

Freedom and Free Will

THE WORD *FREEDOM* has been variously construed. For some it means little other than the occasion for licensed irresponsibility. For many it defines the principal function required of the democratic state: to establish and maintain the condition that enables individuals to safely pursue their own interests and healthy pleasures.

Franklin D. Roosevelt enumerated four freedoms that a government is committed to secure the people its serves: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. He called these essential human freedoms. While Roosevelt's vision was bold and bracing, no government can confer freedom from fear. It can protect from external enemies. But man's greatest enemies are internal and invisible. Our inquiry into the nature of freedom will consider its esoteric and spiritual dimensions.

Inner or spiritual freedom cannot be directly given to an individual, but free will is so given, and by its right use freedom can be attained. Parsing Goethe's familiar couplet, the key that unlocks the chains that bind human consciousness to the material world is self-control. More correctly, it is self-mastery. And self-mastery enables self-transcendence. The primary purpose of the Hierophants of the old Mysteries and of present-day occult schools is to teach the art of self-mastery (*Cosmo* p. 273). By obeying the law man rises above its restrictions. Or, as has been aptly said, freedom is gained through the voluntary acceptance of the obligatory.

Christ Jesus' living example proves that love frees from the constraints of law. That is why it



Engraving, from Dante's *Illustrations to the Divine Comedy* (1824-27), William Blake (1757-1827), Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery

The Recording Angel of the Presence

both fulfills and transcends the law, for the Spirit ceases to act out of self-interest.

The cross of incarnation is the emblem of the trials incident to the attainment of freedom. For the human physical body is the arena where spiritual powers contend to work their different purposes. But when human action is intentionally and continuously aligned with God's will through the indwelling Christ, the supersensible forces pertaining to the physical, etheric, desire, and thought worlds become subject to human will.

The Gospels describe the way to God as strait, or

in Max Heindel's phrase, "narrow as a razor's edge." This narrow access to the Ego's freedom is also an esoteric fact in occult anatomy. The route by which the spirit leaves the body—as an invisible helper, an initiate, or at death—is via the pneumogastric nerve to the brain and then through the occipital-parietal suture in the skull.

While the science of astrology opens up areas of the soul otherwise closed to all but the most discerning inquirer, free will is an imponderable and beyond the ability of even the most competent astrologer to calculate. And the more evolved the Ego, the more difficult it is for an astrologer to accurately predict the course of that individual's life. At most, only general tendencies can be identified. But persons who live more passively and reactively are far more subject to direct stellar influence, and only deliberate effort can alter their star-configured behavior.

Freedom is gained by the enlightened exercise of free will. It is based on knowing the results that follow upon specific actions, whether they be spiritual, mental, emotional, or physical. It is clear that freedom is proportional to the amount and quality of assimilated experience, for the latter teaches us how we should conform our lives to God's will for us. Our guide in so living is conscience, which is the collective memory of suffering occasioned by all the mistakes committed during the Ego's earthly incarnations.

On the basis of the spirit's post-mortem panorama, the pictures of its just-concluded life are etched into the desire body and serve as the basis for the Ego's experiences in Purgatory and First Heaven, the two regions comprising the Desire World. In Purgatory only the scenes where the soul did wrong are reenacted. There it lives the experiences of and suffers as those whom it wronged. Thus what we do to others we do to ourselves. This is an exact occult equation whose truth becomes first-hand fact of often surpassing poignancy in the desire world.

The record of these sufferings is indelibly engraved upon the seed atom of the dense body, which is the only part of that vehicle the soul takes with it and keeps permanently from life to life. It has also been called "the book of the Recording Angels." It serves as the basis for conscience.

