

Achilles to respond to Patroclus' death at Hector's hand by killing Aeneas would have been some kind of murder (senseless murder, perhaps), but it would not have been murder-in-revenge as killing Hector was. To describe it as (that sort of) revenge would merely be a misuse of language. Why so? Surely, because the Homeric notion of Revenge presupposes a Homeric notion of Responsibility.

But these are, as I say, minor criticisms, and overall the ambition, reasonableness, and scope of Lucas's thoroughly enjoyable book can only be admired. I warmly recommend it.

T.D.J.CHAPPELL

THE WISDOM OF FOOLS? by Mary Grey. *SPCK*, 1993. pp. ix-164, £12.99.

For those interested in viewing reality from a specifically feminine angle any book by Mary Grey is a "must". The present book seeks to "see revelation in a context of mutuality, as divine communication, but for *our* times . . . as the dawning of a different consciousness, as a call to further participation in the divine work of creating and redeeming." The need to do so springs from the questions addressed to Christian revelation: How can it be understood in such a way as to bring God's justice to the victims of global oppression, and address the catastrophic situation of the planet?

The author believes that Christian revelation fails to do this because it is, and always has been, understood in the dialogical terms of what she styles the "logos myth". She attacks the whole philosophical basis of articulation and definition on which western civilisation has been built, and condemns it for spawning dualisms which have led to isolationist individualism, a hierarchical polity of power, nationalism and goals of materialistic success. She blames the same cause for creating an unjustified separation between God and human beings, between heaven and earth and for claiming that the revelation which bridges that gap can be captured in "timeless truths". She identifies this approach as characteristically, though not essentially, masculine, and opposes to it a "hermeneutic of connectedness", a psychological philosophy of "mutuality-in-relation" which seeks to apprehend reality by recognising connections rather than distinctions between different facets of experience. She diagnoses, of course, that such a disastrous situation has come about because of the almost total absence from the realms of power—theological, ecclesiastical and political—of the intuitive and more holistic feminine manner of articulating reality which seeks to discern and include, rather than sift and categorise, the significance of all experience.

The very structure of the book is intended to bring out this pervasive motif of connectedness. Chapters of reflective discussion and comment are strung on a weak story-line of *Perceval*, the holy fool, pursuing his quest for *Sophia*, the wisdom figure, through the modern world, too often frustrated by *Logos*, the successful politician or businessman. Part way

through, these reflections are focussed in the introduction of another symbol—Cassandra, the Trojan prophetess doomed never to be listened to, who stands at the interface between *Logos* and *Sophia*. This structure seems to make the material repetitive and confusing to the present reader—a parable perhaps of the *Logos* and *Sophia* approaches?

The reflections cover a good deal of serious ground: the undoubted oppression of women for most of recorded history in most parts of the world, and not least, in the Christian Church; the obvious faults and sins which can be traced to unbridled individualism; the terrible exploitation of natural resources, and—saddest of all—the apparent ineffectiveness of Christianity to remedy any of these.

Interesting topics are broached at a deeper level: the powerful influence of myths and symbols, and the various ways of “knowing”; the effect of western philosophy in making people, as well as things into objects rather than subjects; the effect of dualism in any sphere, of reducing one party to passivity, which where women are concerned, has tended to foster a “sacrificial victim” syndrome apparent in too many images of the maternal vocation; the effect of ritual, symbol and (effective) liturgy in creating community, and so real “mutuality-in-relationship”. Most significant perhaps is the restatement of the nature as well as the role of Christian revelation as participation in God’s on-going creative activity. The book presents an appealing vision and a persuasive thesis, and for groups that can apprehend and implement these, they must undoubtedly bring blessings.

But can it really be universalised to the extent that the book implies (despite overt disclaimers)?

Though short the book makes difficult, and frankly tedious, reading. So many ideas are jumbled together but not integrated; so many strands of thought are tangled rather than interwoven, and much of the persuasive effect is produced by “flooding” or bombardment, rather than by the creation of conviction. Fascinating phenomena, heart-rending narrations of experience and powerful works by other authors are presented with dramatic force, but particular conclusions seem to be based on inadequate exploration of the underlying ideas. This is not the sort of material that can be argued with but the inspired rhetoric, while it may induce a feeling of guilt or inadequacy, will not necessarily evoke conviction in the reader whose own, feminine, experience does not harmonise with the tenour of the book.

Two major criticisms must be voiced. What grounds are there for finding this new concept of revelation any less deluding than the “timeless truths” concept? True—very many women around the world have found freedom, restored dignity and a sense of vital renewal in having their feelings and experience valued and respected; but does this authenticate their insights as Christian revelation for all? The all-too-justified criticism of the male-dominated patriarchal structure of the Church, and of theological enterprise, leads the author to suggest that women—as the paradigm of passive, silent, marginalised categories—hold the only, desperate remedy

for the defects of that Church and the general ineffectiveness of Christianity in coping with human ills. While there is a great deal to be said for the leavening of both theological study and Church structure with much more female talent, the author certainly claims far too much for her panacea since its application would de-christianise the whole enterprise. Her concept of both revelation and Church appears to ignore entirely the—scandalous—particularity of Christ.

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MERTON. MYSTIC AT THE CENTER OF AMERICA. Thomas M. King. (Collegeville, Minn.: A Michael Glazier Book, *The Liturgical Press*, 1992.) 150 pp. \$10.99.

SILENT LAMP. THE THOMAS MERTON STORY. William H. Shannon. (London: *SCM Press*, 1993.) 304 pp., with index. £10.95.

These two books provide insight into aspects of Merton's developing spiritual journey. Both emphasize his growing spiritual awareness of mysticism and of contemplation, and how that awareness inevitably brought his journey back; to the world. Both would be good places to begin a study of Merton, while both are limited in scope.

Merton wrote so much that it is probably impossible for any commentator or author to do him justice in a single volume. These books quite successfully point the way toward further study. Shannon's investigation might be called a supplement to earlier biographical studies (Furlong, Mott, Griffin, Pennington). Its somewhat ironic title "Silent Lamp" refers to Merton's monastic life as an instrument for helping others see, but as we all know Merton was seldom silent. The study by King is more limited in scope, and surely does not convince us that Merton was a "mystic at the center of America". Nevertheless, it does a good job at demonstrating that Merton sought to understand the fundamental role of mysticism in his own life journey.

King arranges his text in four basic narrative sections — Self, Contemplation, Freedom, and Others — encased with an introduction and epilogue. Each chapter, more or less self-contained, deals with the paradoxical realizations of Merton who both sought to deepen his (and others) mystical awareness, and as individual always remained exceedingly "industrious". Thus, while "he talked of disappearing in God . . . his own Nothingness," he usually had to qualify "I am a joyful person. I like life" (p.30), and he kept returning to life.

In his chapter about contemplation, King demonstrates, not surprisingly, that for Merton mysticism flourishes in ordinary circumstances. The section about freedom stresses how Merton became increasingly aware of how exterior discipline should free (monk and others) so they can "deal with a more ultimate struggle"(p. 99). Finally, each individual (Merton stresses) chooses between despair and joy.

King's last chapter, predictably, is "Others". Merton concerned himself with explaining that "achieving purity of heart . . . is not the end, for . . .