

## Book Reviews

*Cultivating the Presence*, by TOM SAMPSON. New York, N. Y.: Thomas Crowell Co., 1977. 212 pp. \$3.95.

Reviewed by Dr. Albert F. Bean, director/teacher, University of Missouri, Columbia.

Christians of all sorts are hungry today, hungry for a more intimate experience with God. Traditional forms of worship and personal devotion have only whetted the appetites of many who seek to make an inward journey. Thus, some have turned eastern and neo-pagan methods to turn inward; others have taken the self-destructive road of drugs. Campus ministers then are "hemmed in." The market is flooded with books on self-awareness and the inward gaze; but denominational or "main-line" helps are non-existent. The need is for a book in the center of the Christian stream which points one on the way of the Christian saints, Tom Sampson has written just such a book. The book is simple and easily read; it is profound and worthy of re-reading. The book's sub-title is "A Spiritual Guide for a Journey Toward the Presence of God." As a guide it points out a way to follow but without demanding slavish obedience to any single view or practice. From the beginning the reader is lead to recognize that the presence of God is His to give. God is never tied to us by a procedure or an activity. Rather, Christians are to practice being open to His presence in order that in His time and fashion God may come to us. God's ways reflect His initiative and the "enormous variety of souls." The Presence of God can neither be commanded nor forced. "The best that any method can do is to help us become more open and sensitive so that we can receive more of the meaning of the spirit." (p. 74)

The author of the book knows the quest from personal experience, and he briefly relates his own inward journey in the opening chapter. But the book is not about Tom Sampson;

instead, it is an instruction manual concerned with explanations and techniques and resources. The opening section explains what this Presence is which Christians throughout the ages have sought. Without being mystical, the writer uses scripture, history, and story to identify the Presence. Methods used to cultivate the Presence are mentioned but not discussed at length. Sampson writes about decisions the beginning seeker needs to make: How do I cultivate the Presence, How much time do I give to the quest? The author mentions disciplines used by Christians including several pages on prayer and also on silence. In the section devoted to prayer, Sampson discusses how to pray and for what and how often. He counsels, too, about the "dry periods" in one's prayer life.

There are two surprises in the first half of the work. Seldom does one find cautions in a book of this sort. But the writer treats briefly problems and dangers of the inward life, e.g., avoidance of drugs as a technique, the difficulty Protestants have in contemplative prayer, the increasing difficulty of making life-style choices as one continues the journey. The second un-anticipated reward of *Cultivating the Presence* is its balance between the inward life and social concerns. There is the practical counsel of cultivating a non-religious interest and in visiting the poor. One of the chapters, too, is entitled "The Presence as an Influence Toward Personal and Social Change!" No forced dichotomy between journey inward, journey outward exists here. Thus, the first section of the book is a well-balanced, easily-read primer on beginning the inward journey.

The most significant feature of the book, however, is the way it combines a manual on how to begin the inward life with a resource on how to continue and to progress. The second half of the book is an introduction to classical Christian literature pertaining to the inward journey or the Presence. In that portion of the book the author draws from many

sources and points toward others. He places before the reader a sort of "buffet" of books and authors and ideas while pointing out some truths of Christian "nutrition." Sampson prints excerpts from "twenty one significant books of the Presence" in order to give the reader a taste of this sort of literature. The twenty-one books include well-known works such as *Pilgrim's Progress* and Brother Lawrence's booklet; but less commonly mentioned writings are there, too, e.g., Bernard of Clairvaux's *Song of Songs* and John Woolman's *Journal*. These excerpts make good devotional reading. The final major section reviews "forty-two classics of the spiritual life" and gives brief biographical sketches of their authors. This latter element, the biographical notes, is invaluable. Times, places, and major works are mentioned. There is enough here for a lifetime of serious seeking; but Sampson cautions earlier in the book that one should not attempt to embrace the whole of the field. He quotes Douglas Steere: "Be proud to be ignorant of vast areas of the 'religious book' field. Nowhere does novelty count so little as in devotional reading." And again, "A real devotional book is one that you can live with year after year and that never stales or never fails to speak to some needs in your life." By introducing the reader to classics in the field, Sampson has given long life to his work.

