

BOOK REVIEWS

Bioethics: A Christian Approach in a Pluralistic Age. By Scott B. Rae and Paul M. Cox. Critical Issues in Bioethics Series. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999. Pages, x + 326. Paper, \$24.00.

This volume launches the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity's (Bannockburn, Ill.) second series of bioethics books. Both authors, Scott Rae and Paul Cox, are professors of biblical studies and Christian ethics at the Talbot School of Theology, Biola University in La Mirada, California. Their focus is different from what one finds in most other volumes in bioethics in that the authors intend to concentrate not on specific topics that are controverted but rather to address the field of bioethics broadly from a distinctively Christian perspective. Thus, method and methodological questions are the principal concerns of this work.

The book is divided into three unequal parts. Part one seeks to review both the religious and secular approaches to bioethics. The second and most substantial part lays out the authors' six pillars of a Christian approach to this field: medical technology in a theological perspective, the image of God, the personhood of the patient, autonomy and the common good, death as a conquered enemy, and distributive justice in our health care system. The final part addresses two important issues: the form that Christian bioethics might take in a secular culture and a model for bioethical decision making from a Christian perspective.

Though the authors are principally concerned with methodological issues and with developing their Christian approach to bioethics, the book regularly addresses concrete topics such as physician-assisted suicide and abortion. When discussing these concrete topics in the second part, the authors routinely proceed by describing the current situation, then turn to the Scriptures to uncover biblical perspectives that might help illuminate the issue, and finally apply these distinctive perspectives to the topic and conclude with a moral judgment. They also make frequent use of case studies to set up the topics and to illustrate their Christian approach. At the end of the volume, the authors make clear that any moral position taken on these complex topics must be identifiably Christian, though the means of persuasion do not need to be limited to either theological or biblical notions. Philosophically-informed public discourse is important and necessary in their approach, even if this is not the central vehicle by which Christians arrive at their moral judgments on complex bioethical topics and convey them to the Christian community.

This book should be helpful to a wide audience: health care professionals, educators, upper-division undergraduates and graduate students. Though some sections might delve too deeply into material that is not essential to the overall purpose of the volume, the book has many positive features. To be applauded are the authors' attempts to focus primarily on method, not on concrete topics, and to address the distinctively Christian contributions to bioethi-

cal reflection. The authors are informed and knowledgeable about the developments in this field, and they are fair to positions that they themselves do not adopt. They offer definite positions on both methodology and concrete topics, but recognize that others will almost certainly disagree. One looks forward to many more volumes from this new series on bioethics.

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Parables for Preachers: The Gospel of Mark, Year B. By Barbara E. Reid, O.P. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999. Pages, 131. Paper, \$11.95.

Parables are often roadblocks to preachers gliding along the homiletic highway. Their utter simplicity, seemingly singular moral message, and homespun images suddenly catch the preacher off guard since parables turn out to be terribly complex, pluralistic in meaning, and provocative in imagery. Seasoned preachers eventually learn that the parable as roadblock can turn out to be a wondrous gift if they have at hand skillful biblicists to guide them. Barbara E. Reid, O.P., is professor of New Testament at Catholic Theological Union and one of those skillful biblicists who not only opens up the treasure box of scholarly insights but offers preachers honest-to-God help in seeing the possibilities of parables in preaching. Her goal is to make scholarly research on the parables create sparks for preachers' creativity. Her new work is a solid help for preachers in this B cycle of the liturgical year.

Chapter 1 explores the dynamics of Jesus' parables and how they "work." In future editions of *Parables for Preachers* in the C and A cycles, I would hope the author would draw upon the fine insights on preaching the parables found in Thomas G. Long's classic work, *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* (1988). Chapter 2 presents contemporary trends in biblical interpretation of the parables. Reid does not tip her hat to any one particular method but, like the 1993 Pontifical Biblical document, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," she demonstrates the wisdom of seeking out a plethora of biblical methods. In chapter 2, the author gives an overview of the Gospel of Mark, its author, historical context, and major theological themes. This reviewer missed here a poetic appreciation of Mark for preaching. For example, no mention is given of how Mark is a man out of breath rushing to the story of the cross of Jesus and how "immediately" is one of his favorite words. Mark is in a hurry but still takes time to see that Jesus naps in the stern with a pillow under his head (4:38). Such a literary appreciation of Mark's texts opens up practical and wondrous possibilities for the preacher.

