

[Dr. Ford answers the question, "Can't I do what I like with my own life?" The fact is we are not our own. On the bases of the gift of life, the preservation of life, and our redemption on Calvary, we belong to Another. This preview article is taken from Dr. Ford's upcoming book *Worth More Than a Million!*]

WHY BURDEN PEOPLE with unwanted warnings or restraint? Why urge upon free-willed beings any course that contrasts with their own desires and habits? Why shouldn't a man curse, fornicate, drink, smoke and live only for his own pleasure? Why not? It's his life, isn't it?

Why urge a son or daughter to be pure, to take God into account, to treat others not only as neighbors, but as brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers? It's their business, isn't it? Not yours or mine. It IS their life, isn't it?

Pride and Amnesia

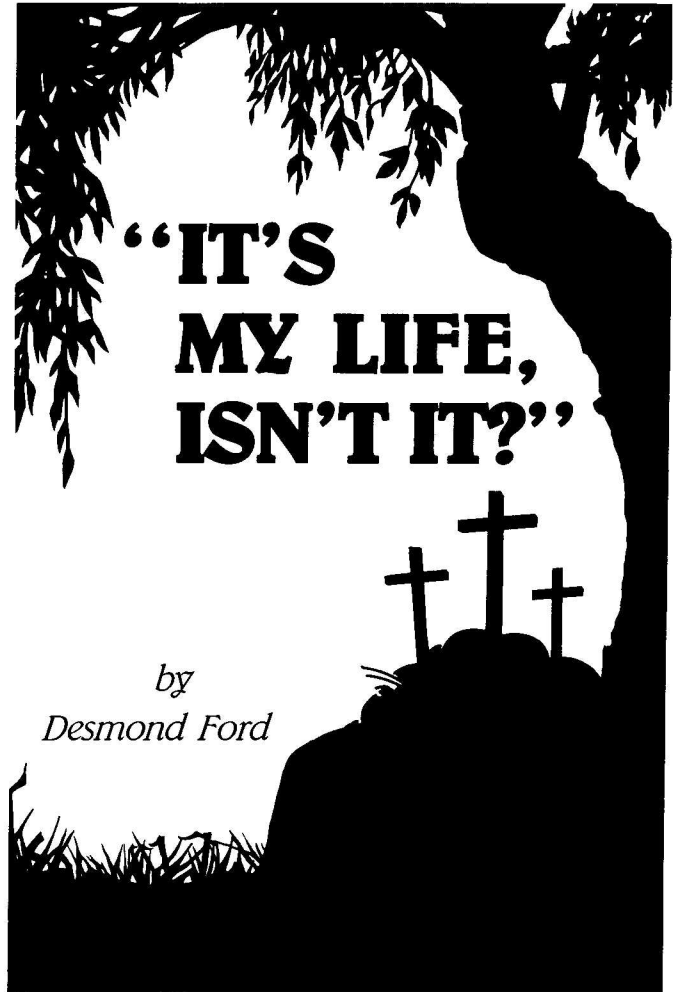
It takes not only a great deal of pride to claim sole right to one's person, but also a colossal amount of either thoughtlessness or ignorance. For example, do not all of us take memory for granted, until some accident occurs which reveals to us how dependent we are upon this faculty for identity and survival? Ever parked your car at the airport of a huge city, gone away for a week, and returned to find you are not sure where you parked? Memory is a very ingenious contrivance containing detailed files reaching back to our infancy. Not only did we not invent this vital device, we could not have done so given all eternity.

Must not the angels laugh at the arrogant strutting of human beings who have forgotten they could not manufacture even a faint resemblance of any of the body's 50 trillion cells? Did ever any king with as little reason claim sovereign rights over a territory as foolish mortals claim autonomy over themselves? How gentle is our God who could, if he wished, visit us with amnesia with embarrassing regularity. Suppose in an endeavor to cure amnesia, scientists forgot what they were about, why they were so engaged and who it was that was

striving so. One thing is certain, they would neither know much about, nor be able to do much with, the kingdom they belligerently assert to be theirs.

You Have Been Bought!

The answer from Scripture to man's claim of self-ownership is clear, unequivocal and final. "You are not your



**“IT’S
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by

Desmond Ford

own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Cor 6:19-20 RSV). Twice in these words the truth is told that we are God's, not our own.

