

October 2019

## Bok Review

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### Recommended Citation

None, N. (2019). Bok Review. *JADARA*, 11(2). Retrieved from <https://repository.wcsu.edu/jadara/vol11/iss2/9>

## BOOK REVIEW

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*The God of the Deaf Adolescent. An Inside View* by Rev. Anthony Russo, C. Ss. R. Paulist Press, 1975; 278 pages; paperback, \$6.95.

This book provides the reader with a rare opportunity to be confronted with the concept of God as held by deaf young people. Via a study, labelled by the Rev. Russo as a "thorough diagnostic inventory", insights were gained by allowing deaf young people to express themselves freely. Rev. Russo interviewed 155 prelingually deaf young people using drawings especially designed for the study with coordinating questions related to three general categories; belief in God, identification of God, and relationship to God. Rev. Russo also interviewed a control group of 24 adolescents with normal hearing. The responses of the deaf adolescents were compared with those of the control group of hearing peers.

Rev. Russo states, "The principal offering of this work, then, is the responses of the interviewed deaf adolescents, responses which are not empty words, but a refreshing and honest revelation which imparts sure knowledge of the religious thought of the deaf adolescent." He adds that two additional objectives of the book are 1) "a theological evaluation of the meaning of the responses" and 2) "a drawing of parallels between the thinking of the deaf and the thinking found elsewhere."

The book begins with a helpful list of abbreviations, a glossary of terms relative to deafness and the project, and a glossary of religious terms. The first section is entitled "Introduction and Methodology" and gives the reader an overview of the development of the test questions and the procedures used in eliciting information from the deaf adolescents. The second section discusses the statistical procedures involved in the study.

The third section, "Examining and Discussing the Responses", is the section I found most interesting. Within this section Rev. Russo presents the responses of the deaf adolescents statistically and also directly in selected verbatim quotations. Thus the reader not only gains an overview of the youngsters' responses but also is confronted with specific verbalized concepts. In addition, Rev. Russo reflects upon and discusses the various responses. For example, the study revealed that 75% of the Catholic deaf adolescents in secular schools answered affirmatively to the question, "Is God real?" Of those in secular schools, 60% held creation and revelation as a basis for their faith. One student stated that she believes "because God made ideas and the world." Another stated that "God made light, everybody." Rev. Russo comments, "These quotes made clear, creation, according to the deaf, simply means God's getting things started in the beginning. It is a concrete manifestation of God's activity which can bring the deaf to an attitude of faith. Yet the deaf youngsters would do better to connect creation with providence. . . hence, the deaf must be taught that God creates and cares afterwards and in his providence he will not allow corruption to prevail over a creature finally."

**BOOK REVIEW (Continued)**

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The fourth section, "Conclusion and Recommendations", discusses further the deaf person's personal faith, their understanding of the transcendence-immanence relationship, the deaf conception of God's universal love for mankind, and anthropomorphism and its implications. Rev. Russo then discusses basic and early Christianity, myth, and symbol and what bearing these might have in deepening the deaf person's understanding of God. This section concludes with specific helpful recommendations that pertain to religious education.

Regardless of one's denominational background, this book would be of great value to anyone involved in religious education of deaf persons - young or old.

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