

hymns have been revised. In every case the meaning has been improved, and the poetry in no way impaired.

On the question of appropriate language for God, The Presbyterian Church U.S.A. has taken a middle position. At the 1985 General Assembly, the church reaffirmed the traditional trinitarian language - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - but it also strongly encouraged the use of the many *biblical* metaphors for God, including female metaphors, to enlarge and inform our thinking and to help us better understand the full nature of God.

Jesus called God "Abba - Father." These words express Christ's intimate relationship with God, but they do *not* mean that God is somehow of the male gender. Rather, the words indicate that Jesus proceeded *from* God and was *of* God, as a human child is from and of its parents. And when Jesus says, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father," Jesus is not saying that God looks like Jesus did as a man on earth, but that Jesus came from God, and would go to God, and is God incarnate!

The Lord's prayer begins, "Our Father." That is wonderful language, and a beautiful way in which human beings may address their God. But I hope that you and I will be enabled by God's grace to say these words with a new broader understanding: An understanding that yes, God *is* Father, but that scriptural metaphors *also* tell us that God is Creator, Shepherd, Shield, Parent, Guide, Love, Light, and Mother; and that we who pray together to this infinite God are neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, but all *one* in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28).

#### BOOKS (continued from page 9)

These make this workbook an excellent tool in a variety of Bible Study situations: a neighborhood interdenominational group, a home 'cell' group within a church, and/or for one's private devotional time used with a spiritual journal. *Women in God's Plan of Redemption* is also being used as a class resource at a seminary in the Philippines. There is great potential for this study workbook to be used not only in the U.S. to raise the consciousness of Christians to see the equal status accorded to women by God, but also in other countries and cultures as it is translated into Spanish and other languages.

*"I wanted to write and tell you what a blessing the article "Being a Feminist and Pro-Family" was to me in the Winter '89 Priscilla Papers. As an employee of a large conservative parachurch ministry, it has not been easy to reconcile my new feminist views with some of what is touted as "biblical" and "normative" (or "ideal") by pro-family evangelicals. The article helped to crystalize many of my thoughts on this issue, and steadied me in my growing conviction that you can value men and women equally along with family values, and do both with the guidance and approval of God. Thanks for the help and encouragement - I really needed it!"*

## The Silent Loom

by Deborah L. Menken

*Meditation for Twin Cities CBE Conference: "Weaving a Tapestry of Peace"*

The silent loom. Silent? How can we even think about the cessation of activity at a conference centered on promotion of activity—*weaving* a tapestry of peace? Why, we've all got so much to do for God! In our personal lives, we're striving to fulfill God's plan while working through past hurts. In our homes we're raising little Christian soldiers and modeling the Christ-lifestyle. In our careers we want to impact the world for Christ. In our neighborhoods we want to be salt and light. How can we suggest shutting down the loom at a time like this? And moreover, what about the **big issues** of *world evangelization*, of working for *the equality and dignity of women and men* of all races, ages and classes; what about *encouraging all women and men to fully use their God-given gifts* in ministry? How then can we even consider a silent loom?

Let's just take a look at the example of Jesus. Though he had a very short public ministry of only about 3 1/2 years, yet He single handedly impacted the world more than any other individual in the history of our globe. Jesus *championed the rights of the disprivileged classes* in society; Jesus ministered to the *multitudes*; Jesus *founded a new kingdom* that is still flourishing after 2,000 years. Yet this same Jesus—crusader, revolutionary, public figure, person of action—was also a person of solitude. Jesus *knew* that a silent loom was a necessary characteristic of his private life.

Jesus clearly demonstrated to us the high priority He placed on His times spent alone with God. With *regularity* He *drew away from the crowds, away from the ministry, and away even from the needs* to sequester Himself with His Father in prayer. It was in those times of quietness before God, at a silent loom, that *Jesus learned to see through the eyes of the Master Designer*. It was at a silent loom that *His Father taught Him the spiritual way of weaving His will*. And it was when the loom was silent that *Jesus drew on divine strength to complete the task ahead*. **To be much for God we must be much with God.**

#### AT THE SILENT LOOM WE LEARN TO SEE THE MASTER'S DESIGN

Indeed, we've all got big agendas of important things to get done for God. But we must not get tricked into using the arm of the flesh to accomplish them. It is only when the loom is silent, when we stop our flurry of well-intentioned activity, that we can see things as they really are—through the eyes of the Master Designer.

