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TSF BULLETIN

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ACADEME

(Reports from seminary classrooms, special events, and TSF chapters)

THE ATHANASIAN THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY: TSF AT PERKINS

By Ted Campbell, Perkins School of Theology.

To keep readers of the *TSF Bulletin* informed, here is a report about the activities of the Athanasian Theological Society at Perkins School of Theology in Dallas.

Athesoc was organized in the Spring of 1980 for the purpose of bringing to the Perkins community a forum for discussions of issues relevant to New Evangelical thought. Athesoc has tried to hold three or four high-quality discussions per academic semester. In 1980-1981, Athesoc sponsored formal discussions of the meaning of "Evangelicalism" and "New Evangelicalism." Other programs in our first year included informal discussions of biblical authority and religious experience, and structured discussions of the ethics of evangelization and the possibility of miracles.

Athesoc will sponsor programs this fall concerning Biblical Hermeneutics, Old Testament Christology, and the Charismatic Renewal Movement in the Roman Catholic Church.

Our Society maintains informal liaisons with such national and international organizations as the Theological Students Fellowship, Evangelicals for Social Action, and the Evangelical Womens' Caucus.

Athesoc meetings have been generally well-attended by Perkins students and faculty, and we covet your prayers for a successful year in 1981-1982.

TSF Bulletin does not necessarily speak for Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship on matters dealt with in its brief articles. Although editors personally sign the IVCF basis of faith, our purpose is to provide resources for and encouragement towards biblical *thinking* and *living* rather than to formulate "final" answers.

EDITORIALS

(Opinions, options, and olive branches)

PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD

By Greg Ikehara Martin, M.Div. student at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Sometimes it seems to me that the favorite topic of thought among prominent evangelical spokespersons must be . . . evangelicalism. Tiresome as that can become, it's worth it for the sake of the occasionally fruitful observations made. A case in point came out of the 1980 AAR/SBL comments by Clark Pinnock, in which he identified two types of evangelicals, those with "running shoes" and those with "heavy boots."¹ Doctrinally, the former group's flirtations with quasi- or non-orthodox thinking raises for Clark the concern that they may become liberal. The "heavy boots" camp stays close to home, and while Clark is critical of both groups, if pressed he casts his lot with the tortoises rather than the hares.

As a student at Adidas-Nike Theological Training Camp,

Clark's comments set my defenses off like air-raid sirens. As I have struggled to understand my reaction to Clark, I have realized that it was not just (or even primarily) Clark with whom I was taking issue, but with student groups who may use what Clark and others write to create a Maginot line for protection during their trek through the academic wilderness. They believe that is the sure way to keep their faith intact. Still, as one currently making that pilgrimage, I have often felt that the guidance I have received from Clark and those who follow him has stressed only part of the "whole armor of God." In trying to answer the question, "How might evangelicals get mired in liberalism?" the guides repeatedly warn against uncritical reading of the likes of Bultmann or Tillich. This is a helpful suggestion as far as it goes, but if this guidance is given repeatedly or exclusively, it communicates that faith/doubt struggles are one-dimensional, "linear" movements along a cognitive continuum from evangelical to liberal doctrine.

My own experience, and those of some "liberal" friends, doesn't reduce so simply. In fact, I have as many special cases as I have acquaintances. Let me illustrate using the issue of authority. Imagine a theological student raised in an evangelical home and church which correctly emphasized the centrality of authority in Christianity, but unfortunately imposed an equally incorrect *authoritarianism*. This student leaves home and comes to seminary, where she rejects (healthily, I think) the authoritarianism, but with it (sadly) the moorings of the authority. As a friend or pastor to her, I need some way of affirming the positive step that she has taken vis-a-vis the authoritarian suppression of her own subjective affirmation of the truth. I need other categories, in addition to the cognitive, to allow me to recognize and give thanks for the grace of God in her life.

This is where Clark's image of evangelicals with two types of shoes (describing one's proximity to Christianity's authoritative Revealer) links up for me with Jesus' parable of the two prodigal sons. In light of my defensive starting point, I'll only deal with the prodigal evangelical with running shoes who winds up in a "far country, having squandered the riches of his or her theological heritage on riotous reading of European existentialists." In Jesus' parable there is a word of hope, a suggestion that there is a second dimension of proximity (in addition to geographic—doctrinal) for measuring the prodigal's progress: "He came to himself" (Luke 15:17). Or, as I read it isogetically, "He achieved the necessary psychological distance from the authority figure so as to be able to choose freely how to relate himself to the authority." A decisive turn has occurred, but if my only category for spiritual formation is linear, I may not have eyes to see the change. So I will be severely handicapped pastorally to help my friend (or myself) on the humble return trip to the Father's House.²

How is it that a Christian comes one day to find that, faith-wise, she or he is in an alien land longing for pig-feed? By being unattentive to the multi-dimensional nature of the life of faith — that is, by failing to put on the whole armor of God. People often become liberals for reasons other than intellectual. I mentioned fleeing authoritarianism as one example, but there are other paths to perdition as well. No doubt, as Clark's parable suggested to me at first reading, there are some of us (particularly if we are male) whose upbringing was so emotionally arid that faith never developed an affective dimension. For others, the almost exclusive diet of intellectual stimulation during seminary or university years may have shriveled faith into a mere "belief-system." To suggest that the gospel can be reduced, without essential loss, to only one dimension of life — be it intellectual, political, emotional, etc. — is to suggest something sub-human, and therefore sub-Christian.

