

The Book of Love

Commentary by Peter Rollins

This tale attempts to express the central message of Christ, namely love. All of the complex ideas, theories, laws, and creeds that are generated in the attempt to come to terms with one's faith can be boiled down to this one word and arise from it. It is this that we see being witnessed to when Jesus is asked about the most important law. In response, he replies, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37).

Yet we must not forget that while faith is expressed in love, it is from a genuine desire to understand what this word concretely means at any given time that people develop various theories, laws, and creeds. The problem arises only when these provisional structures become unyielding.

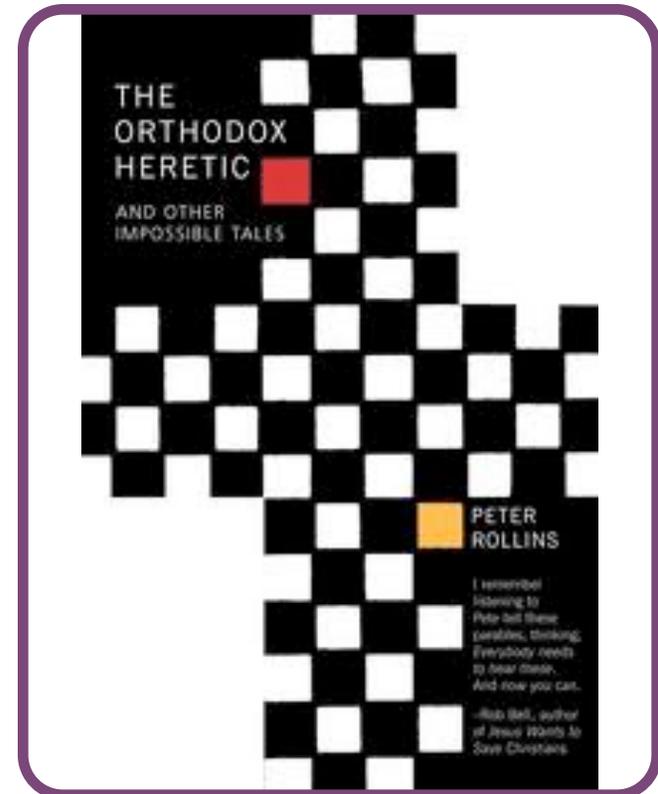
It is love that should motivate us to create political solutions regarding environmental issues, social injustice, and ethical problems. But it is also love that should motivate us to question all existing political solutions, testing whether they really do deliver freedom and liberation. For the law is made for people; people are not made for the law. Without love political and ethical systems can become oppressive and unyielding. Without love we can become dogmatic legalists following holy books, sacred rites, and religious creeds without regard for their true purpose. This story simply seeks to remind us that the source of all our attempts to work out what must be done in the world should be love. It is love that calls us to build, and it is love that demands we tear down. It is love that calls the priest to existence and it is love that calls the prophet to speak.

("The Orthodox Heretic" pages 165-7)

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**

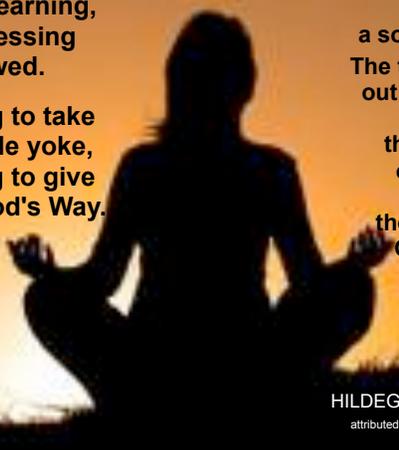
Lenten Evening Prayer Parables

“**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.



The soul is
kissed by God in its
innermost regions.
With interior yearning,
grace and blessing
are bestowed.

It is a yearning to take
on God's gentle yoke,
It is a yearning to give
one's self to God's Way.

