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Vol. 9, No. 1
April 2006
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BOOK REVIEWS

Woman, Religion and Spirituality in Asia by Sister Mary John Mananzan. Published by Anvil Publishing Incorporated, Pasig City, Philippines, 2004 (263 pages).

Spirituality is generally conceived as an expression of an individual's life journey, and "does not refer to any specific religion or faith, but to depth, value, relatedness, heart and personal substance" (Mitsifer, 1995, p. 4). Mary John Mananzan, writes *Woman, Religion and Spirituality in Asia* from her perspectives and experiences gained as a sister in the Missionary Benedictine order of the Catholic Church in the Philippines. Sister Mary holds a degree in Missiology from the Wilhelmsuniversitat, Muenster, Germany, and a Doctorate in Philosophy majoring in Linguistic Philosophy from the Pontifical Gregorian University of Rome. She is also a feminist activist, having established a number of women-focused programs, as well as serving for 18 years (1986-2004), as the national chairperson of Gabriela, a Philippine feminist alliance of women's organizations.

Sister Mary has also been awarded three international fellowships including the granting of a Fellowship as an Asian Public Intellectual of 2002, by the Nippon Foundation, which enabled her to carry out research in four Asian countries, resulting in the publication of this book.

Her main objective in writing the book was to show the impact of the institutional religions of Asia on women – the oppressive and liberating elements of religion on women's spirituality, considered to be "an inner inspiration to know, to feel, to enter into contact with a greater reality beyond and pervading the universe which inhabits also our own being" (p. xi). In the first chapter, Sister Mary relates her story and her first confrontation with Protestantism through her study in Germany, where she nearly lost her faith, but "began to see that other people thought differently" (p. 5).

Upon her homecoming from her studies abroad, Sister Mary became involved in social and political activism, taking on "the struggle of the people" (p. 7), during the period of military rule in the Philippines, which ultimately led to her involvement in the women's movement and feminist theology. She perceives that women's lower status in most Asian countries has been reinforced

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by a patriarchal Western mission theology, which calls for an “alternative theology of mission” (p. 17). According to her “the task of feminist theology is twofold: deconstruction of the dehumanizing aspects of institutional Christianity and reconstruction and enhancement of its more liberating elements” (p. 35).

Prior to the Spanish invasion of the Philippines in the 16th century, and with it, the introduction of Catholicism, Filipino women had enjoyed equal status with men economically, socially, politically, and in the religious practices of tribal religions. Despite the repressive elements brought by Christianity, a feminist theology as described by Sister Mary, has enabled women to enjoy a “passionate and compassionate spirituality” (p. 37).

A comparative study of the dominant Asian religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, along with Confucianism, and Indigenous and Folk religions, this book outlines the basic tenets of each religion; how spirituality is perceived within them; and the roles of women, along with associated issues resulting from imposed roles and hierarchies. Sister Mary also interviews women adherents to each of the dominant Asian religions, followed by feminist reflections.

Her research into women, religion, and spirituality in Asia has led her to conclude that the oppressive aspects of institutionalized religion “are found in the realm of religiosity” (p. 177), whereas the more liberating aspects can be found in spirituality. It is Sister Mary’s belief that through inter-religious dialogue, a “shared spirituality” can be gained through personal experiences of transcendence, and joining “the struggle for justice and social transformation” (p. 252).

A number of Sister Mary John Mananzan’s insights into, and discussion of female oppression, both within Western Christian and Eastern religions, may be disturbing to some readers. Also, her theological positions raise questions for theologians of non-Catholic religious belief systems, however, her book advances understanding in areas of religious life and spirituality that can benefit social researchers, students of missiology and feminist studies, theologians, and others interested in examining the formation of worldviews that impact on individual spirituality.

Reference

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Valuegenesis Ten Years Later: A Study of Two Generations, by Gillespie, V. B. & Donahue, M. J. Published by: Hancock Center Publication: Riverside: CA, 2004 (423 pages).

“Nobody understands youth!” is a statement which carries much less weight after you have read through the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists’ second mammoth study on Adventist youth: *Valuegenesis ten years later: A study of two generations*. The original *Valuegenesis* study of 1990, which sought to find responses from some 16,000 subjects, 11,000 of which were used for their final production of *Faith in the Balance* by Roger Dudley (1992), was expanded this second time around to cover more than 21,000 students.

