

A SELF-EXAMINATION FOR PASTORS: MY SANCTIONAL RANGE AND RICHNESS

Jesus convinces me of the primacy of the motive, that out of the heart are the issues of life. I am only slightly less persuaded that Socrates was right when he said that the unexamined life is not worth living. T. S. Eliot expresses my modern awareness of guilt and catharsis when he speaks of "the purification of the motive in the ground of our beseeching." In the scattered life of my culture and parish, I long for an integration of my motives, my words, and my actions. I long for transparent integrity for myself and my people.

I would have the courage to let my heart be moved by what I would have move other hearts. As I pray for the skill to persuade as I ought, I tremble before love's demand that I be what I ought, I in whom cold calculating often overcomes the fire burning. God would stir up in me and in my people a religious moral passion that is a match for the times, a consuming consecration to the service of God in Christ.

In this spirit of prayer and trembling I am now willing to study the type, range, depth, and pattern of my appeals to others, as part of an overall study of my motives, the sanctions which move me, the motives and sanctions of the culture in which I minister, and the heart of those to whom I minister. I do not know everything of what it means to be holy, but I stand certain that it involves a longing for communion with God, for self-transcending transparency, and for cooperation with Grace in removing, in myself and in others, blockages to awareness and communion.

ULTIMATE SANCTIONS--In my relationships to what extent do I support my convictions (my "message") by appeals to the character, name, works, words, or will of God (divine sanction) and of Jesus Christ (dominical sanction)? Do I make persuasive use of tradition as such (scriptural and apostolic sanctions)?

RETRIBUTIVE SANCTIONS--In seeking to elicit affirmative response do I promise extrinsic rewards? Do I threaten extrinsic punishments? If and when I lead others to anticipate recompense, is it in historical (prophetic sanction) or final (eschatological sanction) terms? How much do I present my case as wisdom and its alternative(s) as folly (sapiential)?

THE AUTONOMOUS SANCTION--In inciting to a certain belief or action, are the values I hold out and disvalues I warn against intrinsic, discernible by conscience as essentially (i. e., in themselves) right and wrong? Are the consequences I envisage reflexive, the gains and losses inner and automatic? Do my idea and ideal of happiness require personal autonomy, a self-sufficiency achieved through habituating life to the inherent injunctions of reason and nature?

SPIRITISTIC SANCTIONS--As a religious leader do I seek to guide others by considerations drawn from personal experience (my own, theirs, or what may be theirs)? Do I spur with thoughts and feelings of the sacred and

(over)

pure (holiness sanction)? Do I offer the attractions of a freedom and forgiveness which may be obtained by repentance and faith rather than attained through struggle, or at least more the former than the latter (redemptive sanction)? In argument do I refer my case to and derive my lessons from the past, present, or future communion with God or the intuitive or symbolic values derivative therefrom (mystical sanction)? Do I use the actual or potential infusion of numinous potencies as stimulus (charismatic sanction)? Are the obedient promised grace through rites or the neglectful warned that they may be deprived of God's favor through these channels (sacramental sanction)?

SOCIAL SANCTIONS -- How much fuel-thrust do I derive from the nature of the Church (communal sanction)? From its instruction in faith and morals (catechetical sanction)? In evoking cooperation by promising group favor or in discouraging opposition by threatening withdrawal of group approval and the consequent disappointments, do I draw strength from the sense of the Church's order (constitutional sanctions)? (Do I provoke to my ends by alluding to the nature or powers of the clergy and leading laity [leadership sanction]? Does the worship of the church become sanction for what I desire [liturgical sanction]? Does the Christian community have a law and discipline which in my hands becomes a whip or a goad when higher motivations do not avail [legal sanction]?) Does any of my persuading rest on the relation of the Church and/or of the person to the general community, which has the power to bestow honor and inflict disgrace (sanction of public opinion)? Do I point to the secular juridical power to enforce my

views of the proper relations of the Christian and the Church to the socio-political order (sanction of majesterial power)? To what extent do I use considerations drawn from the academic disciplines (humanities, scientific, methodology, politics, economics) (academic sanction)? From technology (including communications) (technological sanctions)? Are rival cults or fellow-churchmen or fellow-churches utilized by me to get action (competition as sanction)? Do I turn to persuasive account the possible influence Christians may have on their fellow-believers or on non-Christians (sanction of personal influence)?

--Willis E. Elliott

(This was developed from my University of Chicago PhD thesis, SANCTIONS IN THE CONTROL-LITERATURE OF POSTAPOSTOLIC-PRECATHOLIC CHRISTIAN LEADERS, 1954.)