

This thinksheet consists of cogitations on a meeting today (13June77) of AF at NYTS with trustee chm. Graham Davidson and his food-production partner Dr. Thomas Gauchier (oceanographer who produced the first space-food model), with Rep. Fred Richman's food assistant Glenn VanBramer. Not because what I had to say was outstanding or even important, but so that I have a record of it, here, too, is some verbatim of my comments. (The thinksheet index not being developed from #800 to the present, I find my prior concerns in this area limited to the following: #34, Letter to the Ed. of HUDSON REVIEW, on antitheistic-antibiblical tendencies in poetic naturalism, tendencies impeding alliance between these two forces on ecological issues, population, and food; #329, attacks on Genesis; and #736, religious leadership vis-a-vis shamanic experience as destabilizing/restabilizing. Tangential are theopolitical issues, such as "governmental authority/power to use" control technologies "without the consent of the governed"--the quotation being from a disease scenario developed theologically as #75; motivational issues, on which some forty thinksheets; the nature of "nature" in relation to Genesis and the doctrine of "creation"--on which #329, #770, #556, and #51; the East/West hemispheres' religious interface, #605; an analysis of human needs, #319; and Christian/Amerind prayer, #774; upcoming are some on Mel Yosso's "transcultural allegories.")+#982

1. The biblical (Jewish and Christian) custom of centering in God on every occasion of partaking of food and drink--"grace at meals"--(1) expresses gratitude to the Creator for being our Provider, (2) wars against amnesia as to the Source of all that nurtures our animal and human life, and (3) completes the vertical cycle of Creation-Providence-Praise, while often (4) explicitly mentioning the horizontal cycle, the food-chain of the biosphere, in the form of thanks to God for "the farmer, the processor, the distributor,...." This simple, humble habit is a way of living the integrity, wholeness, full context of our cosmic-planetary life. The central sacrament of Christianity--"the Eucharist [thanksgiving-at-meal]," "Holy Communion," "the Mystery," "the Lord's Supper"--is a heightened form of grace-at-meal, incorporating the additional factor of Christ-ocentricity ["This do in remembrance of Me."] and both general and particular historicity (against ahistorical and antihistorical naturalism). To put it negatively, Judaism and Christianity cannot survive without this ancient custom, which most Jews and Christians have abandoned (except for special occasions) with the rise of cultural amnesia in the forms of life-fragmentation and secularism. With the rising consciousness-raising about food, we have in this biblical habit a resource for renewed respect for Father-God-and-Mother-Earth [to put it in only one of many impressive ways], a fresh sense of the preciousness of food and the precariousness of the life/food relationship, and a consciousness no previous generation could have, viz. of earth as bio-limited--and therefore of the psychology-of-neopoverty gratitude to God for the gift of something rare we are in danger of making scarce....This enriched thinking about "grace-at-meals" can provide rich sanctioning in daily Christian and Jewish living in home and world. Liturgists have already begun to enrich public worship in this vein, but religion in the home so languishes that materials here are only beginning to appeal--including a book, three months ago, for Reform Jews.

2. The Bible's prophetic kneejerk reaction is that if anything goes wrong, it's because we've sinned. Even a wry secularist will agree that that's not a bad beginning for scientific investigation and heuristic exploration toward the optimal pragma! But of course the prophets mean that the root cause is that we've disturbed the relational basis of our life, viz. the "covenant" with God, rooted in his command to "tend the garden" within strictures announced from the divine side of the relationship [Gen.1-3] --the primordial command, to which we must ever return [according to our guest consultant VanBramer today] on pain of nonsurvival. Untowardnesses are not curses [torture] from a demon but blessings [punishments!] from the God of truth and love, who's put pain-sensitive nerves not only in our skinbags but in the worldbag itself [the God/nature/humanity triangle]. The biblical person thus will experience, and proclaim, eco-dangers as personal, loving threats from the Promiser (as threat is as ontologically

