

Foundations of American Literature

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A discourse setting forth evidences of the influence of the Word of God in and through the lives and works of the early American Pioneer leaders, writers, and thinkers.

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The Twentieth Century

(Part Three)

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ROBERT FROST (II): SPECIFIC EVIDENCES OF BIBLICAL INFLUENCE IN HIS WORKS (1913-1936)

In the previous issue we undertook a brief consideration of the following revealing approaches to the unique and somewhat intricate life of poet-philosopher Robert Lee Frost:

- I. Frost the Man
- II. His Philosophy
 - A. Poetic
 - B. Socio-Political
 - C. Religious and Scientific

Today we shall attempt to cite at least some of the more outstanding among the specific evidences of Biblical influence to be found in the works of this rather vexingly profound writer.

The most outstanding examples involve two titles complete in themselves: *A Masque of Reason* published by Henry Holt in 1945, and *A Masque of Mercy* from the presses of the same publisher in 1947. We shall be concluding the present study of Frost with a detailed account of Biblical influence as revealed in the two masques. Of them, Victor E. Reichert¹ says:

It would be risky to single out certain places in the Bible as having a favored fascination for Frost, especially since the two Masques rest so solidly upon the Book of Job (*A Masque of Reason*) and Jonah and the Sermon on the Mount (*A Masque of Mercy*). Yet there are several poems

¹ Committee on the Frost Centennial, *Frost Centennial Essays*, pp. 421-2.

like "The Ax-Helve" ("The snake stood up for evil in the Garden"); "Once by the Pacific" ("There would be more than ocean-water broken / Before God's last *Put out the Light* was spoken"); "Nothing Gold Can Stay" ("So Eden sank to grief"). And in *A Masque of Reason*, where God is praising Job for setting him free to reign, God says:

My forte is truth,
Or metaphysics, long the world's reproach
For standing still in one place true forever;
While science goes self-superseding on.
Look at how far we've left the current science
Of Genesis behind. The wisdom there, though,
Is just as good as when I uttered it.

There must be other examples that escape me, but I can hazard the guess that the early chapters of Genesis had a haunting attraction for Frost. The poem "Away!" is another fine example of how Frost uses the strategy of mirth, with echoes of Eden, to deal with what he describes in the great dramatic poem "West-Running Brook" as "The universal cataract of death / That spends to nothingness."

That Frost was a devout man there can be little doubt. Some have construed his intimacy with the Almighty as an indication of atheism, but in a letter to Lawrance Thompson dated August 31, 1972,¹ Reichert defends Frost by writing:

...Bishop Henry W. Hobson said that on the plane coming to Amherst he met a man who knew him and asked where he was going.

"To Amherst to conduct a memorial service for Robert Frost."

"What, that atheist!"

Bishop Hobson countered:

"You're mistaken. Robert Frost was no atheist. What you don't understand and Frost did was that God has a sense of humor!"

Bishop Hobson was right. Only one with the playful intimacy of a naughty grandchild could be bold enough to say:

Forgive, O Lord, my little jokes on Thee,
And I'll forgive Thy great big one on me.²

INADEQUACY OF LANGUAGE

The foregoing incident is an excellent example of language as only one avenue for conveying spoken or written meaning. It is by no means a perfect medium of expression, and carries with it an infinite array of possibilities for misunderstanding. Even when used deftly and discreetly by the most accomplished and dexterous of writers and speakers, it lends itself to a variety of complications in interpretation and meaning. It therefore becomes well-nigh impossible for one man to judge his

1 Committee on the Frost Centennial, op. cit., p. 416.

2 "Forgive, O Lord..." from *In the Clearing*, 1962.

fellow-man with total fairness simply on the basis of pronouncements. Only God can do this with absolute equity, since He is "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."¹ But not man. For a consideration of some of the possibilities for misunderstanding and misinterpretation of verbal and/or written communication (though by no means an exhaustive listing), ponder carefully the following:

1. What he intended to say.
2. What he thought he said.
3. What actually proceeded forth from his mouth.
4. What I thought I heard.
5. What I actually heard.
6. My interpretation of what I heard, based upon and influenced by all my past experience.
7. What I expected (or wanted) to hear, with all its ramifications, including my pet preconceptions and prejudices.

A typical exchange between two individuals usually follows the above pattern, or a strikingly similar one.

MIRTH AND MORAL

Reichert, in the same volume, continues:

What should I add to last summer's letter to Professor Thompson? It is a mistake to call Robert Frost's religious beliefs any more complicated than the whole remarkable and tough texture of his mind and soul. No one of us is ever free from the complexity of changing mood and the unresting tides of outward circumstances and inward tensions. What gladdens our hearts and places us in everlasting debt to Frost is that as poet he fashioned a strategy of mirth and an upreach to the stars to vanquish the defeating foes of doom and darkness....The fact that Frost was not a churchgoer, as Professor Cook of Middlebury College tells us in his superb *The Dimensions of Robert Frost*, did not mean that he stayed out of the Bible. On the contrary, Frost loved the Scriptures and liked to call himself an Old Testament Christian.² He was soaked in the King James version and might have agreed with John Livingston Lowes that it is the noblest monument of English prose...³

Of his constant reading of the King James version there is overwhelming evidence.⁴

¹ Hebrews 4. 12.

² Revealed in a letter written by Frost in 1947, as follows:

"My fear of God has settled down into a deep inward fear that my best offering may not prove acceptable in His sight. I'll tell you most about it in another world. My approach to the New Testament is rather through Jerewsalem than through Rome and Canterbury." (Quoted from Hyatt H. Waggoner, *American Poets: From the Puritans to the Present*, pp. 318-9).

³ Committee on the Frost Centennial, op. cit., p. 421.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 419.

