

Friday, March 19

Coercion versus Transformation

(I)t is not unreasonable to make forgiveness contingent on sincere repentance, Such repentance at the very least opens the door to forgiveness and often to reconciliation.

This is not to suggest, however, that we should seek to coerce repentance as a condition for forgiveness and reconciliation. When a person comes to repentance as a result of her or his own spiritual growth, we are witnessing a transformation of character. Any expressed repentance that is nothing more than a response to coercive external incentive, however, is very likely to be fake. This is one reason why the South Africans were probably wise in not demanding repentance as a condition for amnesty in their Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

So let us welcome repentance when we find it, and let us do what we can to create a climate where it can flourish and open the door tot he moral rebirth of the wrongdoer and to forgiveness by the wronged.

*Jeffrie G. Murphy, **Getting Even: Forgiveness and Its Limits***