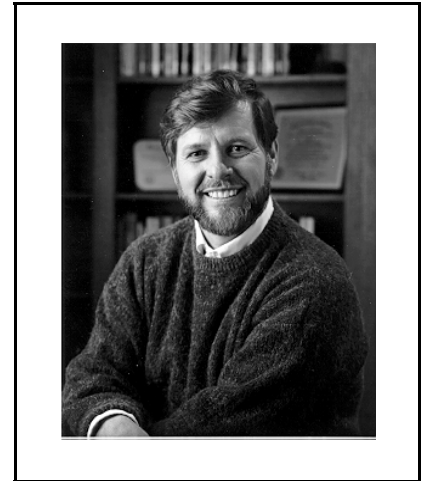


Growing Edges

September 1998

A decade-long project is now completed—*Streams of Living Water*. Some ten years ago the dream was given—I think from the heart of God—of various “streams” of Christian life and faith flowing into a mighty river of the Spirit: The Contemplative Stream, or the prayer-filled life; The Holiness Stream, or the virtuous life; The Charismatic Stream, or the Spirit-empowered life; The Social Justice Stream, or the compassionate life; The Evangelical Stream, or the Word-centered life; and The Incarnational Stream, or the sacramental life.

Soon we assembled a little team of speakers and leaders to discuss, pray through, and work together for the realization of such a future. For several years I tried hard to get several others on our little team to commit to writing this vision of a “Mississippi of the Spirit” that we were working on. But, no one took up the challenge. Finally, about three years ago, the team spoke into me with one voice, “This is a task you must do! Not us, YOU!” I took them at their word, believing they had rightly discerned the mind of the Lord. Two years of extensive research and one year of intensive writing followed. *Streams* began as a 96 page primer and ended up as a 400+ page major effort. But at long last the task is done and is now available to the public.



Laying a Foundation

I am exceedingly pleased with the results—more pleased than I ever thought I would be, or could be. Hopefully it has laid the foundation for a balanced vision of Christian life and faith. I have taken quite seriously the history of the Church—all the Church—and have sought to translate that reality into the contemporary scene. By bringing the insights of an Abba Anthony or a Phoebe Palmer or a William Seymour to bear upon our day and our time, we enter a deeper realization of the “great cloud of witnesses” who are urging us on in our pilgrim journey (Heb. 12:1). I feel especially happy with a 25-page Appendix, “Critical Turning Points in Church History.” This, I believe, will give people a sense of the grand sweep of history, which will provide a grid through which to view the specific details of the individual chapters.

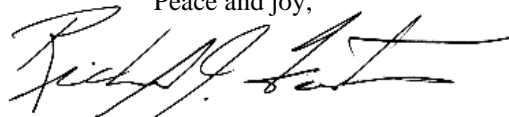
This larger perspective is especially critical today when most Christians think almost exclusively in terms of “the early church—the book of Acts—and us!” Perhaps for a few people there is a little blip at the Reformation, but that is about it. And we seem totally oblivious to the arrogance of such a posture—as if no one since the early Christians have tried to be faithful to God until we came around! Rather it is a genuine act of humility to realize that we can learn from others who have gone before us. To be sure, they made mistakes, but even so they have much to teach us.

“Insight into the Christian Experience”

But, I wondered, “Will others find these stories as helpful and as meaningful as I have?” Or will they think, “Another age, another culture—they have nothing that could possibly be of interest to me!” Hence soon after I turned in the manuscript, I was genuinely encouraged by the immediate response of Mr. Mark Chimsky, Executive Editor of HarperSanFrancisco, who wrote, “Congratulations on finishing STREAMS OF LIVING WATER! I am currently reading it, and I am astonished by its power to bring to life Jesus and his disciples and to show us how faith can be lived fully and not just practiced ‘at arms length.’ As a Jew I am grateful to you for giving me such insight into the Christian experience.”

May you too find “insight into the Christian experience” in its pages.

