



We *Have* the Answer

Jesus' Vision of a Better World and How We Can Achieve It

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A Course in Miracles is famous for its wisdom about how we can transform our entire experience merely by changing our minds. But does it have anything to say about what should happen beyond our individual minds? Does it have a vision for how the world as a whole should be?

The answer, perhaps surprisingly, is yes. We've talked about this vision before, in articles like Robert's "[The Social Vision of *A Course in Miracles*](#)." But here, we want to focus on a particular passage: a fascinating passage in the original dictation of the Course (removed in the final editing process) that refers to "the freedoms." For reasons we'll explain below, we think this is almost certainly a reference to the "four freedoms" put forth by US President Franklin D. Roosevelt in a historic 1941 speech. As such, it is the only passage we know in the Course material that comments on the words of a political leader as he put forth his vision of a better world.

In this article, then, we want to draw out the meaning of this passage by placing it in the larger context to which it alludes: Roosevelt's "four freedoms" speech, its immediate effects, and its legacy. We will describe both this passage's vision of a better world and its counsel for how to achieve that world. This is a vision that, if taken to heart, could truly change everything. In a world that wonders whether we can ever be truly free, a world wracked with doubt and hopelessness, what could be more transformative than to learn that in the end, freedom *will* be ours because we *have* the answer?

The passage

Here is the passage, which occurs right after what is now T-7.II.2 in the FIP version:

You have heard many arguments on behalf of "the freedoms," which would indeed have *been* freedom if men had not chosen to *fight* for them. That is why they perceive "the freedoms" as many instead of *one*.

But the argument that underlies the *defense* of freedom is perfectly valid. Because it is true, it should not be *fought* for, but it *should* be sided *with*. Those who are *against* freedom believe that its outcome will hurt *them*, which *cannot* be true. But those who are *for* freedom, even if they are misguided in *how* they defend it, are siding with the one thing in this world which *is* true. Whenever anyone can listen fairly to both sides of *any* issue, he *will* make the right decision. This is because he *has* the answer. Conflict can indeed be projected, but it *must* be intrapersonal first.

Before we comment on this passage, we will present the larger context referred to in our introduction.

Franklin Roosevelt's "four freedoms" speech

The four freedoms were part of Roosevelt's January 6, 1941 State of the Union speech (the annual speech that the president delivers before Congress). The focus of the speech was the world situation, which was dire. World War II had started in Europe, and from the beginning, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had been begging Roosevelt for help, as the British were getting hammered by the Germans.

The United States had been largely isolationist since the end of World War I, and therefore Congress was reluctant to intervene in foreign wars. But Roosevelt saw the situation in Europe as dangerous to democracy worldwide, and thus something which America could not simply ignore. He felt that America should become the "arsenal for democracy," which would side with defenders of freedom throughout the world.

In this State of the Union speech, then, Roosevelt confronted the isolationists, making a case for US arms buildup and for helping Great Britain in the war. He didn't propose sending troops, but he argued for a program called "Lend-Lease" that would provide US arms to the British, changing the existing law which forbade armed assistance to foreign nations. In his view, it was critical for American security that the tyrants of Germany and Japan be defeated. Freedom must be fought for. This, in his view, was the "realist" position demanded by the current situation.

But he added that freedom meant more than simply freedom from foreign aggressors; it also meant freedom to have a better life. And this idea inspired the end of his speech, in which he shared his vision of "four essential human freedoms" that he hoped could be spread throughout the world:

In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.

The first is freedom of speech and expression—everywhere in the world.

The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world.

The third is freedom from want—which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants—everywhere in the world.

The fourth is freedom from fear—which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor—anywhere in the world.

That is no vision of a distant millennium. It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation. That kind of world is the very antithesis of the so-called "new order" of tyranny which the dictators seek to create with the crash of a bomb.

To that new order we oppose the greater conception—the moral order. A good society is able to face schemes of world domination and foreign revolutions alike without fear.... The world order which we seek is the cooperation of free countries, working together in a friendly, civilized society.

