



the Liberty LETTERS

2 — *Why Is Liberty so Elusive?*

DEAR LIBERTY LEADER —

Liberty is what all people have prized yet so few have possessed. But why? If every person in history has desired freedom, then why have so few had the opportunity to enjoy it? The answer is simpler than one might expect. Since the beginning of time, men and nations have misunderstood the meaning, origin, and support of liberty and thus, like a great mystery, true liberty has eluded them.

If given the choice of slavery or liberty, who would not elect to be free? Yet the annals of history tell the story of one tyrant after another, of unlimited power residing in the hands of a few who control the rest with cruelty and injustice. Even if a group somehow could rid themselves of a despot and throw off the noose of oppression for a time, they soon found themselves in bondage to another ruler. But why? Why can't societies eradicate oppression?

Though ancient history provides evidence of civilizations progressing in their methods of nation-making, even after 4000 years of practice despotism or tyranny was still the result. Absolute power was given to one or a few who controlled society with selfish arbitrary laws. From Egypt to Babylon to Persia to Greece to Rome, circumstances improved but even the best of the ancient world was enslaved to the rule of men. The pattern was that everyone submitted to the ruler's law, with little to no liberty at all.

What about Greek democracy or the Roman republic? Didn't these great civilizations experience liberty? While one can applaud their attempts at good government, they fell short. While democracy may have eliminated the rule of one despot, it created the rule of many despots. In a democracy, everyone rules which means that no one rules. Rights and liberties are not protected in a democracy because they are subject to majority whims.

The mob wins and the minority loses.

While the Roman republic was an admirable endeavor, the Romans failed to follow the rules they established. They said one thing and did another, leaving the masses poor and oppressed. The idea of true representation was noble but non-existent. People were not viewed as equals but only as assets to the State or Caesar.

The nation of Israel (after the Exodus and before its reign of kings) was the only bright spot in ancient history, the freest people on earth. Liberty existed externally, at least, but only because Israelites were not ruled by men but by God and His laws. But even the Chosen Nation of Israel did not possess true liberty in the same sense. Why? Why has liberty been so elusive?

The truth is that nations could have had another 4000 years and arrived at the same end — tyranny.



Their external bondage to rulers was a symptom of their internal bondage to sin. Before Christ and His Gospel, there was no hope for mankind to climb out of the mire of slavery, internal or external. The truth is that tyranny has been the norm of history and liberty the exception.

One of history's exceptions is the United States, often referred to as the "Land of Liberty." To commemorate America's centennial in 1876, France presented a gift – the Statue of Liberty – to identify America as a beacon of hope to the world's oppressed people. One hundred years earlier, when Americans were resisting the tyrannical rule of George III, Thomas Paine wrote in his classic pamphlet *Common Sense*, "Every spot of the Old World is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Europe regards her like a stranger and England hath given her warning to depart. Oh, receive the fugitive! The birthday of a New World is at hand!" That fugitive was Liberty and, after being expelled from Europe, she found a home in America.

But why did Liberty find a home in America? Though America has not been without its struggles, more people have found liberty in America than any place in the world. What secrets did the American forefathers' discover that eluded their predecessors? Whatever they are, Americans must rediscover and reaffirm those secrets today.

But, is Liberty still a welcomed guest in America? Do her citizens still embrace Liberty as a friend, or is Lady Liberty on the run again? Americans still desire the effects of liberty but, frankly, they have forgotten its cause. They, like so many before them, have mistaken the meaning, origin, and support of liberty.

Unfortunately, what Americans don't realize, but will soon discover, is that when they forget the cause of liberty, they will in time forfeit the effects of liberty. How can the fruit of liberty continue to blossom and bless the American people if the roots of the tree are ruined or removed?

Liberty is not a given, not automatic. Neither is liberty a constant. Liberty must be sustained and safeguarded.

