

Savignac, "Interprétation de Proverbes VIII 22-32," *SVT*, XVII (1969), 196-203.

McKane has plowed new furrows and overthrown firmly established views as a result of painstaking research. No scholar or serious student of Pr can afford to neglect this commentary. Many of the conclusions will have to be reckoned with. This work is indispensable.

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Miller, David L. *Gods and Games: Toward a Theology of Play*. New York: World Publishing Co., 1970. xiii + 209 pp. \$ 5.95.

David Miller frolics through this book insisting that play is serious, but theologians saying so are playing. Five sentences from three successive paragraphs in the last chapter illustrate this: "If a book purports to witness to life lived *sub specie ludi*, perhaps then there should not be a serious word in the whole book. . . . I seriously hope there is not one serious sentence in the whole of this book. Including this last one. . . . The danger with a book like this one is that someone might take it seriously. Or that the author might take the preceding sentence seriously" (pp. 170, 171). Frankly, it is a little difficult to take David Miller seriously, and I mean it.

Somehow Miller got diverted into spending well over half his book on introduction; not a typology of previous comments on play, or a searching analysis of their work, but an annotated bibliography on everyone who has mentioned play from Wittengenstein to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern—46 authors in seven widely diverse fields (including mathematics). Still, it may be the most useful part of the book. At least none of the authors writing on theology of play do the same thing. In the last half of his book, Miller surveys what anthropologists and psychologists write about play being a central characteristic of man, and even defining what phenomenologists and theologians say about religion as play. The topic has been discussed in greater depth by Robert Neale and Sam Keen.

The point that Miller stresses more than Neale, Keen, or even Harvey Cox is that theology of play should be playful. "A theology of play, *by* play, and *for* play," is the formula he propounds. Why? Why should a theology of play be any more playful than other theologies, especially if play is as significant as Miller proposes? Should theologies of faith be pious, theologies of hope ecstatic, and theologies of love erotic? Theology by definition is reflection. Its purpose is to clarify feelings, actions, thoughts. If a religious person wishes to reproduce in others a quality of his experience, he will probably break into poetry or song. Instead of theology he will involve himself in devotional literature and liturgical practice. Theology and liturgy are both needed, sometimes they can even overlap, but to demand that a theology of play *must* hop, skip, and jump means that careful reflection may well be sacrificed to a forced ebullience.

Miller himself is sometimes superficial, other times inconsistent. He connects the word play with many other words. He describes play as the sense of pleasure, by which the "meaning comes through the interplay of the senses" (p. 141). But he also says that the language of a theology of play is witty, full of puns, joke-like (p. 161). But is humor necessarily the language of pleasure? Aren't play and humor related, but distinct? And what about joy? Repeatedly he describes the play of children as joy. They experience a joyful sense of freedom and unity. In his introduction, when Miller describes the purpose of his book, he invokes the word joy. "It is a quest, not for a serious theology about play, but rather for a playful theology about seriousness—in fact, about Ultimate Seriousness, which is Joy" (p. 5). What then is the relation of play to pleasure, to humor, to joy? Clearly, they are related, but how? Miller enthuses about all of them, but does not clarify their relation to each other.

On whether play is essentially individual or corporate Miller is inconsistent. He emphasizes that in Anglo-Saxon the word *pflegan* meant not only play, but pledge. In the process of trying to emphasize the seriousness which the word play has connoted in the past, Miller reveals an ethical dimension inherent in play. To play is to be with, and therefore concerned about, others. Later, in his analysis of the psychology of play, Miller separates play in general, found in infants, from game-playing begun in the late childhood and adolescence. Activity within rules, within regularized concern for others, is not play. "Games may well seduce us into purposiveness. Into wanting to win something. But play: that is a different matter. Play is purposeless" (p. 174). When Miller comes to describe religion as play he sees no reason for play to be directed outward toward other people. "To refer to play as the religion behind man's everyday existence is to imply a radical reformation in the history of religious consciousness. . . . Whereas previously man found meaning in social contexts, now he finds it individually" (p. 154). Miller has obviously forgotten the meaning that he himself reported that play had in Anglo-Saxon. Miller's religion as play finds no pledges to others.

Miller's lack of clarity on the relation of play to humor compounds his problem here. If humor is part of play, can one persist in saying play is individual? Does not noticing incongruity assume attention to reality external to the individual? Does not humor and wit demand an audience to hear the incongruity pointed out?

If Miller's book were the only one published on theology of play, we could be grateful for his at least reminding us that play has been overlooked as a place for God to be revealed. As it is, those willing to spend a limited time dallying with theology of play should read Ralph Neale, Sam Keen, or Harvey Cox.