The stated purpose has not changed since *Faith in the Balance*. Gillespie quotes the 1992 edition, reaffirming the goal to provide “the most pertinent findings of the *Valuegenesis* study to the Adventist church in North America and to draw implications both for our educational system in particular and for youth ministry in general through the channels of our homes, churches, and schools” (p. 39).

The book itself, when considered aesthetically, is small and unimpressive. But let the youth director, pastor, research or concerned parent browse through its pages and they will find a light that shines into the lives of Adventist teenagers that will elucidate many a dark corner of youth ministry.

The writing style is clear, sensible and pragmatic; easy enough for the casual reader, and deep enough to expand the mind of the serious examiner. Similar to Dudley’s contribution, Gillespie seems to aim for usefulness over erudition; and in the end, accomplishes both. Bottom line: it is uncomplicated, intriguing, and helpful.

The 14 chapters are aptly illustrated and supported throughout with statistical percentages and charts on the various subjects assessed. Areas covered range from spiritual maturity to lifestyle; from church loyalty to family relationships, and everything in between. Gillespie does not just present the numbers, but parallels them with conclusions and proposals. This is probably the strongest point of the book. And if his numbers and explanations do not satisfy you, go to the chapter entitled *From the Statistician’s Desk*, written by the chief statistician of *Valuegenesis 1 & 2*, and overall coordinator of Project Affirmation and *Valuegenesis 1*, Charles T. Smith, PhD., of La Sierra University, and let the statistician himself give you his perspective on all the findings. To whet your appetite a bit, one excellent section in that chapter is called *My most important finding in ten words or less*. In short, Smith concludes: “watch out if they smoke cigarettes” (p. 380). He saw a worrisome correlation of “-.31 with intrinsic religiousness; -.27 with faith maturity; +.22

with dissatisfaction with Adventist standards, -.22 with both denominational loyalty and personal piety, and an astounding +.56 with the 'at risk' index" (pp. 380-381). Invaluable information, indeed.

Thankfully, things are not *all* that dreadful. Gillespie dedicates an entire chapter to describing the positive aspects of the youth, and giving hope and encouragement for continued ministry to these lambs.

In the end, the handy appendix gives you a taste of what the instrument looked like and leaves you wishing you could get access to the original as soon as possible.

Gillespie and the research team do not claim to have mined all of the data which Valuegenesis 2 brought forth; on the contrary, they encourage the diligent scholar to pursue opportunities for further quarrying of valuable nuggets that have a bearing on youth ministry today.

Valuegenesis ten years later: A study of two generations is a must read for any person wanting to peer through the latest window into the minds of Adventist teenagers.

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Religious Influence on Health and Well-Being in the Elderly. K. Warner Schaie, Neal Krause, & Alan Booth, Editors. Broadway, NY: Springer Publishing Company, Inc., 2004 (320 pp.)

Both Warner Schaie and Alan Booth are distinguished professors at Pennsylvania State University. Neal Krause is at the University of Michigan. This team of credible subject matter specialists in psychology, scientific research and sociology, respectively, form a part of the larger Springer Series Societal Impact on Aging, a multidisciplinary effort to promote theory-building between scientists who study societal structures and contextual influences on adult development.

Religion as expressed by these authors, is a sensitive topic of discussion, and difficult to tap into. However, an entry point was found, for recent behavioral studies have shown that there is indeed a link between religion and mortality. The authors examined issues such as spirituality and the effects of participation in formal religious structures, and their impact upon aging.

Religious Influence on Health and Well-Being in the Elderly is the sixteenth volume in the series that addresses societal influences on adult development by demystifying the connection between religion [spirituality] and health. The authors build a rationale for this volume in chapter one by introducing the fundamental question of “which domain had the greatest effect on health?” (p. 9) among the following domains: church attendance and denominational preferences; prayer; religious coping responses; forgiveness; life course issues in religion and health; socioeconomic status and race; church-based social support; gender; the negative side of religious involvement; cross-cultural and international issues; and spirituality. Furthermore, the authors considered three sub-questions: “First, why study religion at all? Second, why study religion and aging specifically? And third, how can a meaningful strategy be devised for approaching research on religion, aging and health?” (p. 1).

The contributions from diverse authors, in the chapters of this volume, are purposed to assist investigators in finding specific guidance on how to integrate newly emerging insights into their research programs. The authors illustrate how the study of religion can serve as a strategic context for integrating much of what has been learned in the social and behavioral sciences.

