ELLIOTT THINKSHEETS
309 L.Eliz.Dr., Craigville, MA 02636
Phone 508.775.8008
Noncommercial reproduction permitted

JUSTIFICATION & JUSTICE XI

HOW DOES THE BIBLE SAY IT?
"SEEK....." MATTHEW 6 33

Jesus here tells us his followers what to seek, what he was seeking & would seek even though it might do him in, which it did. While this Thinksheet's mainly about the **content**, viz what's to be sought, it's vital to feel the **context**: "God's kingdom, his justice" is no optional goal for us who are committed to taking Jesus at all seriously. We are under orders to be on a search, & it includes continuous seeking of what, throughout "the changes & chances of this life," the specificities of the assignment are....We have to do with two Latin kingdoms, the kingdom of "Iustitia" (our vs. in MT.) &, as in this cartoon,* the kingdom of "Id" (Freud's libido world, Jos.Campbell's "follow your bliss," the ever popular "go with the flow"--the kingdom our cartoon's fortuneteller well describes, the kingdom where Jesus' golden rule is prostituted to victories for the self, & the king of Id illustrates the kingdom's spirit by wanting to know the future so he can control it in his own interest.....So what's that we're to seek? * Over.

1. Does Mt. intend the two words, "kingdom" & "justice," **appositively** (the second indicating the content of the first) or **successively** (meaning we're to have two goals)? The Greek conjunctive can be translated either way, as by the two English words "even" (for apposition) & "and" (for succession). Let's not decide now. Instead, keep the question as cud, to be brought up & chewed on as we go along.

2. In Jesus here, the seeking & the sought are **interdefining**. Eg, if what's sought is chiefly attitudinal (inner, to work itself out in your life), the search methods will be mainly contemplative (as, eg, monasticism values contemplation over action--& as does LaoTzu, in reverse of KungFuTzu [Confucius]). But if what's sought is chiefly a style of action in the world, the training for it will be in interaction with "the world," the outer sphere of life. Consider that the latter viewpoint tends toward apposition: what "the kingdom of God" means is "to do justice" (Mic.6[8], but note that this classic verse combines outer & inner); while the former viewpoint (1) points to the priority of [supposedly inner] "kingdom" over [supposedly outer] "justice," or (2) absorbs "justice" into "kingdom" by seeing "justice" as good will, the righteous-just mindset (ie, as either succession or apposition).

3. On "kingdom" & "justice" I'll not repeat what's easily available in Bible dictionaries & theological wordbooks. One thing you won't find there is English-translation history. Since Craigville Colloquy centers on "justification & justice," I'll not give you a rundown of βασιλεῖα *basileia* (reign, rule; kingdom, domain; sovereignty), but here's all the Englishing of δικαιοσύνη *dikaiosuné* (in LXX, + 91 times in NT): most versions & translations, "righteousness" (though Michael Darton's MODERN CONCORDANCE TO THE NT [Doubleday/70] is wrong in saying "all current English translations"): Tyndale, Great, Geneva, KJV, RV, ARV, ASV, RSV, AMP, NAS, NIV...."justice," a Latinism (as is "justification"), not of our native-native tongue, as is "righteousness" : Rheims (to be expected, as it depends on Vulg.), NEB, REB...."goodness": Phillips. ..."Be concerned with...what he requires of you": TEV...."Seek...his kingdom over you, his way of holiness": NAB, the only appositional translation: walking the way of holiness is living with God's kingdom over you. NAB's only crossref. is Wis.1[1]: "Love justice...," where the fn. reads "Justice: not merely the cardinal virtue of that name (cf. Wis.8[7]), but the universal moral quality which is the application of Wisdom to moral conduct." In the tristich, the parallels of "justice" are "goodness" & "integrity of heart" (the Gk. of this last meaning [A-G] "simplicity, sincerity, uprightness, frankness; generosity, liberality"). The cardinal virtues--"modernation, prudence, justice, fortitude"--appear in the other Wis. ref., viz 8[7]. Wisdom was written in Greek, ca. a c. before Jesus, by an Alexandrian Jew who was a master of both of the primary strands of our spiritual heritage...."uprightness": AT (Am. Translation, also know as the [University of] Chicago Bible, which eschews Latinisms & Grecisms, uses "uprightness" also at Wis.1[1]).

