

THE NEW FLORILEGIA: GLAZIER'S MESSAGE OF THE FATHERS

A relatively unknown but once highly useful literary genre, the florilegium, has been restored to the Church in the new series, *The Message of the Fathers*, published by Michael Glazier, Inc. (Wilmington, Del.). The florilegia, collections of excerpts (lit., a gathering of blossoms), were in use from the fourth to the 14th century. The dogmatic florilegia were either excerpts from a single author, such as Augustine or Origen, or collections of excerpts from several writers organized around a dogmatic theme such as the two natures of Christ or doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The spiritual or edifying and the monastic florilegia gathered teachings on the virtues and on the ascetic life. The usefulness of these florilegia for teaching, polemics, and edification is quietly attested by their thousand-year history.

The *Message of the Fathers* series belongs in this tradition and may well prove to be just as useful. Unlike most other anthologies on the writings of the Fathers, this one is organized by topic rather than by author. Thus it is not an introduction to individual patristic thinkers but rather to patristic thought. As such, it is an appeal to tradition. Remarkably, it is not a dogmatic appeal to tradition; for the tradition here is presented in such a way that what is resurrected for the attentive reader is the "livingness" of the tradition, its growth, its unfolding, its diversity, and its dynamic character.

The women and men who have composed these florilegia are themselves scholars in the fields from which they gather the "flowers" of the thought of the Fathers. They are the ones who are responsible for this dynamic rendering of the patristic tradition. Their sensitivity to origins, historical development, changing literary forms, and the impact of political and military events on the patristic thinkers lends to their anthologies a sense of the "livingness" of the tradition.

The policy of the general editor, Thomas Halton, to select editors on an interdisciplinary and interconfessional basis has also contributed to a dynamic rendering of the patristic tradition. In this series the mosaic of patristic thought is constructed by classicists, theologians, and historians; Protestants and Catholics; laity, clerics, and religious. Such a diversity of perspectives is well suited to evoke the diversity in patristic thought.

The combined resources of the classicists, theologians, and historians assure that the patristic tradition will be presented as an expression of the life of the Church which is shaped by the preceding forms of that life

and by new problems which arose through interaction with outside literary and philosophical traditions. The religious/lay/clerical, Catholic/Protestant diversity assures that the thought of the patristic period will be brought to bear on the concerns of the contemporary Church. In this light the diversity could only be enriched and the tradition more faithfully interpreted by including among the editors scholars of the Orthodox churches.

Like the florilegia, the themes around which the excerpts are organized reflect the theological, pastoral, and polemical concerns of the Church that produced them. The concerns are theological in the sense that the depth of theological understanding brought by patristic writers is made accessible through this series to the educated lay reader. Thus topics like Christ Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit, sin and forgiveness, grace and the human condition, and death and resurrection provide a theological patristic education in miniature for the studious lay person. The topics on liturgy reflect a similar theological concern: the volumes on baptism and confirmation, Eucharist, ministry, and the making of the liturgical year introduce the reader to a developing theology of liturgy.

The pastoral concerns are reflected in topics such as divine providence and human suffering, prayer, social thought, and moral teaching. The pastoral concern of the series is evident in those volumes that gather the teachings of the Fathers on subjects of concern to contemporary Christians. Thus the volume on prayer addresses the current interest in spirituality, and the volume on divine providence and human suffering allows the Fathers to make their contribution to the modern discussion. The volume of war and military service and that on social thought bring the resources of the Fathers to bear on topics presently occupying the Catholic Church, specifically those expressed in the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Church and its Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.

It is not surprising, especially in volumes dealing with contemporary concerns, to find a polemical tone. Many of the florilegia were composed to provide arguments from the tradition for one side of a theological dispute. The volume on war and military service fits this genre quite well because of its strong antipacifist tone. The volume on the Church and Mary perhaps belongs in this category because of its unusual format. Since it seeks to show the relationship between *Lumen gentium* and the thought of the Fathers, *LG* provides the framework and the excerpts from the Fathers are set like glosses into its structure. The result is that the patristic teachings on the Church are given as footnotes on the concept of the Church set forth by Vatican II.