To appreciate Roosevelt's vision, we need to set it against its opposite: "the so-called 'new order' of tyranny which the dictators seek to create with the crash of a bomb." The dictators, in this view, seek to dominate both other countries and their own citizens, imposing on them the cruel will of the tyrant. This binds both their mouths and their hearts, preventing them from speaking and worshipping freely. And it causes them to live in constant want of life's necessities and in constant fear of warfare. Everyone suffers in subjugation to the tyrant's will.

In contrast, Roosevelt's vision was one in which free countries work together to bring about a world in which all people are given the conditions needed to thrive. As a result, people can freely speak up and speak out. They can follow their own hearts in how they worship. They have enough; the crushing burden of want has been lifted off of them. And they are free of the fear of tanks rolling down their streets. In short, in this vision countries join together to help their citizens flourish. It is indeed the "very antithesis" of a world in which everyone groans under the thumb of the tyrant.

The immediate effects of the speech

Roosevelt's speech proved to be very popular. Public support for a US arms buildup and for aiding the British was high. As a result, the isolationists were defeated. The Lend-Lease program became law, and arms began flowing to Churchill's forces. The United States embarked on an unprecedented arms buildup to prepare for a war that seemed to be right at the nation's doorstep. And of course, with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941—that "date which will live in infamy," in Roosevelt's famous words—America entered the war in full force.

The four freedoms of Roosevelt's speech were also well received by the public. In the popular imagination, they became the basic rationale for the war: America was fighting to defeat the tyrants and usher in a new world in which those freedoms could be realized. Moreover, a number of artists created works meant to commemorate the four freedoms. Soon after his speech, Roosevelt himself commissioned sculptor Walter Russell to create a Four Freedoms Monument, which was dedicated in New York City's Madison Square in 1943.

The most famous artwork commemorating the four freedoms was a series of posters done by Norman Rockwell in 1943. They were for the purpose of selling war bonds, and we've included them with this article because they not only became very well known, but also say something that should remind us of our passage: the freedoms are "OURS...to fight for." Sound familiar?

The legacy of the speech



The Allies won the war, of course, and since then the four freedoms have become a part of our political and cultural heritage. They are still referred to in the press, especially the political press. The Roosevelt Institute gives “Four Freedoms Awards” every year to people who do something significant to advance the freedoms. A number of monuments have been built over the years to commemorate them; as recently as 2012, a Four Freedoms Park was dedicated on Roosevelt Island in New York.

But what is the ultimate legacy of the “four freedoms” speech? Speaking broadly, we see two ironically paired legacies that are relevant to the Course passage we are examining. First, unfortunately, it turned out to be foundational to the modern arms buildup justified by the desire to be the “arsenal for democracy.” The original vision of the speech was to build up arms temporarily to defeat the German and Japanese tyrants, and then work toward the “world-wide reduction of armaments” envisioned by the fourth freedom. We think Roosevelt was sincere about this, and we wonder what he might have done had he not died before the war ended. But alas, not surprisingly, it turned out there were more tyrants after the tyrants of Roosevelt’s time were defeated, and the world today is more heavily armed than at any time in human history. Freedom, it seems, is still something we think we need to *fight* for.

Second, and more fortunately, the speech also became foundational to modern international cooperation and humanitarianism. The four freedoms ended up becoming a major inspiration for the United Nations charter and, thanks in part to the diligent efforts of Eleanor Roosevelt, for the UN’s International Declaration of Human Rights (in the preamble of which the four freedoms appear). Though the quest for human rights in the world has a long history, it could be said that Roosevelt’s speech marked the birth of the modern version of that quest. To this day, international organizations and people all over the world who are inspired by this legacy are working to bring the four freedoms to the world.

Is this passage really referring to Roosevelt’s four freedoms?

We’ve provided what we think is the context of the Course passage we’ll be examining here, but is this *really* the context? How can we be sure that Jesus actually has Roosevelt’s four freedoms in mind here? Absolute certainty must elude us, but we believe there are very good reasons for thinking he does.

First, the term “the freedoms” is enclosed in quotes, suggesting that it is a recognizable term. Roosevelt’s “four freedoms” are in fact often called simply “the freedoms.”