For though we live in the *world* we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have *divine power* to destroy strongholds. [2 Corinthians 10:3-4]

... be strong in the *Lord* and in the *strength of his*

*might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. . . . Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. [Ephesians 6:10-14,18]*

It is not by might, nor by power, but *only by the Spirit* that we can win the victory for God.

#### HANNAH MOORE

In the late 1700's God raised up a strong evangelical force in Great Britain that was committed to the abolition of slavery. The triumphant trio who eventually brought this to pass were: Charles Simeon, parish pastor of the Old Clappum Borrough, South of the Thames; William Wilberforce, British Parliament Member; and one anointed Bible woman—Hannah Moore. Hannah Moore, a great Methodist preacher, was as fiery as she was devout. In her times of communion with God she adjusted her thinking to the divine perspective. After securing the viewpoint of heaven in her inner closet, she ventured forth to wrestle it out on earth. Hannah Moore's inner journey and fervent quest for God led her to found the Keswick Convention, the precursor of the revivalist movements that swept Great Britain as well as the United States—a movement that was very influential in the history of my denominational fellowship, the Assemblies of God. Her solid balance between her inward pietism and outward activism warranted Hannah Moore the title "The Best Man of Methodism."

After 50 years of zealous prayerful labor on the slave trade issue, the victory was won. In 1807 the British Parliament banned slavery in the United Kingdom, and in 1837 it was banned throughout the whole of the British Empire. Professor Ray Bakke of Northern Baptist Seminary in Lombard, Illinois, offers historical commentary on the Spirit-directed ministry of Wilberforce, Simeon and Hannah Moore. "Those *evangelicals* did social ministry and saved England from a civil war. We fought a civil war because we did not have that kind of evangelical commitment." It was on her journey inward to God that Hannah got God's direction to bring to pass His will in her journey outward to the world. At a silent loom she saw the Master's Design.

#### AT THE SILENT LOOM WE LEARN TO USE THE MASTER'S TECHNIQUE

For every design of God there is a divine method of accomplishing it. In Colossians 1:9-11 Paul prays that "you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all *spiritual* wisdom and understanding." In other words, Paul prays that we will know not only *what* God wants done but *how* He wants to do it supernaturally! When the

loom is silent, God shows us the design and teaches us His technique. We have the truth that can set women and men free. We know the grace of Christ that can break the chains of sin and transform an oppressive society—but how can we get the truth out in such a way that it will set the captives free?

Charles Finney wrote: "The truth is not enough! *Unless the saint pray*, the truth alone will only harden a heart to impenitence." Jesus said the same thing in Matthew 13:13-15

"while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; and you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; for the heart of this people has become dull, . . . they have closed their eyes, lest they should see . . .'"

Why is it that one can win an argument and still lose the war? Why is it that some people, even after they've heard the truth, choose *not* to accept it? Why is it that the same church leaders who preach equality don't always practice it? Why is it that churches with traditions of racial equality reject their roots in favor of modern theories of homogeneity? And how can a religious movement decry efforts to ordain women as "liberal," and in the process orphan its own historical support for the cause? Perhaps Finney is right, that "the truth is not enough!" Paul, in 1 Corinthians 2:13, explains that we must have the Spirit of God so that we can speak, "not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words." Remember Finney's words: "Unless the saint pray, the truth alone will will only harden a heart to impenitence."

Let us never be confused into thinking that the battle can be won on the pages of academic journals, in the halls of the legislature, or on the streets in picket parades, or even in church or denominational board meetings. This battle must be won on our knees before God.

As a group, Christians for Biblical Equality will not settle for an identity of women and men battling in the flesh. We want to be known as a mighty army that advances on its knees. We want to *remain spiritually centered*. Above all, we desire to be *saints* of God, committed to the liberating *Word* of God, living lifestyles consistent with the standards of *holiness* required of us by the Word, and in constant *communion* with our Lord. We are not committed to perpetuating another social movement, as valid as that may be, but we are committed to being salt and light—getting our cues from our Saviour, doing His work on this earth.

