

liturgical celebrations. There is still much to be done in this regard.

All efforts to reflect on the spirituality and traditions among the Mexican Americans will help to develop a Hispanic pastoral theology in this country. It will also nourish the spirituality of so many Hispanic Catholics living here. This will be also accomplished through renewed liturgical celebrations as the Hispanics hunger for the Word of God and for participation as full members of the church. This was the purpose of the liturgical reform for the whole church according to Paul VI, who said that "We must be fully cognizant of the fact that with the Council a new spiritual pedagogy has been born."²⁰ By a truly inculturated liturgy, the goal of the renewed liturgical celebrations will be the summit and source of the spirituality of all peoples, including the Mexican Americans.

²⁰ Sacred Congregation of Rites (Consilium), Instruction *Inter Oecumenici*, on the orderly carrying out the Constitution on the Liturgy, 26 September 1964: AAS 56 (1964) 877-900. Specifically no. 297 in *Documents on the Liturgy 1963-79* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press 1982) 89.

Paul S. Minear

A Theology of the Heart

Twenty years ago Father Michael Marx of St John's Abbey challenged me to explore the biblical perceptions and insights regarding the heart. I have long been unable to respond to such a challenge, though I fully agree with the importance of such a study. Perhaps a cloistered monk, given to long periods of meditation, is in a better position to penetrate the subtleties of biblical thinking than is a seminary professor. That is no excuse, however, for my altogether avoiding the challenge. This essay is a preliminary study of a few scriptural texts that may open the way for readers to explore the subject more fully. Even a preliminary sketch, however, is not worth the effort unless readers open their

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minds to quite new ways of viewing both theology and cardiology (the Greek word for heart is *kardia*). Much more is involved than improving the lexical definitions of heart; what is needed are new perceptions of the basic divine-human relationship, for which *heart* was a code word.

Many efforts to grasp early Christian understandings of God go awry because they overlook the strategic importance of such elemental realities as the human heart. In a recent effort to probe the God-logic of the Gospels,¹ it became clear to me that, in scripture, thinking about God was so closely spliced to thinking about the heart that an understanding of either is quite impossible without an understanding of the other. What follows may make that conviction clear.

Many texts speak of the heart as the hidden source of all significant human actions. Every heart overflows into either evil or good. From the good treasure in the heart, a good person, like a good tree, produces good fruit (Lk 6:45). As for the evil fruit of the evil heart, we find an extensive catalog: evil intentions, fornication, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly (Mk 7:22f). Any fountain capable of yielding such a vast range of evil must be large indeed. This list of the heart's overflow is accompanied by the flat declaration that a person cannot be defiled by anything entering from the outside; only by what comes from within can a person be defiled.

Consider, for example, the announcement that a man who looks at a woman with desire has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Mt 5:28). To modern readers that sounds like hyperbole, but to Jesus it was the plain truth of the matter. That announcement not only underscores the corruptive power of desire; it also implies the scope of the heart, for desire is a term that binds two people, the object of desire and the one desiring. Often, in fact, it is the object desired that evokes the desire. Both are present in the one heart. So, too, the heart is the source of all loyalties. Loyalty creates a bond between a particular lord (e.g., God or Mammon) and a particular servant (Mt 6:24). Again, it is the lord that evokes this loyalty. Likewise, the heart is viewed as the hidden source of all treasuring; that truth compels us to locate the heart wherever the treasure is, as well as where the treasuring

¹ *The God of the Gospels* (Atlanta: John Knox Press 1988).

takes place (Mt 6:21). The heart is big enough to include both. By referring to both ends of desiring, hoping, serving, and treasuring, the heart comprises all the actions that stem from those inner urgencies. It thus binds the future to the present, the heaven to the earth.

How frequently the heart is linked to the eye in biblical speech! The eye can be evil, corrupting everything, or good, purifying everything (Mt 6:22f.; Lk 11:34). Blind eyes and hardened hearts are two ways of describing the same ailment (Mt 13:15); when the opposite condition pertains, the eyes of the heart are enlightened (Eph 1:18). There is a similar linkage between the ears and the heart. Deafness in responding to God's word is the action of a disobedient heart, whereas acute hearing spells obedience. The prophet often concludes his appeal with the call: "Whoever has an ear should listen." Such listening can be done only with the heart.

