

"GOD'S LAW" IS (1) THE BIBLE? (2) NATURE?

Mark Twain as an Apostle of the "Natural" Urge ---- Elliott #1705

"The ankle bone is connected to the head bone": ideas shape life, and The Idea that gets your attention best (in intensity, extensivity, and repetition) gets you....#1699.2 lists these idea-options:

- (1) History, focusing on COMMANDMENTS--Bible, Quran, Hegel, Marx.
- (2) Nature, focusing on URGES--Rousseau, Darwin, Mark Twain, Lloyd Morgan, Samuel Alexander, Jan Christian Smuts, Schopenhauer, Freud.
- (3) Idea(s), focusing on VALUES--Plato, Whitehead, Tillich, Sidney Simon.
- (4) Consciousness, focusing on AWARENESS--Vedanta, Buddha, Freud, Jung, Husserl/Heidegger, Sartre, Camus.

Now, just think of the fun you could have if you were to assume that religion has displaced "God's Law" from "nature" (where it actually is) to the Bible (where it isn't--and where, indeed, the opposite is). That's Mark Twain's project in LETTERS FROM THE EARTH (H&R/62, -p.55, the rest of the book being the other papers in this last posthumous work of America's most famous humorist). This thinksheet shows how devilishly clever and wickedly delicious his working out of the project (German, *Denkzwang*, a thought-process viewed as self-propelled). The responsible critic will point out (1) Twain as responsible, in this extended spoof, to basic humane values over against inherited insensitivities and professional humbug (in this case, especially of clergy), and (2) Twain as irresponsible in throwing out the biblical baby with the critical bathwater,*and (3) Twain as irrepressibly Menckenesque (M.T. being the major model for H.L.M.), destabilizing, ironic, uproarious, and sardonic oft to the point of pessimism....NOTES: (1) Of the four *Anfangspunkten* (thought starting-points, above), the first two are active and the second two largely passive. (2) Person-locations are not absolute: Marx belongs also in #2, Hegel also in #3, and Schopenhauer also in #1. (3) For culture-analysis of the present education-establishment in America, note that Twain is in the same category as Darwin and Freud: Darwin was the priest of evolutionism, and Twain its temple jester. (4) I read Walter Lippmann's copy of Twain: the two, secular-humanist soul-mates! (5) Shortest way to put the world-picture options: All you see is from Me (the biblical view);...Me (most of Hinduism; all pantheisms);...It (all materialisms and voluntarisms; e.g., Freud's *id*).

QUOTES, in order: (God gave automatic law) a name--the LAW OF NATURE--and said Natural Law is the LAW OF GOD--interchangeable names for one and the same thing...Man is an experiment, the other animals are another experiment. Time will show whether they were worth the trouble....(Satan goes to earth and writes letters back to Gabriel and Michael--the letters constituting the rest of the essay.)....(Man) has imagined a heaven, and has left entirely out of it the supremest of all his delights,...sexual intercourse!....(Heaven) has not a single feature in it that he actually values....(Attacking doctrinal fundamentalism and rigid moralism:) Now (after the apple) they could do evil--and suffer for it; now they had acquired what the Church calls an invaluable possession, the Moral Sense....(God) has one code of morals for himself, and quite another for his children.... (God's character is) a confusion of contradictions. ... (Nonsense:) *God is all-knowing and all-powerful*....Under no circumstance does the pulpit ever pay the Creator a compliment that has a vestige of truth in it. The poor's most implacable and unwearying enemy is their Father in Heaven....(Compassionate people relieve human distress, and) God gets the credit for it....(God is) the Great Criminal....Every statute in the Bible and in the lawbooks is an attempt to defeat a law of God--a law of nature.

*And in failing to credit the Bible as the chief source of his own moral sensitivities-- which is like saying that one's mother, though she did her best, was no damn good.