Teach me, my God and King,
In all things Thee to see,
And what I do in anything
To do it as for Thee.... --George Herbert

"I' is the central truth of the Psalms.'" --Henry S. Gehman

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Did you ever try to list the ten Scripture verses you could least do without? I haven't. But if I ever get around to it, one will be 1Cor.10.31 ("...do all to the glory of God"), which this George Herbert quatrain reminds me of. In the Bible, "I" doesn't mean you or me; it means He: secondarily it's the Good Book; primarily it's **the God Book.**

SETTING: In the Craigville Tabernacle this morning, this Sunday's preacher, who teaches pastoral counseling in a university divinity school, puzzled over Is.5.1-7 (the LORD plants a vineyard (Israel [vs.7]) & is disappointed to get only "wild grapes" [vv.2 & 4]), so he says (vs.6) "I will make it a waste." (Since she's a j&p [justice-&-peace] kid from the '60s, she puzzled also over L.12.49-56 NRSV [Jesus' bringing not "peace" but "division!....why do you not know how to interpret the present time?"--but this text did not figure in her sermon, which would have been improved by her introducing the two texts to each other]).

1 In leading the after-meeting, I try to avoid criticizing the preacher, though I encourage participants to address him/her critically as well as affirmatively: my task is to enable, as best I can, the most fruitful encounter possible, within the hour, between preacher & preached-to.

In the fellowship time between worship & the after-meeting, a woman whom I'd invited to stay said to me "Why stay? She was pushing therapy as religion, without even mentioning the Christian gospel. I don't want to have to suffer more of the same." I encouraged her to come & say to the preacher & the group what she'd said to me. She came--& said nothing! The LORD was disappointed at the wild grapes, I was disappointed that this woman failed to bear witness to her belief in the Faith (she's a faithful, highly-cultured Episcopalian). Nor did anyone else (except me) inquire openly about the disconnect between the preacher's thereapy jargon & the Christian religion. Pastoring is caring (she said, indicating that this perspective has increased in the church with the increase of female pastors). "Peace* is right relationship," she said; but had nothing to say when I asked how her conception of this, as a Christian, differs from the Buddhist "right relation" in the eightfold path: "I don't know about the Buddhist, so I can't make the comparison." Surely she must know that the Buddhist conception is atheist; but God really is unnecessary to her conception of "Christian" pastoral counseling (her education, including a PhD in counseling from an eminent theological school, not having helped her to integrate Scripture & psychotherapy).

Her goal? To help people (especially victims of rape, on which she's sent a book to press) "live a life of [holistic] abundance," cooperating with "the forces for change" in "support of life-giving behavior." "Rape victims need supportive community," she said; but when I asked if she ever suggested they explore churches, she said "They see churches as dogmatic, rigid communities there'd be no point to exploring." And yes she did say, further, that "the patriarchal element" in most churches would be a turn-off to her rape victims (and yes of course, she was radically "inclusive language": no masculine pronouns or even titles for deity).

Seminary graduates taking her as model would, as pastors, try (even if unconsciously) to re-form their churches into feminine-liberationist psychotherapy clinics.

2 I asked the preacher--as I do every preacher in the Tabernacle throughout the summer--to tell us her journey leading to ordinaiton. In doing so, she didn't mention deity (not God, not Jesus) but only her sense that the church, in which she grew up, was a good place in & from which to "struggle for justice & peace" (I supplied the phrase, as Fred.Streng's eighth & last in his classic, WAYS OF BEING RELIGIOUS [which she did not know]. So many of my students of that period began with the eighth way & progressed to others: her progress has been not in ways of being religious but in therapeutic skills to implement the eighth

*"Peace," she made clear in sermon & discussion, is her life-word. But never did she state the crucial Christian doctrine that "Christ Jesus ...is our peace," who by his blood "has broken down the dividing wall" of "hostility," opening up "access in one Spirit to the Father," making the penitent "citizens" & "members of the household of God" (Eph.2.11-22). Jesus' person & work are **essential** to peace.

way....For the good repute of the Tabernacle, I hasten to add that the quality of preaching is generally good, very seldom (as today) a disaster. But why tell you about the disaster? Please stay tuned.