Viewed thus, the heart becomes a whole world of its own, where the desired elicits the desiring, the treasure the treasuring, the lord the loyalty. Modern analogies might be Sotheby's, Crystal Mall, Wall Street, Lovers' Lane, a Hall of Mirrors, a flea market, a factory producing idols. This range of meanings makes useless the usual medical and anatomical connotations. Even psychological categories are inadequate, because thought focuses not on the intensity of passion but on the structure of relations. So complex are these hidden bonds that the heart is unable to love only one master, as Kierkegaard observed. That inability impelled Jesus to stress the love of God with the whole heart. His command, however, began not with the imperative "Love" but with the declaration, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Mk 12:29). Singleness of heart must match the oneness of the Lord. Accordingly, Jesus required the rich man to sell everything so that his heart would become as single as its lord (Mt 19:16-22).

This view of the heart underlies various unusual aspects of biblical speech. For example, a community, in which no member claims to possess anything but everything is owned in common, is said to have only one heart (Acts 4:32). So, too, Paul tells the Corinthian Christians that God's Spirit has written a message on their hearts that can be read by all as "a letter from Christ delivered by us" (2 Cor 3:1-3). Here the heart serves the functions of a modern postal service, receiving and delivering messages. Each

heart in this community forms a network of relations, linking together God, Christ, the Spirit, Paul, the Corinthians, and others. It is not surprising, then, that Paul assured the Thessalonians that though he was separated from them in person (*prosōpō*), they had not been separated in heart (1 Thes 1:17). The heart is not as limited by space and time as is the face. The heart can be in two places at once, and many people can inhabit this one space. So, too, when Paul writes to the Philippians (1:7) that he holds them in his heart (or that they hold him in their heart — both translations are possible), he means to appeal to more than mutual affections; he is referring to their presence in the same, very real, space. The one heart has become a world within which individuals are so interdependent that they die together and live together (2 Cor 7:3).

When we think of the heart as the hidden source of all desires, hopes and treasures, another feature emerges. The heart becomes the scene of deadly conflicts, for one desire competes with the others and one treasure must be chosen over many rivals. The heart cannot avoid choosing one lord over others. In fact, each desire represents a lord; many lords are therefore at work in the same heart, each soliciting obedience. So the parable of the seeds pictures the heart as soil on which God sows wheat and Satan sows weeds (Mt 13:18-30; Lk 8:9-15). Each decision registers not only the human preference but also the power of a lord (Jas 4:1-10). Persecution merely clarifies the more humdrum alternatives of everyday life. When Christians are placed on trial for their faith and threatened with death, it is by their fearlessness before their persecutors that they reverence Christ as lord in their hearts (1 Pt 3:13-17). Like the choice made in Gethsemane, this gives an apocalyptic finality to the heart's *yes* and *no*. Primordial and eschatological realities converge when the heart makes up its mind.

So much is at stake in choosing where to lay up treasures that one might suppose that the alternatives are always clear. Not so. From the human standpoint, both the hearts and their lords remain hidden, safe from curiosity and manipulation. At best, a person's knowledge of either is problematic and bound to be distorted by self-interest. In sharpest contrast, God's knowledge of the heart is perfect and complete (Heb 4:12f). As we have seen, the heart is the control-center of all relations, yet God is nearer to that center than is the person involved. Since what is desired

among people is detested by God (Lk 16:15), self-deception with regard to the state of the heart is inevitable. It is the secret intent of the heart that must be forgiven. As Jeremiah recognized, the heart is the most deceitful of things (17:9). So the inclination to justify the self must be overcome before the knowledge of God becomes accessible. His knowledge enables him to cleanse hearts by faith. When God purges hearts, he makes obsolete the former distinctions between Jews and Gentiles (Acts 15:9). In his teaching about the heart, Jesus made all foods clean (Mk 7:19), thus repudiating all legalistic definitions of uncleanness. In their teachings, both Paul and Luke repudiated all external forms of circumcision. The only true circumcision, with its inclusion in God's people, is a matter of the heart and not of the foreskin (Acts 7:51; Rom 2:29). Such a view of the heart destroys all legalisms, Christian no less than Jewish. Purity of heart is at once gift and response.

