

WHICH WAY WOULD BE "FOR THE GREATER GLORY OF GOD"?

ad maiorem dei gloriam

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In church planning yesterday for public "Conversations of Consequence" (on some issues that are, & some that should be, in the public eye), somebody asked about a prior question: Do we need to help our folk develop a Christian mind, a Christian way of approaching public issues, so there will be a real engagement between gospel & world, instead of the usual collapse of the discussion into merely secular considerations? I gave two **clues** on learning to think Christianly: (1) Try beginning sentences, first in your mind, with God (or Father or Jesus or Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit) as subject, so that "we" (the immediate company, the world, any "we" in between) are blocked from forgetting, or playing, God. Yes, this is a counsel of idealism; but also one of realism, for God really, realistically, does have the top-line & bottom-line initiative. (2) "Do all [including your thinking/planning/deciding/doing] to the glory of God" (1Cor.10.31; NRSV, "everything").... This Thinksheet began as this morning I was reading, in Hebrew, Hosea 2. ("In Hebrew" is important: I could not have been moved so deeply by any translation of vv.21-22 [Eng. translations, vv.19-20]; here I paraphrase:)

I [the LORD] will make you my wife forever.
As bride-price, I will confer on you
righteousness¹ and justice²,
loyal-love³ and compassion⁴,
and I will add the gift of faithfulness⁵.
Then you will call me Ishi ["my Husband"]⁶,
for you will be devoted to [lit., "know"] the LORD⁷.

1 On the human scene, we rightly have a low view of a groom who expects his wife to be exactly like him. But in our text, that is exactly what the divine Groom YHWH expects of his corporate wife Israel. If Gomer (1.3) had had the five qualities the LORD expects of us (Israel old [i.e. Jews] & new [i.e. Christians]), she never would have wandered away from her husband Hosea. (Yes, the earth-story is of a wandering wife; I, being a man, would be more comfortable with a wandering-husband story, but that's disallowed by the author's [the Bible's] understanding of God as [though certainly not male] masculine.)

2 Think about that medieval (Latin) motto in this Thinksheet's title: What guidance can the-glory-of-God goal give us vis-a-vis, say, abortion or life on Mars? Intellectually, what we face here is two indeterminate coordinates, viz. (1) what's "glory"? & (2) who's "God"? Both coordinates are, biblically, determinate. "Glory" is what we give to what we consider most important (in Heb., weightiest), most worthy of the highest repute (Gk., reputation & praise). Which decisions, on which issues personal & public, most thus **benefit God** (as this supreme life-goal is stated in the first line [after the "Father" address] of the Lord's Prayer)? As to what deity, the coordinate here is as determinate, definite, as in the case of "glory." The God whom we are to glorify is, as our UCC Statement of Faith puts it, "the eternal Spirit, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father": sexless, since a (fleshless) "spirit"; but not genderless, as he's twice "Father." He has the qualities we see in the OT canon (i.e., the OT taken as a whole, not fragmented for invidious purposes), see enfleshed in his Son Jesus in the Gospel corpus (the four Gospels), & see expounded in the Epistle corpus (the rest of the NT).

3 The previous verse is an eschatological ("that day") dual promise of (1) the LORD's covenant with nature (specifically the other animals, including "insects") & (2) the LORD's elimination of war. *Shalom!* Eden thus restored is the environment in which the LORD's wife can live his life-qualities (cp. "Be holy, for I am holy").

4 Since I'm determined to keep this Thinksheet 1p, I can't expound superscript numbers 1-5, but can say that here we find gathered almost all of the moral attributes of the biblical God & therefore almost a complete catalog of the virtues of the biblical person....Superscript 6 is from the 2nd verse before our text....Superscript 7 is to let you know that the meaning of this line is from the Jewish Publication Society's 1985 translation, TANAKH: devotion to the LORD opens the door to knowing him.