

problematic for this current generation of college students, Farley helped them to synthesize various contemporary viewpoints critical of the Christian tradition with a revised approach to ethical reflection. Her book validates the experiential and intellectual reasons persons have to be critical of the church's inherited sexual morality, at the same time that she clarifies why Christian faith itself provides a warrant for ethical revision on behalf of its distinctive vision of what human life may and should be when lived out of a love that is just.

There is no better book on Christian sexual ethics. *Tolle, lege*: take and read.

— Paul E. Capetz

**CAUSE FOR HOPE:  
Humanity  
at the Crossroads  
by Bill Phipps  
CopperHouse 2007  
232 pages, paper, \$23.95**

As a lawyer, an activist, a minister, and a former Moderator of The United Church of Canada, Bill Phipps has always wanted to change the world. In this book, he sets out to explain what drives him, what encourages him and what gives him hope. "*Cause for Hope*," says former Saskatchewan premier Roy

Romanow on the back cover, "offers up an inspirational vision for social progress, one which compels us to bridge the disconnect between our values and our vision for a just society."

It is a noble task, but unfortunately, problems arise as early as the Preface, where Phipps lists the book's three objectives. "First," he writes, "I believe that the faith traditions of the world are called to respond to the growing challenges facing our Earthly home." Well, yes, Bill, I think we all believe that, but what is the objective of the book?

In fact, all of Phipps' objectives — and an inordinate number of other sentences — begin with that phrase: "I believe...". But nobody seems to have decided the objective of the book. Is it to be a platform for one person's confession of faith? If so, it succeeds. Or is it to provide what the title promises, cause for hope? Here it is, well, hopeless.

But back to the supposed objectives. "Third, I believe that faith traditions need to emerge from behind doctrinal and theological differences to work together for the common good." Herein lies another problem: the book's editor failed not only to notice that the first objective is subsumed by the third but also other glaring mistakes, such as the misspelling of Sallie McFague's name.

So really there are just two “objectives”. The last, which makes the first unnecessary, and the second: “I believe ... everything is connected.” The book lacks depth, but at its heart — and this is a book from the heart — is Phipps’ faith in storytelling. “I believe the time has come for new, dangerous and life-giving stories.” He distinguishes between the Old Story and the New Story. At one point, he writes that the Old Story is like a jet ski and the New Story is like a canoe. Just to be sure we get it, Phipps reminds us that Stockwell Day drove a jet ski, and Pierre Trudeau paddled a canoe. He hastens to add that in using this comparison, he is not saying anything about politics or either Day or Trudeau. Really? Just as when Phipps got in trouble for remarks he made as Moderator in an interview with *The Ottawa Journal* and then explained that he wasn’t speaking on behalf of the church, I can’t decide whether he is charmingly naïve or frustratingly obtuse. By the way, the interview with the *Journal* and Phipps’ responses to it are included as an appendix, although they have nothing to do with the rest of the book.

In any case, the Old Story, based on patriarchy and the struggle for power, is that humans are “masters of creation”. It leads to jet skis, consumerism, destruction, poverty,

fear and war. Phipps finds cause for hope in his assessment that this story has almost run its course. “*Once we are conscious of the Old Story, we can consciously choose a different story,*” he declares in the book’s only italicized sentence. And who knows, maybe this time, people really will turn away from fear and greed and the lust for power. Personally, I thought that was sure to happen in the 1960s, but the Old Story had more staying power than we hippies ever imagined.

Writing about the New Story, Phipps’ prose is focussed and even poignant, as he explains how he opened to wonder, gratitude, abundance, canoeing, partnership, grace (including his own life-changing I-Thou moment) and, of course, hope. He goes on to develop his earlier faith statement that everything is related. The New Story is told and lived as we reach out to creation and to each other. Co-operation, synergy, compassion, the honouring of children and a commitment to peace and justice — these are the hallmarks of the New Story. Unfortunately, there isn’t anything here that we might not hear from any United Church pulpit on a Sunday morning.

Despite the title, I found little cause for hope in these pages. Full of passion but lacking in program, Phipps offers no substance to the things hoped for. Perhaps I expected

too much. Or perhaps the trouble is in the title. Where Phipps does succeed admirably is in situating “humanity at the crossroads”. That’s the subtitle, and although there is little hope in it, it’s exactly what Phipps describes for us.

— Michael Webster

**DEFINING WORK:  
Gender, Professional  
Work, and the Case  
of the Rural Clergy  
by Muriel Mellow  
Montreal & Kingston: McGill-  
Queen’s University Press,  
2007. viii, 204 pp. \$70.00**

A graduate school professor of mine once observed that there was only one good reason to publish anything — you were wrestling with a question and you judged that others might find your work helpful in their dealing with that question or problem. Muriel Mellow, a sociologist currently teaching at the University of Lethbridge, has been wrestling with the question of how better to conceptualize work. It has led to a book that will be helpful, I think, in the field of sociology, but also highly useful both for rural clergy and for those who teach rural ministry courses.

She begins by examining how work has been defined, and how

feminist theorists in particular have challenged traditional definitions that equated work with paid employment. She notes, however, that even feminist critiques have not accounted adequately for volunteer work, and also that most writing on the subject has not taken sufficient account of the influence of locale (most especially rural locale) in terms of how work is conceptualized. She believes that an examination of how rural clergy function could challenge some conventional theories about “the nature of work”. To that end, she interviewed 40 ordained United Church ministers — 20 women and 20 men — all of whom were working in rural pastoral charges. In the course of her consideration of “work” and of the “work” clergy do, Mellow examines a number of areas: what theorists about “work” would regard as the ambiguity of much of the pastoral care “work” ministers do (i.e., effective pastoral care requires the building of strong relationships, much of which is done through “informal” contacts at places such as the grocery store or post office); the challenges of accounting for one’s “work” as a minister (both to oneself and to others); the human need for friendships, and the issues ministers face in forming friendships in a rural area; and the difficulties of separating work time from family