

Hill Fletcher, Francis X. Clooney, Marianne Moyaert, Catherine Cornille, and Felix Wilfred. The essays by Fletcher and Moyaert push theology to move (or move further) in important, new directions. The former uses the famous 1893 World's Parliament of Religions as a case study for interrogating how a theology of religious pluralism always does the kind of work in social and political milieu that requires critical analysis of the intersections of race, gender, and religious difference; the latter explores the possibility of expanding the compass of comparative theology beyond preoccupation with religious texts as to include rituality. It thus gives priority to vital themes that in fact (and to its credit) surface at several places in this volume, for example: embodiment, experiential forms of learning and symbolic practices, "lived religion," and the politics of representation.

Though these relatively short essays may appeal more immediately to readers with relevant background knowledge, they will serve well for both graduate and advanced undergraduate seminars in their explorations of constructive directions in the field. On a final note, a couple of the chapters refer to a 2014 symposium at KU Leuven, entitled "Between Doctrine and Discernment," as their initial context. The theme of discernment runs throughout the volume and effectively anchors the many reflections, which, taken together, challenge theologians to find new ways forward in interreligious engagements.

CHRISTIAAN JACOBS-VANDEGEER
Australian Catholic University

The Climate of Monastic Prayer. By Thomas Merton. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2018. xvi + 156 pages. \$19.95.
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As one might expect from almost anything by Thomas Merton, *The Climate of Monastic Prayer* is both solidly traditional and creatively insightful. It provides a valuable introduction to Catholic Christian prayer.

The present book, however, is truly perplexing to review. How dare anyone be less than respectful toward anything written by Thomas Merton? It was, however, published in 1969 as *Contemplative Prayer*, and is available in that format, online, having been assembled shortly before Merton's trip to Asia and untimely death. Its chapters were written in the 1950s, as noted in the new introduction to the text—about half the chapters written in 1959 (nine chapters), and the rest (ten chapters) from "an earlier manuscript." Merton's diaries from the 1950s and 1960s find him occasionally chiding himself about publishing unnecessarily. One might wonder why the

publishers of the present text felt the need to reprint a book assembled in 1968, published in 1969, but written in the late 1950s. Among other journals, it was reviewed in *America* in 1969 and in *Theological Studies* in 1970.

A disclaimer: the present reviewer was a seminarian in a Catholic novitiate in the 1950s, and read a good deal of the kind of material that is in this book, so he brings a certain amount of *deja vu*, which both informs and biases his response.

It is puzzling that the book is noted as not for beginners, and not for the more advanced in Catholic (monastic) prayer. The present reviewer began reading it straight through, and found it so puzzlingly errant between what seemed to be advice about discursive meditation, and more advanced contemplation, that he went back, numbered the chapters according to the announced chapters from 1959, and separately, the chapters from “an earlier manuscript,” and reread the book according to the two separable sections with their separable emphases.

In that era of “ascetical theology,” spiritual writers, whom Merton surely knew, distinguished among three stages of prayer: the purgative, the unitive, and the illuminative. The purgative stage was where most people started, those who had to cope with the most basic attention to such spiritual obligations as the Ten Commandments and the most basic cleaning up of adolescent distraction. Subsequently one worked into, and was graced by God, to experience a trans-discursive unitive way, addressed by a reassuring book called *An Ignatian Approach to Divine Union* by Louis Peeters, SJ, which comfortingly assured the ordinary soul that simple “acquired” contemplation was within the possibilities of ordinary folk. All were cautioned against any presumption that any but the most uniquely and obviously undeservedly graced would be admitted to the illuminative stage of infused contemplation. All of this was worked out in a summary handbook on spiritual direction called *The Spiritual Life: A Treatise on Ascetical and Mystical Theology*, by Adolphe Tanqueray, SSM. Novices were cautioned not to read this book, lest they get any false ideas about their presumed mystical depth.

The present book moves back and forth between the purgative and the unitive ways, without explanation. If one reads half the chapters, one is in the realm of (word not mentioned) “discursive meditation,” while the second set of chapters uses the word “contemplation” far more frequently, almost exclusively. Assembled as they are in the book, to one reading it straight through, there is a confusing mixture of advice about meditation and then about contemplation, with no formal distinctions pointed out. The present reviewer worked through the book, and then simply turned to Merton’s *New Seeds of Contemplation*, which he had partially read in the

1950s as *Seeds of Contemplation*. The last ten chapters of *New Seeds of Contemplation* give very substantially deeper advice on contemplation.

Except for antiquarian or biographic interest, skip *The Climate of Monastic Prayer* and read Merton's *New Seeds of Contemplation*.

GEORGE B. GILMORE
Spring Hill College

Faith, Hope, Love, and Justice: The Theological Virtues Today. Edited by Anselm K. Min. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2018. 264 pages. \$110.00.

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Anselm Min's edited volume accomplishes at least two important tasks. First, it provides the reader with access to eight different theologians from across the ecclesiological spectrum. Second, the text reads in a way that both graduate students and undergraduates (with some assistance) can access the material. Let me explain.

For the graduate classroom, the edited volume can serve as a practical example of what it means to apply Aquinas' moral universe, specifically his discussion of the natural, moral, and theological virtues, to important ethical issues of the day (e.g., secularism, racism, terrorism, etc.). That is, as Min notes in the introduction, the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love "have come under severe challenges from contemporary culture during the last several decades" (vii). There are multiple threats (e.g., the problem of evil and suffering, atheism and agnosticism, structural injustices, imperial conflicts and ideologies, etc.), and, complicating matters further, these threats are located in a globalized context (vii). As the editor, Min articulates four aims for the project. The first aim is to conceptualize the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love in today's present context. Second, he asks how one may understand these three virtues relate to one another? Next, he queries how faith, hope, and love respond to the problem of suffering and injustice, and lastly, he examines what can be done to revitalize faith, hope, and love in light of the pressures and temptations that exist in contemporary culture, along with opportunities to counter or resist them (viii). What follows are the creative responses of some of the best thinkers in a field that reflects "both the diversity and challenge of contemporary theology" (viii).

In addition, I envision Min's book also landing in the hands of more sophisticated undergraduate thinkers (albeit with some modest assistance). The lesson to be learned in this context resides in how he demonstrates that the virtues of faith, hope, and love (in cooperation with a robust understanding of justice) are meant to reshape our moral imaginations and