The remaining chapters focus on the parables of the Gospel of Mark as they appear in the Lectionary for Cycle B both on Sunday and weekday celebrations. Most helpful here is that after an exploration of the meanings of each parable, Reid concludes with two headings: "Preaching Possibilities" in which she offers precious insights for contemporary preachers to use the exegetical material she has presented and "Lectionary Context" in which she attempts to show

possible connections of the parable of the gospel reading with the other liturgical readings. The author's "Preaching Possibilities" is a rich contribution to the homiletic task. She rightly recognizes that the preacher's vocation is not to explain the Scriptures but to interpret people's lives in light of the Scriptures. She values the assembly and thus writes, "One of the hardest tasks of the preacher is to discern which of these is the message that most needs to be preached at this particular time and place" (46). One detects the approach found in the United States Catholic Bishops' document *Fulfilled In Your Hearing: The Homily in the Sunday Assembly* (1982) when Reid states that biblical interpretation is "only one of the many tasks of the preacher" (23) since "[I]t is God's word that a preacher speaks" (6). As a homiletician, I am frequently distressed that such contemporary homiletic insights are often not found in the work of biblical scholars. Barbara Reid obviously takes seriously not just the Ph.D. after her name, but the O.P.

This reviewer found the author's section "Lectionary Context" less helpful. She states that the gospel reading is set in dialogue with "three other readings from the Scriptures" (48). While it is wise for homilists to be aware that they should be in dialogue with the responsorial psalm, they must also acknowledge that in the liturgy it does not serve as a reading but as a response to the first reading. The Introduction to the Lectionary clearly states: "Each Mass has *three* readings" #66 (emphasis mine). Reid is correct to point out that preachers "would be hard pressed to make cogent connections" between the first and gospel reading of the weekday lectionary (102). Why then does she attempt to make these connections between the gospel reading and the second reading and also with the responsorial psalm in the Sunday lectionary? That is why she admits finding only a "loose connection" between Mark 4:26-34 of the Eleventh Sunday of Ordinary Time and the second reading of the day, 2 Cor 5:6-10 (72).

This reviewer sincerely hopes that Barbara Reid will also pen *Parables for Preaching* for Cycle C and A. She is right on target when she insists that preaching first of all comes from an encounter with the Holy in study, prayer, in other people, and in all creation. The way her book reads indicates that she practices what she preaches. Barbara Reid's *Parables for Preachers* is not just a clearly written study of the parables but a fresh and first-class contribution to homiletics.

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Education for Reflective Ministry. By Johannes A. van der Ven. Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs, 24. Louvain: Peeters Press, 1998. Pages, x + 256. Paper, \$30.00.

Pastoral ministry is a demanding challenge in any age, and training for ministry is equally daunting. Both have become even more so in today's complex, pluralistic world. Johannes van der Ven faces these challenges directly and offers a comprehensive, well-grounded, and stimulating response.

The author describes the complexity of today's situation in terms of the macrolevel of religion in society, the mesolevel of religion in the Church, and the microlevel of religion among individuals. This threefold division, though familiar, is a helpful way of setting the context and he uses it throughout the book when presenting recommendations for more effective ministry and education.

In the face of today's complexity, van der Ven judges the prevailing models of education for ministry to be inadequate. These are the therapeutic model, based on individual-oriented clinical training, and the managerial model, based on the means-to-end technical rationality of empirical science. In their place he persuasively calls for a more self-directed, holistic, and reflective model of ministry.

