

## ASSURANCE FOR MAN: THE FALLACY OF TRANSLATING ANAIDEIA BY "PERSISTENCE" IN LUKE 11:5-8

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One of the most exciting areas today in NT studies is the interpretation of the parables. While not without its own problems, Jülicher's "one main point" approach to the parables broke the stranglehold of centuries of allegorical interpretation.<sup>1</sup> C. H. Dodd<sup>2</sup> furthered the quest by recapturing the eschatological kingdom of God setting of the parables notwithstanding his truncated "realized eschatology," while Jeremias<sup>3</sup> has pushed the interpretation of the parables back into their first-century Palestinian culture. More recently, the insistence on the literary aspect of the parable as genuine metaphor has tended to balance the "severely historical" approach as well as to clarify the role of Jesus' absolutely unique creative imagination.<sup>4</sup> The most recent contributions have focused on the existential qualities of the parable as a "language event" that opens to the hearer new possibilities of understanding and calls for decision.<sup>5</sup> Reference also will be made throughout this paper to the latest significant contribution in parable studies, a work by Kenneth E. Bailey. The author, a professor of Biblical studies at the Near Eastern School of Theology, Beirut, focuses on the Near Eastern cultural milieu and the literary structure of the parables in an approach he calls "oriental exegesis." Though Bailey only discusses four parables in Luke's gospel, it is easily the most significant study on the parables in the last several years.<sup>6</sup>

Our intent is to bring to bear certain features of this rich background material

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<sup>1</sup>*Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* (2 vols.; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1910).

<sup>2</sup>C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (rev. ed.; London: Nisbet, 1961).

<sup>3</sup>J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (rev. ed.; New York: Scribner's, 1963).

<sup>4</sup>Cf. A. Wilder, *The Language of the Gospel: Early Christian Rhetoric* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1971); G. V. Jones, *The Art and Truth of the Parables: A Study in Their Literary Form and Modern Interpretation* (London: SPCK, 1964); S. TeSelle, *Speaking in Parables: A Study in Metaphor and Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975).

<sup>5</sup>Cf. R. W. Funk, "The Parables: A Fragmentary Agenda," in *Jesus and Man's Hope* (D. G. Miller and D. Y. Hadidian, eds.; Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 1971), 2, 287-304; D. O. Via, *The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967); E. Linnemann, *Jesus of the Parables* (New York: Harper, 1966). For a different emphasis cf. J. D. Crossan in *Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper, 1973).

<sup>6</sup>K. E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976). For a helpful survey of the history of recent interpretation of the parables cf. J. C. Little, "Parable Research in the Twentieth Century," *Exp Tim* 87 (1975-76) 356-360; 88 (1976-77) 40-44, 71-75.

and recent interpretive trends on the interpretation of the parable of the "friend at midnight" in Luke 11:5-8. It is our thesis that this parable about prayer has been misunderstood by the Church since earliest times. Traditionally the parable has been interpreted to mean that "persistence" in prayer will eventually move God to answer. This paper will argue that the traditional understanding is both exegetically and theologically indefensible.

The meaning of the parable hinges on two crucial features found in the story: (1) the significance of the introductory words, "Who of you," which introduce a question; (2) the meaning of *anaideia*, variously translated as "importunity," "persistence," "shamelessness."

### I. THE MEANING OF "WHO OF YOU"

At first sight the words appear to be simply a way of stating a rhetorical question and can be translated as follows: "Who of you who has a friend will go to him . . . ?" Upon closer examination, however, several illuminating matters are discovered. In the first place, this expression is used in the NT to introduce a rhetorical question that expects an indignant negative reply. At least seven different illustrations of the usage of this phrase are observable in the synoptics. In each case the expression bears this same sense.<sup>7</sup> Thus later in this chapter Jesus asks, "What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent?" (Luke 11:11). Paraphrased, the sense is: "Can you imagine a father whose son asks him for a fish and who will instead of a fish give him a serpent?" The Near Eastern listener responds, "No, I cannot imagine such a thing!" Thus in the parable under consideration the question can be paraphrased, "Can you imagine having a guest and going to a neighbor to borrow bread and the neighbor offers ridiculous excuses about a locked door and sleeping children?" The Near Eastern listener responds, "No, I cannot imagine such a thing!"<sup>8</sup> Under no circumstances would he fail to get up and leave his friend's request unanswered. The interpreter must note not only the kind of question and its corresponding response but also the extent of the question. It goes on through the words of v 7: "My children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything."<sup>9</sup> V 7 is not describing a refusal of the request but rather the utter impossibility of such a refusal. Thus the real point of the parable is to depict the custom of oriental hospitality, which was not just a personal matter but a village responsibility.<sup>10</sup>

Along a slightly different line it may be observed that the expression "who of you" does not seem to have any contemporary parallels. It occurs occasionally in the prophets (Isa 42:23; 50:10; Hag 2:3), but not in connection with a parable.<sup>11</sup> What significance this unique usage by Jesus may suggest is not clear at this time.

