter (45–48, 183).

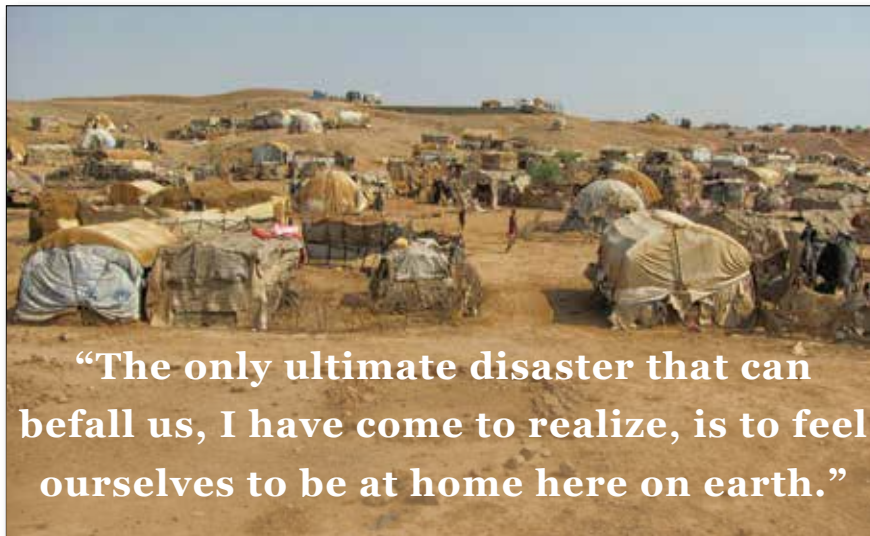
I was brought up to be an ardent believer in the religion of this age—utopianism. My father used to read aloud to us on Sunday evenings from books like William Morris' *The Earthly Paradise*, a title that lingered in my mind as having some special significance over and above the text. At the same time, I had a sense, sometimes enormously vivid, that I was a stranger in a strange land; a visitor, not a native.

My first conscious recollection of life is of walking down the street in Sanderstead, where we then lived (it must have been in about 1909, when I was six), in someone else's hat, and wondering who I was. Then, some thirty-five years later, at Allied Headquarters in Algiers, a colonel explained to me how the term "displaced person" had been decided upon for all the various individuals who had already found, or would shortly find, themselves, as it were, loose in the world—without nationality, or place of residence, or even identity; only a vague awareness of being ostensibly such and such a person, born of such parents, at such a time, and now no one and belonging nowhere. As he went on talking, it seemed to me that this was the sickest of sick expressions, an emanation of a sick world, which, as victory approached, came to seem sicker than ever.

Then I thought: after all, I'm a displaced person myself, and always have been one, from the beginning. The feeling, I was surprised to find, gave me a great sense of satisfaction, almost of ecstasy. My awareness of being a "displaced person" made me feel uplifted in that desolate headquarters and in the company of that ungainly colonel.

This sense of being a stranger, which first came to me at the very beginning of my life, I have never quite lost, however engulfed I might be, at particular times and in particular circumstances, in earthly pursuits. For me there has always been—and I count it the greatest of all blessings—a window never finally blacked out, a light never finally extinguished.

Days or weeks or months might pass. Would it never return—the lostness? I strain my ears to hear it, like distant music; my eyes to see it, a very bright light very far away. Has it gone forever? And then—ah! the relief. Like slipping away from a sleeping embrace, silently shutting a door behind one, tiptoeing off in the gray light of dawn—a stranger again. The only ultimate disaster that can befall us, I have come to



realize, is to feel ourselves to be at home here on earth. As long as we are aliens, we cannot forget our true homeland, which is that other kingdom that Jesus Christ proclaimed.

All this business of men's alienation, which is on every tongue now, seems to me to relate directly to this feeling of not belonging here. If I could point to one single basic feeling out of which the structure of my mind and thought and belief grew, it would be this—that I do not belong here. ✠

Journey Through the Bible

With Dr. Mike Powers, Director of Discipleship

You are invited to join Dr. Mike Powers next year, February 16–26, 2021, on a Journey Through the Bible that will expand your knowledge of the Bible and the sacred land of Israel. A journey following in the footsteps of Jesus will change the way you read the Bible. You will understand why scholars refer to the Holy Land as the "Fifth Gospel." Contact Mike at mike.powers@francisasburysociety.com for more information. ✠



FAS Presidential Search

We are now accepting resumes of qualified persons interested in being considered for the role of president of FAS. To be more available to Katy and her physical needs and to be more present in the lives of his grandchildren, Stan desires to step down from his role as president. He will continue as Director of Publishing as well as speaking and writing. We believe this change will both deepen and broaden the overall ministry impact of FAS.

