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The Nature of Luther's Reform

by DAVID C. STEINMETZ

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Take me, for example. I opposed indulgences and all papists, but never by force. I simply taught, preached, wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. And then while I slept or drank Wittenberg beer with my Philip and my Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that never a prince or Emperor did such damage to it. I did nothing. The Word did it all.

The Protestant Reformation began, almost by accident, on October 31, 1517. By all counts the central figure of that Reformation was the professor of Old Testament at the newly established University of Wittenberg, Father Martin Luther, an ascetic and soft-spoken friar of the Reformed Congregation (Observant) of the Order of the Hermits of St. Augustine. Even though there were currents of reform in the 16th century which owed very little to Martin Luther and which were marked more by hostility to his thought than by indebtedness to him, nevertheless, the questions which prompted the schism between Protestantism and the Roman Catholic Church were in a preeminent sense Luther's questions. When Karl Holl, the famous Church historian at the University of Berlin, remarked that John Calvin was Luther's best disciple, he was underscoring a fact with which historians and theologians must come to terms. Luther marks a turning-point in the intellectual history of the West. It is impossible to understand the nature of Protestantism or of the Roman Catholic Church which redefined its borders in the light of the Protestant Revolt without understanding the genius of Luther's thought.

Luther was not a political revolutionary. Aside from an early appeal to the German princes as *Notbischöfe*, emergency bishops who ought to act to reform the Church in the face of the dilatory and half-hearted tactics of the Catholic bishops, Luther remained sceptical of the state and of the legitimacy of political means to further spiritual ends. Political power cannot compel conscience and princes make better hangmen than spiritual leaders. Therefore Luther opposed Thomas Müntzer and the Peasants' Revolt, on the one hand, and distrusted the Protestant League and the diplomatic negotiations of Melancthon, on the other. "I did nothing," he claimed in his famous but unbelievable alibi. "The Word did it all." Nevertheless, while Luther was politically naive, his Reformation forced politicians to redraw the political map of Europe and to redefine the boundaries of the European states.

Luther was also not a Church reformer in the strict sense of the term. He did not set out to attack monasticism or abuses in the life of the Church. If Luther had shown any defects as an Augustinian friar, he was guilty of a too rigorous asceticism and indulged an excessively sensitive conscience. Luther was a conservative friar in the most traditionally Catholic state of 16th century Europe. His Reformation grew, not out of his radical tendencies, but out of his patient research as a biblical scholar. In his lectures on the Psalms and on the letter to the Romans, Luther was slowly led by his research to reconceive the center of the Christian message. This fresh conception of the message led to a new form of the Christian life and gave birth to new institutions. In his *Tabletalk*, Luther observed to his students over lunch: "Wyclif and Hus fought merely against the life of the Pope. That is why they did not attain their purpose, for they were sinners just as the papists were. But I attacked the doctrine." (*WATR* I, nr. 880).

One must also admit that Luther was not a spokesman for the economic aspirations of the rising middle classes. Luther's economic attitudes were medieval. He was opposed to all interest as usury and could never understand how it was possible to make one guilder out of another. There is little in Martin Luther which foreshadows either Adam Smith or Karl Marx. Still Luther's Reformation put an end to many Church taxes and provided the moral preconditions and incentives for the development of a powerful urban middle class. The Protestant ethic was an accidental by-product of Luther's biblical research.

The Reformation of Martin Luther was primarily a movement of doctrinal and theological reform. To say that does not exclude the fact that the reform served as a catalyst for a myriad of social, political, religious and economic aspirations of people not in sympathy with the central thrust of Luther's thought or who understood it imperfectly. Wilfrid Sheed once remarked with tongue in cheek that the staunchest defenders of the Protestant ethic in contemporary American society are first-generation Sicilian immigrants. The point is exaggerated, but not wholly false.

In spite of Luther's decisive impact on the modern world, Luther had no reform program. Indeed, if the word will not be misunderstood, one could even say that Luther had a charismatic view of reform. In Luther's view God was reforming the Church (together with all the social and political dislocation which that reform implied), while he, Martin Luther, was personally very unimportant. "While I slept or drank Wittenberg beer with my Philip or my Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that never a prince or Emperor did such damage to it. I did nothing. The Word

did it all." Luther gives the impression, in Gordon Rupp's happy phrase, that he regarded the Reformation as a tempest in a beer mug. Yet while Luther claimed to do nothing, it would be more accurate to say that he did nothing programmatically. The still incomplete Weimar edition of his collected works now numbers over ninety volumes. Luther pursued research into the Old Testament, met his classes, wrote letters, composed polemical treatises (many of which are still hilariously funny), engaged in the pedestrian chores of academic and ecclesiastical administration. He was intensely active, but he had no unified vision of the reform of Church and state. He set in motion forces which he did not try, or only tried half-heartedly, to control.

Luther's Reformation was connected from beginning to end with university life. The University of Wittenberg competed with its closest rival, the University of Leipzig, by putting into effect an experimental curriculum. Aristotle was deposed from his central place in the liberal arts and theological curriculum, and students were put to work studying the Bible and St. Augustine. Instead of reading the scholastic doctors (St. Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus and Gregory of Rimini had been staple items in the old curriculum), the students learned Greek and Hebrew, read the early Fathers, and listened to a dazzling array of lecturers apply the methods of the humanists to the biblical texts. The new curriculum made Wittenberg the most popular university in Germany and formed a generation in new theological ideas. The Reformation started as a movement of university reform among a collection of scholars more interested in purifying ancient texts than in reforming society. Yet, from these unlikely beginnings, the Reformation became an immensely popular movement rooted in German life. Luther was both scholar and reformer, and reformer precisely because he was a scholar. He is a symbol that the lively pursuit of the truth, rather than the breathless scramble for relevance, may prove in the long run to be the most relevant service which the university performs for the society in which it lives.

I

At the very heart of Luther's reconception of the Christian message lies his understanding of Christian freedom. Luther sums up what is meant by Christian freedom in two short propositions:

A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.

A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.

Every person stands in two fundamental relationships: in a relationship to God and in a relationship to society. Luther uses two Latin phrases to designate these two relationships: *coram Deo* ("in the presence of God") to designate the relationship to God the Creator

and Redeemer, and *coram hominibus* ("before men") to designate the relationship to one's neighbor. These two relationships are distinct, though they intersect in each person. Luther can also talk of an inner nature, known only to God and the self, and an outer nature which must be fed, housed, pampered, clothed, and which enters into relationship with other human beings. What he has in mind in using this language is much the same thing as when he uses the phrases *coram Deo* and *coram hominibus*. What Luther wants to prove is that a Christian is a perfectly free Lord of all *coram Deo* and a perfectly dutiful servant of all *coram hominibus*.

He first focuses on the relationship *coram Deo*. The soul, the inner nature of the human person, needs righteousness and freedom. This righteousness cannot be conferred by eating certain foods or abstaining from others. There are no ritual or liturgical acts which will grant spiritual freedom or take it away once it has been obtained. Neither hunger nor thirst nor poor health nor imprisonment nor external misfortune of any kind can damage the soul or destroy a wholesome and right relationship to God.

Righteousness and freedom are conferred on the soul by the Word of God. The Word of God which confers this proper relationship on the sinner is the good news of Jesus Christ. Luther elsewhere draws a distinction between two kinds of words in order to make clear what the Bible means when it speaks of the Word of God. There is, of course, the *Heissel-Wort*, the Call-Word, the word which we use when we apply names to things which already exist. The biblical story of Adam in the garden is a fine example of this. He names all the creatures. He does not create them; he only sorts them out and gives them labels.

But there is a second kind of word, the *Thettel-Wort* or Deed-Word, which not only names, but effects what it says. Adam looks around him and says, "There is a cow and an owl and a horse and a mosquito." But God looks around Him and says, "Let there be light," and there is light.

God's Word, according to Luther, is a Deed-Word. It creates new possibilities where no possibilities existed before. The Word of God is a Word which enriches the poor, releases the captives, gives sight to the blind and sets at liberty those who are oppressed. The Word which the Church proclaims is a Deed-Word. It is a Word which meets men and women at the point of their greatest need and sets them free. A Church which has become modest about the proclamation of the gospel is not a Church which has become more relevant to the human situation, but less so.

Jesus Christ is the Deed-Word of God. It is he and no one else—certainly no program or promotional emphasis—which has been

anointed to set at liberty those who are oppressed. The Church has been commissioned, not to be original, but to witness to him. Therefore, it is a terrible catastrophe, far worse than any natural disaster, when the Church experiences a famine of the hearing of the Word of God. Christ has no other ministry than the ministry of the Word. All apostles, bishops and priests are called to that same ministry.

I refrain from saying anything about the utterly stupid and incompetent persons whom bishops and abbots nowadays promote everywhere to the pulpit. We really cannot say that they are called and sent, even if we wanted to, because in this case incompetent and unworthy men are given the call. This is the work of God's wrath, for it is he who withdraws his word from us on account of our sins and he increases the number of vacuous talkers and verbose babblers.

The appropriate response to the Word of God is faith, not works. While works have a role to play *coram hominibus*, the relationship to God (*coram Deo*) calls for a response of faith alone. Faith is not a simple human possibility. All persons are alienated from God. They have placed their ultimate trust in something which is not God, whether something crass like money and power, or something noble like human love. God must break us down in our self-trust, in our false worship of what is not ultimate, in order to teach us trust in the gospel. Only faith in the gospel can restore health and freedom to the soul and overcome the alienation from God which is the universal predicament of mankind.

Scripture has, therefore, two parts, corresponding to the double work which God must do in order to teach us faith. There are the commandments and the promises. The commandments show men and women what they ought to do, but cannot give them the power to do it. When people examine themselves in the light of the commandments or law of God, they discover that they are sinful and helpless and are reduced to humility by that discovery. God breaks the self-righteous down through the law in order to teach them what it means to trust in his promises. He does his strange work of wrath through the law in order to do his proper work of restoring life through the gospel.

The promises of God give as a free gift all that the law commands but was powerless to effect. The only response appropriate to a promise is trust. If a king promises a robber, to use an illustration which Luther employs in his early lectures on the Psalms, that he will give him a hundred dollars on the sole condition that the robber appear at a certain place on a certain day and claim it, then it is clear that the robber, if he wishes the reward, must appear at the designated place and time. He does not receive the gift because he merits it. Indeed, he is a robber and deserves punishment. The gift is given

because of the king's promise irrespective of merit or demerit. All one can do with a promise is accept it or turn it down.

God promises righteousness and freedom to sinners. That promise contradicts ordinary human expectations. Sinners ought to receive punishment, not righteousness; incarceration rather than freedom. But by the double work of his law and gospel, God teaches us to close our eyes to ordinary human expectations and the conclusions of common sense and open our ears to the promise which offers life and freedom to us. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. God always acts in a way which is contrary to ordinary human expectation. He vindicates his wisdom in ways which sensible people regard as foolish.

Therefore, just as the wisdom of God is hidden under the disguise of foolishness and truth under the form of a lie, so also the word of God comes, whenever it comes, in a form that is contrary to our own thinking in so far as it pretends to have the truth by and from itself.

Hence, we must do nothing else but listen to the word with all our mind and all our strength, simply keeping our eyes closed and directing all our prudence only to it. And whether it enjoins something foolish or bad, something large or small, we must do it, judging what we do in terms of the word and not the word in terms of what we do.

Luther uses three analogies to demonstrate the way in which God communicates righteousness and freedom to the soul by means of faith. The first analogy is natural. A heated iron glows because of the union of fire with it. So, too, the Word, like fire, communicates its properties to the soul. A soul united to the Word has all that God has promised to give and does not need to rely on good works in order to gain justification.

The second analogy is drawn from personal relations and was developed by Luther in his early commentary on the Psalms. God justifies us when we justify him. We justify God when we ascribe to him the honor which is due him; that is, when we regard him as truthful in his promises. Faith in God's promises is the act by which we ascribe truthfulness, justice, wisdom and fidelity to God. When we consider God truthful in his promises, God considers us righteous on account of our faith. "Those who honor me," says I Samuel 2:30 of God, "I will honor." Paul has reference to the same principle when he argues that Abraham's faith was reckoned to him for righteousness.

The final analogy is drawn from the marriage relationship and rests on a distinction drawn from Roman law between property, which implies ownership, and possession, which implies right of usage. In marriage two people who have their own property in the eyes of the law enter into the possession and use of the property of

their partner. The same phenomenon holds true in justification. The Christian's property is his sin. Christ's property is his righteousness. When the Christian is united to Christ by the wedding ring of faith, Christ's property—i.e., his righteousness—becomes the possession of the Christian. At the same time the Christian's property—i.e., his sin—becomes the possession of Christ. In one decisive act Christ takes it over and takes it away. But the benefits of the relationship are inseparable from the relationship itself. There is no exchange of possessions without faith.

II

While the Christian is justified by faith alone and apart from any reliance, however slight, on his own good works, nevertheless that faith expresses itself *coram hominibus* in good works out of spontaneous love for God and in gratitude for his gifts. Living faith toward God issues in moral activity directed toward the neighbor. These works are not reluctantly extracted from the Christian by the forceps of the law, but spontaneously overflow in unstinting measure.

Luther uses three analogies to try to explain what he means when he affirms that good works do not make a good man (righteousness is given to faith alone), but a good man does good works. The first analogy is based on the creation story in Genesis. Adam was not made righteous by tilling and planting the garden of Eden, since he was righteous already. But because he was a good and righteous man, he worked in the garden in order to please God and express his love and gratitude.

A bishop is not made a bishop by performing episcopal activities such as confirming children or dedicating churches. If an actor performed those actions in a play or if a prankster did them, they would have no validity at all. The confirmation of children does not make a person into a bishop, but because a person is a bishop by ordination he can validly confirm children as members of the Church. The office precedes the function; being precedes doing.

Similarly a tree bears apples only if it is an apple tree. One can take a botany book into the orchard and read it to the apple trees, telling them what kind of blossoms to bear and when, and what variety of apples to yield and how, but it will make no difference to the trees. If the trees are apple trees, they will bear apples apart from our exposition of their duties and even, perhaps, in spite of it. We may congratulate ourselves when the harvest comes on our eloquent exposition of the law in the orchard, but our exhortations were irrelevant. The nature of the tree dictates the kind and quantity of the fruit.

If we should try the following spring to demonstrate our rhetorical skills by reading the section on cherry trees to the apple orchard, we shall see how pointless our exposition of duties has become. No exhortation, however moving, will ever persuade a cherry tree to yield apples. Similarly, no exposition of the law will ever bring good works out of an evil man. Works do not make the man; worship does. If we love, trust and honor God above everything else, we shall express that love in good works which glorify him. If we trust as our god something which is not God, we shall bring forth works appropriate to our idolatry. What we are precedes what we do and what we do proceeds from what we are. Works are good if they are done in faith; i.e., if we fulfill the first commandment by faith alone. Works do not make one a Christian; faith does. But faith is lively and active and is endlessly busy in good works.

Luther does not reject good works, except as the basis for justification. On the contrary, Luther wishes to stress as much as possible the importance of good works in the life of faith. Christ does not free us from works, but from false opinions concerning them. Christians are called to live in Christ by faith alone and in the neighbor by works of love. I do not perform good works in order to be justified, but because I already am.

The Christian does not need good works for his own justification. Christians are justified by faith alone. Therefore, they should give their good works to their neighbor, who does in fact desperately need them. The pattern for this selfless renunciation of works and the unself-regarding bestowal of them on the neighbor is Christ. Christ put on our condition; he clothed himself in our humanity, laying aside all his privileges and prerogatives. He was rich by nature, but for our sake he became poor.

