

OCCASION:
My return from a
conference on
eco-justice.

I believe that our primary human obligation is to live gratefully-joyfully on God's good earth in God's presence for God's purposes, walking the Lord's Prayer, respecting the biosphere and protecting it against Medflies, gypsy moths, and a bio-unbearable flow of human flesh. I am one of the perplexed whom I am trying to guide into & through 1982 with this thinksheet. This may I do, and help others do, in 1982 (my father's favorite Scripture saying): "to do mishpat, to love hesed, and to walk eagerly with my God." I am more than perplexed as to how to do this: I am anguished. Soul and society are now at stake, as never before, on the global scale. I have been given, in various ways, some guidelines/parameters from God:

1. Jn. Ciardi's famous one-line poem, "Man can," is a false truth. Its truth is that we humans cannot excuse ourselves from trying to solve our personal-societal-generic-specific problems; its falsity is that both our condition and our situation are hopeless within the limits of our trying. (In historical theology, this is the Augustinian/Pelagian and the Calvinist/Arminian divides, and John Wesley's pious pragmatism: "On your knees knowing that all depends on God: on your feet knowing that all depends on you.")
2. While we ecumenical Christians are rightly advised not to use the Bible koranistically (as fundamentalists) or ayatollistically (as the Moral Majority), I do believe that the biblical Jesus provides us with the primary and adequate model for walking in the world anywhere anytime. The first distich of the prayer he taught us as a model provides us with the right tension for this walking: first line ["Your kingdom come"], the liberal pretension (which Niebuhr masterfully attacked) is self-defeating; second line ["Your will be done on earth"], all pietistic and mystical cop-outs on trying are betrayals of the biblical-prophetic call to compassionate-intelligent action.
3. A faithful biblical-theological presentation, now, will repent of whichever of the two sins (in paragraph #2) one has been guilty of and will call to a purified, humble, obedient, caring faith. One reason I hear so little repentance is that it seems to give aid and comfort to the enemy, i.e. to the other side! The fear of conceding too much joins with the old Adam's desire to minimize ego-pain. How often I hear from counselees and students (and read, with various wordings) "I don't regret anything; I've learned so much." The self-model here is human-as-learner: the education- or "growth"-model predominates, as is natural in a Hellenic culture such as "Western civilization." The biblical self-model is human-as-creature, and the aberration is "sin" (breach, by creature, of the Creator-creature relationship), treachery, betrayal. Correctly, the grieving father i S. Agnon's "Fable of the Goat" says it both ways: "Oi, vai, I am my own worst enemy, a betrayer of Life!"
4. Jeremiah is right: We cannot "heal the wound of My people lightly, saying 'Peace, peace, where there is no peace'." The Hebrew root here (shlm, noun "shalom") means safety in mind-body-estate-society-world, and [by extension] complete, fulfilled, whole, healed, healthy, and [by further extension] in joyful communion with Creator and fellow-creatures. In this perspective, "eco-justice" expands from meaning only fairplay for one's fellow-humans to include the whole eco-bio-sphere (the term including living creatures' earth-house ["eco-," from Greek "house"] and all life on earth ["bio-," from Greek "physical life"]). So Black Elk: "I would not tell you my story if it were only my story. But I tell it because it is the story of all creatures on earth--the two-leggeds, the four-legged, and all finned and winged ones."
5. I believe that "eco-justice," in the narrow sense of treating all humans fairly, has become impossible, and that that impossibility will become more clear as the thin and fragile biophere groans ever louder under the weight of increasing human flesh. We might begin to approximate justice by coercive reduction of this flow; i.e., by sterilizing women at the third birth. Taboos against this are probably too strong; accordingly, I do not expect the survival of civilization unless the civilized can build strongholds against the uncivilized; but that's self-defeating.