Second, whatever “the freedoms” are that Jesus is referring to, they are clearly well known in the culture. This shows up in several ways. Jesus opens by saying that Helen and Bill “have heard many arguments on behalf of ‘the freedoms,’” then later refers to those who argue “*against* freedom,” and still later mentions those who need to “listen fairly to both sides.” Plus, he says that “men” actually chose “*to fight* for them.” “The freedoms,” then, have sparked debate in the culture and even impelled men to fight. They clearly have a large cultural presence, just like Roosevelt’s four freedoms.

Third, the focus all the way through the passage is the notion of arguing on behalf of the freedoms, and that’s essentially what Roosevelt was doing. He was saying we need a world based on the four freedoms, rather than the world the tyrants would give us. Like the people referred to in this passage, Roosevelt was making his case for the freedoms.

Fourth, as we’ve already mentioned, Jesus says that men chose “*to fight*” for the freedoms. In addition to being an indicator of their cultural presence, this is a hugely significant identifier because it connects directly with a major concern of the speech and of those who heard it: Roosevelt’s four freedoms, as we saw, were seen as the rationale for fighting, for entering the war.

All in all, then, Roosevelt’s speech was an argument on behalf of “the freedoms,” an argument which became the rationale for men deciding to fight for those freedoms, all of which made “the freedoms” well known in the culture. This is the precise situation described in our Course passage. It is hard not to see a match.

And why should we be surprised to find such a reference in the Course? After all, the very genesis of the Course was Helen and Bill joining on Bill's "better way" speech, in which he urged Helen to join him in trying a new approach, based on cooperation rather than competition, which he hoped could renew their department. Bill's vision of cooperation giving rise to a more harmonious psychology department is, in the end, not so different from Roosevelt's vision of cooperation giving rise to a more harmonious world.

Further, the Course has a number of references to related things. There are two explicit references to the US Declaration of Independence (T-4.III.2:2 and W-pI.31.4:2), in which the newly born United States declared freedom from the "Tyrant" in order to uphold the "unalienable Rights" of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness"—all of which is highly reminiscent of Roosevelt's speech. There is a reference to the Holocaust in the early dictation of the Course, an event which Jesus calls the Nazis' "appalling error." In two consecutive sentences (T-24.I.5:1-2) there are references to *The Great Dictator*, a 1940 Charlie Chaplin film that was a satirical condemnation of Adolf Hitler, and *Grand Illusion*, a 1937 French film in which the grand illusion is the usefulness of war. Finally, the original dictation contains a reference to the Vietnam War. In Lesson 14, Helen originally wrote, "God did not create that war in Vietnam, and so it is not real," before crossing out "Vietnam" and replacing it with a blank space that would allow students to insert whatever war is relevant for them.

Therefore, the passage in question not only fits Roosevelt's "four freedoms" speech to a tee, but such a reference would actually not be out of place in the Course.

Jesus' vision of a better world

Yet assuming that Jesus really is talking about Roosevelt's speech, what is he saying? By giving us such an unabashedly positive reference to "the freedoms" (raising a critical note only when discussing some of the misguided ways they are defended), Jesus is clearly supporting something about Roosevelt's four freedoms and their overall vision of the world. But what?

The essential concept on which Jesus and Roosevelt converge is obviously *freedom*, so let's look at that concept. Freedom is a natural consequence of the notion that each person has inherent value. Each life should therefore consist of conditions that honor the person's value, that promote his or her happiness and highest good. As an outcome of this value, the person should enjoy *freedom from*—from harsh conditions or an alien will being imposed on him or her. And the person should enjoy *freedom to*—to make one's own choices, follow one's own conscience, and unfold one's own potential.

The notion of the innate value of the person, then, leads directly to the concept of freedom. It also leads directly to the concept of human rights. If a person has inherent value, that person also has inalienable rights. And this is why freedom is also naturally paired with human rights. As we saw, Roosevelt's four freedoms helped inspire the UN's International Declaration of Human Rights.

The Course clearly supports this trio of value, freedom, and rights. It says there is "inestimable worth" (T-7.VII.7:3) in each one of us, and therefore that we have the right to both *freedom from* all that would hurt and limit us, and *freedom to* express our own will. Jesus and Roosevelt, then, are joined on a vision in which the innate worth of each person means that each one has a right to *freedom from* and *freedom to*.

