

of hope and judgement, of suffering and loss, of evil and forgiveness, and of dying and rising, he has now woven together in this book, threaded through with apt words of poets and theologians whom he uses to put that unforgettable event into a larger context.

Johnston McKay does not try to 'interpret' what happened on September 11 or to impose a meaning on it. Instead, he allows it, and the people he met there after it, and the stark and awful images he encountered, to speak for themselves, pointing only to what Scripture has to say about fear and hope, the human and the demonic, evil and redemption, in this or any time.

He quotes a journalist who said to him, 'The story of September 11 is a transitory one. It is there now, but it will change in time. It will mean something else to future generations'. No doubt some will tell and retell it to further their own narrow agenda. Here it is told from the standpoint of faith, the difficult faith that finds in the worst of settings glimpses of hope. In a book that will nourish and encourage long after the day that caused it to be written.

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Margaret Forrester, *Touch and Go*, Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 2002. pp. 129, £7.99, ISBN 0 7152 0800 4.

It used to be fashionable to publish and collect volumes of sermons. The best of them were models of what good preaching should be, and they often reached and nourished readers far beyond the congregations to whom they were first delivered.

The Saint Andrew Press series *On Reflection*, edited by Duncan Forrester, has revived that old practice in a succession of excellent collections from Scottish ministers of this generation. The latest, from Margaret Forrester, has twenty sermons, some responding to particular events of recent years, others to seasons of the Christian Year, and each reflecting the Lectionary Readings for the occasion. Sometimes they are reassuring, sometimes uncomfortably challenging, but

consistently they point away from the preacher to the Word, and to the place and time to which they speak.

One, for a November Sunday in 1999, in the week when Diana's death preoccupied the nation but when the Referendum on Devolution confronted all Scotland with an unrepeatable historic choice, is a memorable reflection on destiny and responsibility. Later, another, centring on the Opening of the Scottish Parliament, uses a wittily imagined message from St. Andrew to help think about the prospect for a new Scotland. Margaret Forrester has a gift for story-telling, and the narrative style that clearly comes naturally to her might encourage those of us less gifted to explore its imaginative possibilities. She has a knack too for the memorable phrase: 'Life with Christ is not just picnics in Galilee; it is letting Jesus go, and taking responsibility'... 'Destiny is not chance. Destiny may be all the potential we are born with and born into, but essentially destiny is to do with choice...'

Although some of these sermons were first heard in other congregations and in other countries, it is her own St. Michael's in Edinburgh who Sunday by Sunday are the hearers without whom preaching cannot happen, nor in any real sense have context or meaning. Since there have to be both speaking and listening before the Word can be received and lived, these come from a congregation as well as from its minister, and their life, witness and questionings speak through it eloquently and encouragingly.

This book can be read in various ways. It offers examples of what good preaching should be – concise, plain, evangelical and Biblical. It is also an exploration in how to do theology – how to relate doctrine and life, tradition and the contemporary world, in a critical conversation. And perhaps, too, this might be a nourishing book of personal devotion – to mull over and think new thoughts. As ever, this collection of sermons will touch new hearers.

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