Those who desire to be considered for this position should send their resumes to the address below before April 15. Please pray for FAS as we seek divine guidance in this important matter.

Dr. Chris Bounds, Chairman of the Board
chris.bounds@asbury.edu
PO Box 7, Wilmore, KY 40390

This story reminds us that no one embarks on the journey to spiritual wholeness until he comes to grips with the question of his true identity. Am I a turkey or am I an eagle? Am I trapped in a predetermined destiny or am I free to soar into a new and glorious identity? Who am I?

Before anyone starts a journey, there must first be a *reason* to begin. If we are content on the turkey farm, why leave? Why risk the journey when we are happy with the way things are? Why break the status quo if we like life as it is? Unless the reasons for leaving are greater than the reasons for staying, we will never begin the journey that God has set before us. Though we may live among turkeys and even act like them, God wants us to know that we have a different identity and, therefore, we have a different destiny.

As the book of Exodus opens, the Hebrew people have been living in the land of Egypt for almost 400 years. For much of this time, they have lived in relative freedom and comfort in the pleasant region of Goshen. Egypt was prosperous, stable, and culturally advanced. It would make sense for the Hebrews to think of Egypt as home and to take on Egyptian ways and customs. Just as the eaglet concluded that he must be a turkey, so the Hebrews, after 400 years, must have been tempted to conclude that Egypt defined both their home and their identity.

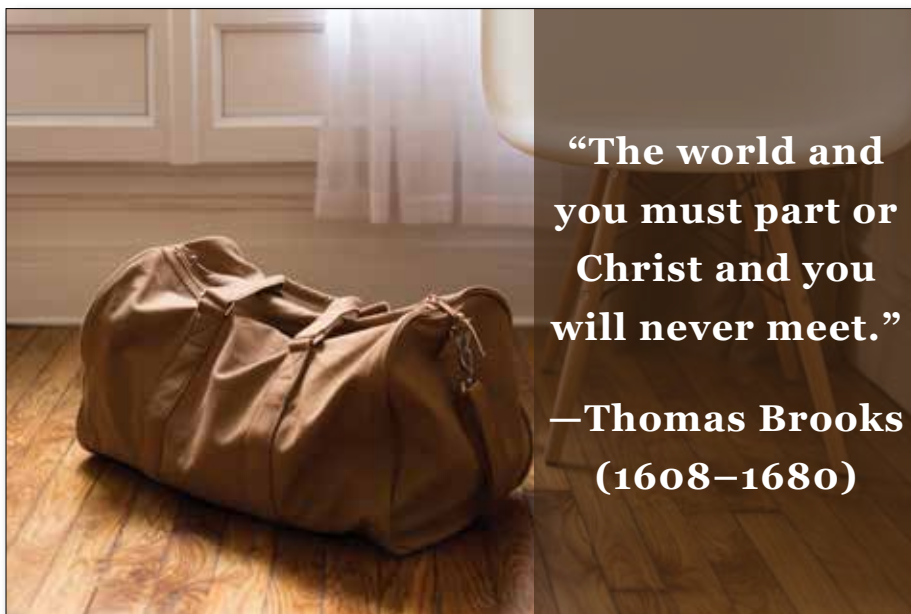
This is the problem God faced when the time came for him to call his people to set out on their journey. His people were living, as it were, on a “turkey farm.” As long as they were being treated well, why on earth would they want to leave?

In spiritual terms, Egypt is a picture of this world (see Rv 11:7–8). The Bible strongly states that no one can be a friend of

this world and a friend of God at the same time (Jas 4:4; 1 Jn 2:15–17). God’s people are not “turkeys,” and their home is not “the farmyard.” People who are happy with the status quo will never begin the journey to spiritual wholeness. We simply cannot soar with the eagles if we are content to waddle with the turkeys. As the puritan pastor Thomas Brooks (1608–1680) said so succinctly, “The world and you must part or Christ and you will never meet.”

