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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Religious Personality* by Donald Capps and Walter H. Capps

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But with these remarks I have moved into issues quite contested in Luther research. They are meant, indeed, to place the book into this scholarly setting rather than to disprove the author who has written a stimulating book.

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*The Religious Personality.* By DONALD and WALTER H. CAPPS. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1970. 381 pages. \$6.00.

The editors of this collection of autobiographies use as their model the "last lecture" idea. Professors are compelled by students, on occasion, to share what is ultimately important to them in the form of what they might say if they were given only one "last lecture." The Capps have selected portions of autobiographies which in their judgment go straight to the heart of the author's passions (providing thereby non-canonical "purple passages" for study and exegesis). In this format they give the reader a chance to view such well-known figures as Augustine, C. G. Jung, Bonhoeffer, Malcolm X, Goethe and Cotton Mather, along with lesser known figures like Black Elk, Heyme Litte, and others, in a comparative framework.

For the Capps, religion manifests itself more in what men interpret to be the *meaning* of their self-conscious existence than it does in creed, cult, or institution, a position that William James might confirm. The authors present, all too briefly, a Jamesian typology; the "chastened self," the

"constrained self," the "fraternal self," the "aesthetic self" are the four broad types illustrated by each excerpt. With only a modicum of historical introduction for each "last lecture," the excerpt is presented for inspection, often drastically edited but nevertheless surprisingly interesting in such a scissors and paste format. A short but relevant bibliography closes each offering.

For a college course in religious experience the book is well suited, provided that students attempt to grasp the overview of the collection from the vantage point from which the typology makes some sense. But they should also be encouraged to dig into the works of one or two authors with additional witnesses to the historical and cultural period in which they lived.

This book cannot perform anything more than an introductory function. The typology needs critical understanding by *some* set of meaningful psychosocial perspectives, as the authors may be aware. Even less evident in their notes is the rigor required of the new psycho-historical point of view of Erikson, Lifton, and others. In particular, the difference in feeling-tone between the ideology of any writer's time—those vague yearnings articulated in his age—and those of the reader's time are necessary for a psycho-historical understanding.

Without a more critical apparatus, a mood of nostalgia polarized by a feeling of deceit grips me after reading this book: There is nostalgia for the well-polished phrases, the instruments of language another cultural epoch provided its agonists, but there is at the same time a feeling of deceit in which the authors may have tricked them-

selves or are tricking us, in the very intention to write their confession. After Ghavel's *Truth*, we do know something more about the act of public confession. The closer to our age the author lives, as in a Jung or Malcolm, for example, the less this polarization appears. But it never disappears.

The religious situation in our time is similar to previous cultural periods only on the surface. It takes a more critical and constructive approach to see the differences and *through* them make our own contribution to the structure by which personality dynamics and religious expression effect each other.

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*Gods and Games.* By DAVID L. MILLER. New York: World Publishing Company, 1970. 209 pages. \$5.95.

*To a Dancing God.* By SAM KEEN. New York: Harper & Row, 1970. 160 pages. \$1.95.

These two books seem to call for some response different from a critical review in a serious journal: like telling a story or making love or, for the fun of it, pretending to write a critical review for a serious journal. For both books are about theology and play; both bring into play a cluster of metaphors: play and dance, make-believe and sensuality, nostalgia and poetry, alchemy and therapy, capable of metamorphosing theology. Both are about themselves.

They have been around long enough,

almost two years now, to be familiar like a song whose melody and lyrics one already knows, a dance whose rhythms and movements have come to feel natural. We no longer need respond to either of these books as to a new game whose pieces and rules are strange and puzzling; we are ready to play with grace and enjoyment. We understand that playing means not repeating their moves but experimenting with our own. I don't have to choose between theology as aphorism and theology as anecdote, between etymology and personal confession, don't have to aim at being as clever as David Miller or a folksily casual as Sam Keen, don't have to lay my bets on the child Dionysos or Zorba the dancer. I can propose theology as reverie, pay my homage to Persephone—because we are “playing play” with one another not a game against one another. As David Miller says, “The language-form of a theology of play is not a word of dichotomous and schizophrenic nay-saying in opposition to other words. . . . It is not the language of noisy gongs and clanging cymbals; it is, rather, the language of love, of yea-saying (p. 161).

His distinction between *game* and *play* seems central to any genuine appreciation of the playfulness appropriate to theologizing. It lays open the close tie between gameplaying and the process of socialization, the initiation into the world of rules and competing and winning. We see that theology all too easily becomes a game; how hard it is truly to play it. The “rules” for writing theology (or theological reviews) seem to suggest that I may celebrate David Miller's punning but not indulge in any myself, may clumsily