The book's shortcomings are minor. This reviewer disagreed occasionally with Sampson (and the "saints"), but the effect of reading the book is hunger, hunger for the Presence. Few who have a calling to this relationship will be satisfied by **Cultivating the Presence**; but the dissatisfaction will come because our hopes are raised, our appetites whetted, and our eyes opened. This book is not simply to be read and shelved, it is to be used.

---

*Gothard: The Man and His Ministry*, by WILFRED BOCKELMAN. Santa Barbara, California: Quill Publications, 1976. 150 pp. \$2.95

*Reviewed by Ircel Harrison, Director of the Baptist Student Union, Mississippi State University, State College.*

The mention of "Bill Gothard" and the "Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts" in a group evokes strong feelings, either positive or negative, with very few taking a moderate position. The Gothard seminar is a phenomenon of the seventies which has been promoted primarily by word of mouth and in spite of the founder's personal policy of keeping a "low profile."

This reviewer has heard glowing reports of the Institute from both adults and students, many of whom have attended more than once. It is often difficult to obtain precise answers to questions about the sessions and scanning the famous "red notebook" does not really help one to understand the attraction of the movement.

For those of us who have not attended the Institute, and perhaps for some who have participated, Bockelman attempts to provide a quick overview and evaluation (he avoids the word "critique") of Gothard and his ministry.

Bockelman has not undertaken an easy task. First, Gothard himself did not want the book written. He would prefer that anyone interested in the Institute attend rather than having the information filtered through another medium. Gothard feels if a person has a criticism or question about his ministry, that the "Biblical approach" (based on Matthew 18 and Galatians 6: 1) is to come to him and discuss it with him personally.

Second, it is difficult to cover the thirty-two hours of lectures and the lengthy "red notebook" in such a brief book.

Third, the author attempts to be fair with Gothard and takes issue with those who would dismiss him and his ministry too easily. He goes out of his way to stress the points which he feels are valid and "extremely practical" (p. 114). Bockelman says that he is not trying "to tell others what they should or should not do in relation to Gothard. Realistically, I doubt that it would do very much good anyway (p. 137)."

Bockelman does attempt to put Gothard in perspective. He provides biographical data, some of it drawn from an interview with Gothard with other parts taken from personal il-

illustrations used in the Institute. He also gives a brief outline of "The Big Red Book" and describes its use in the Institute.

The meat of the book is in the chapters dealing with Gothard's use of the scripture; his view of God; the well-publicized "Chain of Command"; his use of the trichotomy of spirit, soul, and body; and his approach to dating, marriage, and the family. Each chapter gives a concise review of Gothard's presentation on the subject, then an "evaluation" (actually a critique or analysis) by the author.

Bockelman believes that the success of the Institute derives from the desire of people to find certainty in a time of ambiguity, a reaffirmation of traditional patterns of authority and clear lines of responsibility.

Although he likes much of what he sees in Gothard's approach, the author sees the flaws as well. He believes that Gothard's presentation comes "very close to the borderline of leading people to bondage rather than freedom" (p. 140) by emphasizing law over grace. Certainly there are demands that go along with discipleship, but the motivating force behind it all is the love of God and the freedom that comes in knowing Jesus Christ.

Several printing errors flaw the quality of the book, but the content is valuable. If you have not attended the Institute or don't plan to, read it. If you have attended, read it to gain another person's perspective.

---

*The 11 O'clock News and Experimental Sermons*, edited by John Killinger. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1975. 156 pp. \$6.95.

Reviewed by David Book, Associate, Student Department, Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Interest in creative worship is definitely on the increase and John Killinger, professor of preaching at Vanderbilt Divinity School, Nashville, has done worship leaders a real service by collecting twenty-five experimental sermons which represent a variety of forms and styles. Examples of innovative monologues, dialogues,

drama, free verse, multi media, and pantomime are included. Professor Killinger makes a strong case in his introduction to the Collection for "spontaneity and creative freedom" in church worship. Pointing out the inherent risks involved, he challenges worshippers to play and frolic before God in "natural and unselfconscious ways in order to celebrate God's presence and to uncover new dimensions of their own existence. Tradition is not necessarily invalidated by this free-style worship; rather it can "breathe new life into old ideas, old concepts, and images in new packages, new combinations, new environments.