Yet they are not entirely joined. Jesus makes clear that "the freedoms" represent a misunderstanding of freedom. He implies that the choice to fight for freedom distorted its nature, causing it to seemingly splinter into many, when it really is only one. So what is the "*one*" freedom that Jesus sees in place of Roosevelt's many?

An important clue to this lies in those two references to the Declaration of Independence that we mentioned above. Interestingly, each of those passages contains an affirmation that is specifically labeled a "declaration of independence," and each affirmation reinterprets the meaning of freedom, as well as the identity of the tyrant. Here they are:

The Kingdom is perfectly united and perfectly protected, and the ego will not prevail against it. Amen. (T-4.III.1:12-13)

I am not the victim of the world I see. (W-pI.31.Heading)

In the first case, the tyrant is the ego, which seeks to shatter the perfect unity of God's Kingdom. In the second case, the tyrant is the world we see (both outer and inner), which seems to victimize us. In both cases, we affirm that the tyrant has no power to do these things. We declare that we stand independent and free of these seemingly destructive forces. In the Course, then, freedom is an *internal* freedom: freedom from the inner tyranny of the ego and from the false idea that we are victimized by the harsh world generated by the ego. This freedom from the ego and its oppressive

effects is very likely the “one” freedom that Jesus refers to in our passage.

This, of course, is quite different from Roosevelt’s concept of the freedoms. All of his freedoms are different forms of physical freedom from the tyranny of the outer world. In his version of the freedoms, freedom means the world is no longer trying to stifle our speech or our worship. It is no longer trying to deprive us of food or afflict us with war. The tyrant has *physically* pulled back from our doorstep. This is so different from Jesus’ concept of freedom—in which the mind is free even if the outer tyrant is breaking the door down—that one wonders how these two concepts of freedom can go together. How can they coexist within a single vision of the world?

I think we can actually see their coexistence in an important story from the Course’s genesis (told in *Absence from Felicity*, by Ken Wapnick, 1st ed., pp. 120-124): Helen and Bill’s Mayo Clinic experience. In this story, the night before they were to travel on business to the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota, Helen psychically received an image of a Lutheran church. She was sure they would see the church on arrival, but even after an extensive search, they failed to find it. Then, as they were leaving, Bill discovered that the church had indeed existed, but had been razed when the hospital was built.

On the way back to New York, on a layover in Chicago, Helen applied her psychic abilities in a more constructive way. She was able to feel, in her words, “waves and waves of misery going through” a young woman huddled up against the wall. Helen went over to talk to her and discovered that her name was Charlotte. She was terrified of flying, so Helen offered to sit with her on the plane and hold her hand. Once past her takeoff jitters, Charlotte said that she was leaving Chicago to start a new life in New York. She hadn’t brought much money and had no idea where she would stay in New York, but she was Lutheran and was sure that if she just found a Lutheran church, they would take care of her. Helen writes:

Bill and I exchanged glances. The message was not hard to grasp. “And this,” said the Voice, “is really my church.”

Bill and Helen basically became Charlotte’s support system in New York, finding her first a hotel and then a Lutheran church, and feeding her dinner most nights. When ten days later she did return to her life in Chicago, it was on a new basis. She was able to face her challenges with a renewed sense of self.

In this story we find a telling synthesis of both Jesus’ and Roosevelt’s concepts of freedom. Roosevelt’s freedoms are not hard to see here. By finding her places to stay and feeding her dinner, Helen and Bill made sure that Charlotte was free of want. By holding her hand on the plane, Helen helped Charlotte be free of fear. And by finding her the church of her choice, Helen and Bill supported Charlotte’s freedom of speech and worship.

Jesus’ concept of freedom is present as well. By acting so selflessly toward Charlotte, Helen and Bill demonstrated freedom from the inner tyrant—the ego. And by treating Charlotte with such care and respect, they implicitly affirmed her freedom from the tyranny of the ego’s world, including the oppressive outer conditions that seemed to beset her. How? Their kindness affirmed that Charlotte possessed a tremendous value, and as we saw, freedom is the natural consequence of value. Indeed, if Charlotte’s value was as great as Helen and Bill’s kindness implied, then she not only *deserved* freedom from life’s afflictions, she arguably already *had* that freedom, for her value was quite simply larger than any of the winds that would batter it. So Helen and Bill’s kindness affirmed that Charlotte both deserved freedom and in some sense already had freedom. Their kindness thus placed her in the perfect incubator for the realization of her own inner freedom.