Indigenous in this world of thought is the idea that God is able to write his laws on the heart, so that a person's knowledge of God becomes superior to any knowledge received from relatives or teachers (Rom 2:15; Heb 8:8-12). It is such knowledge that enables the recipient to discern the fateful difference between one hope and others, one treasure and others. With his Word God initiates the struggle with Satan. It is the function of a prophet to penetrate the secrets of the heart and to disclose the strategies of these two primeval enemies. By responding to this prophetic disclosure, the self determines the community to which it belongs and discovers within that community the strongest of family ties. "Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father'" (Gal 4:6). That cry makes worship authentic, in contrast to the reliance on pious words and human doctrines that make worship futile, with hearts far from God (Mt 15:8; Mk 7:6).

So much hangs on the heart's activity that it is essential for every person to employ tough-minded analysis rather than tender feelings. In this respect, biblical thinking differs from much popular imagining. A frequent misunderstanding is articulated in a statement of Herman Melville in a letter to Nathanael Hawthorne in June 1852: "I stand for the heart. To the dogs with the head."²

² Cited in Joyce Carol Oates, *(Woman) Writer: Occasions and Opportunities* (New York: Dutton 1988) 147.

This idea of a basic conflict between heart and head is entirely unbiblical; it relies on different metaphorical coefficients for both nouns. Instead, the New Testament views the heart as a place where the most elaborate purposes and schemes are concocted, where complex reasoning takes place, and where critical understanding is required for genuine conversion (Mt 13:15). In fact, on a number of occasions the RSV translators felt compelled to translate *kardia* by *mind* rather than *heart* (Lk 21:14; Rom 1:21; 2 Cor 3:14, 15; 9:7). There is no conflict between loving God with the heart and loving God with the mind (Mt 22:37 and par.) To have an evil heart is to be *double-minded*; to purify the heart is to become *single-minded* (Jas 4:8). For God to say "I will put my laws into their minds" is an alternative way of saying "I will write them on their hearts" (Jas 4:6-8; Eph 4:17-23). Knowledge of God embraces both mind and heart (Phil 4:7).

Authors are convinced that what happens in the heart determines the future. Hearts are either being fattened for the day of slaughter or being established for the day of the Lord (Jas 5:5, 8). It is the heart that, in turning, moves from inner division toward integrity, from darkness into light, from participation in the first creation into participation in the new (Rom 6:17-19). The richness of the idiom is reflected in such a prayer as this:

"I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power . . ." (Eph 1:17-19).

This biblical thinking about the heart makes intelligible the frequent references to the mysterious interdependence of the divine and human that enables apostles to speak of the Father as dwelling in his children, and to speak of them as dwelling in him (1 Jn 3:24), or to speak of Christ as dwelling in human hearts by faith.

We have now completed this preliminary survey of some texts that express biblical attitudes toward God and the heart. By uncovering linkages of major importance between those two realities, the survey justifies a much more thorough exploration that would

do greater justice to variations in outlook and to subtleties in perspectives. Some analysts will be interested only in examining the formal structures of early Christian theology. Others, like Kierkegaard, may choose to use the texts to press deeper into the subjectivities of their own faith.³

All readers should take notice of the roads to a knowledge of God that are *not* taken by these texts. For example, these authors do not take the road of first pondering the mysteries of creation, the immensities of the physical universe, and then of asking about primal causes and the possible activity of a Creator. Such questions do not occupy these minds.

"The righteousness that comes from faith says, Do not say in your heart 'who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring the Messiah down) . . ." (Rom 10:6). The apostle has in mind a much shorter route.

Nor do these authors encourage readers to take the road of pondering the anomalies of human history, the endless struggles between nations and races, the unceasing miscarriages of justice, and then of asking such questions as "Where?" or "How long?"