It is refreshing to note that seven of the experimental sermons in this collection were contributed by Baptists, including a dramatic monologue by Alton McEachern, former pastor of St. Matthews Baptist, Louisville. There are several excellent selections which merit particular note because of their relevance to campus ministry. In "Parable of a Parable," Patterson D. Ellis relates a very stuffy sermon preached by an erudite pastor. The intellectual treatise on the Good Samaritan is interrupted four times by persons with specific needs, all of which are ignored. Allen Oliver has a donkey give an eyewitness account of the nativity in a delightful monologue, "A Night at the Inn." McEachern's monologue, "The Distant Disciple," is an excellent example of the intricate weaving of a Biblical character, in this case Nicodemus, with valid cultural details to construct a viable and authentic first-person account. A parody, Jerry Harber's "Sound and Fury," is a classic. Cluttered with the ambiguous cliches of advanced righteousness, this sermon, unfortunately, would probably sound like good Biblical preaching to too many pew-warmers. A good multi media program for the campus could be adapted from "The Celebration of Life," by William Simpson. This innovative worship leader constructed the sermon from pictures of his church members engaged in their everyday routines. Killinger's own "The 11 O'clock News" is a meaningful blending of news commentary, on-the-spot reporting, and sacrosanct commercials that

produce an experience quite appropriate for the campus. Other selections deal with marriage, death, leisure, hunger, and even one which is structured to help smokers resolve to stop smoking.

The diversity of this collection and the concepts which motivated its editor constitute an excellent resource for anyone genuinely interested in creative worship. I highly recommend it.

*Edge of Adventure*, by BRUCE LARSON and KEITH MILLER. Waco, Texas: Word Publishers, 1974, 226 pp., \$3.95.

*Reviewed by John Gilbert, Campus Minister, College of the Ozarks/Polytechnic College, Russellville, Arkansas.*

I have chosen to review an experiential program which included a book, rather than review only the book. *The Edge of Adventure*\* has been the most practical help to me, theologically and programmatically, as a campus minister in the past four years. The program material includes a text, tapes to structure 13 meetings for small groups, and a work book for each participant. I have used the program four times on two campuses, and in a church (median adults). Each experience was enabling to several participants.

*Edge of Adventure* covers the basics of Christian living, beginning with a discussion of life before commitment to Christ, continuing with a look at Christian commitment—"the gamble"—and then progressing with the following topics: prayer, the Bible; church; personal relationships in family, school, job, and neighborhood; moral failure; loss of faith; anxiety and fear; how to handle failure; and potential-destiny. Each chapter is introduced by a letter from one author to the other. Then an essay follows, and a reply letter, and the second essay closes the chapter.

The depth of the material is challenging for Freshmen and Sophomores. The purpose of the program is to enable the participants to become more aware of feelings about themselves and others while they learn cognitive material. There is definite-

ly the strength of "doing" the book with others in small group process which heightens learning potential.

Miller's essays in the first two chapters concerning the conversion experience are the best I've read. For that reason I strongly recommend this section for students in general, seekers and new Christians in particular. Beyond the first two chapters, the book emphasizes the pilgrimage concept of Christian growth, a welcome relief from "hot-gospel," quickie solutions.

There are two strengths in the structure of the experience. The first is the opportunity of the people (students) to "look it over" at the first group meeting before having to commit themselves. A week's consideration is possible, so a person can "come aboard" without a lot of pressure. The second strength is a follow-up evaluation. Six months after the 13 week experience, each participant is reminded of contracts that were made during the program, and he/she is helped to evaluate what has transpired in that half year.

The program has two weaknesses if it is not adapted for campus use. The small group meetings are highly structured through the use of tapes. While they keep the risk factors at a comfortable level, the tape tends to inhibit facilitation if more time is needed for the group to continue working on a particular segment. The second weakness of the program is its design to teach a wide age span. For example, single, non-working students will have difficulty relating with material and tapes about marriage and jobs. Nevertheless, the program is flexible, lending itself to easy adaptation. The group can use the book and small group meetings without the tapes, or it can arrange the time flexibility necessary to cope with the uniqueness of the group's process. Another adaptation could be the use of part of the material rather than the whole text.