If we are going to win this battle of equality for our sisters in the church and in the world, if we're going to earn the rights and welcome for all people of color, if we're going to get the church to embrace members of all classes in our society, these goals are only going to be won in the travail of prayer—when the loom is silent, when the

shuttle stops flying across the woof in a flurry of responsible activity, and when we become still and travail before our God. As we silence ourselves we become more sensitive to God's will and His ways of accomplishing what He's called us to do. We will never be able to *organize* this kind of spiritual revolution. But we can *agonize* it in prayer.

### SOJOURNER TRUTH

(In this section the author is dependent upon a fine article which appeared in *Soujourners Magazine*)

Sojourner Truth was a woman of faith and fire, who devoted herself to the spreading the truth of the gospel and bringing the cause of justice for Blacks and women. Isabella, her given name, was sold away from her slave parents at the age of nine. She spoke no English, but rather the Dutch jargon of her former owner. She was severely mistreated for her lack of comprehension and bore the scars of her beatings all her life. Remembering her mother's teaching about God, Isabella began to pursue Him. She pleaded with God for deliverance from her owner and God did help her. Isabella blossomed so in her new environment that her value as a slave tripled and she was sold to another owner who was a kind man. This man, Mr. Dumont, called her "Bell," his favorite slave, and said she was "better than a man" because "she could do as much as half a dozen others in the fields and still do laundry at night."

As a young woman, Isabella's journey with God deepened. She made herself a "sanctuary" among some willow trees and daily continued the conversation she had begun with God years earlier. She began her quiet time with the Lord's prayer in Dutch, then she recounted sins and suffering, she begged forgiveness, and pled with God to set things straight. She was a most aggressive intercessor, wrestling in prayer for God's will to be accomplished. But she also learned to listen for God: She learned to recognize and act on His voice. In a dramatic encounter with Jesus Christ, Sojourner was transformed by the forgiveness of God and cried out—"Lord, Lord, I can even forgive de white folks! [now]."

With God's direction, and the help of the Quakers, she took to court the white man who had illegally bought her five-year-old son—and won! In 1828 such a legal victory was unheard of!

Sojourner Truth had a low voice that rang out when she sang and shook the gates of heaven when she preached. She was the possessor of both a warm heart and a tongue of fire; she crusaded for abolition and suffrage for women. She became a leader in the resistance movement against raiders from Maryland who frequently crossed into the Washington D.C. slums and kidnapped Black children. Sojourner took on Jim Crow and worked for equal street-car riding privileges for Blacks. She took up the cause of temperance and child labor, she spoke against capital punishment, and on behalf of equal pay for equal work

long before the concept became a political issue.

"She talked with authors and abolitionists, preachers and presidents. But most of all, she talked with God, with whom she had an unending conversation that began when she was a child and who was her source of guidance on every step of her journey."

When her loom was silent God showed Sojourner Truth how to accomplish His will.

### AT THE SILENT LOOM WE LEARN TO DRAW ON THE MASTER'S STRENGTH

We've come quite far in our work for God. And yet we know there's still a long way to go. But we cannot grow weary in well doing. The author of Hebrews exhorts us [10:36] "You have need of *endurance*, so that when you have *done* the will of God, you may receive what was promised." We may be on the very threshold of seeing our dreams become reality. We cannot let ourselves be found in the place described by King Hezekiah in 2 Kings 19:3 (Isaiah 37:3):

This is a day of distress and rebuke and disgrace, as when children come to the point of birth and there is no strength to deliver them.

We can all relate to the sorrow of a mother, who, after carrying a child for nine months when the day of her delivery comes, has no more strength to deliver. We may be nearing that point in history right now. We've conceived a vision from God, obedient to God's instructions we've carried it nearly full-term. But will there be strength left for travail so that the birth can be accomplished?

Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord says [66:9-11]

"Who has ever heard of such a thing  
[As a woman giving birth without labor]?  
Who has ever seen such things  
[As delivery without pain]?"

Can a country be born in a day  
Or a nation be brought forth in a moment?  
Do I bring to the moment of birth  
And not give delivery?" says your God.  
"Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her,  
All you who love her;  
Rejoice greatly with her,  
All you who mourn over her.

For you will nurse and be satisfied . . .!"

