

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

time, especially if one is living in a manse. Mellow concludes her book with an assessment of how the “work” of ministers provides useful patterns and examples in re-thinking the concept of work.

Whatever the contribution to her particular field, Mellow’s book is very useful to an understanding of ministry, particularly rural ministry. The insights gleaned from her interviews represent the best description I have read of the reality and of the challenges of serving as a minister in a rural area. Among the topics she considers, all of which I thought were well done, I found most helpful her discussion on the subject of ministerial friendships with parishioners. Literature on this subject, written from an urban perspective, usually assumes that any such relationships are inappropriate. But Mellow’s interviewees, and Mellow’s assessment of their comments on this subject, generate a more nuanced (and I would assert necessary) approach to what may be one of the most challenging aspects of rural ministry.

I had two frustrations in reading the book. First, the convention in the social sciences for referencing one’s sources (i.e., the “author/date/page inserted into the text) makes following the author’s argument tedious; one must constantly flip to the bibliography to see the

particular text to which reference is being made. Second, and more off-putting, the book is poorly edited. In its slightly over 200 pages, I noted eight errors of spelling or sentence construction. McGill-Queen’s University Press needs to do better in a book for which the asking price is no less than \$70.

— John H. Young

**HEART OF THE CROSS:
A Postcolonial Christology
by Wonhee Anne Joh
Louisville: Westminster
John Knox Press, 2006,
164 pages. \$28.99**

The author explores the meaning of the cross from a Korean American perspective, as she draws traditional christologies into conversation with feminist and postcolonial theories. She uses postcolonial tools of hybridity, mimicry and interstitial space to consider the power of the cross through *jeong*, a Korean concept of a radical form of love that encompasses compassion, affection, solidarity, relationality, vulnerability, and forgiveness. Joh juxtaposes the Korean concepts of *jeong*, which she summarizes as right-relation, and *han*, summarized as suffering, with Julia Kristeva’s