If these memories of Frost's interest in a Bible commentator named Rashi and a Hittite called Ephron seem trivial and farfetched in respect to Frost's religious beliefs, perhaps they are relevant in throwing light upon that search for truth which Louis Untermeyer believed to be Frost's central passion. "Truth is the seal of God" said the sages of the Talmud. Those who come closest to truth come nearest to God.¹ Frost, like one of his heroes in the Hebrew Scripture, promethean Job, was a stormer of heaven.²

Sidney Cox, writing in the same vein, says of Frost:

Mirth has always been attendant on his moral. He will not, for earnest half-truths, stay completely reverent. He has to keep the door ajar for the other half of the truth. Even in his caperings that irk the solemn and embarrass the earnest, wisdom is usually implicit. Trifling is pertinent though often it seems pesky, when dealing with inflated trifles. And even with God, the fear of not pleasing Whom is the beginning of wisdom,³ Robert Frost sets his soft hat on one side of his head and looks Him in the eye.⁴

To illustrate the remarks by Cox, let us turn our attention to something entitled "Not All There":⁵

I turned to speak to God
About the world's despair;
But to make bad matters worse
I found God wasn't there.

God turned to speak to me
(Don't anybody laugh);
God found I wasn't there—
At least not over half.

Frost's combination of profound truth and sincerity coupled with what some might consider a touch of levity or even sacrilege give to the above a powerful punch. Especially is this apparent in his use of the O. Henry-type surprise ending and of his magnificent down-to-earth double entendre in the last two lines!

1 Of this line of thought it has been well said: "God is the author of all truth." His Word declares, in response to Pilate's query "What is truth?" (John 18.33), "Thy Word is truth." (John 17.17), "I am the truth..." (John 14.6), and "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." (John 18.37)

2 Committee on the Frost Centennial, op. cit., p. 424.

3 "The fear of the *LORD* is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." (Proverbs 1.7)

"The fear of the *LORD* is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding." (Proverbs 9.10)

"For the *LORD* giveth wisdom: out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." (Proverbs 2.6)

4 Sidney Cox, *A Swinger of Birches*, pp. 2-3.

5 From *A Further Range*, 1936.

Robert Fitzgerald, writing in the *National Review*, expresses this opinion:

The controlled development of his talent, and the finality and grace of statement in his best poems, are of moral no less than artistic value, exemplary for all who practice this art....That stern critic, Yvor Winters, considers Frost an Emersonian and therefore untrustworthy sage; but he would probably concede that on occasion Frost has had a harder edge and eye than Emerson, more humor, and more of the fear of God.¹

INFLUENCE OF ASTRONOMY

Robert Frost's familiarity with the heavens was remarkable, and the analogies he drew from that knowledge were of no little wonder themselves. Repeatedly the subject appears in his works, of which Reichert says:

The star imagery in Frost's poems dazzles the Milky Way. Stars keep shining through Frost's poems, suggesting splendors of infinity and intimations of the Divine. Frost talks about the stars the way the more orthodox in religion speak of God. Frost chooses star light as Isaiah chose God to say that the mind stayed on Him, He keeps in perfect peace.²

Robert Frost knew a great deal about the stars. You would expect a poet to know star mythology. Frost surprised and pleased astronomers with his more precise knowledge of the science of the skies. Frost employed the star symbol to communicate the ideals of living in which he believed. Frost wanted men and nations to hold each other apart in their places as the stars do. He was on the side of constancy and the search for the absolute, however unattainable. He believed that we should live with a certain height of aim, the calm of courage, the poise of a man who is self-possessed, who values the worth of incorruptibility. Frost sees in the stars the suggestion of the light of reason and common sense....

All his life, Frost was out for stars. He refused to come into the dark and lament. Though he had looked into the dark abyss of the human soul, and was well familiar with his own desert places, he steadily turned his back on despair and doom and steadfastly followed the starlight of affirmation, aspiration, and dedication.

In this sense, Frost stays Old Testament Biblical and Hebrew prophetic. Because Frost was full of fun and the joy of living, he liked to break loose from the phylacteries of rigid creed and frozen theological dogma. The sassiness of Frost can be seen in his rebellion against falseness wherever he found it. His spiritual forebears here may be uncovered in the patriarchal Abraham and Job, in the uncompromising strength of Amos, the compassion of Hosea, the massive integrity of Micah. These men too lived in dark, evil days, but they did not teach cowardice or despair.³

1 Robert Fitzgerald, *National Review*, August 8, 1949, p. 18.

2 The exact quotation (Isaiah 26. 3) is: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee."

3 Committee on the Frost Centennial, op. cit., p. 425.

FEAR OF GOD VERSUS FEAR OF MAN

Two direct quotations are worthy of mention here because they indicate something of the very devout nature of the poet and of his propensity for frequent reference to the Word of God. The first is a comment by Frost as quoted in Perkins:¹

Two fears should follow us through life. There is the fear that we shan't prove worthy in the eyes of Someone who knows us at least as well as we know ourselves. That is the fear of God. And there is the fear of man²—the fear that men won't understand us and we shall be cut off from them.

The above remark calls forth also something that Frost wrote when he was only eighteen, in a poem entitled "Bereft":³

Word I was in my life alone,
Word I had no one left but God.

Of this, Sidney Cox⁴ says:

...if you are contributing to the social good as a self-seeker, getting selfish satisfaction from being social and belonging to the big "we" of the United States and of all the world, you need the fortitude to bear loneliness. Robert Frost has the thought....It (set) him free from cadging, goose-stepping, or domineering—free to be truly considerate, co-Operative, and social....He never forgot.

This unique philosophy sets a man on course rather far removed from the concept of *amae* as elucidated by the renowned Japanologist Chie Nakane and others.

