

CALLED TO BE EAGLES A certain man went through a forest seeking any bird of interest he might find. He caught a young eagle, brought it home and put it among the fowls and ducks and turkeys, and gave it chickens' food to eat even though it was an eagle, the king of birds.

Five years later, a naturalist came to see him and, after passing through his garden, said: "That bird is an eagle not a chicken." "Yes," said the owner, "but I have trained it to be a chicken. It is no longer an eagle, it is a chicken, even though it measures 15 feet from tip to tip of its wings."

"No," said the naturalist, "it is an eagle still; it has the heart of an eagle, and I will make it soar high up to the heavens."

"No," said the owner, "it is a chicken and it will never fly."

They agreed to test it. The naturalist picked up the eagle, held it up and said with great intensity: "Eagle, thou art an eagle; thou dost belong to the sky and not to this earth; stretch forth thy wings and fly."

The eagle turned this way and that, and then looking down, saw the chickens eating their food, and down he jumped.

The owner said: "I told you it was a chicken."

"No," said the naturalist, "it is an eagle. Give it another chance tomorrow."

So the next day he took it to the top of the house and said: "Eagle, thou art an eagle; stretch forth thy wings and fly." But again the eagle, seeing the chickens feeding, jumped down and fed with them.

Then the owner said: "I told you it was a chicken." "No," asserted the naturalist, "it is an eagle, and it has the heart of an eagle; only give it one more chance, and I will make it fly tomorrow."

The next morning he rose early and took the eagle outside the city and away from the houses, to the foot of a high mountain. The sun was just rising, gilding the top to the mountain with gold, and every crag was glistening in the joy of the beautiful morning.

He picked up the eagle and said to it: "Eagle, thou art an eagle; thou dost belong to the sky and not to the earth; stretch forth thy wings and fly."

The eagle looked around and trembled as if new life were coming to it. Yet it did not fly. The naturalist then made it look straight at the sun. Suddenly it stretched out its wings and, with the screech of an eagle, it mounted higher and higher and never returned. It was an eagle, though it has been kept and tamed as a chicken.

We have been created in the image of God, but men have made us think that we are chickens, and so we think we are; but we are eagles, stretch forth your wings and fly! Don't be content with the food of chickens!

From "The Parable of the Eagle," as told by James Aggrey of West Africa in Journal of Religious Speaking,