Peace and joy,

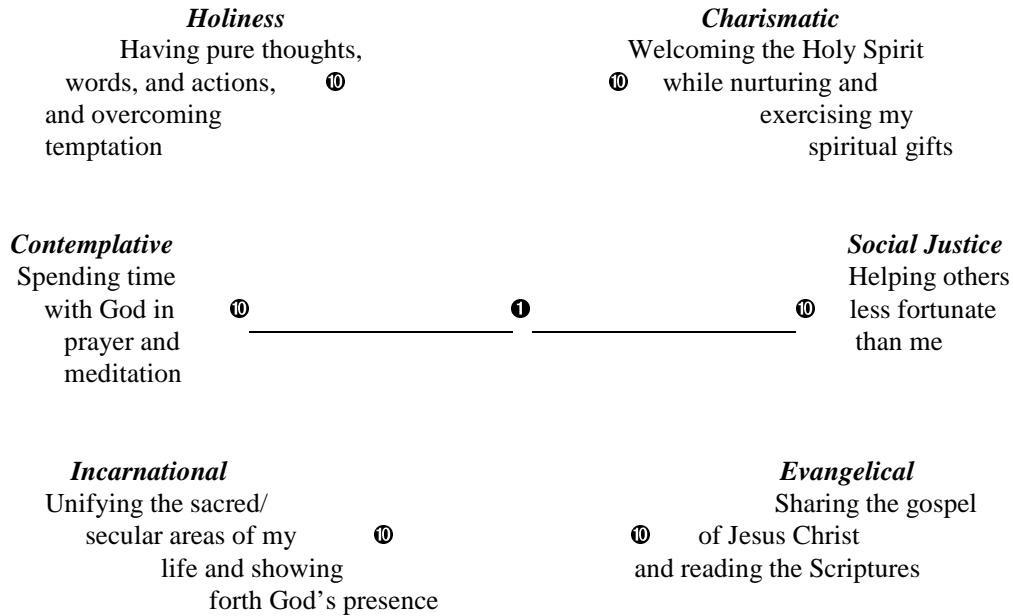


Richard J. Foster

Growing Together

The Bump, Bump Test

Looking at the six areas below, which Tradition or Stream are you strong in? Which comes the most naturally? Which is your weakest? Take a few moments, and on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being the least proficient) estimate where you are in each area on the wheel spokes below, place dots at those points, and connect the dots with an arched line.



After connecting the dots, ask yourself the following question: Does my “tire” go bump, bump?

Now, take a closer look at those areas that have made your “tire” go flat, areas where you gave yourself a score of, say, five or less. As you prayerfully consider these Streams, see if you begin to be drawn toward one of them, thinking, “This is an area of life I really want to explore.” Do not jump too quickly. Wait patiently until there is a stirring of the heart, a “divine nudging,” a “holy desiring.” Don’t worry if the rising desire is accompanied with certain hesitations and fears. That is understandable. Just keep your focus on the growing “desire of your heart.” This then becomes your “special intention,” the Stream or area to which you will want to give attention for the next months, say until Easter.

Next, write down three ways that you can begin exploring this Tradition. These need to be actions that are personal, reflecting how **you** will explore the Stream, not someone else. Also, make the actions attainable. Many people get spiritual indigestion because they try to bite off more than they can chew. Finally, enjoy your growth experience as you venture out into new territory.

MORE Growing Together

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An annual, tax deductible gift of \$15.00 is welcome to help cover publishing expenses. If you cannot help, we understand. Some will be able to give more and in this way the unity of the Body of Christ will be maintained.

Selections from Richard Foster's new book **Streams of Living Water**

A Mighty River of the Spirit

Today a mighty river of the Spirit is bursting forth from the hearts of women and men, boys and girls. It is a deep river of divine intimacy, a powerful river of holy living, a dancing river of jubilation in the Spirit, and a broad river of unconditional love for all peoples. As Jesus says, "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38).

The astonishing new reality in this mighty flow of the Spirit is how sovereignly God is bringing together streams of life that have been isolated from one another for a very long time. This isolation is completely understandable from a historical perspective. Over the centuries some precious teaching or vital experience is neglected until, at the appropriate moment, a person or movement arises to correct the omission. Numbers of people come under the renewed teaching, but soon vested interests and a host of other factors come into play, producing resistance to the renewal, and the new movement is denounced. In time it forms its own structures and community life, often in isolation from other Christian communities.

This phenomenon has been repeated many times through the centuries. The result is that various streams of life—good streams, important streams—have been cut off from the rest of the Christian community, depriving us all of a balanced vision of life and faith.

But today our sovereign God is drawing many streams together that heretofore have been separated from one another. It is a little like the Mississippi River, which gains strength and volume as the Ohio and the Missouri and many other rivers flow into it. So in our day God is bringing together a mighty "Mississippi of the Spirit."

