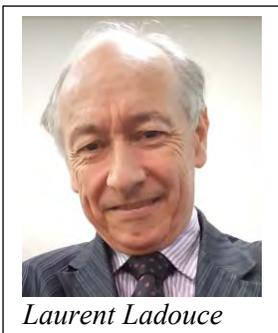


Fulfilling the Four Freedoms Eighty Years Later

Laurent Ladouce
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With the pandemic rampant and lockdowns imposed worldwide, an economic crisis destroying jobs, political turmoil in much of the West, and religious fanaticism elsewhere, we ought to shout, like President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1941, “Freedom of worship, freedom of expression, freedom from fear, freedom from want — everywhere in the world.”



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Eighty years later, though circumstances have changed, his call remains valid.

Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms speech was exceptional. Under normal American political circumstances, Roosevelt would never have sought a third term in office; he would even be reelected for a fourth term in 1944. In normal times, his speech would not have been given.

It was exceptional, because the Great Depression had lasted a decade already. It was exceptional, because Nazism was then controlling almost all of Europe. Roosevelt faced two totalitarian threats, from Hitler and from Stalin. It was exceptional because of Roosevelt’s confidence that the call for more freedom everywhere would guarantee greater safety everywhere. We need such confidence today.

The Four Freedoms guided democracy for eight decades. They should continue to do so, adapting to the challenges of the 21st century. They should again guide us in times of uncertainty, of great insecurity and major restrictions to our freedoms everywhere.

More than a major political manifesto, the Four Freedoms speech is a prophecy. Its eschatology inspired many artists.

Here, I evaluate the spiritual and cultural importance of the Four Freedoms from a Unificationist viewpoint. I suggest Norman Rockwell’s four paintings offer the deepest interpretation of the Four Freedoms, by insisting on family values. Finally, I discuss how the speech should inspire us today.

Balancing freedom and security

The Four Freedoms speech is the highlight of Roosevelt’s State of Union Address on January 6, 1941:

“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...”

Here, freedom is the major theme, safety the minor theme. A safe and peaceful world is coming soon. Shall we gain greater freedom by seeking safety at all costs? No. Rather, the pursuit of freedom everywhere will procure lasting peace. This directly challenges today’s “wokism,” “safetyism” and so-called “intellectual safety.”

Freedom has two complementary aspects. Positive liberty (*freedom of*) is the possession of the capacity to act upon one’s free will, whereas negative liberty (*freedom from*) is the freedom from external restraint on one’s actions. For political theorist Isaiah Berlin, “I am slave to no man” is the slogan of negative liberty. By contrast, “I am my own master” is the credo of positive liberty, the freedom to choose one’s own pursuits in life.

Our dual nature accounts for these two freedoms. Unification ontology sees human beings as composed of a spirit self and a physical self. Our physical self has needs and drives, requires physical protection and care, and seeks material values. Our spirit self has desires and aspirations, grows through education, and seeks spiritual values. Human freedom is a synthesis of these two freedoms, the former being in the subject position, the latter in the object position. Freedom is complete when *one can do what one may do*.



A video on Roosevelt’s “Four Freedoms” produced by the Norman Rockwell Museum.

Freedom of worship and freedom of speech characterize the spiritual self, the person with autonomy. All creatures resemble God symbolically and indirectly. Additionally, human beings, resembling God’s direct image, should inherit the Divine Character, namely Heart, Logos and Creativity. Human beings may freely communicate with God through the spoken word of revelation (from God to man) and through prayer (from man to God). This personal relationship between God and myself generates all positive freedoms.

Our human dignity is spiritual, yet it is incarnated. Our body is the second self of our mind, and the temple of God.