The first section of this volume gives a broad overview of literature linking church observance and religious denominations. The chapters give a theoretical explanation for the association between “religious observance and health; and taking account the social meaning of religion” (p. 56). Epidemiological research has been done in this field; however, the issue lacks theoretical explanatory models. Data from theories and cohort studies done on this topic have attributed social forces, for instance, social integration or the regulation provided by

religions institutions to causing the positive results, rather than religion itself. Further studies have ascertained that social ties to family, friends, and neighborhoods are associated with lowering mortality risks. This section encourages the pursuit of new theoretical developments in the area of religion and its effect on health among the elderly population.

The second domain, prayer, is described by the author as “an attractive topic” (p. 70). It is a challenging area that addresses questions on the ‘what, who, where, when, how and why’s’ while trying to understand the connection between prayer and health. The author points out that to a gerontologist epidemiologist, prayer provides a “protective factor against psychological distress, primarily depression” (p. 80) in addition to cardiovascular diseases, functional disability, pain and substance abuse. Psychosocial, and neurophysiological explanations have tried to make sense of the connection between prayer and health, or what the author refers to as the “prayer/health link” (p. 96). However, the authors point out that past studies on prayer have had limiting factors. For instance, the question “How often do you pray?” has been measured by a metric range and not raw prevalence, and, therefore, “does not enable rough estimates of frequency” (p. 78). The authors therefore imply that the use of frequency of prayer or even church attendance doesn’t necessarily indicate spirituality.

The third domain, religious coping responses, answers the question of how religion might prolong life or basically affect health. The authors reviewed a collection of studies that had examined perception and mental health and attempted to explain them and to establish how religion works. Since religion hasn’t been supported by empirical research in this way in the past, the question of how religious coping evolves over an individual’s life cycle is not yet answered.

The authors define forgiveness in the fourth domain as “a response, a personality disposition, and as a characteristic of social units” (p. 165). There are those whom the author identifies as possessing a tendency to forgive. Specifically, there are those in social relationships, for example marriage, that tend to display attributes of trust, intimacy or commitment to forgive. In addition, cross-sectional and longitudinal studies have attempted to link religion to forgiveness and aging. These have established that the older persons in society have a tendency to forgive more freely than the younger ones. Though a causal relationship between forgiveness and physical health has not been established, controlled empirical studies have shown that forgiveness has a positive effect on longevity and quality of life.

The fifth domain, life course issues in religion and health, projects religiosity as increasing with age, thereby making the older folks less vengeful, less aggressive, less remorseful, and so on, than younger people. The authors

suggest that this so, because as people gradually become older, they invest in relationships that they wish to bloom into meaningful ones.

Socioeconomic status and race concludes the domains addressed in this volume. Contextual perspectives affirm this by associating individuals with the context of the community or institution, as well as “personal expressions of religious faith” (p. 221) that directly affects their relationships and activities, specifically, in the area of social welfare and health. The authors base their discussion on the African American race in comparison to their White counterparts. Literature points to strong religious involvement among African Americans, and supports a connection between race, health and spirituality. However, religious affiliation and attendance was associated in Whites with “happiness” and related with “more distress symptoms among Blacks” (p. 225). Selected studies focused on the role of the association of religion, health, and race thus advocating for consideration for psychological, social and epidemiological research as well.

It is interesting to note how the authors in this book draw their conclusion from reviews of both epidemiological research and behavioral studies. In the past few decades, these studies have shown the significant effects of spirituality-related variables on health. Evidence was so clear in earlier medical research that spirituality and medicine have become inextricably interwoven in a connection called the mind and body link.

However, the field has been confronted with challenges of measurement, analysis and conceptualization, as identified by the authors. The realization of religion’s sensitivity and the difficulty of measurement it presents gives this book an avenue to explore behavioral studies that have systematically attempted to trace health-related implications that exist in society.

Consequently, *Religious Influence on Health and Well-Being in the Elderly* combines gerontology, religion, and social science survey evidence to provide readers with raw material from which to make informed decisions and establish in what direction they would prefer to understand the information presented. In addition to the topics which are well researched in this book, the authors point to topics that need further research—for instance, the need for increased religio-ethnic research and empirical research outside the United States and the European community to enable cross-comparisons. This makes this book a useful resource and worth reading for those who wish to carry out social research connecting religion and health, or merely for those who wish to inform themselves about this very important field.