This issue of *The High Calling* is devoted to a description of the first location that must be understood on the journey to spiritual wholeness: Egypt. Certainly, defining human lostness

in terms of “Egypt” means no disrespect to the current nation known by that name. God’s love for Egypt and Egyptians is beyond dispute. But in the Bible, the word is often used symbolically to describe that “place” where men and women are held in bondage to the world, the flesh, and the devil. No one begins the journey to spiritual wholeness without a poignant understanding that this world is not their home.



The articles in this magazine, representing a wide range of authors and perspectives, serve only to *introduce* the vast subject of human lostness and bondage to sin. We send it with the prayer that it will enable you to better comprehend our tragic human condition and thus prepare us for the call of Christ that invites us to leave our chains and begin the journey toward our true home.

To read more about what Stan Key has to say about Egypt as well as a description of the entire journey to spiritual wholeness, read his book *Journey to Spiritual Wholeness* (FAP, 2019). 🌟

FAS: The Rest of the Story

By Charlie Fiskeaux, Special Assistant to the President for Development

Stories are important. They engage not only our rational thought but also our emotions. By grabbing both parts of our attention, stories are very effective in bringing us personally into the situation at hand. It has been said that “every person has a story,” which no doubt is true. But organizations also have stories; for example, their founding, their goals, the purposes for which they expend funds, examples of persons transformed by their ministry, persons instrumental in their operation, etc. Based upon the specifics, a story typically involves a temporal dimension sharing incidents of present “time and space,” but it may also have an eternal dimension, sharing specific impacts extending beyond our present, earthly existence.

A part of the story of the Francis Asbury Society is its founding in 1983 by Dr. Dennis Kinlaw and Dr. Harold Burgess

with a commitment to proclaim the Scriptural message of holiness through core ministries of speaking, publishing, and discipleship. But in addition to these visible parts of the FAS story, there is a sense that FAS ministries extend further. Specifically, all ministries, efforts, and expenditure of funds are for the single purpose of persons finding spiritual wholeness and becoming all that Christ’s death on the cross made possible. When your prayers and finances support the ministries of the Francis Asbury Society, you become part of a story that extends into eternity. How exciting and fulfilling!

Details for various methods of giving to the ministries of the Francis Asbury Society are available on our website www.francisasburysociety.com/support. 🌟

Joseph, be swallowed up in Egyptian ways? And who will now emerge as the leader of this family? Will it be Joseph the god-like administrator, or will some statesmanlike leader emerge from among the other brothers?

After Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers and succeeds in getting his father and all his family to move to Egypt, a whole new set of questions arise concerning the choice between assimilation or separation. How much must the Children of Israel become like their host nation in order to live securely and prosper under its rule? Precisely because Egypt is civilization at its peak, careful readers of Genesis—tutored from the beginning to notice the unjust and unholy ways of cities and civilization—have every reason to be concerned about the fate of nascent Israel in its encounter with mighty and prosperous Egypt.

Joseph arranges things so that his family settles in some of Egypt's best land, the land of Goshen. Although he has secured their present, he has unwittingly endangered their future. They had come to sojourn, but he "settled" them and made them landowners. The land that is now the best will soon become the worst. Ironically, Joseph's present policy obtains Israel's survival at the cost of its future enslavement. In fact, Israel is doubly cursed by Joseph's policies. Its prosperity, produced by Joseph's favoritism, will arouse the envy of the Egyptians, and even more important, Joseph's consolidation of Pharaoh's power will result in the practice of wholesale slavery. Thanks to Joseph's agrarian policies, Egypt is transformed into a nation of slaves and Pharaoh becomes Egypt's absolute master.

As a result of Joseph's doings, Egypt comes fully into its own. Pharaoh owns all the land, except that owned by the priests. The people are enslaved. Everyone double-tithes (one fifth) to Pharaoh, a god among men. In Israel, things will be different—indeed, reversed. Reversal will require a Moses, in soul the antithesis of Joseph: a ruler, not an administrator. In the Israelite society established under Mosaic Law, families will own the land and the priests will own none. People tithe to the priests, who are dependent on the people. There is no king or pharaoh; God and his law rule. Righteousness matters more than gain. All the people are summoned to be holy as the Lord their God is holy. ✱

The Haunting Question *continued from page 6*

("I have called you by name," God said). We are known with an intimacy that is a source of gratitude and soul-shivering wonder ("Such knowledge," the psalmist wrote, "is too wonderful for me"). The notion of life as *karma*, or the belief that your future is unchangeably "written," is as far from the truth of calling as you can get.