Christians, too, are rich—by faith if not by nature. All that belongs to Christ belongs to the Christian because of the spiritual marriage which has occurred in faith. We are called like Christ to empty ourselves, to put on our neighbor as Christ put on our humanity, and give ourselves as a Christ to the neighbor just as Christ offered himself freely and without reservation to us. Luther summarizes the moral goal of the Christian life in these radical words: "I will do nothing in this life except what I see is necessary, profitable and salutary to my neighbor, since through faith I have an abundance of all good things in Christ."

Luther describes the love of God as a *verlorene Liebe*, a lost love which pours itself out shamelessly on the just and the unjust alike. That is the kind and character of love which the Christian, who is justified by faith alone, freely offers to the neighbor. It is a love which takes no account of gratitude or ingratitude, worthiness or

unworthiness, friends or enemies, praise or blame, gain or loss. It does not attempt to place other people under obligation to itself or engage in any kind of subtle spiritual blackmail. It considers no good work wasted, even when it is despised by the recipient. Indeed, it is only as Christians pour out their lives in the world that their fellowship with each other is renewed. Philippians 2 contains the pattern for the renewal of the Church. It is as the rich become poor for the sake of the poor that God makes both rich.

The argument, as Luther develops it, is logical and convincing. Good works are the spontaneous response of Christians to the need of the neighbor, as perceived by those who, following the mind of Christ, have put on their neighbor's situation. Good works spring from true and genuine love. Love is true and genuine where there is faith and confidence in the promises of God. Confidence in God is created by the proclamation of the Word of God, the good news of what God has done for the salvation of men and women in Jesus Christ. It is the Word of God which is the essential foundation and precondition for an authentic moral life.

The Christian life is a life of freedom. All Christians are free from sin because they have received the righteousness of Christ through faith. Christians are free from anxiety that suffering or physical calamities of any kind will be able to destroy their relationship to God. They are free to bear the Word of God's judgment and grace to other Christians and to intercede on their behalf in prayer. They are free to identify with the situation of their neighbor and to pour out works of love on persons in need, because they know they cannot hoard those works in order to justify their lives in the presence of God. They are free from the law, whether the law of God or any prescription of merely human origin which attempts to bind the Word of God. Indeed, they are even free to chuckle with the angels over the rich joke that the commandments of God, no less than the promises of the gospel, can only be fulfilled by faith alone. Christians are free in faith and therefore free to serve. Christian ethics are grounded in faith alone. Luther is not apologetic about that fact. There is simply no place else where they can be grounded.

Luther warns against people who cannot get their minds around Christian freedom and think that Christians can never be liberated until they drive out from the Church all ceremonies, traditions and human laws. Some Protestants feel they can only be authentic Christians if they reject all ceremonies associated with the Roman Catholic Church, even though, by asserting their freedom in this respect, they harm the faith of simpler people. Luther advocates a middle ground. Christians are, of course, free to adopt habits or styles of life which are not forbidden in Scripture. But the over-

riding rule is love. Christians must have respect for the conscience of the weak, even while not letting the conscience of the weak become a law for the Church.

God makes us free in order that we may serve the neighbor. Where the gospel is preached, communities of love are created. Such communities of love, in which authentic human freedom is realized, cannot be formed or sustained in any other way. Luther sums up his teaching in these words:

We conclude, therefore, that a Christian lives not in himself but in Christ and in his neighbor. Otherwise he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbor through love. By faith he is caught up beyond himself into God. By love he descends beneath himself into his neighbor. Yet he always remains in God and in His love. . . .

III

There are three observations about the nature of Luther's reform which are worth making, even if only very briefly:

1. In Luther's theology the vertical relationship to God and the horizontal relationship to the neighbor are so inseparably joined in the act of faith that one is unthinkable without the other. In principle, if not always in practice, there is no place in Luther's conception of the gospel for that variety of evangelical Christianity—all too common in America—which cultivates individual piety but is utterly unable to identify with the weak, the poor and the oppressed, with whom Christ is identified. On the other hand, Luther has no patience with a social gospel which lacks religious depth and which substitutes ethical analysis and moral obligation for inner liberation and joy. Freedom in faith and freedom to love can only be isolated from each other with disastrous results for both.

2. Luther administers a very useful corrective to some of the more enthusiastic theologies of liberation currently being commended to the churches. Identification with the weak and powerless is fundamental to Luther's ethics. At the same time Luther knows that there is a freedom which no oppression can ever take away from the Christian and there is a liberation which no alteration in one's social and political circumstances, however fundamental or drastic, can ever effect. One can be oppressed and free; one can be liberated and in bondage. To say that does not belittle the struggle for justice and for basic human rights, but it does keep that struggle in the proper perspective.

3. There is an irony in Luther's rather cavalier approach to reform of which United Methodists at least should be aware. Wesley divided the agenda of early Methodist conferences into three parts: what to teach, how to teach, what to do. Modern United Methodists have a

lot of time for the last question, some for the second and almost none for the first. But it was the question, what to teach, and not the question, what to do, which lay at the heart of the Reformation as Luther understood it. Luther concentrated on doctrine and shook Europe to its foundations. We concentrate on program and strategy and make almost no difference that matters to the world around us. The comparison is instructive.

The Foundation of Calvin's Theology: Scripture as Revealing God's Word

by RICHARD A. MULLER

Mellon Graduate Fellow

"Without the Word, there is nothing left for us but darkness."—from the commentary on II Peter 1:19.

He didn't want to be a preacher, much less, a reformer. His desire in life was to be a man of letters, a scholar, whose struggles were all intellectual and all engaged in the quiet of a library. But his hope to remain at the edge of the religious conflict of the times was in vain. At the age of twenty-six he published a book, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, that could only draw him into the fray; and the following year he met with the "thunderous voice" of William Farel:

in the name of almighty God—this Farel said—I declare to you, you make a pretext of your studies; if you refuse to devote yourself to this work of the Lord, here, with us, God will set a curse upon you, because you seek your own welfare more than the Christ.

The young John Calvin heard well. He was frightened and deeply perturbed by the voice, "not so much by the counsel and exhortation as by a terrifying adjuration, as if God had from on high set his hand upon me to detain me."

The year was 1536. John Calvin abandoned his plan to journey on to Strasbourg and scholarly quietude for an active life of preaching and teaching in Geneva. Except for a period of three years (1538-1541) during which he and Farel were exiled by a town not yet ready to become the Christian commonwealth, Calvin remained in Geneva until his death in 1564. In each aspect of his work, whether it was in the gradual development of the *Institutes* into a vast summation of his thought, in the painstaking exegetical examination of the greater part of the Bible, or in the sermons which he preached twice each Sunday and once each day of the week in alternate weeks, Calvin viewed himself as the servant of the Word of God. As the *Ordinances* of the City of Geneva (1542) declared, "The duty of pastors . . . is to announce the Word of God for instruction, admonition, exhortation, and reproof." That Word, given to man in Scripture and known to be both true and sufficient for salvation by the inward witness of the Holy Spirit, constituted for Calvin the foundation of all Christian teaching.

As a preacher Calvin continually sought to emphasize to his hearers the need for God's Word as a light to life's path. He recognized that the revelation of God embodied in Scripture was more

than a simple deposit of knowledge. In the reading and exposition of Scripture and in the hearing of the preached Word, God is daily revealed to the human heart as Creator, Ruler, Redeemer, Father. Scripture, as God's Word, is a present revelation, an effective Word directed toward the faithful: "there is nothing more notable or glorious in the church than the ministry of the gospel, since it is the administration of the Spirit and of righteousness and of eternal life" (*Institutes*, IV. iii. 2). God's Spirit is so joined to the Word that preaching becomes at once a communication of God's will and an instrument of the Spirit in working salvation. Calvin establishes the closest possible relation between the words of the preacher, the Word of God, and the work of the Spirit without exalting the human instrument beyond his station. Preaching makes the Word of God present to faith because God has so willed.

This sense of the importance of the living Word preached in conveying to Christians the saving content of revelation also lies behind Calvin's discussion of the relation of the Word to faith. God's Word is both the foundation and the source of the life and strength of the Church. Even as the Spirit testifies to the heart concerning the authority of Scripture, so does he make the Word fruitful in leading us toward Christ. The Spirit opens our eyes that we might perceive the light of the Word (III. ii. 33-34). A keen balance of these subjective and objective elements appears, therefore, both in Calvin's doctrine of Scripture and in his description of faith:

Therefore our mind must be otherwise illumined and our heart strengthened, that the Word of God may obtain full faith among us. Now we possess a right definition of faith if we call it a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit (III. ii. 7).

Calvin's sermons continually call attention to the presence and power of the Word bringing men to faith.

The necessity of an embodiment of God's revelation in the Scripture over against the inability of fallen creatures to learn rightly of God through an exercise of their own powers provides Calvin with his basic impulse to formulate a doctrine of Scripture in the *Institutes* (I. vi. 1). The sinfulness of humanity acts as an impediment even to the knowledge of God as Creator. The Word comes as a light to people who walk in darkness: "Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God." Scripture, therefore, first teaches of God as Creator, only afterwards drawing our spirits onward through the law and the prophets to a knowledge of God as Redeemer. If we neglect or turn aside from this "rule of eternal truth" our attempt to know God involves us in an "inexplicable labyrinth" of error (I. vi. 1-4).

After an excursus on the authority of Scripture Calvin again takes up the theme of Scripture as revealing Word, now reflecting on the correlation between natural and scriptural knowledge of God. Both are intended to manifest God “not as he is himself, but as he is toward us: so that this recognition of him consists more in living experience than in vain and high-flown speculation” (I. x. 2). All knowledge of God should conduce first to fear and then to trust, since a proper knowledge of God must include God’s justice and judgment as well as his kindness and mercy. But natural knowledge of God is corrupted by human sin. Therefore, *only Scripture* can “direct us to the true God” and draw us away from ignorant doctrines wrought by the sinful mind’s examination of nature. Scripture reveals the error of idolatry and of the attribution of any form to God (I. xi-xii), manifesting the “infinite and spiritual essence” of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In order to understand Calvin’s view of Scripture as a living revelation of God, we will need to take very seriously not only the development of his exposition but also its terminus in the doctrine of the Trinity.

Scholars have frequently characterized Calvin’s doctrine of Scripture in terms of two principles: first, the presence in Scripture of the Word of God as given by the *inspiration* of the Holy Spirit to the prophets and the apostles and, second, the recognition of Scripture as the Word of God by reason of the *testimony* of the Spirit to the faithful heart.

There is, however, disagreement over the exact import of Calvin’s statements and over the way in which these two principles relate to one another. Many have viewed Calvin as the proponent of a rigid doctrine of verbal inspiration and of the inerrancy of the text, while others have tried to find in Calvin’s doctrine a distinction between Christ as Word and the word of Scripture as an imperfect witness to Christ effective only through the work of the Spirit.

The first interpretation was held by Reinhold Seeberg and is also associated with the orthodox “Calvinist” reading of Calvin in the writings of A. Mitchell Hunter, John Murray, and Benjamin B. Warfield. The second interpretation is the “neo-orthodox” line of Wilhelm Niesel and R.S. Wallace, who emphasize the Christocentricity of Calvin’s entire system. These last call into question the presence of a rigid theory of inspiration in Calvin’s theology by stressing the Reformer’s awareness of minor inaccuracies in the Scriptures and his sense of the limitation of human language in describing God. Niesel also makes much of the subjective tendency in Calvin’s thought, chiefly by bringing Calvin’s discussion of the relation of Word and Spirit to faith to bear upon his discussion of Scripture as Word.

All of the above writers fail to draw out the relationship of these issues to the analysis of Word and Spirit which appears in Calvin's doctrine of the *Trinity* in which the objective and subjective elements of Calvin's view of Scripture are reconciled.

The two principles—*inspiration of the Scripture* and the *testimony of the Spirit to its authority*—around which the debate turns occur at opposite ends of the *Institutes*. Calvin speaks of the testimony of the Spirit in a digression (I. vii-ix) from his main exposition of the content of scriptural revelation, while he reserves consideration of the inspiration of the text to Book IV, chapter viii where he pits Scripture as revelation given by the Spirit against the Roman Church's claim of magisterial authority. In both places he joins Word and Spirit closely together and opposes the elevation of Church above Scripture. This means that the two issues are intimately related despite their formal separation. They are also related by the categorical statement of Calvin in the earlier discussion of the testimony of the Spirit:

When that which is set forth is acknowledged to be the Word of God, there is no one so deplorably insolent—unless devoid also both of common sense and of humanity itself—as to dare impugn the credibility of Him who speaks. . . . Hence the Scriptures obtain full authority among believers only when men regard them as sprung from heaven, as if there the living words of God were heard (I. vii. 1).

Calvin's writings bear ample testimony to his conviction that not simply the motivation of the prophets and apostles to witness but also the words of their written testimony derive from the ministry of the Spirit. Commenting on I Peter 1:10-12 he remarks that the continuity and consistency of the testaments rests upon the Spirit who speaks both in the prophetic and in the apostolic writings. Both the ancient prophesies and the Gospel were given by the "dictation and guidance" of the Spirit. The word "dictated" also appears in the comment on II Timothy 3:16, where Calvin argues that "the prophets did not speak of themselves, but as organs of the Holy Spirit" and that "we owe to the Scripture the same reverence that we owe to God, since it has its only sources in him and has nothing of human origin mixed with it."

This high doctrine of inspiration must not be separated from Calvin's equally strong emphasis on the accommodated character of God's revelation. Scripture reveals only what serves to advance piety and its revelation is couched in terms accessible to the human intellect. Accommodation of the message to the situation and needs of the recipients accounts for differences between the Old and New Testaments. In the "childhood" of the Church, God clothed his heavenly promises in the form of earthly blessings and reserved the fulness of his revelation for a later time (II. xi. 2,5). Similarly Calvin

allows for a certain imprecision in usage and description within Scripture as an accommodation to the capacity of the “unlearned” reader. He also recognized and dealt with a wide variety of variant texts, emendations, and scribal errors in the conviction that the underlying inviolability and coherence of God’s Word enabled the faithful exegete to penetrate to the meaning of the passages in question.

The divine origin of Scripture appears clearly in the examination of the text. In the rather rustic language of “Amos the herdsman, Jeremiah, and Zechariah,” as much as in the refined writings of David and Isaiah, the “majesty of the Spirit” is evident. Miracles and the fulfillment of prophecies also testify to the divine hand at work, as does the providential preservation of the text throughout history. Even more, the simplicity of style and spirituality of the content of the New Testament require assent to the origin of Scripture in the instruction of the Spirit. All these evidences are confirmed by the “unvarying testimony of the Church” and the willingness of the martyrs to die for the doctrines of Scripture (I. viii).

Nevertheless, no amount of argument or human testimony will be sufficient “to prove that Scripture is the Word of God . . . for only by faith can this be known. . . . Scripture will ultimately suffice for a saving knowledge of God only when its certainty is founded upon the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit” (I. viii. 13). The Church, therefore, cannot be the guarantor of Scripture: rather the Church itself rests on “the writings of the prophets and the preaching of the apostles.”

Scripture, writes Calvin, is “self-authenticating” (*autopiston*), not subject to “proof and reasoning” and having no authority beyond its Word to which we might turn for validation. Scripture, as “unsailable truth” itself provides the norm for our judgment:

it is sealed upon our hearts through the Spirit. Therefore, illuminated by his power, we believe neither by our own nor by anyone else’s judgment that Scripture is from God; but above human judgment we affirm with utter certainty (just as if we were gazing upon the majesty of God himself) that it has flowed to us from the very mouth of God by the ministry of men (I. vii. 5).

