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JUSTIFICATION & JUSTICE V:
THE FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION, GOODS, & SERVICES

As **content**, the "kerygma" is the Good News of justification: as **action** it's the proclamation of this Good News toward justice, including the freedom to proclaim the Good News (to use a hoary legal phrase) "without let or hindrance." In both content & praxis, then, the Gospel commits us to the free flow of information &, by inference, of goods & services. From this coign of vantage, injustice is whatever impedes this free flow, this laissez faire (on its negative side, personal-institutional-governmental abstention from interference with choice & action in this free flow). This Thinksheet is about instances of interference, always in the name of justice (& sometimes justly so!), with this free flow.

1. **Law** is the servant of the dominant sociomodel in a society. Under Leninism, which now at the end of '89 has collapsed almost everywhere in the Second World (China, N.Korea, Vietnam, & Albania being the holdouts), the party is the law; & always & everywhere, no matter the ideology, monopoly power functions as a mafia, killing off challengers (eg, the PLO & Deng's China). The king-of-the-castle survivor of this execution of rivals becomes a mafia boss, who cultivates the cult of personality (as did the Roman Emperors, & Romania's dictator Ceausescu, today executed with his wife by the military, who swung over to the people because of the brutaility of the mafia [secret] police). By contrast, by their very nature multiparty sociomodels (various democratic & republican polities) allow, where not aggressively promoting, the free flow of information, goods, & services.

2. When criminals "take the law into their own hands," to the extent they are successful they are de facto themselves the law --as was Noriega till the U.S. military seizure of Panama &, yesterday, his seeking sanctuary with the papal nuncio. But in this instance, the OAS declared the U.S. criminal, a charge we rejected on the ground that we were only enabling the freely elected government of Panama to come into power: our criminal action was in the interest of **justice.** Because one man had set himself up as the law de facto, the law de jure could not be the servant of the nation's sociomodel, viz democracy. Therefore, action to depose the de facto law was infralegal, ie in the service of "the law" so that the law could once again serve the sociomodel. Note: Law is never in the direct service either of the people or of justice. Rather, it is doubly removed from either directness: (1) By its being the servant of the sociomodel; & (2) By its working only jurisprudentially, ie through **legal process.** In consequence, socioslogans like "democracy," "laissez faire," "equality," & "majority rule" cannot be treated with semantic simplicity, as though they were trees or rocks, as though they were in themselves political realities needing only shouting. They need to be viewed as stars within constellations of social significance. (Cf., eg, Michael Walzer's "spheres of justice," through which he demonstrates, for one thing, "the complexity of equality.") But don't trust the Duchess when she says to Alice "Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves." Rather, we need to take great care of the sounds, lest we become auto-seduced or hetero-seduced by them.

3. Because religion leadership is 60% rhetoric, I'm especially concerned with the audio-seductive processes within religion. Take three Jims, eg: Jones (of the 913 corpses), Swaggert (of the "pure gospel" words & kinky sex), & Bakker (who gospel-talked himself into luxury & then prison). Or take the present preachers of "majority rule" for S.Africa. We had majority rule in the U.S., & thank God Martin King helped us get rid of it, helped us get a more human rule in which "the power of the people" included minorities. Again, look what "majority rule" has done to Iran, oppressing nonMuslims,

Censorship is not the answer

Leo Coveney's recent letter has given me the new idea that it might be my responsibility to look into what literature should be "available" to public-school teachers. Until now, I've been concerned only that not enough is available to them. Specifically, not enough materials on religion in public education.

We have a word for making reading material "unavailable," as Mr. Coveney wants Planned Parenthood literature to be. The word is "censorship." We all know of efforts to censor materials available to the students. To my knowledge, Mr. Coveney is the first to suggest censoring materials available to teachers.

What worries me most here is the conflict betwen our nation's need to improve teacher quality, and our history of eroding teacher freedom. Principals come down on teachers for violating the anti-religion taboo, which exists even though the Supreme Court says religion should be taught in the public schools. And a Sandwich teacher is fired for discussing obscene words, even though that in no way violated contract. And in many schools teachers are not even free from physical assault.

As long as our schools operate like faceless bureaucracies whose employees are forced to work in an atmosphere of constriction and fear, forget about improving teacher quality. Censoring the literature available to teachers would only move us further into the morass.