The marvels of God
are not brought forth
from one's self.
Rather, it is more like
a chord,
a sound that is played.
The tone does not come
out of the chord itself,
but rather,
through the touch
of the Musician.
I am, of course,
the lyre and harp of
God's kindness.

HILDEGARD OF BINGEN,
attributed, *Soul Weavings*

Benediction:

P: "We cannot live in a world that is interpreted for us by others. An interpreted world is not a hope. Part of the terror is to take back our own listening. To use our own voice. To see our own light"

“ The soul is kissed by God in its innermost regions.”

“ Love abounds in all things. So, sing the Love of God”

Amen

(Hildegard of Bingen 1098-1179)

Peace:

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



O Holy Spirit Root of Life

**O Holy Wisdom,
Soaring Power,
encompass us with wings
unfurled,
and carry us, encircling all,
above,
below,
and through the world.**

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)

Hymn: **#644 Although I Speak With Angel's Tongue**

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.

Music & text © 2001, 2005 KEL. www.KELmusic.com

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: **#720 We Are Called**

Invocation:

P: “O God, grant that we may be aflame with you, Spirit of Love and walk as your children.

C: O Sophia, Spirit of Wisdom, who speaks the language of God in our hearts, speak to us now; and infuse us with the courage to listen.”

(Hildegard of Bingen 1098-1179)

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

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

P: Fire of the Spirit, life of the lives of creatures, spiral of sanctity, bond of all natures, glow of charity, lights of clarity, taste of sweetness to the fallen, be with us and hear us. Composer of all things, joy in the glory, strong honour, be with us and hear us.

C: Amen.

(Hildegard of Bingen 1098-1179)

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

Silence for reflection

Litany:

P: The Holy Spirit animates all, moves all, roots all, forgives all, cleanses all, erases all our past mistakes, and then puts medicine on our wounds.

C: We praise this Spirit of incandescence for awakening and reawakening all creation.

P: Doctor of the desperate, Healer of everyone broken past hope, Medicine for all wounds, Fire of love, Joy of hearts, fragrant Strength, sparkling Fountain, Protector, Penetrator,

C: in You we contemplate how God goes looking for those who are lost and those who are at odds with God. Break our chains!

P: You bring people together. You curl clouds, whirl winds, send rain on rocks, sing in creeks, and turn the lush earth green. You teach those who listen, breathing joy and wisdom into them.

C: We praise You for these gifts, Light-giver, Sound of joy, Wonder of being alive, Hope of every person, and our strongest Good.

(Hildegard of Bingen 1098-1179)

Silence for reflection

Hymn: **#512 Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil**

Scripture Reading: Matthew 22:34-40

A Reading from *The Orthodox Heretic: THE BOOK OF LOVE*

THE BOOK OF LOVE

THERE IS AN ANCIENT LEGEND THAT SPEAKS OF GOD'S STRUGGLE TO GUIDE THE DESTINY OF HUMANITY. It is said that God had grown tired of the way that mortals constantly lose their way, creating disasters as they go. So he sent out his angelic messengers to gather together the timeless wisdom contained in the world and to place this wisdom into a multitude of books that would be housed in a great library – a library that mortals could use in order to work out how they should live and act in the world.

When after many millennia, the great task was completed, the colossal library stood proudly in one of the world's great cultural capitals, dominating the skyline. However, this huge building contained too many books for any individual to read. It was all but impossible to reach for the majority of people, and the library's sheer size was enough to put anyone off even entering it. So God demanded that his couriers compress the essential wisdom into a single encyclopedic book.

Once completed, this single work was widely circulated, but the manuscript was so huge that one could hardly lift it, let alone read it or put what it said into practice. So yet again God put his couriers to work, crafting a booklet with all the essential information. But the people were lazy and there were many who could not read, so the booklet was refined into a single word and the word was sent on the lips and life of a messenger.

And the word?

It was love.

Peter Rollins commentary on this parable is provided on the back of the bulletin.