Reflective ministry operates in the domain of religion (rather than social service or individual therapy) and in the context of church. Its general function is hermeneutic communication, the effective correlating of the faith tradition with contemporary experience. This is channeled through the seven specific functions of ministry: pastoral counseling and spiritual direction at the microlevel of individuals, liturgy/preaching, catechetics, and church development at the mesolevel of the Church, and social ministry and mission at the macrolevel of society.

The author is most original when he discusses the nature of reflective ministry as a form of reflection on practice, analyzed so perceptively by American pragmatic philosophers Charles Peirce and John Dewey. Drawing on these sources, he presents reflective ministry from three viewpoints: an experiential reflection *in* ministry, highlighting the evaluations, actions, and general tendencies which one's practice of ministry reveals; an experimental reflection *on* ministry, focusing on the problems arising within ministry and their potential solutions; and a teleological reflection *from* ministry, aiming at the integration of ideals and their spatio-temporal constraints.

The competencies required for this type of reflective ministry are four: knowledge (the reproduction of information), insight (the production of information in narrative form), skill (methods and techniques to apply information), and attitudes (affective orientations to the tasks of ministry). Each is discussed in terms of the general function of reflective ministry (hermeneutic communication) and the seven specific functions. The result is an impressive description of ministry today.

Only when van der Ven discusses how to impart these competencies does he directly address the title of the book. Assuming an educational anthropology that is holistic and aimed at self-direction, and an educational psychology that values many different ways of learning (by experience, by doing, by reinforcement, etc.), van der Ven discusses seven components in the education for reflective ministry.

Courses and seminars aim at cognitive competence (knowledge and insight) while practica aim at attitudinal competence and skill. Internships can take several forms ranging from membership in a parish to specialized pastoral functions. Supervision may be oriented to the profession itself, the person of the professional, or the institutional/societal context of the profession. Coaching overcomes some of the dependency relationship of supervision by substituting colleague equality.

Theological reflection, the sixth component, includes experiential reflection in ministry, experimental reflection on ministry, and teleological reflection from ministry, while action research tries to determine if intended changes have actually occurred as a result of one's ministerial interventions.

The author's perspective reflects an impressive breadth of experience and research spanning both Europe and the U.S. The material is of primary interest for those in professional ministerial education; it has limited usefulness for the actual practitioner of ministry. As a contribution to the ongoing discussion of education for ministry, it is a timely and well-thought out alternative model.

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Theology of Ministry. By Thomas F. O'Meara, O.P. Completely revised edition. New York: Paulist Press, 1999. Pages, iv + 300. Paper, \$21.95.

The author, the William K. Warren Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame, modestly describes the first edition of his book on the theology of ministry as having enjoyed "a certain success in the United States, Canada, and abroad" (1). It has, in fact, been a standard reference for many courses on ministry and for many people engaged in ministry. In few ways has the Church shown so much vitality in the last decades of the twentieth century as in the explosion of new ministries and the enormous expansion of the number of its members who understand themselves as ministers. When one considers how many new forms of ministry have developed with and without official recognition in parishes and institutions, a new edition of O'Meara's book is most welcome. His revision is much more than an updating or even a clarification of his previous work. Rather, it is a completely rearranged and considerably expanded rethinking of the earlier edition.

The new edition is designed for the same audience who profited from the first edition: those engaged in ministry, both lay and ordained, and those teaching courses in the theology of ministry. In combination with Kenan Osborne's *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church: Its History and Theology*, I think that O'Meara's book would be almost indispensable for such courses. O'Meara grounds his theology of ministry in ecclesiology which he in turn roots in Christology and in Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom of God. So the book moves from its introductory chapter on the pressing questions concerning ministry today and the resources for responding to them in the theology of grace and ecclesiology through a consideration of the New Testament understandings of ministry and charism and a brief history of the concept of ministry in the Catholic Church. The author then offers a kind of phenomenology of ministry in which he includes his definition of ministry which has often been quoted since the first edition: "the public activity of a baptized follower of Jesus Christ flowing from the Spirit's charism and an individual personality on behalf of a Christian community to proclaim, serve, and realize the kingdom of God" (150). The next two chapters are a detailed examination of the implica-

tions of this definition. The final chapter is a fine treatment of ministerial spirituality which refreshingly treats that topic as intrinsic to a fundamental theology of ministry and not simply a pious addendum.

