

1. "Privilege" is something we're supposed to "enjoy" (or we're stupid) while not "taking advantage of" others (or we're guilty). A double bind?
2. Imagine this sexual reversal: the incarnation is God coming to us through a father whose name was Jesus (and some unnamed woman, the mother among the ancients often not recorded) as the daughter Mary. Mary, as "God with us," goes to the synagogue, but does not "stand up to preach" (L.4). Why? She can't do it. Why not? Because the members won't let her. Who are the members? Men. Men! So God was bright enough to come as a Man, so he could have privileges which Jesus "enjoyed" and "took advantage of" (though of course without taking advantage of others...yes?).
3. This thinksheet tries to sort sentimentality out from substance in the thinking and arguing and teaching we do about "justice" in relation to "privilege." One of the weaknesses of the Christian religion (and everything on earth has its weaknesses) is that it makes folks prone to neurotic guilt: "If something goes wrong, it will probably be my fault." Scrupulosity, the over-readiness to feel guilty, is part of our Jewish heritage, the most unseemly part. What saves the saints from this unseemliness is that while she/he is more guilt-sensitive than anybody else, a higher consciousness controls, overrules, sweetens. "I am a sinner" has a double focus (self and guilt) inferior to the double focus of "God is my Savior" (God and forgiveness). The second set of foci, biblically, dominates, answers to, gets superior attention in comparison with, the first. The second set is both personal and interpersonal, both arising from and restoring to both communion and community; the first set is personal and intrapsychic, lacking the social dimension until it becomes "I am a sinner before God" and/or "I am a sinner against...(name)."
4. Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and the publican has the latter begin his sentences with "God" and the former, with "I." "God be merciful to me, a sinner" gives the major focus to God and the minor focus to sinful self. That's not so easy in our secular society. When we want social "action" (as over against social "service"), we more easily preach with focus on the unjust use of power/privilege as visible in (the marxist phrase) "social contradictions," systemic hypocrisies, unnecessary miseries. My observations of the post-World-War-II movements is that while they've brought some benefits, they've produced enormous neurotic guilt (alongside genuine "consciousness-raising") that folks make go away instead of getting forgiveness for. Or try to make go away, by practicing custodia oculorum (diverting the eye from the injustices and the ear from those who denounce the injustices). Losing the God-focus, the American people deified the occupant of the White House (inclining a few of us, including me, more accurately—of late—to demonize him). Losing the God-focus, social preachers harangued in ways almost indistinguishable from socialist (in the strict, atheist sense) preachers. (In the less strict sense, I consider myself a socialist, a Christian socialist.) Would "the fruits" find the Christian witness/church today stronger, more effective, if the God-focus had not been weakened? Hard to say, but I think so.
5. I'm pro-"movements" but anti-neurosis, against neurotic guilt; and I'm irritated but folks who try to make me feel guilty about things it would be stupid for me to feel guilty about. It would be stupid for me to feel proud about being of that sector of humankind that has been the greatest influence for good, viz. white males—for I had nothing to do with my birth. And for the same reason it would be stupid for me to feel ashamed about being of that sector of humankind that has been the greatest influence for harm, viz. white males. Presumably God had something in mind in making me a member of the earth's most powerful, most influential, sub-species, and he wants me to enjoy the privileges thereof, the rights and responsibilities. That's very different from "God, I thank thee I was not born anything other than a white male" (a version of the late Jewish prayer "God, I thank thee I was not born a woman").
6. One thing I'm grateful to the movements for is taking away some of my privileges.