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Oeming, M., & Schmid, K.'s "Job's journey: Stations of suffering" (Book Review)

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Oeming, M., & Schmid, K. (2015). *Job's journey: Stations of suffering*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns. 110 pp. ISBN 9781575063997

The book consists of a group of essays on specific passages in the book of Job which emphasize the path that Job has to travel. The authors attempt to show that the book of Job can be read as a whole. "Its various sections display a high degree of sensitivity toward the human condition and thus provide us with much helpful material of counseling" (p. xiii).

The counseling theme is continued. "There are good reasons to read the dialogues between Job, his wife, his friends, God, and finally his internal dialogue as case studies in pastoral theology (poimenics)" (p. 26). Job contains a

multiplicity of different stereotypical characters that each articulate their own reaction to the suffering of Job and thus provide us with a brief typology of possible strategies of pastoral care. It is plausible to read the book as a classical case study for counseling (pp. 26-27).

The authors present the book of Job as fictional in nature.

In spite of the drama of all that happens, and in spite of the harshness of the blows that befall Job, we recognize clearly: Job is a paradigm, not a person. Job is not a historical case-study; Job is the character in a novel that does not report experience but condenses it (pp. 22-23).

Complete literary unity is assumed. "It seems to us that composition of the book is deliberately aimed at engaging the readers in a sometimes confusing and unsettling discourse in order to provoke them to reexamine their own insights into self and God" (p. ix).

God's speeches to Job are described. God grants Job dignity by appearing to him in the storm and allowing him to hear his word. So, God elevates Job above all other creatures and grants to him a special place in the world (p. 82). "He has learned that he is not at the center of God's activities, and this insight leads him to true wisdom" (p. 83).

"The dilemma of the contradiction between sharp criticism (38:2 and 40:8) and high praise of Job by Yahweh (42:7) is noted and discussed" (p. 85). Oeming concludes, God praises Job's speech because it is a speech *to God*. In contrast, the friends do not speak to God, nor toward God, nor in personal relation to God. Instead they only speak *of God* and this is what incurs God's wrath (p. 98).

I was not sure at the start if I would be able to comprehend this book and I did not agree with all of its premises. However, the two authors provided a look at Job that was both scholarly and understandable and that made me want to study the book of Job anew.

Reviewer

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Backhouse, S. (2016). *Kierkegaard: A single life*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. 304 pp. \$24.99. ISBN 9780310520887

Stephen Backhouse is the Lecturer in Social and Political Theology at St. Mellitus College, London. His other works include *Compact Guide to Christian History* and *Kierkegaard's Critique of Christian Nationalism*.

Who does Franz Kafka, Albert Camus, Hannah Arendt, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Franklin Roosevelt, and Hideaki Anno all have in common? They all were one of many influenced by “the Great Dane,” Søren Kierkegaard, according to Stephen Backhouse in this biography targeted to a non-academic, mainstream audience.

Backhouse introduces his book with a quote, the famous first line in Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, which gives a good sense of the novelistic quality to this work of nonfiction. If Darcy and Jane ended up star-crossed because Darcy believed he couldn’t answer God’s call to reform Christianity and be married as well, then you would have the story of Søren and Regine.

Backhouse does an excellent job of explaining just why the social world of 19th century Denmark was so prejudiced against the seriously misunderstood Søren Kierkegaard (pronounced Kier-ka-gore), and why he is so important today. A man who believed that being a part of the crowd was living a lie, and gave voice to the single individual before God, the author reveals why Kierkegaard is one of the most enigmatic figures of intellectual history.

Like other serious Kierkegaardian scholars, Backhouse is compelled to explain why those who come into contact with the contentious Dane’s prolific body of work tend to misunderstand and mischaracterize his various points of view and respond negatively.