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Heart to God, Hand to Man

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Although a "sampler" in nature, I believe that this volume will be helpful to seminary courses in parish administration, to pastors serving in parish ministry and in special service and to laity who hold leadership positions within the church. There are parts of this text that could serve well as resource material within a board, committee or task-force retreat setting. The author, having served over some time in parish ministry prior to coming to his current administrative position, has used that rich experiential base well to explore leadership textual and human resources for key practical insights into strengthening leadership in the church.

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Heart to God, Hand to Man

Edward Read

The Canadian Pulpit Series, number 8 (Burlington, Ontario: Welch Publishing Co., Inc., 1989)

130 pp.

Welch Publishing Co. is to be congratulated for initiating and continuing "The Canadian Pulpit Series". Those of us who read sermons have been largely limited to American preachers; Canadian volumes have been rare, and so this series is exceptionally welcome. The series is important for historical and scholarly purposes, of course, but this deliberate attempt to publish "the best of Canadian preaching from a variety of regions and denominations across our country" affords an easy and exciting access to the preaching of our neighbor denominations. Here we can examine the characteristics of and be edified by the preaching of (so far) United Church of Canada (vols. 1 and 3), Presbyterian (vol. 7), Baptist (vols. 2, 4, and 6), and Pentecostal (vol. 5) ministers, and, in this latest volume, a Salvationist minister. Commissioner Read, a native of Nova Scotia, has served the Salvation Army across Canada and in several other countries; he is presently principal of the International College for Officers in London, England.

I found myself at once intrigued by two central emphases in the sermons, which I take to be two central emphases also in Salvationist doctrine, namely, holiness and social ministry. We all know of the latter; it is an eye-opener to discover that holiness (sanctification) holds the position in the Salvation Army that justification holds in Reformation churches! Of course, the saving cross is fundamental (expressed here via the substitutionary atonement image); but Salvationists insist that this propel the believer into the faithful actions of evangelism, social ministry, and holiness of life. Especially holiness. "We are chosen," says Read, speaking of the doctrine of election, "to be holy" (74); the Father's work, he says, quoting

Ephesians 1:4, is the choosing of us in Christ “to be holy and blameless” (49). “Holiness... is a matter of loving and obeying God. We are to be complete in every good work, *doing* God’s will” (120). Holiness is obedience and submission, it is hungering and thirsting for righteousness (“Hunger for Holiness”), it is clean speech and clean living. In a word, it is to be filled with the Spirit. And what is that? “It is to be so yielded to Christ, He by whose cross we are saved, He whom we know as living Lord in our midst, that we offer no resistance to His will. We long to be obedient. We want conformity to Christ. These desires He Himself creates in a Christian and takes steps to meet. His outlook begins to shape our outlook, His attitudes control ours. We are conformed to His holy and loving nature, because He—in a real sense—takes up residence in, and then moves to cleanse and fully possess, the temple He indwells” (43).

The sermons are notable for their biblical and theological content. The doctrines of election (we are chosen to be holy), the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, salvation, and ordained ministry are treated vigorously, forthrightly, and according to the Salvation Army’s *Handbook of Doctrine*. Perhaps predictably, he loves Ephesians and Hebrews, the epistles from which most of his sermon texts are drawn.

Read is a careful craftsman. The sermons are methodically outlined, with main headings and sub-headings printed in capitals and/or in italics, and often numbered as well. They are all in the “topical” mode, and thus he tends to work with brief texts which make his “points”. He quotes a wide spectrum of authors and fellow officers, and uses illustrations economically but effectively.

Some observations, criticisms, and even a quibble are in order. First, the sermons have a “yesterday”, even occasionally a Victorian, aura. The style is formal (e.g., “Such transcendent greatness, such splendid uniqueness and holy otherness, is enough to evoke fear and trembling in the heart of the person who is confronted by it, as was Isaiah...”, p. 10); divine pronouns are capitalized. Above all, while contemporaries like Richard Neuhaus, Virginia Satir, Neil Armstrong, and M.L. King (presumably Jr.) are quoted, most references and illustrations are from the last century or early 1900s. Read’s world seems more informed by Moody, Livingstone, and the brave age of foreign missions than the realities of the present in which the Salvation Army renders such admirable ministries.

Secondly, apart from mention of the Salvation Army *Handbook* there is not an acknowledged reference in the book. The academic requirement of acknowledging sources is, of course, a disruption in preaching, but it is a responsibility owed to the reader when a sermon is published. One can even overlook the lack of a reference when the person quoted is well known (“Wesley said...”; “Luther said...”; “Billy Graham said...”), but there are at least 16 quotations long enough to merit indentation, and at least these deserve accreditation; it is, after all, only a matter of full honesty (which is, I believe, a part of holiness). But there is an editorial responsibility at stake here as well. The Series is meant also to introduce people to the

preaching of other denominations. So here is a chance for me, a Lutheran, to discover the "saints" of the Salvation Army. William Booth and John Wesley I recognize; but who are (were) R. Brimsmead, John Hyde, Harry Ironside, Vance Havner, Sidlow Baxter?

Third, and this is definitely an editorial failing, the language of the book is totally masculine. Well, "humanhood" is used once (68). I believe all responsible publishers have established inclusive language policies some time ago, and after the "Montreal Massacre" the implementation of such a policy is no longer a matter of choice. It is also a considerable disappointment to see a Commissioner of the Salvation Army seemingly oblivious to this issue, when women, from Catherine Booth on, have played so major a role in the Army's work. Yet, except for a couple of instances which tell of women being called to ministry, women appear here only as cooks and housekeepers, and are totally excluded by the language.

In addition, there is one very distressing perpetuation of a hurtful and unfair negative stereotype. "Consider," Read writes, "the intensity of the struggle David Brainerd faced in his efforts to evangelize the North American Indian—a people utterly benighted and bound by superstition" (92). It is true that Brainerd and other early missionaries thought of the Native people in this way, but there is enough literature around today describing the vibrant and sophisticated traditional spirituality of our aboriginal peoples that anyone describing them so is simply ignorant and insulting.

And the quibble, which is also an editorial failing, namely, the irritating lack of consistency in arrangement, style, and numbering of headings and sub-headings. Not a fatal flaw; just irritating.

I hope that this volume, as well as the other volumes, will have a large and ecumenical readership; discovering the preaching of our neighbors can have significant educational, devotional, and reconciling effects.

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The Spoken Word

Sheldon Tostengard

Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989

Fortress Resources for Preaching, 109 pp.

Tostengard, Professor of Pastoral Theology, Ministry, and Homiletics at Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, is concerned about the severe devaluation of the spoken word in our society. Words have become containers of truth, not truth itself. This crisis in language poses a dilemma for the church's preaching, worship, and witness—the oral tasks of an oral community. After describing the problem (ch. 1)