<sup>7</sup>Matt 6:27 (par. Luke 12:25); Matt 7:9 (par. Luke 11:11); Luke 14:5; Luke 11:5; 14:28; 15:4; 17:7.

<sup>8</sup>So J. Jeremias, *Parables*, 103, 158; K. E. Bailey, *Poet*, 119.

<sup>9</sup>J. Jeremias, *Parables*, 158.

<sup>10</sup>K. E. Bailey, *Poet*, 122.

<sup>11</sup>J. Jeremias, *Parables*, 103.

Finally, does the question thus posed expect us to identify with the host—that is, the man who had an unexpected guest arrive—or with the man asleep? The problem involves the subject of the verb “go” in v 5. Some interpreters have argued that the subject of the verb is “friend.” Jeremias renders vv 5-7 in the following manner:

Can you imagine that, if one of you had a friend who came to you at midnight and said to you, “My friend, lend me three loaves, because a friend has come to me on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him,” you would call out, “Don’t disturb me. . . .”<sup>12</sup>

Thus understood, the passage states that the listener is called upon to identify not with the host who has need but with the sleeper who is aroused. But it is probably better to reject Jeremias’ suggestion and to identify the subject of “go” with the “you” of v 5 and translate with the RSV and others as follows: “Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight. . . .” The “friend,” therefore, is the sleeper, and the listener to the parable is called upon to identify not with the sleeper (Jeremias) but with the host who has need.<sup>13</sup>

## II. THE MEANING OF THE WORD *ANAIDEIA*

The really crucial sense of the whole parable revolves around the meaning of the key word *anaideia* in v 8. Two different senses for this word have come down to us from earliest times in Christian tradition: (1) “shamelessness” (a negative quality), and (2) “persistence” (a positive quality). A survey of the evidence should determine if the second meaning was possible during the first century or whether it is a later sense attached to the word in following centuries.

1. *In Ancient Greek Literature.* Bailey correctly observes that “from Archilochus in the seventh century B. C. through Plato, Sophocles, Herodotus, and Pindar in the fifth, to Demosthenes in the fourth, all references point to ‘shamelessness.’”<sup>14</sup> Liddell and Scott include along with the predominant sense of “shamelessness” the sense also of “impudence” and “shame.” The stone of Sisyphus is called *laas anaidēs*, a “reckless” or “ruthless” stone (Il. 4.521; 13.139). In the Areopagus, *lithos anaideias* was a stone of “unforgiveness” on which stood an accuser who demanded the full penalty of the law against one accused of homicide (Paus. I. 28.5).<sup>15</sup> All the classical references convey a negative quality, and the word never has the sense of “persistence.”

2. *In the LXX.* The noun, adjective and adverb of *anaideia* occur some fifteen times in the LXX.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 158; J. M. Creed, *The Gospel According to St. Luke*, 1965, p. 157, makes the same identification, which he admits makes for “an awkward change of subject” (cited by K. E. Bailey, *Poet*, p. 124, n. 29).

<sup>13</sup>K. E. Bailey, *Poet*, 125, offers a convincing though not exact parallel in Luke 17:7 as evidence to support this conclusion.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>LSJ, p. 105.