In contrast to "constituted to be" and its sense that life is fated and predetermined, "calling to be" stresses freedom and the future. "Who am I?" As we follow God's call, we become what we are constituted to be by creation. We also become what we are not yet, and can only become by re-creation as called people.

Only when we respond to Christ and follow his call do we become our real selves and come to have personalities of our own. So when it comes to identity, modern people have things completely back to front: professing to be unsure of God, they pretend to be sure of themselves. Followers of Christ put things the other way around: unsure of ourselves, we are sure of God. ✱

We are metaphysically very good because we are created in the image of the absolutely good God. But we are morally very bad because we have despised our Creator. Modern paganism says we are not metaphysically very good at all, because we are merely trousered apes; and not morally very bad at all because there is no divine law to judge us. There is only man-made societal law, which is negotiable and revisable. "Here, kid; take a condom. We know you're incapable of free choice and self-control. We expect you to play Russian roulette with AIDS, so we're giving you a gun with twelve chambers instead of six."

If there is any one message all our psychopagan prophets insist on, it is that we must love our selves. But if there is any one message that Jesus and all his saints insist on, it is that we must deny ourselves. The golden key that alone unlocks the closed door of the riddle of the paradoxical greatness and wretchedness of man is this: that God alone can tell us what we are. To understand and repair any machine, you must read the repair manual by the inventor.

The world judges what is natural and normal to man by observing his present state. This is the world's base line. Christianity begins with a completely different base line and therefore judges everything differently. Its assumption is that what we see is not normal but abnormal; not natural but unnatural, inhuman, fallen. The reason it judges so differently is that it judges human experience by divine revelation, while the world judges divine revelation by human experience. Christianity sees the present experience of human behavior as abnormal, while the world judges this religion as abnormal. The key to all anthropology, for Christianity, is the sentence: "You are no longer in the state in which I made you." Pascal put it this way: "In a word, man knows he is wretched. Thus, he is wretched because he is so, but he is truly great because he knows it." ✱

Hope for Lost Intellectuals *continued from page 8*

horror. In letting that thought through, my mental censors blundered. You see, in order to take the sense of horror seriously, I had to admit that there was a difference between the wonderful and the horrible after all. I knew that if there existed a horrible, there had to exist a wonderful of which the horrible was the absence. So my walls of self-deception collapsed all at once.

At this point I became aware again of the Savior whom I had deserted in my twenties. Astonishingly, though I had abandoned him, he had never abandoned me. I now believe he was just in time. There is a point of no return, and I was almost there.

The next few years after my conversion were like being in a dark attic in which shutter after shutter was being thrown back so that great shafts of light began to stream in and illuminate the dusty corners. Of course I had to repudiate my dissertation. What I do now as an ethical and political theorist is poles apart from what I did as a nihilist. What I write about now is those very moral principles I used to deny—the ones we can't not know because they are imprinted on our minds, inscribed upon our consciences, written on our hearts. One might say that I specialize in understanding the ways that we pretend we don't know what we really do—the ways we suppress our knowledge, the ways we deceive ourselves and others. Jesus Christ has redeemed my nihilist past and put it to use. ✱



The High Calling

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The Ninety and Nine

By Elizabeth C. Clephane (1868)

*There were ninety and nine that safely lay
In the shelter of the fold;
But one was out on the hills away,
Far off from the gates of gold.
Away on the mountains wild and bare;
Away from the tender Shepherd's care.*

*But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed;
Nor how dark was the night the Lord passed through
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.
Out in the desert He heard its cry;
'Twas sick and helpless and ready to die.*

*And all through the mountains, thunder-riv'n,
And up from the rocky steep,
There arose a glad cry to the gate of heav'n,
"Rejoice! I have found My sheep!"
And the angels echoed around the throne,
"Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!"*

The High Calling—March–April 2020

The High Calling is a bimonthly publication of The Francis Asbury Society to serve as a link between FAS and its constituents, building loyalty and awareness so that the teaching and experience of Christian holiness may continue to be lived and proclaimed throughout the world.

The Francis Asbury Society

PO Box 7 | Wilmore, KY 40390 | 859-858-4222

FAS@francisasburysociety.com

www.francisasburysociety.com

Managing Editor: Stan Key

Editing/Design/Layout: Jennie Lovell

