

"What's going to happen to me/us?" is a high-energy question most of the time for most of us, even higher-energy in uncertain times, times uncertain for the soul and/or for society—and our time (Mar/75) is a time of double uncertainty. The question can be, but need not be, small-souled and provincial. (See the marvelously crisp, simple exposition of his "Christian realism" in Reinhold Niebuhr's MAN'S NATURE AND HIS COMMUNITIES (Scrib/65), 30ff: "Idealist and Realist Political Theories." 39: "In principle, the Christian faith holds that human nature contains both self-regarding and social impulses and that the former is stronger than the latter. This assumption is the basis of Christian realism.") This thinksheet presents the four hopes for meditation and study-guidance.

THE FOUR HOPES (SIX?)

1. On the chart, "here" means here-now/soon, an immediate hope (as in Mark 1.15?). It points to more than we have at the moment, yet what we have a "foretaste," aperitif, arrabon (engagement ring), of....

"Hereafter" is everything after "here" as here understood. Prime (') is used to designate beyond

the common-understood continuity of the present: "B'", beyond the present society/"world"; "D'", beyond biodeath of the individual.

	HERE	HEREAFTER	
		PRE-DEATH	POST-DEATH
SOCIETY	A	B	B'
THE INDIVIDUAL	C	D	D'

2. Note the order: biblically, concern for the future/hope of society predates, has priority over, concern for the future/hope of the individual. This "priority" has many aspects, most dramatically in the cross of Jesus; an aspect it does not have is the political-ideological notion that the individual exists to serve the state. (Politically, individual and state are on the same level, in triangulation under God.)

Fill in the chart-model as you will. The rest of this thinksheet is only a few of my musings, by designation of the boxes:

"A" is the prophetic concern for what's happening to people here and now under God (who is the primary Actor) in the squeeze between self-regarding and social impulses—and what will soon happen if/if-not.... Theodic vision of justice/peace in praise/joy.... which moves us into "B" and (in the case of the later prophets, who see beyond the exilic death of the old society) "B'": concerted action for social change.

"C" is the individual's here-and-now hopes set over against personal fears, suspicions, doubts, anxieties. Health? Employment? Fragile relationships? (Use the reverse of this sheet to detail yourself on this, as you now are or at least see yourself.)

"D" is long-range personal goals/dreams. What do I want to "be" (if I'm young)? What do I want to "achieve" (if I'm in mid-life)? How can I make my life more worth while for myself and others (if I'm old)? Or frame your own questions/answers, on the reverse of this sheet.

For many people, "D'" is the "biggie." What happens to me when I die? Where do I "go," if anywhere? Do I get another chance there, here, or nowhere? Let's stick with this last question: (1) Many religions don't much bother with the question (e.g., the Sinic: Taoism, Confucianism). (2) Some religions—chiefly Hinduism and Buddhism—say you must have another chance till you don't need another chance: you'll be back here on earth till you've become worthy of not returning (which means that being on earth is punishment, which indeed it often feels like!)—metempsychosis, transmigration, reincarnation are words used to describe this unwanted return-trip. (3) Some religions—especially the Abrahamic (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) say you've had it down here on earth as earth now is; your life always was, is, and always will be in God's hands: do you trust him? "Resurrection"/"Kingdom of God" are the code words ("B'" + "D'").