

THE V-WORD & THE J-WORD AS ENEMIES/FRIENDS

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"Justice" is a species in the genus "Values," so the words are natural friends. But enemies they've been in the '88 presidential primaries & campaigns. "Justice," the rainbow coalition's buzzword from below, rightly preaches, in tones of the biblical prophets, that the quality of a society, it's human-humane "value," is under judgment of the way its powerless are treated: Jesse Jackson is both symbol and leader of this truth. "Values" argumentation between Dukakis and Bush comes from above, from those who see themselves as guardians and restorers of America's social glue: "values," here, is the buzzword for our basic beliefs in God, family, freedom of individual initiative (free speech & entrepreneurial capitalism), national sovereignty against internal & external challenges (limited states'-rights, public tranquility, "national security"), and compassionate action to aid "the less fortunate."

1. At the N.Orleans convention, Gary Wills said to Jim Wallis, "America-watching is fun." And Mary McGrory says "Government is serious, but politics should be fun." Election '88 is so serious, esp. vis-a-vis the appointment of federal judges and justices, that it's hard to enjoy the fun, one almost feels guilty enjoying it all. But the fun of it all is as American as apple pie; and I'm distressed at citizens who, wholeheartedly enjoying the way competitors use their bodies (ie, "sports"), grumble over the way competitors are using their mouths & the media (ie, politics). Yes, government is serious; and it's serious if you can't, or won't, enjoy politics.

2. With no chance to become President, Jackson has been telling it like it is; but Bush & Dukakis don't have that option: they must be "realistic," ie, must negotiate the minefield of voters' taboos. Aspirants must be honest without offending the public with uncomfortable truths such as listed today by a Harvard conference of economists. They must be frank but not nasty, though the public dislikes flat confrontation & fears anyone "winning" by "being nasty." They must be likeable, though the citizens are wary of the smoothie (though not wary enough to see through the Gipper's acting). They must be patriotic, but not sword-rattlers. They must have "character," but not preach. They must have "commitment," but not offend by stepping on the toes of any sector of other commitment. They must be "liberal" (whether or not using the word) in the sense of for "liberty and justice for all," yet "conservative" in opposing any changes that would take some liberty from some in order to give some justice to others. They must be religious, but not "sectarian"; convictioned, but not opinionated (the latter meaning convictioned in a way that offends the otherwise convictioned). Sulzburger asks, "Do We Want a Pitbull in the White House?" Say I, how could that be, seeing we have only nipping toy poodles --well handled at that--running? Who are also snakes trying to slither their way through the minefield to the Oval Room....No, I'm not cynical or (!) nasty. I'm sympathetic with the candidates' dilemma of how to be courageous but not foolhardy, how to behave with integrity and get elected anyway, how to be for "justice" without losing the right & for "values" without losing the left, how to be centrists without seeming to be only opportunist, how to be ambitious for office but not a power junkie.

3. Said Francis Bacon, a father of "the West," "The four pillars of government are religion, justice [both legal & ethical], counsel [roughly, expertise + commonsense], and treasure [yes, \$]" (sec.15, OF SEDITIONS AND TROUBLES). The R-word includes the V-word: religion is, for all human beings & their voluntary & forced associations, the foundation & fount of values. In Austria, the Hapsburgs crushed Protestantism on the ground that religious uniformity was essential to (yes) "national security." Toqueville was disturbed that in the USA, what functioned as the national religion alongside the traditional communions was unregulated entrepreneurial individualism, to which Bush now is successfully appealing (while concluding his speeches "God bless you all"). The V-word & the J-word are friends in that both root in religion, but they are enemies for the same reason. Sure, you can't have values without religion; but what can be concluded as to your religion from examining your lived values (whether or not they're your claimed values)?