If we can simply expand this to a global level, we have a vision that includes both Jesus’ inner freedom and Roosevelt’s outer freedom. In this vision, we have citizens and nations freely cooperating to provide the people of the world with a life that reflects their inherent worth. Those citizens and nations would thus be playing the Helen and Bill role, and thereby expressing freedom from the tyrant within. And then the people of the world would be in the Charlotte role. Once kindness from all quarters had helped them into a life that befits their worth, they would be living in conditions that were an ongoing affirmation of their worth. This affirmation would tell them that they both *deserved* to be free of all outer tyranny and that they in some sense already *were* free. Their outer freedom would thus be the perfect incubator for realizing their innate inner freedom.

This, it appears, is Jesus’ vision of a better world. For if the encounter with Charlotte is Jesus’ concept of the ideal church, then surely it is also his concept of the ideal *world*. Who would not want to live in a world like this?

How can we achieve this better world?

Of course, everyone yearns to live in a world like this, but we all ask the same question: *How?* The passage we are examining provides a powerful answer, and it is to this answer that we now turn.

This freedom should not be fought for

Jesus begins by making crystal clear how *not* to achieve this better world: We cannot get there through war. He couldn't be more clear: Even Roosevelt's freedoms, as limited as Jesus suggests this understanding of freedom was, "would indeed have *been* freedom if men had not chosen to *fight* for them."

Let that sink in a bit. We do yearn for freedom, and for that reason we celebrate "freedom fighters" the world over, by which we usually mean people who fought wars to gain some measure of political freedom. We tell ourselves that "freedom isn't free," by which we usually mean that we only have freedom thanks to all the people who fought in those wars, and if we want to keep it we'd better be prepared to fight another one. This idea, of course, was central to Roosevelt's speech: If we don't defeat the tyrants in war, we'll lose the freedom we fought so hard in the past to achieve. In the words of those Norman Rockwell posters, it is "OURS...to fight for."

But here, Jesus tells us that fighting for freedom is the very thing that *prevents* freedom. Oh, no doubt fighting can achieve a temporary freedom of the body in the world of form, but can we really imagine it leading to the world of universal kindness that we just saw? Violence, after all, enthrones the tyrannical ego. The ego loves to fight, for "war is the guarantee of its survival" (T-5.III.8:7). If we choose the ego as our general to lead us into the new world, what kind of world do we really think we will get?

But this freedom should be sided with

As much as Jesus laments our tragic history of losing freedom by fighting for it, he is clearly very much in favor of defending freedom in some sense. Indeed, "the argument that underlies the *defense* of freedom is perfectly valid," and those who think freedom is worth defending are on the right track "even if they are misguided in *how* they defend it." Even those like Roosevelt who fight wars to defend freedom have the right goal; they're just using the wrong means.

How, then, should those who are for freedom defend it? This question is answered by what is perhaps the key line of this passage: "It should not be *fought* for, but it *should* be sided with." And how do we side with it? There are no doubt many ways, but since Jesus refers to the "argument" for freedom and to those who can "can listen fairly to both sides of *any* issue," the specific alternative to fighting that he seems to have in mind in this passage is one that may surprise us: presenting *intellectual arguments* in favor of freedom.

This may go over like the proverbial lead balloon for those who see little use in intellectual arguments. Yet in international relations, what is typically the alternative to war? Is it not *dialogue*, in the form of diplomacy, debate, listening as fairly as possible to multiple viewpoints, hashing things out in international institutions created to preserve peace—in short, the very kinds of things Roosevelt was envisioning when he spoke of "the cooperation of free countries, working together in a friendly, civilized society"? (We realize that many people have issues with the United Nations as an institution, but here we are simply arguing that however it is done, international cooperation and dialogue is the standard alternative to war.) If we choose not to go to war for freedom, what alternative is there but to *convince* those who are against freedom that it is truly in their best interests?