The fear of God is certainly a wholesome thing and by all means to be sought after regardless of cost. But the fear of man makes weak-kneed manpleasers of the strongest, and is to be avoided like the plague by any who would be a true follower of Christ, who admonished His disciples repeatedly: "Follow me."⁵ And again, to those in His day who were denied a *true saving faith* because they feared the opinions and castigation of man more than they feared God:

How can ye believe (be saved), which receive honour one of another (manpleasing), and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?⁶

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN LIFE

In a letter to Amy Bonner, Frost made the revealing statement about his own

1 George Perkins, ed., *American Poetic Theory*, p. 205.

2 The Bible says: "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe." (Proverbs 29. 25)

3 From *West-Running Brook*, 1928.

4 Sidney Cox, *A Swinger of Birches*, p. 133.

5 See Mark 4. 19, Luke 9. 23, etc.

6 John 5. 44. In all cases involving conflict of interests, man is still under obligation to heed counsel by the early apostles: "We ought to obey *God* rather than *men*." (Acts 5. 29)

understanding of the really urgent matters of life as follows:

There are no two things as important to us in life as the art of being threatened and *being saved*.¹

If indeed Frost had in mind a truly spiritual and not poetic use of the term *saved*, the problem he poses, like that of the Philippian jailor,² can be easily solved by referring to the answer of Paul and Silas:

“Believe on the *LORD* Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be *saved*...”³

In order to grasp the full import of the matter of salvation, however, much more than mere intellectual acuity and prowess are involved. Such things in themselves alone are but a source of putrifying stench in the nostrils of God,⁴ as also is everything without exception when offered in the pride of the flesh and from hearts that are not perfect toward Him.⁵ The ultimate in intellectual minds and leaders of His day came to Christ with all their accomplishments and achievement records. He immediately saw through their veneer and sham, past all their straw men, and right into the heart of things. Nicodemus, ruler among the Jews, is a fair example. To him Jesus said:

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit (of God) is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be (spiritually) born again (anew, from above, conversion of heart and soul).”⁶

The spirit, mind, body, conscience, heart, and soul of man are all involved in the matter of Adam's sin, and much more than mental assent to the historical facts of the Gospel is required for genuine conversion from the natural sinner state to the Christian state before God. It is believed by this writer—and by all who hold the historic Christian confessions of faith—that the *total* of man's capacities and being was affected, and regressively so, by the disobedience, rebellion, and sin of that first man (Adam)—grievously attested to also by modern (and ancient!) man's inclination for the unrighteous (various forms and manifestations of lust, envy, hatred, murder, crime, war, etc. *ad infinitum*, *ad nauseam*), and also throughout all nature as indi-

1 Elaine Barry, *Robert Frost on Writing*, p. 22.

2 Acts 16. 30.

3 Acts 16. 31.

4 “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the *LORD* hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the *LORD*, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores...” (Isaiah 1. 2-6)

5 “For the eyes of the *LORD* run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him.” (2 Chronicles 16. 9)

6 John 3. 6-7.

cated in the second law of thermodynamics.¹ The first² of Calvin's famous five points, then, is inexorably true, not only by Divine pronouncement,³ but also by abundant human experience.³

The Five Points of Calvinism

<i>Principle</i>	<i>Related References</i>
<i>Total Depravity</i>	Pr 20.9 (935) Isa 64.6 (1049) Jer 17.9 (1079) Mk 7.21-23 (119) Rom 3.10-20 (450) Rom 1.18-32 (444)
* <i>Unconditional Election</i>	
Cain & Abel, Gen 4.3-5 (4-5)	Psa 33.12 (821) Psa 135.4 (905)
Esau & Jacob, Gen 25.27-34 Heb 11.4 (664)	Isa 41.8 (1019) Isa 44.1 (1024) Mk 13.20 (142)
Saul & David, Gen 18.6-12 (442)	Eph 1.4,5 (568) Jno 13.18 (321) 2 Tim 2.19 (630)
* <i>Limited Atonement</i>	
"to make <i>at-one</i> again the parties alienated by offence or injury."	Jno 3.16 (267) Acts 2.21 (344) Rom 10.13 (469)
See also: Rom 5.10 (455) Eph 2.1-7 (570)	2 Cor 5.14,15 (536) Rev 22.17 (769) Jno 6.37 (281) 1 Tim 2.5,6 (618)
* <i>Irresistible Grace</i>	
	Jer 1.5 (1054) Rom 9.19 (467) Eph 1.5-10 (568)
<i>Perseverance of the Saints</i>	
	Mt 10.22 (27) Rev 2.10 (725)
* These three would seem to have strong support in Romans 9.14-24 (466)	

— EXHIBIT A —

In *A Masque of Reason*, expressing his own personal philosophy about man and the universe in which he finds himself, Frost explains:

Except as a hard place to save his soul in,
A trial ground where he can try himself
And find out whether he is any good,

1 Simply stated: the law of diminishing returns. All things in the universe tend toward degeneration and retrogression—not progress, and *definitely not* toward Darwinian evolution!

2 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17.9) See also Exhibit C, p. 25, for further clarification.

3 Consult your local news media daily.

It would be meaningless. It might as well
Be Heaven at once and have it over with.

Elaine Barry transcribes for us something of the same sentiment expressed by Frost in his oft-quoted communication entitled "To *The Amherst Student*":¹

TO THE AMHERST STUDENT

When the editors of The Amherst Student sent greetings to Frost for his "sixtieth" (actually his sixty-first) birthday in 1935, Frost wrote this reply, which was printed in that undergraduate paper on 25 March, 1935. It is one of his most memorable statements on form as a philosophical necessity.

[c. 21 March 1935] [Key West]

It is very very kind of the *Student* to be showing sympathy with me for my age. But sixty is only a pretty good age. It is not advanced enough. The great thing is to be advanced. Now ninety would be really well along and something to be given credit for.