Scripture can be called “self-authenticating” and “sealed through the Spirit” only because the Spirit is not external to Scripture. The testimony of the Spirit occurs not in isolation or in some mystic experience but in the reading, hearing, and searching of the Scriptures. The testimony of the Spirit to us concerning the authority of Scripture belongs to the same doctrine as the idea of the inspiration of the human authors precisely because the Spirit who “dictates” to his “amanuenses” is the same Spirit who testifies to the heart. Speaking objectively of the authority of Scripture, Calvin can say of Paul’s words in II Timothy 3:16, “To assert its authority he teaches that it is

inspired of God . . . dictated by the Holy Spirit." But he quickly adds, "If anyone ask how this can be known, my reply is that it is by the revelation of the same Spirit both to learners and to teachers that God is made known as its author."

Rather than deriving the authority of Scripture from a formal doctrine of inspiration, Calvin employs the concepts of inspiration and testimony as correlative aspects of the work of the Spirit mediating in and through Scripture the saving knowledge of God. Scripture is the Word of God because the Spirit of Christ imparted to the ancient authors the wisdom of God directly from its source, the eternal Wisdom or Word which resides in God: "we see the Word understood as the order or mandate of the Son, who is himself the essential Word of the Father" in the Scriptures given by the "Spirit of the Word" (I. xiii. 7).

We begin to sense an intimate relationship between the epistemological and the Christological (or Trinitarian), the noetic and the ontic, the subjective and the objective elements of Calvin's thought. Calvin's discussion of Scripture as saving revelation begins in a manner structurally parallel to the beginning of his presentation of Christ's saving work. In the former place, a sense of man's inability to find the true God through natural revelation leads to a statement of the necessity of special revelation given in Scripture: in the latter, the unfulfilled prophecies of the Old Testament and man's inability to come to God of his own will lead to a statement of the necessity of mediation between God and man by Christ. The necessity of Scripture is grounded in the necessity of the mediated Word of God as the basis of right knowledge of God. And the Scripture, once given, reveals the further necessity of a mediated salvation. Scripture, the written Word of God, directs us to the Christ, the essential Word of God manifest in the flesh as Mediator.

Calvin's view of Scripture and doctrine, which was designed to cut through a mass of medieval speculations, will support none of Niesel's neo-orthodox conundrums in driving a wedge between Christ as Word of God and Scripture as Word in the sense of witness. Since Christ as the Word or Wisdom of God is the source "from which both all oracles and all prophecies go forth" (I. xiii. 7), the whole of Scripture must be directed toward Christ. For Scripture is the Word spoken by him who is the Word of God in order that God might be known. By reason of the work of the Spirit, Scripture perfectly reveals Christ and is truly his Word. There we learn of Christ, and through Christ of God the Father. Christ rules his kingdom by the scepter of his scriptural Word (IV, ii, 4).

Calvin nevertheless acknowledges an explicit distinction between the essential Word of God, the Word spoken, and the Word written.

The Scripture is God's Word, but it is not the Christ—rather it “clothes” Christ and communicates Christ's promise to us in a form accommodated to our understanding. Christ as the eternal and essential Word of God is the ground and foundation, the “scope” and meaning of the Scriptures (II. vi. 2-4; II. x. 4). The entire revelation of God in the Old Testament depended on the mediation of Christ as Word of God, first in the form of “secret revelations” and oracles given to the patriarchs, later in the written law which came from the “mouth of God,” and then in the Word which came to the prophets and was recorded by them (IV. viii. 5-6). Finally, in confirmation and conclusion of all previous revelation, “the Wisdom of God was at length revealed in the flesh.” This revelation of the “perfect radiance of divine truth” as preserved in the writings of the Apostles, completes the scriptural Word of God and provides the Church with its norm of doctrine, beyond which there can be no authority. God “has so fulfilled all functions of teaching in his Son that we must regard this as the final and eternal testimony of him” (IV. viii. 7).

This concept of a *progressive* revelation, culminating in the Word made flesh, unites several of the elements in Calvin's doctrine of Scripture. Here, as in his Christology, Calvin binds the form taken by the Word to the issue of knowledge. Like Luther, though not in as paradoxical a manner, Calvin holds that God is both hidden and revealed in his self-manifestation. Human forms of expression and, indeed, the human nature of Christ both reveal to us what is necessary for our salvation and hide from us the awesome and incomprehensible majesty of God. The words bearing the revelation of the law and the prophets prepared the mind and heart of the Church for the coming of the Word in the flesh. In Scripture and even in the culmination of the revelatory process, the incarnation, God cannot be contained, even though he gives himself wholly. Infinite God *cannot be encapsulated* in finite human forms.

The continuity between the progress of revelation in Scripture and the work of the Son of God incarnate is nowhere more apparent than in Calvin's doctrine of the prophetic office of Christ. In his teaching Christ reveals clearly what the prophets had only shadowed forth. The prophets themselves recognized that they only prepared the way for a fuller revelation of God's will. Citing Isaiah 61:1-2, Calvin argues that the anointing of Christ by the Spirit parallels the anointing of the ancient prophets to their teaching office. Calvin even describes the anointing of the Mediator to his prophetic office in a manner that reflects his concept of the inspiration of the prophets to write and that explains why the Spirit of the Word also

testifies to the heart in confirmation of the message of Scripture: "he received anointing not only for himself that he might carry out the office of teaching, but for his whole body that the power of the Spirit might be present in the continuing preaching of the gospel" (II. xv. 2). Christ completes the process of revelation not only because he reveals a fuller knowledge of God but also because he makes possible the reception of the truth of Scripture by his body, the Church, through the work of the Spirit.

Thus, the underlying verity of Christian doctrine appears throughout the written Word, in the form of a divine promise given both by Christ and in Christ. God's promise, like the divine origin of the Scripture, must be regarded by faith as an objective fact as sure as the existence of God. (Calvin, unlike the medieval scholastics, did not see the necessity of including proofs of God's existence in his system of doctrine. He so joined self-knowledge to knowledge of God, that he denied the possibility of outright ignorance or doubt of God's existence. A fundamental sense of the divine exists in all men.) Even so, the truths of God's existence and of his promises are conveyed not as a dead letter but as a living experience of God. This living experience occurs in the encounter of every believer with Scripture as the revealing Word of God. Calvin's firm distinction, here, between the Scripture as revelation present and active among us and the Christ as the one who reveals himself in Scripture both affirms the objectivity of revelation and obviates the difficulty, sometimes alleged against his thought, of a discrepancy between faith as the acceptance of an objective revelation given in Scripture and faith as the personal acceptance of Christ. In the former the believer approaches Christ through a true knowledge of God and his work of salvation; in the latter the believer receives the Christ to whom he has been led by Scripture (III. ii. 6).

If Calvin refuses to allow the Scripture to become a static, rationalizing norm divorced from personal acceptance of the living Christ and from the active presence of Christ's Spirit, he also refuses to let the Spirit become a norm of faith apart from the unchanging rule of Scripture. The Spirit has a genuine "teaching office" in the Church, as promised by Christ in the Gospel of John. This office consists "not in inventing new and unheard-of revelations, or . . . forging a new kind of doctrine" but in "sealing our minds with that very doctrine which is commended by the Gospel" (I. ix. 1). The testimony of the Spirit can only confirm the Gospel, since "He is the Author of the Scriptures: he cannot vary and differ from himself." The Holy Spirit "inheres" in the truth of Scripture. Scripture, therefore, cannot be a temporary mode of revelation, nor can it be equated with the killing letter and contrasted with the living Spirit. Calvin denies successive

dispensations, one of Word, a second of Spirit. After Pentecost, God “sent down the same Spirit by whose power he had dispensed the Word, to complete his work by the efficacious confirmation of the Word” (I. ix. 3). This means that Word and Spirit are joined by a “mutual bond” to the end that the Word is confirmed by the Spirit and the Spirit “shows forth his Power” when the Word receives his due recognition.

These themes—the epistemological and the soteriological—coalesce around Calvin’s delicately balanced Trinitarian exposition. We recall the distinctive Western and Augustinian doctrine of the Trinity, which Calvin accepted and utilized fully, with its concept of the double procession of the Spirit. The Father manifests himself through the Son, while the Father and the Son together work by the Spirit who proceeds from them. Calvin’s doctrine of Scripture mirrors exactly this operation: Scripture is produced by the inspiration of the Spirit who testifies to our hearts of the truth and authority of his words. By the Spirit we recognize Scripture to be the Word and Wisdom of God the Father given *to us* in a form that we can apprehend; and by the Spirit we are drawn to find in Scripture the Gospel of Christ, the essential Word of the Father given *for us*. Then in Christ we learn of God as Father and see the “heart of God poured out in love”: and “since he is the eternal wisdom of the Father, his unchangeable truth, his firm counsel, we ought not to be afraid of what he tells us in his Word varying in the slightest from that will of the Father which we seek” (III. xxiv. 5).

I am tempted to say in conclusion that Calvin would have agreed with later doctrines of verbal inspiration but would have questioned the advisability of grounding the authority of Scripture solely on an objective statement of its divine origin which must remain forever external to the believer. Calvin’s doctrine attempts to tread a fine line, balancing the objective and the subjectice, following an “order of faith” rather than an order of logical or causal priorities. We are led from a subjective apprehension of the verity of Scripture to the affirmation of its objective truth. This is precisely the order followed by Calvin in discussing predestination after faith, justification, and the Christian life. His approach served to emphasize the purpose of Scripture and the manner in which its message of salvation becomes effective: through the reading, preaching, and faithful hearing of the Word.

The contemporary preacher or theologian will not want to adopt wholesale the language and thought of Calvin. The sixteenth century cannot provide exhaustive guidelines for the present. Yet Calvin, as one of the very few theologians who have not only spoken to their own time but also have left an indelible imprint on the course of

Christian thought and piety, does have something to teach us—not so much in terms of the language of theology as in terms of the foundation of his thought and the way in which that intellectual underpinning bound theology to preaching, doctrine to practice. Today, when it is not altogether clear whether the up-to-date scholasticism of a Pannenberg or a Moltmann can be taken out of the schools and into the pulpit—and when it is sometimes doubtful whether our exegesis can lead either to Christian doctrine or to Christian preaching—the thoroughly integrated Scriptural theology of Calvin prods us in our inability and, to use a phrase of Calvin's own, “leaves us without excuse.”

Without attempting to analyze Calvin's exegetical method, we should recognize that the doctrine of Scripture outlined above has a powerful and positive impact on hermeneutics. Calvin did not practice an uncritical proof-texting of established doctrines, but he did believe that Scripture, as a present Word of God spoken to the Church, does demand the formulation of doctrine. There was no problem of finding a method for applying the results of exegesis to the needs of the day. Scripture, for Calvin, spoke directly, not to the long-irrelevant life-situation of a dead prophet, but to the needs of God's people in all times. In the words of a Reformed successor of Calvin, God spoke *by* the prophets *unto* us. In exegesis, Calvin utilized the best available texts and tried to let the text speak for itself. He recognized the importance of context, both textual and historical, to the meaning of a passage. And, far more than most modern exegetes, he moved freely from the examination of minutiae to the placement of a verse within the over-all pattern of meaning of God's scriptural revelation.

Calvin's doctrine of Scripture was in fact a finely-tuned theological epistemology which affirmed the common work of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in producing the scriptural Word, which accepted the continuity of the divine promises in their various dispensations, and which drew doctrinal and practical theology into a more intimate relationship with biblical study. Letting the text speak for itself brought the voice of God directly into the Church to address and grasp the believer as firmly as the prophets and apostles had been grasped, as firmly as Calvin had been grasped and held “as if . . . from on high.” Both in preaching and in doctrinal statement that Word would be the one criterion. With such an approach to the Word of God, the Christian community in any age—even in the present—might be led to reject elements of its tradition, to throw over doctrinal formulae not in accord with Scripture, or even to effect a monumental reform of doctrine and practice. “Without the Word,” wrote Calvin, “there is nothing left but darkness.”

St. Teresa of Avila: Friend of God

by WENDY WILLIAMS

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Teresa of Avila was known to her contemporaries as “Teresa of Jesus,” and was canonized within a generation after her death. Official recognition of her stature as a theologian was longer in coming. But in 1970 she was declared a Doctor of the Church, one of two women to receive that distinction. She was also the foundress of the reform of the Carmelite order in Spain, reintroducing the primitive and austere Rule of her order in the seventeen convents she helped found in Spain.

From her writings emerges the portrait of a lively, charming, humorous, straightforward, strong, soaring, down-to-earth woman. A perhaps apocryphal story about her on one of her innumerable travels around Spain illustrates the winsome paradox of Teresa. After several days on the road, Teresa started complaining to God about the cold and the rain and the mud that their cart kept getting stuck in. Finally God said to her: “But Teresa, I treat all my friends this way.” To which she replied: “No wonder you have so few of them!”¹ It is this easy and intimate relationship with God that is so characteristic of her life and writing, and so attractive.

All of the books and prayers she wrote witness to the depth and passion of her relationship with God. She was a soul aflame with love, and the desire to share that love with her spiritual sisters and daughters. Her motive in writing was to inspire them, and indeed all souls, to a similar passionate embrace of the Godhead. But always she remained accessible as a person, recounting her own experience, failings, thoughts, feelings, as she grew in the knowledge and love of God, and offering encouragement—or a scolding—as seemed appropriate. Her manner and words won friends both for her and for God during her lifetime. In this brief introduction to St. Teresa’s life and thought, her own words will be used as much as possible for the purpose.

Teresa de Cepeda y Ahumada was born in Avila, Spain on March 28, 1515. She was the third of nine children born to her father’s second wife. The family was comfortable, though not wealthy, and devout. And all the children were educated at least to read. Teresa’s mother died when she was thirteen, and she was left somewhat on her own. She says in her autobiography that she took up with some frivolous companions, and suspects it was for this reason that she was sent to be a boarder at an Augustinian convent in Avila in 1531. She stayed there for eighteen months, and gradually began to

consider the possibility of becoming a nun. However, she also felt reluctant to leave the world of pleasure and self-pleasing. The result was that she had no peace of mind or enjoyment either at home or in the convent. After three months of intense struggle, she made her decision.

Though I could not bend my will to be a nun, I saw that the religious state was the best and safest. And thus, by little and little, I resolved to force myself into it. . . . when I left my father's house my distress was so great that I do not think it will be greater when I die. It seemed to me as if every bone in my body were being wrenched asunder; for, as I had no love of God to subdue my love for my father and kinsfolk, everything was such a strain to me that, if the Lord had not helped me, no reflections of my own would have sufficed to keep me true to my purpose. But the Lord gave me courage to fight against myself and so I carried out my intention.²

Hardly an auspicious beginning, one might think; yet it also reveals Teresa's strength of character and purpose in the pursuit of what she believed to be her soul's best good, even though it was contrary to her purely natural inclinations. This struggle continued unabated even after she was professed at the Carmelite Convent of the Incarnation in Avila: "during eight and twenty years of prayer, I spent more than eighteen in that strife and contention which arose out of my attempts to reconcile God and the world."³ For almost twenty years she lived the religious life, yet felt in herself that she had not even begun to love and serve God. She suspected that the mitigated Rule, observed at her convent, allowed her too much freedom and comfort—ample food, gracious living quarters, visits to and from family and friends. She received little help or support from her confessors, who did not take her scruples seriously. "When my confessors saw that I had good desires and was spending my time in prayer, they thought I was doing a great deal. But in my heart of hearts I knew I was not doing what I was bound to do for Him to Whom I owed so much."⁴

St. Teresa speaks often of how she was hindered by confessors who did not understand her or the type of prayer life she was being led to follow. Some of them even told her that what she was experiencing came from the devil and not God, and that she should give up her practice of prayer. (She later came to believe that she had been given such trials to enable her to be of more help to others in similar circumstances.) Out of these trials came her admonition always to seek a learned and *prayerful* confessor. She finally found such in the Jesuit Fathers who recognized God's actions in her soul. It was at this point, twenty years after her profession as a religious, that her prayer life really began to develop. She experienced visions, "locutions" or words spoken to her by God, and raptures or trance-like states of intense and complete union with God. All of these

experiences infused her with an even greater love of God and the desire to be with Him and serve Him. In practical terms, she realized that a different type of religious house and Rule would be necessary to facilitate this kind of contemplative life and divine service of neighbor-love. It was thus out of her contemplative life and her desire for oneness with God that the Discalced Reform of her order first began.

