

## BOOK REVIEWS

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**The Book of Job: A Short Reading.** By Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm. New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1999. Pages, vii + 137. Paper, \$14.95.

Certainly the field of Joban studies is replete with technical commentaries on the book of Job. However, for the non-expert and interested reader, the number of manageable commentaries on Job is fewer. This has been addressed by Roland Murphy, a well-known expert in the field of the Hebrew wisdom literature who has successfully put together a very readable and user-friendly volume on the book of Job that he subtitled, *A Short Reading*.

As the subtitle suggests, the book is primarily a concise commentary on Job that begins with an Introduction in which Murphy deals with basic historical-critical questions regarding the authorship of the book, its date, its being categorized as one of the Old Testament wisdom books, and its place within the wisdom literature of the ancient Near East. This is followed by seven chapters of commentary on the content of Job, following the traditional division of the book into the Prologue (1:1–2:13), the three cycles of dialogue between Job and his interlocutors, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar (3:1–31:37), the Elihu speech (32:1–37:24), Job's encounter with God (38:1–42:6) and the Epilogue (42:7–17). The author rounds out his work with two chapters, one entitled, "After-Thoughts," and the other, "Does the Book of Job Have a Theology?"

Two of the overall features of Job brought to the fore in all of Murphy's chapters are Job's struggle between hope and despair and the constant assertion of his innocence in the midst of his so-called friends' accusations to the contrary. These features can and do speak to the situation of many believers today, and therefore point to the importance of the book of Job and a commentary such as this.

Despite the book's brevity the author succeeds in giving his work the feel of a larger commentary. Not only does one come away with a good grasp of an expert's own interpretation of the book, but is also not denied exposure to other proposed interpretations of especially those texts in Job whose meaning is vigorously disputed. In addition, Murphy's interpretation of these passages (e.g., 6:10; 8:14–19; 13:15–16; 14:13–17; 16:18–22) is done without a certainty that would preclude other interpretations. Thus, the author manages to present a balanced, broad-minded and where needed, well-argued commentary despite its compact size.

Another dividend when working with this book is that one learns much more than just the book of Job. Murphy intersperses his commentary with valuable tidbits on the meaning of such words in the Hebrew Scriptures as death, Sheol, *go'el*, satan, Behemoth, Leviathan, prayer, to mention but a few.

The addition of the final two chapters lends more satisfaction to one's reading of the book. Here the author offers an interpretive key—albeit his own—to the book's overall theology. Without these concluding chapters the book would

be a less successful read for the average reader who needs guidance in wading through the convoluted thought of the book of Job.

Murphy's book whets one's appetite for more, and is certainly recommended for all interested readers and Bible devotees who wish to increase their knowledge of the book of Job.

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**Who Is Jesus? Why Is He Important? An Invitation to the New Testament.**

By Daniel J. Harrington, S.J. Franklin, Wis.: Sheed & Ward, 1999. Pages viii + 212. Paper, \$10.95.

This book is a real gem, written by one of the foremost Catholic biblical scholars who deftly presents the best of contemporary New Testament scholarship in an accessible way to the beginner. It is part of the "Come and See" Series that aims to offer guidance to spiritual seekers from the best theologians and scholars. Harrington's goal is to show how each of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament address two basic questions: Who is Jesus? and Why is he important? In answering the first, Harrington uses historical-critical methods to situate Jesus of Nazareth both as an historical figure and to explicate the early Christians' articulation of him as the risen Christ. With the second question in view, he further probes in each chapter the significance of Jesus for Christian spirituality, ethics and ecclesiology.