Overall, I have found the book and the total program helpful. Many student lives have been enabled while experiencing *Edge of Adventure*.

\* There is a sequel titled *Living the Adventure*. Both titles are from Paul Tourniens' influence.

*Showings*, by LARRY JULIAN of Norwich, *The Classics of Western Spirituality Volume I*. Ramsey, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1973, 324 pp. \$9.95 (cloth) \$6.95 (paper)

*Reviewed by Clinton F. Dunagan, Professor of Philosophy and Religion, Hardin-Summons University, Abilene, Texas.*

The first volume in a series called *The Classics of Western Spirituality* is published by the Paulist Press. Each edition translates from a critical text. They contain substantial introductions giving the significance of the work and central features of interpretation. The series has the works of many faiths—Christian, Jewish, and Islamic. Among them will be Christian classics like Jakob Boehme's, *The Way to Christ*; William Law's, *Serious Call*; Meister Eckhart's, *The Complete Works*. But there will also be the Jewish Hasidic tales of Nachman of Bratzlav, the Islamic Sufi Attar's, "Discourse of the Birds," and material from the Woodland Indians.

In *Showings* the preface addresses women as church teachers, contemplation, and God as mother. Julian herself comes alive as one of the more profound of the English spiritual writers with mastery of the rhetorical art comparable to Chaucer. *Showings* has a long and short text and both are reproduced in this edition. The latter expands and explains the former. Both are based on an actual experience, a revelation, a "bodily sight." The longer text begins with a summary of the sixteen things Julian felt revealed to her.

In a day of increased interest in the inner life, Julian offers depth of understanding and practical insight. She opens up what it is to trust in prayer in the fourteenth revelation. Here appears one of her most quoted statements:

I am the ground of your beseeching. First, it is my will that you should have it, and then I make you to wish it, and then I make you to beseech it. If you beseech it, how could it be that you would not have what you beseech! (p. 248)

Ecological concerns will also find a grounding in Julian's sense of relation to nature. Chapter five is a vision of a hazelnut. She sees that even the smallest things exist in God's providence. "It lasts and always will, because God loves it; and thus everything has being through the love of God" (p. 183). But this goes on to show her what God is to us through providence: "... he is to us everything which is good and comforting to our help. He is our clothing, who wraps and enfolds us for love, embraces us, and shelters us, surrounds us for his love, which is so tender that he may never desert us" (p. 183).

The reader would expect Julian to display her Catholic commitment to asceticism as an anchoress. At the same time there is room to respect one who loved God so deeply and understands intimacy with the Divine.

---

*Brother to a Dragonfly*, by WILL D. CAMPBELL. New York, New York: The Seabury Press, 1977, 265 pp. \$9.95.

*Reviewed by Jerry Buckner, Campus Minister, The University of Maryland, College Park.*

*Brother to a Dragonfly* is a lot of things. It is history, sociology, psychology and theology, but above all it is a love story. The basic story is the love of two brothers for each other. It is forceful and moving. Will and Joe Campbell love each other. Each giving and receiving love in his own way. The book starts in the late 1920's when Joe and Will are boys and ends in the mid-sixties with Joe's tragic death.

But there is too much there to be contained in recounting love of brother for brother. It is really the story of Will Campbell's love for all people, those he likes and those he dislikes, those he understands and those he doesn't understand. Will Campbell is the one person I know who doesn't make "love your enemy" sound hypocritical. I'll bet Will Campbell believes that Jesus even loved

the Pharisees and that we should do the same.

**Brother to a Dragonfly** is a very intimate look into the South and its culture, its struggle with change and the role that religion played in its unfolding drama. Campbell is brutally honest in his description of churches in general and Baptists in particular. He sees us as so many outside the church see us. Their view always makes me uncomfortable.

Along the way you will meet some fascinating people. If Thad Garner and P. D. East don't beguile you there is really little hope for you. How refreshing it is to have heroes who are human and not embarrassed by that humanity. You may love Thad, as I did, or you may despise him, but whatever your opinion you will find him interesting.

