LORD, CHRISTIANITY'S MASTER-WORD

Yesterday, the Craigville Tabernacle Circle Conversation re-encountered (after last Sunday's Circle) our Faith's **central title** (in all languages, equivalents) for Jesus, viz. "**Lord.**" It's the title that ties the Testaments together (*Adonai* in Hebrew [& for the sounding, to this day, of God's name, YHWH/Yahweh/Ehyeh of Ex.3.14[Ehyeh]-15[Yahweh,"the LORD"]; in Greek, Κύριος *Kurios* (in both Testaments of the earliest Christian Bible).

Well, doesn't "God" tie the Testaments together? Yes, but it's not a title. "God" is the **category** (viz., divinity), "YHWH/Jesus" is the **name** (to which the NT adds "Holy Spirit," completing the Trinity of the Name), & "the Lord" is, as the master-word, the master **title.**

Thus we arrive at the word "**Master**" & should clarify it vis-a-vis "Lord":

1 In this Thinksheet's title, I purposefully used both "Lord" & "Master": they are close enough, in force, to be seen as synonyms; but their differing connotations have significant consequences in religious usage. "Master" is Lat.*magister* shortened by dropping *-gi-*. The Brits use it for a male teacher, but we don't (except in MA, MBA, etc., where it's the Latin). Here are some RHD2nd.ed.unabridged meanings: (1) "the ability and power to use, control, and dispose of"; (2) "owner of a slave, animal, etc."; (3) "employer of workers or servants"; (4) "the male head of a household"; (15) "the Master, Jesus Christ." The CAMB.DICT.OF AM.ENGLISH (CUP/00) gives the semantic domain as "**control**": the master ("female, mistress") is the control-person, in a vertical-superior position. The Lat. base is a comparative adverb, *magis* "more," the base also of *magnus* "great" (as in Mother Mary's Magnificat). Of "Master," the OED's 1st meaning is "A man having control or authority" --16th c., thus in L.6.46 "Master, Master" (Tyndale's [1525] NT & the Geneva Bible [1560], translating "Kurios," Vulgate "Domine"; Mt.7.21-22, only Tyndale).

2 In the whole history of Eng. tr. of the Bible, Tyndale & Geneva alone do not use "Lord" for "Kurios" in the NT. In their century, only a small dent had been put in feudal classism. Oddity noted in OED: "Master" was used then, & (I judge) up to WWII, for a boy not yet old enough to be addressed as "Mister" (Mr., a term I don't use because it's antonymic to "slave" [Massa!]/"servant"). (In contrast to my father, who used "Mr.....,Esq."[esquire, from "squire"], for those in his [legal] profession.)

3 Strangely, a recent Eng.paraphrase--Eugene H. Peterson's THE MESSAGE: The NT in Contemporary Language (NavPress/93)--reverts (whether or not consciously) to "Master" from the otherwise universal post-16th-c. "Lord" to the 16th-c. "Master." This is only one of the idiosyncrasies in his breezy loose rendition, but it's the most serious one (as Loree & I found as we read the whole of his NT aloud to each other). As a term of respect-from-below, "sir" can represent "Kurios," & does so in Peterson's L.6.46; but the following verb of command shows that "sir" is too weak in this context: a person may be respected as "sir," but as "lord" is to be obeyed. Peterson's clumsy handling of "Kurios" appears further in Jn.13.13, where he rightly has "Teacher" for διδάσκαλος *didaskalos*, which in the Vulg. is *magister* (thus, in Brit.Eng., with some connotative force in Am.Eng., "male teacher"). Jesus goes on, however, with "Kurios," in the Vulg. "domine," definitely "Lord," & not (as Peterson) "Master."

Why bother to have spelled out Kurios/Master in the history of Gospels' translation? To dramatize, by its paucity, the dominance of Kurios/**Lord.**

1 Let's look again into CDAE (as in §1, above). The semantic domain of "lord" (compare "lady") is "title," & the semantic domain of "Lord" is "God." In this reference work, "Lord" signals deity, "Master" signals only "control." Peterson's "Master" fails to provide the numinous-divine quality the original demands.

2 Nowhere in OT is God addressed or referred to as "Master," so "Master" cannot **tie** the Testaments together, as YHWH/Jesus "Kurios" does.