<i>Form</i>	<i>Reference</i>	<i>Translation and Context</i>
<i>anaideia</i>	Sir 25:22	"impudence"—when a wife supports her husband <sup>16</sup>
<i>anaidēs</i>	Deut 28:50	"stern," "fierce"—of a nation who will destroy Israel
	1 Kgs 2:29	"insolent," "impudent" eye—of Eli's sons' attitude toward sacrifices
	Prov 7:13	"impudent face" of a harlot
	25:13	"indignant" tongue brings angry looks
	Ecc 8:1	"impudent," "hardness"—of the face of man altered by wisdom
	Sir 23:6	"shameless" prayer for deliverance for a wicked man
	26:11	"shameless" or "impudent" eye of a headstrong daughter
	40:30	"shameless"—of an uncouth man who begs
	Isa 56:11	"fierce," "mighty"—of a dog's appetite
	Jer 8:5	"perpetual," "enduring"—of Israel's apostasy
	Bar 4:15	"shameless"—of a nation brought against Israel
	Dan 8:23	"fierce," "bold" king (Antiochus?)
	Dan 2:15	(Theodotion) "harsh"—of the command of Nebuchadnezzar to kill wise men
<i>anaidōs</i>	Prov 21:29	"bold," "impudent" face of a wicked man

In summarizing the evidence it becomes clear that the word primarily means "shameless," "impudent," "stern," "fierce," "harsh." It is always used of a negative quality, and with one possible exception it never has the sense of "persistence." While it is possible that the LXX translators of Jer 8:5 wanted to describe Israel's apostasy as a "shameless" apostasy, the Hebrew word *nšht* means "enduring," "lasting," "perpetual." This unusual case provides the only precedent for the later Christian usage.<sup>17</sup>

3. *In First-Century Usage.* The word is found a few times in texts whose originals date to the first century A. D.

a. *Epictetus* (A. D. 50-130). There is a text that interestingly connects *anaidēs* with *apistos*. Epictetus is offering advice to a would-be politician. When asked what position he could hold, Epictetus answers:

Whatever position you can, if you maintain at the same time your fidelity (*piston*) and sense of shame (*aidēmona*). But if when you wish to be useful to the state, you shall lose these qualities, what profit could you be to it, if you were made shameless (*anaidēs*) and faithless (*apistos*)?<sup>18</sup>

b. *Papyri*. Moulton and Milligan<sup>19</sup> give three examples, two of which come

<sup>16</sup>The Hebrew text reads *qšh*: "hard," "severe," "harsh."

<sup>17</sup>K. E. Bailey, *Poet*, 126, refers to Dan 2:15 (Theodotion), the context of which is the king's decree to kill all the wise men in Babylon: "Why has this harsh decree (*hē gnōmē hē anaidēs*) come out from the face of the king?" The Aramaic word *hšp* is equivalent to a Syriac word that is used to translate *anaideia* in all the Syriac versions and has (or perhaps acquires) the secondary meaning of "persistence." Bailey correctly calls attention, however, to the fact that the sense of persistence is clearly absent from the Daniel passage.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>19</sup>J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1930) 33.

from the first century and one from the late second. The first of the earlier texts reads as follows: "At the hands of the greedy and shameless (*anaidōs*), the authorities have had enough" (OGIS 665, A. D. 48-49); the second refers to people who "shamelessly (*anaideuomenai*) refuse to pay" (P. Ryl. II. 141, A. D. 37).

c. *Josephus*. There are no less than eighteen references to *anaideia* and its variants in Josephus, according to Rengstorf.<sup>20</sup> In each case the quality is negative and translated as "shameless," "impudent" or "affront." There is no text, to my knowledge, where it carries the sense of "persistence."<sup>21</sup>

4. *In Early Christian Literature*. Lampe's lexicon yields nine cases of the word in third- to fifth-century Christian literature.<sup>22</sup> He translates the texts as "without restraint," "to lack shame," "to behave shamelessly." Again the quality is always negative and there is no sense of "persistence."

To sum up, the Greek evidence from ancient times until at least the fifth century A. D. seems to point strongly in favor of the following: The word *anaideia* always refers to a negative quality, is best translated as "shamelessness" or "impudence" and in only one case suggests the sense of "enduring" or "persisting." In the first century there is no evidence that the word would have been understood as "importunity" or "persistence."

Now when this negative sense of "shamelessness" is brought to the word *anaideia* in the parable of the friend at midnight, problems arise. The key phrase in v 8 must be rendered as follows: "I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his shamelessness he will rise and give him whatever he needs." Does the Christian act "shamelessly" when he comes to God in prayer? Certainly not. In order to avoid this conclusion and make sense out of the parable, the Church gradually changed the meaning of the word from a negative quality (shamelessness) to a positive quality (persistence). Just when and how this change took place is difficult to clarify, but some of the lines of evidence can be briefly summarized.<sup>23</sup>

Earlier OL texts<sup>24</sup> read *improbitatem*, meaning "badness," "wickedness," "impudence," "dishonesty,"<sup>25</sup> while later texts<sup>26</sup> read *importunitatem*, meaning "rudeness," "impoliteness," "insolence," "incivility," "importunity."<sup>27</sup> Even

<sup>20</sup>K. H. Rengstorf, ed., *A Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 1. 92-93.