Readers of O'Meara's writings know that he is deeply influenced by Karl Rahner. This is clearly evident in his theology of ministry. His treatment of grace and of church is strongly marked by Rahner's notion of grace at the roots of the world. The engraced character of human existence, present even in secular forms which ignore or deny it, is the context in which O'Meara treats the Church's mission and so the shapes of its ministries. Both church and ministry are uncoverings of grace already present rather than the channels by which grace enters where it was previously absent. Since this theology of grace has been so central to so much of Catholic systematic theology in the last seventy-five years, O'Meara's placing of ministry within this context allows him to offer a truly *fundamental theology* of ministry. That was the strength of the first edition of his excellent book. This new edition builds on and furthers that welcome contribution to a very important development in contemporary Catholic life.

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Jewish-Christian Debates: God, Kingdom, Messiah. By Jacob Neusner and Bruce Chilton. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998. Pages, xiv + 240. Paper, \$24.00.

This volume continues the ongoing, published dialogues of Jacob Neusner, a prolific Jewish scholar, and Bruce Chilton, a leading New Testament scholar from the Episcopal tradition. Their previous three collaborative volumes compared the theological structures of Judaism and Christianity with special attention given to the formative categories. In this fourth volume they take up three principal issues: (1) how their respective faith tradition brings about communion with God; (2) how each understands life in the world under divine dominion; and (3) how each confronts the question of teleology through the medium of eschatology. In pursuit of the dialogue the authors intentionally remain within the framework of classical texts which they regard as paramount.

The title of the volume can be misleading. This is not a book that takes into account (by intention) other scholarly assessments of the three issues within Judaism and Christianity. The dialogue present in this book is essentially between Neusner's and Chilton's personal appropriation of the material. Autocitation is especially prevalent in Chilton's contributions. While their views are interesting and enriching, the book suffers from the lack of any connections with other scholarly interpretations of the same material. If the book is to serve as an introduction to the late twentieth-century Christian-Jewish dialogue, this omission limits its value considerably. Good scholarship, which should be the basis of good dialogue, requires engaging other serious scholarly studies.

The volume is characterized on the whole by a fairly traditional interpretation of both faith perspectives, one that tries to maintain a clear sense of distinction

between Israel and the Church. Other scholars in recent years, both Jewish and Christian, have emphasized some possible points of convergence far more than Neusner and Chilton seem willing to do.

The most creative section of the volume comes towards the end. Here Chilton explores the "Messianic Virtues and the Pleasure of God" and "Christ: The Bodily Presence of God." These two chapters are followed by a closing reflection on the Incarnation by Neusner which makes some important points from the Jewish side, but again makes no reference to other Jewish authors such as Michael Wyschograd who have interpreted some of the same classical texts along other lines.

The most striking omission from the volume, particularly in terms of the section on God, is the absence of any reference to the Holocaust. There exists a considerable body of literature today both in the Christian and Jewish communities that reflects on the experience of the Holocaust and its impact on the understanding of classical texts. This is especially true of the God question. Even if the authors choose to argue that the Holocaust is not especially significant in terms of contemporary theological perspective as some scholars such as David Hartman do, a volume claiming to propose a model for Jewish-Christian debate today needs to make reference to this central dimension of Jewish life. Otherwise it is positing a truncated perspective on contemporary Judaism in particular.

In sum, Neusner and Chilton offer the reader a concise, readable introduction to Jewish and Christian theology about God, Kingdom and Messiah. Much profit can be gained not only from the content but also from the style of intellectual interaction they employ. It could serve as an introductory volume for undergraduate college courses and more sophisticated adult study groups. But it would need to be supplemented with readings from other authors if students are to gain a developed insight into where the overall Christian-Jewish conversation stands on the three issues highlighted in this volume. Only the closing section on Messiah/Incarnation will provide new perspectives for those already well conversant with the Christian-Jewish dialogue.