In the introductory chapter Harrington gives a thumbnail sketch of the contents, date and language of the New Testament. He discusses translations and gives an overview of the social and cultural world of the New Testament. He also treats the issues of canon and gospel genre. In the second chapter he deals with the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, highlighting the portrait of Jesus as teacher, healer and suffering Messiah. Chapter three, "Glory of Israel and Light to the Gentiles," is devoted to Luke-Acts and chapter four to "The Word of God: John's Gospel and Epistles." In chapter 5, "Our Lord Jesus Christ," he gives an introduction to the seven authentic Pauline letters. Chapter 6, "The Gospel of God," is devoted to Romans, and chapter 7, "The Head of the Body," deals with the deuterio-Pauline letters. In chapter 8, "The High Priest," Harrington treats the Letter to the Hebrews, and in chapter 9, "The Chief Shepherd," the Catholic Epistles. In the final chapter, "King of Kings, Lord of Lords," he studies the Book of Revelation. Harrington's engaging style quickens the desire of the reader to study further. So it is apt that the volume concludes with a list of thirty titles of recommended biblical commentaries for more in-depth study and an index.

In each chapter Harrington deals with the literary, historical and theological levels of the texts in a very inviting manner. Each chapter also has "Questions for Reflection" and "Texts for Special Attention." While a book this compact cannot treat extensively all the current questions of New Testament scholarship,

this reviewer would have liked to see mention of the debate over Luke's treatment of Jews and Gentiles, or about his portrayal of women. While Harrington emphasizes the Jewishness of Jesus and his first followers in his treatment of the Fourth Gospel (66), an added comment about how to avoid fomenting anti-Judaism would be apt. And when he calls attention to the admonitions in 1 Tim 2:10-15 for women to be silent in the assembly and bear children (133), he might comment further for the reader on the ways in which such culturally conditioned texts have been detrimental to women and how we might read them today.

This concise guide would be an excellent tool for parish Bible study groups as well as for individuals. Because of the emphasis on spirituality and on actualization of the text in the present, both on personal and communal levels, this book is of benefit not only to the beginner, but for veteran students of the New Testament as well.

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**Following Christ: Models of Discipleship in the New Testament.** By Andrew Ryder, S.C.J. Franklin, Wis.: Sheed and Ward, 1999. Pages, xiv + 181. Paper, \$12.95.

The preface gives a general introduction to the study of Scripture through the historical-critical method. The author begins from the premise that one can build on this study to better understand Scripture. Chapters then follow on each of the major books or divisions of the New Testament. Each chapter gives a general introduction and then traces some of the major theological themes as they relate to the theme of discipleship.

After the appropriate caveat about relying on Acts for the story of Paul, the author then goes on, like most Pauline interpreters, to take Acts at face value. Paul's conversion is seen as instantaneous, and the heart of his theology is the new relationship "in Christ." Mark's portrayal of Jesus is not as a magician but as a miracle worker who calls his followers to discipleship through the pattern of conformity to his suffering and death as shaped by the three predictions of the Passion. Matthew's Gospel aims to meet pastoral needs in a time of transition from Jew to Gentile, with a stress on Jesus' ministry of teaching. Other reflections include the image of the yoke, the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, Jesus and the Law, and the Law of Christ.

The Gospel of Luke is presented as both history and theology. More focused reflections include life in the Spirit and the option for the poor. The much-controverted intentions of Luke with regard to women are here seen as positive. Unfortunately, Acts is almost completely neglected except for a few comments about its women characters. Presentation of the Gospel of John proposes belief centered on the person of Jesus. Additional reflections on John include the Bread of Life, Light of the World with sustained attention to chapter nine, and a refutation of the charge of individualism that is often directed at John. Unfor-

tunately, there is no consideration of the women characters in John who are in many ways more distinctive than those in Luke and Acts.

The study of Hebrews reminds us that, in spite of the priestly analogy in this book, Jesus was a layman. Jesus becomes priest because he was chosen by God, tested by suffering, heard for his obedience, and is a companion for Melchizedek. First Peter and Revelation develop the notion of the royal priesthood of believers. The Pastorals show the development of forms of leadership. Together the themes of the royal priesthood and of discipleship unite all believers. It is somewhat surprising to read in this chapter: "The New Testament model of leadership is the presbyter-bishop" (138) when so many other forms of leadership appear there.

