

INTERIOR FREEDOM

INTERIOR
FREEDOM •• Jacques Philippe

Translated by Helena Scott



Originally published as *La Liberté intérieure*
Copyright © 2002, Editions des Beatitudes, S.C.C.
Burtin, France

Scripture texts from the New and Old Testaments are taken from
The Holy Bible Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition, © 1965
and 1966 by the Division of Christian Education of the National
Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States.
All rights reserved. All copyrighted material is used by permission of
the copyright owner. No part of it may be reproduced without
permission in writing from the copyright owner.

English translation copyright © 2007,
Scepter Publishers, Inc.
P.O. Box 211, New York, N.Y. 10018
www.scepterpublishers.org
All rights reserved.

Translation of texts on the back cover
are by Sofia Cabrera

This edition is for sale in all countries except
the Philippines and in Africa.

ISBN-13: 978-1-59417-052-2
ISBN-10: 1-59417-052-5

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CONTENTS

Introduction	9
I .. Freedom and Acceptance	
I. THE SEARCH FOR FREEDOM	11
<i>Freedom and happiness</i>	
<i>Freedom: Claiming autonomy or accepting dependence?</i>	
<i>Outward freedom or interior freedom?</i>	
<i>Liberation or suicide?</i>	
<i>"It is in your own hearts that you are restricted"</i>	
<i>A witness for our times: Etty Hillesum</i>	
<i>Interior freedom: Freedom to believe, hope, and love</i>	
<i>Freedom in action: Choosing or consenting?</i>	
<i>Being free also means consenting to what we did not choose</i>	
<i>Rebellion, resignation, consent</i>	
2. ACCEPTING OURSELVES	31
<i>God is realistic</i>	
<i>Desire for change, and consent to what we are</i>	
<i>The mediation of another's eyes</i>	
<i>Freedom to be sinners, freedom to become saints</i>	
<i>"Limiting beliefs" and self-prohibitions</i>	
<i>Accepting ourselves in order to accept other people</i>	
3. ACCEPTING SUFFERING	44
<i>Consenting to difficulties</i>	
<i>The most painful suffering is the suffering we reject</i>	

Refusing to suffer means refusing to live
Badness isn't all bad: The positive side of difficulties
From mastery to abandonment: Purifying the mind
Understanding God's will
"No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my
own accord"
Helplessness in trials, and the trial of helplessness: The
freedom of believing, hoping, and loving

4. ACCEPTING OTHER PEOPLE

60

Consenting to sufferings caused by others
Making allowances for differences in temperament
Some reflections on forgiveness
Forgiving is not the same as condoning a wrong
The chains of resentment
"The measure you give will be the measure you get back"
How other people's faults can be good for us
Other people's offenses take nothing from us
The trap of indifference
The real harm is not outside us but within us
Our complicity increases the harm
Evil comes to fill a gap
The royal freedom of God's children

II .. The Present Moment

1. FREEDOM AND THE PRESENT MOMENT
2. "TO LOVE" HAS A PRESENT TENSE ONLY
3. WE CAN SUFFER FOR ONLY ONE MOMENT

81

83

84

4. "LET THE DAY'S OWN TROUBLE BE SUFFICIENT FOR THE DAY"	85
5. TOMORROW CAN TAKE CARE OF ITSELF	87
6. LIVE, INSTEAD OF WAITING TO LIVE	90
7. AVAILABILITY TO OTHER PEOPLE	91
8. PSYCHOLOGICAL TIME AND INTERIOR TIME	92

III .. The Dynamism of Faith, Hope, and Love

1. THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES	94
2. THE THREE OUTPOURINGS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT	97
3. VOCATION AND THE GIFT OF FAITH	98
4. ST. PETER'S TEARS, AND THE GIFT OF HOPE	99
5. PENTECOST AND THE GIFT OF CHARITY	101
6. THE FIRE THAT LIGHTS UP, BURNS, AND TRANSFIGURES	102
7. THE DYNAMISM OF THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES	103
8. LOVE NEEDS HOPE; HOPE IS BASED ON FAITH	104
9. THE KEY ROLE OF HOPE	107
10. DYNAMISM OF SIN, DYNAMISM OF GRACE	108
11. HOPE AND PURITY OF HEART	109

IV .. From Law to Grace: Love as a Free Gift

1. LAW AND GRACE	111
2. "WHERE THE SPIRIT RULES, THERE IS FREEDOM." THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FREEDOM AND LICENTIOUSNESS	112

3. THE TRAP OF THE LAW	113
4. LEARNING TO LOVE: GIVING AND RECEIVING FREELY	117

V .. Spiritual Poverty and Freedom

1. THE NEED TO BE	120
2. PRIDE AND SPIRITUAL POVERTY	122
3. SPIRITUAL TRIALS	125
4. RELYING ON MERCY ALONE	129
5. THE TRULY FREE PERSON IS THE ONE WHO HAS NOTHING LEFT TO LOSE	130
6. HAPPY ARE THE POOR	132

INTRODUCTION

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

—St. Paul¹

We will offer God our will, our reason, our mind, our whole being through the hands and the heart of the Blessed Virgin. Then our spirit will possess that precious freedom of soul, so far removed from tension, sadness, depression, constraint, and small-mindedness. We will sail the sea of abandonment, being freed from ourselves to attach ourselves to him, the Infinite.

—Mother Yvonne-Aimée de Malestroit²

This book is about a basic theme of Christian life: interior freedom. Its purpose is simple. Every Christian needs to discover that even in the most unfavorable outward circumstances we possess within ourselves a space of freedom that nobody can take away, because God is its source and guarantee. Without this discovery we will always be restricted in some way, and will never taste true happiness. But if we have learned to let this inner space of freedom unfold, then, even though many things may well cause us to suffer, nothing will really be able to oppress or crush us.

¹ 2 Corinthians 3: 17.

² Quoted in Paul Labutte, *Une amitié voulue par Dieu* (Paris: François-Xavier de Guibert, 1999).

Interior Freedom

The thesis to be developed is a simple but very important one: we gain possession of our interior freedom in exact proportion to our growth in faith, hope, and love. This book will look specifically at how the dynamism of what are classically called the “theological virtues” is the heart of the spiritual life. It will also underline the key role of the virtue of hope in our inner growth. Hope cannot really be exercised apart from poverty of heart, so that the whole of the book may be considered a commentary on the first beatitude: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.”³

We shall return to certain topics that have been covered in my previous books⁴ and look at them more deeply: inner peace, prayer life, and docility to the Holy Spirit.

At the beginning of the third millennium, it is hoped that this book will help those who wish to open themselves to the marvelous inner renewal that the Holy Spirit wants to bring about in people’s hearts, and in this way reach the glorious freedom of the children of God.

³ Matthew 5: 3.

⁴ *Searching for and Maintaining Peace: A Small Treatise on Peace of Heart* (New York: Alba House, 2002); *Time for God: A Guide to Prayer* (New York: Pauline Books and Media, 2005); *In the School of the Holy Spirit* (New York: Scepter, 2007).