

# I PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO PLANET EARTH:

## THE HOLY TASK OF SELECTING THE SITE FOR THE SACRED

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Among our species' God-given liberties is the freedom to choose the site on & through which we honor the Source & control, through stylized rituals of submission, our sinful-natural tendency to Luciferian overreaching in our righteous-natural reaching for self-transcendence, for becoming more than we are beyond what we are. This Thinksheet is reflections after the final planning meeting of Craigville VI Theological Colloquy (August 13-18), on abortion.

1. Addressing the problem how to keep the colloquy on theology (ie, from wandering off into medicine, law, ethics, & anecdotalism), I suggested, as one control question to keep our critical consciousness in the theological fold, this: *From the particular point of view being promoted, where-what is the locus or site of the sacred?* You can quickly tick off many loci--eg, earth, land, humanity, the individual (ex- or in-cluding the fetus), the past, the present, the future, art, the community, learning (including a particular book or books), specific ritualizations functional to control & direct consciousness & community, societal liberty, personal freedom, the high (ecstatic experience however had--religion, sex, psychotropic chemicals, jogging).

2. Definitions pertinent, & shaped for, this Thinksheet: The **sacred** is the sacrament, the medium of, the means to, the **Holy**. The distinction is vital, not specious, even though public awareness of it is dim. On CNN last evening, an Amerind subtly--too subtly for the secular interviewer--said that earth-&-sun are transparent of the Great Spirit. The interviewer "explained" to the viewers that "Indians" worship the sun, nature. Now, there's a lot of nature worship going on in "the West," our civilization, these days; & some theologians (eg, Thos. Berry's "creation theology" & Mt. Fox's "creation spirituality") are verging on it. But any collapsing of the Holy (to be **worshipped**) into the sacred (to be **respected**) sacrifices freedom to the theopathy of **idolatry** & the psychopathy of **addiction**.

3. All other things being equal, **decisional freedom** expands as we explore conceptual interrelationships. We need some PhD dissertations on the addiction/idolatry boundary; we need more, we have quite a few, on the sacred/Holy boundary. But of course all other things are not equal: the minor (as lesser, & in the musical sense) fact is that as knowledge expands, freedom decreases, else antiintellectualism would be all bad.

4. I **worship** only the biblical God, & I **respect** ("pledge allegiance to"), in decreasing order, planet earth (specifically, the biosphere), humanity tomorrow, humanity today, the human individual, the past, & some individual fellow-creatures (eg, in my garden, the cats but not the rabbits).

5. Note that "the human individual" is, on my scale, way down at the fourth level of respect. I am concerned about a living, born or preborn, individual's **quality of life**, but only in the context of my prior three respects: biospheric quality, demographic quality, & the human life-quality of "the children's children unto the last generation," unto Kingdom Come (in the sense of the Lord's Prayer). This is no novel notion of mine, but a settled opinion of the years, as came out in the meeting when Herb. Davis smiled & said "Three strikes & out," an expression I'd used 30 years ago in leading a retreat in which he was a retreatant. I taught then, as now, the coercive sterilization of mothers at the third birth, the loss of license of physicians & midwives proved to have failed (1) to tattoo a small mark just below the navel to record a birth or (2) to sterilize on the occasion of the third birth. For at least 30 years I've explained that this legislation would (1) control population & (2) eliminate abortion in the cases of women who've thrice come to term. If my legal project seems grossly inhuman as well as laughably futuristic, consider the current inhumanity: a billion malnourished, millions dying of starvation, in one more generation two people standing where one stands now, an exponentially deteriorating bio-support system, and an overall downgrading of the quality of human life. (A just-published Rockefeller Foundation Population Sciences report projects that the overthrow of Roe v. Wade would result in  $\frac{1}{4}$  million additional babies annually at the socioeconomic bottom of our society, where hopes & prospects for quality of life are lowest & welfare dependency is highest. Some who are addicted to humanity in general & the poor in particular claim that population-control efforts,

incl. abortion, intend the genocide of the poor. I counter that the present situation could with more truth be called the suicide of the poor, their hopes sunk in too heavy a mass of human flesh.) An old demographic truth is sounding ever louder: The higher the population, the lower the quality of life. Rubbing in the need to go radical in population control, Isaac Asimov (to Bill Moyers, "A World of Ideas" TV series) put it this way: "It's almost as though it's not necessary to do good; it's only necessary to stop doing evil, for goodness' sake." (ZPG June/89: +700,000,000 during Reagan.)

