

**Roberts, R C 2007 – *Spiritual emotions: A psychology of Christian virtues***

Publisher: Eerdmans. 207 Pages. Price: Unknown

**Reviewer: Naas Ferreira (Johannesburg)**

The reader of *Spiritual emotions* quickly realizes that Roberts is steeped in classical theism that confines his arguments to a prerational mythological stage of the evolution of human consciousness. Besides questionable Biblical references, Roberts uses personal anecdotes and often refers to Leo Tolstoy and Feodor Dostoyevsky as support for his arguments about Christian emotions. The book is divided into three sections: I. A Christian psychology of emotions, II. The Christian passion, III. Christian emotion-virtues. He dedicates chapters to contrition, joy, gratitude, hope, peace and compassion to guide his readers through the emotional maze. Roberts refers to the three recent revolutions in psychology and ethics to showcase his understanding of Christian emotions: 1. Ethics has turned psychological. In 1958 the Christian philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe "pointed out that the only legitimate basis for the ought-rules was God." (p 6) She proposed that ethicists should think about virtues as human traits like justice, generosity, truthfulness and compassion. 2. Psychology has turned ethical. 3. Both psychology and ethics have turned emotional.

*Spiritual emotions* will help those on the same level to understand emotions, but will have a tough time coping in a rational world. He says: "Christianity does not have the same ideal of autonomy as modern moral outlooks. Christian ethics and psychology affirm that we are fundamentally dependent on God and that maturity is a certain kind of dependence on God, rather than some radical autonomy. So it should not embarrass us that Christian ethics involves, in a very basic way, a sense of being watched by God" (p 102). Developmental psychology and more importantly, integral psychology have shown that humanity and all humans are on a developmental path, from the archaic, the magical, mythical, the rational to the transpersonal levels. Ken Wilber,<sup>1</sup> an integral psychologist, using Claire Graves' research as expressed in "*Spiral dynamics*" by Cowen and Beck, has developed an integral operating system or integral map that explains the evolution of human consciousness from the prepersonal subconscious to the personal self-conscious to the transpersonal superconscious. Wilber (1996:12) sees the prepersonal conscious evolution from nature, then body to the early mind. At the self-conscious level the advanced mind is rational and self-reflexive, while the superconscious is divided into soul (psychic and subtle) and spirit (causal and ultimate). In the superconscious mind the individual finds the soul and God within. God is acting from within the individual and is not watching from a theistic pantheon the individual's every sinful move.

Wilber divides this integral map into four quadrants: the right side represents the external reality and the left side the internal reality. He calls the upper left (UL) the Beautiful (art, self) because it represents the subjective individual development, the lower left (LL) is the Goodness (morals, culture) as it is the collective of the subjective interior. Wilber sees the right side (UR, LR), individual and collective, as the objective Truth (science, nature).

The upper left (UL) develops from the instinctual, magic, egocentric, mythic self, and achiever self, sensitive self, holistic, to the integral self. On the lower left (LL) the correlating interior morals are archaic, animistic-magical, power gods, mythic order, scientific-rational, pluralistic and holistic to the integral. The collective exterior lower right (LR) evolves from survival clans, ethnic tribes, feudal empires, early nations, corporate states, value communities, holistic commons and integral meshworks. The upper right (UR) is the physical evolution of the individual. Importantly, all the levels in the upper left correlate with the three

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<sup>1</sup> Wilber, K 1996. *Up from Eden: A transpersonal view of human evolution*. First quest edition. Wheaton IL: The Theosophical Publishing House; Wilber, K 2007. *The integral vision*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.

other quadrants on the same level. Thus, if the individual (UL) is on the fourth, mythic self level, on the left lower (LL) quadrant, the person would have the ethics of the premodern mythic order that is part of the agrarian horticultural early nation exterior (LR). One would find the correlate in the individual exterior (UR) in the neocortex, the modern human brain. The individual's morality/virtue is governed by the group's ethics. The higher a person evolves, the smaller the group becomes and the greater the freedom and the responsibility that rests on the individual (Wilber, K 2007:51).

Roberts' arguments about spiritual emotions are on level 4, while the West and most westernised countries operate on level 5, a modern scientific-rational level. Imagine the internal conflict. *Spiritual Emotions* will keep the readers stuck on the mythical level without giving Christians either hope or the tools to grow to the transpersonal level where one discovers God within and where the fruits of the Spirit are not something to aspire to, but are actions emanating from the Spirit itself.

Robert C Roberts is Distinguished Professor of Ethics at Baylor University, Waco, Texas, USA and has written two other books: *Taking the word to heart: Self and others in an age of therapies* and *Intellectual virtues: An essay in regulative epistemology*



**Haynes, S R 2006 – *The Bonhoeffer legacy post-holocaust perspective***

Publisher: Fortress. 224 Pages. Price: Unknown;

**Bonhoeffer, D 2006 – *Wondrously Sheltered***

Publisher: Fortress. 43 Pages. Price: Unknown;

**Bethge, R & Gremmels, C 2006 – *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A life in pictures***

Publisher: Fortress. 160 Pages. Price: Unknown

**Reviewer: Dr André Groenewald (Scotland)**

*The Bonhoeffer legacy* is divided into 8 chapters, with a preface, acknowledgments, notes, a detailed bibliography and an index. The author manages to hold the reader's attention from the beginning to the end. The key issues the author wants to address are outlined in the preface.. "The premise of this book is that while the Bonhoeffer legacy contains real significance for post-Holocaust Christianity, this has been neither fully explored nor accurately described" (p xi), the reasons being that Bonhoeffer is often read/interpreted without his immediate context and the tradition he represented. In chapter 2 the author provides the reader with a thorough overview of Jewish and Christian perspectives on Bonhoeffer's views on the Jewish people as is evidenced in research undertaken from 1960 to 1990. In the end he concludes that Bonhoeffer's theology cannot be read without the tradition he presented. "For Bonhoeffer the Jew is always the other who is also Christ's brother; the other whom is tied up the fate of the West; the other whose suffering reflects God's providence and whose treatment discloses the moral condition of church and society" (p 142). I agree with Haynes that Bonhoeffer reminded Christian theology of the true meaning of Israel when it reflects on election, covenant and redemption. His theology also serves as a warning to theologians to be aware of the problems of the Christian tradition when theologizing about the Jewish people. This book is recommended for its critical reflection on Bonhoeffer's perspective of the Jewish people.

*Wondrously Sheltered* is a selection of quotations from Bonhoeffer's major works and letters reflecting on themes of shelter, joy, light, hope, faith, prayer, happiness, love, nearness, darkness, anxiety and fear, evil, resistance, freedom, friendship, peace, strength, consolation