

TRANSLATING THE WORD

Commentary by Peter Rollins

“Here we are invited to reflect upon the true meaning of the phrase *Word of God*. While this term is often used in order to describe a set of Scriptures, this parable asks the reader whether words in a book, no matter how beautifully constructed, could ever be worthy of such a title. Of course, for many the Bible is worthy of this hallowed title. The words, or at least the message contained by the words, has a status far beyond that of even the greatest literary achievements. But we must ask whether holding the words of the Bible in such high regard is really the best way to show our love and respect to this ancient text. For it is not the Bible itself that informs us how God’s Word never returns empty (Isaiah 44:11)? In other words, God’s holy word can never fall on deaf ears, but will always evoke transformation in those who truly hear it.

If this is the case, then God’s Word cannot be heard without being heeded; it cannot be received without being incarnated. Indeed, it is only in being incarnated that one can say that it has been received. For instance, the words *love your neighbour* should not be thought of as sacred or divine. These words are no more than words. They take on a revelatory role only when they are lived, that is, when someone actually gets their hands dirty and loves their neighbour--in other words, when this phrase is incarnated in action. The idea of loving one’s neighbour is the Word of God, not when it is merely affirmed, but when it is lived.

Therefore, it is impossible to affirm God’s Word apart from becoming that Word, apart from being the place where that Word becomes a living, breathing act. This divine Word cannot then be rendered into an object that is somehow separate from the subject who hears it or reads it, for the Word of God is an incarnated Word that is lived. Its call is heard only by those who inhale the aroma of the words and who exhale life, liberation, and love.

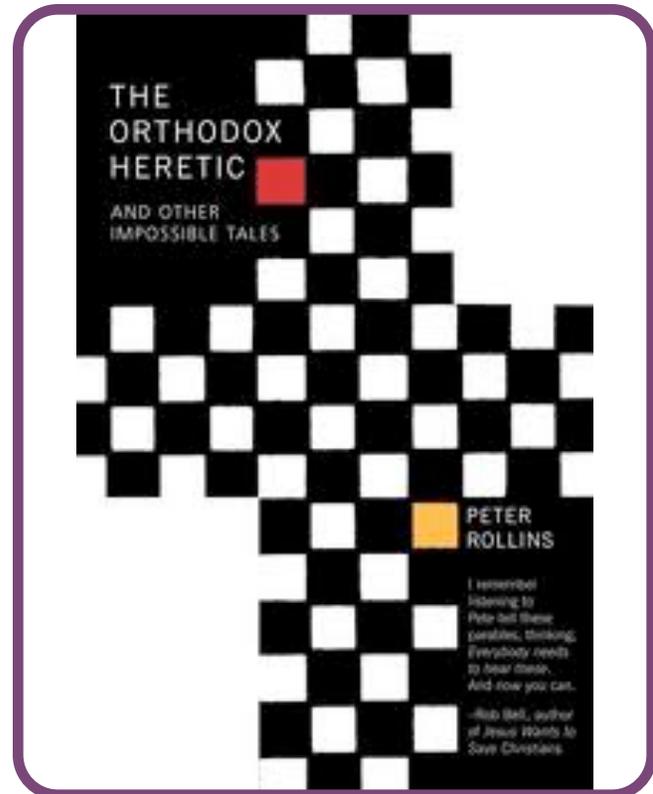
By attempting to describe this Word we will always end up describing something less than it, for, like love, the Word is discovered not in speech but in act. The Word is formed only when it is performed; it exists in the world only when it is lived out by a subject who dwells fully in the world. Is this not the logic of incarnation?”

(“The Orthodox Heretic” pages 16-18)

Lenten Evening Prayer

Ancient & Modern

PARABLES



“Religious writing is usually designed to make the truth of faith clear, concise, and palatable. Parables subvert this approach. In the parable, truth is not expressed via some dusty theological discourse that seeks to educate us, but rather it arises as a lyrical dis-course that would inspire and transform us...parables do not seek to change our minds but rather to change our hearts.” **PETER ROLLINS**

Lenten Evening Prayer

Parables

“**Parables** subvert the desire to make faith simple and understandable. they do not offer the reader clarity, for they refuse to be captured in the net of a single interpretation and instead demand our eternal return to their words, our wrestling with them, and our puzzling over them.

This does not mean that the words contain no message, or that they mock us as some insoluble puzzle (and thus not rally as a puzzle at all). Parables do not substitute sense for nonsense, or order for disorder. Rather, they point beyond these distinctions, inviting us to engage in a mode of reflection that has less to do with fixing meaning than rendering meaning fluid and affective.

A parable does not primarily provide information about our world. Rather, if we allow it to do its work within us, it will change, our world--breaking it open to ever-new possibilities by refusing to be held by the categories that currently exist within that world. In this way the parable transforms the way we hold reality, and thus changes reality itself.” (Peter Rollins)

Please begin your worship in quiet contemplation.

Invocation:

P: All things desire to be like God, and infinite space is a mirror that tries to reflect God’s body. But it can’t. All that infinite existence can show us of God is only an atom of God’s Being.

C: **Existence mirrors God the best it can, though how arrogant for any image in that mirror, for any human being, to think they know God.**

(Thomas Aquinas: All Things Desire)

Day Is Done

1 Day is done, but love un-fail-ing dwells ev-er here;
 2 Dark de-scends, but light un-end-ing shines through our night;
 3 Eyes will close, but you un-sleep-ing watch by our side;

shad-ows fall, but hope, pre-vail-ing, calms ev-ery fear.
 you are with us, ev-er lend-ing new strength to sight:
 death may come, in love's safe-keep-ing still we a-bide.