"I desired to make the foundation [of a convent with the primitive Rule] so that I could withdraw more completely from everything and fulfil my profession and vocation with greater perfection in conditions of stricter enclosure . . ."⁵ The religious constitutions she desired were to ensure a life of poverty and separation from the world. She made it a condition of all the houses she founded that they have no fixed income; they were to be maintained on whatever charitable gifts they received, doing with as few material things as possible. "It would hardly look well if the house of thirteen poor women made a great noise when it fell, for those who are really poor make no noise . . . I should wish on the day when you build such edifices [large, ornate convents], they may fall down and kill you all."⁶ The nuns would have strict enclosure; they would be veiled, and permitted to have visitors only if they conversed on spiritual matters. Silence was to be the way of life. What inspired this austerity was not hatred of the body or the world, but love of God and the desire to remove everything from life that blocks or hinders growth of the soul's love for God, which is also, Teresa though, inseparable from a truly Christian love for others. "Let us realize, my daughters, that true perfection consists in the love of God and our neighbor . . . Our entire Rule and Constitutions are nothing but means which enable us to do this more perfectly."⁷

A foundation of this type was not easily won, however. Teresa and like-minded religious saw their plans opposed by civil and religious authorities who feared that a community of this type would be a financial burden, since it would have no income, and might create religious controversy and questions of jurisdiction and control—which in fact did happen. St. Teresa was attacked as being a troublemaker and glory seeker; she even had to defend herself to her sisters at the Incarnation. But Teresa was not perturbed because she knew she was acting in accordance with what God wished her to do, and that the final outcome was God's responsibility, not hers. She knew that if God desired this new work to start, He would see that it did. After several years of disputes and difficulties, the new house was established. But it was several more years before Teresa was allowed to go there, to St. Joseph's of Avila, the first of the seventeen

convents of the Discalced Reform that would be founded during Teresa's lifetime.

In the *Book of the Foundations* St. Teresa detailed her work of establishing the new convents. She lived the enclosed life as she desired from 1562 until 1567 at St. Joseph's. "The most restful years of my life," she called them. The next fifteen years of her life, until her death in 1582, Teresa spent at least part of every year on the road establishing new convents or visiting the existing ones. The trips were always arduous and often plagued by illness, but Teresa kept everyone in good spirits, and saw to it that they had Mass and recited their Offices. As her fame and reputation for sanctity spread, she would be mobbed by all classes of people in the towns they passed through—which caused her no little embarrassment. Once a noblewoman sent a carriage to bring Teresa to be present as a blessing on the birth of her first grandchild. When they got word before reaching the castle that the child had already been born, Teresa's response was: "Thank God! The 'saint' won't be wanted now!"⁸ She was also elected Prioress at the Convent of the Incarnation by the sisters during these years, because of their felt need for the kind of reform Teresa was instituting. Almost invariably there were civil or ecclesiastical difficulties over the founding of each new convent, yet one by one they were established. Eventually bishops and archbishops, as well as papal visitors, were won to the cause of the reform.

During these years of intense activity, Teresa continued to advance in her prayer life, and found time to write as well. She experienced distinguishable types and levels of prayer, which she described in slightly different ways in her *Life*, *Way of Perfection*, *Interior Castle*, and other shorter works. All of her books were written at the behest of her confessors. Her intent was to describe her experiences as clearly and vividly as possible, so that her books could serve as guides or helps to souls who were searching, or discouraged and perplexed by what was already happening to them. In the *Life* Teresa describes four degrees of prayer, comparing and explaining them as four ways of watering a garden. The plants in the garden represent the virtues or qualities the individual soul is striving to attain. One way of watering the garden is to fetch the water with buckets from a well, which is a very laborious process. Teresa compares this to someone just starting on their prayer life—every act of prayer or recollection is "work," as the mind and will must constantly be brought back to God and not allowed to wander. In this stage prayer is mostly vocal or mental—the reciting of written prayers or meditation, especially on the human Jesus and events of his life: "knowing what we are saying, understanding it, and realizing Whom

we are addressing.”⁹ In both these types of prayer the person is actively involved, collecting all the soul’s faculties and entering with them deep into itself to be with its God.

The second degree of prayer is compared to collecting water from a windlass-powered pump. There is still some human effort involved: the soul is actively involved in preparing and recollecting itself, but God gives it joy and consolation. This is the beginning of the “prayer of quiet.”

The third degree of prayer is compared to a stream watering the garden. In this stage, the soul is no longer active on its own initiative. This is “contemplation” in which God directs or suspends all the usual activities of the soul—the understanding, thought, memory—and the soul rejoices in God without conscious effort. “It is as though food has been introduced into the stomach, without our having eaten it or knowing how it got there.”¹⁰ One cannot initiate or control the frequency or length of these divine visitations. At the end of this kind of prayer, the soul feels pain and loss at being separated from God. Teresa likens it to two candles burning together: they give one light, yet they can be separated as each retains its identity.

The fourth degree of prayer is compared to rain watering the garden—it is entirely a gift of God. This is the “prayer of union”: the soul is wholly absorbed in God as though in a trance. The soul is so immersed in the Divine there is no longer any way to separate them.

But here it is like rain falling from the heavens into a river or spring; there is nothing but water there and it is impossible to divide or separate the water belonging to the river from that which fell from the heavens. Or it is as if a tiny streamlet enters the sea, from which it will find no way of separating itself, or as if in a room there where two large windows through which the light streamed in: it enters in different places but it all becomes one.¹¹

In this state the soul no longer experiences separation from God: since there is no more pain of separation from God there is no longing to leave this life in order to be with God. There are no more periods of aridity or desolation, only tranquillity and the awareness of the nearness of God, even in and through all “worldly” experiences.

In the *Interior Castle* Teresa developed another schema; she likened the different stages of prayer to rooms or suites in a castle. The common element in each of her systems of prayer is the experienced movement from the soul as primary initiator and actor to God as the giver of all prayer, the center, beginning and ending of all being. It is the progressive fulfillment of an utterly God-oriented desire to surpass the limits of what the mind can think or imagine of God and directly to apprehend who and “what” God is.

And we creatures go about like silly little shepherd-boys, thinking we are learning to know something of Thee when the very most we can know amounts to nothing at all, for even in ourselves there are deep secrets which we cannot fathom.¹²

The goal, the end to which this life of prayer is directed, is not consolations and sweetness or good feelings, but increased love of God: "the important thing is not to think much, but to love much; do then, whatever arouses you to love . . . for love consists not in the extent of our happiness, but in the firmness of our determination to please God in everything . . ." ¹³ For Teresa this meant actions, not just words or prayer. "Do not let us suppose that if we weep a great deal we have done everything that matters; let us also set to and work hard, and practise the virtues, for these are what we need most." ¹⁴ Love is active, moving and growing and expressing itself in deeds. Teresa defines Christian love as a measure of the soul's ability to bear crosses. Without this love, "They do not embrace the Cross, but drag it after them, and so it distresses them and wearies them and wears them to pieces." ¹⁵

The first step on the road to this perfection of love is knowing oneself.

Would it not be a sign of great ignorance, my daughters, if a person were asked who he was and could not say, and had no idea who his father or mother was, or from what country he came? Though that is great stupidity, our own is incomparably greater if we make no attempt to discover what we are, and only know we are living in these bodies, and have a vague idea . . . that we possess souls. ¹⁶

She compared this process of becoming acquainted with our own souls to exploring the many rooms and apartments in a large castle. The end that is sought is the center room in which the Bridegroom dwells, waiting for the soul. Teresa is saying that at the very center and core of our being is God, and the meaning of our spiritual pilgrimage is to discover this indwelling of God and become united to God. The result is the union Paul spoke of: "No longer do I live, but Christ in me."

Teresa intimates that this kind of union or "Spiritual Marriage" is possible for all souls. However, it is acquired only at the cost of continual self-sacrifice and self-conquest. Most people get discouraged and give up long before reaching the Union of which Teresa speaks. She continually exhorts the reader to persevere, not to give in to feelings of failure or discouragement. She warns again and again against giving up prayer out of a feeling that one's sins have made the soul unworthy of God's time or attention. Teresa labels this "false humility"; it is really a kind of inverted pride, a centering on the self instead of God.

Let it [the soul] trust in the goodness of God, which is greater than all the evil we can do. When, with full knowledge of ourselves, we desire to return to friendship with Him, He remembers neither our ingratitude nor our misuse of the favors He has granted us. . . . Let them remember His words and consider what He has done to me, who wearied of offending His Majesty before He ceased forgiving me. Never does He weary of giving and never can His mercies be exhausted: let us, then, not grow weary of receiving.¹⁷

It was in the midst of her own experience of discouragement and fear that Teresa came to an understanding of profound religious truth: the only things a soul has to offer God are its own poverty and its desire for God. Everything a person possesses—whether talents, intellect, strength, goodness—is a gift of God, given for the soul to use to glorify God. When a soul offers up its successes, triumphs, achievements without acknowledging God as the source, then it is only offering up its pride in itself. Only as the soul is stripped of everything is it able to approach God with real self-knowledge of its own brokenness and poverty. Once a person realizes this, she/he has attained the kind of self-emptying that Jesus perfectly exemplified, and the soul's desire for God is answered and enlarged in its capacity to receive the fullness of the divine life. This is the beginning of Life: "I have not yet begun to serve Him, and I am nothing but imperfection except in desire and love, with regard to which I know well the Lord has helped me so that I may render Him some service."¹⁸

As important as self-knowledge and humility are, boldness and courage are equally important in the pursuit of the spiritual life. Teresa exhorted her nuns repeatedly to be "manly" and not "effeminate." She warned them against typical kinds of behaviors that were identified as "female" in her day—excesses of tears, melancholy, transient emotional flights, timidity—and unworthy of so great a Lord as they were serving. But she did not mean to imply that women were inferior because they were women.

. . . for when Thou wert in the world, Lord, Thou didst not despise women, but didst always help them and show them great compassion. Thou didst find more faith and no less love in them than in men . . .¹⁹

Teresa was also aware that more women than men were drawn to the life of prayer and union that she experienced. When she asked God about it, she was given this answer: "Theologians will do nothing to enter into personal communication with me. Repulsed by them, I must choose women to open to them My heart and speak of My affairs."²⁰ She knew, however, that the society of her time did have an antifeminine bias—and it understandably chafed her to be kept from a fully public ministry.

. . . a woman in this state will be distressed at being prevented from doing so by the obstacle of sex and very envious of those who are free to cry aloud and proclaim abroad Who is this great God of Hosts.²¹

Nevertheless, what Teresa seemed to be calling for in her nuns was a kind of androgynous being, the development of the best human qualities—whether they are labelled “feminine” or “masculine.”

Not surprisingly, the God she adores was similarly not limited by sexual stereotypes. Teresa used male and female imagery in her desire to encompass the Divine All, to reveal the richness, depth and breadth of the God she experienced. She called God by many names: Father, Mother, Lord, Spouse, Child, Friend, Brother, King, Lover—no single symbol sufficed, and she would use several in the same breath. Perhaps most striking, because unfamiliar, is her use of female imagery for God, which gave an added richness and dimension to human understanding of God’s love.

It [the soul] has been strengthened in the virtues and comforted by Him Who so well knows how to comfort it and has also the power to do so. With what to compare this it knows not, save to the caress of a mother who so dearly loves her child and feeds and caresses it.²²

O life of my life, and sustenance that sustaineth me! . . . For from those Divine breasts, where it seems that God is ever sustaining the soul, flow streams of milk, which solace all who dwell in the Castle . . .²³

Always one is struck by the immediacy and intimacy of her colloquies with God, and her absolute certainty of the relationship.

Yet for Teresa the most important thing was not just the enjoyment of the experience of God, but the results, the effects that experience has on a life. One cannot profess to love God, and hate the creatures God has created. Teresa enjoined her nuns to practice this virtue most especially with each other, to learn to bear each other’s faults and failings with humility. “It is a good proof and test of our love if we can bear with such faults of others and not be shocked by them. Others, in their turn, will bear your faults . . .”²⁴ The following is perhaps the best statement of Teresa’s continuing emphasis on the need for balance in one’s life between action and contemplation, faith and works:

When I see people very diligently trying to discover what kind of prayer they are experiencing and so completely wrapt up in their prayers that they seem afraid to stir, or to indulge in a moment’s thought, lest they should lose the slightest degree of the tenderness and devotion which they have been feeling, I realize how little they understand of the road to the attainment of union. They think the whole thing consists in this. But, no, sisters, no; what the Lord desires is works. If you see a sick woman to whom you can give help, never be affected by the fear that your devotion will suffer, but take pity on her: if she is in pain, you should feel pain too; if necessary, fast so that she may have your food, not so much for her sake as because you know it to be your Lord’s will. That is true union with His will.²⁵

What then is the spiritual heritage of this sixteenth-century saint? The religious reform she started in her order influenced religious orders across Europe. She delineated the life of prayer and union

with God, offering her life as proof of God's love and mercy for all souls who seek Him. She achieved a balance of action and contemplation in her life which could be a model for effective, authentically Christian social action. Out of her life of intense activity and the absolute stillness of contemplation mysteriously emerges the image of the life of Jesus. The perfection of life is a life of absolute givenness; it is a realization of the soul's emptiness and God's fullness; it is a revelation of God's being—love alive and active in the world.

ENDNOTES

1. I cannot cite the source of this story; it is from a book about St. Teresa I read years ago.
2. St. Teresa, *The Life of Teresa of Jesus*, trans. and ed. E. Allison Peers (New York: Image Books, 1960), pp. 75, 77.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 113f.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 341.
6. St. Teresa, *Complete Works*, Vols. 1-3, trans. and ed. E. Allison Peers (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1946), p. 98.
7. St. Teresa, "Interior Castle" in *Complete Works*, II, 212.
8. St. Teresa, *Minor Works*, (London: Thomas Baker, 1939), p. 166.
9. St. Teresa, "Way of Perfection" in *Complete Works*, II, 104.
10. St. Teresa, *Life*, p. 251.
11. St. Teresa, "Interior Castle," p. 335.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 237.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 233.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 300.
15. St. Teresa, "Conceptions of the Love of God," in *Complete Works*, II, 375.
16. St. Teresa, "Interior Castle," p. 202.
17. St. Teresa, *Life*, p. 189.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 285.
19. St. Teresa, "Way of Perfection," p. 13.
20. St. Teresa, "Spiritual Relations," in *Complete Works*, I, 344.
21. St. Teresa, "Interior Castle," p. 298.
22. St. Teresa, "Conceptions of Love," p. 385.
23. St. Teresa, "Interior Castle," p. 337.
24. St. Teresa, "Way of Perfection," p. 35.
25. St. Teresa, "Interior Castle," p. 263.

John Wesley as Revealed by the Journal of Hester Ann Rogers

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John Wesley and Hester Ann Rogers had a most remarkable relationship. In spite of the fact that Wesley was Hester's senior by more than half a century, they seemed to establish an immediate rapport from the moment of their first meeting. The Rev. Mr. Wesley and "Hetty" were truly kindred spirits. It is not surprising that Wesley soon became her personal friend, devoted correspondent, and spiritual mentor. Hester faithfully kept a Journal during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. In the pages of this record one can trace her brief but fruitful relationship with John Wesley. Her Journal not only provides countless insights regarding the nature of the Methodist Movement and the organization of the Societies during those crucial years, but also affords a glimpse of the mature Wesley as viewed through the eyes of this sensitive Methodist laywoman.