<sup>21</sup>K. E. Bailey, *Poet*, 126, refers to "one exception" to the general claim of its being free from the idea of persistence, but he does not cite the text in Josephus and I have failed to discover such a reference.

<sup>22</sup>Vb., Herm 3.7.5; A. Thom. A 15 (p. 112.4); *ibid.*, p. 152.2; Or. or 31.3; Ath. inc 32.6; Soph. H. V. Anast (M.92.1721A); Noun, Const. App. 6.10.3; Didym, Trin. 3.41; Cyr Is 4.1.

<sup>23</sup>K. E. Bailey, *Poet*, 127-129, has done an excellent job in summarizing the versional evidence. I have checked out his work wherever possible and added some additional material.

<sup>24</sup>d f i l q vg, cited by *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup>C. T. Lewis and C. Short, eds., *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879) 908.

<sup>26</sup>B F c ff<sup>22</sup> r aur., cited by K. E. Bailey, *Poet*, 127.

<sup>27</sup>C. T. Lewis and C. Short, eds., *Latin*, 906.

the latter word does not yet have the clear sense of "persistence." In the Coptic versions two words appear, *las* and *matlas*. Both mean primarily "shamelessness" but acquire the secondary meaning of "persistence." Is it possible that the Coptic words underwent a similar change in meaning, as did the Greek word *anaideia*, due to the influence of this passage in Luke 11:8? In the Syriac versions the word used is *hsp*, which means "persistence."<sup>28</sup> Again, is it not possible that the passage in Luke has affected the meaning of the Syriac word since the same word in Aramaic has no idea of persistence and means simply "harsh" or "overbearing"?<sup>29</sup> In the Armenian versions the word is *tachantsank*, meaning "noisy pleading."<sup>30</sup> In the Arabic versions the word used means "persistence."

In summary, the versional evidence seems to reveal a gradual shift from the earlier negative quality of "shamelessness" to the positive quality of "persistence." So complete was this change that Euthymius, a Greek monk in the twelfth century, could define *anaideia* as *tēn epimonēn tēs aitēseōs* ("the persistence of the petitioner").<sup>31</sup> Most modern versions follow this same secondary meaning. Probably what has happened is that the problem of *anaideia* was solved by appealing to the following parable poem: Jesus said, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you shall find; knock and it will be opened to you" (Luke 11:9, 10). Since present tenses are used, indicating continuous action, the expression "keep on knocking and it will be opened to you" is referred back to the parable as summarizing its primary meaning and hence the sense of *anaideia*. But there is no warrant for this understanding. The parable does not have the image of "persistence" in it, and the word *anaideia* does not have this sense in the first century. Furthermore the host in the parable would not be *knocking* at the door but *calling* to his friend inside. According to Bailey a stranger knocks at night, a friend calls. Nevertheless the later parable-poem is no doubt responsible for this "spilling" effect into the parable of the friend at midnight.

Thus the Church's solution to the problem is unsatisfactory on exegetical, theological and stylistic grounds. Even if we grant that the parable of the unjust judge teaches persistence in prayer,<sup>32</sup> it is a persistence until God answers by vindicating his saints and not a persistence aimed at cajoling God to change his mind after he has said "no"—which is what the parable of the friend at midnight would teach. The sleeper on the inside has presumably refused to grant the request, and it is only the continued annoyance and supposed banging on the door that eventually brings him to the aid of his friend. But sensitive Christians have recognized the severe theological difficulties of turning *anaideia* into "persistence."

How, then, can the problem of the negative word be solved? A brief summary of current views will complete the aims of this paper.

<sup>28</sup>Cited by K. E. Bailey, *Poet*, 127.

<sup>29</sup>Cf. n. 17.

<sup>30</sup>This reference was supplied by my colleague, Gilbert Bilezikian.

<sup>31</sup>F. F. Bruce, *Synoptic Gospels*, cited by K. E. Bailey, *Poet*, 127 n. 42.