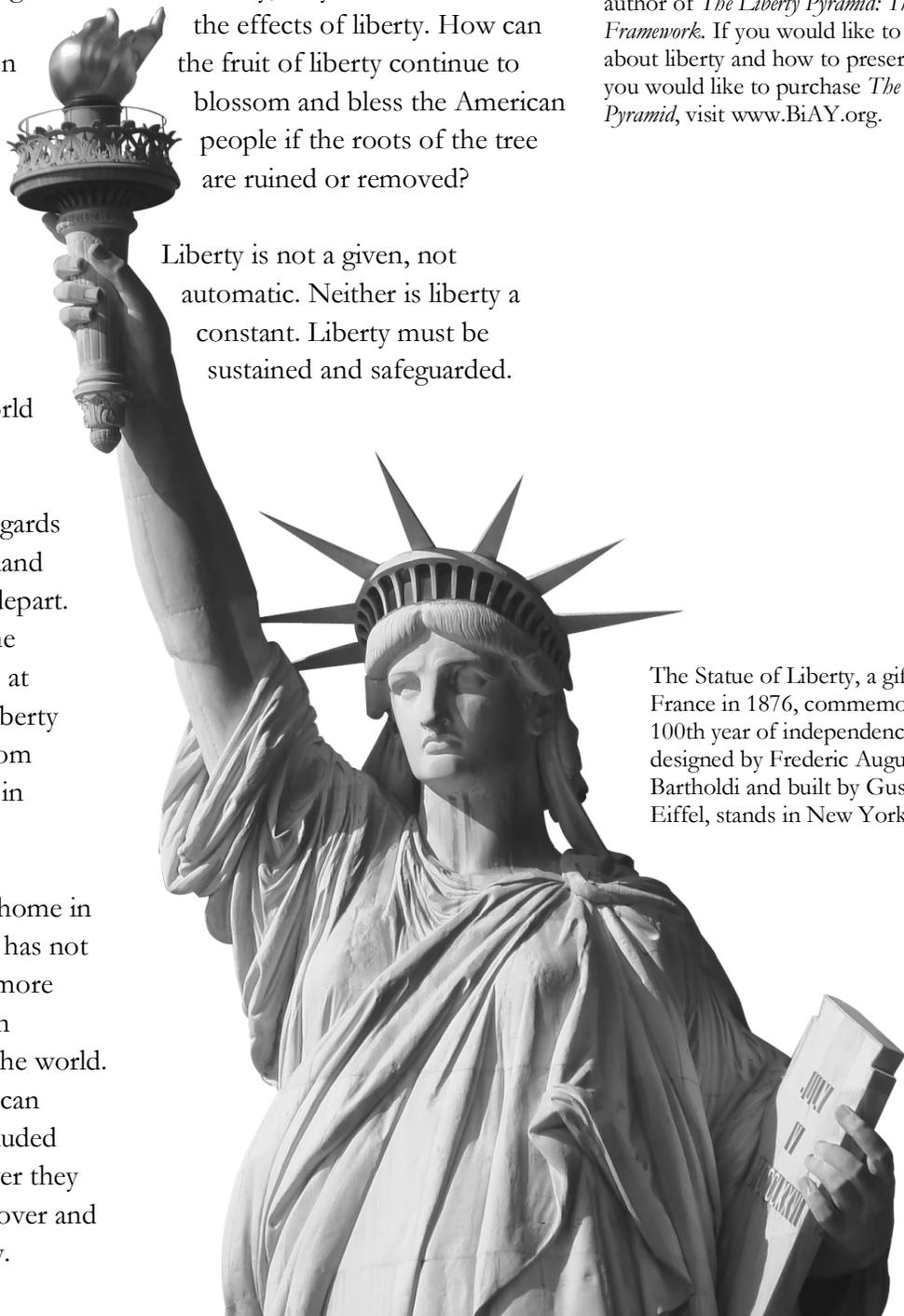
But first, one must understand what liberty is. The true meaning of liberty is elusive and puzzling. It is a mystery, a case to be solved, so let the investigation begin.

Your Friend in the Cause,

Aaron



The Liberty Letters are written by Aaron Ferguson, a student and teacher of America's history and government and the author of *The Liberty Pyramid: The Founders' Framework*. If you would like to learn more about liberty and how to preserve it, or if you would like to purchase *The Liberty Pyramid*, visit www.BiAY.org.



The Statue of Liberty, a gift from France in 1876, commemorating our 100th year of independence, was designed by Frederic Auguste Bartholdi and built by Gustave Eiffel, stands in New York Harbor.