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3 When for any reason the word Kurios, our Faith's central title for deity in both Testaments, is not permitted to do its tying work, the bond between the Testaments & also between Judaism & Christianity is weakened, encouraging the development of two theologies rather than one "canonical" (i.e., total-Bible) theology. SUPPORT: (1) In the original Christian Bible (& all extant manuscripts thereof), Greek is the only language, & Kurios is the primary divine-title **tie.** (2) The two sections of the Christian Bible are called διαθήκαι *diathekai* "covenants" or "testaments," old & new (from He.9.15). (3) Marcion (ca.AD140CE) attacked the OT/NT tie, teaching that Christians should not worship the false deity of "the Hebrew Scriptures." (4) Christians who abandon "OT" in favor of "the Hebrew Scriptures" have, to that extent, abandoned Christianity in favor of Judaism, which teaches that the NT is "the Christian Scriptures," which, as a famous rabbi put it to me, "should never have been written." Question: If not "the Christian Scriptures," how call what Christianity calls "the NT"? We have the apple/orange problem if we conjoin "the Hebrew Scriptures" (which in the basic Christian Bible are all in Greek!) with "the NT" (which implies the antonym of "New," viz. "the OT"). Jews aren't fooled by these linguistic contortions, & Christians are confused.

4 As did Marcion, Hitler's Rosenberg tried to cut the OT away from the NT. (How ironic that today, some liberal Christians are [in ceasing to use the title "OT"] in such company!)

5 Even worse, some liberal Christians are trying to cut the title "Lord" out of the Christian language, which then is left doughnut-shaped (with a hole in the middle where Christianity's master-word was). A UCC board produced THE NEW CENTURY HYMNAL with *no use* of "Lord" (then, under Synod pressure, added it back in a mere 23 times).

In the Craigville Tabernacle worship yesterday, the preacher remarked the irony that we affirmed the Apostles' Creed after his sermon laid out the doctrine of Craigville's founding communion, the Connectional Churches--in essence, "no creed but the NT." In the ensuing Circle Conversation, this: (1) Creeds, with "Kurios Iesous" ("Jesus is Lord") at their heart, are **shorthand** for the NT's essence; (2) the Connectional Churches had some intellectual leaders who were masters of the NT &, able to bespeak its essence, could use it as their creed; (3) when lesser leaders --not masters of the NT--took over, the Connectional Churches were left completely creedless, & drifted into unitarianism, which drifts out of Christianity & into atheism. (The few remaining Connectional Churches joined with the Congregationalists in 1931, thence into the UCC in 1957.)

Why unitarianism? Trinitarianism is unsustainable without the **shorthand** of the creeds (which, therefore, are honored and promoted in the Preamble to the UCC Constitution). But isn't the Trinity in the NT? Yes, specifically at the end of Mt., in (Peterson) "the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." By the doctrine of the Trinity, which Christianity's markers require, is evolving throughout the NT period; & some statements could be used (& were!) to teach unitarianism.

6 Why the strong negative reaction to "**Lord**"? Because, to our environing culture, its insulting, indeed the most insulting word in the Christian vocabulary--& as such it's the best word for freeing the culture's prisoners. As I typed that, this hymn sprang to mind: "Make me a captive, *Lord*, and then I shall be free; / help me to yield up my sword, and worship only thee." Among H.Rich.Niebuhr's phrases, it's the supreme verbal instance of "Christ against culture." And as the UCC is the most acculturated Christian church (not counting the UU, which no longer calls itself Christian), it's the church in which resistance to "Lord" is strongest. Let's see why: "Lord" insults the culture's prevailing values: (1) It insults the **autonomy** (lit., "self-law") of the individual (vs. theonomy, lit. "God-law": can you not feel the insult in Augustine's "You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in You"?); (2) **democracy**, lit. "people-power" (vs. theocracy, lit. "God-power"); (3) **materialism** (evolution [no "Creation's Lord"] & consumerism); (4) **privatism** (if we "Crown him Lord of all," we're essentially related to the others by nature & grace); (5) **egalitarianism** (so no "boss" [Dutch for "lord"]--no vertical, so no hierarchical--no gender in God [true in Ex.3, God's essence; untrue in God's self-presentation, which is, in the Bible's personal titles & pronouns, consistently masculine]).