When in a new life similar circumstances arise and the old temptations come before us, the memory of past sufferings for wrong deeds is present in the seed atom to warn us that a desired or proposed course of action is wrong. If that voice of conscience is strong enough—and its strength will be proportional to the intensity of purgatorial suffering—the Ego will have the power to resist the temptation. If the suffering was not keen enough, the voice of conscience may not be forceful enough to prevent a recurrence of wrong doing, and the consequent post-mortem pain. Eventually, the cumulative effect of purgatorial suffering will be sufficient to direct our actions along right lines.

What we may describe as the freedom of a well-formed conscience is due to the immediacy of its action, whereby the right response to a given situation comes intuitively and instantaneously. This intuition is like a bird that effortlessly wings its weight on the cradling air, free from the harm that would ensue if it forgot how to fly.

Actually, these retained pictures of our processing life do not come through the slow physical senses, but directly through the fourth or reflecting ether contained in the air we breathe. As oxygen-rich blood passes through the heart, it engraves the pictures it has received from the inspired air upon the physical seed atom, to be indelibly impressed upon the soul in post-mortem existence. The final destination of a life's history is the World of Life Spirit, which contains the true memory of nature.

In the World of Life Spirit the individual Spirit sees much more clearly than it can in the denser worlds. In its high home it is in touch with cosmic wisdom and in every situation it knows at once what to do and flashes the message of guidance and proper action back to the heart, which as instantaneously flashes it on to the brain, resulting in the intuitional impulse, which, because it originates in the World of Life Spirit, is always good.

But the problem arises at this point because the quiet prompting from the virgin Spirit may be muffled by the loud voice of passion or dismissed as silly by the crafty voice of reason swayed to serve a selfish motive. When the mind and desire nature frustrate the designs of the Spirit by impelling action that ignores the wisdom of experience, both

Spirit and body suffer. Thus we may appreciate the aptness of the occult saying that “wisdom is crystalized pain”; that is, it is our errors and the resultant suffering that teach us. But this wisdom is of a negative sort in the sense that we learn by experience what *not* to do. We cultivate the virtue of omission.

But there is another way to wisdom. It is not free from suffering, for that is our lot as long as we live in physical bodies. Suffering is, in fact, our teacher. And we may take much of what we suffer in the same sense that we understand the words: whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth. Christian saints joy in their afflictions knowing they can lighten the burden of Christ. We may revise our idea of what God wants of us: it is not to be free *of* suffering but to be free *for* it—that in its purifying fires we may grow in wisdom and in spiritual strength.