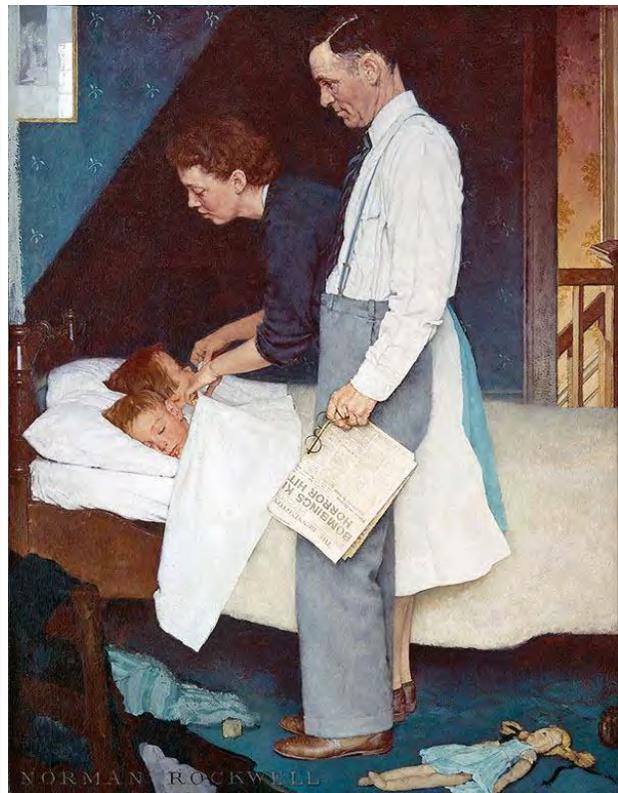
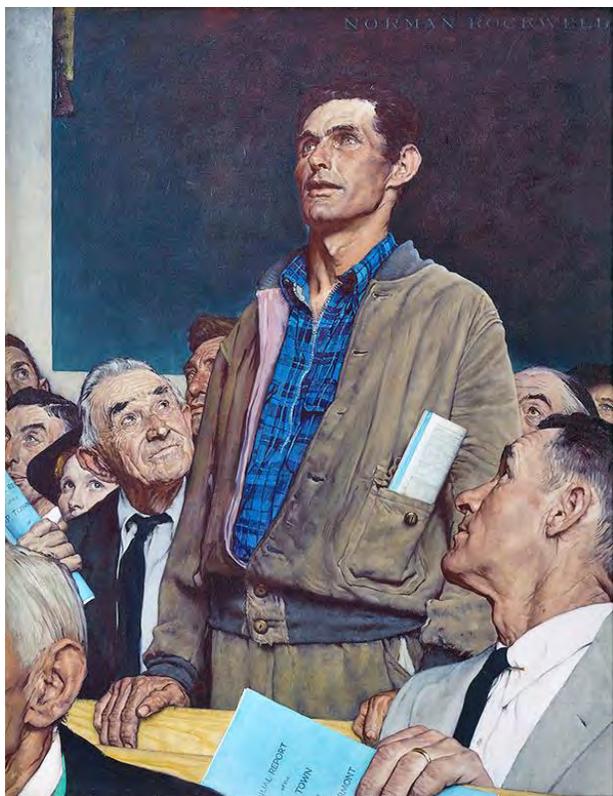
Human beings, unlike animals, stand on two feet and have a visage, hence an expression. The standing position frees the hands to work creatively, under the guidance of our desires and reason. We create

objects of value, embodying truth, goodness and beauty. We create works, but much more, we create our destiny, we co-create ourselves, together with God. Philosopher Pico della Mirandola (1463-94) praised human dignity, as seen by God, as follows:

“The nature of all other creatures is defined and restricted within laws which We have laid down; you, by contrast, impeded by no such restrictions, may, by your own free will, to whose custody We have assigned you, trace for yourself the lineaments of your own nature. I have placed you at the very center of the world, so that from that vantage point you may with greater ease glance round about you on all that the world contains. We have made you (...) in order that you may, as the free and proud shaper of your own being, fashion yourself in the form you may prefer.”
(Oration on the Dignity of Man)

The Four Freedoms and the Common Man: Rockwell and Copland

Before being a resistance to external oppression, freedom should be a positive affirmation, an internal aspiration to fulfilment and joy. This serene vision inspired artist Norman Rockwell to paint the Four Freedoms in 1943 for the *Saturday Evening Post*.



“Freedom of Speech,” “Freedom of Worship,” “Freedom From Want,” and “Freedom From Fear,” as painted by Norman Rockwell (source: Norman Rockwell Museum).

Rockwell’s four illustrations refrain from ideology or politics. In 1943, Americans were fighting on multiple fronts (Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and Asia); the whole nation was focused on defending

freedom. We could therefore have imagined patriotic scenes with armed soldiers attacking “the enemies of freedom” or masses clenching their fists and shouting “liberty.” Rockwell did not paint this. Some even blamed his idealistic and non-militaristic view of the defense of freedom, as if he ignored the mortal enemy.

Rockwell’s patriotism was unquestioned. He knew many American families were mourning the loss of a son, a brother, a husband, or a father, dying in a foreign land for the sake of other people. But deep reasons prompted him to portray freedom in its civil form, associating it with well-being, ordinary life, not exceptional circumstances. He did not paint anonymous battalions in uniform dying for freedom, but ordinary civilians living for it. Today, Rockwell’s choice makes eminent sense.