<sup>32</sup>Luke 18:1-8. In many respects God is *unlike* the unjust judge in the parable. God immediately rises to aid his suffering people. It is another case of a *minore ad maius* argument.

1. Some have accepted the translation of "shamelessness" and have applied the term to the host.<sup>33</sup> He is shameless in his coming at night, or in his persistence, or both. Thus *NEB* has "the very shamelessness of the request" and *TEV* reads "because you are not ashamed to keep on asking."

The main problem with this view is the wrong identification of which man has the shamelessness. Grammatically the antecedent of the "his" in the clause "because of his shamelessness" could refer to either the host, as in the traditional understanding, or to the sleeper inside. Bailey's following literary analysis clarifies the antecedent:

I say to you,	<i>The subject of each line is:</i>
B 1 If he will not give to him	the sleeper
2 having arisen	the sleeper
3 because of being a friend of his	the sleeper
3' but because of his ( <i>anaideia</i> )	?
2' he will arise	the sleeper
1' and will give him whatever he needs.	the sleeper

His summary is worth quoting:

It is clear that the entire stanza is talking about the sleeper and that line 3' should also apply to him. Whatever the disputed word means it applies to the man in bed, not the host outside the door. Furthermore the matching line in the first stanza of the parable (A-3') speaks of the sleeper's potential refusal of duty. Here we expect a discussion that relates to the same man and the same topic. Thus we have two problems in our traditional understanding of this line. We have a mistranslation of the key word and have applied it to the wrong man.

2. A second solution accepts the "shamelessness" as belonging to the sleeper rather than the host. It explains the sleeper's willingness to grant the friend's request as due to his desire to avoid the shamelessness which might come to him if he refuses to fulfill the oriental village code of hospitality. He will cause the village to lose face if he does not supply his friend with enough for him to feed his unexpected guest. Anton Fridrichen first proposed this solution, and it has been adopted by Jeremias.<sup>34</sup> It has much to commend it. The major difficulty with this view is the subtle shift from a quality that the sleeper desires to avoid to a quality the text seems to say the sleeper already has ("his shamelessness"). Thus Jeremias may have jumped to the right conclusion but without an adequate explanation of how one gets from "shamelessness" to "avoidance of shame."

<sup>33</sup>Bengel, *Gnomon*, 1. 446; N. Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (Eerdmans, 1951) 326. J. Jeremias, *Parables*, 158, 159 alternates between "persistent prayer" and "importunity" or "for the sake of his own shamelessness, that is to say, that he may not lose face in the matter." Jeremias makes a subtle jump here from the negative quality "shamelessness" to a positive quality "not lose face"; Arndt and Gingrich also give the meaning of the word as shamelessness and also with no evidence cited as "persistence" (p. 54). Levison's suggestion that the Hebrew/Aramaic root behind *anaideia* would probably be 'zz meaning "strong" and hence the sleeper would be a nobleman rising to strengthen his friend in his need is highly unlikely; cf. N. Levison, "Importunity? A Study of Luke XI.8," *The Expositor*, Ser. 9/3 (1925) 456-460.

<sup>34</sup>A. Fridrichen, "Exegetisches zum Neuen Testament," SO 13 (1934) 40; J. Jeremias, *Parables*.

3. A third solution is the more recent proposal of Bailey, which argues from etymology.<sup>35</sup> The word *anaideia* is composed of *aidōs* and the alpha-privative *an-*. *Aidōs* has two meanings: (1) "sense of shame," "sense of honor," "self-respect" (a positive quality); and (2) "shame," "scandal" (a negative quality). The word *anaideia* negates the first meaning, "sense of shame," and not the second. Hence we correctly translate it as "without a sense of shame" or "shameless." But in the Semitic languages, Bailey suggests, there is no word (as in Greek) that covers both "shame" and "sense of shame." There are special words for "shame" and other quite different words that mean "sense of shame." The Greek translator of Jesus' original speech saw an Aramaic word meaning "sense of shame" in the crucial phrase.<sup>36</sup> He wanted to reproduce this thought in Greek and did so by beginning with a Greek word for "shame," *aidōs* (a negative word), and then adding the alpha-privative, thus ending up with a positive word meaning "avoidance of shame."

