

CASEY, Michael, *Fully Human, Fully Divine: An Interactive Christology* (Liguori, MO: Liguori / Triumph, 2004), pp. 352. ISBN 0-7648-1149-5 (paperback). \$19.95.

As a Benedictine-engaged person whose work is in developing formational education programs for secular environments, I am continually reminded that “a little goes a long way” concerning works examining Christianity from a contemplative perspective. Casey, an accomplished writer and Cistercian monastic knows this also and prefaces his 300-plus page Marcan-centered study with the admonition, “This book needs to be read slowly. I would not consider it excessive if a reading of it stretched out over most of a year” (p. viii). This statement is in no way intended as a forewarning of content with a pronounced academic tone or structural awkwardness waiting to entangle; the book is not difficult to read. Instead, Casey offers us a sincere invitation to embark upon a challenging and extended exploration of our life and who we are as Christians.

As in all journeys taken with others, we learn much about others and ourselves through the relationship of being in a developing story together. Herein resides the technique referenced in the book’s subtitle. The pedagogical interactivity provided for us comes about as Casey assimilates our story today, with our relational triumphs, challenges and failures, into juxtaposition with the divine and human interactivity present in the life and person of Jesus Christ. The approach works in a wonderful way and the text would serve well in support of a small group study or personal devotion.

John W. Smith

CHITTISTER, Joan, *In the Heart of the Temple: My Spiritual Vision for Today’s World* (New York: BlueBridge, 2004), pp. 158. ISBN 0-9742405-1-6 (paperback). \$14.95.

CHITTISTER, Joan, *The Way We Were: A Story of Conversion and Renewal* (New York: Orbis Books, 2005), pp. 255. ISBN 0-57075-577-9 (hardcover). \$20.00.

This first volume under review is a collection of Joan Chittister’s own essays. Joan’s fans will recognize most of her favorite topics addressed in this small volume: Simplicity, Work, Sabbath, Contemplation, Prayer, Empowerment, Prophecy, Wholeness—trans-

late, "women's gift to the human equation"—Equality, Ministry, Vision, Discipleship, Conversion . . . .

In her brief introduction, she asks the "what about" and "what to make of" questions that she addresses in the essays. For example, "What do we make of work in a society driven by profit margins, exploitation, and workaholism?" and "What does vision have to do with the discipleship of equals and with conversion?"

In Chittister's popular style, she reminds us of our rootedness in the people who have been mentors and models (Benedict, Thomas Merton, Mahatma Gandhi, Eshun) as she presents stories from religious traditions (the Bible, the Talmud, Sufi and Buddhist spiritualities). Consistently, she points out cross-fertilization among the above using the language of each within the concepts and language of the others. Her worldview is consistently global and ecological with a challenge to meet life from a contemplative stance.

In the light of Chittister's giving voice to the issues of justice-seeking and peace-making, I wonder if sociologists or many of the world's women, for that matter, would concur with her statement, "Only in the most backward, most legalistic, most primitive of cultures are women made invisible, made useless, made less than fully human, less than fully spiritual" (p. 149). Is she saying that any culture that has not turned this around, is backward, legalistic, primitive? In Minnesota alone (my home state) from January 2003 to May 2004, "30,000 women were victims of domestic violence; 10,000 more were sexually assaulted."<sup>1</sup> It's too close to home for me to agree with Chittister's conclusion here regarding the many levels of abuse that women regularly endure in cultures around the world.

As *In the Heart of the Temple* looks forward, *The Way We Were: A Story of Conversion and Renewal*, looks back to her community's 150 years of presence, mission and ministry in the new frontier of America.

The photos on the dust-jacket drew me into my own past, my memories, but not the nostalgia that some trade for the open and honest account of the painful changes that brought about conversion and renewal both in our monasteries and convents as well as in the Church after Vatican II, especially in the United States.

Any community originating as Mount St. Benedict Monastery in Erie, Pennsylvania did will identify with the various cohorts Joan writes about. Speaking of garb, Joan says (p. 132), "Clearly, dehumanization had set in where witness was supposed to have

been. But it was who we were, and the very thought of having to come out from behind all of that to become, well, nothing, brought the whole purpose of the life into question."

The author became the prioress in 1978 when her community she writes, "was ripe . . . . The years of renewal had taken their toll, both in energy and in relationships . . . ." Joan, who speaks here about exercising her authority through the shared authority of the community, moved into the process of revitalization which, she says, ". . . sets out to channel old energy, now dissipated, into new directions" (p. 210). The new directions meant conversion of heart and a commitment to gospel living in the daily which is what Benedictines are called to by the ancient but ever new Rule of Benedict.

#### Note

---

1. *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 10, 2005.

Theresa Schumacher, O.S.B.

DEKAR, Paul R., *Creating the Beloved Community* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2005), pp. 325. ISBN 1-931038-30-9 (paperback). \$23.95.

It has become commonplace that communities need stories and history to build the bonds that give purpose and even permanence. The history of a nation binds together citizens, as religious history does the faithful. The same holds for the peace community. In fact, one might argue that, since it is such a minority whose views are so countercultural, the peace community needs such a narrative much more than these others. In most places those who work for peace are so few that they can fall under the illusion that the peace movement is just the group of people they know—and similar small groups dotted around the country and the world. Individualist and fragmented, the illusion can even be discouraging and isolating.

*Creating the Beloved Community* is an antidote to the sense of isolation. A history of the Fellowship of Reconciliation from its founding in the early Twentieth century, Dekar's book gives a vision of the sweep of this important part of the peace movement. FOR was started by Christians who understood the gospel as incompatible with war. As it has broadened its religious base and