

Every human being is, at any given moment, sniffed at by some other human beings. This thought occurred to me after the moving-van left a neighboring home, and the "new" family's dog came onto our dog Tippy's territory and got sniffed and growled at. I conclude, by an ethological leap some may call dubious, that "prejudice" is mammalian, "natural," and therefore--when functioning specifically, i.e. according to the life of the species--to be accepted, and even thanked God for.

Now, the word "liberation," so much in use since WWII, reminds us that the functioning of human prejudice is sometimes unnatural, hypertrophied. As the term polar to "oppression," "liberation" denotes divine-human action toward restoring and/or achieving "the liberty of the children of God," i.e. the natural functioning of the species under, in, and for God. According to the latest sensitivities, which I affirm, these polar terms apply--as, indeed, in Ro.8--to the whole creation: Christian ethics bids us Christians seek the well-being of all creatures under humanity's care-taking commission, and thus to fight, under whatever economic system, against injustice, poverty, waste, and pollution...and to engender the virtues arming us to this fight, viz. fellow-feeling ["love," "compassion," "listening"-empathy, sympatico], self-control, risk-taking, truth-fervor, stewardship as both property-caring and property-sharing, diligence--indeed, the virtues of both "capitalism" and "socialism," combined, with avoidance of the vices of both: capitalism's hubris of profit for profit's sake, with the cosmic positive sanction that prosperity signals God's favor and poverty God's displeasure and rejection; socialism's hybris of the collective versus the individual, with the cosmic positive sanction that the materialistic dialectic favors the "alienated" and condemns the rich (a view Jesus is often used, by "liberation theology," to sanction).

[A SIGNIFICANT ASIDE: From the standpoint of Jn. Calvin, vs. Calvinistic scholasticism, both laissez faire and Marxism are degenerate forms of Calvinism in that they woodenheadedly, and without diffidence or sorrow, develop, as of equal weight, the negative: moralistically, legalistically, precisionally, the rich or the poor are "bad" on opposite sides of the world's currently most agonized curtain..... whereas Calvin was diffident: (1) double predestination in developed form would have shocked him; (2) prosperity signals, in some sense(s), God's blessing, but trouble and poverty do not automatically indicate divine punishment (so the rich cannot alibi themselves out of responsibility for poverty)...To illustrate the degenerate dimension, ideological "liberationists" would see me as oppressing the young, people of "color," and women, by virtue of the simple fact that I am an old white man.]

In dealing with realities the subject of this thinksheet signals, I have a concern for BIBLICAL BALANCE. Exodus-Resurrection is a major "cut" through the Bible, but is not the theme of the biblical revelation (as "liberationists" claim); rather, it is a theme in a complex inclusive of creation, responsibility, community, all centering in the "glory" of God--and no subtheme to coopt the other subthemes of the biblical paradigm. When cooptation occurs, the paradigm is distorted only if the rhetorical inflation of a particular subtheme like "oppression-liberation" is ideologized and hypostatized into ontic distortion, i.e. reality warped as in a bent metal mirror. When this distortion occurs, one function of theological education is (1) to bend the mirror flat (2) while not deflating the rhetoric. This is almost impossible, and I know of nowhere where it is presently occurring.

Letting the centuries speak to the hours, we shall have to prophesy that "liberation theology" is a passing construct. In as recent a work as the DICTIONARY OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS (Jn. Macquarrie, ed.; Westm./67), "liberation theology" and "liberation" do not occur, even though the authors, including Jn.C. Bennett, are, as Marty said, "'all the right people.'" Truth should be honored, not victimized, in [UCC Statement of Faith] "the struggle for justice and peace." Anti-ismism is just another God-dishonoring prejudice, a sentimental evasion of the tough task of adjudicating fulcrum claims on the rights/responsibilities balance in full face of fact.