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## Adult Children of Alcoholics: Ministers and the Ministries

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and radical perspective are then analyzed. McGovern spends the remainder of the book describing various themes from a liberationist angle: biblical motifs, the role of women, spirituality, socio-political perspectives, capitalism, socialism and ecclesiology. Much time is given to "dependency theory" versus notions of modernization as developed by Western imperialism, to the impact of Marxist analysis on liberation theology and to the competing value systems of capitalism and socialism. McGovern cuts through the excessive rhetoric on the subject by his calm and nuanced analysis. His highlighting of the Nicaraguan Sandanista government in light of liberation theology is especially useful. Small biographical sketches at the end of his book are a decided plus.

McGovern's book is far from perfect. It is sometimes tedious and repetitive. His excessive caution can be maddening at times. Yet even these negative characteristics translate frequently into strengths, as they add weight to the balanced and thoughtful quality of the work. At a time in our world's history when progressive forces are being heckled or hounded everywhere, McGovern's focus is timely and relevant. His hope both to have liberation theology remain in and be heard by the church is most appropriate. His own words underscore the permanent value of the theology he has analyzed so thoroughly: "The message of liberation theology and the development of base communities... have already made it possible for many poor to experience a new sense of dignity, a new awareness of God's special love for them, and an ability to work in solidarity to achieve significant social goals at community levels."

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### **Adult Children of Alcoholics: Ministers and the Ministries**

Rachel Callahan and Rea McDonnell  
New York: Paulist Press, 1990

In the early 1980s, a new phenomenon in alcohol-related difficulties was being discussed: adult children of alcoholic parents (or ACoA) seemed to share a number of similar emotional and social difficulties as a direct result of the conditions of their upbringing. For many people such news was liberating and, as more and more people were discovering that perhaps there was hope towards feeling better, support and self-help groups sprang up and more and more books were published on understanding and helping the ACoA.

As with any new, exciting trend, there will be both good, careful work, and on the other hand, much that is well-intentioned but not very helpful.

Unfortunately, *Adult Children of Alcoholics: Ministers and the Ministries* falls into this latter category.

This book was written in five parts to be a manual for pastors who may themselves be ACoA's or who are working with the grown children of alcoholic parents. It attempts to incorporate and integrate a great deal of admittedly very relevant material, yet the book is left chatty and superficial, of little practical help, and, within the context of other titles in print, redundant.

Part I consists of a single chapter discussing the key concepts of alcoholism, co-dependency (another trendy, yet important subject), and the ACoA movement. This chapter could itself be used as an excellent primer or introduction to the "disease-model" of addictive-compulsive behaviors such as alcoholism. Unfortunately the authors have enthusiastically accepted the dominant myths of A.A. uncritically. This whole disease-model definition has come to be more and more suspect by some researchers in the field of addiction recovery (H. Fingarette, *Heavy Drinking: The Myth of Alcoholism as a Disease* [Berkeley: 1988], provides some surprising data which show how ineffective A.A. actually is, despite its good press). The 12 Steps of A.A. are set forth by the authors as the chief stone of the corner and recur frequently throughout the text.

Part II focusses on the minister and the development of self-awareness through spiritual exercises. Chapter 2 deals with family-of-origin examination, Chapter 3 with psychological self-awareness (and considering the wide range and types of material drawn on by the authors, one is almost surprised to see the Myers-Briggs analysis omitted), and Chapter 4 with spiritual awareness. This latter is not so much a help to draw up a personal inventory than an encouragement to a specific model of spirituality, which may not appeal to all pastors. Part II concludes with a chapter five pages long on issues arising when the minister is an ACoA, and though one would think that these issues would be vital, because of its brevity, the chapter goes into little depth.

Part III discusses the opportunities which the public ministries of liturgical leadership, preaching, and teaching provide for helping the ACoA. The one-page chapter on liturgical leadership simply states that authenticity in public worship is important to a person, but this is hardly a liturgical manual for pastors working with ACoA's, and provides no strategies or concrete help at all, especially when half of it is spent setting forth a brief theology of holy orders. The following two chapters, though longer, are cursory, and at times almost naive in their idealism. Although examples are given, any sense of concrete method or analysis is absent.

Part IV explores the helping relationships in which pastors engage: listening, crisis intervention, pastoral counselling, spiritual leadership, spiritual direction, visiting, and prayer. The authors attempt to cover far too much in too brief a space. This section is not specifically about ACoA's, in fact; it is about aspects of a specific style of ministry, using some ACoA concerns as occasional examples.

The final section consists of three chapters about the dynamics of how the church as a system may itself display addictive disorder. This could have been a fascinating study, even if brief, but this entire section feels rushed and disorganized, and offers little insight.

I had hoped from the title and the Table of Contents that this book would be the single volume which would cover most of the issues, and systematize most of the research in the field of pastoral care and the ACoA. The authors have certainly tried to minister to the whole person, using all that the church has to offer. It is confident and optimistic, and certainly pastorally written, and does contain some insight. However, it contains nothing original, and is needlessly jargony. So much background in the field is needed to recognize or understand the many glancing references to other works and ideas, that if one has the necessary background, one doesn't need this book. The bibliography contains the usual list of standard works, but some authors of important or closely related books are missing. For example, John Bradshaw's *Healing the Shame that Binds You* (Florida: 1988) addresses and supports directly most of what Callahan and McDonnell say, but he is omitted, as is Sean Sammon's *Alcoholism's Children: A CoA's in Priesthood and Religious Life* (New York: 1989).

The authors of *Adult Children of Alcoholics: Ministers and the Ministries* have tried valiantly to integrate ACoA issues with many strands of contemporary theological and pastoral thought, and they are obviously deeply committed to caring for people wounded by alcoholism. But this volume is really an advocacy of a specific spirituality and style of ministry rather than a handbook on understanding and helping ACoA's, and there are better introductions to both pastoral care and ACoA issues available.

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## **How to Preach a Parable: Designs for Narrative Sermons**

Eugene L. Lowry  
Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989  
173 pp. \$17.50

With this volume in the Abingdon Preachers' Library, Eugene Lowry, the dean of narrative preachers, adds to his already extensive publications on narrative preaching (*The Homiletical Plot, Doing Time in the Pulpit*). Lowry, who teaches preaching at Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, is concerned here to make narrative preaching accessible to those who may be apprehensive about this style. To do so, he presents four narrative