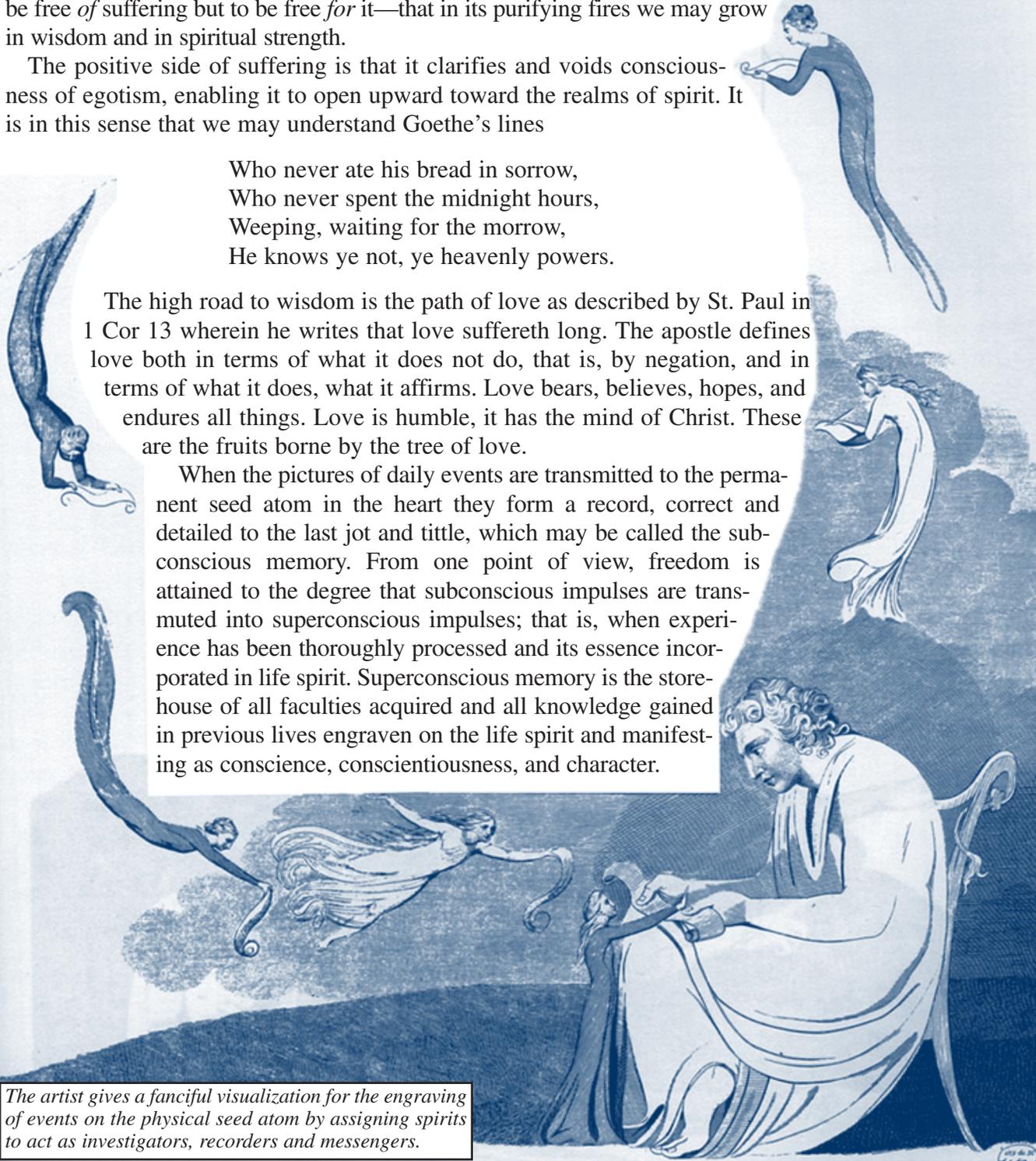
The positive side of suffering is that it clarifies and voids consciousness of egotism, enabling it to open upward toward the realms of spirit. It is in this sense that we may understand Goethe’s lines

Who never ate his bread in sorrow,
Who never spent the midnight hours,
Weeping, waiting for the morrow,
He knows ye not, ye heavenly powers.

The high road to wisdom is the path of love as described by St. Paul in 1 Cor 13 wherein he writes that love suffereth long. The apostle defines love both in terms of what it does not do, that is, by negation, and in terms of what it does, what it affirms. Love bears, believes, hopes, and endures all things. Love is humble, it has the mind of Christ. These are the fruits borne by the tree of love.

When the pictures of daily events are transmitted to the permanent seed atom in the heart they form a record, correct and detailed to the last jot and tittle, which may be called the subconscious memory. From one point of view, freedom is attained to the degree that subconscious impulses are transmuted into superconscious impulses; that is, when experience has been thoroughly processed and its essence incorporated in life spirit. Superconscious memory is the storehouse of all faculties acquired and all knowledge gained in previous lives engraven on the life spirit and manifesting as conscience, conscientiousness, and character.

The artist gives a fanciful visualization for the engraving of events on the physical seed atom by assigning spirits to act as investigators, recorders and messengers.



Engraving: William Blake, from Illustrations for *Night Thoughts*, by Edward Young, Dover Publications, Inc.

Conscience directs us not to do that which is wrong. Conscientiousness prompts us to do the things which are right. Conscientiousness is the product of former good deeds, which are extracted in the First Heaven as benevolence and altruism and enhance the Ego's capacity for future generosity and well-doing.