Hester Ann (Roe) Rogers was famous among the Methodists for her eminent holiness, zeal, and Christian influence. This fame was due in large measure to the publication of extracts from her Journal following her death. First published by R. Edwards of Bristol in 1796, *The Experience of Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers* became an extremely popular devotional tract which went through many subsequent printings during the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, almost all of the material dealing with Hester's relationship with Wesley, from their first meeting in 1776 to her marriage to one of Wesley's itinerants, James Rogers, in 1784, was deleted from the original and all subsequent editions. In fact, only one Journal entry dealing with their relationship during this eight year period has been retained, namely, the brief account of their first encounter.

Therefore, in order to discover the details concerning this amazing relationship, it is necessary to turn to the pages of Hester Ann Rogers' original papers. Of her manuscript Journal three volumes are available which cover the period between July 30, 1775 and October 21, 1784.¹ Reading and studying these volumes is an exercise in stepping through their pages into the world of late eighteenth-century England. Hester's Journal affords information regarding her developing relationship with John Wesley, nurtured particularly by Wesley's recurrent visits to her native town of Macclesfield; it reveals several facets of the life and work of that master-

craftsman of Methodism; and finally, it provides a personal portrait of a man, as “Hetty” remembers “Dear Mr. Wesley.”

I

Methodism in England was little more than a “new sect” by the middle of the eighteenth century. It was only in 1739 that John Wesley “submitted to be more vile” and began to proclaim the message of salvation in the open fields of the English countryside. Eight years later, on a spring afternoon in 1747, it was probably curiosity more than anything else that drew the people of Macclesfield to a vale called the Waters. For it was there that the ringleader of the people called “Methodists” made his first appearance to them and preached following Morning Prayer at the local Anglican church. The situation was somewhat altered when Wesley made his second visit to Macclesfield, twelve years later, in April 1759. According to a long-standing tradition, on this occasion Wesley was struck in the face with a stone. He again tasted the lash of persecution.

It is doubtful whether little Hetty Roe, the daughter of the vicar of Macclesfield, remembered this incident at the rare age of three. Indeed, such a violent attack upon the Methodists was an exception and not the rule in that Cheshire village. Their comparative exemption from overt persecution was owing in small part to Hester’s father. He was a very strict and pious clergyman, very reminiscent of the rector of Epworth, Samuel Wesley. But the tranquility was due in large measure to the Rev. Charles Roe, brother and successor of the vicar of earlier years, and uncle of Hester. He had married a London Methodist, Miss Stockdale, and was known to be a great lover of evangelical preaching.

The story of Hester’s early years is well known from the extracts of her Journal in *The Experience of Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers*: the cataclysmic impact of her father’s death when she was nine, the damaging effects of her “worldly” godmother, the spiritual turmoil of her quest for peace and assurance, and the ultimate “conversion” she experienced through the evangelistic preaching of David Simpson and the Methodist, Samuel Bardsley. Her wholehearted involvement with the Methodists led to harsh persecution and ostracism from family and friends. It was her reading, in part, that enabled Hester to persevere during those troubled times. And it was in the reading of Wesley’s sermons and treatises that Hester encountered her future spiritual mentor in a preliminary way. Unwittingly, Wesley had become an influential figure in Hester’s life, as this entry (p. 26), made only several months before their first meeting, confirms:

Mr. Wesley's *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* was this day a greater blessing than before: O how very ignorant, how stupid have I been, respecting this great salvation; and even yet I seem to know nothing. Lord, teach me, and save me fully.

It was on Monday, April 1, 1776 that the youthful twenty year old and the energetic septuagenarian met for the first time. And what an encounter it was. Wesley's two day visit to Macclesfield was a whirlwind of activity. Between his arrival on Monday and his departure early Wednesday morning Wesley preached three times, met with the Bands and the Select Band, and celebrated the Love-Feast. Hester was initially impressed with Wesley's "parental tenderness" towards her and the wisdom of his spiritual counsel. To her great delight she was able to spend an hour alone with him after breakfast on Wednesday immediately before he left for Manchester. "What a wonder," she wrote, "is that dear saint of God? how above 70 years of age.—how healthy and strong?—how chearful in piety?—how active and laborious in the work of God? May a tenfold blessing descend this day upon his hoary hairs." (I, 72) The remarkable relationship had begun.

Between the years 1776 and 1784 (the years encompassed in Hester's Journal) Wesley never missed his annual visit to Macclesfield. He made only one additional trip to Macclesfield in the fall of 1783. This visit was in conjunction with the convening of the yearly Conference at Manchester but was specifically precipitated by internal problems concerning the Macclesfield and Congleton Circuits. Including this special trip of 1783, Wesley therefore made a total of ten visits to Macclesfield during that nine year period. Hester recorded six of these encounters with Wesley in her Journal.

A typical record of Hester's encounter with Wesley is composed of several elements. Hester usually recorded geographical and temporal information concerning these meetings. The location of their visits, for instance, was often the home of "old Mr. Ryles," a pillar of the Macclesfield Society. Another consistent element is Hester's careful recording of Wesley's sermons. Not only did she include the text of the sermon and the time of the preaching, but often provided outlines, extensive commentaries, and verbatim accounts. She recorded Wesley's visits with the Bands, Classes, and individual members of the Society. Occasionally she afforded verbatim accounts of personal conversations with her mentor, indicating Wesley's health and spiritual state. From these records of Hester Ann Rogers' encounters with John Wesley at least three aspects of his life and work come into focus: John Wesley as caretaker of his Societies; John Wesley as caretaker of souls; and John Wesley as caretaker of the *paradosis*, the tradition which was entrusted to his care.

The first aspect of John Wesley's life and work which is revealed by the Journal of Hester Ann Rogers is his activity as director of the Methodist Societies. That Wesley was an organizational genius is hardly a new insight. Of this there is no question. Many ingredients combined in Wesley to produce such a unique gift.

In the organization of the Societies we witness the slow result achieved by his common sense, his perception of the practical value of suggested arrangements, his appreciation of the views of other people, his love of conference and counsel, his willingness always 'to be wiser to-day than the day before.'²

It is interesting to note that at the time of Hester's first meeting with Wesley in 1776 all of the characteristic methods and facets of the Methodist Society had been operative for over three decades. The local Societies had their "Bands" and "Classes," their Rules and discipline, and their methods of social service. Preaching-houses, itinerant lay preachers, assistants, helpers, stewards, local and circuit administration, and yearly Conference were all cherished Methodist "institutions" by then. Hester's Journal reveals Wesley's ability to keep this vast institutional machine in good repair by means of visitation, participation, and discipline.

We have already seen that Wesley made annual visitations of his Societies in the Manchester area. He was aware of the perils of numerical success and was determined to know his people, such as Hester, individually. This emphasis on the importance of visitation and the development of personal relationships was reflected in the lives of his workers. "I went," wrote Hester, "with Mr. Rogers to visit many families as he is following Mr. Wesley's rule—and intended to visit all in Society and some others" (III, 45).

During these visits Wesley participated fully in the ongoing life of the Societies. He met with Bands and Select Bands and visited the sick. While these periodic visits were necessary in terms of administrative function and oversight, they were also opportunities for spiritual renewal and direction, and Hester remembered:

Dear Mr. Wesley—met Select Band—and called upon some who had formerly enjoyed sanctification to speak and exhorted them to seek afresh—I believe there was a great revival in many hearts—several were lost in tears—and a little few testified they loved God with all their heart. (I, 72)

The Love-Feast in particular afforded Wesley the perfect opportunity to become involved in the lives of his people. Hester relished the memory of such an occasion on Easter evening in 1782 when "he was very short [in preaching] because of the love feast afterwards, which was a season of peculiar grace. About 40 made a noble confession, and above one half of these testified." (II, 178)

Wesley's visits, however, were not always characterized by such joy and spiritual fervor. One particular incident involving the assistant of the Congleton Circuit, James Rogers, later to become Hester's

husband, illustrates Wesley's abilities as a reconciler, a quality of extreme importance in the administration of the Societies. And it also demonstrates that the key to Wesley's success as director of the Societies was discipline. A dispute arose concerning the division of the unwieldy Macclesfield Circuit. The Conference directive to create two Circuits was carried out by Mr. Rogers and his colleagues. The problems created by this arrangement became so disruptive that they necessitated Wesley's arbitration. After an impartial hearing of a group within the Society on the one side, and Mr. Rogers and his colleagues on the other, Wesley attempted to reconcile their differences. In her Journal Hester recorded what transpired following the long period of debate:

Mr. Rogers said—All I desire is a reconciliation and I appeal to all present if I have not sought it various ways for months past—Mr. Johnson said—I never would nor I never will be reconciled—the rest seemed more flexible—At last Mr. Wesley got up in much warmth and said—you are of your father the Devil—a murderer—and no more in Connection with me.—I will have none connected with *me* who can deliberately tell me, I never will forgive, etc.—this had the desired effect, Robert Johnson fell on his knees—JL—was near fainting so was J Roe and Mr. Ryle and I wept.—Gods dear servant then proposed—"let all henceforth die in oblivion." *All now* agreed to it, and shook hands with Mr. Rogers who wept tears of joy. (III, 88)

Wesley would have nothing to do with prejudice, anger, and bitterness within his Societies, for these groups were designed for the purpose of nurturing faith and love. In order to assure the attainment of that goal it was necessary for Wesley to visit, participate in, and discipline the ever-growing chain of connectional Societies scattered throughout the British Isles.

Secondly, Hester's Journal reveals John Wesley as a man of profound pastoral concern. In a letter to his brother Charles, written during a visit to Congleton in 1772, Wesley confided:

O what a thing it is to have a *curam animarum*! You and I are called to this; to save souls from death; to watch over them as those that must give account! If our office implied no more than preaching a few times in a week, I could play with it: so might you. . . . God says to you as well as me, "*Do all thou canst*, be it more or less, to save the souls for whom My Son has died."³

The very nature of the Societies made them tremendous aids for the care of souls, and Wesley, as we have seen, certainly used them as such. In addition to this role of the Societies in general, those particular facets of pastoral care which are reflected in Hester's Journal include Wesley's use of letters, conversation, and the worship, liturgy, and sacraments of the Church of England.

Correspondence is often neglected as a means of pastoral care. In the case of John Wesley, to overlook this aspect of the curacy would be a gross mistake. Of the Hester Ann Rogers/John Wesley cor-

respondence only 23 letters have survived, 15 of which were penned by Wesley and 8 by “Hetty.” She often recorded having been blessed by receiving a letter from her “Dear Mr. Wesley.” Wesley’s letters to “Hetty” form a picture of counseling by moral exhortation at its best.⁴

Hester’s appreciation for the spiritual encouragement Wesley provided her in private conversation during his visits to Macclesfield permeates the pages of her record of those encounters. She recorded spiritual renewal occasioned by “comfortable conversation with him alone” during a visit in April 1777 (I, 120). On March 29, 1781 she “spent an hour with his dear servant alone and his fatherly affections and advice and sympathy was a blessing indeed” (II, 92). She was able to bare her soul to Wesley concerning the persecution she experienced from her relatives, her relationships with people, her plans and goals, and most particularly, her quest for holiness.

A little after 7 I went again to Mr. Ryles and sat half an hour with Dear Mr. Wesley alone—and spoke freely to him on many things—Glory be to God it was a time I hope ever to remember—A time of the Lords felt presence and overwhelming grace—especially while his dear servant prayed with a wrestling spirit, that I might endure to the end, and be filled with all the fullness of God. (II, 94)

The Methodists of Macclesfield, as elsewhere, by the direction of John Wesley, abstained from holding any religious service during the regular church hours. And so, the rich liturgical and sacramental heritage of the Church of England must be included as a very important aspect of Wesley’s care of his people. Wesley never failed to appreciate the value of worship, liturgy, and the sacraments, in the nurture of souls. The members of the Macclesfield Society had been accustomed to attending Anglican services at the local parish church, St. Michael’s, where Hester’s uncle was vicar. But after the completion of the “new church,” Christ Church, most of the Methodists flocked there to hear the “evangelical preaching” of its curate, David Simpson. It was in this episcopally consecrated church that Wesley was often invited to preach and assist in services. Since Wesley’s visits were customarily in March and April, they occasionally corresponded with the celebrations of Holy Week and Easter. Such was the case in 1782. During Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter, Wesley preached no less than nine times and assisted Mr. Simpson in administering the sacrament to about thirteen hundred communicants on Good Friday and eight hundred on Easter. The Wesley revealed in the pages of Hester’s Journal is a true “Church of England man.” But he was also a curate of souls, called by God for the special task of renewing a vital “evangelical” faith within that Church he loved. Toward this end he employed many means. He

utilized correspondence, conversation, and the liturgical and sacramental tradition of the Church of England.

A third and final aspect of Wesley's life and work revealed in Hester's Journal proved to be a great channel of God's grace, namely, the preaching of the Word. Wesley's own words concerning pastors are strikingly consonant with the image of Wesley portrayed in Hester's Journal:

They are supposed to go before the flock (as in the manner of the eastern shepherds to this day), and to guide them in all the ways of truth and holiness; they are to 'nourish them with words of eternal life'; to feed them with the 'pure milk of the word': applying it continually 'for doctrine', teaching them all the essential doctrines contained therein . . . training them up to outward holiness.⁵

Like Timothy in the Pastoral Epistles, Wesley was entrusted to care for the *paradosis*, the Tradition of Christian faith. He was called to proclaim the pure Word of God. Whereas the Methodist Movement, from its very inception in the quadrangles of Oxford, had been dominated by a concern for personal pastoral care, it first came into the public eye as a preaching movement. Most Methodists today are, or at least should be, aware of Wesley's *Sermons* as we have inherited them in "sermonic essay" form. But Wesley hardly preached the way he wrote the *Sermons* we possess today (excepting those preached at Oxford). Hester's Journal, therefore, affords a glimpse of Wesley as the vivacious preacher of the fields, at the "new church," and in the Macclesfield Preaching-House. The study of her record of Wesley's sermons, their theological and doctrinal content, and the effect that Wesley's preaching had on his audience, brings to life this final facet of the life and work of John Wesley.

Hester was assiduous in her recording of Wesley's sermons. She was careful to include the text of every sermon she heard him preach. She often commented on his discourse, provided an outline of its contents, and described her impression and personal appropriation of the message. Most importantly, however, she occasionally recorded portions of the sermon verbatim. These records contain not only the "bare facts" concerning Wesley's preaching but actually bring them to life, revealing the spirit, the mood, and the excitement of the event.

Between April 1776 and August 1783 Hester was witness to twenty-five sermons preached by John Wesley, twenty of them in her native Macclesfield, two at the sister Circuit of Congleton, one at neighboring Leek, and two at Newcastle, where Hester had journeyed to accompany the preacher. Twelve of these sermons were preached in the morning (generally at 5:00!), ten in the evening, and three in the afternoon. In her record of these twenty-five sermons, thirteen entries contain barely the text and the time of preaching.