Many may doubt the effectiveness of this, and indeed it has often *been* ineffective. God knows international relations can be a mess, even when we're not fighting wars. To reverse Clausewitz's famous dictum, politics is often just the continuation of war by other means. And we think Jesus would heartily agree that simply presenting an argument for freedom, in and of itself, is not enough. As long as debate is nothing more than a bunch of egos arguing and serving their own interests while trying to look cooperative, we won't get very far. No, arguing for freedom will only be effective to the degree that those presenting such arguments are really *demonstrating* the freedom that this passage tells us is the freedom behind all freedoms: freedom from the ego and its oppressive effects.

And it seems to us that the nonviolent proponents of freedom people admire the most were effective precisely because they had the whole package: powerful intellectual arguments for freedom *and* lives that demonstrated a greater-than-usual freedom from ego. Think, for instance, of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. Both were intellectual giants who presented brilliant arguments for freedom, equality, justice, and love. In addition to arguments for various political and social freedoms, these inspiring figures argued quite explicitly for freedom from the ego as well—arguments for leaving self-seeking behind and striving for that King called the "beloved community," a community in which we all live harmoniously together for something much greater than ourselves.

These arguments carry huge weight on a purely intellectual level. But of course they gained immense additional power from the fact that the people putting them forth demonstrated a remarkable degree of freedom from ego themselves, putting their very lives on the line to serve the best interests of *everyone* involved, even the "oppressors." And history has shown that siding with freedom in this way has been *immensely* effective.

Siding with freedom will enable everyone to claim the freedom they already have

So, if we side with freedom in the way we've been talking about—perhaps in a sociopolitical context, perhaps in some other context, but above all siding with freedom from the ego—what effect will this have on others? We've already seen the powerful positive effect Helen and Bill's siding with freedom had on Charlotte. But what does the passage itself say about the effect our siding with freedom can have on what it calls "those who are *against* freedom"?

This to us is perhaps the most fascinating part of our passage. There is, of course, a lot of resistance to freedom out there. Indeed, such resistance is displayed by everyone from dictators like Hitler to ordinary people who have a big investment in their egos, which means pretty much all of us. When someone comes along who responds to them by siding with genuine freedom, they feel threatened because "they believe its outcome will hurt *them*"—that is, it seems to conflict with their ego interests. Alas, history shows us just what can happen when this sense of threat is strong enough: The herald of freedom is quickly removed from the scene—crucify him! And as the saying goes, "Now that he is safely dead, let us praise him."

But deeper in the minds of those who are threatened by heralds of freedom is the real issue: an "intrapersonal" conflict between the ego and the spirit *within them*. (The spirit isn't actually fighting of course, but it *feels* like a conflict.) A person who is outwardly against freedom already knows deep down that the argument for freedom is valid because the spirit in him tells him so, but his investment in his ego is blinding him to that fact. When he crucifies the herald of freedom, he knows not what he does.

However, a better way is open to him, and those who are for freedom give him an opportunity to take that way: If he will just set aside his ego long enough to really listen to the argument for freedom, he *will* be convinced. Why? Because "whenever anyone can listen fairly to both sides of *any* issue, he *will* make the right decision. This is because he *has* the answer." The herald of freedom isn't trying desperately to redeem a hopelessly corrupt soul; he is simply reminding his inherently good and sane brother of something he already knows.

We think something of the spirit of this is in Roosevelt's speech, especially when he refers to "the greater conception—the moral order." As a United States president steeped in the traditions of this country's founding documents, surely in the back of his mind were those stirring words of the Declaration of Independence, which speaks of the "self-evident" truths that we are all created equal, and that we all have the right to "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." If these truths are indeed self-evident, these are truths *anyone* will get if he or she listens to both sides fairly.

