

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the horror of the shade;
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find me, unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishment the scroll,
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.

There is something in this song that appeals to all of us. There is something it every Christian should detest. Both elements are in it and we are mistaken if we neglect either element.

Let's look first at that which we should recognize. The claim that we can be superior over circumstance. We all glide along all too easy under circumstances. We do what our flesh feels like. We eat what we like instead of what is good for us. We do what we enjoy of what will accomplish the purposes for which God put us here. We become piano keys ~~and~~ as Dostoevsky said. We become mere instruments. And you imagine a man in such a situation as this saying, I am the master of my fate, --- of course it's absurd, it's nonsense. It expresses a truth that man should learn to be the master of his fate. That man's spirit should learn to be supreme over his circumstances but he cannot be so except as he is subject to God. He cannot do so except as he has been redeemed through Christ. But even after we are redeemed by Christ, how easy it is for us to slide along! A victim of our circumstances, of our situation, of our genes instead of stepping out with our God-given abilities to accomplish what He wants us to accomplish. Surely it should not be "I am the master of my fate." It should be "God is the master..." God is the master of our fate. But we should recognize it and yet we should realize that He has given us a certain measure of autonomy, which he wants developed in order that we not slide along as our genes or circumstances predict.

The existentialist is one of the widely held philosophic views. In a way it is the exact opposite of materialism; in a way not. Because the existentialist realizes that the world in general is under the law of cause and effect. But the existentialists thinks he can stand up and say, I'm going to be a man, not a piano key. He thinks he can say like Henley, It matters not how strait the gate. Nothing ahead but the horror of the shade, yet I'm the master of my fate! If there's nothing ahead but the horror of the shade, then he's not the master of his fate!