3 The preacher's theology was too weak to respond to a New Ager who tried to take over the group. For her "we are all parts of God," who is in essence "therapeutic energy." She refused to distinguish between God & goodness/truth/beauty/love: "no separation," she said. But where the Bible says something of God she disapproves of, she hastens to separate herself from God! This discrepancy glared when I asked the preacher to speak to vs.6 of her text: "I will make it [the vineyard he'd been hopeful for] a waste."

Our New Ager, being a positive thinker (like the Pope's "gospel of life," but without the Pope's solidly classical-orthodox gospel), cried out against the idea that God would do anything destructive. "People make the world a waste, God doesn't!" In this exchange, nobody used the verb "punish": so many now say "I don't believe in a punishing God, I believe in a forgiving God." But if the vineyard's desertification was not by divine action, Isaiah's (& the whole Bible's!) religion goes poof! I explained that for the Bible (& the Jewish & Christian religions), sentences normally begin with "I" the primary actor in nature & history--or, if a noun, "God." How the sentence continues & ends is a theological problem, but not as bad a one as if the sentence were to begin otherwise....

4 ....which brings us to this Thinksheet's title. In our devotion last evening, Loree & I read & discussed **Psalm 2**. As this afternoon I was studying this Psalm on my Psalms-commentaries shelf, I came across "I" in a box in the 1st line of vs.6: "Yet have I set my king...." In the margin I'd penned "'I' is the central truth of the Psalms." * It's in my well-pen-annotated copy of the 852 classic by A.F.Kirkpatrick, THE BOOK OF PSALMS (Cambridge/33, the year Hitler came to power). It was my text four years later (summer/37) in seminary. All my quoted penned notes are of Princeton Seminary's beloved, scholar-saint Henry S. Gehman. Said he, this Psalm's words are "too great for the temporal" alone.

"The temporal" is triumphalistic Jewish nationalism, the king in his palace conjoint with the temple, God's palace: the maximum distance from "separation of chruch and state." Cities revolting against Judah's dominion are in unjustified rebellion (vs.2) "against the LORD, and against his anointed" (meshiah-christos: "The Messiah is One who is anointed by the Spirit of God to establish His Kingdom & to redeem His people"). Gehman's translation of vs.10: "Let yourselves be corrected, you judges of the earth. / Serve the LORD with holy fear." And his comment: "Fear without joy is terror; joy without fear is presumption."

5 Chew (Latin noun, *ruminatio*) on it, please: **"'I' is the central truth of the Psalms."** The God Book. World creation, world domination. Some in the United Church of Christ are embarrassed that our logo (upper right of p.1) (1) is masculine (viz., Christ the King) & (2) triumphalistic (the Cross triumphant over the world). They are offended even by the very idea of the vertical (the masculine dimension) & push alongsided relationalism (the feminine dimension). But the logo is accurate to Scripture & the Faith; I love it. (Look close & you'll notice the logo incorporates the horizontal; "male and female...one in Christ Jesus" [Gal. 3.28].)

6 Two days ago, Israel occupied the PLO hdq. in Jerusalem, "never" to be returned (said PM Sharon). *Mutatis mutandis, Ps.2: Near East politics is never & always the same. But Gehman was right: this Psalm's words are "too great" to be tied, without remainder, to that historical context & those religiopolitical conceptualities.* We must transpose from the court style of ancient Babylonia, Assyria, Egypt, & Israel-Judah, including the king's adoption as the deity's son (vs.7, important in the christological reading, Jesus as God's Son; Mark 1.11).

In between the King-Son's **power over** the nations (vs.8) & Christianity's trinitarian Son of the Father lies Israel's mission to be "a **light to** the nations" (Is.49.6). The passionate nationalism of triumphal-destructive power (vv.9,12) is to yield to the "good new" (evangel-ism) of the God who (through his suffering servant, Israel/Jesus) suffers to redeem rather than causing suffering to destroy.

* Interesting correction: on closer look, it reads "central truth of ps." (Ps.2), not (as I'd earlier read) "pss." (the whole Psalter). In all the prophetic psalms, Ps.2 being the first, God speaks in the first person (Heb.1.1: "God spoke...by the prophets"). But the divine "I" underlies all the Praises (the meaning of the Hebrew title of the Psalams) & indeed the whole of Scripture. Gehman would shout that!