But speaking of ages, you will often hear it said that the age of the world we live in is particularly bad. I am impatient of such talk. We have no way of knowing that this age is one of the worst in the world's history. Arnold claimed the honor for the age before this. Wordsworth claimed it for the last but one. And so on back through literature. I say they claimed the honor for their ages. They claimed it rather for themselves. It is immodest of a man to think of himself as going down before the worst forces ever mobilized by God.

All ages of the world are bad—a great deal worse anyway than Heaven. If they weren't the world might just as well be Heaven at once and have it over with. One can safely say after from six to thirty thousand years of experience that the evident design is a situation here in which it will always be about equally hard to save your soul. Whatever progress may be taken to mean, it can't mean making the world any easier a place in which to save your soul—or if you dislike hearing your soul mentioned in open meeting, say your decency, your integrity....

FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS

Introductory lines from "The Lesson for Today"² appearing *A Witness Tree* (1942) provide insight into Frost's view of the modern age:

If this uncertain age in which we dwell
Were really as dark as I hear sages tell,
And I convinced that they were really sages,
I should not curse myself with it to hell,
But leaving not the chair I long have sat in

¹ Barry, op. cit., pp. 112-3.

² Taken from Edward C. Lathem, ed., *The Poetry of Robert Frost*, pp. 350-1.

I should betake me back ten thousand pages
 To the world's undebatably dark ages,
 And getting up my medieval Latin,
 Seek converse common cause and brotherhood
 (By all that's liberal—I should, I should)
 With poets who could calmly take the fate
 Of being born at once too early and late,
 And for these reasons kept from being great.
 Yet singing but Dione in the wood
 And *ver aspergit terram floribus*¹
 They slowly led old Latin verse to rhyme
 And to forget the ancient lengths of time,
 And so began the modern world for us.

In "A Leaf-Treader,"² Frost hints at his concept of the omniscience of God as Creator and Record-Keeper, and as the Righteous Judge of the universe before whom all men shall some day render up accounts for the investment of life, time, talent, and substance received at the hand of God during "earth's transient dream:"³

I have been treading leaves all day until I am autumn-tired.
 God knows all the color and form of leaves I have trodden on and mired.
 Perhaps I have put forth too much strength and been too fierce from fear.
 I have safely trodden underfoot the leaves of another year.

All summer long they were overhead, more lifted up than I.
 To come to their final place in earth they had to pass me by.
 All summer long I thought I heard them threatening under their breath.
 And when they came it seemed with a will to carry me with them to death.

Line two above brings to mind the fact that Jesus indicated in Matthew 10, and again in Luke 12, that "...even the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

The foregoing selections reveal, as do most of Frost's writings, repeated indications of the poet's personal convictions regarding the existence and nature of God, of man, and of the universe. We may safely conclude, from the known fact that Frost was saturated in the Scriptures, and based upon his frequent references to and about these

1 *Spring scatters flowers abroad throughout the earth.* (literal translation)

2 From *A Further Range*, 1936.

3 "For God shall bring every work into Judgment, with every secret thing (deeds, actions, words, attitudes, motives, plus thoughts and intents of the heart), whether it be good, or whether it be evil." (Ecclesiastes 12.14)

"For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." (Hebrews 4.12-3)

and similar topics, that he firmly held the following Biblical tenets (proof texts indicated):

1. The existence of God as Creator and Sustainer of the universe—eternal, invisible, immortal, immutable, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, righteous, merciful, loving...

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”¹

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork....There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.”²

“For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they (all men) are without excuse...”³

2. The creation of man by the direct act of God.

“And the *LORD* God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”⁴

3. The existence of man as soul⁴ and soul (spirit) as his most valuable possession.

“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”⁵

“Then (moment of death) shall the dust (body) return to the earth as it was: and the spirit (soul) shall return unto God who gave it.”⁶

4. The reality of Heaven as God’s provision for the saved.

“In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”⁷

5. The fall of man and the twin problems of hamartiology and ponerology. See Exhibit B for Genesis 3 in its entirety.⁸

6. The reality of sin, of death, and of Hell as a place of punishment for the unrepentant.

“All unrighteousness is sin...”⁹

“...and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”¹⁰

1 Genesis 1. 1.

2 Psalm 19. 1, 3.

3 Romans 1. 20. See also Genesis 1 & 2.

4 Genesis 2. 7.

5 Mark 8. 36-7.

6 Ecclesiastes 12. 7.

7 John 14. 2-3.

8 See also Romans 5. 12, Jeremiah 17. 9, Isaiah 64. 6, among others, and Exhibit C, p. 25.

9 1 John 5. 17.

10 Romans 5. 12.

GENESIS 3

The Temptation

CHAPTER 3

NOW the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

2 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

8 And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

9 And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?

10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

11 And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?

12 And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

13 And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

14 And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

★ 15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow

thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

20 And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.

21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

○ 22 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

24 So he drove out the man: and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cher'ubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

— EXHIBIT B —

“And in Hell he (the rich man) lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus (a beggar) in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.”¹

“But the fearful, and unbelievers, and the abominable, and murderers,

1 Luke 16. 23-4.

and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”¹

7. The necessity for salvation from sin and from Hell.

“Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant (slave) of sin....I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am He (Messiah, Saviour), ye shall die in your sins....For the wages of sin is death (both physical and spiritual),² but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”³

Admittedly, Frost does not carry to its logical conclusion, with proof texts as I have done, the evidence of his beliefs based on the *Book* he loved so well. We can be sure, however, that he was thoroughly familiar with all the passages cited. It is only to be regretted that he failed to elaborate clearly and in greater Biblical detail on the necessity for salvation (Point 7) as well as that of the fall, hamartiology, and ponerology (Point 5). Regarding the former, man's need to be saved is predicated upon the fact of man's utter sinfulness and the consequent need of a Saviour (God working on behalf of helpless and hopeless man from without),⁴ the only Perfect One and acceptable in God's sight being His own dear Son.⁵ But Frost, preferring to think of himself as an “Old Testament Christian,”⁶ has either deliberately or accidentally overlooked the greatest truth of the whole of Scripture, and that is simply the unveiling of God's total and complete provision for the salvation of sinners through the substitutionary death of Christ.