Nine of her records include brief commentary on the sermon, an outline of its contents, and/or a personal comment concerning the sermon and its effect. For example, after she heard Wesley expound the text, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man," during the "wee hours" of April 10, 1777, she recorded in her Journal:

O My God—if *he* in whom there was never spot of sin, could grow in wisdom and Thy favour—Well mayest Thou exhort Thy saints to grow in grace.—Lord help *me*!—O may I increase in *every* grace—and deeper sink and higher rise till Thou transport me to the skies. (II, 120)

Of special interest, however, are the remaining three records which contain verbatim, or at least partially verbatim, accounts of the sermons. One of the characteristics of these sermons is a real sense of urgency and of the possibility of *instantaneous salvation*. In his sermon preached at Leek, Wesley proclaimed:

Art thou willing to know Jesus as thy Savior? and art thou afraid to come?—fear not. look up. he is nigh thee—dost thou want a pardon for all thy sins?—Shall I tell thee thou mayest have it next year—next month—next week?—Nay, I *dare* not.—I am not sure thou canst. Tomorrow is none of thy own.—But thou mayest have it *today*—It is at hand—I am sent to offer it—look up *now* even this moment. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." (II, 174)

Coupled with this aspect of urgency is the Wesleyan emphasis on the personalization of faith, reminiscent of Wesley's Aldersgate experience and illustrated in the same sermon. "Art thou a child of God—a believer, and feelest his Kingdom in a measure set up in thy heart—dost thou know, he hath loved *me* and given himself for *me*?" (II, 174)

Hester's Journal reveals that Wesley was a thoroughly doctrinal preacher. In *The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained* Wesley spoke of repentance as the porch of religion, of faith as the door, and of holiness as religion itself. These three pillars of Wesleyan theology, a true self-knowledge which issues in *repentance*, the Reformation doctrine of salvation through *justification by faith*, and Wesley's peculiar emphasis on *Christian perfection* are all reflected in his sermons preached in and about Macclesfield.

John Wesley believed that there is a radical universal flaw in humankind that separates us from our Creator. The only hope for salvation is our turning to and relying upon God alone. The acknowledgment of sin, or true self-knowledge, and the necessity of repentance were central to his preaching. In his sermon on the "Kingdom of God" Wesley, according to Hester, demonstrated the universal applicability of repentance.

He addressed himself to all sorts of people, states, and conditions, old and young, yea to children 6 or 7 years old—drunkards, swearers—Sabbath breakers, thieves, lyars and lewd persons and told them you may *now* be

delivered from the power of your most besetting sins—even this day—this moment. . . . Yeild now to him who loveth you, who died for you, who will save you from all your sins. (II, 173-74)

Later in that same sermon Wesley exhorted his hearers to an immediate repentance of sin and the reception of justification.

It is true that in *general* the work of repentance is carried on by very slow degrees—most people are a long time after they are convinced of sin, before they are justified.—But why is it?—Even because of unbelief.—The word of faith is nigh thee—fear not—only believe. (II, 174)

The second doctrinal pillar reflected in his sermons is justification by faith. On the afternoon of Easter Day 1782 Wesley took as his text “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” According to Hester, in his exposition:

He insisted strongly on this eternal life being the free gift of God, not obtained by works in whole or in part, but alone through Jesus Christ our Lord and through faith in him—that this eternal life is *Love* begun when being justified by faith we have peace with God and his love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost so that we love him *because* he hath 1st loved us. (II, 92)

Earlier that morning, in his sermon based on “Christ is risen indeed,” Wesley demonstrated how an experimental evidence of the resurrection is one of the fruits of justification. For, as Hester remembered his words, “. . . the moment any vile polluted sinner believes on Christ and is justified . . . he receives the spirit of adoption whereby he can in that moment cry Aba Father, *My Lord* and *My God*” (II, 177). The central affirmation for Wesley was faith in Christ. He believed and taught that “if any individual embraces Christ and the glad tidings of salvation by faith—the Kingdom of God is set up in that heart” (II, 173).

But Wesley was not satisfied with the tendency of some of the Reformers to neglect the doctrine of sanctification in the effort to rediscover faith. If faith is the door to religion, then according to Wesley, holiness is religion itself. The importance of this doctrine, for the Methodists in particular, he made abundantly clear in the early hours of Friday, March 30, 1781:

He showed what were the things committed to Timothy and then confined his discourse to the particular doctrines committed to the Methodists—and proved the doctrine of Christian perfection was the one *peculiar point*—they were called to preach and practice, and that no other people under heaven did clearly insist on this, as a present and an instantaneous salvation.—that they who did not preach it—or believe it were *no* Methodists—neither they who were not *now* preachers, and *now* hearers.—And who were not *now* preachers he said, were the Devils preachers, and not sent of God, and he would have no such in Connection. (II, 93)

The influence of the early Church Fathers, particularly Gregory of

Nyssa via Macarius, and their conception of holiness as a dynamic process rather than a static state, may be discerned in a sermon based on Ephesians 3:14-20. Addressing the people of Macclesfield he “insisted chiefly on Christian holiness, as implied in being *rooted* and *grounded in Love*. . . . yea and a *growing* in grace till filled with *all* the fullness of God” (II, 92). Wesley insisted that holiness or Christian perfection, like justification, was also a free gift of God. On Easter morning 1782 he proclaimed that the “indwelling of God as our sanctifier is the privilege of all believers, and is received by faith as well as justification” (II, 177).

The effects of Wesley’s preaching varied from place to place and certainly depended greatly on the recipients of his message. For those who were “in Connection,” Wesley’s preaching often brought comfort and renewed strength for their spiritual quest and temporal battles. On one occasion Hester reported that “many hearts were comforted and the hands of all who love holiness hereby strengthened” (II, 93). Likewise, in 1782 during the Easter series, “one woman was set at full liberty and many were comforted and established” (II, 173). The effects of Wesley’s sermons and prayers at Leek were especially dramatic, and Hester went to great lengths to describe the power of that occasion.

He was full of life and love and power and wept several times while he prayed. All the congregation were in tears and a young man who walked from Macclesfield and came to hear him in great distress of soul was set at liberty and met us praising God who he knew had forgiven all his sins.—A young boy about 10 years old wept aloud and was crying for mercy and several more appeared cut to the heart. (II, 176)

Wesley especially took delight in the testimony of children. One evening at the home of Mr. Ryles, Wesley confided to Hester, “I was much pleased with that little maid of ten years old—continued he who said—When I felt my sins were all forgiven and I could love God,—it overjoyed me!” (II, 180-81) Wesley’s preaching was not in vain!

III

Hester Ann Rogers remembered John Wesley as leader, as pastor, and as preacher. But most importantly, she remembered him as her “Dear Mr. Wesley.” Perhaps what captivated her more than anything else was Wesley the man. Her reminiscences of this personal friend reveal yet another facet of his fascinating character. On their return trip from Leek, while riding in the chaise, “Wesley said, I never saw a more lovely congregation Hetty—they were like melting wax just fit for divine impressions—But *God* was with us, there’s the secret—tears filling his eyes.” (II, 176) Before Wesley departed from Macclesfield in the spring of 1781 he visited a dear and dying

friend, David Pickford. "It was indeed a solemn scene," Hester recalled, "to see that venerable, happy, dying Christian, with clasped hands, and streaming eyes, call for blessings on God's dear aged messenger, and overwhelmed in holy rapture at the thought of meeting him above" (II, 94). Such were the men and women John Wesley called friend. Hester revealed Wesley as a man radiant with the love of God in his heart. It is little wonder that later in the day she confided to her Journal, "I never saw him more filled with the love and presence of his dear Master than this morning" (II, 94).

The Journal of Hester Ann Rogers reveals John Wesley as the indefatigable director of the Methodist Societies, as a priest of the Church of England charged with the care of the souls of his flock, and as a man called by God to proclaim the message of salvation to his world parish. In Hester's Journal we catch but a glimpse of John Wesley the saint.

ENDNOTES

1. The first volume (188 pp.) of these manuscript journals is entitled *A Short Account of Ye Experience of H A R Written by Herself, Cork, August 30, 1789* and covers the period July 30, 1775 to May 19, 1780. The second volume (188 pp.) is entitled the *Continuation of Ye Journal of H A R Written by Herself* with entries from May 21, 1780 to April 18, 1782. The third volume (199 pp.), *Continuation of H A R's Journal*, includes entries from April 20, 1782 to October 21, 1784. The original manuscripts belong to the Methodist Archives in the John Rylands Library, Manchester University. References to these volumes are hereafter presented by volume number and page in parentheses. Quotations which include abbreviation are fully transcribed, and frequent capitalization is modernized. Hester's spelling, however, has been retained throughout.

2. John S. Simon, *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies* (London: Epworth Press, 1923), p. 50.

3. John Wesley, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, ed. John Telford, vol. 5 (London: Epworth Press, 1931), p. 314.

4. This subject deserves more attention than can be given at this time. Since this paper is concerned particularly with Mrs. Rogers' Journal, and since the correspondence has been published in several forms, acknowledgment of this fact must suffice here.

5. John Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.*, ed. Thomas Jackson, vol. 7 (London: Mason, 1831), p. 110. From Sermon XCVII, "On Obedience to Pastors."

Known

by CHARLES K. ROBINSON

Associate Professor of Philosophical Theology

I know you. I created you. I am creating you.
 I have loved you from your mother's womb.
 You have fled—as you now know—from my love.
 But I love you nevertheless and not-the-less
 and, however far you flee,
 it is I who sustain your very power of fleeing,
 and I will never finally let you go.
 I accept you as you are. You are forgiven.
 I know all your sufferings. I have always known them.
 For beyond your understanding, when you suffer, I suffer.
 I also know all the little tricks by which you try to hide
 the ugliness you have made of your life from yourself and others.

But you are beautiful.
 You are beautiful more deeply within than you can see.
 You are beautiful because you yourself,
 in the unique one that only you are,
 reflect already something of the beauty of my holiness
 in a way which shall never end.
 You are beautiful also because I, and I alone,
 see the beauty you shall become.
 Through the transforming power of my love
 you shall become perfectly beautiful.
 You shall become perfectly beautiful
 in a uniquely irreplaceable way,
 which neither you nor I will work out alone.
 For we shall work it out together.

Your life from now on will be neither simple nor easy.
 I will give you moments of abundant goodness and joy;
 moments when you will be lifted very high;
 moments when, even in the midst of chaotic noise,
 you will begin to hear my symphony playing;
 moments of meaning when you will suddenly find yourself
 on a mountain where the distant bits and pieces
 suddenly come together in the worthwhileness of the whole.

The abundant goodness of the moment of meaning
 will be crisis for you, though it may not seem so.
 For then you must decide
 whether you will in forgetful pride grasp the moment to yourself
 as though it were your own possession
 or whether you will simply open yourself to the moment
 receiving it in grateful humility as a gift,
 remembering the Giver
 and sharing the abundance of your blessing with others in need.

I will to give you Paradise.
 But you will only become finally ready for it
 when you have learned how to live in Heaven
 and not wreck it through the self-surging of ungrateful pride.
 When you are exalted with abundant goodness,
 do not forget to remember,
 remember who you are,
 remember who I am,
 and remember your neighbor in need.

Remember my Son,
 who took upon himself the Servant life
 and, though he is exalted now, remains the Servant still.
 His earthly life was lived
 not upon the smooth plateau of high abundance.
 Jesus also suffered and you will suffer too.
 Do not ask yourself whether you deserve to suffer.
 That is not the point. Jesus did not deserve to suffer.
 But he suffered and was cast down,
 and you will also suffer and be cast down.
 Only when you have learned how
 to be grateful in memory and hope even in Hell
 will you be able to be steadfastly grateful in Heaven.
 In the mystery of my working with you
 I must sometimes appear cruel in order to be kind.
 I will give you a foretaste of Heaven.
 But I must also give you—strange gift—a foretaste of Hell.
 I will not drop you all the way
 down to the bottom of the Abyss—though you may think I have.
 Only One has been to the bottommost depths.
 He passed through the extremity of suffering
 and conquered the final temptation
 so that none other need ever go to the limit of agony.

But as you must be tried by joy
 so must you also be tried by sorrow.
 You will awake on some morrow to find
 that you no longer find me.
 Instead of fulfillment there will be a void.
 Instead of my Presence there will be my Absence.
 From my side I shall still be present with you,
 but you will not perceive our relation that way.
 You will perceive only my Absence.
 That will be crisis in trial of temptation
 and you will have to choose.

If you choose wrongly,
 that will delay the business to be transacted between us.
 But, even so, your choice will not be the last word between us.
 I must have the last word, for your sake.
 For I am the last Word, as the First,
 for your sake and for all.
 If you choose rightly,
 that will facilitate matters between us,
 speeding up the process
 of perfecting your faith, purifying your love.

For I am like a refiner's Fire.
 The fire is the fire of my Holy Love.
 The flame will not be pleasant,
 but the outcome will be worth it.
 For I am holy in a way you can not-now understand,
 and the last distortion of unlove must finally yield.
 I sovereignly will to give you—and all—eternal Life.
 But the Life I will to give you
 can be joy and blessing for you
 only through your being-perfected in unswerving worship,
 faith and love, obedience and trust, under any circumstance.

When you perceive only my Absence, then you must choose.
 One choice would be to get along without me.
 You can do that.
 You can do that because, if that is what you opt for,
 I shall empower you, for a while, to do just that,
 though you will scarcely realize that it is I
 who empower your "autonomy."
 The other choice would be to hold on to me
 even when I am no longer "there" to be held on to.

If in the darkness,
 when you are all alone and I am gone,
 and there is only anguish and Forsakenness,
 you will not let me go,
 but continue to wrestle with my unperceived Presence
 even in my palpable Absence;
 if you continue to call me "my God"
 when breathing will not come and you are wracked with pain;
 if you will not give up and simply call it quits;
 if you will not let yourself off the hook
 by letting me off the hook;
 if you steadfastly insist upon remembering
 our former communion;
 if you remain unswervingly faithful
 to the vision of my Presence which I give you now;
 if you remain relentlessly obedient
 to the commissioning obligation which I lay upon you now;
 if you continue to trust me despite all temptation
 to take the easier "out" of radical despair;
 if you just go on loving me when you cannot have me
 and loving your fellow sufferers
 when you cannot sense my compassion;
 if you go on stubbornly worshipping me
 in the night when there is no light to behold my face;
 if you wordlessly say,

Though I have the world and have not Thee,
 I have nothing,
 yet if I have nothing in the world and still have Thee,
 I have All:

then, having been willing to learn—
 through my power made perfect in weakness—
 what it means to be crucified with my Messiah,
 you shall learn also what it means to be raised with Him.
 For He is the Pioneer and Perfector of faith whose victory
 was once-for-all perfected through suffering temptation.

As the One goes
 so may the many come.
 You are one of the many.
 Come unto me.

I know you. I created you. I am creating you.
I have loved you from your mother's womb.
You have fled—as you know now—from my love.
But I have loved you with an everlasting love,
and I will never finally let you go.
I accept you as you are: you are forgiven.
I know all your sufferings. I have always known them.
Beyond your understanding I have always shared them.
Though you are naked before me, do not fear.
As a mother loves her newborn, so love I you.
Even now—yes, even now—you are beautiful.
And I shall gently lead you
into a beauty that shall be unending:
beheld by joy, in joy beholding
Jesu, Joy of all desiring.

The Lectionary: Straightjacket or Coat of Many Colors?

by ROGER R. KELLER

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Another week! Another sermon! On what am I going to preach? Each pastor meets the weekly responsibility to preach in different ways, and each probably has some method by which he or she plans ahead. For example, a pastor may plan his preaching schedule a year in advance; he may preach in six to eight week series; he may preach on topics suggested by his congregation; or he may deal with various themes. Whatever method a pastor uses, the ideas for preaching do not always come easily, the relation of a sermon to a specific biblical text is often tenuous, variety in preaching may not be forthcoming, and the needs of the congregation may not be met. Such are the hurdles that every parish preacher must face, and the present article seeks to suggest a way of dealing with some of these issues by examining the vital role that preaching based on lectionary texts can play in the life of any parish.

Presuppositions

Certain presuppositions lie behind the suggestion that the lectionary serve as the framework for planning one's preaching. The first assumption is that God actively and continually makes himself known through Jesus Christ, and that the way the Church has with certainty encountered this incarnate God in the past, and the way the Church can expect to encounter him with certainty in the future, is as witness is borne to him by the writers of Holy Scripture.