The final chapter does a sensitive rendition of apocalyptic expectation in Revelation and elsewhere, situating it within its Jewish context. The author understands correctly that "The Book of Revelation is not then, in the final analysis, about the end of the world; rather, it's about the closeness of Jesus to the present moment" (149).

This little book is a good summary of the findings of historical-critical interpretation as shapers of New Testament theology. While it is too basic for academic study, it would serve well for parish Bible study groups.

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**Faith among Faiths. Christian Theology and Non-Christian Religions.** By James L. Fredericks. New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1999. Pages, vii + 188. Paper, \$18.95.

Make things as simple as possible, Einstein advised—but not any simpler. Fredericks, who teaches at Loyola Marymount in Los Angeles and is a long-time participant in the Buddhist-Catholic dialogue, attempts to give a simple but fair account of a complex topic. His success is mixed.

F.'s final point is to suggest the fruitfulness of doing Christian theology "comparatively," that is, "in the light of the teachings of other religious traditions" (139). But he ties this perfectly valid proposal to an unnecessary argument that the "theology of religions" has reached an impasse and should for now be abandoned.

Most of the book is an effort to show that the three main "types" of theology of religions—exclusivism (Christianity is the only revelation), inclusivism (the saving grace of Christ is universally present), and pluralism (there are many ways to salvation besides Christ)—all fail in some way to meet F.'s criteria of (1) being faithful to the Christian tradition and (2) assisting in "living responsibly and creatively" with non-Christians.

Many of F.'s critical remarks, especially on "pluralism," are insightful. However, there are also problems. F. admits that the three "types" are only "rough classifications" and that each includes "a wide range of differences and nu-

ances" (15). His brief summaries of "representative" positions attempt to respect these complexities. But in his argument that every current theology of religions is inadequate (by his criteria), he generalizes from only a few selected cases, neglects the complexity of positions (even those he has examined) and slips into faulty logic. He implies that for "exclusivist" Karl Barth, damnation is the inescapable lot of those unfortunate enough to be born non-Christian. But Barth wrote, on the contrary, that we have good reason to hope that all people will be saved. F. contends that the exclusivist position "lures Christians away from the opportunity to learn from non-Christians" (22). But, as George Lindbeck points out, even if they are not regarded as means of salvation, non-Christian religions could still reveal important truths that Christianity misses. And it is a grave oversimplification to argue that inclusivism and pluralism discourage inquiry into other religions because they hold that one will find there "the same" salvation as in Christianity. In fact, Rahner (an "inclusivist") makes statements about learning from non-Christian religions that sound very similar to F.'s own; and both "inclusivists" and "pluralists" have not only provided sound motives for interreligious dialogue, but have to some degree already practiced the kind of "comparative theology" that F. advocates.

In his last two chapters F. concretely exemplifies the "comparative" method by using insights from Hinduism and Buddhism to evoke a deeper appreciation of truths already present in Christianity. He speaks persuasively of the benefit of interreligious friendships. But many issues remain untouched. For example: How does one deal with the radical challenges religions pose to each other? How can one do comparative theology on a pastoral level while respecting the complexity of religions?

The book is engaging and generally well written. For the undergraduate or lay reader, it can be a thought-provoking introduction to both a significant issue in contemporary theology and a fruitful way of responding to religious diversity. But readers should be wary of F.'s generalizations, especially in his arguments regarding the "theology of religions."

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**Ministry and Community: Recognizing, Healing, and Preventing Ministry Impairment.** By Len Sperry. Collegeville, Minn. The Liturgical Press, 2000. Pages, x + 124. Paper, \$11.95.

Christian ministry is a mystery. Many factors are involved in this complex reality. At times, however, ministry does not happen well. Some sort of impairment takes place. According to conventional practice, when a minister is impaired in ministry, the blame usually falls on one of two places. At times the minister him or herself is blamed for having some sort of psychological or emotional impairment that impedes ministry. At other times the organizational dynamics of the ministry are blamed as the cause of the problem.