To guard against truncating Christianity during the academic years I make the following three suggestions. First, don't sell the stork short. The point of Clark's joke about liberals not coming from storks was, I think, that we are responsible stewards of our intellectual well-being. But the joke will be on us if we do not

also apply this truth to other dimensions (psycho-social, political, etc.) of our humanity as well. The "stork" includes everything in our personality beyond our control: our sex, race, class, nationality, relationship to family members, and education, just for openers. If many of us have become most comfortable keeping faith questions on the cognitive level, is it because we fear the loss of control, for instance, with which the unconscious confronts us?³ But if there are certain areas of our lives which are to a great degree beyond our control, is retreating into a "safe" harbor the response of faith? Should we not rather be all the more diligent in presenting these dimensions of our broken selves to the Lord by prayer and meditation?⁴ Those elements in our personalities of which we are unaware will not go away by our ignoring them. Rather they will express themselves in our lives and theologies in unforeseen and potentially destructive ways.

Second, biographies (of Christian artists, politicians, theologians, etc.) can help bridge the gap between one's own inward journey and the world of academe. My isogesis of Luke 15:17 is informed by the struggle of Soren Kierkegaard to get out from under the dominant influence of his father. Kierkegaard is a clear case of the effect of the psychological dimension on theology, but the connection always exists. Indeed, any theology or system of theological education which boasts of being a pure intellectual product, uncontaminated by economics, emotions, etc., is at best irrelevant. At worst it is a diabolical denial of the image of God which calls every human being into wholeness.

Finally, while this wholeness ("the full measure of the stature of Christ") is the "upward call" of every person, it is a wholeness only partially glimpsed in this life. Thus, in the theological enterprise, we must expect to be eclectic, and (though that word implies it I feel compelled to add), appreciative. No one person has it all together. So much academic work is critical; we are driven more than most of us dare admit by our defensive need to control. Many a wise teacher is dismissed on a technicality; the priceless treasure lies undiscovered because the field has a few weeds (Matt. 13:44). I am weary of the reviews of Liberation Theology which complain of the problematic hermeneutics; this observation has its place, but in the final analysis, is that an important thing to say except in passing? We have so much to gain by coming to those who have been marginalized for most of Christianity's history — women, the poor, and those outside the North Atlantic cultures — in our quest to be made whole.

NOTES

¹See *TSF Bulletin*, Feb. 1981, p. 6.

²Some light is shed in Paul Hiebert's "Conversion, Culture, and Cognitive Categories" in *Gospel in Context*, Oct. 1978; or see the helpful review by Alfred Krass in *The Other Side* of May 1980.

³*The Other Side* of May 1981, p. 5, contains a letter (from a male with an Anglo surname, of course) who "find[s] it incredible that in his February column John Alexander could actually presume that the religious right's opposition to ERA and gay rights is due to 'sexual hang-ups.'" Why is this such a terrifying suggestion? See the excellent article by Carl Whitaker, "The Hindrance of Theory in Clinical Work," in Philip Guerin, Jr., ed., *Family Therapy* (NY: Gardner Press, 1976) p. 154 ff.

⁴Elizabeth O'Connor's trilogy of workbooks for the inward journey are a good starting point: *Search for Silence* (Word), *Our Many Selves* (Harper & Row), and *The Eighth Day of Creation* (Harper & Row).

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SPIRITUAL FORMATION

(Probing questions, suggestions and encouragement in areas of personal and spiritual growth)

HE AND HIS KIND OF KINGDOM

by Joseph G. Donders, University of Nairobi, Kenya

Perhaps a comment is extraneous, but misconceptions persist. To place a lengthy quote from Joseph Donders's Jesus, the Stranger (see review, this issue) in the Spiritual Formation section does not imply it is less important than, say, theology proper. On the contrary, theology or biblical studies which cannot make an impact on one's Christlikeness or move one's society toward "Kingdomlikeness" is a sham and probably heretical. Donders lets us see Jesus. That's theology at its best. — MLB

We are celebrating the solemnity,
as it is very royally called,
of the universal kingship of Jesus Christ.
King, world, church, oikoumene,
they all seem to hang together,
and yet that whole kingship of Christ
is a rather confusing issue;
it is even, I think,
a rather fishy issue.
Did that man,
Jesus,
want to be a king?

When the devil wanted to make him a king,
he refused;
when the people wanted to make him a king,
he ran away into the forest;
when Pilate asked him:

Now tell me,
Are you a king?

He answered:

That is what you say,
but not from here,
not from this world, not like you;
my power is different;
if it would not be different,
then you would have been crushed by now
by my father's angels
and their missiles.

His power was not from here.

We all know where the power from here comes from:

It comes from what somebody HAS;
at the roadblocks in the streets of Kenya,
the matatu*, the ex-hare-krishna car,
is stopped time and time again,
trunks are opened,
briefcases are investigated,
pockets are turned out,
and the shiny Mercedes Benz 280 SE,
according to the Automobile Association,
the most expensive car for sale in the Republic,
costing 249,918 Kenya shillings,
is not even stopped.
The man in the matatu

*The cheapest possible "taxi," these cars are sometimes twenty or more years old.