Two warnings about the book. First, if "earthy" language bothers you, you will be bothered a lot. The rural south had some colorful expressions and Campbell uses and records them all. His definition of the gospel in ten words or less, "We're all bastards but God loves us anyway," is to me classic. We are offended by bastards but with less than that we miss the nature of sin. Thad's definition of the church as "one cat in one ditch and one nobody of a son of a bitch trying to pull him out" may shock our modesty, but it will save us from self-righteousness.

If somewhere along the line you missed a theological education, either by not going to seminary, or by going to seminary, reading **Brother to a Dragonfly** should complete your education.

The second warning is that if you are embarrassed to let your emotions show, read the book in private. Love and death are touchstone emotions. I laughed out loud at times and I wept as I read it. So did my wife and so will you if you have any warmth at all in your soul.

**Brother to a Dragonfly** is a rare experience, don't miss it.

*Strange New Religions*, by LEON MCBETH. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1977. 154 pp. \$2.75.

*Reviewed by Glenn McCoy, Campus Minister, Eastern New Mexico University, Portales.*

Can anything good come out of a speaking engagement before a "Wives Only Club"? **Strange New Religions**, written by Dr. Leon McBeth, suggests a positive answer. Dr. McBeth, teacher of church history at Southwestern Seminary since 1960, got the idea for the book from a talk he gave to the "Wives Only Club" at Southwestern.

The book consists of nine chapters. The first eight deal with various new religions. Individual chapters are given to the Unification Church, Krishna Consciousness, Scientology, Children of God, Zen Buddhism, Astrology, and Transcendental Meditation. Chapter eight treats Satanism, Demonism, and Witches. Chapter nine is an attempt to understand why the rise of so many new religions.

The author's approach in each chapter is consistent. He opens with a popular introduction that attempts to catch the reader's attention. This is followed by a brief history of the religious group. Then the doctrinal concepts are presented. Finally, the author gives practical suggestions as to how the Christian can respond to each group.

In some respects the last chapter of the book is the most helpful of all. Here McBeth presents some "probable causes" as to why so many of these religious groups blossomed in the 1960s. He lists social factors that include (1) disillusionment among the youth in the areas of politics, economics, and science; (2) "future fright"; (3) family disintegration; and (4) drug usage. Religious factors are summed up in the belief then held that the church was not meeting the needs of the world in which she existed.

The chapter also describes major motifs of the "strange new religions." Many of them carry an Eastern flavor. Most of them depend upon their own experiences as their religious authority. There is little interest in

the outer world. The religious adherents seek not to subdue the earth, but to subdue themselves. Most of the religious groups have some new scheme for marriage, sex, and the family. They present a strong reaction (sometimes overaction) against permissiveness. There is a general trend among the groups to engage in some form of altered consciousness or ecstasy. Many of their teachings are non-rational or even irrational. This presents no problem to their belief. Finally, they assume a Pelagian (i.e., basic goodness, or at least potential goodness) view of man.

The reader appreciates the frankness with which Dr. McBeth approaches how the Christian is to witness to these groups. He suggests that in many cases to attempt to witness is a waste of time. His alternative is that we should concentrate on preventive witnessing. We must attempt to identify the spiritual needs of the new cults and see that our churches meet these needs.

McBeth writes in a personable, easy-to-understand, sometimes—humorous fashion. He offers some keen insights in his evaluations of the religious groups. He evidences the careful research of a church historian. His professional background as a church historian is seen especially in

the latter part of the book. Each chapter ends with a suggested reading list for those who wish to study the subject in depth.

Overall the book serves as a good introduction to the various religious groups. College students will have no trouble in understanding the content. The book may serve as a good introduction for any student and/or campus minister who confronts one or more of these groups. There is a minimum of errors in the book. This reviewer only found two misspelled words and two incorrect words.

One final note. How does this book compare with Starkes' **Confronting Popular New Cults**? Both books contain common materials. For example both have chapters on TM, the Unification Church, Scientology, and Hare Krishna. However, Starkes' book contains material on the UFO and the Bahai faith while McBeth's does not. In turn, McBeth gives consideration to the Children of God, Zen Buddhism, Astrology, and Satanism, whereas Starkes does not. McBeth's book is the work of a church historian, an academician. Starkes' book is the work of one who has studied the groups more from a practical viewpoint with personal involvement.