God, our Mak-er, none for-sak-ing, take our hearts of Love's own
 one in love, your truth con-fess-ing, one in hope of heav-en's
 God of love, all e-vil quell-ing, sin for-giv-ing, fear dis-

mak-ing, watch our sleep-ing, guard our wak-ing, be al-ways near.
 bless-ing, may we see, in love's pos-sess-ing, love's end-less light
 pell-ing, stay with us, our hearts in-dwell-ing, this e-ven-tide.

Abba Prayer

P: As Jesus taught us, we pray:

**Heavenly Mother, Heavenly Father
Holy and blessed is your true name.
We pray for your reign of peace to come.
We pray that your good will be done.
Let heaven and earth become one.
Give us this day the bread we need.
Give it to those who have none.
Let forgiveness flow like a river between us
From each one to each one to each one.
Lead us to holy innocence
Beyond the evil of our days:
Come swiftly Mother, Father, come.
For yours is the power
And the mercy, and the glory.
Forever your name is all one. Amen.**

Hymn: **Day Is Done** *printed on the next page*
Words: James Quinn, Music: AR HYD Y NOS
LiscenSing #1975

Benediction:

P: "Would any seed take root if it had not believed
God's promise, when God said,
**'Dears, I will rain. I will help you. I will turn into
warmth and effulgence,**

**I will be the Mother I AM
and let you draw from
My Body**

**and rise, and
rise.'"**

(Thomas Aquinas: If It Had Not Believed)

Peace: *receive the peace of Christ
and share Christ's peace as you depart.*

Evening Hymn: **#561 Joyous Light of Heavenly Glory**

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

P: We have a cause. We need those don't we?
Otherwise the darkness and the cold gets in and
everything starts to ache. Our souls have a purpose , it
is to love; if we do not fulfill our heart's vocation, we
suffer. **C: Amen.**

(Thomas Aquinas: Otherwise the Darkness)

Psalmody: **#232 Let My Prayer Rise Up**
the piano side is Group 1 and the north side Group 2

Silence for reflection

Litany:

P: "Sometimes we think what we are saying about God
is true when in fact it is not."

**C: "It would seem of value to differentiate between
what is God's nature and what is false about
LOVE."**

P: "I have come to learn that the truth never harms or
frightens. I have come to know that God's
compassion and light can never be limited."

**C: "thus any God who could condemn is not a god
at all, but some disturbing image in the mind of
a child, we best ignore, until we can cure the
dark.**

(Thomas Aquinas: God's Nature)

Silence for reflection

Hymn: **#639 When We Are Living**

Scripture Reading: Matthew 25:13-30

A Reading from *The Orthodox Heretic*:

TRANSLATING THE WORD (Adapted from a Buddhist Parable)

IT HAS BEEN said that many years ago there lived a young and gifted woman called Sophia who received a vision in which God spoke to her as a dear friend. In this conversation God asked that Sophia dedicate her life to the task of translating and distributing the Word of God throughout her country. Now, at this time the printing press had only recently been invented, and the only Bibles to be found were written in Latin and kept under lock and key within churches. Sophia was from a poor farming village on the outskirts of the city, so the task seemed impossible. She would have to raise a vast sum of money to purchase the necessary printing equipment, rent a building to house it, and hire scholars with the ability to translate the Latin verses into the country's common tongue.

However, the impossibility of the task did not sway her in the least. After having received her vision, Sophia sold the few items she possessed and left the village to live on the streets of the city, begging for the money that was required and dedicating herself to any work that was available in order to help with the funds.

Raising the money proved to be a long and difficult task, for while there were a few who gave generously, most only gave little, if anything at all. In addition to this, living on the streets involved great personal suffering. But gradually, over the next fifteen years, the money began to accumulate.

Shortly before the plans for the printing press could be set in motion, a dreadful flood devastated a nearby town, destroying many people's homes and livelihood. When the news reached Sophia she gathered up what she had raised and spent it on food for the hungry, material to help rebuild lost homes, and basic provisions for the dispossessed.

Eventually the town began to recover from the natural disaster that had befallen it and so Sophia left and returned to the city in order to start over again, all the while remembering the vision that God had planted deep in her heart.

Many more years passed slowly, extracting their heavy toll on the beautiful Sophia. But there were now many who had been touched by her love and dedication, so although people were poor, the money began to accumulate once again. However, after nine more years, disaster struck again. This time a plague descended upon the city, stealing the lives of thousands and leaving many children without family or support.

By now Sophia was tired and very ill, yet without hesitation she used the money that had been collected to buy medicines for the sick, homes for the orphaned, and land where the dead could be buried safely.

Never once did she forget the vision that God had imparted to her, but the severity of the plague required that she set this sacred call to one side in order to help with the emergency. Only when the shadow of the plague had lifted did she once again take to the streets, driven by her desire to translate the Word of God and distribute it among the people.

Finally, shortly before her death, Sophia was able to gather together the money required for the printing press, the building, and the translators. Although she was by this time, close to death, Sophia lived long enough to see the first Bibles printed and distributed.

It is said to this day that Sophia had actually accomplished her task of translating and distributing the Word of God three times during her life rather than simply once--the first two being more beautiful and radiant than the last.

Hymn: **#572 Now It Is Evening**

Prayers of the Body

We will begin and end our prayers by singing the canon

May be sung in canon. Kristopher E. Lindquist



My spir-it rests in You a-lone, All my whole-ness comes from You.

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