Of course, many who oppose freedom *aren't* willing to listen, at least not for the time being; we doubt that Hitler would have come around if Gandhi had talked to him long enough. But the *possibility* is always there, and it seems to us that central to the message of the Gandhis and Martin Luther Kings of the world is that everyone, no matter what he or she has done, has an inherent, undefilable goodness within that will ultimately win the day. The methods of such inspiring people are indeed an argument for freedom in thought, word, and deed, an appeal to that undying spirit in everyone that *knows* the truth. This appeal may go unheard in the short term—indeed, those who make it may lose their lives in doing so—but it *will* be heard in the end. This is guaranteed, because *all* of us yearn for true freedom, and *all* of us already have it within us, just waiting to be rediscovered.

A real-life snapshot of siding with freedom

While writing this article, I (Greg) enjoyed Nelson Mandela's autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*. Now, Mandela *did* proudly call himself a "freedom fighter," and he was no Gandhian: He believed violence was sometimes necessary to win freedom and actually founded the military wing of the African National Congress, though he regarded violence as only a last resort. That being said, he is rightly admired for his charity and forgiveness toward those who oppressed him. And as I was working on this article, I read of an incident during his time in prison that strikes me as an uncanny snapshot of our passage.

As most everyone knows, Mandela spent twenty-seven years in prison, most of them on the infamous Robben Island. The warders (prison guards) there were a mixed bunch, some friendly but most tending toward the harsh side. Mandela tells of a particularly harsh warder that was causing big problems for all the prisoners. Of course, the natural response to such a person would be hatred and resentment, but Mandela and his fellow inmates—all in prison for resisting the apartheid regime—decided to try to befriend him. After all, Mandela writes, "It was ANC policy to try to educate all people, even our enemies: we believed that all men, even prison service warders, were capable of change, and we did our utmost to sway them."

So, that's what they did with this warder; they befriended him and tried to sway him. And slowly, his attitude began to shift. At first he had been a typical prison warder steeped in the racist propaganda of the National Party, the party that created the apartheid government of South Africa. But as he warmed up to the men under his watch, he started to have a

change of heart, and even started asking questions about the ANC. The prisoners now had their educational opportunity. It took time, but eventually their teaching bore surprising fruit: “As we quietly explained to him our nonracialism [belief in the equality of all races], our desire for equal rights, and our plans for the redistribution of wealth, he scratched his head and said, ‘It makes more bloody sense than the Nats.’” Clearly a lamp had been lit inside of him.

Do you see how uncannily this story dovetails with our passage? There is a group of men who have devoted their lives to the cause of freedom, and a man who is quite literally against freedom—their prison guard. The pro-freedom men could have chosen to *fight* for freedom from their oppressor, which Mandela says was a doomed proposition against the warders—hostility toward them would only lead to hostility in return. So instead, they decided to side *with* freedom. They decided to patiently present their argument for freedom, a freedom that, far from hurting the warder and his people, would actually be in their best interests.

But notice what was going on behind the outer form of this exchange. Implicit in the prisoners’ argument for freedom for nonwhite South Africans was an argument for the freedom that really matters most: freedom from the ego and everything that stems from it. This was implicitly contained in their intellectual argument—after all, things like equality, nonracialism, fairness, and kind treatment for everyone are arguments against self-serving, arguments against ego. This was also implicitly contained in their demonstration of egolessness in relation to the warder himself: befriending him and treating him with respect, even though he was their “enemy.”

And behind their kind reasoning with him was an implicit recognition of the intrapersonal conflict going on within *him*: the conflict between his own ego and the better angels of his nature. Their whole approach was rooted in the conviction that he had it in him to listen to both sides fairly, and if he did listen he would come around because, to paraphrase our passage, he *had* the answer. The lamp in him *would* be lit—and it *was*. It was lit because, in words that Mandela says about another prison official but surely apply to this one as well:

He had revealed that there was another side of his nature, a side that had been obscured but that still existed. It was a useful reminder that all men, even the most seemingly cold-blooded, have a core of decency, and that if their heart is touched, they are capable of changing.

I think this presentation of the argument for freedom in an uncommonly egoless way was the central factor that led to the freedom that Mandela and his compatriots sought in South Africa. Now, the story of that struggle is complex, and I don’t want to romanticize it—there was violence, often horrific violence, involved in it as well as nonviolence. But the story of South Africa is essentially the story of whites who were convinced to grant freedom and blacks who were convinced not to use that freedom to seek revenge. And while many things convinced them, the ones that inspire the world to this day are the ones that demonstrated uncommon freedom from the ego: Bishop Desmond Tutu’s call to whites to “join the winning side,” Mandela’s generosity and forgiveness to those who had imprisoned him, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that attempted to heal the wounds of the nation through forgiveness.

