

*** Santa Claus is a conflation of St. Nicholas and Druidism's Old Man of the Forest whose ho-ho-ho jollity is in the "Yule" ["Joll-"] log.

* Among recent down-with-Darwin thinksheets, see especially #1611.

** NYC depends on tree's water-retention northward, so I planted trees in Westchester.

This thinksheet is an exposition of a brow wrinkle, my emotional-theological perplexity over the profound eco-disturbance of the trees/humanity balance or trade-off. Private and public policy must be involved. What, now, am I being called to do as human and as Christian?

1. ABOVE the earth, I breathe what trees exhale, and vice versa. ON the earth, I use trees both to warm myself (wood/coal/gas/oil [currently, not gas; and oil only as one of two sources of public electricity]) and to build myself shelter. BELOW the earth, I'm dependant on trees to maintain the soil against erosion as well as to develop its friability and nutrients. While other flora (esp. bacteria) are important to my bio-existence, only trees share with sun and water a sibling relationship with me.

2. How provide sufficient sanctional-motivational force for the healthy maintenance of this sibling relationship? In various paganisms (Druidism, Shinto, Taoism, Animism, Canaanitism [asherah/oth]), the relationship is hallowed by ritual celebration, locating the relationship in the numen, the sacred sphere. In biblical religion, "the earth is the Lord's" and is therefore both sacrament and stewardship (in the words of a church mailer recently hitting my desk: "The basics of stewardship are (1) God creates, sustains, and thus owns all things...always....(2) God brings us to life....(3) He intends, however, that His will shall govern our wills....(4) Our use of God's Property, whether as faithful or rebellious stewards, is therefore what life is all about.--Richard E. Ryder"). The same truth in the mouth of Coleridge's Ancient Mariner: "He prayeth best, who loveth best/All things both great and small:/For the dear God who loveth us,/He made and loveth all." Note that biblical religion roots (literally!) our relationship with and our love for the earth in the doctrine of creation. Cut the root of that doctrine (as did Darwin), and we are alienated from "nature" (which Darwin as an old man admitted was a baleful, unintended side-effect of his evolutionism). (That alienation process began with the Renaissance and was intensified by the Industrial Revolution "naturally" [Darwin] and in the work/tool [the Marx critique], and then by psycho-collapse into id [Freud] and psyche [Jung].) A sad replacement for this biblical doctrine of creation is naturalistic-poetic mysticism (HUDSON REVIEW, Loren Eiseley and other scientist-poets [just now, esp. Carl Sagan, who uses "Cosmos" as a holophrase for God--as, in the final segment of his TV series "Cosmos": "Our obligation is to the Earth and to the Cosmos."]). "Earth Day" (1970) boosted eco-concerns into public attention, but "Genesis II" depended less on Genesis than on Eastern religions and (to a lesser extent) Amerind ("American-Indian") religion.

3. I can still hear Mircea Eliade, to a group of liberal ministers (including me): "Is the Sacred Tree in the center of the clearing holy?" Most said not. M.E.: "Then why are you ministers?"

4. Desertification/dendrification(reforestation). AD2000, Kansas will be like AD1980 Sahara-Sahel. In 1948 (Israel's first year), I bought a tree for Israel, which now has more trees than all the rest of the Middle East together: Israel is winning the war for the trees. The Mediterranean basin, in biblical times heavily forested, is now virtually treeless: that is its major political fact--as is true in the case of Haiti and a hundred other "trouble spots" of the earth. To this fact, everything else is secondary: food, arms, type of government, life-styles, religions, demography, urbanism, "development," even literacy. Population-control is the fact's dark side.

5. *Etz chaim* ("tree of life," a powerful biblical paradigm) is what friend Chaim Stern says he'd choose for his logo. In our Cape Cod greenhouse, one is in stained glass as logo for our greenhouse/home....From Sanskrit *dru* we get both "tree" and (through Celtic) "Druid." How much I've had to do lately with (Skr.) *daru* ("wood": the native oak and pine to build our house, the cleared trees that are still warming us, and all the paper I process!).