4. TEXTUAL NOTES: (1) "Of God" is probably not original*(p.18, A TEXT. COMM. ON THE GK.NT, United Bible Societies/71). (2) Vaticanus (B), one of the two earliest extant complete Bibles (& of course in Greek, both OT [LXX] & NT) transposes to "righteousness" & "kingdom," (ibid) "perhaps the result of the desire to suggest that r. is prerequisite to participation in the k." Cf.5[20] TEV: "You will be able to enter the Kingdom...only if you are more faithful...in doing what God requires."....*But the majority disagreed, so "of God" is in brackets in UBS/Gk.NT.

5. DEFINITIONS: "Justification" (Latin, *iustificatio*) is the punctiliar-linear (act + process) action of God in & through Jesus Christ whereby the believer is set free of the burden of having failed to do "what God requires," graciously clothed with "what God requires," & confirmed on the life-course of doing "what God requires," viz "justice" (Latin, *iustitia*, the regular Vulgate rendering of "dikaiosuné"). The thrice-quoted phrase, "what God requires" (in our English renderings, §3, only in Phillips,* & there as "what he requires of you") lacks only the fact that God is what he asks; so we can improve by this: The Mt.6[3] word we're studying means "the holiness-righteousness-uprightness-goodness-justice God is & requires." (* And, as noted, in another passage, viz 5[20], TEV.) But is not "love" also required (again, Mic.6[8])? In biblical diction, love is commanded, justice is required. The one exception proves the case (the Mic. vs.): What God "requires" is that we "do justice," that's first in place; then "love mercy, & walk humbly with your God." Each of the three expresses also the other two. Pertinent to our theme, two questions are to be asked of a proposed action in the name of "justice": (1) is it loving? & (2) is it pious (ie, conformable to God's nature & will & an instance of walking humbly with him)? This critical consciousness will rule out, or radically modify, much behavior that is secularly called "justice action."

6. When we're very young, we think we're just talking, but we aren't just doing that. We're also, in doing it, speaking a language. When do we become aware of that? When we become aware that not all who talk use our talk: we have the culture-shock of discovering another language. At a still later stage, we become sophisticated enough to sense, & to some degree understand, that a language is a world, a language-world with natives & aliens (the latter, all whose mother-speech is other). A coeval truth is that trying to transpose from one language to another must fail to be more than an approximation: **translation is alienation.** The distortion is compounded when the hearer-reader is unaware, or has forgotten, that the material is a translation --which therefore is treated as though in mother-speech, the mother-speech feelings-&-meanings (Ger., *Sprachgefühl*) then being read into the material, creating a second level of distortion. If the translation is of a translation--yes, a third level of distortion. ACTUAL CASE: The Bible's basic mother-speech is Hebrew(-Aramaic), but almost none of the early Christians after the first generation & till the 4th c. knew that language: their "Bible" was all in Greek (as noticed in §4). In this Thinksheet we've been dealing with a Greek word that can be (but shouldn't be!) studied without any attention to the Hebrew words behind it that it "stands for": the earliest Christians shaped their "dikaiosuné" thinking, theology, within the Hellenistic-Greek language-world, with its own powers & limits, its own feelings & meanings. Was that bad? Of course not. Greek was the language in & through which the Holy Spirit moved & guided the early church; as such, it was holy speech, & holy books were written in it. (We've noted, §3, that some diaspora Jews wrote holy books in Greek: Hellenistic Judaism is the cultural baseline of the NT.) But from the viewpoint of the Hebrew language-world, in which the Spirit generated the basic images & ideas of both Judaism & Christianity, Greek-Christian thinking/writing is distorted. Then in the West for a millenium Greek was forgotten, & speaking-thinking-writing was done inside the Latin language-world, whose books were largely translations from Greek (true in the main even of the Latin [Vulgate] Bible)--a third level of alienation & therefore of distortion. So we'll get into the Hebrew grounding of "justification & justice" soon.