

The Bible is "heavier" with hearing / not hearing than is any other sacred book of the world's great religions. Look at "HEAR-LISTEN-LEARN" in Dalton's THE MODERN CONCORDANCE....[based on the Jerusalem Bible] and you'll find page after page instead of only a brief article. Abraham hears God, the religion of promise begins; Moses sees a burning bush, but it turns out to be only a come-on for a voice speaking out of it; Jesus hears the Father, and Paul hears the resurrected Lord, and the catechumens [lit., "listeners"] hear the Word of God in preparation for baptism--and Black Elk, who as an Amerind child heard the four prayers in his own heart to direct him through the four seasons of life, became a Christian and for a half century was a catechist....WHAT THIS THINKSHEET DOES NOT DO: Lay out a syllabus for Bible study on this experience/paradigm. For that, I suggest that first you study the article in Dalton, then read the article in Richardson's THEOLOGICAL WORD BOOK OF THE BIBLE....WHAT THIS THINKSHEET ATTEMPTS: Existential remarks on NONlistening and its consequences, as a world-Word movement for "doing theology."

1. In his fifth and last vol. on America's chn., Harv. psychiatrist Robt. Coles says that THE PRIVILEGED [his book-title] are trained what questions not to ask and what cries not to hear: education for power is education in NONlistening and NONasking. To sharpen the point, the rich and powerful want their children educated against learning--as, I may add, the poor and powerless tend to "learn" their children against "education"! Anyone reading this thinksheet has had at least some of the former dysfunctionality built in, in-scripted, at an early age. And Christian faith --e.g., Is.61 (L.4)--is against this ANTIhearing. So Coles' five-vol. opus is, as action and reflection, profoundly biblical, opening our ears to all our children and thus to the child of the past within each of us.

2. Because I was not well heard, or at least heard out, as a child, and because my conversion to Xny occurred at the peak of the first of my three adolescences, I am keenly sensitized to the deprivations and desolations of nonlistening, and angered at top-dog ploys to prevent the hearing of bottom-dog cries [to use Fritz Perls' coinage]. Power is trained, and trains, to listen up, and not to listen down. A few instances of the power-instruction "Don't listen to....!"

(1) LBJ's DON'T LISTEN TO VIOLENT BLACKS. His "We shall not reward violence" speeches disingenuously floated a number of fictions: (1) That history does not reward violence, whereas the truth is that history rewards little else; (2) That force from black folks, instead of against them, is inherently wicked, therefore "violent"; (3) That white folks would listen to black folks if they'd only stop being violent and threatening violence; (4) That white folks will not listen to the threats and violence of black folks, so that black folks might better just cool it and "come now, let us reason together." Truth, of course, is that white folks were listening, at the power level, to black folks for the first time. E.g., the Montgomery Bus Corp. was the first Am. corp. ever threatened by black folks with extinction: money talks, and so does the threat against holding and making it....My response, in NYT and on radio and television and in magazines, was to blow this illusion. Many saw me as for violence, though my United Ministries in Higher Education pamphlet ["VIOLENCE: No Resort or Last Resort or...?"] makes clear I was not: rather, I was against nonlistening and the rhetoric promoting the illusion of nonlistening when violence ensued from black folks' not having been listened to when nonviolent.

(2) The churches' DON'T LISTEN TO J.P.STEVENS. Since my religion commits me to fight for everyone's having a hearing, I am against the brushoff this company has time and again gotten from church executives, though I am for the workers' right to organize. But partisans treat me as though I were against the workers! Partisans, unless they can step back occasionally from advocacy to philosophy, are poor listeners, for they are "principalities [structures] and powers [processes]."

(3) At 60, I'm becoming more meditative about my lifelong habit of bespeaking the interests of those persons and causes on the low end of the DON'T LISTEN advice. Which means I'm often speaking for those not present. Which means I'm often, largely unjustly, seen as speaking against those present.