

## THE BRIGHT/DARK GIFT WAY OF SEEING/LIVING IN THE WORLD - ELLIOTT #1834

This thinksheet deals with one of the ways--my way--of seeing/living in the world--my definition of a religion being "a way of both seeing and living in the world" (a philosophy being only a way of seeing the world: I have mainly six philosophies, or coigns of vantage, for viewing the world). This way, this religion, embraces all experience as (1) gift, (2) the "good" and the "bad," (3) from the biblical God. Of this, the central sacrament and metaphor is the dark gift God gave Jesus (viz., the Crucifixion) and the bright gift God gave Jesus (viz., the Resurrection). This gift-mode is primary for me in (1) living, (2) counseling, (3) preaching/teaching/writing. ....This mode cannot be "proved": no religion ("integration," in psycho-language) can be. It is a "faith" as (1) a commitment, (2) an experiment (in process of confirmation/legitimation), and (3) a proclamation (in process of refinement). Its text (to choose one, or rather be graced by one) is "What have you got that you weren't given?" (1Cor.4.7). It's interior effect is to enthrall (both senses) my imperial ego (which I share with all other humans), in the interest of (1) relation to Reality and (2) deliverance from self-destruction. It's external effect is to free me to be some earthly/heavenly use to God and my fellow-creatures, including and especially the Church of my Lord Jesus Christ....The body of the thinksheet is the biblical grounding.

1. The Bible makes diamond-brilliant the primary impediment to our accepting life as divine gift: it's an insult to our imperial ego. On her deathbed, Eliz.I rebuked a man who said she must something: "Must? Is 'must' a word to be addressed to princes?" That, of her job. But of her life before God, she said (of the Lord's Supper) "'Twas God the word that spake it,/He took the Bread and brake it;/And what the word did make it/That I believe, and take it." So she received the Eu-charist ("Good-Gift") with humility, though no woman has ever been less humble in the presence of men, esp. underlings (which means the whole population of England minus her empress-ego). Poets of the divine love --Blake, Hopkins, Thompson, et al--use violent language in petitioning God's defeat of their imperial egos. "Batter my heart, three-person d God!" For us Christians, supremely Jesus' oft-insistence that receiving from God life as gift is conditional upon self-giving to God (including "seeking his rule and righteousness"), which is the precondition of God's further giving ("all these things shall be added to you").

2. I can't trace the light/darkness metaphor used with gifts; maybe it's mine.\* Anyway, the photeric analogy is appropriate for distinguishing, from gifts we're eager for, those "I'd rather not, thank you, if it's all the same to you." E.g., suffering as gift: Phil.1.28f,2.17; 1P. 4.12f(2.19f: suffering as "grace"--as Judaism developed the theme of joy as a gift attendant upon the gift of martyrial suffering: 2Mac.6.30, 4Mac.10.20)....(\*Highly unlikely. What have I that I have not received?) NT severally associates light with pardon as gift and with mutual forgiveness as mutual gift-giving (God's gift in Christ being the model--e.g., Eph.4.32)....Light will always be, for me, a gift, as I've not been able to assume my eyes (which have never worked well, and at age 14 I had to sign a no-malpractice-suit if I went blind in consequence of an operation): the miracle of sight! Naturally, what most impressed me in school science was the optics of light. Naturally, I became a photographer (and was college photographer, as well as prof. of rel. and phil., when I met Loree, my life-love). Naturally, when I had the oxygen removed from my brain (in what-else California, under the auspices of the Psychophysical Laboratory of the U. of Cal.), I had a photeric experience: a Great Light filled my consciousness, then dissolved into multicolored ancient NearEastern temple plans (3-stage), then re-resolved--as by suction or magnetism--into the Great Light. (While NT persuades me, along with my experience, that God is Love, I am even more profoundly convinced that God is Light. This relates my

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theology more to the Christian East than to the Christian West--but see the next thinksheet, which qualifies my enthusiasm for a new translation of Eckhart.

3. Speaking of ancient NearEastern temple plans, I'll use their basic 3-stage structure to diagram the 4 meanings or motions of the Hebrew word TODAH (תֹּדָה): (1) Thanks-living, the steady attitude of gratitude, fed by and feeding the other motions. (2) From the temple's "pro-fane" area (literally, "outside the temple"--so, the world, daily life) we enter the outer court to bring a thank-offering, so acting out our life-gratitude. (See "t.-o." in your Bible dictionary.) Thus we move from being thankful to doing thankfulness, from passion to such action as feeds the passion and without which the passion dies. (3) Thanks-action raises thankfulness to the level of adoration, praise, the inner hymning that prepares the worshiper for the outer hymning in (4) the liturgy, public worship. "The TODAH" is what we call "the worship" or "the service" (please, not "the worship service"!)...Of course language is seldom as schematic as this presentation, but TODAH does carry these 4 meanings in OT. #1 is the life-style, which is nourished individually by (#2) thanks-action (including how you treat your neighbor and the earth and what you do about how your neighbor and you and the earth get treated) outwardly and by (#3) inward praise ("prayer without ceasing"), and is nourished corporately by public worship (without which the life-style is unsustainable, and both individual and group fall to "murmuring in the wilderness") (#4). Hebrew-style, we pray that the Temple's Lord will "bless our goings out and our comings in from this time forward and forevermore": the 4 intersustaining motions weave together life and liturgy, action and contemplation, works and faith, thought and feeling, individual and group. #3 & #4 are so reciprocal as to be reversible: indeed, reversing them puts personal devotion, my inner utmost for God's Highest, in the holy of holies, enterable only by one, the high priest (of which the Letter to the Hebrews makes much)...The root of TODAH? YD, as "the hand" (YAD, יָד), the verb YADAH meaning\* "to hand (over)," as in giving a gift, "to take (into, in) hand," as in receiving a gift, "to extends the hand(s)," as in the ancient and Jewish (and modern charismatic) posture of praise and prayer, and in blessing (as in ordination and healing). The life-style: to think/feel/do/be TODAH. (\*Hand-in-motion, so "throw, cast.") (TODAH is feminine, and not accidentally.) ...The leitmotiv of Gn.: the giving/receiving of the Promise (Covenant, Blessing)...Through repentance (confession of sin) as a gift to God, our inner soil is prepared to receive the seed of deliverance/salvation/forgiveness, which springs up as joy-thanks-confession of faith --e.g., Ps.51. Ps.100 (whose title is "A Psalm of TODAH") is a pure and powerful expression of the spirit and action of TODAH. Modern Heb. has TODAH for "Thanks!" Liturgical TODAH (animal sacrifice, "the s. of praise," Eucharist) is duty as well as privilege. TODAH is sometimes "choir," singing thanks. (#442 for Heb./Gk. "glory," linking--as does TODAH--sin and praise.) This life/action delivers from divine judgment on one's past and protects both against sins one would fall into without this life-orientation and from the consequent divine judgment. A common liturgical structure: invocation, description of the distress, prayer, the deliverance, summons to magnify YHWH (perhaps with a new song, as Ps.40.3, a hymn opening heaven's gate).

4. NT CHARIS (χάρις) is most of the above, always with the note of joy (which is the root). 57pp. of fineprint in Kittel! #s775,946,1213.

## 1. THANKS-LIVING

2. THANKSGIVING,  
THANK-OFFERING

3. PRAISE, PRIVATE

4. WORSHIP, PUBLIC;  
THE LITURGY