

Israel the faithful/unfaithful wife of YHWH (OT): the Church the bride of Christ (NT). Marriage is the penultimate [Gk., "near-ultimate"] encounter, and accordingly the nearest paradigm to the ultimate encounter, viz. being stood over against or confronted by God, who in aseity stands also apart from us [= "transcendence"] and with the essential reticence of love stands present to all and each creation [= "immanence"]. Which reminds me of Heraclitus' way of distinguishing religion and philosophy, or as now we might say the two brain-hemispheres: The Wise One wants, and wants not, to be named Zeus.

Instead of listing the chief biblical reff. on this paradigm--references easy to turn up under "marriage" and "divorce" and such like in your Bible dictionary--I have written the following open-style meditation on it. Note that the provenance of the meditation is grounded in actual experience, a recent conversation with a counselee; pondering the conversation vertically, I reproduced the inner process behind the writing of Hosea, with variations only in details. Of course the process is reversible: Eph.5.22-33.

Since the Bible is a marriage record, annulling the divine-human encounter with its ecstasies and struggles, its misery and glory, the Bible does not have occasion to wrestle with the question whether the divorced God still exists. Within this paradigm, that question itself exists only when the marriage has finally failed. In the Bible, it has not.

I asked a woman
whether her exhusband were living, and
she didn't know.

If she had had occasion--which she didn't--
to research the question of her exhusband's existence,
she would have been in the position of
one,
anyone,
everyone enquiring
as to whether God exists.

For the question of God's existence to exist,
to come into being in the well of questioning, the mind,
it is required that one be not in relationship with God:
it is required that one be

divorced from God,
no longer
confronted by God.

It is required that one no longer
encounter God, or at least that one no longer
know that one is being encountered by God.

For the question of God's existence to exist, to be a question,
one must have suffered separation from God, the loss of God,
one must be lost--lost from relationship with the only One
who can stand over against one's whole being, existence-essence,
in final promise and threat, in ultimate risk and hope--
of which marriage is the only human-human model of success,
divorce the only human-human model of failure.