The second assumption is that the witness of scripture is not merely a past witness, but an ever new witness made in the power of the Holy Spirit, thus providing a *contemporary* witness and encounter with the Risen Christ. Consequently, a biblical text can be the only true "listening post" for the pastor who seeks to proclaim God's Word in the contemporary world, for it is only within the pages of the Bible that a Christian is assured of encountering an authoritative witness to the Word of God.

Any sermon that does not grow primarily from a struggle with a biblical text runs the risk of being nothing but a conversation between the preacher and himself. It is not enough to say that the Christian pastor is rooted and steeped by his training in scripture, and thus any message he proclaims will have biblical authority. It is

easy to twist scripture to one's own ends, and the only way to provide some check on this manipulative process is to open oneself continually and prayerfully to the probing, questioning examination of the biblical texts prior to preaching. Every preacher, every week, needs to rediscover what Karl Barth called "the strange new world of the Bible." This means that a pastor must set aside time for study, time for exegesis, time for conversation with the text upon which he plans to preach, and time for conversation with contemporary issues that the *text* raises. Sermons, that is, good thoughtful sermons, simply do not come into existence overnight. Only after a long struggle do they come to full flower in the pulpit.

A Biblical Environment

If the Church truly believes that the Bible in its wholeness and its *diversity* bears witness to Jesus Christ, then it becomes imperative that the preacher not utilize texts randomly. Rather, there needs to be some sort of systematic hearing and struggle with the Bible in its entirety over a period of time. The lectionary provides a disciplined approach to the scriptures.

From the preacher's perspective there are two primary benefits to be found in using the lectionary. The first is that as a preacher one is forced to struggle with texts that might not otherwise be utilized. We all have favorite scriptures. We all have our favorite theological hobbyhorses which need to be questioned by an authority outside ourselves. The variety within the scriptures calls into question any constant emphasis upon such themes as justification by faith alone, grace without works, works without verbal witness, the work of the Holy Spirit, or the social gospel. None of these is wrong, but no *one* is the total gospel. Only as the pastor is forced to hear those texts which run counter to his or her basic theological interests, will the gospel in its wholeness be preached. The task of preaching the whole gospel is too important to be left to individual pastors, for few of us call ourselves and our theological perspectives into question with any regularity. The lectionary stimulates such a critical process.

The second major benefit is that a pastor inevitably preaches from both testaments as the lectionary is used. Some pastors preach almost exclusively from the New Testament, feeling that God's Word is most fully revealed there, and that to depart from the New Testament is to preach only a partial word. Others, on the other hand, feel that the New Testament points beyond the realities of everyday life to an existence in the future, and consequently they turn to the Old Testament for reference to social justice, personal morality, etc. But the Church through the centuries has continually asserted that witness is borne to God's purposes for, and ways with, human beings in both Testaments. To root preaching primarily in

one testament or the other is to fail to recognize that God bore witness to his self-revelation in Jesus Christ through both testaments. Neither testament is more important than the other. Neither can stand by itself. The Old Testament bears witness to Jesus Christ in *expectation*, while the New Testament bears witness to him in *recollection*. Both are God's Word as they are oriented toward and bear witness to Jesus Christ. Neither is God's Word when treated in isolation from its witness to the Christ who raises issues and who provides the basis for a response to those issues. Few modes of sermon planning other than the lectionary provide this varied biblical atmosphere which immerses the preacher in the biblical witness.

Lectionary preaching also provides benefits for the congregation. They too become steeped in the Bible, hearing texts which call their lives into question or which provide them with hope, while at the same time exposing them to unknown and unexplored portions of the Bible. Therefore, lectionary preaching becomes in part a tool in the overall program of Christian education of young and old alike.

Topical Variety

Not only is there biblical variety in lectionary preaching, there is also an incredible richness in the subjects that a pastor will address. I am not totally convinced that preaching in series is a particularly helpful mode of planning over the long term. Series preaching may become somewhat abstracted from the present, because it looks too far ahead. Also a series too often demands that one *find* texts which he believes address a given subject, rather than permitting texts to raise subjects. Lectionary texts are called upon to raise the topics for consideration in preaching, and there is a freshness to topics newly raised from scripture at the beginning of a week's sermon preparation that I personally do not find when preaching in series or preaching topically.

A real strength of the lectionary's variety is that all topics arise in a *specific* context, a context with two poles. The first pole, as already suggested, is biblical. The situations addressed by the biblical literature, the situations which raise questions about people's relation to God, to the created world, and to other people, are timeless situations, because they are rooted in real human, historical existence and experience. Thus, the first specific context is that of a biblical writer's witness to God's activity in *human history*, a writer who was a real person and who had to struggle with himself and with his God.

The other specific context with which the lectionary texts force us to deal, as they raise their historically rooted questions, is that of the

concrete present. To hear the Bible only in its past historical situation or to repeat only its words is to do nothing but adorn oneself with the feathers of the past. There must be a meeting of the past and present, and it is the responsibility of the preacher after prayerful biblical exegesis and a consideration of the present situation, to suggest ways in which the text at hand addresses the concrete realities of today's world and needs. Thus, preaching becomes the process of dialogue between past human witness to God's varied activity in history, and the present human need to perceive and respond to God's working in *our* history in all its multiplicity. Therefore, a sermon whose fountainhead is a biblical text, is a sermon in context, the context of the past and the present.

Meets Human Needs

It is often said, however, that lectionary preaching, for all its variety, may not meet parish needs as they arise. Yet, those who use the lectionary discover that the prescribed texts have an uncanny ability to appear at the right moments, addressing precisely the correct issues. Each week a pastor may choose to base his or her sermon on one of three prescribed passages. One of these will usually reach out and take hold of the preacher, demanding to be heard, demanding the right to address the present in the name of Jesus Christ. If we listen to a text's cry for a hearing we will probably find ourselves preaching about topics which we might never have considered or about topics that we would perhaps have chosen to avoid. Somehow these topics turn out to be right, by the grace of God.

In the course of a year far more human joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, problems and situations are dealt with through lectionary preaching than are likely to be addressed by any other method of sermon planning. If there is a real dialogue between a biblical text in its historical reality and the contemporary world in which a congregation lives, parishioners with their many needs will be confronted with the risen Christ through the pulpit ministry.

A pastor who uses the lectionary also has the freedom to address difficult and potentially explosive subjects, because the lectionary is *structured*. If a congregation knows that their pastor uses the lectionary, and if a pastor publishes in the weekly bulletin the next Sunday's lectionary texts, the congregation begins to understand that the topics which the preacher addresses are raised by the *Bible*. The topics are not the result of a counseling session during the week, of a rumor, or of the pastor's personal difficulties. Thus, when the lectionary text deals with adultery, so can the pastor, even though he

may know of persons in his congregation who are being unfaithful to their spouses. His sermon arises not out of his pastoral knowledge, but out of a text which demands that the subject be addressed. Similarly, topics such as race, social justice, and political honesty can be raised *because the texts demand it*. This implies, of course, that the pastor is willing to do the exegetical work to check his own personal biases on a subject, and perhaps even to have his own mind changed by a text of scripture. The Word of God, Jesus Christ, challenges all persons, including ministers, to look anew at situations in the light of scripture, and to have their "pre-understandings" shattered on the basis of that Word.

In addition to the variety that the lectionary provides, there is also a control exercised in one's preaching. Often when a problem arises in the parish, the community, the nation, or the world, our initial reaction as preachers is to jump into the middle of the problem with both feet as soon as it surfaces. There *may* be instances of such earth-shaking significance that it is necessary to abandon the lectionary for a Sunday and to address such a need. But I would contend that such situations are relatively rare. Rather, by following the lectionary one discovers that in two or three weeks the opportunity comes to address the problem, and the lapse of time has perhaps permitted some reflection and the cooling of emotions (the pastor's included).

Preaching is not a bucket brigade operation designed to extinguish weekly brush fires. If it becomes this, then the congregation, the pastor, and weekly situations control the preaching, rather than permitting the Word of God as witnessed to in scripture to control. The lectionary assures, as nearly as possible, a biblical basis for preaching. As pastors we are called not to preach our own presuppositions, but rather to permit them to founder on the shoals of scripture so that we preach God's Word to ourselves, as well as to our congregations. The lectionary is no straitjacket, but rather a many-colored, multifaceted resource and source that will never run dry. It continually draws us into the "strange new world of the Bible," which God by his Holy Spirit opens again and again to his Church.

Book Reviews

John Wesley: His Life and Theology. Robert Tuttle, Jr. Zondervan. 1978. 368 pp. \$9.95.

Unfortunately this book has been promoted as the "definitive biography" of John Wesley. But apart from this misrepresentation the work is a significant treatment of John Wesley. It comes at a time when many are rediscovering Wesley as a serious theologian and an important resource for church renewal. And judged by estimated sales of 50,000 in the first six months of its existence, this book is likely to make an impact on current Wesley studies.

It is helpful to see Dr. Tuttle's purposes in writing this book. First, he sought to present an interesting and readable biography which struggles with a man of history and emotion. In doing this he wanted to demonstrate an appreciation for Wesley's Diaries, Journal, and Letters. Second, he wished to present a fairly comprehensive theological analysis of Wesley and his interest in practical theology. Third, he hoped to motivate people to read primary Wesley material for themselves. And fourth, he desired to inspire. Judged on these points alone, Dr. Tuttle does well.

Worthy of further mention is the unique organization and approach of the book. Dr. Tuttle presents both biographical and analytical chapters, and by doing so he desired to keep distinct the factual and analytical material in his work. Further, through the use of first-person style he sought to give the reader the impression of actually conversing with Wesley. This, however, is no mere popularized version of

Wesley's life and thought. By including numerous footnotes and much bibliographical information, the author enables the reader to confirm statements which he makes. And the inclusion of an index makes it possible to trace important people and ideas through the book.

It is this reviewer's opinion that the book makes three significant contributions. The first is its presentation of John Wesley as a real man, not a folk-hero. Some other biographies of Wesley have tended to paint him in an unreal light. Tuttle, however, treats Wesley as a real person, complete with struggles and even apparent inconsistencies. This treatment helps the reader remember that the genius of Wesley was not Wesley himself, but rather his willingness to be used of God. This is an important perspective in our day when we are tempted to focus on the charismatic personality rather than the Spirit who gives the charismata.

The second significant contribution is that the book provides the reader with a new understanding of the role of mysticism in Wesley's life. Older biographies have either ignored this fact or presented general, sweeping condemnations of mystical influence. Both Tyerman and Telford, for example, seek to show Wesley's escape from mysticism's snare. But in doing so they make the very mistake Wesley made around 1736, i.e. they condemn mysticism "in a lump." More recent Wesley scholarship has correctly shown that a distinction must be made between Germanic and Roman Catholic mysticism in the life of Wesley. After 1738 he did leave behind much in the German mystics with their emphasis on

stillness and the extreme interior life. But he continued to utilize the Roman Catholic mystics (e.g. a Kempis, de Renty, Lopez) who kept a balance between holiness of heart and life. Dr. Tuttle makes a significant contribution in showing this influence upon Wesley's spiritual development.

Thirdly, the book struggles with the period between 1725 and 1738. Dr. Tuttle admits that equally competent Wesley scholars have differed on their interpretations of this period, but he believes there is a fresh approach which will shed further light on this important time in Wesley's life.

No doubt, some will find Tuttle's struggle no more satisfying than previous attempts, but any reader of this work should give careful attention to this analysis. Basically, Dr. Tuttle describes the problem as an impasse created by conflicting philosophies contained in Anglicanism and mysticism. Anglicanism affirmed the Aristotelian principle of reason seeking faith. Mysticism affirmed the Platonic principle of faith seeking reason. This mixture of philosophies blocked the one thing Wesley needed most, assurance. Using the mystical notion of faith as quest instead of the evangelical notion of faith as trust, Wesley misunderstood holiness as the producer of faith rather than the product of faith. And, says Tuttle, it took him thirteen years to sort out this problem and resolve it.

When was Wesley converted? Dr. Tuttle uses Wesley to shed light on this question. In reflecting upon this period in his life, Wesley distinguished between the "faith of a servant" and the "faith of a son." Between 1725 and 1738 Wesley says he had the "faith of a servant," and after 1738 he had the "faith of a son." While Wesley never doubted that vital faith was that of a son, he nevertheless came to believe that the "faith of a servant," though young and immature, was acceptable to God for salvation. The result of all this

is that in speaking of bare salvation one must look to 1725, but in speaking of personally assured faith and the resulting spiritual dynamic of such faith, one must look to 1738. In a sense the whole period can be seen as Wesley's "conversion."

In addition to these three highly significant contributions, there are five other contributions to be briefly noted. First, the author shows that Wesley was willing throughout his lifetime to be open to new light and new truth. This gave him a vitality and dynamism that kept his life and theology from becoming brittle. Second, Dr. Tuttle notes the importance of the period at Wroot in Wesley's spiritual development. Some may disagree with the emphasis on solitude which Tuttle makes here, but all may affirm the need to study more carefully this period and not overlook it. Third, the Society structure is described. For the person coming to Wesley for the first time, this information will be quite helpful; and it is an important point to refer to in contemporary discussions of church renewal and small group movements. Fourth, the influence of the Moravians is noted, both positively and negatively. Fifth, the personal spiritual life of Wesley is shown. Not only is he a priest, evangelist, theologian, and leader of a movement, he is also a fellow pilgrim in the faith who must cultivate the same spiritual disciplines we do.

Despite these positive features, there are some weaknesses to note. The first is minimal treatment of certain segments of Wesley's theology, e.g., prevenient grace and repentance in believers. It is this reviewer's opinion that Dr. Tuttle's book is more a theological analysis of John Wesley than it is a presentation of his theology. The reader should not look for a systematic or comprehensive treatment of Wesley's theology in this book.

Second, several key events and issues are overlooked. Wesley's ongoing relation to Anglicanism is passed over.

The Calvinistic controversy is ignored. While information about the Societies is present, the Conference system which tied it together is not dealt with. Missing also is attention to the use of lay preachers.

Third, the years after 1738 are minimally treated in comparison with the years before then. This is often the case in biographies of Wesley, but it is still a weakness. Dr. Frank Baker has noted that half of Wesley's letters were written after 1770, and certainly the development of Wesley as a person and revival leader comes after 1738. Although it may be said that nearly one-third of the book covers the years after 1738, the fact is that much of that material deals with matters between 1738 and 1750. The last forty-one years of Wesley's life are treated minimally and generally. Less historical material is given and much is left out. Nothing is said about Wesley's ordinations or the Deed of Declaration of 1784.

Fourth, the book ignores some of Wesley's social ministries. It could have been enhanced had Dr. Tuttle included such things as the Kingswood School, Wesley's concern for the poor, and his stands on various socio-political issues.

No single volume can be free from weaknesses and omissions. Dr. Tuttle's book is no exception. The serious Wesley scholar needs complementary volumes in order to complete the picture which is begun in this work. But even for the less serious reader it is unfortunate that some major events and issues are left out.

In concluding this review, several summary statements are in order. First, despite its weaknesses, this is a work worth reading. It stands somewhere between a mere popular work and a thorough scholarly treatment. Second, if rightly used it will lead the reader to the primary material and to other secondary sources such as Frank Baker's *John Wesley and the Church of England*, Martin Schmidt's *John Wesley: A Theological Biography*, and Albert Outler's *John Wesley*. And third, this

volume points to the need for a definitive work on John Wesley. Until that is written we may be thankful for works such as Robert Tuttle's which continue to hold before us the importance of John Wesley and the need to know him better.

—Steve Harper

Learning Through Liturgy. Gwen Kennedy Neville and John Westerhoff, III. Seabury. 1978. 189 pp. \$8.95.

A few years ago, John Westerhoff of Duke and Gwen Kennedy Neville, a cultural anthropologist from Emory, combined insights from their respective fields in *Generation to Generation*, a book which explored the processes of religious socialization. Now, in *Learning Through Liturgy*, Westerhoff and Neville focus on one key aspect of religious socialization, ritual and ceremonial, in a discussion of the interplay between liturgy and religious education.

