

CLOSING WORDS

The great Spirit, hovering over her creation, exclaims in delight and love, “Oh this is so very *tov*.” It is good, a good that generates life. Planet Home brings forth life out of death.

There is hope for the “uncreators.” We may accept resurrection from the death of “uncreating.” Reborn we may be, reborn as “keepers and tillers” of this magnificent fecund garden, Earth. Created in the image of the God of love -- created, that is, to be lovers - we may claim that destiny, seeking evermore fully to love God, self, and neighbor as self, especially neighbors far and near who now are damaged or destroyed by how live.

The reader has mustered moral courage. It is the courage to face squarely the structural evil that inhabits our lives, not because we intend it but because of the social structures – the policies, habits, assumptions, and institutions – that shape our lives. Faith in the God whom Jesus loved calls forth this courage, because to repent of such evil requires recognizing it. Doing so is dangerous. It can break one’s heart. A student of mine once said that her education at Seattle University had broken her heart. I gasped. I did not want her to leave with a broken heart. “And,” she went on, “my time here also put my heart back together again, much bigger, much stronger.” While here, she explained, her eyes had been opened to the agonizing suffering wrought by economic injustice, ecological destruction and other forms of structural sin. Yet her eyes were opened also to the worldwide quest for justice and the power of the Sacred in it.

Daring--as an ongoing practice of morality--to see the devastating impact of economic life as we live it is far less perilous *if* simultaneously we use a second and a third form of vision. The second is seeing “what could and should be” -- that is, more just, compassionate, and ecologically sound ways of living. The third kind of vision is seeing ever more fully the life-giving, life-saving Mystery that is God flowing and pouring through all of creation, and working there toward creation’s flourishing. This, we have called “mystical seeing.” It is down-to-earth, practical.

Christian ethics is charged with helping people meet the moral challenges of each new time and place, guided by the resources of Christian traditions in dialogue with many other bodies of human knowledge. In the case of this book the moral challenge at hand is a dramatic re-orientation, the likes of which the world has never before known: humankind’s high-consuming people moving from an unsustainable relationship with planet Earth and exploitative relationships with huge sectors of the human family, to sustainable Earth-human relations marked by steadily diminishing levels of social injustice.

A moral framework emerged herein. The magnitude of the moral challenge we face may render it seemingly impossible. The beauty of a moral framework is its capacity to lay hold of a moral challenge that seems beyond the possible and reveal it as possible by shining a light into the foggy mess and discovering paths through it. The light illumines also where those paths intersect and where they already are being trod by people the world over. These people are at work bringing the seemingly impossible into being.

Christian ethics, I have claimed, is the art of coming to know ever more fully both God and the historical realities of life on Earth, and holding them in one breath, so that we may respond to the latter in light of the former. Where the forces that mask systemic injustice cloud our vision and knowledge of God or of life's realities, a task of Christian ethics is to enable seeing more clearly. My hope is that the journey of this book has, to some small degree, done just that.

The corporate-and-finance driven global economy will change. Earth no longer can support it, and the human urge toward compassion cannot tolerate it. In what direction it changes is up to human beings. God's ancient call to love neighbor as self may help us to direct that change toward social justice and Earth's well-being. Words from the opening serve well in parting: "This book is one tiny part of a much larger human endeavor, the seeming impossibility of which should dissuade no one from joining it. It is the re-orienting of human life to render it both sustainable on this Planet Home and characterized by increasing degrees of social justice. In this re-orientation we are called by God and by life itself to celebrate, relish, and stand in awe of Earth's beauty, unfolding complexity, and life-generating goodness."

The test of a Christian ethic is fourfold:

- Does it speak truth about life on Earth, demystifying what is hidden from view by the blinders of power and privilege?
- Does it seek faithfully to know more fully the God revealed in – but not only in -- Jesus Christ?
- Does it move people to align themselves with justice-seeking, Earth-honoring, self-respecting neighbor love?
- Does it wed moral vision with pragmatic steps toward that vision?

Whether or not the moral framework proposed herein passes that test remains for the future to tell.