

“Will the defendant please rise?”

There is an odd intersection on Highway 12 by the Fiesta Shopping Plaza. If you are driving toward Santa Rosa, there is an access street on your right and a traffic light. Just *a few yards* beyond that is another access road coming in from the left and a traffic light. Hardly a few yards past that on the right there is another access road. Three access roads to Highway 12 plus two traffic lights whose timing within that limited space seems to vary from day to day. Result? Back ups in all directions.

It's while sitting there in my car advancing in starts and stops that I begin to complain. “Why doesn't somebody time those lights to favor Highway 12 traffic? Why doesn't that fellow four cars ahead of me get moving before the light changes again? Who are these people who speed into the middle lane to cut into one's right of way? Why don't I wise up and take Arnold Drive?”

I become a plaintiff seeking justice, disgruntled all the way home at the inefficiency of modern administrators, drivers, the world in general. And I don't like being that way. Nor is that the only time I feel that way. It seems I am a plaintiff most of the time. It's like my brain is a courtroom in which I am judge, plaintiff, jury - and *reality* in general is the offender – myself included! How did I get this way? Above all the things I want to change in this world it is *myself as a perpetual plaintiff*.

It renders my world not so much as ominous but as uncooperative. And again it's often myself that I complain of - as prime culprit – as when just today I accidentally (or inherently?) knocked over a tall cup of coffee I ritually take every morning. You can imagine what the plaintiff in me invoked: the judgment of God himself (in the vernacular) upon the coffee, the cup and my own clumsiness. As St. Paul says in Romans 7:24: *Miserable man that I am! Who will deliver me from this mortal body?*

Of course this being not only *my* ailment but one universally shared, some philosophers trace this obsessive complaining to the beginning of our modern era – when, rather than seeing ourselves as a *part* of our world, like a fish in water, we awarded responsibility over all things to ME – our human Ego – as the manager of everything else in Nature – the world being made up of “things” that often dare to elude our control – like wildfires. And so I am set up to register scoreless complaints per day.

It's as though each of us sets up a courtroom in which we become the whole cast of a Perry Mason episode summoning the world to order – to conform to meet our needs, comfort, ideas or prejudices. We become everyday grumblers instead of joyful, caring people who feel at home amid earth and sea and sky and people and *all things bright and beautiful* and challenging.

And then of course there is the Bible to which we owe some sense of our living in a courtroom and always being judged, ourselves becoming juridical - from biblical readings that speak of meting out reward and punishment like a couple of readings this Sunday – isolated out of the context of the Bible as a whole.

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