

WHEN I GOT FOUND passive meaning
 I STOPPED SEEKING middle meaning
 & STARTED SEEKING active meaning

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Having just returned from six days among the **Moravians** of Bethlehem-Nazareth, Penn., I am seeing with the new eyes humans at least momentarily get when going "abroad," among "other" folk. Then reading the pile of mail through the new eyes....

1I came upon this: "The United Church of Christ taught me to seek and that is what I am doing" (Apr/97 UNITED CHURCH NEWS p.11). With these words, a UCC clergyman (Ben Chavis) argues that his having become a Muslim should be no impediment to his UCC clergy standing!

2 Could "Ben Chavis Muhammad" (new full name) make the same argument if he'd gone, say, Buddhist or Hindu? No, for he argues from the notion that the so-called religions of the West--Judaism, Christianity, & Islam--worship "the same God....I am still a Christian minister." (The UCC association that ordained him is now considering whether to defrock him--objectively a good idea, for the UCC needs a precedent for further defrockings [an almost unthinkable thought in so latitudinarian a denomination]).

3 What UCC national-offices response to Ben's Christian/Muslim straddle? The executive director of the Office of Communication (ibid p.11): "Perhaps God has called Chavis Muhammad to a new ministry....How is God working here? What can we learn?" Supportingly, he quotes BCM: "Don't we believe there is one God? Isn't the God of Abraham also the God of Jews, Christians and Muslims?" "I am a pilgrim on a spiritual pilgrimage." The executive closes his article with the (sentimental) prayer "that the Holy Spirit will guide all of us in the United Church of Christ toward understanding, wisdom and healing."

4 Segue back to those **Moravians**. They did/do not teach their children to seek (middle meaning), as Ben says the UCC taught him....(NOTE on the grammatical term "middle": The middle voice refers verb-action back to the subject, as [eg] "I seek [for myself]." Psychologically, the center is not who/what is sought but rather the seeker. Does a mosquito seek you for yourself? The reverse: for itself, to suck on you. "Spiritual" seekers seek a deity to suck on: it's as natural for the human spirit as blood-sucking is for mosquitos. In my FLOW OF FLESH, REACH OF SPIRIT, I don't badmouth this natural "reach of spirit"--though I do reject religion that's only in the middle voice, ie consumer religion: what in this mode gets consumed is always, from the biblical point of view, an idol.)

5 But one need not get stuck in the middle-voice egocentric "seeking" mode, as GBS's BLACK GIRL IN HER SEARCH FOR GOD. As caregiving movements & institutions advertise, "Help Is Available." The God of grace & glory is more eager to be found than seekers are to seek (cp. Mt.7.7-11; L.11.9-13; Thomas 2,94). The difference between such intentional searching & the vague, promiscuous, perpetual process of "spiritual seeking" is simply put in Is.55.6: "Seek THE LORD"--& scores of other reff.: try these: Deut.4.29; 1Chron.28.8-9; 2Chron.15.2, 19.3, 30.19, 31.21, 34.3; Ezra 4.2, 7.10; Job 5.8; Ps.14.2(53.2), 27.4,8; Jer.29.13; Zeph.2.3; Mt.6.33(L.12.31)....In the Bohemian Brethren's seeking of THE LORD (their founder, Jan Hus, burned at the stake in 1415), the Moravians in 1740 sent a mission to Penn., forming the settlement their leader (Count Zinzendorf) named "Bethlehem." Grace, joy in the Savior, had found them (passive voice), so they stopped seeking (middle voice) & came to America to seek (active meaning)--to seek Amerinds, among whom they quickly (supported by sound financial practices in farming, crafts, & industry) sent fifty missionaries. (Subsequent actions of the federal government wiped out all the Christian Indian settlements.)

6 This Thinksheet's title is personal. When in 1935 I got found, I stopped seeking (middle meaning) & started seeking (active meaning: on the make for converts to grace, the Good News of the Gospel). I understand from the inside, & recapitulate, the Moravian experience, as did Jn. & Chas. Wesley, Moravian converts whose hearts

were "strangely warmed" in the Aldersgate (London) Moravian church (& who went on to found the Methodist Churches).

7 Back to my Moravian "new eyes" from this past week: How could Ben have been accepted into UCC membership, to say nothing of ordination, while he was still seeking, ie before he had stopped seeking (middle meaning), ie before he had been found? Of course in a secondary sense, all human beings should be seekers in the sense of being open to fresh experience & insight; but Ben is speaking (& you can hear him on Odyssey/Faith&Values May 1) of primary spiritual searching such as may convert the seeker from one religion to another.

8 Again, consider the anti-intellectualism of the Ben Event, the cognitive dissonance of his claim to be both a Christian (a religion whose Big Bang origin was the resurrection of Jesus) & a Muslim (a religion denying Jesus' resurrection). Again, Islam can no more tolerate the Trinity (which is implicit in the New Testament, explicit in the creeds of Christendom) than can Judaism: intellectual honesty demands that anyone converting from Christianity to Judaism or Islam deny the Trinity, without which Christianity lacks intellectual-spiritual substance--so how can Ben claim, after converting to Islam, to remain a Christian & even a Christian clergyman? The answer may be found in his moral softness (eg, in his criminal mishandling of funds, including pay-offs to a mistress, while president of the NAACP). But another piece of the answer is the **intellectual**-doctrinal **softness** of his denomination, the UCC--the softness level of the Unitarian-Universalist churches a generation ago (churches now less & less inclined to call themselves Christian).

9 Contrast the solid Christian commitment of the Moravians, whose new hymnal (1995, 952pp) follows the **inclusive language** principle of the New Revised Standard Version: inclusive language on the horizontal (human relations), but biblical language on the vertical (masculine titles & pronouns for deity, no redesigning of the deity under radical-feminist pressure)...in contrast to the new UCC hymnal (same year), which is feminist-sectarian.

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