The first half of *Learning Through Liturgy* is devoted to a set of essays by Neville in which she examines the structure and function of certain informal, recurrent community celebrations which have not been previously identified as liturgy. Her "Outdoor Worship as a Liturgical Form" uncovers the ancient Celtic roots of such American Protestant liturgical forms as the camp meeting and the frontier revival. This essay suggests that our concepts of what constitutes the "church's liturgy" may be too narrow, too limited to certain establishment or "high church" definitions of liturgy. By showing that such apparently "non-liturgical" gatherings as camp meetings and church homecomings have ancient roots in the dissent from the Established Church, and that they have a carefully patterned, ritualized focus and theological function; Neville expands our awareness of these "folk

liturgies" as significant liturgical forms. No Protestant pastor in the Southeast should miss her "Folk Liturgies in the American South," an essay which examines such familiar rites as "dinner on the grounds," "homecoming," "family reunions," and "camp meetings" as liturgical expressions of what she calls "religious familialism." It occurred to me, in reading this chapter, that one reason many Protestant pastors either ignore or run rough-shod through such persistent "folk liturgies" as the church "homecoming" is that pastors do not adequately understand the socio-psychological function of these phenomena. They erroneously assume that these events are quaint, meaningless holdovers from the past which are little more than nuisances in the present.

By using the tools of cultural anthropology, Neville helps us to see that these "folk liturgies" reveal the essential elements of a given culture (something a pastor, particularly a new pastor, should want to know) and the essential learnings which are being passed down from one generation to the next. The pastor may question whether the learning which comes from these informal liturgies is *Christian* learning, or whether the "liturgies" need to be modified in order to function more effectively for the participants, but those questions come only after one has carefully examined what happens in the liturgies and how they function. In "Anthropology and Liturgy," Neville gives some specific suggestions for how we can utilize the methods and insights of cultural anthropology in analyzing liturgical forms, particularly the liturgical forms of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism, in order better to understand and possibly to change those forms. Liturgical study has too often limited itself to historical and theological inquiry, inquiring mainly into the liturgical tradition of the Roman Catholic church and its

immediate offspring. Neville breaks new ground in suggesting a perspective and some methods for research which can enable us to understand the liturgical life of "free church" Protestantism.

Understanding is primary. For too long the American church, particularly American Protestantism, has acted as if ritual were optional and even unessential to Christian discipleship. But I think we must give credit to anthropologists like Neville and educators like Westerhoff for reminding us that, in any culture worthy of the name, whether it be secular or sacred culture, ritual is persistent, unavoidable, pervasive, and powerful. In the opening essay to his half of the book, "Liturgy and Catechesis: A Christian Marriage," John Westerhoff admits, "Our rituals can be dangerous." Rituals can bless and sustain the status quo and thus frustrate the Gospel call to conversion and change. But our rituals can also be agents of personal and social conversion. They need not simply make us comfortable in the world as it is but can also give us a vision and a commitment to the new world which God is creating. Therefore Westerhoff calls for an integration of the church's worship, education, fellowship, and service with worship as the center. Rather than conceive of Christian education as some separate, classroom-oriented activity, Westerhoff says that all Christian education should be part of worship. The proper task of Christian education is to prepare us to worship, to judge and improve our worship life, to reflect upon what we do when we worship, and to question where we are to move after we have worshipped. Continuing his attack upon recent Christian education based upon a secular schooling model (which he began in *Will Our Children Have Faith?*), Westerhoff proposes a restored "marriage" between liturgy and education in the church.

In his next two chapters, Dr.

Westerhoff further explains why and how this can be done. His last chapter, "Identity and the Pilgrimage of Faith," is an exposition of Westerhoff's intriguing proposal for a new or, for most of us, a radically changed plan for initiating people into the Christian faith. His advocacy of Confirmation as an adult rite which is "ordination of the laity for ministry" and the establishment of a new adolescent "rite of responsibility" which he calls "A Covenant of Discipleship" should set our imaginations in motion as we wrestle with the problem of liturgy's relationship to the formation of Christian maturity.

For some readers, *Liturgy and Education* may appear disjointed at times, with little relationship between one essay and the next. This is often the problem with a book of essays, particularly essays by two people. There is little connection between Neville's opening observations of informal rites within American Protestantism and Westerhoff's later proposals for liturgical change unless it is the implicit assumption that change should be done only after careful analysis of a given faith-community's rituals. But some of Dr. Westerhoff's proposals, if implemented in most quarters of the American church, Protestant or Catholic, would be a radical and possibly painful departure from the previous liturgical patterns of the community. Such change may be exactly what we need. But it would have been interesting to know what Dr. Neville thinks about the desirability as well as the possibly negative effects of these changes. I also think there are historical and theological questions which are avoided in the discussion of future liturgical trends. The proposals for change suggest that sometimes educational assumptions about what people want or need should outweigh some traditional theological concerns. Such assumptions are often the result of dialogue with one of the social sciences. But these are minor objections and they

must not obscure the contribution of this book.

It is gratifying to have so competent an anthropologist as Gwen Kennedy Neville turning her attentions toward so neglected an area of Protestant church life. It is exciting for those of us at Duke to have so competent a Christian educator as John Westerhoff boldly beckoning us forward into what he believes will be an invigorating future for the life of faith.

—William H. Willimon

The Eighth-Century Prophets: Amos · Hosea · Isaiah · Micah. Bernhard W. Anderson. Fortress. 1978. 111 pp. \$3.50.

For those persons who are acquainted with the Proclamation Commentary Series, the content and structure of this volume could very easily be anticipated. This series is designed basically for pastors to assist in interpreting the texts for the Church year and to present the results of contemporary scholarship on the various parts of the Bible. This particular volume is concerned with the eighth-century prophets.

One usually anticipates with eagerness the reading of a book by B.W. Anderson. His style is clear, and the content of his writing is sound. These characteristics are present in this book as well. But the overall arrangement of the book and the organizational structure of the presentation of the material somehow do not make this one of Anderson's better products. This may be the result of the "Proclamation" format which one could argue against as much as for.

After a *brief* introduction dealing with the nature of prophecy, Anderson moves on to talk about the background for the eighth-century prophetic message, linking it quite closely to the political and social situations of the time. God, according to Anderson, is like a "roaring lion," which indicates that God is present in

the world and that "God's prey is his own people" (p. 9). This chapter is followed by a discussion of how the prophets viewed the future, especially how the present is linked to the future, which in turn is followed by a discussion of repentance, or "Turning Away and Turning Around."

The three chapters which immediately follow are based in turn on the three admonitions described in Micah 6:8. What does the LORD require of you but, "... to act justly, to love loyalty (*hesed*), and to walk wisely before your God." (NEB) In these chapters several texts from the prophets under consideration are examined basically from the form-critical viewpoint to illustrate the points being emphasized.

The work concludes with two chapters entitled "God Who Cares" and "Waiting For God." The first argues for a God who is "passionately concerned and involved" with the people on earth, while the second argues that the prophets were "optimists" even in the midst of all their negativities, looking forward to a new beginning. The book also includes a brief bibliography and two indices, the second of which sets out "prophetic preaching themes."

The response of this reviewer to the book under consideration is frankly mixed. On the one hand, there are some very positive portions of this work and, as is usually the case with Professor Anderson's writing, some very quotable quotes. On the other hand, however, there are some aspects of the work which detract from its overall strength. One problem is that of arrangement, which has already been mentioned. A second, which the present reviewer found somewhat distressing, concerned the quite frequent references to Jeremiah, a seventh-century prophet. There is no objection to Jeremiah's teaching or that it was ill-used by the author; but with all the rich material from the four prophets under consideration, it

would seem more logical to stay more closely with them and therefore within the purpose of the book.

Finally, there is one other distraction which may not bother anyone except the present reviewer. But the question may well be asked about the necessity of introducing references to the New Testament at every opportunity. Cannot these great inspired prophets of God have their messages understood and appreciated on their own? Apart from any other "validating" collection of writings or later theology? They certainly can. The problem here is not that this is an illegitimate undertaking, to link the Old Testament and the New Testament together, but that in such a short amount of space the attempt to do that detracts both from the great message of the prophetic books and the connection and relationship of these messages to the New Testament writings and thought. But again this may be the fault of the "Proclamation" format more than it is of Professor Anderson.

—James M. Efrid

Isaiah: Scroll of a Prophetic Heritage.
William L. Holladay. Eerdmans.
1978. 270 pp. \$6.95.

Professor William L. Holladay of Andover Newton Theological School is perhaps one of the best interpreters of the Bible for pastors and lay persons who is writing today. Many have already read and profited from one of his other works, *Jeremiah—Spokesman Out Of Time*. The present book on Isaiah is designed as a companion volume to that work. It is intended for lay persons who have not had formal training in Biblical interpretation.

The author's thesis is that the book of Isaiah as it now exists is the final product of a long period of time during which a "single prophetic viewpoint" was "remembered, preserved, compiled, and copied" by a prophetic community which also produced

additional prophetic oracles which "were authentic to that tradition." (p. 18) Holladay likes to refer to the different blocks of tradition within the sixty-six chapters of Isaiah as it now stands as a "whole array of voices." He finds, as most Old Testament scholars do, several "Isaiahs" within the collection that bears that name.

The first chapter deals with these problems concerning unity, and the author attempts to demonstrate that modern concern for common source (*i. e.*, one Isaiah) was not important to the ancients. "They did not ask, Who spoke these words, and when? But rather, their question was, What words were to be spoken, and what is God doing, according to his spokesman? . . . Many of the voices . . . must remain anonymous, but what the voices have to say does come through loud and clear. . . . Multiplicity does not seem to have bothered the Old Testament community which brought these collections together, and multiplicity should not bother us." (p. 21)

After the initial "orientation" chapter, the author develops the remainder of the work under the broader headings: The First Isaiah; "Second Isaiah"; "Third Isaiah"; Other "Isaiahs"; and a "Summation" in which he examines the Isaiah tradition and suggests ways that the tradition can have meaning for us.

It would not be appropriate in such a short review as this to discuss the points of agreement and disagreement which the reviewer has with the author. The comments, therefore, will be confined to an evaluation of whether Professor Holladay has, in fact, done what he intended to do, namely to write a book on Isaiah suitable for the lay person without formal Biblical training. The answer to that question is not without certain ambiguities.

The present reviewer respects the work of Professor Holladay immensely, feeling that he is one of the best interpreters of the Bible for lay persons of this generation. More work like his

needs to be made available to the laity because there is a real need and a demand for such material presently. Whether Holladay has "hit the mark" with this book on Isaiah is debatable, however. On the one hand, the book is well written, clearly stated, and quite balanced in the use of scholarly data put in simpler language for the uninitiated reader. On the other hand, the technical complexities of the situation all too often appear in the text of the book, perhaps because the entire undertaking is so complex and bulky. But the result is that it is difficult, if not impossible, for uninitiated lay persons to follow some of the discussion, especially where so much emphasis is placed on how the text was finally edited—a highly speculative study. This kind of presentation will simply confuse the lay person, and the *overemphasis* on this topic will cause the reader to lose sight of the message being presented.

Having said this, however, let it be emphasized that while the book probably is too complex at certain points for lay persons, this is an excellent resource for the pastor both in terms of one's own understanding of the book of Isaiah and in the preparation to explain that book to one's parishioners. The book can be of great value for the purpose for which it was intended, *i. e.*, to help the lay person understand the book of Isaiah. But it will do that best if it is further simplified for the laity *by the teacher*. The book is simply too complex, and at times too difficult to follow, to place it directly in the hands of a lay person without some supervision. The book is, however, highly recommended for all pastors.

—James M. Efrid

And Sarah Laughed. The Status of Women in the Old Testament. John H. Otwell. Westminster. 1977. 222 pp. \$7.95.

In contrast to a traditional understanding that the status of woman (her relative standing in the family and

community) in ancient Israel was rather low, and in a radical departure from much recent writing (especially by women) which claims that the Bible is partly (or even largely) to blame for the inequality of women in present Western societies, the author argues that the status of Israelite woman was admirably high. Although this position has been argued before, it has seldom been done with such length and detail as undertaken here. And since the author is an established scholar (Professor of Old Testament at the Pacific School of Religion and the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California), it is proper that his analysis be taken seriously.

He examines hundreds of passages dealing with the status of woman (the Scripture index contains approximately 1,000 entries), some of them standard in discussion of this topic (e.g., Gen. 3:16, "He [the husband] shall rule over you"), and others which have been conveniently or imperceptively ignored. He does this under such headings as the creation of woman, sexual attraction, marriage, motherhood, subservience of women, subservience to women (a rarely discussed topic, indeed!), sisters, divorcees, widows, freedom of action (within and without the family), cultic activity, and personifications (e.g., wisdom as a woman, Zion as a daughter).

He argues that, since God has made promises concerning Israel's future which are dependent upon offspring, "the divine presence and activity which guaranteed the progeny was resident in the woman. Her fecundity was the most crucial and clearest proof of God's presence in the midst of the people" (p. 61); that woman's status as a "helpmeet" (Gen. 2:18) and her creation from the man's rib (2:21-22) have no implications of inferiority, contrary to popular assumption (p. 17); that a father's right to contract a marriage for his daughter was by no means absolute (p. 33); that many passages taken to indicate the subservience of women have been misunderstood, e.g., the

giving of the patriarchal wives into the harem of a foreigner, as in Gen. 12 (p. 79); that women regularly wielded great authority in domestic and political spheres, and indeed that "The wife was not inferior to the husband" (p. 101); that, contrary to popular modern belief that only the husband had the right to initiate divorce proceedings, the wife's right to such initiation is even more explicitly spelled out (p. 121); and that women exercised wide leadership in the cultic sphere, with only the priesthood forbidden them (p. 155).

The volume is written in non-technical language, footnotes are almost non-existent, there is a basic bibliography and full index, and it is noticeably well bound for a paperback. Each chapter concludes with a brief summary of the material covered and the conclusions which may be drawn from it.

There are a number of peripheral points at which one might argue with the author: e.g., that the actors in the Song of Solomon are "bride and groom" (p. 25); that the Hebrew word *bethulah* means "virgin" (p. 183). And some of his interpretations seem a bit forced: e.g., that Saul's ability to give his daughter Michael to someone else in marriage after her first husband David had become an outlaw is an indication of the high status of woman (the family protects her from an unsuitable marriage) rather than an illustration of parental power over daughters (p. 75).

However, the volume provides a useful counterbalance to the earlier opposite extreme in interpretation. The truth lies somewhere in between.

—Lloyd Bailey

The Men, The Meaning, The Message of The New Testament Books. William Barclay. Westminster. 1976. 149 pp. \$3.95.

This book is the result of a collecting together of a series of articles which first appeared in the magazine of the

Church of Scotland. They are designed to give a "quick but comprehensive view of the whole New Testament" (p. vii). The method used by Dr. Barclay is one wherein one special theme or aspect of each New Testament book is singled out and each book is then explicated according to that theme.

The book proceeds to examine each New Testament writing in the manner described, and the order of presentation is basically that of the order of the New Testament canon with few exceptions. At the conclusion of each chapter there are some questions for further discussion and suggestions for further reading.

As usual Barclay's book is clearly written and does what he intends for it to do. This work introduces the books of the New Testament for lay persons and can be used with some success by laity. The basic problem with the book is that it is probably too simplistic even for laity. There is very little reference to problems involved in the dating and interpretation of the New Testament literature. While there definitely is a place for this kind of approach to the literature of the New Testament, the present reviewer feels that the prevailing mood among laity today is for some study material which challenges their thinking and understanding while still being readable and understandable to them. Barclay's book here discussed does the latter but not the former.

—James M. Efird

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