

Freedom from oppression

We are not helpless in the face of oppressive circumstances. Prayer leads us to liberty.

Lynn G. Jackson

IN his book, *Utopias Elsewhere*, Anthony Daniels speaks of a regulation that required Romanians (before the downfall of Nicolae Ceausescu) to report any conversations they had with foreigners. Daniels thoughtfully writes, "It was not actually forbidden to speak; only to say anything." Understandably, this kind of restrictive atmosphere leads to depression and doubt. But as Daniels's book also brings out, underneath this mental darkness there is always a desire for freedom, a kindling of hope and right thought, which rise to the front of consciousness until they can no longer be suppressed.

There is another, more fundamental kind of oppression that we need to be alert to—no matter where we live. It is the imposition of worldly, godless thought, which is blind to the true nature of God and man. This materialistic state of mind is fearful and ignorant. It would confine and darken life, taking away our joy, until we emerge from its hypnotic spell to a greater awareness of the bliss and liberty of God's man—to spiritual freedom.

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The awakening to a new, true view of man—and the desire to express our God-given individuality—are the beginning of our individual spiritual revolution. Christian Science helps us understand the fact stated in the Bible that man is actually made in the image and likeness of God. It helps us see that man reflects all the spiritual qualities of God, good, including freedom, wholeness, usefulness, peace. Man's God-given individuality is illimitable; it's boundless; and the freedom inherent in our true selfhood is more fully manifested as this truth is recognized and as the divine nature is more consistently expressed.

Oppression seems to come from other people or from some limiting, frightening circumstance outside of our control. But the spiritual fact is that God governs His child perfectly at every moment. God, good, is all-powerful. Remembering God's unlimited goodness, we realize that it's impossible for Him to produce oppression, physical or mental. God does not promote discord; He destroys it. In fact, God's goodness *precludes* discord. His ever-presence prohibits aggression and oppression. Infinite Love prevents hatred, anger, jealousy, envy.

Of course, this absolute truth can seem extremely difficult to accept when we are experiencing oppression of one kind or another. But we can come to see that what we consent to has a direct bearing on our experience. To the degree that we acknowledge God's government of His creation, we can reap the benefits of this spiritual understanding.

Realizing that man is governed and controlled by God *only*—without interference or interruption—will expand our sense of freedom, no matter how long or severe the oppression we have been facing.

An important point to remember is that while we may feel imposed upon by other people or by a specific sin or disease, in a fundamental way oppression is always an aggressive suggestion coming to thought. Even in a severe situation, then, we can turn from this imposition and begin to feel something of God's love. We can see more clearly and begin to demonstrate

that independent action, inspiration, alertness, singleness of purpose, self-government, and self-control cannot be separated from man, the expression of God.

Taking a stand for freedom can require great strength and courage—not frenzied courage but the deep spiritual resoluteness that demands equality and liberty as a matter of divine law. Mary Baker Eddy, who discovered and founded Christian Science, writes in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*: “There is too much animal courage in society and not sufficient moral courage. Christians must take up arms against error at home and abroad. They must grapple with sin in themselves and in others, and continue this warfare until they have finished their course. If they keep the faith, they will have the crown of rejoicing.”

Ironically, the oppression associated with the sins of others sometimes causes us to feel guilt or self-condemnation or helplessness. This is just another attempt to suppress our joy and freedom of thought. But keeping in the forefront of thought man’s unity with God and His goodness will help us understand that our particular circumstance is neither necessary nor permanent. Self-condemnation will dissolve as we recognize our spiritual innocence, and a way out of an oppressive situation must inevitably come to light. Prayer enables us to bar our mental doors to mass mesmerism and erroneous influences. And as we carry forward our spiritual revolution, we can experience increasing trust in God, who is the genuine source of provision and health.

True liberty is not, then, determined by location. It is actually a spiritual quality, which cannot be lost or separated from man. As the New Testament tells us very simply, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” Through prayer we can increasingly feel God’s presence as we turn away from false suggestions and gain clearer views of man’s God-given, inalienable freedom and innocence. As faithful warriors in this spiritual revolution, we cannot fail to triumph over oppression.

Enlistment for peace

Prayer and listening to God are the steps we can take right now to help bring peace.

Karl Werner Keferstein

Original in German

DURING the dark and anxious days of battle in Iraq and Kuwait last year, at least one development was especially wonderful, it seemed to me: observing so many people calling for peace and seeing newspapers and churches calling upon people to pray.

In the ninety-first Psalm, the writer describes those who will find genuine peace: “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. . . . Surely he shall deliver thee from

the snare of the fowler . . .” How shall we know, then, whether we are dwelling “in the secret place of the most High” and are under God’s sure protection? Can we in fact live securely even though we are surrounded by unrest and threatened with danger? Can we meet civic obligations and at the same time dwell in God’s secret place?

I had to face these questions in the most severe of wartime conditions. During the Second World War, I was drafted and