He painted the daily heroism of simple yet dignified citizens. He showed them as families, as people with emotional attachments, not as isolated individuals. “Freeing oneself from fear” shows neither fear nor danger: a mother tucks her two young children in the same bed. Dad looks at them with love, a newspaper in his hand. The freedom to express love in a household is the major source of safety. The first place to feel safe is a loving and united home.

“Freeing oneself from want” shows neither factories spewing smoke for mass production, nor bountiful harvests. Such frescoes were common in totalitarian art. For Rockwell, true prosperity is more than material wealth. He portrays grandparents serving Thanksgiving turkey to their children and grandchildren. Three generations sharing food on a special holiday (not a working day) — that’s how we free ourselves from the scourge of scarcity. It’s a family scene, “where we share what we have with those whom we love.” The true wealth of a nation is a tight-knit, united home.

Freedom of worship is not represented by a religious edifice, a holy book, or clergy, but by strangers of all creeds who pray silently, with joined hands, “each according to the dictates of his own conscience.” The picture is serious and fervent, but reflects serenity and confidence. Prayer is not a frantic scream, but a freely given report to Heavenly Parent. Spirituality is not compulsory; it comes from the heart.

Finally, “freedom of expression” shows a standing blue collar worker, resembling Abraham Lincoln, speaking forcefully in a town meeting. His torso takes up the entire upper half of the painting. In the lower half, several figures frame the speaking man. Two townspeople wearing ties listen to him with admiration. The painting suggests that educated people take pride in listening to the *common man*, who speaks from the heart, the town’s annual report being in his pocket.

As the Norman Rockwell Museum points out, “it was not until Rockwell painted his Four Freedoms that Americans could really understand what they were fighting for and why the Four Freedoms were so important to the country and the world.”

The common man is actually the subject of composer Aaron Copland’s famous “Fanfare for the Common Man,” originally entitled the “Four Freedoms Fanfare.” Vice President Henry Wallace’s 1942 speech on the “Century of the Common Man” prompted Copland to change the title. Like Rockwell, Copland believed that freedom was not necessarily embodied by heroes with guns, but rather by the common men. When we combine President Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms and Wallace’s prophecy of the common man, Rockwell’s four paintings and Copland’s composition, we grasp the global vision that inspired freedom-seekers 80 years ago.

Common men and women united for freedom now

The Four Freedoms legacy is impressive. The speech influenced the founding of the United Nations, thanks to Eleanor Roosevelt. Later, the European Union adopted its own four freedoms, namely, free movement of goods, free movement of capital, freedom to establish and provide services, and free movement of persons.

The Four Freedoms speech also had a direct impact on the rise of the new discipline of human development, originated by Pakistani economist Dr. Mahbub al Haq, with its two pillars of research and recommendations: freedom from fear and freedom from want.

For the past 80 years, the torch of the Four Freedoms has guided us to a safer world. Today, that light is vacillating, democracy is challenged. Some seek security rather than freedom.

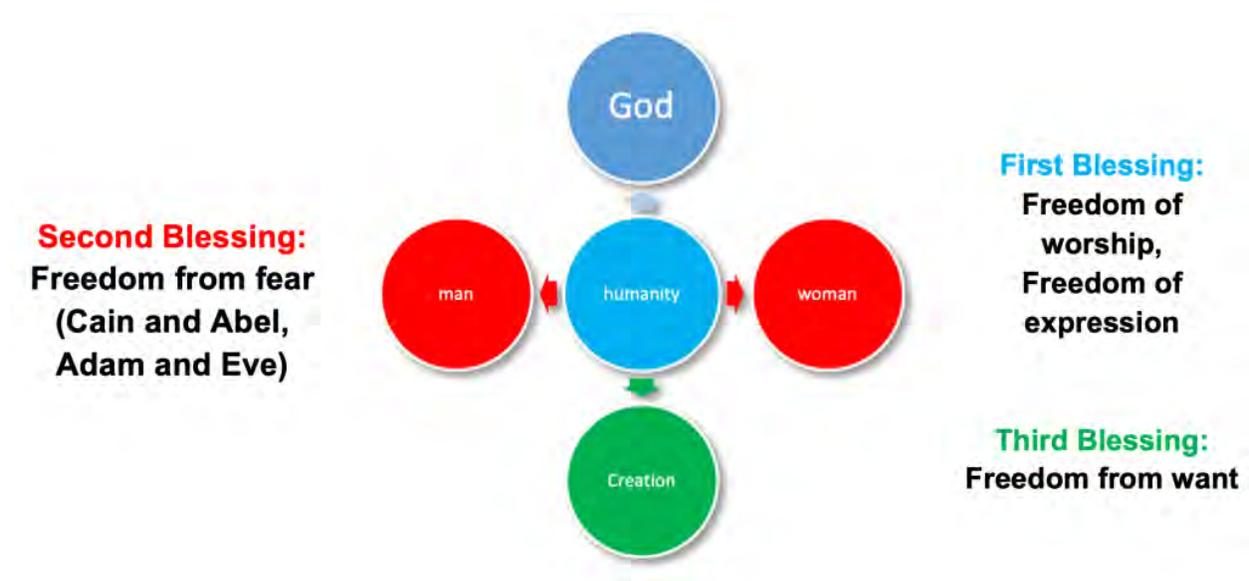
Roosevelt’s speech may have sounded like a political agenda. But as Rockwell painted it, the Four Freedoms have no political color, but are a universal ethical imperative. As Copland composed it, the Four Freedoms are not the battle hymn of one camp against the other; they are everybody’s tune. True Mother often speaks of the 7.8 billion people of the world, the common men and women of our time.