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Parenting by the Spirit, by Sally Hohnberger. Published by Pacific Press: Mountain View, CA, 2004 (155 pages).

A conscientious and intentional Christian mother, Sally Hohnberger, and her husband, Jim, touch people's lives through a family life ministry that aims toward the ideal of parenting after God's heart. The Hohnbergers travel nationally as well as internationally presenting Bible-based seminars titled Empowered Living Ministries (www.empoweredlivingministries.org).

Parenting by the Spirit is not so much a method of raising godly children as it is an attitude that parents need in raising children. The Hohnbergers' personal journey of parenting two boys as baby Christians themselves led them to the true Source of parenting, God Himself. As a rose opens petal by petal until it becomes a fragrant flower, so Sally's journey with God opened as she grew in trusting Him continually. She realized that the Omniscient Father is Omnipotent, as well as Omnipresent. Her testimony of raising two sons leads one to see that Abba God is intensely personal and is committed to our children even more than we are.

A highlight of this book is a personal testimony that includes failures frustrations, and tuning in to the still, small voice of God. Does God really communicate with us intimately, perpetually, presently every step of the way of our parenting experience? One could almost feel that it is presumption to even think that God does, indeed does communicate constantly with us. But Hohnberger answers "Yes!" and repeatedly emphasizes this important point. God is the Parent of parents, the Father of fathers, and through Him the true wisdom of parenting is imparted.

Parenting is described as both a horizontal and vertical experience. The horizontal is the human interaction that we experience with our children while the vertical is the divine communication that takes place between the parent and God. Each interaction with our children urges us to communicate more intimately with our Heavenly Father.

With the dysfunction that sin brings into family life, there are many single parents. Each chapter ends with a special focus of encouragement for parents involved in the "lone embrace." The first two chapters, "Embracing the Work" and "The Mary Principle" really lay a foundation for parenting and present a paradigm shift for Hohnberger. She had been a career woman as a nurse, and enjoyed being an intentional Christian. Early after the birth of her first child, Matthew, while on the way to work the Spirit of God interrupted what she thought was an incredibly providential "win-win" situation – working and sharing the Gospel, as well as having the best babysitter—the church school teacher's wife! Three distinct questions, which Hohnberger knew God had prompted for her contemplation, bounced around in her head. "Will Matthew

learn her (the babysitter's) view of Christianity or yours?" "Do you really want the caregiver instilling her values in your son?" "Did Mary raise Jesus or did another?" The next six months were agonizing as she wrestled with this gentle challenge from God. She finally moved out in faith to be a stay-at-home mother.

Each chapter has an appropriate Bible verse that directs the reader heavenward. Throughout each chapter (except for the last one) there are encouraging conversations between Hohnberger and Father God. God's voice is often heard saying, "Sally..."

Concepts covered in the book include:

1. An honest review of our own parenting behaviors may at times cause us to feel inadequate, and rightly so, as we bring our own baggage to the task. But we need not be overwhelmed. "Embracing the work is first embracing Christ. It's letting Him have all of me—the good, the bad and the ugly" (p. 21).

2. Jesus' earthly mother Mary faced much uncertainty with her divine pregnancy and caring for the Incarnate Redeemer; yet she trusted God implicitly, letting Him be the Pilot and she, the parent—the co-pilot.

3. Cooperation with God opens the door for Him to transform the parent's inconsistencies as well as poor techniques of problem solving. Christ's love is able to filter and purify our thoughts before they are shared with our children.

4. Seeking the voice of God is vitally important since He is the Great Shepherd and purely loves as well as knows His little lambs' (our children's) very thoughts. God uses impressions—our senses, our reasoning, and His omniscient leading.

5. A lasting, loving and abiding relationship requires regularity and consistency. This is true for our children as well as for our own relationship with God.

6. In desiring our children to obey us, we as parents should lead by example in obeying and submitting our will to God's. The will is the deciding vote between the higher powers of reason, intellect and conscience weighing against the lower powers of emotions, feelings, passions, appetites, affections, lusts, and desires.

7. Parents' words and actions are consciously and subconsciously perceived and picked up by our children. A child desires to please the parents, and as parents, we need His loving spirit prompting our very thoughts and attitudes thus bearing fruit in our words and actions.

8. Regularity and schedules are rudiments that are important to both parent and child and this requires prioritizing with balance, and not extremism.

9. The obedience of doing things God's way for our children has opportunity to be tested in our relationship as parents with our own relationship with God. It involves candidly allowing God to intervene in our thoughts, feelings and emotions in cooperation.