How can we assure that we will have strength for the travail? In the language of Isaiah 64:7, we must *stir ourselves up in prayer and take hold of God at the silent loom.*

### AMY CARMICHAEL

Amy Carmichael was a young woman from Ireland who went all alone as a missionary to India in 1895. There she helped to rescue the Temple children, like Precna, who had been sold by their impoverished parents into virtual slavery and prostitution to the Hindu priests. In feeding her thousand orphans she told *only the Lord* of her financial needs. She literally *prayed in every*

provision. Imagine the enormous strength she needed every day to carry out her God-ordained ministry.

Amy was "in it for the long haul"—she remained in India without a furlough for 56 years, until she went to be with the Lord in 1951. Even during her final twenty years of her life, though Amy was bedridden the whole duration, she continued to draw divine strength to continue her work. She prayed, "[Lord,] make me to climb, even when I lie down." Her room was called "The Room of Peace." She had prayed for God's strength, that He would help her hide the signs of pain so no one coming into her room would feel sad. She knew she could have as vital a ministry from her bed, for she had said, "God never sets His servants aside like cracked china." And indeed, she continued her powerful ministry drawing strength at a silent loom until she went to be with her Lord.

#### CONCLUSION:

We too must find the balance between the inner life and the outer work. Our social concern must be wedded to a profound pietism. It is not a matter of either/or. Some of us may excel at one branch more than the other, but all of us are called to cultivate both. This is interactive spirituality.

We have a tradition of spiritual revolutionaries—women of intense reconstructionistic convictions who were devout in their inner lives. The pages of history bear records of female champions of the faith who were called to transform their society—who knew how to balance social activity and inner solitude. These valiant women were shakers and movers. But their impetus came from a divine commission energized to success through prayer.

If we concentrate on the depth of our inner lives, then God will determine the commensurate breadth of our outer lives.

Finally, I'd like to share the story of someone from our time in history. In 1982, my brother David married Beverly. She's been the greatest addition the Menken family has ever experienced. I had known Bev in high school where I had been her distant admirer, and now, the closer we got, the better she looked. Beverly graduated from the University of Minnesota twice, in 1976 with a B.S. in Bio-chemistry with honors and in 1979 with a Master's in Nutrition. She worked as a research scientist and has published nineteen articles in scientific journals.

Besides imminent success in her career, Beverly excelled at every avocation she put her hands to. Every year she had a big garden and put up her own vegetables. She sewed, crocheted, tatted, painted in water color and oil, and was an expert photographer, a fine musician and knitted beautifully.

Beverly bought a knitting machine and developed great proficiency in the art, even publishing two books of designs which have sold very well. Her knitting machine—shall we call it her loom—was the joy of her life. Her loom was nearly constantly in motion. Her many fulfilling activities, hobbies and outings crowded out much time for an inner journey. Life was so full of such satisfy-

ing pursuits, wholesome recreation, good clean fun, career, hobbies, family. The shuttle was unceasingly streaking up and down the loom. Everything was coming up roses, business was booming, the loom was in high gear . . . that is, until June of 1987.

Beverly began getting winded on their daily four-mile hikes around Lake Phalen. She was also experiencing some abdominal discomfort and had trouble sleeping at nights. She checked into the hospital on suspicion of a gall bladder problem. The doctors took her gall bladder but also found a badly diseased liver. With nothing to offer in such a situation, they sewed her up again and remained entirely baffled as to the cause. Beverly went downhill daily, her petite, little waist swelled up as if she were in the last stages of pregnancy. Fluid was collecting throughout her body and discomfort and joint pain were increasing. Over a month later, the doctors identified her problem as Lupus and began chemotherapy.

These were heavy, dark days for us all. David spent days and days at her bedside, and we family members took turns watching vigil at her side. Minc was the afternoon shift, from around 2 p.m. to supper. Small talk was exhausted over those many hours, and eventually we began to talk about more serious things. In my heart I prayed for Bev's healing, but my foremost petition was for an assurance of her salvation.

