

Dear Friends in Christ:

July is the month we think about freedom. Unfortunately, between secularism and consumerism and Sheilaism, there are many distortions of freedom.

Sometimes I get writer's block. It usually happens when I am trying to write a newsletter article. Of course the easy and cowardly way of dealing with this is to have a guest columnist. The problem with guest columnists is that if they are really good, the audience / readers will ask one to schedule the guest columnists more often and the regular author less and less. I think I have solved the problem by employing a guest author who is dead. Avery Cardinal Dulles wrote an article in *First Things* on the relationship between freedom and truth in 1995. In it he quotes Pope John Paul the Great and Lord Acton. Here is his opening paragraph.

The rootedness of freedom in the truth has been a constant and central theme in the writings of John Paul II. Already in 1964, as a young bishop at Vatican II, Karol Wojtyla criticized the draft of the declaration on religious freedom because it did not sufficiently emphasize the connection between freedom and truth. "For freedom on the one hand is for the sake of truth and on the other hand it cannot be perfected except by means of truth. Hence the words of our Lord, which speak so clearly to everyone: 'The truth will make you free' (John 8:32). There is no freedom without truth."

Of course, truth is not whatever I want it to be. Truth is established by God. If one follows St. Augustine, God is Truth Itself. This means that freedom for a Christian is not the right to come up with my own version of what is true. This is a hidden kind of slavery. Freedom for a Christian is the reception of God's truth as what is true for me. I cannot aspire to be truly free until I aspire to dwell in God's kingdom of justice and truth, of faith hope and charity, of righteousness and peace. If I have the freedom to build a kingdom suitable only to me, I will manage to enslave myself and everyone around me. We will have only my lies rather than the truth. This is what it means to be fallen and subsequently unfree.

Lord Acton is of course famous for his dictum that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. He also makes a wonderful distinction between political freedom and philosophical freedom. As Dulles indicates freedom that aims for truth must aim for the moral and the will of God:

Lord Acton declared that freedom is "not the power of doing what we like, but the right of being able to do what we ought." As this definition indicates, Acton is concerned not so much with the philosophical as with the political definition of freedom. Those who have a constitutional right to do as they ought are politically free, and if they are not physically or psychologically impeded from following the moral imperative, they are also free in the philosophical sense of the word.

In the story of the man and the woman in the Garden, the freedom that the serpent promises: the freedom to be like God ,

is the freedom to divorce themselves from the truth that God is God and they are creatures of God. It does not end well.

They make a hot mess of everything by divorcing freedom from truth, and they end up with neither. We and our nation

which claims to embrace freedom should endeavor not to repeat their error in our own day.

Yours in Christ,
John Shepherd McKenzie