

of divorce, I believe, can coach us in how they navigated the tricky if not treacherous terrain of the “world between.” Thirdly, the theological reflections begin in this book as children recall that Jesus had two homes, two fathers, and two worlds. I have a hunch the children have a lot more to teach us. As one child said: “I am not alone in my switching, waiting, hoping, wishing, avoiding, and wondering. God, you travel with me” (Flesberg, 2008, p. 80).

**OPEN-HEARTED MINISTRY:
PLAY AS KEY TO PASTORAL LEADERSHIP**

Michael S. Koppel

Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008. Soft cover. 139 pp. \$17.00

*Reviewed by Jaco Hamman
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Open-hearted Ministry is an inviting and stimulating book to read. Michael Koppel, the Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology and Congregational Care at Wesley Theological Seminary (Washington, DC), has drawn on his doctoral dissertation, and brings to his book scholarly, pastoral, clinical, and teaching experience. He introduces us to a “new” metaphor for pastoral leadership and provides an alternative vision on the nature of ministry. In seven chapters, Koppel explores the images of the pastor as a “misfit” playing on the “playground” of ministry in general and the congregation in particular. Essentially, this is a book about creative and effective leadership and a different kind of faith community, both of which are informed by a specific understanding of play. The book’s chapters address various aspects of leadership such as how to facilitate grief and mourning, how to awaken authentic selfhood, and how to be effective teachers and caregivers. Throughout the book, Koppel draws on biblical, psychological, literary, and artistic sources with helpful autobiographical vignettes and other case studies.

Arguing that ministry can erode one’s energies and leave one depleted, Koppel believes that pastoral leadership can benefit from a playful attitude. His definition of play is strongly informed by British Object

Relations Theory, especially by the thoughts of D.W. Winnicott. Koppel also draws on the Dutch cultural theorist, Johan Huizinga, and his work on play. For Koppel, “[p]lay refers to meaningful thought and behavior that has pattern to it without being completely prescribed or predetermined” (Koppel, 2008, p. 4). He also offers a more elaborate definition which highlights the embodiment of play:

Play as embodied theology:

is cooperative engagement *within the self* and *between the self and others* that heightens enjoyment of God and pulls us more deeply into life experience;

incorporates the new and innovative within already structured patterns of behavior; [and]

allows for making mistakes as we develop creative, and sometimes previously unimagined, pastoral leadership practices. (Koppel, 2008, p. 14)

Koppel receives his metaphor of the pastoral leader as “misfit” from pastoral theologian James Dittes, who used the term “chronic misfit” to describe the marginality of ministry and ministers (Koppel, 2008, p. 15). Koppel however, also recalls an autobiographical memory from early in his ministry where his “internal misfit” indicated the need for a transition to a new context (Koppel, 2008, p. viii). For Koppel, “[m]isfit refers to persons, qualities, and experiences that do not correspond to dominant perspectives” (Koppel, 2008, p. 2). Being a misfit allows for expressions of exuberance, flexibility, and humor as creative ways to deal with emotions such as anger, shame, and frustration. Misfit leaders have “emotional intelligence” (Koppel, 2008, p. 26) and can play with their own emotions and invite others to do the same. Play, therefore, is not only a perspective and attitude, it is also a container that can hold emotions or moments of crisis such as the 9/11 attacks. Misfit leaders lead misfit communities, and Koppel provides vivid images of how different communities have facilitated hope and offered persons space to experience themselves, others, and God in new ways.

As the chapters of *Open-hearted Ministry* unfold, there is a subtle, but logical shift from a leader as someone who can play, to ministry and even the congregation as a playground. In a chapter called “All I Ever Knew I Learned on the Playground,” Koppel finds a parallel between the playground where children learn about relationships, conflict, confidence, tension, frustration, etc., and a community of faith; in the church one can

foster new friendships, practice new skills, and experience the transitions of life. The congregation, as a community of misfits and a playground, is also intercultural, intergenerational, situated in larger contexts, and fosters creation-centered practices with friends and under the guidance of coaches.

