

HORRORS AND HOPES: The Coastean Society, dedicated to the defense of "the water planet."
 Box 113/S, Norfolk VA 23517

On this my 65th birthday (4Feb83), we of the Town of Barnstable are deep into something good, viz. town planning, which involves something ambiguous, viz. population limitation. This thinksheet is concerned about Christian ethics vis-a-vis (1) population flow (folks' freedom of travel and settlement across the fragile "ecumene" (Greek, "inhabitable earth"), and (2) population limitation (voluntary and coercive conception control, triage, biomedical ethics in general, "heroic measures," infanticide, suicide, parricide, female circumcision--the last four still in general practice in some societies, and proposed by some for all societies).

1. This month, our grandson Matthew will be five days with us on Manhattan: we don't like his breathing that rich air, but that's the way it is. We (Loree and I) have been many places on this globe where we faced "Don't Drink the Water" signs. Since the world has no better flush-toilet system than the Hudson River, NYC would be one of the last places on earth to put up such signs. But that's part of the problem: the people who would be last to face the pure-water issue have the most media-power. Close by NYC, L.I. is fast approaching the time for putting up the signs. And our Cape Cod is not far behind.

2. On issues of purity of water-air-soil, what now does it mean to be (as I, as a human being and a Christian, want to be) "fighters for humanity"? If I vote to keep more people from moving onto Cape Cod, now that we are "safely" here, that's certainly fighting for pure water to continue. And it's certainly fighting for us humans now here on Cape Cod. But is it "fighting for humanity"? If I were really a fighter for humanity rather than (elitistly) fighting for *my part of* humanity, I'd vote to open the floodgates to everybody, including those designated on the Statue of Liberty--wouldn't I? If I did, Cape Cod's aquifers would become, probably within the short space of my lifetime, so polluted as to be undrinkable without (as, e.g., in Italy today) a good shot of wine. Yet, logically, voting for the ecological exclusion of *anybody* is an outrage to my liberal convictions! I'm in an ideological muddle, but tilting toward voting for the biosphere against an excrescence of humans.

3. "Excrescence" is an ugly word, and the world situation (of which the Cape Cod situation is one slice) is ugly. Hitherto, the problem of the biosphere has been what might be called earth-husbandry. China and the Middle East, for examples, deforested and grazed to such an extent as to effect such desertification as would take centuries to repair; and the technological devastation of the oceans has seen a steady decline, since 1971, of food from the sea. The planet is becoming, at increasing pace, less habitable for man, the most rapacious and filthiest creature.

4. Biblically, the Garden of Eden was protected against the most rapacious and filthiest beast: it (we) was chased out. Politically, do we have the right/duty to retain certain paradises, defending them against this depredation? I'm leaning toward establishing bio-preserves of "the good earth," enclaves in which the biocycle continues undisturbed by us humans. On Cape Cod, this would mean unbuildable green areas on which only bike trails could be built. But who the hell am I to have the privilege of living near any of these Ersatz paradises?

5. It's crazy, but Ghandi's spinningwheel is looking better. Computer and spinningwheel, what a combo! Maybe we're underdreamed. And I lie awake: should I put an ad in the CAPE COD TIMES to those needing shelter, "Y'all come"? And "how dwelleth the love of God in me" if I turn away from anyone's immediate needs?