"HAVE YOU ANYTHING TO DECLARE?"

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS DECLARATIONS

2202 New Year's '88
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When entering (sometimes, too, when leaving) a country, either you're asked this question, or an inspector searches your luggage for contraband, or both. You may have something illegal or something taxable....Tonight we all leave the country of 1987 & enter the terra incognita of 1988: what do we have with us that we should speak of? This Thinksheet is me rummaging in my mental baggage to come up with a few things that may interest you, maybe that you can tax for your own benefit, at least as stimulating you to rummage in your own mental baggage in a fresh way, not the shaping & sharing of New Year's resolutions. Me, I admit to having been stimulated to do this Thinksheet by a reminder of a 1936 novel by Maurice Baring, of the same title as this Thinksheet....I'm using "declare" both in the shamefaced sense of "admit" & in the boldfaced sense of "proclaim." I'm resisting to make two lists: I prefer, this time, to let it flow & see what happens.

1. I confess that my Thinksheets in '87 have not been entirely free of the taint of exhibitionism, & I proclaim this justification: the baggage I'm sorting may inspirit you to sort your own baggage, do you own connection-making, cosmize (set in better order) your own mind. See this Thinksheet as an instance of this motive. I'm not so presumptuous as to imagine that my mental adventurings can fascinate you hundreds of times per year, but I'm safe in presupposing (1) that you will read me if you find me helpful to your own interior processes of analysis, synthesis, meditation, & devotion, (2) that you find far more interesting what's going on inside you than what's going on inside me, & (3) that you don't find what's going on inside you & what further could go on inside you as interesting as you should. To whatever extent you permit, I thank you for letting me be a minister to your interiority & therethrough to your walking in the world.

2. I admit that a Thinksheet's body is not always a faithful servant of its title. Take the lot of them, & they're more like a tour through a strange house than like an Emersonian neatly-tied-up-in-a-ribbon essay. You've options: (1) Do your own meditation on a Thinksheet's title (which is usu. all I have to begin with) & skip reading the body; (2) Read the Thinksheet critically, enjoying clucking over the mess I've made & imagining how you'd do better; (3) Give the Thinksheet a desultory, or at least fuzzy-focused, reading; observe what the trip is doing for you--feelings, contexts & memories & intentions that come to mind; go woolgathering, but use your finger and don't lose your place!....Imagine me as a realtor trying to sell you the house of this Thinksheet (yep, I'm off that "strange house" analogy). Realtor Willis (1) is talking with you (Thinksheets are oral literature on paper, & they can't be understood unless they're heard & talked with) & (2) is making declarations, claims, about a place he'd like you to live in, at least for a while, maybe till you build something better for yourself, having picked up some building tips from me.

3. Centrally, in '88 as in all years, what I have to declare is what I consider central to heaven & earth & all therein: we are of one Source & therefore of one sort, unity in creative-redemptive love transcending disunity, difference providing freedom to choose or reject love, which lies utterly beyond coercion. I am in the strict dictionary sense a theist, a devotee of the biblical God, and more Thinksheets are motivated by the exposition & defense thereof than by anything else. Here I speak with long experience of heart & life & out of long study & sharing. This is the sphere of my convictions, in contradistinction to the wider circles of my opinions. (Yes, I am opinionated, & hope you'll not waste energy being offended by my opinions: in my opinion, they aren't worth it.... I worry that the immature reader, coming upon a turnoff, will pull the cord to stop the train & get off; the trip is more important than the towns gone through.)

4. I'm not offended at you, dear reader, but I declare that many a Thinksheet exists to express my having been offended by something or somebody. The anomic personality, being normless (-"nom"-), doesn't get upset over violations of truth, honor, decency, common sense, kindness, fairness, justice, love, commitment--but I rage, & sleep better after pouring the anger into a Thinksheet, in the hope it'll bless you real good.