

SANCTIFICATION: NOTES ON THE DYNAMICS
OF UNIVERSAL BENEVOLENCE

1. The key Biblical passages seem to be the "I am" passages: the Passion, the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection. I call it the "I am the way, truth and light." It happened in the reading of the passage where it says "to him who has, more shall be given; and to him who has not, even that shall be taken from him." My first reflection was that for him who sees his life as gift, every moment is experienced as a blessing; and for him who sees life as cheating him, every moment is experienced as robbing him. Then I saw that the objective occasion or event could be the same; it was the basic relationship to them that made the difference. This spun me into the indicative that man creates his own universe. From that window the experiences of the other indicatives came. Two, especially, I remember. First: "my only battle is with Satan," or the struggle to refuse or accept my life, and second: "that every dynamic going on in any situation is also going on in me in its particular, unique manifestation of my inescapable total relatedness." I remember them so vividly because they are so obviously the way life is for all men, yet they are the last thing I would come up with rationally, even with intense reflection. They were very much events.

2. Somehow it doesn't seem to make much difference at which state of being the Other World clobbers you over the head. The whole of it descends upon you. Also, there is a strange and elusive element of witnessing life in action that seems to spark the breakthrough, whether it be someone else's life or a radical stepping back from your own life. Either way -- pow -- and you've seen something that radically alters the way you see life going on and, of course, this alters your own total understanding and actions forever.

3. The image that keeps coming to my mind is "the Deed of God," which comes from Gogarten's references to Bultmann's claims about the kerygma of the early Church. Their faith maintained that the key to understanding the Deed of God was the fact that Jesus was born and died. Preaching was not on the scene at that point. The act of God is his revelation in the Deed of Christ. The Deed of Christ was for Him to acknowledge His participation in the sentence of Doom, to embrace and suffer it to the very end, and hence bring forth a change, namely the salvation of the total world. This is what Gogarten called responsibility for the world before God.

4. It strikes me that this fairly well holds the "Deed" that gives permission for one to live out of the Other World. I see it lining up something like this: I am inescapably, totally related to all; this is my primal reality which I recreate; my life is being brokenness and losing my life on behalf of all; and all of history itself is changed.

~~I am totally
unconditionally
related
to all
I
live on
behalf of all~~

I brought
to be
all that
has been

I am
the Model,
the Savior
of the world

~~total
related-
ness
on
behalf of
crucifix.~~

resp.
for
past

dominion
over
future

5. Frankly, my initial response is, "The hell I am..." Then, it is, "I wouldn't wish my life on a dog!" I have a great set of self-stories to ward off this intrusion. They try to reassure me that I'm not really related to all that there is; like "When a peasant sneezes, the compensation that the universe makes is so microscopic as to have no practical effect on my life, let alone on what really matters." My all-time favorite story is, "Little ole me couldn't possibly change the world;" and another, "I am a terribly defiant person, you know. I certainly wouldn't call that the model of humanness. Any model I have isn't what the world needs." And on and on and on. But every time I tell myself one of these stories, it witnesses to the fact that there is no escape from the encounter with the Other World. There is no final blotting out of seeing what I have seen, and no way for me to be living out of anything other than the indicatives of life. No matter how much I may try to convince myself that they are not there. I find that they won't take "no" for an answer. They just keep on intruding and demanding a redecision. And of course, "yes" means living with them all the time, as over against running unsuccessfully from them. I know that I'm going to be living out of the indicatives no matter what. The question is just how -- either running from them or embracing them. And my entire life is acting out that "how you do it."

6. As for the story, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection are still the central key acts. John 3:16 keeps running through my mind. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And the verses about Christ dying for us and Christ rising for us follow right behind. It looks something like this:

For God so loved the world

not perish but have everlasting life

He gave His son that whoever believes should

That is, Being that creates and destroys and sustains all creation cares so much that it made itself so clearly manifest in one of its creatures that all men might see that they already are unity with and service to that Being, and thereby when they acknowledge that, become self-conscious to their never-ceasing participation in Being. "Jesus Christ is Lord" becomes the life and death of the man Jesus in the revelation of the indicative of Being as the inescapable for all men. The man who abandons all claim to reality being any other way and lives out of that indicative is the one who has the power to shape the future. He has total dominion, he becomes the vehicle for the salvation of the world. He becomes transparent to Being in the midst of recreating being with all his life. His life is one mighty act of loving God.

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