

Freedom

FREEDOM is much talked about. It is acclaimed as an absolute to justify almost anything. It is hailed as the ultimate mark of individualism, and vital to "my personal fulfilment".

This is a half-truth. And half-falsehood. So beware! Freedom is a tricky idea and ideal.

REVOLUTIONS

The slogan of the French Revolution was Liberty! Equality! Fraternity! — which ceased to exist when the mob waded in the blood of King, Queen, noblemen and gentry. Then a second wave of revolutionaries guillotined the first.

Indeed, liberty and equality can be contradictory. Absolute liberty destroys equality. Enforced equality negates liberty.

There is a story of a South American revolution in which "the patriots" galloped into the clearing, burnt the farm house, chopped the fruit trees, flattened the crops, shot dead the father, older boys and livestock, and left the weeping widow with the remaining children as they galloped of shouting, "Liberty!"

"Oh liberty, liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name!" Thus spoke Madame Roland (1754-1793), French revolutionist — from the scaffold.

The Bible

HOLY SCRIPTURE offers us common sense on freedom and liberty, from Divine revelation about virtue, sin, ritual, salvation and grace:-

St Peter

"For it is the will of God, that by doing right you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: live as free men, and **not as making liberty a cloak for malice**, but as the servants of God;" 1 Peter 2:15-16.

A translation variant is "*a pretext for evil.*"

St James

"But he who looks into **the perfect law, the law of liberty**, and perseveres, being no hearer that forgets but a doer that acts, he shall be blessed in his doing;" James 1:25. Also "So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the **law of liberty**;" 2:12.

St Paul

"For you have been called to liberty, only **do not make liberty an occasion for the flesh**, but by charity of the spirit serve one another;" Galatians 5:13. A variant is *freedom to indulge sinful nature.*

"False brethren [the circumcisers] slipped in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might **bring us into slavery**;" Galatians 2:4.

UNDERSTANDING by way of NEGATION

That last text hints that freedom, as an idea and an ideal, might be made clearer **by what it is not.**

Slavery is an opposite of freedom, thus:-

- slavery under a whip-cracking overseer/taskmaster;
- slavery to a bossy-boots spouse (or a dictator);
- slavery to self (ego-philosophy: "I am special, I love me!");
- slavery to political correctness (cf. song on *Vicar of Bray*);
- slavery to bad temper or a waspish tongue;
- slavery to lust, "free love", (fornicators etc);

- slavery to food (the grosser gourmets and greedy gluttons);
- slavery to alcohol (whether willing or compulsive);
- slavery to wealth (both misers and spendthrifts);
- slavery to speed (dangerous driving, road rage, etc);
- slavery to phony philosophy and its tangled talk;
- slavery to sin (Rom. 6:16-17), foundation of all slaveries.

The Scholastic Principle

NIHIL eligitur nisi sub specie bonis — "nothing is chosen except under the aspect of being good".

Catholic Christians who are accustomed to examining their consciences and going to Confession regularly will identify with the truth of this principle.

It is an extremely shrewd piece of psychology. Put in colloquial terms, it means that when we sin, we are "having ourselves on", deluding ourselves.

In our fallen frailty, we rationalize our sinful choices by debating with our consciences with quite a deal of insincerely. We stifle "the still small voice"... (1 Kings 19:12) Thus did Adam and Eve with the forbidden fruit: they and the Devil had to make it *appear* to be good. Judas did it with the money. St Peter did it when he denied Our Lord.

Untangling a Muddle of Words

GENUINE FREEDOM is the exercise of virtue. It is the making of good choices, among a variety of good choices. On the other hand, evil choices are NOT an exercise of *freedom* but of *freewill* — yes, it is paradoxical, and it is easy to get it all muddled up.

Some atheist scientists, psychologists and evolutionists virulently oppose religion and morality. When seemingly it might help their cause, they *willingly* deny the existence of freewill.

Academics and mass media deny there is such a thing as sin, and persuade us to use verbal engineering to redefine evil as *political incorrectness*. They mean such things as racism, sexism, and non-consenting sex, but not pornography, adultery, contraception or sodomy.

THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM, indeed the whole idea of human rights, is as full of confusion, and thereby of manipulation and trickery, as the ideas of freedom and freewill. Yes, we do have a right to be free of coercion and to act freely. No, we do not have a right to do as we like. **There is no such right as a right to do wrong.** You can, but you may not...

Natural rights are entitlements from God. They are owing to man from his nature, because God made him in His image and likeness; Genesis 1:26-27.

Acquired rights are bestowed by civil law, such as the right to vote, or get licences and pensions, and other man-made rights from contracts and agreements. Governments can cancel some acquired rights, but never natural rights, though some governments immorally attempt to, with abortion, euthanasia, and IVF.

The Round World...

THE ANCIENTS may have had more understanding of the solar system than the vanity of modern man is willing to admit.