Astrologically, Saturn is at the root of conscience. He warns us to avoid and desist. Conscientiousness is not given by a single planet but combines the highest virtues of several planets. The highest and most noble form of conscientiousness requires the cooperation of the Sun, Jupiter, and Saturn. Ultimately conscientiousness becomes virtue, the extract of good from the Ego's past lives. It acts as an encouragement to keep the Spirit ardently striving upon the path of aspiration. In the Third Heaven this virtue amalgamates thoroughly with the Spirit and becomes a part of it.

The greater the fund of superconscious wisdom, the greater is the certainty of right inner direction with a commensurate sense of freedom. While a course of action may still be supremely difficult (as in electing to die to the life of the personality), the rightness of this choice becomes increasingly clear and emphatic, assuring the soul and freeing the mind from doubt and indecision.

When we are in Third Heaven, our Spirit exercises a measure of free will in determining which of several lives shown us by the Recording Angels we want to pursue. We are shown the part of our past debts that we are to make good and what fruits we may be expected to reap in the coming life. However, once a choice has been made, no evasion is possible. While we have free will with regard to the future, we cannot escape the past's mature (ripe) destiny.

There was a time when humanity had no freedom. We neither knew what it was nor lamented its absence. In this respect we were like animals—innocent and ignorant. To know freedom we must have the ability to think, and to know we are thinking; that is, we must have an indwelling Spirit that can identify itself as a doer, knower, feeler, and *beer*. Initially, this identity could only be gained by material consciousness and the egoism such limited awareness engenders.

This fall into physical consciousness was brought about by the Lucifer Spirits, who needed to use the human mind to advance their own development, angels though they were. The Lucifers are responsible for infusing the desire and enthusiasm for knowledge and for instilling in humanity the urge for freedom. The downside of these promethean gifts is that personal knowledge introduces the reality of evil, deception, error, and suffering. The upside is that being able to freely choose its destiny ennobles the human Spirit and allows it to consciously participate in the very mind of God, rather than being good but not virtuous—that is, being a docile thrall of divinity, “a God-guided automaton” (*Cosmo*, p. 288).

Early steps toward freedom are made by curbing egoism and the desire nature under the auspices of Saturn's discipline, especially as it is contained in the Ten Commandments, eight of which are expressed negatively by the prohibition “thou shalt not.”

Christ's two commandments are affirmative and provide the keys to true freedom: to love the God Who is love, Whose Son incarnated love and enjoined us to love others as ourselves.

The Cross is the symbol par excellence for restraint. But it also marks the way of release from earthbound conditions. An essential requirement for this liberation is conservation of the creative force, or generative purity, symbolized by the Roses on the cross of the Rosicrucian emblem and, as Max Heindel writes in *Letters to Students* (No. 13), “the crux of the Western Wisdom Teachings.” If the fall into material consciousness was through arrogation of the procreative function by personal willfulness, conversely, liberation from material consciousness requires retention and transmutation of the life force.

How can we humans be free if we are encumbered by inordinate self-concerns? The extent to which the modern Westerner is conditioned to the pursuit and exchange of things, and this includes information, is breathtaking, literally. The pace is breathless and it disconnects from sources of true inspiration. However things seem, our material needs have not changed since late Atlantis—we still require but simple food, shelter, and clothing. Emerson had it right: Things are in the saddle and

ride mankind.

The excess of egoistic blood brought about by human selfishness had to be sacrificed through a cosmic act, so that, despite their independence, human beings can one day be united in a great community. This egoistic element was greatly reduced by the flow of blood on Golgotha, which purified the Earth's desire body and made possible Christ's installment as the planet's indwelling Spirit. Even so, the modern world is largely the product of egoism. In fact, according to Heindel, "from a spiritual standpoint, no darker day than the present has ever dawned" (*Cosmo* p. 409). Everything devised by reason and intellect has been invented to satisfy egoism, even if indirectly. The entire material culture is the foundation for the development of independence through egoism—and Christ is the antidote for the excesses of this trend. Independence itself, however, is not in opposition to fellowship. Rather, it is a prerequisite. Communal friendship can only exist when there is individual freedom of choice.

