

For at least 1/2 c. I've been puzzled by the standoff between balance (or homeostasis, a Greek virtue) and total commitment (a Jewish and protoRoman virtue-- "protoRoman," because the great-influential Romans of late antiquity were influenced by their Greek slaves, Greek Stoicism with its preachment of equanimity, balance of passion/reason, composure, evenness of mind/temper, right (i.e., balanced) disposition, apatheia (the religious refusal to let feelings bomb out reason)). My mother had the flying-in-the-dark sense of the human thing to do and be: my father was a faithful, and within his limits noble, Roman Stoic (his ruthless logic modified only by the Christian stricture against the violation of agapé). Ergo, I do not know how to live the rest of my life, but I have some clues--more from Jesus than from anybody else.

1. The older I get, the warier I am of total commitment. I'm sure that most of the men who voted against Jesus, a hotheaded and brilliant "change agent," were older than he was. As I'm now exactly twice as old as he got (if he got to 33), I'm bio-distancing from the one I call my Lord. And I have one more promise to keep, viz., to report how it feels/looks from each advancing year of wine and roses, pain and loving. I'm making this report to Jesus, who may learn something from one twice his bio-age. This is no effrontery: He is, par excellence, the teacher able and eager to learn from his disciples, else he'd be unworthy to be my Lord.

2. Why wary of total commitment? Because at 4 a.m., my usual waking-time, I'm convinced that t.c. has been, for humankind, more bad news than good news. If I were to distribute the religious-literature types across the 24-hour spectrum, I'd put the prophets at 11 a.m. (when I'm the hottest) and the Wisdom Literature in the wee hours, when my bio-temperature and gullibility are lowest. On this model: If death comes at dawn (as it does for us criminals, who've betrayed life), the literature of last resort is Wisdom (even though much of Ecclesiasticus, which Loree and I are reading night by night in a new translation in bed, is mainly wasteland).

3. Now, Apr/84, I have an almost overwhelming hunger for balance, for a fair shake for female/male, for compassionate-intelligent trade-offs between humanity and ethnicity/religion and between "rich" and "poor." All our lives we yearn, at least unconsciously, for "the Rule of God," justice and peace, truth and love. Jesus is both the personal symbol and active presence of this dream/reality in the Christian heart, and so Jesus-devotion is the heart of Christianity (which we violate if we think/act unmagnanimously toward others, esp. Jews, our elder brothers and sisters).

4. Another dimension of balance: spirituality/sensuality. I've been re-reading Jn. Donne, whose love-sonnets are super-earthly and whose sermons (later in life) are super-heavenly (both, in the good sense). The glory of his spirituality is that it was won and God-given not at the expense of his sensuality but as the flowering thereof. In this, he's the Goethe of English literature (though I'd never so thought of it before beginning to write this sentence: such discoveries-inventions are one of the joys of thinksheet-writing, which is my main way of connection-making on paper). "Only our love hath no decay....first, last, everlasting dayone another's best....Death be not proud....What if this present were the world's last night?....Batter my heart, three-person'd God.... imprison me, for I/except you enthrall me, never shall be free....more than kisses, letters mingle souls....Be thine own palace, or the world's thy gaol....No man is an island, entire of it self....It tolls for theePoor intricatèd soul! Riddling, perplexed, labyrinthical soul!"

Please balance this thinksheet's tilt with my conviction that alternative worlds are created only by hotheads whose brains and guts concentrate on the thought that things could be, otherwise than they are.