



# Point of View

Dear Marketplace Friend,

When leaders *speak*, people *listen*. That's why Katharine Jefferts Schori - since 2006, the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church of the USA - caught people's attention last week in the opening session of their annual convention, in Anaheim, CA. While recognizing the myriad conflicts that would demand attention in their time together, she had this to say: *"The overarching connection in all of these crises has to do with the great Western heresy: that we can be saved as individuals, that any of us alone can be in right relationship with God..."* She denounced the premise *"...that is caricatured in some quarters by insisting that salvation depends on reciting a specific verbal formula about Jesus."* According to Schori, it is heresy to believe that an individual's prayer can achieve a saving relationship with God...

Schori did her graduate studies in theology at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, under the auspices of the Episcopal Church. Richard Stearns did his graduate work at Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania. Schori became a priest; Stearns became a corporate executive, serving as CEO for companies like Parker Brothers and Lenox. In 1998, he was selected to succeed Bob Seiple as the president of World Vision, USA.



Stearn's book, ***The Hole in Our Gospel*** (Thomas Nelson, 2009) is both biographical and topical. He tells the story of his own journey from "normal" Christian businessman/church layman/committed believer to his role today, at the helm of one of Christendom's most respected ministry enterprises.

**So, what's "the hole?"** He inserts a scathing denouncement by God of His people from Isaiah 1 - in which God exposes the Jews' religious rituals as meaningless hokum, saying: *"Quit your worship charades..."* - and then says: *"Do you hear what God is saying in these blistering verses? He is sick of churches and people who just "go through the motions." And He is weary of seeing a shiny veneer of faith but no depth of commitment. That is the hole in our gospel, and until we fill it, ours is an empty religion, one that God despises..."* Yikes. And, he's right.

Schori says that the fallacy of Western

Christianity is *personal evangelism*. I hope she was simply ill-advised in her choice of words and didn't really mean what she said. If she did, she's at odds with the Apostle Paul, ala *1 Corinthians 15:3-5*. Our Gospel demands a personal response to the offer of salvation through the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ...

Stearns' insights are 280 pages of significant challenge from a man who would "fit" in any **TMP** setting in America. Mr. Stearns says that the fallacy of Western Christianity is the establishment of a personal faith in Jesus Christ that does not result in our active personal involvement in bringing tangible assistance to an increasingly hopeless world. *"What does God expect of us? The answer that changed my life and might just change the world"* (his subtitle; our **TMP** mission).

I fight the temptation to add yet another book to the already-intense textbook roster for **The Master's Program**. ***The Hole in Our Gospel*** would be among the contenders for addition in the near future.

Get the book. Read it. React to it. Richard Stearns figured out what God expected of him through the call to come to World Vision. I wonder: *might you find your calling and Kingdom opportunities through **The Master's Program** and **The Barnabas Group**?*

*Bob Shank*

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