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the other side of promise as punishment is the other side of reward). Most theology today is sentimental and effete, both politically and ecologically, because the whole negative dimension has been denied [on which see, e.g., Ernest Becker's THE DENIAL OF DEATH]: cosmic (devil, demons, hell), natural (so-called "acts of God"), historic (the Fall), historical (war and its aftermaths, tyranny), interpersonal (murder, rape, vengeance, unforgiveness--on which note that the two stripped-down human necessities in the Lord's Prayer are bread and forgiveness), personal (greed, lust, anxiety, death). ...As Glenn spoke about "the food/climate/population matrix," I thought of how much the biblical prophets have to say about climate and the weather! And of the quote from Jeff Cox: "The soil is the employer of last resort."

3. I remember being present when Robt. Maynard Hutchins, more than 1/3rd c. ago, made his "the good news of damnation" speech, in which he innocently--and, as the nuclear-proliferation event has proved, falsely--claimed that the nuclear horror he'd fostered under the U. of C. Spragg Stadium would end war by making it unthinkable. Truth to tell, negative reinforcement alone, fear alone, is inadequate to survival: there must also be love, the expulsive power of a new and comprehensive affection. I say "also": love alone, too, will not do. The two elements, push-pull, are polar components of the Numinous that threatens and so causes trembling, promises and so lures with fascination (*Mysterium tremendum et fascinans*). I get the basic religious-phenomenological feel out of the realities we were dealing with today....Schleiermacher's "feeling of absolute dependence"....Linnaeus' "Live innocently; God is here" (which somebody quoted today; close for Darwin, who unfortunately went amnesiac about God, so that nature became an idol into which the sacred was sucked as "Evolution" [capital "E"], a Source-alienation complicit with (a) technologism and (b) laissez faire capitalism)...Life's one bundle within creation: plants and we animals differ biologically only in that "they" have magnesium where "we" have iron!....Optimism is weakest, centering in circumstances; hope is stronger, centering in self; only trust transcends both circumstances and self, centering as it does in God (as Heb.11.1, e.g.). Cf. Frankl's three dimensions of freedom: to create (controlling circumstances), to respond (when power over outer circumstances is taken away), to take an attitude toward what's happening to you (when even the powers of managing your body are lost, as indeed now our biospheric control as a species is in doubt, and we are called upon to trust God and use our brain in a spiritual journey never before undertaken on the earth, an Abrahamic pilgrimage into a new space and land of promise).

4. The rape of the earth is Promethean-pagan-Enlightenment, not biblical-Jewish-Christian. The notion that biblical religion is bad for nature and thus for the future is a dirty Buddhist evangelistic trick originating with Suzuki ca.1950, according to biologist René Dubos (THE GOD WITHIN)...a canard taken up by many God-haters, especially in the counterculture of the 1950s and -60s. But "new occasions teach new duties," and old constructs of Christian truth sometimes become dysfunctional and even demonic--as in the case of Jacques Maritain's primitive defense of the sacrality of the womb in his debates with atheist Julian Huxley 30 years ago, which occasioned Tom's dedication to food. [Hutchins and Adler brought Maritain and Huxley to Chicago, where I studied with them and was stretched out between the two of them, as the religious one had the faith, the Faith, and the antireligious one the vision--fatal schizophrenia! Thinking stimulated by Huxley led me, in 1965, to present to the government of India a plan for sterilization at the third birth--which the next year received a 30% vote--which led toward I. Gandhi's coercive conception-control experiment--which led to her tyranny and defeat. We of the church must not let our dismal history of coercion, threat, and punishment make us squeemish about what needs doing to shut down the baby faucet, which otherwise will flood out all agri-technological advances.]

5. I listened to the tape, and was impressed with what folks had to say, including myself. But I am too lazy to provide you with a full transcript, and too modest to supply only the verbatim of what I had to say--but not so modest as not to have written it down for my own future use.