With David working in Rochester and coming home a couple times a week to see Bev, he asked me to house sit on week-nights for a while. I'll never forget walking through the dark house each night—their brand new dream house. There stood a 2 1/2 car garage stocked with everything necessary to keep up a home à la twentieth century standards. There hung two sets of cross-country skis and a ten-speed bicycle-built-for-two. I walked through the dark kitchen and dining room, past the living room and listened to their beautiful grandfather's clock chime out the long lonely hours. I saw the little red lights on the state of the art electronic entertainment systems waiting to be set into motion by the remote controls. I passed the computer room, chock full of every kind of hard- and software imaginable. And then I approached Bev's knitting room. There were shelves and shelves of craft books, a closet full of hobby projects, spools and skeins of yarn, and there sat her pride and joy knitting machine, all alone, motionless: The loom was silent!

All of these wonderful toys which had brought so much joy to these double-income-no-children yuppies, these high tech gadgets which occupied so many hours—seemed so empty and useless now. In fact, they appeared as they truly are—enormous distractions to the things that really matter in life—the eternal verities.

Early in Beverly's hospitalization, she turned down my offer to pray, but as time went on she welcomed prayer. An increasing percentage of our time together was spent discussing more and more important things. The hospital television set which so disinterested Beverly, was replaced with a Walkman radio, and Beverly enjoyed

hours of religious broadcasting tuned to KTIS.

After a season of what the doctors called, "industrial strength" chemotherapy, Beverly took a turn for the better. The Lupus was in remission, there was even talk of sending her home. One Sunday afternoon, my parents and I were in to see Beverly. She was reflecting over the past weeks. Beverly shared her fears and *how she had turned to God*. "This kind of a trial is not anything I would wish on anyone" she said, "But it has been good for me. I have drawn close to God though this ordeal." At the suggestion of Beverly's pastor, Pastor Linda Pederson of Faith Lutheran, Beverly planned to write the story of her spiritual pilgrimage through these times and share it with the congregation after her recovery.

Beverly never had the opportunity to write her testimony. A few days later things worsened, she returned to Intensive Care and experienced one crisis after another, and then she went to be with her Lord. Now I am sharing with you, the message I feel Beverly would want you to hear.

"It is only when the loom is silent that the Lord can deal with the weaver. It is only when we stop our preoccupations with all of our temporal involvements—as wholesome as they may be—that we can be eternally aligned with our Master Designer. Be careful not to wait too long. Health, success, and prosperity have such a way of blinding us from the spiritual world. Learn the spiritual discipline of the silent loom; each day draw near to God. What He has to offer cannot be found in any other pursuit. Call on the Lord while He may be found."

Let us silence our looms right now - wherever we are - and talk to the Lord individually. As God's agents of reconciliation, let us covenant to be an army of liberation that advances on its knees.

### **Book Review: *A Voice of Her Own* by Nancy M. Tischler, Zondervan, 1987.**

By Lorraine Eitel *On the day preceding the July 20-23 conference, Lorraine Eitel will teach a course on women authors. One graduate credit will be available from Bethel College.*

Why, over the years, haven't women produced more in the arts — specifically in literature? At the turn of the century, Virginia Woolf began the answer to that important question by saying a woman could and would write given a "room of her own." This is the leisure, privacy, and financial support needed to encourage creativity that has traditionally been withheld from women either intentionally or because of the demands of other roles.

Nancy M. Tischler in *A Voice of Her Own* (Zondervan, 1987) continues the discussion, adding insight specifically for Christians. She shows how women have overcome obstacles in history to be able to demonstrate the same quality of creativity as men. But she also delves a bit into the theory of art, showing that

women artists/ writers may have been excluded from the literary canon because the standards of excellence for acceptance may be male standards.

Tischler's book is an intellectual history, acquainting the reader with important women authors throughout history. She also introduces her reader to several important female literary characters.

Her book raises questions for the thoughtful Christian reader. Has the church been as restrictive and narrow as the rest of society? Have we not allowed women to be good stewards of their gifts because we were too conformed to this world?

I especially liked her chapter "Portrait of the Artist as Women" in which she discloses historical attitudes toward women as creators. Her chapter "So, What's New? and What's Good?" seemed off-focus and unnecessary.

This is a readable, gentle book. It will offend no one. It will be of special interest to people who are just beginning to read literature by or about women.

Why haven't women created as much as men? Or have they? Let's continue to discuss these and all the related questions — until they're no longer necessary.

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