"The righteousness that comes from faith says, Do not say in your heart . . . 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring the Messiah up from the dead) . . ." (Rom 10:7). Again the apostle is thinking of a shorter route. He is, in fact, not thinking of a road at all. That is to him a misleading image for acquiring knowledge of God. "The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is the word of faith that we proclaim); because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes in the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the lips and so is saved" (Rom 10:8-10).

The direction of thought is not outward but inward, where the control center of all relationships is located. A vast network of highways is to be found *within* the heart, where God has created links between the desiring and the things desired, between the loyalties and the lords. Because God's creative word is lodged within the heart, the self has immediate access to the Eternal.

³ *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1941) 176-86.

Here lies the source of the soul's dignity, a dignity fully manifested in lowliness of heart (Mt 11:25-30). Here lie the decisions that unite human freedom and divine will, a freedom won by obedience, or lost when Satan's deceptions are accepted (Jn 13:2; Acts 5:3, 4; 16:14; Rev 11:24; 17:17). Here, too, emerges what Unamuno called "the tragic sense of life," that awareness of the insidious corruptions of creation by sin and death. The heart's slavery to false gods makes it necessary for God to send messengers to "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children" (Lk 1:17). Out of their mission a community is born (and reborn) in which the love of God with the whole heart releases unrestrained love of brothers, sisters and enemies (Mt 5:45; 18:35). Often the source of these loves is attributed to the gift of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:9) which serves as a guarantee in the hearts of the faithful (2 Cor 1:22; 4:6).

Thus far we have focused attention on the New Testament outlook, but the basis for that outlook is amply furnished by the Old Testament. There also writers recognized the fact that God fashions all hearts as a forum for dialogue with him (Ps 33:15). This origin makes the heart susceptible to a deception that "turns things upside down" (Is 29:13-16) and removes the hearts far from their maker (Jer 7:24; 9:14; 11:8; 13:10; 16:12; 18:12; 23:17). It is in the heart that war breaks out and that words become swords (Ps 55:21). It is in the heart that idols are installed so that only a new heart can bring deliverance from self-deceptions. Only a circumcision of the heart can lead to the restored presence of God's word (Dt 10:16; 30:6; Jer 9:26). So the heart becomes both a center for instant communication with the divine will and a battleground for divine and demonic forces. Accordingly, both Testaments provide ample ground for Augustine's axiom that God has so made us for himself that our hearts are restless until they find their rest in him.⁴

All that, however is the language of faith. Most classrooms prefer the language of theology. Even in that language, we are persuaded that by paying closer attention to the connections between theology and cardiology we can improve our understanding of

⁴ An offhand comment by a friend has given a fresh twist to the logic of that axiom. Some years ago, when he heard the brash announcement that God had died, he remarked: "If God is dead, then who am I?"

biblical psychology, sociology, cosmology, eschatology and soteriology, while to misconstrue those connections is to damage the accuracy and cogency of all those disciplines.

Robert W. Hovda

The Amen Corner

SORTING OUT OUR WAYS OF COMMON PRAYER

One of the many gifts of the Second Vatican Council in my church is the attention it drew to the local church — parishes, dioceses, and larger areas or national units of cohesion. It had to do this for the sake of the other reforms it mandated. It recalled a forgotten part of our tradition that valued decentralization and the principle of subsidiarity. Just as Michael Harrington and some other promoters of economic reform in our society have responded to the lessons of modern history by proposing a socialization that has to be built from local constituents and not imposed by political authority's force, so we in the churches cannot afford to overlook or minimize the Council's appropriation of that basic human institutional principle (and of the church's own earlier tradition).

That conciliar gift was not bestowed at the expense of our unity as local church with the other churches. In fact, it was given as the only healthy basis for the universal communion to which all Christians are committed. (And which my church, like others, had been pursuing with some success until recent Roman developments.) In my old age, it seems more and more clear to me that the Council will be remembered and celebrated for that gift more than for any other. And hope assures me that it will come into its own some time in the future: " 'Watchman, how much longer the night? Watchman, how much longer the night?' The watchman replies, 'Morning has come, and again night. If you will ask, ask; come back again' " (Is 21:11b-12).

Vernacular languages and other liturgical reforms, coming out of that concern, obviously aimed at the local churches' making the liturgy their own, possessing it, becoming comfortable in it —

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