

self and compassion for others (29); and that to wake up to one's Buddha nature and put on Christ are analogous experiences (22).

After providing the historical context for Kakuan's pictures/commentary, H. in the bulk of the book guides Christians through the ten pictures in which a boy searches for, locates, tames, loses the ox, and then finally returns to the marketplace of real life light-hearted, laughing, and actively loving. Gently and sometimes provocatively, H. invites Christians to wake up to how this Zen parable can lead them to a more apophatic and thoroughly nondualistic experience of their own selves as Christ's Self. This is a text to meditate on.

But it is also a text that calls for deeper reflection. H.'s doctrinal conclusions from his Buddhist explorations show that comparative spirituality leads to comparative theology. A few examples: Is the Fall a matter of "going astray" rather than depravation (48)? Are Nirvana and the Tao synonymous with God (96)? How is God "supra-personal and more than personal" (97)? Does dogma only indicate but never define truth (55)?

For both prayerful reflection and classroom discussion, the book will serve well.

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*The Sistine Chapel: A Biblical Tour.* By Christine M. Panyard. New York: Paulist, 2013. Pp. xii + 96. \$19.95.

A kind of reference work, this lavishly illustrated book will be useful to anyone wanting to know who the many biblical figures are that Michelangelo painted on the Sistine chapel ceiling, and how the ceiling works not only as art but also as theology. The author, a professor of psychology at the University of Detroit Mercy, writes as one who, relatively late in life, was awe-struck and remains so by the achievement of a Renaissance sculptor who protested that he was not a painter but nevertheless accepted the Sistine commission and outshone the outstanding painters of his day. Panyard shows how Michelangelo's ceiling frescoes demonstrate both knowledge of what Christians call the Old Testament, as well as real familiarity with the works of Dante and Savonarola. She also highlights the theocentric nature of the ceiling and its "completely new image of God" (19), an image that set aside medieval depictions of God as the unmoved mover, as a monarch reigning effortlessly over the universe. Instead, Michelangelo painted a God of movement and action, a God who soars through the sky and who works "with great energy to create the world" (19). But with salvation as his main theme, Michelangelo also emphasized the prophets who in various ways foretold or foresaw, or somehow foreshadowed, the coming of Christ the Savior—prophets such as Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Joel, Jonah, Zechariah, and Jeremiah. P. states that the depiction of Zechariah is a kind of portrait of Pope Julius II, Michelangelo's patron; the portrayal of Jeremiah as deep in thought, with one arm on a knee, may have influenced Rodin's sculpture of a thinker.

Michelangelo painted the Sistine ceiling from 1508 to 1512; though P. includes a kind of postscript on the Last Judgment, painted 1536–1541, Michelangelo's vision of the afterlife merits more than an afterthought. Still, this small book offers a very helpful window onto how and why what is likely the world's most famous ceiling continues to command our attention.

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*World Religions and Contemporary Issues: How Evolving Views on Ecology, Peace, and Women Are Impacting Faith Today.* By Brennan R. Hill. New London, CT: Twenty-Third, 2013. Pp. 367. \$34.95.

Drawing on decades of study and teaching experience, Hill has written and formatted this volume as an introductory-level textbook, with clearly delineated sections and subsections, glossaries of boldfaced key terms, learning texts, discussion questions, and study resources.

The book divides into seven chapters, beginning with “An Introduction to Religion and Its Connection with Social Issues,” continuing with a chapter each on Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and concluding with a chapter on “Interfaith Dialogue.” The exposition is correct and engaging.

While any project of this sort risks the criticism that the author leaves out too much or emphasizes the wrong points, H. supplements his presentation with notes, web links, and bibliography that interested readers may consult for further study and to balance and fill out the analyses. Note, too, his inclusion of biographical sketches that introduce readers to such contemporary figures as Jean Donovan, Shirin Ebadi, Mahatma Gandhi, Thich Nhat Hanh, Judith Helfand, and Desmond Tutu. These stories complement the historical and thematic material, illustrating the actual relevance of religious belief and practice while breaking up the discussion—especially helpful for keeping the attention of nonspecialists.

The accessible style and general content of the book thus would provide a broad range of readers an excellent overview of major world religions and their study. I have ordered the book for my fall 2014 introductory classes on theological foundations, but I would not hesitate to assign it to high school students or to recommend it to family and friends to read in tandem with Vatican II's *Nostra aetate*, the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions.

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