On the night of the new moon in Aries in 1910, the Elder Brother outlined the work of the Rosicrucian Fellowship for Max Heindel in the Brotherhood's etheric temple. The keynote of the Brother's message was to refrain from organization, or to make it as loose as possible, for, he said, as soon as position and power are created which may gratify the vanity of men, the temptation proves too great for the majority and in the measure that the free will of members is interfered with, the object of the Rosicrucian Order, to foster individuality and self-reliance, is defeated. Heindel therefore decided to call the Fellowship an "Association," to underscore and help promote the principle of individual freedom.

The "obligation" that Fellowship students take as they become Probationers is a promise to themselves and not to the Rosicrucian Order. The same tender regard for respecting liberty is in evidence throughout the whole range of the Western Mystery School. The Brothers are our friends and teachers, even as Christ Jesus said to his disciples, "Hence



Die Bibel in Bildern, Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1789-1853)

Paul, in Chains, Arrives in Rome

Paul was free of the restrictions of legalistic ordinances, even when in chains. But he was a prisoner of the Lord (Eph 4) because, as Peter answered Christ Jesus, "Thou hast the words of eternal life."

forth...I have called you friends" (John 15:15).

Moreover, the Brothers "never under any condition demand obedience to any mandate of theirs nor command us to do this or that. At most, they advise, leaving us free to follow or not" (*Teachings of an Initiate*, pp. 150-151). Clearly such a relationship between student and teacher assumes the attainment of a measure of spiritual and ethical maturity. But the evolutionary needs of the Western aspirant require this self-reliance, and the responsibility it entails, for he must cultivate his own inner tribunal if he is to gain first-hand knowledge of the truth.

It is in this light that we may understand the statement that the less a person takes on authority, the greater is the understanding of Christian Rose Cross. As man's will develops and his wisdom increases, "he will become non-amenable to outside suggestion and free to do as he pleases, regardless of suggestions from others." He will become more and more a law unto himself, and that law will be the surety of his freedom, for it will have been acquired through the arduous process of trial and error in the crucible of daily

experience and will conform to universal laws governing the evolution of Spirit.

A passage from Heindel's 37th Letter to Students is relevant to our topic. With his customary ardor, Heindel urges us to use our freedom wisely; especially as it pertains to what we are privileged to know: "As we seek freedom so we should not force our openness on others, that having escaped one fetter, we may not be bound by another, for liberty is the most precious heritage of the Soul...May we all strive to live up to this ideal of absolute liberty, at the same time of course, taking care not to infringe on the rights of others"

The first precept for students of Rosicrucian teachings is that Christ Jesus will be be our ideal. St. Paul rallies us to "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" (Gal 5:1). But this liberty is based on an inner allegiance: "He that is called, being free, is Christ's servant" (1 Co. 7:22). If we serve the Lord Christ, we serve others also, as did He, who took upon himself the form of a servant. Paul's Christian ser-

vice was exemplary: "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more" (1 Cor 9:19).

Finally, human freedom is secured in the truth that man is made in the image of God, whose archetype is Christ. The prologue to John's Gospel identifies Christ as the Word, the Logos. The saturnian law was given by Moses, but grace and uranian truth were given by Christ Jesus. This Truth that is Christ is to be formed in each human being, and it will make him (her) free. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). Paul says, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor 3:17). That is also why he says, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." The freedom that shall be attained by each human spirit will prove his sonship in the Father—and yet, each is free to choose that God-given identity. Who would no so choose? For we are destined to attain the freedom Christ spoke of when He said, "I and the Father are one." □

—C.W.

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