Dr. Sperry has written a book in which he presents a model to help understand an often overlooked aspect of the mystery of Christian ministry. He uses a dual rather than a single lens system to provide a more realistic and fair understanding of ministry impairment. He neither blames the minister on the one hand nor the organization on the other for ministry that has gone wrong. Sperry's premise is that if one is to truly understand ministry impairment, it is necessary to understand that it is the synergy between the underlying emotional impairment on the minister's part and the organizational dynamics of the ministry which unwittingly triggers and reinforces the personality dynamics of ministers who become impaired. His lens is not an "either/or" but a "both/and" system.

This book is a step forward in understanding the "hows and whys" of ministry impairment. Even so, Sperry himself cautions that the dual lens provides a necessary but not sufficient understanding of personnel and contextual issues in ministry settings. He notes that additional pastoral, theological and historical perspectives beyond the scope of the book must be considered.

Sperry identifies and illustrates eight common kinds of behavior that cause ministerial impairment. These behaviors can be found in either clergy or lay ministers. The nonprofessional reader has undoubtedly come across much written about two of the categories of disruptive behaviors in ministry. They are sexually abusing and depressive behaviors in ministry. However, there is less written about ministers who suffer from the other six: narcissistic, psychopathic, borderline, manic-depressive, obsessive-compulsive and passive-aggressive behaviors. All of this information with attendant case studies makes the book helpful for those in positions of pastoral leadership to understand why things have gone wrong in a particular ministry. Sperry also describes common organizational dynamics found in ministerial settings that can exacerbate the underlying personality impairments found in some ministers. The behaviors and organizational dynamics affect each other in a circular sequence.

Each of the eight kinds of impairments, Sperry describes how he recognized, treated and prevented. He is a strong proponent of psychological screening of candidates for leadership positions. He also describes the relative treatment prognosis of each disorder and to what extent an impaired minister after treatment may be expected to continue in ministry in an effective way. He also suggests changes to church and ecclesial structures that exacerbate underlying personality problems of certain ministers. For example, religious organizations tend not to have performance reviews that are as frequent or rigorous as those found in "for-profit" business organizations. Performance reviews of for-profit business organizations quickly recognize individuals who have emotional impairment and move them out of positions of responsibility. Sperry's goal is not that ministries be able to turn a financial profit but that they be opportunities for healing and wholeness. The opposite will happen as long as the minister is impaired and organizational dynamics continue to aggravate the impairment. In the early 1970s the late Henri Nouwen's book *The Wounded Healer* was very popular. Sperry calls the ministers described in his own book "Wounding Healers." Sadly, they do not heal others but cause more harm.

This book would be useful to anyone in ministry formation, vocation work, pastoral ministry or church authority who are responsible for ecclesial person-

nel. It provides practical information to prevent and heal impairment. Its only drawback is that addiction is not included as one of the common kinds of ministerial impairment. Certainly much has already been written on that subject. However, if addiction had been included, Sperry's book could have been an even better one volume easy reference resource for recognizing and treating ministry impairment.

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**Jesus Symbol of God.** By Roger Haight, S.J. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Press, 1999. Pages, xiv + 505. Paper, \$23.95.

Aware of the radical implications of historical consciousness, Haight, professor of systematic theology at Weston Jesuit School of Theology, attempts to present a Christology which is faithful to the tradition, intelligible in today's postmodern world, and empowering of Christian life (47).

Reflecting many contemporary Christologies, Haight's Christology is based on a genetic structure of understanding, i.e. one rooted in the historical process of the development of Christology (28). Hence, he insists on a Christology "from below," i.e. one which begins with Jesus himself (29-30). This genetic structure necessitates his presenting an "image" of the historical Jesus as known through contemporary historical-critical methods, the understanding of God which Jesus had, the resurrection of Jesus, and the pluralism of New Testament soteriologies and Christologies (55-184).

