

signalled. He offers an eschatological vision of an inclusive communion of the saints which provides an opportunity, indeed a duty, 'to show it visibly, like all the other mysteries of the Kingdom ... by loving as of now, gratuitously ... and by living with them the Eucharistic sharing of the everyday'. (p. 57) This is a compelling vision underpinning the faithful, neighbourly witness of the martyred brothers and sisters that comprises the testimonies in *Dialogue of the Heart*.

A useful Appendix includes the 'Testament of Christian de Chergé', a letter that recirculated on social media after the murder of Fr Jacques Hamel, and whose moral authority does not fade. A 'Doctrinal Note on How Christians and Muslims Speak of God' from the French Bishops' Conference in 2008 concludes the book and gives the venturesome and risky ethics that constitute the testimonies of the Algerian martyrs ecclesial weight.

Dialogue of the Heart is an accessible book that could be usefully recommended to lay Christians perplexed and troubled by events such as the murder of Fr Jacques Hamel, offering a way forward for Christian-Muslim relations rooted in narratives of hope in the midst of suffering and despair. While the questions posed by extremist violence to the integrity of Islam are left unanswered, arguably the prior task for Christians, as articulated so persuasively by McGee, is to live faithfully and peaceably with our Muslim neighbours.

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A Way to God - Thomas Merton's Creation Spirituality Journey

Matthew Fox

New World Library, Novato, California, 2016

ISBN 9781608684205 (pbk) 308 pages

\$18.95

The title of this book is adapted from a letter that Merton wrote to the author, then a Dominican novice, in 1967 in response to his request for advice. Merton's reply included the phrase, 'What people want of us, after all, is the way to God.' In 1993 Fox was expelled from the Dominican Order by Cardinal Ratzinger for teaching Liberation Theology and

Creation Spirituality; but as the title shows he, along with Merton, had come to realize that there is no single exclusive way to God.

The author goes on to show the influences that the Dominican Meister Eckhart had on both himself and Merton. He highlights how Merton was particularly influenced by Eckhart's writings through his contact with Suzuki from 1958 onwards. For the author, so strong was this influence that the book contains phrases such as 'Meister Eckhart was [Merton's] ally number one' and 'Merton's mentor and mine, Meister Eckhart'. Merton was clearly influenced by Eckhart, and included several direct quotes from him in *Cables to the Ace*; but the author does not mention the comment Merton wrote in a letter to Etta Gullick in 1961: 'I like him [Eckhart], but now and again he leaves me with a sense of being let down, when he goes beyond all bounds.' Merton had many allies and mentors, but to claim primacy for Eckhart is, for me, a step too far.

Half of the book is taken up by four lengthy chapters, each detailing one of the author's four paths of Creation Spirituality, which lie at the centre of his life and work; a work he sees as 'moving Western spirituality from a dualistic, fall/redemption foundation to the more ancient, more biblical, creation-centred or Wisdom-based foundation'. His four paths are: Via Positiva, the path of wonder and awe; Via Negativa, that of letting go, letting be, of solitude and silence; Via Creativa, the path of celebration and creativity; and Via Transformativa, that of compassion and justice. In expounding on each of these paths Fox quotes extensively from Merton and Eckhart, as well as highlighting his own writings. He sees all four paths contained in the following quote from Merton's circular letter of September 1968:

Our real journey in life is interior; it is a matter of growth, deepening, and of an ever greater surrender to the creative action of love and grace in our hearts. Never was it more necessary for us to respond to that action.

For Fox the key question in Merton's monastic life was, 'Am I called to mysticism or prophecy (which the author defines as the struggle for social justice)?' And he sees that for Merton, as in his own life, the question is not answered as either/or but both/and. The last of these four chapters highlights some of the justice issues that Merton addressed in the sixties: Vietnam, dangers of technology, nuclear war, racial injustice and ecological damage. But such concerns only raised their

head for Merton in the sixties, whereas until the late fifties the key question in Merton's life was, 'Am I called to be a contemplative or a writer?'

The following chapters focus on the seven heresies that led to the author's expulsion from the Dominican Order by Ratzinger. He lists each of these heresies, and goes on to show how they are each perfectly in line with the teachings of the Bible and the early Church, and that it was the influence of Constantine and Augustine that set the Church on a patriarchal, controlling path. Alongside each of these heresies Fox draws parallels between Merton's writings and his own thinking. The seven heresies he recalls being accused of are: (1) Fox is a feminist theologian; (2) Fox calls God 'Mother'; (3) Fox calls God 'Child'; (4) Fox prefers the doctrine of original blessing to the doctrine of original sin; (5) Fox does not condemn homosexuals; (6) Fox prefers the four paths he talks about to the traditional three paths of purgation, illumination and union; (7) Fox works too closely with native Americans. Unfortunately he does not expand any further on these statements so we can glean no further detail from this book about what lay behind them. But the author defends his corner well and provides one with much food for thought – even if by holding these beliefs he brought about his expulsion. It raises the question of whether Merton, had he lived, might have suffered a similar fate.

As regards the fifth heresy Merton did not comment of homosexuality; indeed the issue did not break through into the US national consciousness until 1969, the year of the Stonewall riots in New York. So Fox prefers to concentrate on Merton's love affair with his nurse in 1966, devoting five pages to the matter. He concludes that, 'Merton did not regret the episode so much as learn from it.' True - but this is a difficult matter to assess objectively. Merton burnt her letters to him, and she has been silent on the matter ever since so our picture is necessarily one-sided. (In a similar speculative vein, Fox devotes several pages to examining the possible involvement of the CIA in Merton's death. He concludes by stating his belief that 'Merton died a martyr at the hands of the American Government'.)

The final chapters focus on Fox's critique of religion, monasticism, and the Church, as opposed to the 'kingdom/queendom' of God. For him the two previous popes are the villains of the piece, but he also quotes strong words from Merton, among them: 'Our Christian religion too often becomes simply the cult of the dead body of Christ.' For Fox the solution

lies in the Cosmic Christ, the concept that Christ is in all things including ourselves, and finds echoes of this in many passages of Merton and Eckhart.

Opinions differ over the author. For some he is the successor to Teilhard de Chardin, for others the purveyor of New Age esoterica. Wherever you position yourself on this spectrum there is much in this book to inspire and challenge. As Merton said of Karl Rahner, 'a readable theologian is dangerous.' Dangerous or not, this book is certainly readable. And it will send you back to Merton's writings to see passages in a new way, and discover/rediscover the writings of Eckhart, Rabbi Abraham Heschel and Thomas Berry amongst others – possibly even Fox himself. I recommend it.

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Seeking Surrender – How My Friendship with a Trappist Monk Taught me to Trust and Embrace Life

Colette Lafia

Forward by Daniel H Horan O.F.M.

Ave Maria Press, 2015 — Distributed in UK by Alban Books

ISBN-13 978-1-933495-88-0 (pbk) 160 pages

£9.99

For members of the Thomas Merton Society, the title can be, at first glance, a bit misleading. When I was asked to review the book, I assumed the Trappist Monk mentioned in the title must be Thomas Merton. Probably the publisher's marketing staff were hoping that others would think the same, buy the book and only later realise that it was about another Trappist monk.

Once I had gotten over the disappointment that the book was not about Thomas Merton (and relief, as well, as the prospect of writing a book review on a book about Thomas Merton for the Merton Journal would have filled me with trepidation as I am a complete novice when it comes to all things concerning Thomas Merton), I was heartened by Richard Rohr's comment, 'A beautiful and honest book'. I have read many