ABSTRACT

Resolution and Irresolution: An Exposition of Scepticism and Faith in the Poetry of Denise Levertov and Emily Dickinson

This study assesses the poetry of Levertov and Dickinson in the light of the premise that the notion of faith is the prime mover in their thought and poetry and that scepticism is central to their achievement. It is an exposition of the dialectic of faith and doubt that they enact in their poetry. A chronological study of their work reveals that Levertov affirms God in the accomplishment of her intellectual and moral activity and in the exercise of her imagination, while Dickinson remains a doubter throughout with her back and forth movements from scepticism to faith. Thus a pattern of resolution and irresolution emerges from an examination of the poetry of Levertov and Dickinson respectively. The study attempts a theological analysis of their poetry with regard to the ‘way to faith’, the ‘way of seeing’ and eschatological vision revealed therein and an analysis based on the postmodern religious situation, in order to bring into sharp relief certain distinctions in their faith experience that reinforce this pattern of resolution and irresolution. Finally, a philosophical analysis based on the Kierkegaardian and Hegelian matrices is employed to foster greater clarity through a dialectical understanding of faith and doubt in Levertov and Dickinson.