

The Bible both rebukes and promotes self-governance, "self" in both the individual and collective senses. It calls upon us to submit to God and control the biosphere (and ourselves within it). It more pleads with us (expecting us to initiate action toward self-control) than commands us (not expecting us to manage our own affairs)--yet it's gloomy about our prospects of making it on our own without both direct and indirect divine guidance. It warns us against the hybris of overexpecting success in our personal and societal undertakings, yet honors our inherent urge to transcendence. When we have fallen, it sets us back on our feet--the only condition being a humble willingness to stand in God's presence and listen to God's Voice....This thinksheet is a meditation on the ambiguity of self-rule and (consequently) (1) the dubiety of all our self-governance paradigms and (2) the blind arrogance of our mythomachies and logomachies (i.e., our interpersonal and intertribal and international ideological and sloganic battles). Here, then, are a few notes on this theme. I'm asking you to deal with the theme: I'm only secondarily interested in whether you agree with these opinions:

1. In this century, the "national sovereignty" paradigm, which leads straight on to etatism (totalitarianism) through internal and external pressures, has been and continues to be the world's most potent political faith--and most painful for little people, most destructive of the common life of human beings. The Bible's models and metaphors of "liberation" have been too easily pressed into the service of (de)moralizing overlordship, as well as of virtual anarchy.

2. A. Lincoln's overlordship of "the Great Southland" was a Good Idea. M. Ghandi's resistance to the British overlordship of India was a Bad Idea for the million soon dead and the thousands who have continued to die since--geographical "India" being ungovernable except imperially: on the "national sovereignty" paradigm, "India" is unviable, and the Sikhs need their own nation-state (as the Muslims got theirs, as Pakistan, in the original disruption after Ghandi, whose illusion that "India" could rule herself without British overlordship became a tragic historic delusion for which history so far, because of his sanctity, has failed to condemn him). (I can just see Niebuhr's smile on this "irony" of history: Ghandi, who was bad news for his people (at least in the short run), became, through King, good news for the USA.)

3. The Lebanon never has had self-rule and is destroying itself under the delusion that it can. "Democracy" is a cruel (though unintended) hoax, pushed mainly by the (Christian) U. of Beirut, which has fought against political imperialism and (unconsciously) for its own brand of ideological imperialism. (Quotes from "the gloomy dean" Inge: "Democracy is plainly both a superstition and a fetish"; "A nation is a society united by a delusion about its ancestry and by a common hatred of its neighbors"; "Universal suffrage almost inevitably leads to government by mass bribery, an auction of the worldly goods of the unrepresented minority"; "To become a popular religion, it is only necessary for a superstition to enslave a philosophy"; "Christianity promises to make men free; it never promises to make them independent.") The USA's 1958 invasion of Lebanon was effective because quasi-imperial; our 1983 invasion, killing 264 of us, was ineffective because factional. Should we rather have (1) done nothing, (2) gone imperial, or (3) pushed for balkanization? Nobody knows--which ignorance, on this and almost every political and global issue, is at the heart of this thinksheet. We'd like to reduce all problems to manageable size, yet are poor managers even of ourselves.