Dimensions of the Spiritual Life

In this book I have tried to name these great Traditions—streams of spiritual life if you will—and to note significant figures in each. . . . In reality these different Traditions describe various dimensions of the spiritual life. We find their emphasis throughout the teaching of Scripture—from the Pentateuch to the prophets, from the wisdom literature to the Gospels, from the Epistles to the Apocalypse. And many are the lives that illustrate these themes: Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Moses, Ruth, David, Hannah, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Mary, Peter, Elizabeth, Paul, Tabitha, Lydia, John . . . the list could go on and on.

But no one models these dimensions of the spiritual life more fully than Jesus Christ. If we want to see this

river of life in its most complete form, it is to Jesus that we must turn.

The Divine Paradigm

As Jesus walked this earth, living and working among all kinds and classes of people, he gave us the divine paradigm for conjugating all the verbs of our living. Too often in our concern to make doctrinal points we rush to expound upon Jesus' death, and in so doing we neglect Jesus' life. This is a great loss. Attention to Jesus in his living gives us important clues for our living.

Jesus lived in this broken, painful world, learning obedience through the things that he suffered, tempted in all the ways we are, and yet remaining without sin (Heb. 5:8, 4:15). We are, to be sure, reconciled to God by Jesus' death, but even more, we are "saved" by his life (Rom. 5:10)—*saved* in the sense of entering into his eternal kind of life, not just in some distant heaven but right now in the midst of our broken and sorrowful world. When we carefully consider how Jesus lived while among us in the flesh, we learn how we are to live—truly *live*—empowered by him who is with us always even to the end of the age. We then begin an intentional *imitatio Christi*, imitation of Christ, not in some slavish or literal fashion but by catching the spirit and power in which he lived and by learning to walk "in his steps" (1 Pet. 2:21).

In this sense we can truly speak of the primacy of the Gospels, for in them we see Jesus living and moving among human beings, displaying perfect unity with the will of the Father. And we are taught to do the same, taking on the nature of Christlikeness—sharing Jesus' vision, love, hope, feelings, and habits. (This is followed by a chapter on how Jesus effectively models the RENOVARÉ traditions for us.)

Imitatio

When Jesus walked across the pages of human history, people—astonished by what he did and what he said—exclaimed, "Never has anyone spoken like this!" Jesus captivates our imaginations and wins our hearts because he was, and is, the very Son of God with the power and the life to transform and empower our lives. . . .

Jesus, alive and among his people today, calls to us exactly as he did those disciples so long ago, saying, "Follow me." Now, we do not follow Jesus in precisely the same way those early disciples did. We cannot walk

the dusty roads of Galilee with him. No, we follow him in the Spirit, but the basic principle and pattern is the same. This is why the study of the Gospel records is such a help to us. In their pages we see how Jesus lived and what he did while he was enfleshed as we are. We see, for example, that he trained himself in prayer, solitude, worship, and like disciplines. And we are to imitate him in this, as in all central aspects of his living.

But it is right here that we face a problem—for some an insurmountable problem. How can we imitate Jesus' pattern for living when we do not live in first-century, rural Palestine? We repair automobiles or work at computer terminals or teach school or raise children, and we have responsibilities and demands that simply were unheard of two thousand years ago. How can we imitate the life of Christ in our day and age?

It is precisely at this point that I have encouraging news. We are not the only ones from a different culture and age who have wanted to imitate the life of Christ. Others—myriads and myriads of them—have sought to imitate the way of Christ and to translate that way into their own settings and surroundings. We are helped immensely by looking at their efforts and learning their stories. Furthermore, it is a genuine act of humility to realize that we can learn from others who have gone before us. To be sure, they made mistakes, but even so they have much to teach us. In the midst of all their stumbling and fumbling they sought to imitate the way of Christ and to grow in Christlikeness. Their stories have been—and remain—a rich source of joy, inspiration, and instruction. It is to some of those stories that we now turn.

(This is followed by six chapters that flesh out the RENOVARÉ Traditions. Each chapter brings to life individuals from history, from the biblical record, and from the recent past as well as carefully defining the Tradition, looking at its major strengths and potential pitfalls, and learning how to practice it in daily life.)

* * * * *

A Great New Gathering

Everything I have shared with you in this book grows out of a deep conviction that a great, new gathering of the people of God is occurring in our day. The streams of faith that I have been describing—Contemplative, Holiness, Charismatic, Social Justice, Evangelical, Incarnational—are flowing together into a mighty movement of the Spirit. They constitute, as best I can understand it, the contours and shape of this new gathering.