4. Two preachers lost in the primaries. Pat Robertson, in spite of his tube warmth; Jesse Jackson, in spite of his street heat. But only Jackson has survived politically: mighty though the tube, it's warmth is nothing compared with street heat, the inwardly-outwardly moved masses. Further, Pat preaches prosperity here, Jesse preaches prosperity possible--each addressing one of our two widening classes, Jesse's

the faster-growing one. I heard Ralph Sockman preach his much-quoted & oft-misattributed sermon "Religion's Purpose: To Comfort the Afflicted and Afflict the Comfortable." Well, many of our afflicted feel that religion is one of the forces afflicting them; and the religious significance of "the Jackson phenomenon" is that it counters that feeling in one astonishing case (as the Wesley movement did in Britain). Secularists like to think that Jesse's motor is justice, religion is only in his rhetoric. The truth is that Jesse's motor is evangelical religion, as in his private use of the bit of doggeral still motivating me from my childhood: "Only one life, 'twill soon be past, / **Only what's done for Christ will last**" (qtd.p.17, Nov/88 SOJOURNERS). What deeply troubles me is that the humanism our children learn in public school lacks the "fire in the belly" to digest, together, "values" and "justice"; "in" kids digest values, "out" kids digest, if anything, justice. Result, "two societies" (even worse than when the Kerner Commission first used the phrase), two social worlds of increasing mutual alienation.

5. Subtly but effectively the Bush campaign has been appealing to the overclass's fear of the underclass. Capturing the fear word "change," Bush preaches "We are the change." Social control, says Bush, just doesn't work; look at our welfare mess, and notice that the communist countries are loosening their social controls, Gorbachev calling economic perestroika "the new phase of communism" (why not "people's capitalism"?). In the afterwash of the second presidential debate, some pundits are saying that Dukakis lost when the Jackson three days at the Demo convention frightened the general voting public: social control correlates, always and everywhere, with economic ill health (Scandinavia being a partial, spotty exception)...Competing value-sets make politics complex & government an agonizing struggle in the dark: (1) **Compassion** requires social control, **motivation** of the populace requires fear (which social control relieves) and hope (which social control eliminates); (2) **Human dignity** requires both an economic safetynet (which social control guarantees) and self-support with its attendant risks of failure & dreams of success (which social control, esp. in the hands of a self-aggrandizing bureaucracy, renders unnecessary--as in a case appearing today in Ann Landers: a welfare woman got government support for her twelve children coming into the world, being in the world, & leaving the world--most of them dying in a fire; and for her present three children).

6. Two **failed anthropologies** are now, on this globe, getting their comeuppance. The high, **liberal** philosophy denigrates negative motivation (fear of punishment, fear of failure), emphasizing Enlightenment doctrines--the inherent value of the individual, the essential nobility of every human being, the "natural" love of the good, the human potential; the low, **marxist-leninist** philosophy views humanity sociobiologically as stimulus-response driven, more easily controlled by fear than by faith. Neither Bush nor Dukakis is impeded by the latter of these two failed ideologies, but Bush is tellingly using the L-word against Dukakis, who only looks and sounds phoney when denying he's a liberal. And of the egghead liberal subspecies: when he treated unemotionally, in the second debate with Bush, the hypothetical rape & murder of his wife, Geo. Will wondered whether the Duke has any nerve-endings.

7. Viewed as values-clusters, I prefer Dukakis to Bush but cannot buy either cluster as a package. As Jesus' parable packs an additional wallop when it strikes me I'm both characters (eg, the Pharisee and the publican), my value-sympathies as divided between Bush & Dukakis are illuminating. Eg, I'm with Dukakis on abortion & with Bush on capital punishment. I straddle America's two social worlds: I'm in the middle, on the right, on the left--and on some matters radical, on others moderate. The presidential campaign is a mirror of America and of me.....How can we together find and honor common ground and move forward to higher ground?

8. We Democrats are losing because the Republicans, now, are better artists with the images, symbols, & myths of "values." Reagan a few days ago: "When the left took over the Democratic Party, we made the Republican Party into the party of working people, the family, the neighborhood, the defense of freedom, yes, the American flag and the Pledge of Allegiance to one nation under God." We've been **outrhetoricked** because of our liberal illusions & arrogance.