There is also a cluster of themes that do not traditionally belong to

either of these three categories. They are represented in the volumes on women in the early Church, on teaching authority, on biblical interpretation, on the gospel and its proclamation, and on preaching the word. These volumes represent new divisions of traditional subject matter, with new emphases and different angles of sight along otherwise familiar terrain. In these five, both the framework that the editors create and the collection of patristic passages which they build into that framework are so creative that a perusal of them by patristic scholars will yield many fresh insights. They leave one intrigued with the historical reconstruction or system of organization of the editor and wishful that there were a corresponding monograph for his or her material.

Even in this panoply of topics there are some notable absences. Among the theological themes a volume on the Trinity, or on the doctrine of God, is missing. Among the pastoral themes, more on spirituality might have been expected. While the volume on prayer is provocative because of its broad definition of the subject, the topic does not allow an exploration of the wealth of patristic thought in the area of spirituality, i.e., the diversity of Eastern and Western spirituality, monastic and ascetic, private and communal. Among themes that have the urgency of contemporaneity—and sometimes a polemical tone—a volume on early Christian political thought would have been invaluable. Both the volumes on social thought and on war and military service depend on an interpretation of the evolving patristic understanding of the relationship between church and state. These two volumes would be more useful if there were a collection of texts on that subject also.

The mystical number 22 for the volumes is inherited from the progenitors of this series. Michael Glazier has already produced two series for the laity, *The Message of the New Testament* in 22 volumes and then *The Message of the Old Testament* in 22 volumes. In 1970 Glazier published a *Patristic Library* in three volumes, on baptism, Mass, and the paschal mysteries. This was the prototype for the series on the Fathers, which adopted the 22-volume format of the two earlier series.

With 11 of the 22 volumes now in print, it is possible to say something about the quality of the series. The requirements of format are minimal, allowing individual editors much freedom in their interpretations of their tasks. A short introduction elucidates the framework into which the excerpts of patristic texts will be placed. The table of contents essentially functions as an outline. Brief identifying notes on individual patristic writers, and—depending on the editor—one or two paragraphs of commentary, are provided for each of the texts selected. Unfortunately, few volumes have a topical index, but all provide a short bibliography for further reading of works in English. An index for the series as a whole

has been promised by the publisher.

With so few formal constraints, the strength of the series lies in the creativity and erudition of the individual editors. It is thus through an assessment of individual volumes that it will be possible to make a judgment on the quality of the series as a whole. A number of individual volumes have already been reviewed in *TS*, but they have not been assessed in terms of their contribution to the overall purpose of the series. This will be my project here.

Although the topics are quite diverse and some are so new that there is not yet a traditional way of organizing the material, the approaches of the editors fall into two major groups, which for convenience might be designated as historical and thematic. The volumes *Ministry* (Joseph T. Lienhard), *The Holy Spirit* (J. Patout Burns and Gerald M. Fagin), *Teaching Authority in the Early Church* (Robert B. Eno), *Social Thought* (Peter C. Phan), and *The Early Fathers on War and Military Service* (Louis C. Swift) are organized to show the historical development of the doctrines relating to these themes. The editors of *The Church* (Thomas Halton), *The Gospel and Its Proclamation* (Robert D. Sider), *Preaching the Word* (Thomas K. Carroll), *Women in the Early Church* (Elizabeth A. Clark), *Prayer* (Agnes Cunningham), and *Divine Providence and Human Suffering* (P. G. and James Walsh) organize their material thematically and provide their own structure, which in many cases is quite instructive.

The value of the historical approach for both studying and teaching the history of doctrines is obvious. However, the degree of sensitivity to shifting nuances, to the interplay of political and theological factors and to ambiguity and diversity, distinguishes good from ordinary history of doctrine. Most of the volumes in this group belong to the former category.

Eno's volume is an excellent example of the quality of the series. He is working with a new and narrowly-focused topic: the *teaching* authority of the Church; the distinctiveness of the formulation comes out of the Lutheran-Catholic dialogues in which he was a participant. Dealing with this topic required a skilful co-ordination of several different doctrines: the theology of revelation, the concept of church office, the nature of church authority, the relationship of ecclesiastical and imperial authority, and the respective roles of the rule of faith, Scripture, and interpretation.