A significant strength of *Open-hearted Ministry* is Koppel's ability to play with words and images as he explores the metaphor of play. Pastoral care, for example, requires that you "play it by ear" (Koppel, 2008, p. 91). By re-introducing the metaphor of the pastoral leader as misfit, he offers a vision of pastoral leadership very different from contemporary models of leadership where images of visionary or even apostolic leadership abound. The pastoral leader as misfit is prophetic in nature, exposing the folly of many models of leadership that lead to ministers becoming depleted. This reviewer found Koppel's chapter on "Plays and Play-ing: Discovering Authentic Self-hood," which focuses on drama and the imagination, the strongest. In this chapter, Koppel envisions groups within congregations reading plays and dramatic scripts, exposing themselves to otherness and discovering authentic self-hood in the process.

It is never an easy task to turn a doctoral dissertation into a book. Koppel has managed to remove much of the bulk and boredom of an academic dissertation. However, in doing so, he might have left rich and complex concepts underexplored. Concepts such as "interpathy" (Koppel, 2008, p. 27), "good-enough" (Koppel, 2008, p. 49), "an educational theology of play" (p. 57), the "enneagram" (Koppel, 2008, p. 64), "sandplay religious experience" (Koppel, 2008, p. 65), and God as "Serendipitous Creativity" (Koppel, 2008, p. 77) are all identified as examples of play, without much exploration. That these concepts originated in different contexts, but now are used in a single context—ministry as a playground—may have played a role in this reviewer wanting more information or examples. Also, some methods and tools, such as interpreting the enneagram and sandplay, need more elaboration and would require additional training suggestions if they were to be put into practice.

Koppel's definition of play, which draws on Winnicott and Huizinga, is extremely wide, allowing Koppel to argue that ministry—possibly all of it—is play. With such a wide playing field—to continue Koppel's metaphor—this reviewer was left asking: When is leadership and ministry not play? And, what are the dangers of having a single metaphor that seemingly covers it all, especially if the metaphor asks for "complexity" as the author argues (Koppel, 2008, p. 73)?

With Open-hearted Ministry: Play as Key to Pastoral Leadership,

Koppel provides those in pastoral leadership, whether their playground is a congregation, a classroom, a hospital, or another setting, with a fresh vision for ministry. Koppel is correct; pastoral leaders and ministries often fall victim to powerful cultural values of productivity and purpose that are so pervasive to our society. Through exploring play as a trait of leadership, Koppel offers his readers an alternative pattern of relationship and a fresh vision for ministry.

REPAIR OF THE SOUL: METAPHORS OF TRANSFORMATION IN JEWISH MYSTICISM AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

Karen E. Starr

New York and London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2008. Soft cover. 134 pp. \$29.95.

*Reviewed by David J. Zucker
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In this small volume of less than 150 pages, Karen E. Starr seeks to explore parallels between the teachings of psychoanalysis and the teachings of Jewish mysticism, specifically that school of thought termed Kabbalah. In an early chapter, she introduces Kabbalah, and then she proceeds to make “a case for dialogue” between psychoanalysis and the Kabbalah. Chapters follow on the subjects of “Transformation,” “The Interpretive Encounter,” “Faith as the Fulcrum of Psychic Change,” and the “Transformation of Evil.” Several pages of references and an index complete the volume.

Starr points out that it has been suggested that “whereas religion creates a myth of the external world, psychoanalysis creates a myth of the internal world” (Starr, 2008, p. 11). It is her contention that each can learn from the other.

In the kabbalistic formulation, as in the relational psychoanalytic model, relationship facilitates transformation, and meaning is produced by the collaboration of both members of the interpretive pair. By perceiving their interpretive process as a dialogue with the divine, the kabbalists participated in what can be considered to be the archetypal paradigm of a