What is the specific responsibility of Unificationists in reviving the values of the Four Freedoms speech? We should regard it as a discourse about ideals which human efforts alone cannot achieve. We may empower humans to have more freedom, but without God’s grace, the agenda of the Four Freedoms will be forever incomplete.

According to Divine Principle, human beings lost their original freedom through the fall. The Four Freedoms speech may be interpreted as a prophecy that human freedom will be restored soon, and with it, the Three Blessings. Freedom of worship and freedom of expression definitely belong to the First Blessing: we love God, and we recover our original dignity and autonomy as children of God. In order to do that, a new view of God is necessary. The God we worship is not an impersonal judge, but the Heavenly Parent, whose masculine and feminine nature is revealed to all humankind, provided we become the holy community of Heavenly Parent, now.

If we remain in our churches, loving others from a distance, but not really living together with them, freedom of worship and freedom of expression will remain restricted by our own barriers. Moreover, we should add “conscience” (more precisely, the original mind in Unificationist terms). We should say freedom of worship, freedom of conscience, freedom of expression. When we remain unable to follow the voice of our conscience in daily life, we enjoy limited freedom of worship and expression.

Today, we should encourage advocates of unconstrained confrontation to do better research. Yes, we all should “awaken”... to the voice of the conscience. This will help us manifest our unique identity (including our specific ethnicity, gender, social class), without cutting ourselves from the holy community. Advocates of safetyism and intellectual safety say that we have to create a safe environment where people feel free to express themselves without feeling judged. One never finds this *freedom from fear* by staying in a bubble. Our true self cannot be free under excessive protection or safety from without. We are to discover the world with confidence and curiosity and learn to welcome notions that once were unfamiliar to us. Take risks and you will be safe.



We enjoy “freedom from fear” when we love our neighbors as ourselves. Abel will be free from Cain’s violence, Cain will be free from Abel’s aloofness. Women will be free from men’s lust, men will be free from women’s seduction. This all belongs to the Second Blessing. All programs to end fratricidal or sexual violence will remain limited, however, without the grace of the Blessing. True Parents have conducted mass weddings so that all human beings are free to enter the city by the gates and enjoy the Tree of Life. Without the Blessing, the gates to the city remain closed.

“Freedom from want” will reign in a society where we love the creation and use goods from nature for the common good. This Third Blessing transcends the limitations of capitalism and socialism, and characterizes the society of *kong-saeng*, *kong-yang* and *kong-ui* (translated from Korean as “interdependence, mutual prosperity and universally shared values,” found in *Divine Principle*).

In 2021, we remain in the midst of a global pandemic. It is the first time since World War II that we face so many restrictions to the four major freedoms worldwide. Even the Cold War did not bring these limitations. To overcome the current crisis, we should revive the spirit of the Four Freedoms. Unificationists can launch discussions on the Four Freedoms, in the context of contemporary problems, and show how Unificationism can be applied theoretically and practically to find solutions. In every nation or community, we may find practical projects to rediscover the practice of these Four Freedoms.

Laurent Ladouce is a French Unificationist who was awarded an honorary doctorate by Unification Theological Seminary in 2017. A prolific author of Unificationist publications, he also published the book, Le Projet Pakxe: une contribution du Laos à l’unité de l’Asie du Sud-Est et à la Paix Mondiale, describing the rising role of city diplomacy and proposing a plan to make Pakxe, Laos, an international city of peace. He also regularly conducts tribal messiah activity in West Africa.

Photo at top: President Franklin D. Roosevelt addresses a joint session of Congress on Jan. 6, 1941 with World War II looming.