Indeed, Tutu has said that, though of course his country has many problems that remain to be solved, the story of South Africa’s liberation is a story of *transfiguration*, a transfiguration brought about in large measure by an powerful presentation and demonstration of the argument for freedom. In his book *God Has a Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time*, he writes movingly of the transformation of hearts and minds that occurred during South Africa’s first free election, the election that brought Mandela to the presidency. Notice especially the last sentence of the following passage: Those who had been against freedom for so long were now for it because they realized that, rather than hurting them, it was actually their freedom as well. They *had* the answer:

People entered the booth one person and emerged on the other side a totally different person. The black person went in burdened with all the anguish of having had his or her dignity trampled underfoot and being treated as a non-person—and then voted. And said, “Hey, I’m free—my dignity has been restored, my humanity has been acknowledged. I’m free!” She emerged a changed person, a transformed, a transfigured person.

The white person entered the booth one person, burdened by the weight of guilt for having enjoyed many privileges unjustly, voted, and emerged on the other side a new person. “Hey, I’m free. The burden has been lifted. I’m free!” She emerged a new, a different, a transformed, a transfigured person. Many white people confessed that they too were voting for the first time—for the first time as really free people. Now they realized what we had been trying to tell them for so long, that freedom was indivisible, that they would never be free until we were free.

Conclusion

To conclude: Since the passage we’ve been examining draws upon Roosevelt’s “four freedoms” speech, it might be

helpful to imagine the speech Jesus might give us. After all, just as Roosevelt faced a world oppressed by tyrants and torn by war, so we face such a world today. We've seen that Jesus really does have a vision for a better world. Based on everything we've discussed in this article, what does Jesus have to say to us?

First, though the bulk of Roosevelt's speech was an argument for war as a means to achieve a free world, Jesus emphatically rejects this option. He thus rejects the first legacy of Roosevelt's speech that we mentioned: the "arsenal of democracy." A truly free world is a more cooperative world, and how can conflict bring about cooperation? Instead, Jesus says, freedom must be *sided with*, in the form of those who have achieved some measure of true freedom convincing those who are against freedom that freedom is what they really want—something that deep down they know, and in fact already have. Jesus thus affirms the second legacy of Roosevelt's speech that we mentioned: international cooperation and humanitarianism. This will work only to the degree that the participants have achieved freedom from their self-serving egos, but in the end, a more cooperative world is achieved through cooperation. Means are ends.

And what does this free world, this better world, this more cooperative world, look like? Roosevelt envisioned a world founded on the four freedoms—freedom of speech and worship, and freedom from want and fear—and Jesus affirms the importance of these freedoms. But of course, he says so much more. In his vision, those same people who have achieved freedom from their self-serving egos cooperate to bring about the four freedoms and the rights that go with them as an affirmation of the infinite worth of every person. The result is a world which serves as an incubator for everyone's realization of their true freedom—the recognition that they deserve to be free and in fact already are free in the sense that matters most. We are, one and all, free from the ego and all of the ways—from the inner tyranny of unloving thoughts to the outer tyranny of a harsh world—that it tries to oppress us.

So, just as Roosevelt had a vision of a free world, Jesus has his vision of a free world: a vision not only of individual minds finding freedom, but of a world in which *all* minds find freedom *together*. Though Roosevelt saw his vision as something "attainable in our own time and generation," we probably think Jesus' vision is more something for a "distant millennium." We have no way of knowing how long this will take, but if this really is Jesus' vision, what can we do except roll up our sleeves and get to work on it right here and right now, with the time-saving device of the miracle to speed us along? We may despair that it will ever really happen. But in light of the Course's promise that we already have the answer, we would do well to remember the famous words of Gandhi whenever any tyrant—a worldly one, or the tyrannical ego in our own minds—tries to convince us that there is no hope:

When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall. Think of it—always.



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