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The Normal Alcoholic. By William F. Kraft. New York: Alba House, 1999. Pages, x + 149. Paper, \$9.95.

If asked to describe what an alcoholic looks like, most people including pastoral ministers might describe one as a person who is unable to hold down a job, support a family, or may seem overtly intoxicated most of the time. Alcoholics do not behave like "normal" people. Alcoholism is understood by many to be a disorder that produces extreme and visible dysfunctional behavior. Indeed, most substance abuse/addiction literature tends to describe the symptoms of alcoholism in florid details.

At first glance, the title of Kraft's book seems to be an oxymoron. How can someone be both alcoholic and normal? According to Kraft, the majority of people who are alcoholic appear quite normal. In fact it is only the minority of alcoholics who exhibit what is commonly understood to be "typical" alcoholic characteristics. Most alcoholics appear normal, i.e., non-alcoholic, because they manage to work and communicate effectively, cope with life's demands, and achieve success. They may drink heavily but because they do not appear to lose control, they may fool themselves and others into believing that they are normal drinkers. Normal alcoholics do well in the task-oriented reality valued by society and may even be able to give up alcohol for periods of time. This tends to foster the belief that their drinking is not a problem. However, many people who never manifest overt symptoms of alcoholism are quietly killing their relationships, spirituality and themselves with each drink they take.

The Normal Alcoholic makes an important contribution to the field of pastoral care of those who suffer from addiction because it helps shatter popular myths about who is and who is not an alcoholic. Pastoral ministers are not immune from assuming that because a person can externally function in what appears to be a normal manner, he or she cannot possibly have a problem with alcohol. This can feed into denial that a person has a problem with alcohol. A central concept of the book is that the way pastoral ministers, the family, and the alcoholic construe alcoholism will either help or hinder recovery by increasing or decreasing denial of an alcohol problem. In fact, membership in Alcoholics Anonymous can be difficult for a normal alcoholic if the stories he or she hears at AA meetings are only of so-called "low bottom" alcoholics. Admission of negative consequences and powerlessness over alcohol is difficult if a person's life appears more normal than abnormal.

The key to helping a normal alcoholic is to look to his or her inner world to see how things are not working. It is Kraft's contention that someone is alcoholic if he or she needs to rely on alcohol to help relate to non-task oriented experiences such as interpersonal intimacy or if he or she tends to look forward to drinking and uses alcohol to change mood. In other words, normal alcoholics "listen to alcohol" far too much and too often; it plays a primary and central role in their lives rather than a secondary and peripheral role. A normal alcoholic's love affair with alcohol is more "subtle, silent, smoother and more sneaky" than that of a heavy drinker. "But it is still an affair."

The Normal Alcoholic is easily readable, interesting and useful for pastoral ministry. Kraft copiously sprinkles the book with stories of normal alcoholics to illustrate what a normal alcoholic can look like. He also clarifies the concept of the normal alcoholic by categorizing different types of normal alcoholics.

An important contribution of Kraft's book to the study of the pastoral care of alcoholics is that he focuses on the internal world of a normal alcoholic to help illustrate that his or her reasons for using alcohol are not normal. Dysfunction in the inner rather than outer world is usually the key of the admission of powerlessness over alcohol for the normal alcoholic. Kraft's description of the inner world of normal alcoholics may be a vehicle for them to accept the reality of their situation.

Another important contribution of the book is that it positions itself in the growing appreciation among caregivers of the importance of the interpersonal

and spiritual dimensions of the person. Normal alcoholics usually find that their spiritual life dissipates as alcohol begins to replace God. Interpersonal intimacy also suffers when people seek solace in alcohol rather than relationships. Kraft notes that since we are not isolated individuals but live in an interpersonal network, we impact each other positively or negatively. The tragedy he points out is that impairments in intimacy are sometimes just as damaging as impairments in external functioning. *The Normal Alcoholic* is more in the realm of a psycho-spiritual rather than a pastoral theological book but can be still quite useful to those in pastoral ministry to alcoholics.

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