

# HORIZONS

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Plus Reviews of 27 Books

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f Teresa's stages of prayer, and the dialectic he creates between her writings and the Celtic consciousness. He also includes an excellent, concise guide to Teresa's treatise on the spiritual life, *The Interior Castle*.

Yet this is not a book for beginners or for students. Its spiritual reflections do not offer an ordered, cohesive elucidation. Concepts like Quietism and asceticism are referenced without being properly introduced, and many passages assume a prior knowledge of people and events. More fundamentally, the essays do not attempt a contemporary hermeneutical analysis. For example, no effort is made to give a contemporary face to Teresa's more unusual experiences of "locutions" (hearing God speak) and "intellectual visions"; they are mischaracterized and rather denigrated. Regarding John of the Cross, O'Donoghue gives attention to the traditional teaching on intellect and will in relation to the theological virtues of faith and love, but he completely omits John's insight about the imagination/memory and its connection to hope, with important applications to our era.

As the essays progress, O'Donoghue's perspective becomes more limited by his own circumstances, history and age. The vowed life and celibacy are subtly depicted as higher callings, and his advice on prayer assumes that the reader uses practices quite particular to persons in that state. The author also does not get beyond a decidedly masculine viewpoint, as when he describes at length how hard it is to incorporate "feelings" into the ways of knowing and understanding. At times his comments on darkness, offered with relation to all other mystics, seem not fully supported by their texts but more a projection of his own life experience.

The language is dated and non-inclusive. A firm editorial hand would have solved these problems and also improved the text's ability to communicate. In particular the third part, on Thérèse, lacks organization and suffers from many redundancies.

*Adventures in Prayer* is not a tool for learning about the great Carmelite saints. Rather, between the lines, it tells of one religious man's personal journey, an intimate and moving portrayal of faith and commitment.

*Carmelite Monastery, Baltimore*

FRANCES HORNER, OCD

*Christian Martyrs for a Muslim People*. By Martin McGee, OSB. New York: Doubleday, 2008. xxii + 191 pages. \$18.95 (paper).

Martin McGee, a monk from Worth Abbey in Sussex, England, became fascinated with Algeria after a *Tablet* article by Archbishop Henri Teissier of Algiers prompted McGee's letter of support and, eventually, an invitation in 1904 to visit Teissier. McGee came to understand and appreciate a church that produced so many martyrs. Between 1994 and 1996, nineteen women and men were assassinated because they lovingly, freely stayed with their Muslim sisters and brothers when Islamic fundamentalists threatened death to foreigners who would not leave Algeria. The international press covered the story of the seven Trappist monks of Tibhirine who were abducted March 26, 1996 and beheaded

fifty-six days later. In *Spiritus* 1 (Fall 2001: 205–16) a Trappist who knew them well explained not only the historical context but also the monastic perspective of their discernment to remain with their neighbors and pray for forgiveness for the strangers who would soon come to kill them.

McGee's contribution is the clear focus on the Algerian church—the remnant of Catholics in the midst of Muslim culture—which fostered nineteen religious sisters, brothers, priests who willingly chose almost certain death out of love for the Muslim people with whom they ministered. This church transformed its vision from one of nourishing the spiritual life of French Algerians to one of spiritual solidarity with Muslim Algerians; indeed, Catholics learned to gain spiritual nourishment from the way of Islam. Both formal study groups and informal relationships as neighbors and companions in ministry with poor Muslims enabled this community to embody the "universality and gratuitousness of evangelical love" (173).

Most of the book narrates the stories of the nineteen martyrs. Astounding forgiveness and generosity marked the lives of the seven Trappists whose story was told in earlier publications and repeated, in essence, here. Stories of six sisters belonging to four different French congregations are perhaps told for the first time. All ministered to Muslims as nurses, librarians, or domestic science teachers. All were known as "women of God"; five were killed going to or from celebrating the Eucharist. A Marist Brother, living alone in order to be near his poor students who used the library and social center he ran in the heart of Algeria's market district, was working alongside one of the sisters when they were gunned down at point-blank range in the library on May 8, 1994. Four Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) were shot in front of their house by men disguised as policemen. The last martyr was the Bishop of Oran, Algeria, a Dominican who was assassinated on August 1, 1996.

The martyrs' stories in the context of the way the Algerian Church reflected on the nature of their presence in a Muslim country and transformed their vision for the future could make a significant contribution to discussion of themes such as evangelical mission in a post-colonial world, interreligious dialogue, religious leadership, spiritual discernment, discipleship, and vowed religious life.

*Neumann College*

JOANN WOLSKI CONN

*Black Religious Experience: Conversations on Double Consciousness and the Work of Grant Shockley*. By Charles R. Foster and Fred Smith. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2003. 171 pages. \$29.50 (paper).

Grant Shockley was the preeminent African American religious educator in the latter half of the twentieth century. Shockley's untimely death in 1996 robbed that profession of his profound influence as a teacher, writer and scholar. In particular, it left a gaping void, namely, his long awaited magnum opus on the Africentric origins of the church's education that he was in the process of developing.

