

God's nearness, involvement with the world, and commitment to humanity.¹⁹ She is portrayed as a bridge between humanity and a transcendent God, between things secular and things divine.²⁰ One finds God by finding wisdom, because wisdom ultimately comes from and belongs to God.

End Notes

1. Wisdom is also personified as a woman in Job 28 and in the Apocrypha (Sirach 24, Wisdom 6-9, Baruch 3-4, 1 Enoch 42 and 2 Enoch 30).
2. For other personifications in the Old Testament, see Psalms 45:4; 85:10; 107:42; Isaiah 51:9; Job 11:14.
3. Claudia Camp, *WISDOM AND THE FEMININE IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1985), 81.
4. Genesis 30:1, 6, 8, 11, 13, 18, 20, 23; 1 Samuel 1:11; 22-28; Proverbs 31.
5. Proverbs 14:1; 24:3-4; 31; 5:15-29.
6. Proverbs 2:11; 4:6; 6:22; 7:5.
7. Camp, 137; Pr 9:6.
8. Judges 13:22-23; 1 Samuel 24; 1 Kings 1:17-21, 21:7; Esther 5:15; 6:13; Daniel 5:10-12; Job 2:9; Proverbs 31:26.
9. 2 Samuel 14 and 20, 2 Kings 4:8-10; 8:1-6.
10. Proverbs 8:18-21, 32-36; 22:22-23; 23:10-11; 2:20-22.
11. Jeremiah 17:12; 31:12; Ezekiel 17:23.
12. 2 Samuel 22:31; Psalms 37:5; 86:11; Isaiah 30:21; 35:8.
13. Proverbs 3:18, 22; 4:13, 22f; 8:35.
14. Proverbs 1:28; 8:17; 8:35-36 and Songs 3:1-4, 11; 5:2-8; 6:1-3; 8:1; 1:7-8; 2:8-9; 4:16-5:1; 8:5-6; 13-14.
15. Proverbs 8:17; 4:6-9; 7:4.
16. Nicolas J. Tromp, "Wisdom and the Canticle," 94, quoted by Camp, 110.
17. Proverbs 1:24-28; Hosea 2:7-13.
18. Dermot Cox, *PROVERBS: WITH AN INTRODUCTION TO SAPIENTIAL BOOKS* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1982), 76.
19. Proverbs 4:4-8.
20. Sirach 14, 15, 51; Wisdom 6, 8.

THE BUTTERFLY QUILT

Doris Kramer

Ruth Hess felt a call from God. She had attended her monthly meeting of fellow quilters and at the end of their business agenda, one woman suggested that someone could go and teach quiltmaking to the women in the Kingston, Ontario, Prison for Women. God spoke to Ruth in that moment.

Ruth got permission to go into the prison and soon had a weekly class of about 12 women. They appliqued blocks of colorful butterflies. When the blocks were completed, Ruth sewed them together into a beautiful quilt top.

The next step was to find someone to quilt it so it could be auctioned to raise money for further projects. Ruth approached Leeta Horset, president of the Women's Missionary and Service Commission at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church. Leeta immediately agreed. The WMSC would be honored to complete this special quilt.

John Hess, husband of Ruth and former chaplain to women prisoners, suggested that it would be nice if some of the quilters could meet the inmates who had made the blocks.

On November 12, 1995, several carloads of men and women from the congregation took the 175-mile trip to Kingston. Those who went into the prison had to be cleared with the authorities two weeks prior to going.

Ruth met 10 of us, including one young man among all these women. We were ushered through two locked doors and up two flights of stairs to the room used by the quilt and craft makers. We were filled with excitement, not knowing what to expect.

Our way had been well prepared by Ruth's prayers. She did not know how the women inmates would act socially with these "good" Mennonite women.

What happened next is hard to explain. Our usually reserved WMSC women graciously shook hands and greeted the inmates. The women prisoners greeted us warmly. I felt an unusual kinship between us.

Ruth had prepared a snack for our visit. The completed butterfly quilt was on display. Making this quilt carried much symbolism for us all. These imprisoned women, bound in their cocoons, were released in a measure to become beautiful butterflies by someone taking an interest in them, helping them develop some skills and a sense of self-worth. To Ruth Hess, the butterfly symbolizes freedom: "women in prison expressing their longing for it, and women from St. Jacobs leaving the familiar to step into the world of women in prison."

The women had prepared a thank-you card signed by each of them. An elderly woman, a so-called lifer who is said to have murdered her husband, presented the card to Lovina Weber, our new WMSC president. They spontaneously embraced and kissed each other.

The women had brought from their cells some of the crafts they had been working on. Two had made full quilts; others showed pillow tops and other items. The interchange between these two sets of women seemed natural and comfortable. The time passed far too quickly.

We left, going out into the world free; the other women stayed behind, confined to their cells.

We cannot know everything that happened that day. Ruth told us how apprehensive she had been. What if none of the prisoners showed up?

How would the church women accept women who had committed crimes?

The meeting surpassed all her expectations, and she wanted to steal away for a few minutes with John to pray and thank God for all that had happened. John remarked that what our group had done that day was indescribable. He felt our acceptance of these women had raised their self-esteem and put them on a "high" that will last for many days.

Something happened to us St. Jacobs women, too. We were humbled to realize that because of our Christian upbringing, we have been spared the pain experienced by many women. We were moved by the loving response of these women to us. We felt compassion, not judgment. How we were changed is still to be seen.

Doris Kramer is a retired social worker and a member of St. Jacobs Mennonite Church. She served on the General WMSC Executive Committee in the 1960's. This article is reprinted, by permission, from the June 1996 issue of WMSC Voice.