Right now we remain largely a scattered people. This has been the condition of the Church of Jesus Christ for a good many years. But a new thing is

coming. God *is* gathering his people once again, creating of them an all-inclusive community of loving person with Jesus Christ as the community's prime sustainer and most glorious inhabitant. This community *is* breaking forth in multiplied ways and varied forms.

I see it happening, this great new gathering of the people of God. I see an obedient, disciplined, freely gathered people who know in our day the life and powers of the kingdom of God.

I see a people of cross and crown, of courageous action and sacrificial love.

I see a people who are combining evangelism with social action, the transcendent Lordship of Jesus with the suffering servant Messiah.

I see a people who are buoyed up by the vision of Christ's everlasting rule, not only imminent on the horizon, but already bursting forth in our midst.

I see a people . . . I see a people . . . even though it feels as if I am peering through a glass darkly.

I see a country pastor from Indiana embracing an urban priest from New Jersey and together praying for the peace of the world. I see a people.

I see a Catholic monk from the hills of Kentucky standing alongside a Baptist evangelist from the streets of Los Angeles and together offering up a sacrifice of praise. I see a people.

I see social activists from the urban centers of Hong Kong joining with Pentecostal preachers from the barrios of São Paulo and together weeping over the spiritually lost and the plight of the poor. I see a people.

I see laborers from Soweto and landowners from Pretoria honoring and serving each other out of reverence for Christ. I see a people.

I see Hutu and Tutsi, Serb and Croat, Mongol and Han Chinese, African-American and Anglo, Latino and Native American all sharing and caring and loving one another. I see a people.

I see the sophisticated standing with the simple, the elite standing with the dispossessed, the wealthy standing with the poor. I see a people.

I see a people, I tell you, a people from every race and nation and tongue and stratum of society, joining hearts and hands and minds and voices declaring,

*Amazing grace! How sweet the sound—
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind but now I see.*

Going Deeper

Endorsements for *Streams of Living Water*

I think [*Streams of Living Water*] will be an important step to bring unity and understanding among Christians. Unity can come with understanding and appreciation of other people's beliefs and practices. Your book is remarkable in that it shows a great deal of understanding.

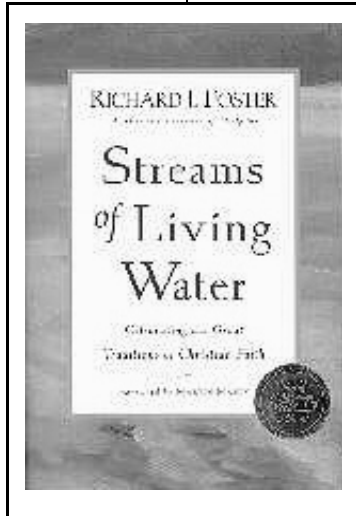
—**Richard M. Thomas, S. J.**
Our Lady's Youth Center
El Paso, Texas

... a marvel of a book covering two millenniums of Christian experience. With clarity and restraint, Foster invites the reader to draw from his wells of wisdom as he paints in words the portraits of those who have shaped our rich and varied heritage. His broad brush strokes bring to life the streams of living water that for centuries have nourished our souls.

—**Ingrid Trobisch, Co-Founder**
Family Life Mission
Springfield, Missouri

Richard Foster has done it again. He presents an exciting and challenging picture of a mature Christian, and the traditions of the Church. I was inspired by his simple, yet profound material. My heart cried out as I read, "to be more like Jesus."

—**Peter Lord, Pastor**
Park Avenue Baptist Church
Titusville, Florida



Richard Foster honors the many-dimensional splendor of Christian spirituality in this book—depth, height, width, and breadth. He invites us into the magnificence and largeness of Christian experience; he shows us what grand company we keep as we follow Jesus.

—**Eugene Peterson, Author**
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If you want your own spiritual life challenged and deepened; if you want to become acquainted with some of the most insightful, inspiring, and influential of Christ's followers; if you want to learn (authoritatively but painlessly!) about main currents of Christian history across the centuries, this is your book.

—**Vernon Grounds, Chancellor**
Denver Seminary
Denver, Colorado

Richard Foster introduces us to a legacy of spirituality richer and more variegated than we have realized. Must reading.

—**Tom Sine, Author**
The Mustard Seed Conspiracy
Seattle, Washington

Streams of Living Water is a book that brings together for the first time in one volume the rich major traditions of Christian Spirituality. It will serve as a great resource for both scholars and everyday Christians who seek a deeper understanding of spiritual things.

—**Vinson Synan, Dean**
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