“For He (God) hath made Him (Jesus) to be sin for us, who (Christ)

1 Revelation 21. 8.

2 The first death to claim jurisdiction over man was *spiritual* (breach of fellowship with, and separation from, the Creator), and came suddenly on the heels of that initial sin and disobedience later giving rise to rebellion against the law of God. (See Genesis 3, Exhibit B, p. 12) The second death was *physical*, overtaking Adam and his progeny some few years thereafter. Both are still with us today—after thousands of years—as grim reminders of God's immutable and eternal Truth: “...whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” and “...the wages of sin is death...” Verily, “*God is not mocked!*” (Romans 6. 23; Galatians 6. 7).

3 John 8. 34, 24; Romans 6. 23.

4 That which defines true *salvation* as separate and distinct from mere *religion*. Of the latter, which always places emphasis upon man's self-effort at improvement in order to “attain” salvation through good works, the world is full. Of the former, there is only one, and it is characterized by *God's love and mercy alone, plus nothing* but a true and simple childlike faith from the heart. The historic Christian position on salvation is and always has been 1) The Bible alone, 2) Christ alone, 3) Faith alone.

“For by grace (unmerited favor) are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2. 8-9).

5 The Bible record reveals that “...He (Christ) was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray (disobedience, sin, rebellion); we have turned every one to his own way; and the *LORD* hath laid on Him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53. 5-6).

6 Committee on the Frost Centennial, op. cit., p. 421.

knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."¹

Old Testament or New, *this* is the Message central to all Scripture.

Frost certainly cannot be blamed for *not* wanting to go through either Rome or Canterbury for his salvation:

My approach to the New Testament is rather through Jerewsalem (sic) than through Rome and Canterbury.²

The problem is much more personal, however, than the issue of *any* intermediary, be it one man or a group of men. Indeed, the Bible declares:

"For there is one God, and *one mediator* between God and men, the man *Christ Jesus*; who gave Himself a ransom for all..."³

Hence, neither Rome nor Canterbury can dispense the salvation that comes from, by, and through God *in toto, plus nothing*. By authority of the Scripture cited above, the rational mind can but conclude that *all* who presume upon Christ's role as Mediator immediately brand themselves as interlopers, usurpers, false, liars, and impostors.⁴ Tragically sad, then, that Frost should have allowed that which was *not* true to stand in the way and become a hindrance to *knowing Him* who said:

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father (Heaven) but by me."⁵

Evidence gleaned from the period *circa* 1953-63, however, indicates that Frost had moved much closer to the New Testament in his theological beliefs and utterances toward the end of life. The following excerpt from a letter written shortly before his death reveals this modified position:⁶

I'm mighty glad you like this poem for Christmas ("The Prophets Really Prophecy as Mystics..."). Why will the quidnuncs always be hoping for a salvation man will never have from anyone but God? I was just saying today how Christ posed Himself the whole problem and died for it...

1 2 Corinthians 5. 21.

2 Hyatt H. Waggoner, *American Poets: From the Puritans to the Present*, p. 319.

3 1 Timothy 2. 5-6.

4 By no means limited to Rome and Canterbury. The world is presently awash with false prophets and deceivers. Jesus Himself predicted these days, saying:

"Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many....For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." (Matthew 24. 4-5, 24).

5 The words of Jesus as recorded in John 14. 6.

6 Waggoner, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

EXCERPTS FROM THE WORKS OF ROBERT FROST HAVING DIRECT
BIBLICAL FOUNDATION AND REFERENCE

Frost began his literary career with the same basic beliefs (listed above) that he ended it with, but as Spiller¹ tells us:

The desire to sermonize grew on him, and in the poems "taken doubly" (not a few of which can be said to fall into that category) it is required that the reader keep his eye on both theme and moral. These poems are delightful and full of unobjectionable didacticism. Beside them his other poems (with double entendre) seem somewhat pale and wan. The natural world, once a bringer of great joy to Frost, suggests to him now the closing in of age and winter.

Before addressing Frost's climactic masques, however, let us now consider some of the representative excerpts from earlier works having direct Biblical foundation and/or reference. Of his first published volumes,² *A Boy's Will* is by far the singular in poems reflecting clear Biblical influence.

From "Love and a Question"³ the lines

A heartfelt prayer for the poor of God,
Or for the rich a curse...

bespeak something of Frost's acquaintance with the following:

"Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith...Judas Iscariot, which should betray Him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the (money) bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she done this. For *the poor always ye have with you*; but me ye have not always."⁴

"Go to now, *ye rich men*, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days."⁵

"A Prayer in Spring"⁸ petitions the Creator for the favor and endowment of a *childlike faith*⁶ so as to enable one to gratefully acknowledge and take pleasure in

1 Robert E. Spiller et. al., eds., *Literary History of the United States*, pp. 1192-3.

2 *A Boy's Will* (1913), *North of Boston* (1914), and *Mountain Interval* (1916).

3 Appearing in *A Boy's Will*, 1913.

4 John 12. 3-8.

5 James 5. 1-3.

6 "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven." (Matthew 18. 3).

all the marvelous, multifaceted handiwork of God:

Oh, give us pleasure in the flowers today;
And give us not to think so far away
As the uncertain harvest; keep us here
All simply in the springing of the year.