Eno has a thesis on how these interrelate, which though not argued in the introduction, constitutes the framework for his presentation of the texts. He finds the raw materials for a synthesis of the above doctrines in the function of the oral tradition, the development of church offices, and the formulation of the notion of apostolic succession. He sees in Irenaeus' co-ordination of apostolic tradition and episcopal succession

the first synthesis, and in Tertullian the propagation of that synthesis. He follows the expansion of this synthesis through the use of conciliar authority, through Augustine's co-ordination of reason, authority, and Scripture, up to Vincent of Lerins, in whom he finds its classical expression. This thesis is not spelled out; it is presented only in the table of contents. Beyond that, the Fathers are allowed to speak for themselves. The result is a reading of the Fathers which, because it is clearly controlled by a thesis, is remarkably instructive. Lienhard's volume on ministry and the Burns-Fagin volume on the Holy Spirit are excellent exemplars of this manner of presenting patristic texts.

The task of preparing a volume on the social thought of the Fathers was formidable, requiring in part the development of a social theory for the Fathers in order to organize and interpret their teachings on social questions (or the lack thereof). Peter Phan undertook this courageously in his lengthy and very interesting introduction, and this might have provided a framework for his presentation of the patristic material. However, he has chosen to present the texts from the Fathers in chronological order, simply following the format of a patrology. While the collection of texts in itself is interesting, it is not possible to gain a systematic understanding of the topic from a continuous reading, because the texts chosen are so loosely related to the introductory treatment.

Swift's provocative volume on war and military service is a case where the thesis dominates and perhaps distorts the presentation of the texts. Here the patristic authors are not permitted to speak for themselves; their statements are followed by long explanatory sections by the editor qualifying and weakening the impact of the passages cited. The editor's thesis that "pacifist" teachings were modified as the number of Christians in the army increased and as the Empire became more favorable is tenaciously pursued, sometimes at the expense of the texts he cites. For example, while he acknowledges at one point that Tertullian's *On Idolatry* and *On the Crown* were written in the same period, he later assumes that they were written 14 years apart and that Tertullian modified his position over that period of time. Then he speculates that during this period of time soldiers held public offices, and thus Christian soldiers could remain in the army without engaging in killing, and that if they remained in the lower ranks they would not have to sacrifice or execute prisoners. In support of this theory, he cites the *Apostolic Tradition*, chapter 16, which he misinterprets. He reads it as a regulation on the behavior of soldiers, whereas the passage gives regulations on who may be accepted for baptism. The issue is not Christians already in the army, but pagans in the army wishing to convert to Christianity and the conditions under which they may be accepted for baptism.

Although Swift's program is to demonstrate that the early Fathers cannot be appealed to as an unqualified support for pacifism because their condemnation of war must be set alongside of their prayers for the Empire and their use of military metaphors for the Christian life, the book is valuable for its sensitive and nuanced (though not always objective) treatment of the texts. It should prove interesting for sympathetic and unsympathetic readers alike.

Creating order in areas hitherto unmapped was the task for the editors in the second group, whose topics represent new sets of questions to be put to patristic writers. This group includes the volumes on the Church, proclamation of the gospel, preaching, women, prayer, and providence and suffering. The primary criteria for success at such a task are familiarity with the issues in their modern form and knowledge of the ancient sources. The Walshes, Cunningham, Clark, and Halton are all involved in the contemporary discussion of the topic which they take to the court of the Fathers. Carroll and Sider, as classicists, bring to their topics a modern love for language (not unlike that of the ancients) and sensitivity to literary forms and styles. The competence of all the editors in the patristic period requires no comment.

Since as yet no chronological framework has been established for either changes or development in women's roles or in attitudes toward women for the patristic period, Elizabeth Clark has had to chart her own course. It is quite intriguing that she orients herself and her reader on a theological grid. She begins in the first chapter with the Fathers on the creation of woman, on woman's fall into subordination, and on marriage, the institutionalized form of that subordination. Chapters 2 and 3 examine the ways in which women could transcend the limits of their subordination as heroines and martyrs and later as ascetics. Chapter 4 follows the fortunes of women who function at the perilous interface of the public and private spheres as teachers, widows, deaconesses, and pilgrims. The volume ends eloquently with selections from Jerome, Augustine, Chrysostom, and Gregory of Nyssa in praise of women.