6. If we construe it aright for our time, the gospel will be **good news to humanity in the biosphere** as it is already good news to the person in community. But the opposite is true of Christianity as the traditional packaging of the gospel: on balance, Christianity comes off as an enemy of the biosphere, for it is compassionately addicted to humanity, to what here-&-now is happening to born & unborn human individuals. Eg, suppose a certain high-Andes small tribe were to become "Christian," giving up sibling incest &/or infanticide. They practice the former to have enough children to survive, & the latter (by putting deformed-by-inbreeding neonates on high rocks for the condors to eat) because only the hardy can survive in that rugged environment & (though unconsciously) to prevent deterioration of their gene pool. How would "civilization" destroy their bio-homeostasis (balance with their bio-support system)? If the "Christians" taught them to use abortion (which they don't) instead of infanticide, population size would be kept in check but population quality would decline & constitute a new survival threat. Further, few Christian missionaries preach abortion, so that intervention is highly unlikely. If the strangers managed to dissuade the tribe from sibling incest, population would decline dangerously; if from infanticide, population (1) would increase dangerously & (2) decline in actual & potential (gene-) quality....Conclusion: The world has little to hope from a "Christian" conference on population, even less from one on abortion. But my religion (yes, Christianity) requires that I never lose hope, & "pray without ceasing."....Other than admitting that their religion is a misfit for that tribe, the "Christian" missionary might try to convince them that they should cease to exist as a tribe: if the shoe doesn't fit, cut off the foot. I believe in Christian missions, but not that kind....Dismal: For BOOKS & RELIGION, currently I'm viewing seven books on Christian ethics, not one of which so much as mentions the biosphere when treating of abortion. It is as though humanity were in history (the two biblical religions being history religions) but not in nature. Christian theologians & ethicists should wake up & smell the flowers, not just the coffee. From reading toward WCC '90 "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation," I have some hope that Christianity is waking up to the environmental crisis--but again, not vis-a-vis abortion, the only means of birth control (other "birth control" methods being not birth-control but conception-control) & an essential ingredient in population control, as most dramatically the case of Japan shows (most Japanese being aborted, to avoid deterioration of life-quality from overpopulation & resultant environmental degradation--a condition World War II proved they cannot solve as Subsaharans are now trying [& failing] to solve, the world-historical way, viz by migration, a way approaching zero possibility for humanity on this shrinking globe).

7. Hope: The world is awaking to our species' threats to the environment. One finds increasing references in bioethics bibliographies. We're in the early stages of what I'm calling **geothology**. Ray. B. Cattell (BEYONDISM: RELIGION FROM SCIENCE, Praeger/87) is a sample of secular help (though I reject his "natural selection"): Evolution directs individuals to form viable groups; it ("Providence," I say) orchestrates genes, culture, & environment through individuals & groups toward human sustained viability. THE ETHICS OF ABORTION (edd. Robt. M. Baird & Stuart E. Rosenbaum, Prometheus/89) includes deep discussion of the limits of individual autonomy. And PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MEDICAL ASPECTS OF INDUCED ABORTION (Eugenia B. Winter, Greenwood/88) is an annotated bibliography of 500 classic & representative works!

8. As nonmarriage makes divorce unnecessary, intercourse-control makes abortion unnecessary. But the mythic foundation on which cultures' sex taboos-custom-laws were based has broken up. Now we must do the wrong thing (abortion) for the right reason (planet earth's, thus also humanity's, health), lest (T.S.Eliot) we commit "the greatest treason, to do the right thing / for the wrong reason."