Perhaps no other expression in all the works of Frost reveals, as does this one, the absolute requirement for a simple, childlike attitude and humility as prerequisite to genuine God-pleasing faith. It is all too abundantly evident that Frost was here alluding to that famous passage in which Jesus cautions His disciples, saying:

“Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these....O ye of little faith....take no thought (be not overly concerned or anxious; let not your life be totally submerged in the cares of this world) saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles (the world's inhabitants) seek: But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you....Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”¹

In the last stanza of the same poem, Frost penned:

For this is love and nothing else is love,
The which it is reserved for God above
To sanctify to what far ends He will,
But which it only needs that we fulfill.

THE ESSENCE OF LOVE²

Two points need be emphasized here: 1) what true love is, and 2) the absolute sovereignty of God.³ Of the former, the Word of God declares:

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation⁴ for our sins.”⁵

First, we understand that all true love, *like truth itself*, originates with and proceeds forth *from God*. Second, we understand that love is enmeshed, as is everything else in the universe, in the process of cause-effect relationships. Simply stated, God Himself is the great Originator of true love, and we (His creatures) find ourselves

1 Excerpts from Matthew 6. 24-34.

2 For an understanding of love's effective operation, see also the classic 1 Corinthians 13 on the same subject.

3 Partial elucidation through references in Points 2, 3, and 4 of Exhibit A, p. 8.

4 Of *propitiation*, Webster's *New Collegiate Dictionary* says: "...atoning sacrifice, specifically, the self-sacrifice and death of Jesus viewed as appeasing divine justice (against the sin, disobedience, and rebellion of man) and effecting reconciliation between God and man."

5 1 John 4. 10.

prisoners of the warmth and grace¹ of all the manifestations of His matchless, magnificent, wonderful love!²

It is the studied opinion of this writer that we of the western nations (the so-called "free world") have deliberately/ignorantly allowed ourselves to be *brainwashed* by Hollywood and by the moguls of mass communication, into an absolute mis-understanding of the origin, definition, and significance of true love. We highly intelligent and sophisticated moderns have *retrogressed*³ to the point of having almost totally equated love with lust, with lasciviousness, with strip shows, with eroticism, *only* with sex, *and even with perversion!* What a travesty on truth in a supposedly enlightened, civilized, and scientifically advanced age!

Admittedly, true love has its physical and material manifestations, but to equate the two is to miss the mark entirely. *Love is fundamentally a spiritual entity*, and involves not only mere affinity or affection, but more important still: sympathy, kindness, tenderness, charity, benevolence, admiration, chivalry, gallantry, devotion, duty, obligation, responsibility, and a host of other equally indispensable intangibles—including righteousness, and hatred of that which is evil. Let us henceforth understand the meaning of the term, and stop confusing the genuine item with all the Hollywood and mass media counterfeits!

As to the absolute sovereignty of God, it is hoped that there is to be found in the last stanza of "A Prayer..."

...it is reserved for God above

To sanctify to what far ends He will...

no fatalistic note in the heart of the poet, but rather a true surrender to the will of God who alone is sovereign⁴ over the affairs both of men and of nations—a surrender

1 "...unmerited and totally undeserved favor."

2 Inasmuch as the very nature of God is love, and since love is definitely a two-way street, the duty and obligation upon the heart of every man is that of serving as a mirror to reflect love back to God, and for God, who authored it initially. Unfortunately (and fortunately!), this is impossible with man as he is in his natural, sinful, unregenerate state, and he *cannot* do so until he comes into right relationship with God through the atoning death of Christ.

3 Apologies to the Darwinians!

4 Something of the nature of God's sovereignty can be more easily comprehended in the light of the following explanatory passage. Isaiah both poses and answers the rhetorical question:

"Who hath directed the Spirit of the *LORD*, or being His counsellor hath taught Him? ...Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, He (God) taketh up the isles as a very little thing....All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare unto Him?...Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the *LORD*, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding." (Isaiah 40. 13, 15-8, 28).

No less than three times in Daniel 4 is set forth the following truth in multiplicate recording to emphasize its importance:

"...to the intent that the living may know that the most High (God) ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men." David, King of Israel, affirms the sovereignty of God with these words:

"For I know that the *LORD* is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever the *LORD* pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places." (Psalm 135. 5-6).

expressed by the Holy Spirit through Paul the apostle:

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, *will of God*.”¹

The title “A Prayer in Spring” is not necessarily indicative of Biblical influence, for prayer *per se* is one of the distinguishing elements of *all* religions. We are not dealing here with religion in general, but specifically with *Biblical* influence as opposed to *religious* influence.

“The Trial by Existence”² begins:

Even the bravest that are slain
Shall not dissemble their surprise
On waking to find valor reign,
Even as on earth, in *paradise*...

Paradise, capitalized, seldom refers to Heaven, but to that lost Paradise: the Garden of Eden. In lower case, as here, it does refer to Heaven, the abode of the saved dead following departure from this earth. In stanza 4 also we find the word appearing, and its clear reference is to passages such as Jesus' word of promise to the repentant thief:

“Today shalt thou be with me in *paradise*.”³

LIFE AND LITERATURE

It has been intimated that the poetically inclined should not deal with the more gruesome aspects of man's existence in the universe, but solely with optimistic themes. If the literary artist should hold strictly to this persuasion, his accomplishments would not then be truly representative of man's existence and of the fundamental problems confronting him in death as well as in life. Caustic critic Yvor Winters⁴ has written:

The poet, then, should not deal with death or with comparably disturbing topics, because these topics distress and discourage people. Yet I wish to point out that *all people die*, that human life is filled with tragedy, and that commonly the tragedies accumulate all but overwhelmingly toward

1 Romans 12. 2.

2 Appearing in *A Boy's Will*, 1913.

3 Luke 23. 43. The word *paradise* appears altogether only three times in the whole of Scripture, none of which refers to Eden. In addition to the Luke reference, the other two appear in 2 Corinthians 12. 4 where it is recorded of Paul:

“How that he was caught up into *paradise*, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not possible for a man to utter...”

and Revelation 2. 7 where, in God's message to the church at Ephesus, it is recorded:

“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the *paradise* of God.”

