



The Book Reviewer

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The God of Our Deepest Longings by Peter van Breemen, S.J. (Spirituality)

This book is really a small treasure in guiding us closer to self-knowledge, and closer to God. It can be used as a mini-retreat—an area in which the Jesuits excel. Fr. van Breemen provides scripture readings for each of his topics and asks probing questions such as “With whom do you identify in the Passion of Christ?” or “What do you consider the most meaningful thing in your

life?” Finding meaning in our lives is essential to finding peace of mind. Neither God nor meaning are found by the Hubble telescope or by the strongest microscope.

Following Fr. van Breemen’s lead, we may find that our own deepest desires coincide with God’s will for each of us; and, as we already know from experience, He knows us better than we know ourselves.

Using a story about a child admiring a stained glass window, who says that “a saint is someone the light shines through,” van Breemen teaches us how to become more transparent, more honest, less self-seeking, more loving, and more able to join Jesus in His Passion and death, “like a brook joining a river.”

Reviewed by Clare Dinno

Jesus Today by Albert Nolan (Jesus)

Albert Nolan is a Dominican priest from South Africa, and also the author of *Jesus Before Christianity*. This book picks up where the other one left off thirty years earlier, continuing the theme that the message of Jesus, himself, was really not the same as that of the many institutionalized versions of Christianity. In exactly the same way, Jesus was at odds with the scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees of His time, and with the institutionalized Hebrew religion with its man-made and impossible collection of taboos and requirements.

Fr. Nolan was active and effective in the South African struggle against apartheid. In this book he focuses on the spirituality of Jesus, and on how this was part and parcel of His constant theme of healing and social justice. Jesus was a mystic in His “oneing”—a homey term often used by Julian of Norwich—with God, and also a prophet. Fr. Nolan explains how this is a relevant goal for all of us, and places himself in the mystic-prophetic tradition of Teresa of Avila and Catherine of Sienna. They were not “dreamy ladies,” as is of-

ten thought about mystics, but rather very active and effective in the world. He points out that mere busyness and much activism may be delusional—simply escapism and egoism—if it is not coupled with a strong spiritual content and an ability to pray and to be still.

Together with many spiritual leaders today, Fr. Nolan finds comfort in the new cosmology, which unlike the mechanistic science of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is compatible with religion.

Reviewed by Clare Dinno



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Home by Marilynne Robinson (Fiction)

Home was written by Marilynne Robinson, who also wrote the Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *Gilead*. Both books take place in the fictional town of Gilead, Iowa in 1957. *Home* is a companion book and not a sequel to *Gilead*, and is told both in the context of a different family and from a different perspective.

Thirty-eight year old Glory Boughton has returned to Gilead to care for her recently widowed and dying father, Reverend Boughton. Soon Jack, Glory's older brother,

also returns home, suffering from a past which has been filled with both trouble and pain. Jack, in contrast to his other siblings, has led a difficult life from childhood. He is continually at odds with not only his surroundings, but also with his traditionalist father. However, even with the tension between them, he remains Reverend Boughton's most beloved child.

Brilliant, loveable, and wayward, Jack forges an intense bond with his younger sister during his visit home. The

novel tells Jack Boughton's story from the point of view of his sister, Glory.

Home is a moving and healing story about families, family secrets, attitudes of different generations, and especially about love, death, and faith. The fundamental question that troubles all of the book's characters is whether people have the strength or the ability to change. The plot is a variation on the parable of the Prodigal Son.

Reviewed by Pat Dalcher

Women Who Hear Voices by Sidney Callahan (Psychology)

The author of this small book is a practicing psychologist with impeccable scientific credentials, and also a devout Catholic. She writes as an explanation of this seeming contradiction. The subtitle is *The Challenge of Religious Experience*; the challenge is to those critics who espouse Freudian disdain for religion and to conservatives within the Church who think of salvation as having been accomplished once and for all in Christ. Callahan follows St. Paul and Karl Rahner in seeing salvation as an evolving process.

Karl Rahner thought that women were a "persecuted minority voice" in the forefront of the renewal of Christianity, and championed the religious experience of individuals:

"...inspirations will serve to energize the actions of the faithful, and can be thought of as ways that the Spirit can give psychological help to the church...It is a striking circumstance that in recent times this function has been exercised exclusively by women."

Professor Callahan stresses, as did St. Ignatius and St.

Teresa, that authentic religious experience is very different from psychotic delusions, in that they always lead to joyful and loving practical effects, never to harmful or negative ones. St. Ignatius wrote that in the delusions of inauthentic experiences one can detect, "the tail of the snake."

Further, Callahan writes that "science cannot explain consciousness, the self, free will, meaning, knowledge, morality, and music—and may never be able to."

Reviewed by Clare Dinno