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especially the Bahais, whom the mullahs consider heretics as well as infidels. Again, look what majority rule did to "India," which was a British invention (being priorly 24 nations): split it, the Muslim minority splitting off to form Pakistan. If Lebanon achieves majority rule, the Christian minority (under Gen. Aoun?) will probably split off to form a small Christian island nation in an Islamic sea. Again, do you think majority rule is a good idea in Israel-Palestine? And what would majority (read "black") rule mean in S.Africa, where most blacks have been politicized into the racist-majoritarian belief in black power, black rule, & their clergy have done nothing to disabuse them of this ideology?

4. Religion rhetoric tends to **simplism** in analysis & **euphoria** in tone & for both reasons is in its glory in revolutionary situations, in which people are eager for the freer flow of information, goods, & services. When the longing for free expression (an implicate of the freer flow of information), for bread (& others goods), & social services becomes more powerful than the fear of repression, the pressurecooker explodes in the streets & repression (a) isn't tried (instance most of eastern Europe, & Lithuania, today), (b) is tried & at least temporarily succeeds (witness China today), or (c) is tried & fails (instance Romania last week). In cases (a) & (c), the new danger is romantic overexpectation. A moderating influence would be the thought that while old power was corrupt, new power soon will be, & the excesses of new power may be worse, lacking the at least potentially moderating influences on old power from generations of breeding & long experience of the im/possible (examples: Africa's postcolonial black governments). But theologians are apt to play into the hands of revolutionary euphoria. FACT: The world needs to develop a consciousness of scarcity, of limits (including the need to limit populations). But against this, M. Douglas Meeks preaches cornucopia, on the divine sanction that God is pleroma (fulness): "The biblical traditions uncover God as the Economist who constructs the household with a radically different assumption: If the righteousness of God is present, there is always enough to go around" (p.12, GOD THE ECONOMIST [Fortress/89]). Enough of what? Of what white S.Africans have & black S.Africans want? Not so. Not now, & not ever. Not that it's not technologically possible for everybody to be rich: it's not biologically sustainable. The pleroma scenario is out. The possible scenarios are (1) a freezing of the present wealth-distribution, with population control to the level of sustainability; (b) an equalizing of wealth (which has never worked, & which would be at the cost of most freedoms), with population sustainability; & (c) uncontrolled population, entailing across-the-board downscaling of all economic circumstances. I am loath to mention (d): the continuing of the present widening of the rich/poor gap, with massive dying off of the excess population on the socioeconomic ladder's bottom rungs. Instead of myopia over the plight of "the poor," prophetic religion should wide-angle on earth today & tomorrow. (Sacralizing the fetus is an instance of the extreme opposite.)

5. Enemies of the free flow of information, goods, & services are privatism & pluralism. **Privatism** wants to constrict information (eg, Ivan Boesky's "Greed is healthy"), goods, & services against the public interest. While **pluralism** would logically seem to favor free flow, in ideological form it operates to suppress-the common (foundational) culture in the interest of a least-common-denominator cultural consensus: while the former was & is God-centered, the latter is not even God-inclusive (eg, government-supported, to say nothing of government-run, daycare will not even mention God). How did we create this impoverishing pluralistic cultural-consensus goal? By sectarian erosion (detailed in Neuhaus' THE NAKED PUBLIC SQUARE). The weathering factors in this eroding have been religious, ethnic, political, & movement; & the weathering has worked against the whole range of public life--government, business, the media, the public schools. To take only this last, some instances: (1) Pressure to eliminate Huck Finn for using "nigger" (seven times, yet); (2) Catholic pressure to eliminate Protestant classics such as Bunyan's PILGRIM'S PROGRESS (dropped from my school in 1934, though Vatican II, especially under the influence of Jn. Courtney Murray, was to level, as self-criticism, many of Bunyan's complaints); (3) Jewish pressure against recognition of the religious festivals of the foundational culture (eg, the objection of one Jewish mother, made to the superintendent, eliminated the creche for which a sister of mine had for many years been responsible); & (4) anti-abortion pressure to censor what's officially available to teachers (see, here, my yesterday's CCTimes letter).