2801 12 Aug 96

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

Eric the Dane tools around Cape Cod on his big red Harley. When he stops, girls buzz around him till he takes his helmut off: Eric is 70.

Well, after the hymnsing in the Craigville Tabernacle last evening, from across the room I saw a twinkle in his eye & knew he could hardly wait to tell me something. This was it:

"Yesterday I was tooling around Provincetown [which you can do on 2 wheels on a summer Saturday but he wouldn't try it on 4] & I saw a T-sheet that said

JESUS IS COMING

LOOK BUSY

"It's worth a 3x5," said I, & wrote down the five words, & this morning upon awakening thought it worthy of this Thinksheet commentary:

1 That T-shirt is delightfully blasphemous, an oxymoronic shock--for almost never do I delight in blasphemy. Line #1 is a holy truth (for I believe that "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come...." [Ac.1.11]) which immediately gets hit by Line #2's counsel of self-regarding, deceiving prudence.

2 They say that when you sneeze you are close to death. I wouldn't know about that. But I do know that when humor shocks you by yanking you out of the expected into the unexpected, you are close to God, or at least to religious experience, which also yanks. At the Talk-Back after worship in the Tabernacle yesterday, I asked the preacher of the morning to tell us his surest moment of knowing he was in the presence of God. "There were three," he said; & I said "No, one please." After a pause, he said "Age 8. I was walking home from school when suddenly I seemed surrounded by a great light & I was terrified. From that moment I knew what I was to do with my life." (Yes, see Acts 9, 22, 26.) What do small boys think of on their way home from school? Self-absorbed thoughts, if any. Maybe just looking for the next stone to kick. Certainly no thought of being looked at. But suddenly, shockingly, this child knew that he was being looked at. And it dawned on him that he was to give the rest of his life to telling about Who had looked at him. Unsurprisingly, his sermon yesterday conveyed that sense of Presence. (Looked: the experience was nonverbal.)

3 When I heard "Look busy," two long Greek words leapt into my mind:

ὀφθαλμοδουλία ἀνθρωπάρεσκος
ophthalmodoulia anthro.pareskos
"eye-service" "people-pleasing"

Two words & you've got the whole scene. The word is passing among the workers "The boss is coming! Look busy!" Neither word occurs in the NT anywhere else than in Col.3.22 & Eph.6.6.

4 Each passage is in a *Haustafel*, a duties list for each category of family members. And in both Col. & Eph., the category is "Slaves,...." By societal analogy, Christians are slaves of Christ (Ro. & Phil.1.1, 1Cor.7.22); but here the reference is to family-owned human beings (who are, in addition to our two passages, instructed--I think, deeply & wisely--in 1Cor.7.21-24, 1P.2.18-25, 1Tim.6.1-2, & Tit.2.9-10). In all these texts, the rich range of motivation makes it probable that *Christian* slaves were not malingerers, harder workers while being master-or-mistress-watched.

5 We biblical folk, Jews & Christians, know that we are never not being watched. Further, we Christians are enjoined to watchfulness: Jesus the Watcher is coming, & warns us to be watching & ready (L.12.35-40 NRSV: "the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour": not *look* busy, but *be* busy!). Not craven calculation but eager expectation: a sacred, not a secular, sanction, but with parabolic secular overtones, as so often in Jesus. Eph.6.18; Rev.3.2 & 16.15. Col.3.22: "lords," "Lord."