

Nice Nihilism: The Darkness of Self-Righteous "Good Works"

Echoing down through the third level of meaning, as if it were a voice from above and beyond your acquired knowledge on the second level, your "conscience" is thus literally "with" your "knowledge". So, concerning so-called "good works", your knowledge informs you about how to do the "works", and supplies the facts for deciding the who, what, where, when, and which of those works; while your conscience speaks to whether or not your works are "good". But what are your standards of "good"? One's conscience is merely that process which gives voice to such standards.

Said Jesus: "If you are ethically lazy and socially indifferent, you can take as your standard of good the current social usages. If you are spiritually indolent and morally unprogressive, you may take as your standards of good the religious practices and traditions of your contemporaries." (TUB 132:2.2) In other words, for so many individuals, "scientific dictation, social usage, and religious dogma" (TUB 132:2.4) are the standards which they have set within their hearts. Not "from above and beyond", but from your contemporaries: Have you acquired the accepted scientific dictation and exalted it to the fourth level of meaning in your heart? Likewise: Is social usage your "moral" standard on the fifth level, and religious (ideologic) dogma your "spiritual" standard on the sixth level? Is the logical harmony of the three the actual triune voice of your conscience, down through the third level? Such a conscience "simply represents the humanly conceived ideal of reaction in any given set of circumstances" (TUB 92:2.6).

"Man may graft many purely humanistic branches onto his basic spiritual nature and thus apparently prove his contentions in behalf of a godless religion [ideology], but such an experience is devoid of survival values, God-knowingness, and God-ascension. In such a mortal experience only social fruits are forthcoming, not spiritual." (TUB 102:7.4) The word "nice" is etymologically derived from the Latin word for "ignorant" (lit., "not knowing"); therefore, if one professes a belief in a human notion called "God", but is nonetheless devoid of real God-knowingness (a recognition on the sixth level of meaning), such a person is "nice". Indeed: "Man can, intellectually, deny God [or not know God] and yet be morally good, loyal, filial, honest, and even idealistic." (ibid.) Any one with these qualities would be deemed a "nice person"--per current usage of the word "nice" as "conforming to approved social standards".

Recall that--per revelation--genuine righteousness is "conformity with the cosmos" (TUB 16:7.6), not conformity with social usage or religious

dogma, even though the latter are common standards of being deemed to "be morally good", as is clear from Jesus' statements above. The notion of works-righteousness--the so-called righteousness of good works--is merely a clever mask of the darkness of self-righteousness. Revelators have long tried to teach mankind that no outer-life deed will secure, or even establish, one's inner-life relationship to God and eternity. For instance, four thousand years ago: "This covenant of Melchizedek with Abraham represents the great Urantian agreement between divinity and humanity whereby God agrees to do 'everything'; man only agrees to 'believe' God's promises and follow his instructions. Heretofore it had been believed that salvation could be secured only by works--sacrifices and offerings; now, Melchizedek again brought to Urantia the good news that salvation, favor with God, is to be had by 'faith'. But this gospel of simple faith in God was too advanced; the Semitic tribesmen subsequently preferred to go back to the older sacrifices and atonement for sin by the shedding of blood." (TUB 93:6.4) And two thousand years ago: "Jesus made plain to his apostles the difference between the repentance of so-called good works as taught by the Jews and the change of mind by faith--the new birth--which he required as the price of admission to the kingdom. He taught his apostles that 'faith' was the only requisite to entering the Father's kingdom." (TUB 138:8.8)

Jesus also said: "You see, then, that the Father gives salvation to the children of men, and this salvation is a free gift to all who have the faith to receive sonship in the divine family. There is nothing man can do to earn this salvation. Works of self-righteousness cannot buy the favor of God, and much praying in public will not atone for lack of living faith in the heart. Men you may deceive by your outward service, but God looks into your souls." (TUB 167:5.1) Notice that he described mere "outward service" as "self-righteousness". And when he said that there is "nothing" which one can do, this implies that the self-servingism of works-righteousness amounts to nothing in eternity. It is indeed nihilism (lit., "nothing"ism)--"nice nihilism", to be precise.

Are you still clinging to your warm belief that the good works of a nice person like you must amount to something before the God of eternity? To such as you, Jesus said: "In the great day of the kingdom judgment, many will say to me, 'Did we not prophesy in your name and by your name do many wonderful works?' But I will be compelled to say to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me you who are false teachers.'" (TUB 140:3.20) [For further clarity, see my declaration entitled "House of Darkness".]

(reflections by Chris Halvorson)