4 James, M. Cox, ed., *Robert Frost: A Collection of Critical Essays*, p. 76. Taken from an essay by Yvor Winters entitled “Robert Frost: or, The Spiritual Drifter as Poet”

the end. To ignore the tragic subject is to leave oneself unprepared for the tragic experience; it is likely to lead to disaster and collapse. It is the business of the poet, let me repeat, to understand his subjects, and as far as may be the most difficult and important subjects, in rational terms, and at the same time to communicate the feeling which ought to be communicated by that rational understanding. The great poet judges the tragic subject completely, that is, rationally and emotionally; the nature of the human mind is such that we can enter the poet's mind by way of his poem, if we are willing to make the effort, and share his judgment....This is the virtue of poetry...

Doubtless, Frost was a man acquainted with the hard, cold fact of reality both in life and in death, as evidenced by his wording in subsequent stanzas of the same poem:¹

And a white shimmering concourse rolls
Toward *the throne* to witness there
The *speeding* of devoted souls
Which God makes His especial care.

And none are taken *but who will*,
Having first heard the life read out
That opens earthward, good and ill,
Beyond the shadow of a doubt;

And very beautifully God limns,
And tenderly, *life's little dream*,
But naught extenuates or dims,
Setting *the thing that is supreme*.

Volumes might be written in exegesis of the above. Though penned at a tender age, these lines bespeak the basic convictions of Frost's personal philosophy of life from the outset of his literary career. *The throne* (above) clearly refers to the Throne of God, the Judgment Throne. Of it, the apostle John wrote:

"And I saw a great white *throne*, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away;...And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened:...and the dead were *judged*..."²

The apostle Paul, of the Judgment, writes:

"...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the Judgment..."³

Yes, the Judgment of God upon every man is certain and inescapable. Whether in this life or afterward, it is a reality to be reckoned with and, ultimately, faced:

1 "The Trial by Existence"

2 Revelation 20. 11-2.

3 Hebrews 9. 27.

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”¹

“Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going *before* to Judgment; and some men they follow *after*.”²

ON THE FLEETING NATURE OF OUR EARTHLY EXISTENCE

Speeding bears also clearly evident reference to the brevity of life, and to the frailty of human flesh. Consider the following:

“For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”³

“All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth....surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the Word of our God shall stand for ever.”⁴

Life’s little dream carries with it the essence of meaning to our existence upon earth, along with the incontrovertible fact that, when all is said and done, time indeed flies by like an arrow,⁵ and we all are soon going to have to wake up (literally, *die*) to stand before *The Throne* and meet God in *Judgment*.² Of this moment, at a point in time placed squarely between the exit of life and the advent of death, it is written:

“Then shall the dust (body, flesh) return to the earth as it was: and the spirit (soul) shall return unto God who gave it.”⁵

A sobering fact? Surely. But true nonetheless. It is so real a part of our existence that God has ingrained its truth graphically and indelibly into the heart of every living soul. It is a part of life. It is also a part of the fear and dread of death, on which subject Paul states:

“O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ out Lord.”⁶

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death *for every man*....He (Christ) also Himself likewise took part of the same (death); that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”⁷

1 Galatians 6. 7-8.

2 1 Timothy 5. 24.

3 James 4. 14.

4 Isaiah 40. 6-8.

5 Ecclesiastes 12. 7.

6 Romans 7. 24.

7 Hebrews 2. 9, 14-5.

“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”¹

Jesus, in the Revelation to John, said:

“I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”²

THE THING THAT IS SUPREME

Frost the man had enough sound Biblical knowledge to his credit (along with its concomitant wisdom) that he was able to affirm *the thing supreme* in life and that ought to be central in each of our lives, our thinking, our attitudes, our words, our actions, our deportment, and the total of our innermost being is to be saved and thus prepared for the moment of death. So doing, we should not thereafter and forever be bound by its awful clutches of fear and dread.

And God has taken a flower of gold
And broken it, and used therefrom
The mystic link to *bind and hold*
Spirit to matter till death come....
'Tis the essence of life here,
Though we choose greatly...
Life has for us on the wrack
Nothing but what we somehow chose;
Thus we are wholly stripped of pride
In the pain that has but one close...
Bearing it crushed and mystified.

Magnificent combination of words, these! Frost's explication of the essence and meaning of life (and of death) is clearly indicated in Scripture:

“And the *LORD* God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (spirit)....”³

“Then (point of death) shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit (soul) shall return unto God who gave it....”⁴

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into *Judgment*, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”⁵

1 1 Corinthians 15. 26.

2 Revelation 1. 18.

3 Genesis 2. 7.

4 Ecclesiastes 12. 7.

5 *ibid.*, 12. 13-4.

Our critique on Frost concludes the present study with an analysis of seven lines from "The Trial by Existence" which are at once sublimely relative and profoundly disturbing:

And a white shimmering concourse rolls
Toward the throne to witness there
The speeding of devoted souls
Which God makes His especial care.

And *none* are taken *but who will*,
Having *first heard* the *life* read out
That opens earthward...