The third major section of the book deals with classical Christology, primarily that of the fathers and the councils (Nicea and Chalcedon). In this section Haight introduces the notion of symbol as a means of retrieving faithfully the Christological doctrines of Nicea and Chalcedon (187-212).

In the fourth major section he presents his own constructive Christology appropriate for a postmodern world. Here he takes up questions such as the meaning of Jesus as savior, the relation between liberation and salvation, Jesus and world religions, logos and spirit Christologies and the Trinity.

While I resonate with much in this book and share Haight's concern to present a truly human Jesus who can speak to our postmodern ear, nonetheless at the end of the day I have grave reservations regarding several points. I mention merely four.

1) Haight's Christology is a *radical* Christology from below, since for him the pre-paschal Jesus is the sole and absolute norm and source of our Christological statements (see e.g. xii). Lacking here is the constitutive significance of the resurrection for Jesus himself because of which Jesus ultimately is the Christ, lord, savior, son, high priest and spirit sender. A mere Christology from below cannot warrant such titles. Immediately one begins to suspect on methodological grounds a reductionist Christology.

2) Haight's understanding of symbol is inadequate to the Christological task. For Haight a symbol has a dialectical structure, it is that which mediates or makes present something other than itself (197). A religious symbol, therefore, both participates in but *is not* that which it symbolizes or mediates. In the case of Jesus, as with any other religious symbol, such as a sacred stone (201), God *is present to and within* the medium or symbol, and yet the medium or symbol is not the transcendent itself because it is a finite piece of the world (196). One begins to wonder at this point exactly what the difference between Jesus and a sacred stone might be, or between Jesus and Mother Teresa. One also begins to wonder what will happen to Nicea's "one in being with the Father." For Haight, it is precisely this dialectical structure of symbol (and not the Greek metaphysics of infinity) that necessitated Chalcedon's distinction between the human and divine natures of Jesus. Among authors invoked by Haight for his use of symbol is Karl Rahner, who indeed does have a "symbol Christology." For Rahner, however, the symbolized and the symbol are mutually self-defining and the essence of symbol is constituted by the essence of the symbolized. Rahner's Jesus as *Ursymbol* is not the Jesus of Haight.

3) Although he wishes to maintain fidelity to the conciliar tradition, I believe he falls short. For Haight, the "one in being" of Nicea means merely that God is *present to* and *acting in* Jesus (e.g. 284), something which could be affirmed of any graced person. Is that all Nicea was about, i.e. whether God and not something less than God was *present to* and *acting in* Jesus? In the face of Arian reductionism, Nicea was concerned with Jesus' being savior from sin and death. In order to save in *that* sense, Jesus had to be "one in being with the Father" and not merely one in whom the Father (or the Spirit or the Logos) was *present* and *active*. It was precisely this type of indwelling-functional Christology which the Fathers of Ephesus in 431 perceived (rightly or wrongly) in Nestorius and condemned with their teaching of hypostatic union as being incompatible with Nicea. It is interesting that Haight, in spending only one line on Ephesus, never presents an analysis of the issues involved at that Council and its teaching of hypostatic union. Flowing from his interpretation of Nicea is his soteriological position that Jesus is not universal savior in any truly causal sense and hence can admit of other saviors.

4) My most serious reservation is not that Haight demythologizes or de-hellenizes, but that he does not sufficiently de-hellenize and hence remains trapped within the very metaphysical premises which generated the two nature Christology in the first place. Both the Alexandrine and Antiochene models and their underlying philosophical premises, especially that of the infinite antithesis between the divine and the human, must be transcended if we are to maintain consistently a Jesus who is truly and fully human and divine. What is needed is a more biblical, eschatological view of reality, history and God. This I do not see reflected in Haight.

I wish to affirm again that Haight's is a challenging work deserving of serious study. However, it should be read only by those possessing solid background in Christological tradition as well as a dose of hermeneutical skill.

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