Bailey's solution fits admirably into the cultural context of the parable, which was already alluded to in the discussion of the long rhetorical question that introduces the story. The sleeper knows that the borrower must gather up essentials for the banquet from various neighbors. If the sleeper refused to give his friend even the menial items the host would continue around to the other neighbors, but before long the whole town would know that the first sleeper had refused these bare items. Cries of "shame" would be all over town before morning. So in order to avoid the shame the sleeper gets up without a moment's hesitation and gives him not only the bread but *whatever he needs*.<sup>37</sup>

While Bailey's solution is the most attractive to date, it nevertheless rests on two factors that must be questioned. First, arguments based on etymologies are always tenuous at best and quite unreliable, especially when the usage of a word has given to it a predominantly strong sense. Second, Bailey's solution rests on the assumption that Jesus spoke Aramaic. Recent studies have argued that Jesus may well have been trilingual, speaking Greek and Hebrew as well as Aramaic.<sup>38</sup> In any event Bailey is certainly on the right track even though his etymological proposals will have to be studied further.

In conclusion, the following seems to emerge from this study: The parable of the friend at midnight is seen to be an oriental story revolving around the Near

<sup>35</sup>K. E. Bailey, *Poet*, pp. 131, 132.

<sup>36</sup>J. Jeremias, *Parables*, 158, suggests *kissūf*, "a sense of shame"; Bailey also mentions *tam* and *nāqī* as possibilities.

<sup>37</sup>This little detail shows that there is no ill will between the sleeper and the host even if the sleeper must get up in the middle of the night. Again, this would be impossible if it was the host's "persistence" or "importunity" or even "shamelessness" that was the cause of the request being granted.

<sup>38</sup>Cf. R. H. Gundry, "The Language Milieu of First-Century Palestine," *JBL* 83 (1964) 404-408; P. E. Hughes, "The Languages Spoken by Jesus," in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study* (R. N. Longenecker and M. C. Tenney, eds.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974) 127-143. See especially the full-length study by J. N. Sevenster, *Do You Know Greek?* (Leiden: Brill, 1968); "Hebrew and Aramaic in the First Century" by C. Rabin, and "Greek in Palestine and the Diaspora" by G. Mussies, chaps. 21 and 22 in *The Jewish People in the First Century* (S. Safrai and M. Stern, eds.; Fortress, 1976), vol. 2 of sec. 1; J. Fitzmyer, "The Languages of Palestine in the First Century A. D.," *CBQ* 32 (1970) 501-531.



Easterner's sense of shame. Even though a man calls in the middle of the night it would be unthinkable for the man inside not to respond to the need of his friend to provide a meal for a traveler even if it means getting up at midnight, unbolting the door and awaking his children. He will indeed get up, and he will do it quickly. He will get up to "avoid the shame" of himself and his village. The key to the meaning of the parable is in the word *anaideia*, which in the first century meant "shamelessness" and takes on the sense in the parable of "avoiding shame." Gradually the Church changed the meaning of the word in Luke 11:8 to "importunity" and finally to the completely positive quality of "persistence." This was seen to be misleading exegetically, theologically and stylistically.

Finally, there are two theological foci in the parable. The first deals with the character of God, the second with assurance for man. If the sleeper, though awakened in the middle of the night, without a moment's hesitation helps his neighbor (the oriental custom of hospitality and honor at stake), *how much more will God* rush to the aid of the needy who call to him! He cannot fail to hear them. His honor is at stake. Therefore they are to "ask, and it will be given to them; seek, and they will find; knock, and it will be opened to them." It is because God is this kind of God that his children have absolute assurance. Their Father will provide exceedingly abundantly beyond anything they dare ask or think.<sup>39</sup>

If the evidence presented in this study makes it virtually certain that the crucial word *anaideia* cannot be translated by "persistence," "importunity" or any such related idea, should not future translations as well as revisions of existing versions correct this error? I would propose the following manner of handling the expression: ". . . yet because of his shamelessness\* he will get up and give him as much as he needs." The asterisk (or letter) would then be picked up in the footnote with the following explanation: "or *avoidance of shame*." I would invite further suggestions and reactions to this proposal from NT scholars and translators.

<sup>39</sup>"Our cultural presuppositions in the last half of the 20th century tend to make us uneasy about seeing 'the preservation of honor' as a virtue that is appropriate to God. Given the importance of this concept in the Eastern value system, it would be surprising if Jesus did not use such a quality as a prime virtue for the Father. The center of each stanza climaxes on the question of honor" (K. E. Bailey, *Poet*, 113 n. 67).