Concerning the extent to which these lines are related to the doctrine of Calvinism,¹ we would be hard pressed to have to admit that Frost here opts for Calvin's stated election and predestination. Nevertheless, "...devoted souls / Which God makes His especial care" is undeniably Biblical:

"I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me."²

"Seek ye the *LORD* while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the *LORD*, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the *LORD*."³

"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the *LORD*..."⁴

"Because thou hast made the *LORD*, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone....Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known My Name."⁵

In the last three lines of the poem above, however, are found indications that Frost understood not only the basic tenets of the Christian Gospel but also something of the matter of man's acceptance or rejection of that Gospel, upon which true *salvation* (which concept is to be clearly set apart in contradistinction to religion, ceremony, ritual, religiosity, good works, natural piety, or moral uprightness) is based. Specifically, in the phrase "...none are taken but who will" we are reminded of man's absolute freedom of choice in matters spiritual. While it is true that man is a prisoner

1 See Exhibit A, p. 8, Points 2, 3, 4.

2 Proverbs 8. 17.

3 Isaiah 55. 6-8.

4 Jeremiah 29. 13-4.

5 Psalm 91. 9-12, 14.

of time and space and matter in God's created universe, yet it is also equally true that the spirit of man is unbound and unbindable—except by the power of his own will (choice), the most precious of our democratic freedoms and forever a God-given entity!

The disobedience and fall of Adam¹ destroyed man's fellowship with the Creator and rendered him a slave to sin, exiled from Paradise, and living in morbid fear of death.² This state of things (both celestial and terrestrial) can only be remedied and rectified—on God's own terms—by utilizing that gem among freedoms (freedom of choice) in order to determine whether we shall continue in (spiritual) bondage to sin and death on the one hand, or freely receive that indescribably wonderful manumission which God, in His great mercy, has so abundantly provided for each of us on the other.

Christ himself said of choice, freedom, and the freedom of choice:

"I am the way, *the truth*, and the life..."³

"And ye shall know *the truth*, and *the truth* shall make you free....If the Son (Jesus) therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."⁴

"But ye will not (choose to) come to me, that ye might have life."⁵

MAN'S MOST PRECIOUS POSSESSION

It is sufficiently clear that those who *will* be saved must first *hear* (and understand) the Gospel ("the life...that opens earthward"), the historical reality and fact of the Creator's plan for redeeming men by means of the incarnation of Christ: through His vicarious, atoning death and bodily resurrection from the dead.⁶

Frost alludes to this truth in "Kitty Hawk,"⁷ wherein he refers to "...that fall

1 See Genesis 3, Exhibit B, p. 12. Romans 5.12 also puts it in a nutshell:

"Wherefore as by one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

2 See Exhibit B, p. 12: Genesis 3.17-9, 23-4. See also John 8.34 & Romans 6.23:

"Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth (makes a practice of, is bound by the habits of) sin is the servant (slave) of sin."

"...the wages (result) of *sin* is death (eternal separation from God with resulting punishment therefor described as *the second death* and referred to in passages such as Matthew 25.41, Revelation 21.8, etc.)."

"Forasmuch then as the children (men) are partakers of flesh and blood, He (Christ) also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through *fear of death* were all their lifetime subject to *bondage*." (Hebrews 2.14-5).

3 John 14.6.

4 John 8.32, 36.

5 John 5.40.

6 "...if thou shalt confess with thy mouth (Jesus as *LORD*), and shalt believe in thine heart that *God hath raised Him from the dead*, thou shalt be saved....For whosoever shall call upon the name of the *LORD* shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?....So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." (Romans 10.9, 13-15, 17).

7 From *In the Clearing*, 1962.

(we took) / From the apple tree" (from the presence of God, and from fellowship with Him, in Eden). God's own remedy for the problem (*ἀμαρτία*, missing the mark, sin) is expressed in the following lines:

But *God's own descent*
Into flesh was meant
As a demonstration
That the supreme merit
Lay in risking spirit
In substantiation.

The Biblical record of the above states that

"...the Word (Christ) was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."¹

To appropriate the Gift of God² as one's own, therefore, such individuals (who have *first* heard and understood the Gospel) must make—by a deliberate act of choice—that pivotal decision for Christ that leads Heaven-ward.

"But as many as received Him (Jesus), to them gave He power to become the sons of God (to be saved), even to them that *believe* on His name."³

"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."⁴

"Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."⁵

Nitchie concludes aptly at this point by summarizing his counsel and observations in keeping with the concept of man as the image of his Creator, and as it relates in particular to his freedom of choice:

It is this capacity for conscious choice that principally distinguishes man from the lower forms of life. "God defend me," wrote Emerson, "from ever looking at man as an animal." And in "The White-Tailed Hornet," Frost echoes Emerson's sentiment, insisting that it is dismal error to confuse the two orders of being....

Frost's man, then, is essentially a choice-making creature, one that, endowed with something more than a determined and determining set of instincts, possesses the heady but dangerous faculty of making his own choices and thus, to a degree, of consciously selecting his own destiny.⁶

(TO BE CONTINUED)

1 John 1. 14.

2 See Romans 6. 23, Ephesians 2. 8-9, Revelation 3. 20, etc.

3 John 1. 12.

4 1 John 5. 11-2.

5 John 14. 6.

6 George W. Nitchie, *Human Values in the Poetry of Robert Frost*, pp. 158, 160.

ROMANS, 3

Both Jew and Gentile condemned

(10) As it is written, 'There is none righteous, no, not one:

11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:

14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:

15 Their feet are swift to shed blood:

16 Destruction and misery are in their ways:

17 And the way of peace have they not known:

18 There ^mis no fear of God before their eyes.

19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that 'every mouth may be stopped, and 'all the world may become ²guilty before God.

20 Therefore 'by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for 'by the law is the knowledge of sin.

21 But now 'the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law 'and the prophets;

22 Even the righteousness of God which is by 'faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for 'there is no difference:

23 For 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

A Photograph of the Human Heart

— EXHIBIT C —

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