

Political theology

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Many remarks came to my mind as I reread the papers. All excellent. Much food for thought.

However I have to limit myself. Therefore I shall retain but two aspects, The Exodus and Violence.

Exodus

The Exodus, as paradigm for Liberation theologians, comes out strongly in John Pawlikowsky's and Michael Ryan's papers. Marc Gellman has also important things to say.

From John (p.104) it appears that Gutierrez misses the fundamental lesson from the Exodus, and so does Segundo according to Michael, (p. 10-11)

Both, John and Michael, quote Rabbi Klenicki and I think that is, or should be, the focus point of our thinking. Here is Rabbi Klenicki's comment regarding Gutierrez:

The Exodus, according to Gutierrez, "is a long march toward the promised land in which Israel can establish a society free from misery and alienation." (p.157. The theology of Liberation) The Exodus experience of the Jewish people adds for the author "an element of capital importance: the need and the place for active participation in the building of society" (p.158). The lesson of the Exodus is set in this manner: "To work, to transform this world, is to become a man and to build the human community; it is also to save. Likewise to struggle against misery and exploitation and to build a just society is already to be part of the saving action, which is moving toward its complete fulfillment. All this means that building the temporal city is not simply a stage of humanization or pre-evangelization as was held in theology up until a few years ago. Rather it is to become a part of a saving process which embraces the whole of man on all human history. Any theological reflection on human work and social praxis ought to be rooted in this fundamental affirmation." p.159-160)

Rabbi Klenicki comments as follows,

"From a Jewish perspective, Gutierrez's interpretation of Exodus is one-sided. It lacks any knowledge of rabbinic thought or contemporary Jewish religious thought. Gutierrez states that the Exodus was "a political act of God," a process of liberation in itself. Judaism recognizes that it was a movement of liberation, but sustains that the liberation from Egypt bondage became meaningful only when Israel received the Law at Mount Sinai and the Promised Land. The process that starts with Moses taking out an enslaved community culminated with the spiritual liberation of Israel at Mount Sinai, and the possession of Eretz Israel." (Klenicki's paper 3/8/79 p. 7)

Now, Gutierrez does say that the liberation from Egypt was "part of the saving action", but, as pointed out by Rabbi Klenicky, his not mentioning Sinai in this saving process is to truncate the meaning of the Exodus.

Does it seem outlandish to imagine what Exodus would have been without Sinai? The Hebrews get out of Egypt, a horde of slaves getting out. Truly, in itself, an astonishing feat. A wonderful lesson for ages to come. A paradigm? Not yet. What happens next?

They land in the desert. Soon the terrific hardships make them regret Mitzraim (and they did). Probably, some of them go back. Others turn for help to the familiar deity, the bull (the calf), but there is no let up and soon quarrels set in among a beleaguered people, with hunger, thirst and disease. The liberation becomes a mockery.

The Hebrew slaves would not have survived without Sinai. Or, if some had, they would have remained but individual examples of resourcefulness and courage, and not as the paradigm of a whole people's liberation.

At this point it seems to me that we have to ask ourselves that question; what was unique about Sinai? A gifted leader gives a set of rules to a horde of people in order to organize

them and prevent anarchy. What is so special about that? Well, the commandments are universal in their scope. They answer basic human social needs without which any group eventually falls apart. It means that Moses was a genius, and that's that.

If we do not go any further we miss again the meaning of Exodus, as Gutiérrez seems to do. Sinai was successful, remained successful, is successful and will be successful, ad vitam eternam, for the Jews and for the whole world, because it is not centered on Moses' personality, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

Therein is the whole ~~whole~~ difference, it is not the self, that of Moses, or that of the people, no matter how wonderful, which liberates. The self has limits. Transcendence does not. It is open, it is timeless. As Marc Gellman says, "there is no sacred history, only sacred time...the apprehension of that event, [Exodus] as a salvation from God is timeless..." That is why the Exodus is the paradigm of liberation. If that spiritual dimension is left out, the Exodus is no longer understood.

It seems to me that the whole matter is very serious. Undoubtedly Latin Liberation theologians are doing basically Christian work in so far that they are on the side of the poor, that's very important, that's the Gospel, and we have much to learn from them. They are up against a frightful situation, and they are facing it. We could not allow ourselves the arrogance to tell them that we know best. But is there anyway that we could dialogue with them? Or, perhaps, you, theologians, could get together with Jewish colleagues, and issue a brochure on the subject? Not as an answer to the Latin Liberation theologians, but as a sharing their concern. And we had better share it, even in this United States. (

Violence

Was the Exodus without violence on the Hebrews' side?
What about the Ten plagues?

Segundo, according to Michael, claims that violence is justified on behalf the revolution. The end justifies the means. Danger of that position. Where do you stop?

ON the other hand, danger of not resisting evil violently.
War against Hitler.

Danger of not recognizing the reality of evil. A certain kind of liberalism. Jewish attitude until 1945, as analyzed by Marc Gellman (p.22)

Distorted picture of Jesus. He was not a non-violent (Lk.28:37,38. Mt.21:12. Mk.11:15. Jh.2:15).