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Review: 'A Spirituality of Dating, Love, Dinner, and the Divine'

William P. Roberts

University of Dayton, wroberts1@udayton.edu

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tice, this book is a reflective, often lyric, consideration of the human body as rightfully honored as divine creation. Paulsell's task is not a simple one for both the Christian past and our contemporary culture have not always afforded us resources for thinking of the body as worthy of honor or as the location for the practice of faith.

The opening section of the book prefaces the discussion of embodied practices with a wider consideration of the tensions inherent in embodied spiritual practice. Tensions between having a body and being a body, the integrity and relationality of the body, bodily vulnerability and sacredness, as well as bodily freedom and restraint are considered. For example, insights into Sabbath keeping, fasting and sexual abstinence are all viewed as restraining practices that have spiritual freedom as their goal.

The following chapters offer refreshing, accessible insights into seven embodied practices: bathing, clothing, nourishing the body, table life, resting/exertion, sexuality, and suffering. Each of the chapters weaves together scriptural and ecumenical themes with Paulsell's stories. She recalls as a restless child a family bedside game of "Toes Relax" (which becomes a meditation on God's desiring our rest); she learns to love running from her athletic husband (a discovery of joy), catches a hurried lunch before her office computer (*not* a meditative exercise), a friend nurses her dying mother; reading her decaying body as the most sacred of texts; another recovers a sense of God through keeping a kosher household. The stories bring home the powerful insight that God is indeed with us as we attend to the mystery of our embodiment. At the same time, *Honoring the Body* does not shy away from the challenges that spiritual practice focused on the body presents in a culture that hides away its sick and dying while exalting the nipped, tucked, generic body. One small caveat: while I appreciated Paulsell's inclusiveness (a reflection of her liberal Disciples of Christ affiliation), especially when it came to honoring homosexual bodies, there may be Christian readers whose perspectives on human sexuality do not accord with hers.

The tone of Paulsell's book is almost conversational. She invites the reader to reconsider fundamental assumptions about spiritual practice and embodiment. That a wealth of knowledge underlies her conversation makes this a sure resource for pastoral leaders and students of contemporary Christian practice as well as for educated lay persons desiring to deepen their faith.

Creighton University

WENDY M. WRIGHT

A Spirituality of Dating, Love, Dinner, and the Divine. By Donna Freitas and Jason King. New York: Crossroad, 2003. 191 pages. \$18.95 (paper).

Many of us who teach college level marriage courses are finding that fewer of our students have immediate plans for marriage, but most of them are in various stages of dating, ranging from the casual and exploratory to the quite serious. Hence, while the focus of our courses continues to be the personalist and theological significance of marriage more stress is placed on the implications that this meaning has for the dynamics of a dating situation.

Accordingly, Donna Freitas, who teaches Religious Studies and Spirituality at St. Michael's College, Winooski Park near Burlington, Vermont and Jason King, teacher of theology at Lourdes College, Toledo, make a welcome contribution in this volume that is totally dedicated to the dating situation. Their treatment of this topic is rooted not in abstract ideas or theories but is presented in light of their dating experiences (though they never dated each other). The book reflects their diverse religious perspectives. Jason's approach is colored by his strong Catholic background. Donna's is less related to a particular religious tradition.

The authors' stated intent is to discuss "how dating contributes to our spiritual life and in turn how our spiritual life can give meaning and purpose to dating" (9). The word "spirituality" is given a rather broad description. It "has to do with meaning-making. Those experiences, people, and encounters where life's ultimate meaning and our relationship to the divine suddenly shines (sic) through are what I view as spiritual" (17).

After showing how dating is treated in TV programs and in the movies, the authors explain how dating can strengthen one's spiritual life. Among the other topics they discuss are their views on chastity and when sex is good and when it is not. Also, of notable interest, are the insights the book gives on being a "born-again virgin," the difference between infatuation and love, and the pain and growth that can be involved in breaking up.

One negative I find in the book is what I consider a disproportionate amount of effort the authors use to justify the value of dating a number of different people before meeting the one you intend to marry. They do this by way of rebuttal of a few Christian authors who are against such dating. I think the assumption could have been made that the vast majority of those involved in parenting, teaching, and counseling college-aged students see a great value in having dated a number of different persons before deciding on the one. Consequently, a lengthy defense of this position seems unnecessary.

This book is a worthwhile read for those teaching courses on marriage and personal relationships, as well as for those who counsel college students, whether formally or informally. While it would not serve as one of the basic textbooks in a marriage course, it would provide interesting and informative supplementary reading as well as serve as a source for some enlivened discussion.

University of Dayton

WILLIAM P. ROBERTS

Josef Fuchs on Natural Law. By Mark Graham. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002. xvi + 276 pages. \$49.95.

Mark Graham offers a lucid, substantial, and important treatment of a pivotal figure in Catholic moral theology in the 20th century. Despite Josef Fuchs's large body of work and his profound influence on several generations of moral theologians, his natural law theory has not yet received a full-length, critical analysis. Graham's book fills that gap admirably.

In the first half of the book, treating Fuchs's theory from 1941 to 1966, Graham identifies the strengths of his defense of the objectivity of morality and