Charles Foster and Fred Smith set out with a threefold task: historically contextualizing and reclaiming Shockley's work, representing it afresh for our present circumstances, and projecting the trajectory of his thinking into the future. By admirably performing these tasks, Foster and Smith have placed Shockley's life and work back at the center of church education and have reaffirmed his intellectual heritage. The book is an important interpretation of the man and the development of his thought.

Shockley's story is relatively unknown. His academic quest was for a model of Christian education rooted in and responsive to the religious experience of African Americans. In this quest, he became the primary interpreter of Christian religious education to two publics: the black church and the academy. Foster and Smith trace the course of Shockley's thought and extend it by offering a proposal that emerges from his intellectual heritage and the experience of the black church.

The format of the book is arranged as a conversation—a conversation with Grant Shockley at the center. The conversation with Shockley's work is initially between Shockley's friends and proceeds to a dialogue between the two authors. The book begins (Introduction) with a conversation with Bishop James S. Thomas and Ethel R. Johnson. These two friends and colleagues of more than fifty years shed light on Shockley's personal sensibilities, educational posture and theological orientation.

The book falls neatly into four sections. The authors have chosen segments of Shockley's writings as a theme for each section and (in a dialogical manner) contextualize and illuminate the trajectory of his thinking on Christian religious education over a twenty-five year period. The first section (A Way of Thinking) explores the perspective that informs his work. At the heart of Shockley's writings was the concept of "double consciousness" (W.E.B. DuBois), i.e., viewing the world through two lenses: the lens of an oppressed community and the lens of the dominant culture. Initially, this was a personal burden for Shockley. In the final analysis, it became a gift to the church and the academy.

The second section (Sources for a Liberative Religious Education) discloses and illuminates the resources that inform, form and transform his thinking, namely, black theology, liberation theology, progressive pedagogy and political movements. Section three (The Quest for a Model) traces the development of his understanding of Christian religious education for the black church. At the same time, this understanding would illuminate and offer strategies for religious education for all Christians. His premature death would prevent the maturing of this project. In the final section (To Create the Beloved Community), Fred Smith takes up the challenge to develop a framework of religious education by building on the themes and foundations of Shockley's work. A prophetic model is proposed—not just of liberation but also of reconciliation.

This book models the best of academic discourse between colleagues. It demonstrates the indispensable value of the recovery of memory for the field of religious education. I recommend it for graduate courses in religious education and for a place in all our libraries.

*The Way of Discernment: Spiritual Practices for Decision Making.* By Elizabeth Liebert. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008. xii + 170 pages. \$19.95 (paper).

Those familiar with Liebert's insightful writing on spirituality and spiritual *praxis* will welcome this book. In it she argues that discernment—seeking God's call in the midst of the decisions that mark one's life—may very well be the single most important Christian spiritual practice for dealing with the contemporary dilemma of how to live thoughtfully and faithfully (ix, 3–4). Past President of the Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality, Liebert both informs readers of the long and varied tradition of Christian discernment and urges them to internalize and incorporate related practices into their decision making.

Divided into two parts, the book first addresses the biblical, theological and historical context for discernment and discusses spiritual freedom as the essential disposition for discernment. A foundational practice introduced in the first chapter, the Awareness Exam fosters a deepened ability to notice, desire, and choose God in the everydayness of our lives (xi). Part 2, which Liebert considers the core of the book, invites the discernor into an actual discernment process. Seven chapters describe seven possible points of entry for leading a person deeply into discernment: Memory's Guidance, Intuition's Knowin' Your Body's Awareness, Imagination's Insight, Reason's Considerations, The Power of Religious Affections, and Nature's Perspective. Each chapter offers practical related to the particular topic. For example, Approaching Discernment through the Body (80–81) describes concrete discernments, including situations from the author's life (103); also, it provides contemporary evaluation of a biblical or Christian foundation for the entry point under discussion. It is important to note that care is taken to honor the discernor's unique experience and to take even caution, the discernor to exercise prudence and good judgment when engaging the exercises. For example, Liebert recognizes that not all memories are benign and advises that "if a traumatic or destructive memory begins to overwhelm us, we need to stop the memory exercise. We might need to seek outside help ..." (62).

The author's careful analysis and broad perspective contribute to the wisdom and practicality of *The Way of Discernment*. Clearly grounded in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, she articulates well the foundation of discernment and includes best practices for framing the discernment question, for practicing decision making and for confirming one's tentative decision. Her knowledge of the Bible and Christian history enables her to remind the discernor consistently that, even more important than arriving at a decision, the ultimate desire is to follow God's call once it becomes clear. She reinforces her conviction with ecumenical insights from spiritual teachers such as Irenaeus, Origen, Athanasius, Augustine, John Calvin, Thomas Traherne, Jonathan Edwards and John Bunyan. Also included is the Quaker approach to discernment in community through a Clearness Committee.

The primary audiences for this book are individual and group discernment adult faith formation groups: experienced spiritual directors and those being formed in the ministry; and pastoral ministers. Undergraduate and graduate