How can it be? The text tells us. We were bought. We were delivered, if we will accept it. God's own Son valued us so highly that he would not leave us in the darkness of the shadow of condemnation and death. By his own agonies he saves us from our agonies, if we will let him.

We Did Not Create Ourselves

Did I conceive myself, bear myself, care for myself in the first days, months, years of life? Did I carefully contrive

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my own IQ, select my particular talents, ordain my race, color, country and my parents and siblings? Let us go further. Can I guarantee one day of my life? Can I be certain of survival in the storm of fear, or enticement, or anger? How much power do I have to pursue what seems to me good? How much power have I to even select what is truly good?

The old Book is right. We are not our own, either by origin, preservation, nature, privileges or destiny. All that I can call my own are my mistakes, my sins, my failures, my innate abysmal selfishness and poverty.

If all my "pluses" are given to me, and the outcome of every hour (if it is to be the best), must also be a "given," then is it so strange that I should behave as one not my own? Is it so strange to act as one who has responsibilities as well as privileges, duties as well as pleasures, obligations as well as indulgences? No, it is not strange. It is sanity. For "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" (Gal 6:78). That is no stern, loveless threat, but a merciful warning about the immutable nature of the universe.

And something else. Probably I (you) can be numbered among the privileged elite of earth. We are not among the half who live without enough food. We have shelter, and our environment is not shadowed by infectious diseases. Most of us have sight and hearing, and ability to move and do, to speak and sing. What shall I do with these advantages in view of the disadvantages of so many? Especially as I remember that there is no known reason why I am not among that oppressed many.

How can I discharge my obligations to those less fortunate? One way only exists. Only "in Christ," by trust and obedience, can my way be wise, safe and useful. Christ will lead me in the path of stewardship. My life is not my own, nor are my moments, talents, opportunities or health. They are all held in trust. To rightly use them is the rent for the space I occupy down here.

The Cross and Our Selfish Individualism

When a man says that he has a right to do what he likes with his life, his body, his

all, what he really means is that he doesn't want to get involved. He has no wish to leave a bequest to humanity as humanity has to him. In other words, he wants to be a selfish pig—so there! But:

Each of us is a social product, nurtured by the whole family of man, loved by parents and grandparents, taught by teachers and clergy, protected by policemen and soldiers and judges, encouraged by universities, inspired by artists and poets. Each of us contains the cumulated investment of thousands of years, and is the product of a multitude of hopes. We have no right to squander this long-term inheritance...¹

Much more motivation exists than Evans Hill has listed. Stand under the shadow of that ancient cross and hear the plaintive cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The answer is: He was forsaken that we might forsake our habit of fleeing from life's cross, and the cross of the gospel, crosses which, if lifted, ultimately will lift us. For the cross of service and stewardship, when embraced, becomes as wings to a bird and as sails to a ship. The sighs of Calvary, through the magic alchemy of our loving, Heavenly Father, ultimately become transfigured into the songs of Paradise.

Therefore sing it gladly: "We are not our own, for we have been bought with a price. Therefore will we glorify God in our body and in our spirit which are God's." Hallelujah!

SUMMARY

We belong to God, every cell, every talent, every capacity for thought, feeling, and action.

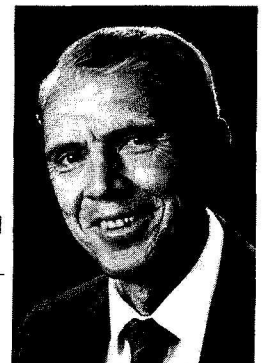
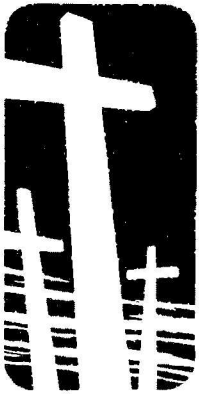
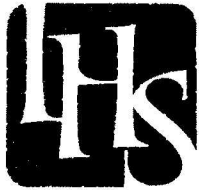
Life consists of responsibilities as well as privileges, duties as well as pleasures, obligations as well as indulgences.

The immutable nature of the universe is that of a cause-effect relationship. What we sow we reap inevitably.

We take many things for granted, including the many blessings of life, such as our senses and a marvelous mechanism of memory. Those who accept the sacrificial principle of the cross will find that instead of weight it will become wings. □

1. Evans Hill, "It's My Life, Isn't It?," *The Reader's Digest*, January, 1969.

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