The ancients saw sun, moon, planets and stars, and classified their relationships, for instance, that they all rose in the east and set in the west. Some noted that the moon was slower than the sun, with 29½ days from one new moon to the next; that the stars rose four minutes earlier every night and were on time 365 days later; that the planets *wandered* among the *fixed* stars; that the seasons seemed to relate to the height of the sun and the shortness of shadows. They made calculated guesses (hypotheses) to explain days and months and seasons and years. Some foretold eclipses (both sorts) and equinoxes and solstices, and tried to think out explanations, and geocentric versus heliocentric.

Undistracted by TV, they were better observers and thinkers than many nowadays. *They* knew the moon was half full at its first quarter. Do you?

In seaports, people noticed how ships slowly sank from sight as they reached the horizon. They could not have sunk because they came back later. That set them thinking. Was the world round?

Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that **the wiser men of ancient times knew the earth was round and not flat**. Try researching this ancient history of science on the internet. Did a Roman emperor B.C. declare a flat earth for legislative convenience?

FLAT-EARTHERS

WORLDLY and churchy trendies sometimes rubbish anti-evolutionists as 'flat-earthers'.

We can tease our tormentors by pointing out that most maps from street directories to Land's Department topographical maps (as used by bushwalkers) present the earth as flat for mapping purposes, because it's easier to work with.

Such flat maps are a respectable **scientific model**. They are a legitimate approximation, like the value of π in the Bible, that $\pi = 3$, (see 2 Chronicles 4:2-3).

A flat earth map is ideal for navigators because it alone preserves directions accurately. This is a Mercator map, made as though a piece of paper were wrapped in a cylinder round the equator, with countries as shadows cast on the paper from a light at the centre of the earth. Shadows get longer at shallow angles, so Greenland appears unnaturally bigger than Australia. Flatten out this cylinder to get a flat earth map.

Find out about 'plane sailing' for ships. It assumes the water is roughly flat for about 500 nautical miles.

Straight line courses on a mercator map are called rhumb lines. Sail due east from Cape Town and arrive at Perth. The direction is constant, but it is not the shortest distance. To understand this, look at a globe.

Lay the globe on its side. Run a string direct from Cape Town to Perth. It veers away to the south, and then veers back up again. It is not a steady easterly course, but the arc of a great circle.

A great circle has its centre at the centre of the earth. It cuts the earth in half like an orange.

Meridians of longitude are great circles. Parallels of latitude are not, except for the equator. Until computers did the steering, ships on great circle routes had to set a new compass course each day, and sail along a series of 500 mile rhumb lines.

THINGS TO CHECK

Moon, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, like the sun, rise in the east and set in the west, because the daily rotation of the round earth gives the impression that everything else moves. Locate them in the sky from their rising and setting times in newspapers.

Look at planets through binoculars and see how hard and round they are.

Pocket diaries show four phases of the moon. It's fun to watch them and think out how they work.

ORB AND SCEPTRE

Two symbols of royalty at British coronations are the *orb and sceptre*. The orb is a sphere with a cross on top — like a cross standing on the north pole of the globe, meaning Christ is King over the whole world, an ancient testimony to a round earth.

THE CASE FOR A CREATOR

You can buy Lee Strobel's book from the address below. It is a kindly counterattack on the poor muddled atheists and evolutionists by demonstrating the uniqueness of planet earth in the universe.

THE BIBLE

The Bible speaks of a round earth. So do Church prayers: *toto orbe terrarum* "in the whole orb of the earth" in the Roman Canon and *Te Deum laudamus*.

Msgr Ronald Knox translates *orbis terrarum* in Psalm 23 as "**the round world**". Others *flatten it out* (please pardon the pun) to "earth" or "world".

The Latin Vulgate has *orbis/orbem terrarum* in Psalms 17:6; 23:1; 71:8; 97:7,9; or the grammatical variants *orbis/orbem/orbi terræ* in 9:9; 18:5; 38:12; 49:12; 76:19; 92:1; 95:13; 96:4; or *orbis* (orb) on its own: 32:8; 48:2; 95:10; or *terra et orbis* (earth and orb) 39:2. (Psalm numbers are old Vulgate).

A GLOBE and a MERCATOR MAP

EVERY HOME should have both a globe and a mercator map. St Vincent de Paul Stores have study desks with a mercator map of the world — to concentrate the student's distractions. Aim for one with Australia in the middle and the Atlantic Ocean split in half on the edges; rather than a Europe-centred map with the Pacific Ocean on both extremities.

Big globes are expensive. But even hand-held pencil-sharpener globes, or key-ring globes with a torch inside, are a help for thinking about the world.

See the homeschooling room in Bush Boys and Bush Rangers, p. 97, with its four lecterns for the Bible, dictionary, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and an atlas, with the globe standing next the atlas.