

Freedom's View

A Commentary on Government from Atop the Capitol

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Up, Up and Away in My Beautiful Balloon

The Damnation of Extravagant Praise

February 5, 2017

WASHINGTON, DC ~ Don't you just love positive attention? I sure do. For many years now, I've been admired by passersby who see me up here. Just a tiny statue to them, some swear I'm a Native American - maybe Pocahontas - or even my younger cousin, Ms. Liberty. But unlike lots of New Yorkers who are filling the ranks of government these days, she just refuses to leave her private island up in New York Harbor.

I was just over the moon recently when one young woman, who regularly and approvingly reads these observations, called me a "Stone-Cold Fox!" If I wasn't securely bolted to this metal dome, I swear to you my appreciative swoon would have been fatal! "Run everyone! She's falling!"

It felt so good, I think I now have a better appreciation for how that New Yorker over at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue must feel when he gets word from his Chief Clarifier that more people are paying attention to *him* than the Super Bowl!

This *is* Super Bowl Sunday, and I went up to the National Cathedral. But not to pray that the Falcons would whup the Patriots, though I'm quite partial to underdogs. So is God, at least according to my favorite clergyman at the Cathedral, Father Newel.

Rather, I wanted to pick his brain a bit about the need for public approval, if not downright *adulation*. He greeted me following the service. "Freedom! How very good to see you today!" "Likewise, Father Newel! Got any spare time for a consult?" "Sure," he replied, "only you'll have to drop the 'Father' bit: after all, we've known each long and well!" I agreed and we walked back to his study.



PHOTO: South Transept of the National Cathedral, Washington, DC

Ordained in the Church of England in mid-life, he later came to this side of the Pond and to the Cathedral. Much earlier, he had been simply Newel Post: a butler working for a wealthy English family in Cheltenham. He is *still* a generous and humble servant.

I told him of my curiosity. He leaned back in his chair, smiled, and composed his reply.

"Well, Freedom, that's a big topic, but we can scratch the surface *a bit*. First off, we *all* have an ego. That's the part of us that's looking out for what we need *for our own* welfare. So it attends to things like paying the rent, being careful behind the wheel, and not pissing off one's spouse, if I may put it that way. The ego also attends to our self-image - our sense of being okay on the inside . . . that we're 'enough.' If all goes well growing up, and of course it really never does completely, we have the sense that we are, indeed, 'enough.' Some people, usually because of early childhood relationships, have an inner sense that they're 'not enough.' Not good looking enough, rich enough . . . you name it. Underlying *that* in many people is the sense that they're not *loved* enough. Oh sure, if people are neglected or even abused, it's easy to see why they'd feel that way. But others would appear to be absolutely doted on by their families. They might have been the center of attention, the recipient of adulation, even. So why wouldn't they feel loved? Why would they have such a *profound* sense of not being 'good enough?'"

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ESSENTIAL BEAUTY: HIDDEN, REVEALED, DENIED



Father Newel paused and, with mirth spreading over his face, queried: "Freedom, am I yet being sufficiently 'obfuscatatorial?'" "Well, not until you asked the question *that way!* I'm hoping, though, your *prior* questions were just rhetorical ones," I laughed.

"Those were trick questions as well as rhetorical," he said, grinning back at me. "Giving a child or anyone attention is a loving thing to do. But if the only way we can get attention and other good things we need is in response just to what we *do*, then *it's not enough*. The deep hunger inside all of us is to be given the gift of loving attention *just for who we are*. *That's what real love is . . . and that is what it does. Only those who first receive it can later give it to others.*

"It's a beautiful day, Freedom. Let's go outside." We found the nearest exit and took a stroll around the lovely building. My host continued. "To some degree, most of us have to struggle with reassuring ourselves that deep down we're 'enough.' We put our egos to work on that. You see that hot air balloon up above the South Transept? It's as though we inflate our empty selves with hot air, rise high up in the sky where others can admire our surface: our power, our beauty, or our smarts, etc. Sure, their attention and applause keep us going for a time, but it's the same old thing, isn't it: we're *still* not getting good attention *just for who we are*."

"Other folks have it far worse. Their emptiness is so profound, their egos

have to work *overtime all the time* in an attempt fill that painfully bereft space. Ever more desperate, they engage in all sorts of twisted contortions trying to fill up a bottomless hollow leg of need."

"I'd think those ego gyrations would probably put off a lot of folks in the process," I ventured. "You have no idea!" he replied. "See those gargoyles and grotesques that are clinging precipitously to the walls? There are 112 of these fanciful, often ugly little guys on the building." "Some of them are really disturbing and off-putting, Newel. How come they're up there?" I inquired.

"It depends who you ask. I think they're pointing out in stone exactly what you and I have been talking about! Unless our egos are secured tightly into something less anxious, more solid down inside, the ego's desperate exertions produce distortions that show up on the outside. These twisted figures haven't yet discovered the immense beauty that's on the *inside* of this Cathedral, poor guys. That beauty is trying to suggest that there's a great, inborn beauty deep down on the inside of *every* person, Freedom. It's the True Self or Image of God: an inborn gift we have been given. *It's who we really are*. Permanently. When we are connected to it, *we know*, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that in spite of what we may lack, or what we and others may say, *we are enough just as we are!* That's the good news this Cathedral is proclaiming. Just look at it, Freedom: it's etched in stone!"



PHOTOS: l. Administrator, r. Crooked Politician
Washington National Cathedral

Wow! I thanked Father Newel for his thoughtful, helpful, and even moving perspective. Back at the Capitol, I saw an article in *The New York Times* I hope you'll read. It appears below.

WHITE HOUSE DENIES EXISTENCE OF PRESIDENTIAL GRAF ZEPPELIN

February 5, 2017 (*Special to the Times*)
WASHINGTON, DC ~ White House Press Secretary, Sean Spicer, categorically denied reports that President Donald J. Trump had journeyed by blimp today to Elizabeth, NJ, where he was said to be investigating whether Muslims were still cheering the collapse of the World Trade Center in 2001. Members of the Press Corps pointed out that the President *had himself* earlier Tweeted: "It's the same iconic shape *only bigger!* It's *huge!* I love it, just love it! When I find those Muslims, they'll keel over dead at the sight of my huge zeppelin!" Caught off guard, Spicer went down hard. He was administered smelling salts and later revived. (BELOW: *Trump's blimp*)



Oh, the humanity, indeed!

~ Armed Freedom, a.k.a "Stone-Cold Fox" 🌈