

The burden of this Thinksheet is burdensome to try to state, for I fear that most of my readers will feel I'm giving a hostage to the enemy. I am an anti-racist, set against all overclaiming of any human grouping against any other human grouping(s); set against any unfair rhetorical-actional advantage-taking of any human grouping against any other human grouping(s). But the bases of my antiracism--commitment to the God of truth & justice; political commitment to public discourse, power-decisional & power-critical; and professional commitment to linguistic clarity & the honoring of man as "the language animal"--require me to attack, along with overclaiming, underclaiming. In all this, the awkwardness of asking other groups to repent is somewhat relieved by my asking my own group (viz, advantaged whites) to repent. I caution and restrain myself somewhat by reminding myself of Mark Twain's "Nothing so needs reforming as other people's habits."

1. The word "racism" has become so politicized, in the sense of being partisanized, as to be almost useless as an analytic-descriptive term: it's come to mean only what white folks feel-toward-&-do-to other folks negatively--ie, bad feelings & bad behavior. Atop the politicization, thus, is heavy moralizing; and atop that is equally heavy religionizing: whites are (!) blackened with being out of the will of God vis-a-vis what Kipling unfortunately called "lesser breeds without the law."....So this Thinksheet coins two affectless terms to use in thinking about black/white (ie, negroid/caucasoid) interrelations. To the stems I've simply added the pejorative "-ism."
2. Of course I'm talking about pernicious, self-&-others-demeaning attitudes & actions. I'm not downputting the innocent, life-affirming pride every group & every human being is more than entitled to, is (I would even say) God-commissioned to have. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights celebrates, where it does not assume, this all-people's self-affirmation, a shalom-ecumenism in which all rejoice in the tradition-honoring of each and the mutually profitable participation of each with all. But this visionary world-communion will remain utopian-sentimental-unrealized unless each responsibly guards against its own & others' excessive pride, hubris, the demon tempting each to overclaim for self & underclaim for others & also (more subtly) to underclaim for self & overclaim for others.
3. I acknowledge that, as a strategic corrective, underclaiming for self & overclaiming for others is sometimes indicated, desirable. But I worry when the strategic becomes ideological-obsessive, as I now observe in much local & global present-day black/white relations. I worry esp. when the churches hook themselves on "racist" situation-definitions uncritically engining "antiracist" programs both of nations-movements & of their own. My own church, UCC, has just sent a few thousand \$ to a WCC thing called "the Commission to Combat Racism"--a dishonest name, as from the start this WCC wing has intended to combat only white racism; and the UCC encourages giving to two movement-organizations, SWAPO & ANC, that are motored by negristic (ie, black racist) feelings-attitudes-slogans. The fact that SWAPO & ANC are "fighting for justice" needs analysis: who isn't fighting for "justice"? Who get to force their definition of "justice" on whom? And who, if not the churches, will witness (1) against the coercive use of blattlecry abstractions like "justice" and (2) for unprejudiced (ie, un-"-ism"-driven) discourse & action?
4. In his masterful JOURNEY TO NOWHERE, Shiva Naipaul (Penguin/80/82) details the tragic collusion, in Guyana, of Forbes Burnham's negrism & the Rev. Jim Jones' anticaucasism. A cautionary tale for thinking, now, about "South Africa."