

Please increase appreciative/critical **AWARENESS**

What got me going on this was something that happened today. I had this conversation with the worker who came to repair our home's fire/burglar alarm. He: "All you need is a new speaker. \$22 + \$50 installation." I: "The previous quotes were \$525, \$400, & \$375. How come?" He: "Most of the people in this business are dishonest." I: "So why are you honest?" He: "I want to feel good about myself. And I can't if I treat a customer as I'd not want to be treated." I: "Just what Jesus said." He: Silence, & he was off. When he returns to replace the speaker, I'll put the bee on him for Jesus: I believe in taking "unfair" advantage of one's workers "for," as the Holy Book says, "the kingdom of God's sake."

1 You are **aware** of two moral issues here: (1) "Jeff"'s nobility. The one thing he said that I didn't report above was, "It's hard to keep honest when you're being constantly undercut by the competition." (2) Is evangelism "fair" when you've somebody financially cornered? Ambivalence: (a) Yes, it's unfair if the target feels entrapped; (b) No, it can be done as a gentle witness, giving the target the feeling that you care but that you'd not be financially unfair (e.g., dropping the negotiation [Lat, "business"] if the target fails to convert). Semantic problem: "Target"? Gentler term, from business: "Prospect." Goal: "All will know me [the LORD], from the least to the greatest" (Jer.31.34 TEV [quoted in Heb.8.11]). Love is becoming aware: evangelism is causing awareness.

2 I've no doubt that the permanent project & continuing commission of every biblical person is to help one's neighbor, the world, become **aware** of God, LORD of heaven & earth, the Father almighty, who has come to us in Jesus Christ his Son & whose Holy Spirit abides in all who become open to him. Necessarily, this will mean that biblical persons are not always the best company at parties, & not being invited to some parties saves them some time. Rising persecution of Christians today is indirect evidence that our presence is, to worldlings, at least awkward. Within the limits of honesty & courage in our Christian professing, we should be as ingratiating as we can be; but we're not in charge of the limits of the world's tolerance of our pitch for Jesus.

3 So far in this Thinksheet, I've bespoke two forms of **awareness**: (1) Critical awareness of "the jungle out there" in the current morally degenerate economy: & (2) Appreciative awareness of the Shekinah, God's Presence in one's life, the lives of others (e.g., Jeff), the world. **BALANCE**: (1) Without critical awareness, we are dupes & playthings of the world; (2) Without appreciative awareness, we are ingrates in a universe full of the grandeur of God & in a world in which character & wisdom race at least a nose ahead of mendacity & folly.

4 As an imperative sentence, this Thinksheet's title asks you to take charge of your own awareness & be an **awareness-witness** to others. Let's call that your royal function vis-a-vis awareness. Your priestly function is to serve at the altar of grateful appreciation, eager to say "Yes!" to life, the neighbor, the world, the cosmos. It's the count-your-blessings mood: "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits" (Ps.103.2 NRSV); "What shall I return to the LORD for all his bounty to me?" (Ps.116.12 NRSV). **DANGER**: In old age I'm tempted to be too comfortable with this priestcraft (a universal priesthood), overdoing the appreciative awareness of what is, to the neglect of obedience to the heavenly vision of what should be. Of course the priestly tendency exists in each of us no matter our biological age, but the temptation to "lose [critical] edge" increases as one's life-energies decline--unless, of course, one permits the sourness of complaints to dispel the sweetness of appreciations.

The final of the triadic dimensions of self-leadership, on biblical analogy, is the prophetic function, critical awareness & critical confrontation of "king" (your duty & responsibility of awareness & awareness-witness) & "priest" (your celebration of "the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living").

5 As **Jesus** throughout the NT is seen & worshiped as King, Priest, &

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Prophet--collectively-canonically, not systematically--we "in his steps" should practice self-examination (& critiquing of the institutions for which we have any responsibility) vis-a-vis this triad of leader-roles. When we decide & evaluate, we are to "remember the words [& deeds] of the Lord Jesus" (Ac.20.35).

6 In your lifestory, who comes first to mind when you think of appreciative awareness? critical awareness? Who willingly paid a price for saying an unpopular yes? who no? What can you learn from them for your own stewardship of awareness? To stay with our biblical-leadership analogy, are you a priest (a "P" [perceiving-appreciative] type) or a prophet (a "J" [judging-critical] type)? (I'm only slightly more J than P, so you'd expect my Thinksheets to be only slightly more critical than appreciative, & you'd be right. Your personality-type is visible in your inclinations, which are clues to your divine assignment, what God wants you to do & be & become.)

7 In my student experience, Henry Nelson **Wieman** (the first thinker to theologize process philosophy), more than any other teacher, helped me become aware of the sacred potential of awareness, which is what happens when one pays attention. (E.Stanley Jones [long a Christian missionary in India], on a retreat & in his extensive writings, had taught me the promise & danger of attending: "what gets your attention gets you.") For me, Wieman heightened the attend-aware process by defining God as "the increase of appreciable awareness" (a shockingly shrunk but sharpened, penetrating definition). A strong P, Wieman was radiant in his call to "Awake, sleeper, arise from the dead" (Eph.5.14, though I don't recall his using this scripture). (An audience is "appreciative," the performer is "appreciable." Growing in appreciable awareness is growing in God, becoming the evolved creature the Creator intends--an evolution including the development of critical consciousness.)

7 Creation's goal (again, in add. to the scriptures in §1 [above]): "The earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Is.11.9 NRSV; Hab. [2.14] quotes this; TANAKH has Hab. here thus: "The earth shall be filled with awe for the glory of the LORD as waters cover the sea [meaning the sea-bed].")

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