The focus on the patristic theology of women makes this volume especially valuable. Unlike books which focus either on individual women or on women's ministries, Clark's volume highlights the theological definitions of women's nature, marriage, and the ascetic life and correlates these with women's roles and women's ministries as exemplified in a fascinating cast of strong female characters. Here again the strength and coherence of the organization of this material can be traced back to a central thesis of the editor. Clark sees the ascetic movement as attractive for both women and men: for women because it meant their emancipation from their subordinate status in marriage, and for men

because it created the possibility of male-female friendship.

Another brilliant and innovative volume in this group is Sider's on the gospel and its proclamation. The moment that has captured this editor's imagination is the moment of impact of the message of the gospel on its audience. To avoid abstracting the content of the message from the drama of interaction between message and audience, he has organized this volume according to intended or designated audiences. Thus the chapter titles read: "The Dynamic of Personal Encounter," "The Message to the Jews," "The Message to the Pagans," "The Message to the Learners" (catechetes), and "The Message to the Faithful." In organizing the material in this way, he has more than any other editor allowed the standpoint and the conceptual categories of the historical period under study to shape his presentation.

This volume is unusually instructive because Sider's running commentary keeps the reader aware of how the interplay between the literary form (disputation, dialogue, defense, exhortation) and the intended audience (Jewish, Christian, and pagan) continually shapes, expands, and to some extent transforms the message. All the while he never loses track of the original or New Testament form of the message as it was delivered to Jews, to pagans, and to fellow Christians.

Perhaps the most difficult and most elusive topic to order, to systematize, or to examine is prayer. Agnes Cunningham has wisely approached the problem by casting her definitional net as widely as possible. She includes the prayer of martyrdom, the exegesis of the Lord's Prayer, poems and hymns addressed to God, journals or confessions as forms of prayer, and instructions on prayer. She has even attempted in the first part of the volume to elucidate a theology of prayer for the Fathers. The distinctions she makes are intriguing and her insights into unique aspects of patristic prayer are helpful, but it is in an embryonic form as terse as an outline; it begs for expansion, explanation, and illustration. No liturgical prayers are included in this volume, perhaps because they will be presented in the volumes on Eucharist and baptism, but they would have also contributed immeasurably to this topic.

The message of the series is the relevance of the Fathers for contemporary theological, ecclesiastical, and spiritual concerns. A certain restrained eagerness in the introductory sections betrays the same deep conviction of each of the editors about the relevance of the patristic period. In a soon-to-appear volume on biblical interpretation, Joseph Trigg makes this conviction explicit with an engaging essay arguing that the most spurned heritage of the Fathers, allegorical exegesis, has much to teach us about the interpretation of Scripture.

The potential success of this series in restoring the Fathers to their

deserved place as respected discussion partners in the ongoing quest to understand and apply the message of the gospel lies in two achievements. One is the creation of a series where the Fathers speak modern English. Earlier series require two stages of acculturation on the part of the reader: one to the thought world and vocabulary of 19th-century English, and the other to the thought world and vocabulary of the Fathers. This series reduces the process to one stage. The other achievement is simply allowing the Fathers to speak for themselves in their own words; as Patout Burns in his volume on the Holy Spirit says, "Doctrinal formulations that have grown from experience and are the fruit of long and painful struggles tend to become frozen as statements dissociated from those experiences and struggles. Primary sources can revive a sense of that struggle and foster a better understanding of how a doctrine or theology develops."

The audiences that this series reaches will be as diverse as those among whom the writings of patristic authors first found their home. Lovers of language, imagery, style, and sermonic eloquence will be attracted to the series. Students and teachers of the patristic period will find the series ideally suited to their needs, as they will the reasonable cost of the paperback versions. Both professional and lay theologians will find in the series much to challenge and stimulate their thinking. Like the florilegia of the period from 400 to 1400, the usefulness of the series lies in its particular manner of presenting the writings of the patristic authors who have created and remolded "tradition." Like the florilegia, this series is valuable for theological instruction, polemics, and edification.

Institute for Antiquity and Christianity
Claremont Graduate School, Calif.

KAREN JO TORJESEN