10. Reflections on motherhood/fatherhood, based on the decision to be the primary caretakers of their children involved choices, sacrifices and simplicity that yielded the fruits of righteousness as well as many joys. Hohnberger concludes by saying, "True motherhood requires an active faith and dependence upon a God who longs to work miracles for you and your child, a God who desires, more than anything else, to lift your burdens and help you in your efforts for your little ones. The only question remaining is: Will you let God part the clouds of heaven for you and live to raise your precious ones to walk with Him?" (p. 155).

Those who are fortunate enough to find access to this book will find spiritual nourishment for their own parenting as they journey through its pages.

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Great Commission Companies: The Emerging Role of Business in Missions. by Steve Rundle and Tom Steffen. Downers' Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003 (204 pages).

The starting point of this book is that God is in control today, and that globalization, especially in the business environment comes as no surprise to Him. Rundle and Steffen believe that as Christians, it is our responsibility to take advantage of each opportunity that God gives us to share the good news. The authors state that their purpose in writing this book is to provide "an initial step toward integrating an economic and missiological analysis of the methods, structures and results" (p. 6) of Great Commission Companies (GCCs).

The book is divided into two sections. In the first section, they define what a GCC is, and suggest the principles that lead to being a successful GCC. The second section relates examples of successful GCCs, although in many cases the exact identity cannot be disclosed because of the difficulties in the areas where they are working.

The first point that is made in the book is that there is a significant distinction between a GCC and a business owned by Christians. The authors posit that the real question is: why does the business exist? If the business merely exists as a cover for missionary activity, it is not a true GCC. A genuine GCC is designed to be self-sustaining, with real products and/or services. It seeks to be of service and is run by committed Christians who are alert for every opportunity available to spread the Word. GCCs are often located where there is little (if any) Christian presence, and endeavors to share the Gospel by both example and teaching (as allowed by law). Other GCCs are located in developed countries, but find ways to serve their communities and to show Jesus' love through actions. Still other GCCs are organizations designed to give support to active missionaries.

One of the key characteristics of GCCs is the involvement of *kingdom professionals*. These are individuals who are well qualified in their field and also committed to sharing the gospel whenever possible.

An organization which qualifies as a GCC should have the following characteristics: (a) it is socially responsible, (b) it is income producing, (c) it is managed by *kingdom professionals*, (d) it brings glory to God, (e) it promotes the growth and multiplication of local churches, and (f) it focuses on the least-evangelized and least-developed parts of the world.

Many business professionals and authors have discussed the costs and problems caused by globalization, casting globalization in a negative light. Rundle and Steffen point out, however, that the global community actually makes it possible for GCCs to exist and even thrive in countries where traditional missionaries are not welcome. A successful business which employs

many people is much harder for a government to shut down than a business that is barely surviving, and employs few (if any) local employees.

GCCs can be categorized along two dimensions as to where they are on the Independent-Partnership axis and on the Facilitative-Pioneer axis. Since each company is designed with a specific mission in mind, they should be very clear about what their mission is, and explicit about how they intend to accomplish it.

In order for a GCC to be successful, it is important that not only the operations be run by kingdom professionals, but also that the investors and board of directors believe in the mission of the company.

The stories of various successful GCCs highlight both what to do as well as what not to do, including the personal and professional costs of working with a GCC. Various examples of unwise decisions and the consequences of not following the guiding principles are shown. Probably the most important element that links the stories, is that of leadership committed to God and the Gospel first and foremost.

This study of GCCs is not finished. This is just a beginning. Part of the problem with collecting data is the political sensitivity to missionary activities in many places where GCCs operate. Comparability between GCCs is further hampered because many of them are private companies, and the data is not easily accessible. In many cases, GCCs operate without being noticed as a GCC until someone makes personal contact with the company. What can be done is to look at what has been successful, and draw ideas from the experiences of others.

This book helps the reader to understand how mission and business can (and should) intersect. The examples and principles given are non-sectarian, and fully biblically based, enabling all Christians to accept them. The applications will vary, but the mission we all have is the same: to preach the gospel to all the world. This book should be read by every committed Christian business professional, regardless of his/her area of expertise. Every business student should be aware of these principles, and be prepared to make professional choices after reading the book. Every Christian business program should incorporate the concepts, if not the actual reading of this book, into their required curriculum.

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