

stops – dropping, inexplicably, the final six conferences (from December 3, 1967 through June 16, 1968) found in the 2012 set! Thus each version contains thirteen talks, seven in common and six unique to each, with no indication of these alterations and of course no explanation for the startling omission of the concluding sequence of conferences previously provided. It seems as if Now You Know decided to limit the revised version to the same number of talks as its predecessor, which was accomplished by the arbitrary elimination of the final six presentations – a most peculiar and disconcerting procedure, particularly since no indication is provided that this has been done, or even that the 2014 release in fact differs from that of 2012. One would hope that greater transparency could be provided for actual and prospective customers, and perhaps even that some way could be found for those who purchased the original versions of these two sets to obtain the newly available presentations without having to buy the entire revised version (or in the case of the Sufi series, for those buying the 2014 release to obtain the material from 2012 now no longer available)

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HORAN, Daniel P., OFM, *The Franciscan Heart of Thomas Merton: A New Look at the Spiritual Inspiration of His Life, Thought, and Writing* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2014), pp. xxvi + 261. ISBN 978-1-59471-422-1 (paper) \$16.95.

I am taken aback at how much I enjoyed and appreciated this new study because of the more intense focus employed by Daniel Horan on the Franciscan foundations that undergird Thomas Merton’s monastic vocation and key elements of his literary legacy. The heart of this young priest and Franciscan’s new good book are Parts II and III.

In Part II, “Franciscan Foundations,” Horan employs well-documented research to present a time-line that is expansive and detailed of Merton’s developing interest in becoming a priest and Franciscan after his baptism at the age of twenty-three. He highlights more strongly than anyone has heretofore the role and friendship of Daniel Walsh in mentoring the new convert to Roman Catholicism and in introducing Merton to the philosophical writings of Franciscan medieval philosopher John Duns Scotus (d. 1308) on whom Walsh had written his doctoral dissertation. Scotus plays a large role in Horan’s book as an influence on some of Merton’s key ideas, for instance, on the true and false selves as elaborated and introduced by Merton in *New Seeds of Contemplation*.

After recounting the circumstances that led Merton not to enter the Franciscan novitiate in 1940 and his subsequently taking a teaching job

at Saint Bonaventure College in Olean, New York, Horan draws out the crucial roles of individual Franciscan friars, most especially a foremost scholar of the Franciscan tradition, Father Philotheus Boehner, in nurturing Merton's love for Saint Francis of Assisi and encouraging his formal studies in Franciscan traditions of philosophy, theology and ways of living.

In the book's Part III, "Reflections on Faith," Horan successfully mines Franciscan key ideas that ground Merton's writing on spirituality, especially, as already mentioned, Duns Scotus' influence on Merton's religious imagination; and then on Merton's Christ-centered theology and the motive of God the Son's incarnation as an excess of God's love; and on Merton's life-long realization of his *kinship*, an important word of Franciscan inspiration, with all beings in creation. Horan carefully examines how much Merton owed to the theological and aesthetic perspectives in the writings of Saint Bonaventure. He italicizes always in his book Merton's continuing reverence for Saint Francis throughout the monk's mature life and how, beginning from the time Merton became a Third-Order Lay Franciscan while teaching at St. Bonaventure, Francis became a (perhaps "the") major model for how Merton intuited he should live out his own search for and way of proceeding to God in his own century.

Father Horan depicts Francis of Assisi and Thomas Merton as associated "icons" with continuing relevance for spiritual reflection, prophetic peacemaking and interreligious dialogue today. He is, however, no idol maker: Francis of Assisi will undoubtedly remain a universally admired man of the spirit for however many centuries humankind has left remaining, long after Merton's text has had its day. Thomas Merton is no Saint Francis and Daniel Horan never makes an equation to prove otherwise.

The author prudently constrained himself and curbed a desire for a more complete presentation of the influence of Francis and Franciscan traditions on Merton's writing and vocation that he could have voluminously proof-texted and commented upon from Merton's journals, letters and poetry. To cite only one beautiful example, he could have included the passage in *The Sign of Jonas*, where Merton is describing the effects of his having been made Master of Scholastics. This new responsibility for monks younger than he in the monastic life lifted him out of his infatuation with a more solitary existence to confront the problems and confusions of others. He realized that in this new job he was discovering a "new desert" as his growing compassion for others began seeping into his solitude, providing a new, more bracing and difficult place to be alone with God with others:

Do you suppose I have a spiritual life? I have none, I am indigence, I am silence, I am poverty, I am solitude, for I have renounced spiritual-

ity to find God, and He it is Who preaches loud in the depths of my indigence, saying: "I will pour out my spirit upon thy children and they shall spring up among the herbs as willows beside the running waters" (Isaias, 44:3-4). "The children of thy barrenness shall say in thy ears: The place is too strait for me, make me room to dwell in" (Isaias, 49:20). I die of love for you, Compassion: I take you for my Lady, as Francis married poverty I marry you, the Queen of hermits and the Mother of the Poor.¹

Horan is nuanced throughout his text as he emphasizes the major Franciscan chords in Merton's life and writing. While not naming or developing other major influences, he acknowledges that Merton's "heart" was fed by the flow of other major voices. Other scholars could as well and justly persuade readers with other studies to argue that Merton's "heart" was Cistercian, or Carmelite, or Ignatian, or even Chuang Tzu-ian.

And now, unwilling to constrain myself, I note that in Chapter 3, "The Rise and Fall of a Vocation," Horan provides a well-reasoned analysis of why Merton did not become a Franciscan. This important vocational crisis in the young convert's life receives a prominence in this book that it has not been granted by previous scholars. In naming the reasons why Merton failed to enter the Franciscan novitiate of the New York Province, Horan prudently resists surmising the reasons why Merton failed to become a Franciscan for which he had not found hard evidence. I applaud him but am not so restrained.

In the absence of possibly eighty pages of private journal which Merton was keeping in 1940 at the time of his pursuing entering the Franciscans, pages which were eventually torn out of the journal book (by him or someone else to whom he confided them when he entered Gethsemani?), pages that could have definitively provided more clues to his "emotional instability" at the time, I'll wager there were at least two other reasons, besides those Horan provides, why Merton did not enter the Franciscan novitiate at this point in his spiritual career. One reason that I am conjecturing Horan does not name at all and the other he alludes to but only generally as Merton's contemporaneous problems with "past sinfulness." One unnamed and less serious reason that I would conjecture for Merton's hesitation to become a Franciscan is that, when he had some exposure to Franciscan scholastics during the summer of 1940 (when he stayed in a dorm room at the college as the gathering of friends at Bob Lax's family cottage had become too large), given his temperament, education and traveled sophistication, Merton might not have relished

1. Thomas Merton *The Sign of Jonas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1953) 334.

the prospect of living with sixty novices who would in the main be right out of high school. While he might have momentarily enjoyed thinking of himself as “standing out” in the Franciscan novitiate, his having to live side-by-side with immature boys probably proved discouraging as boys were never his preferred audience for inspiring admiration. What could he possibly have in common with his fellow novices? At Gethemani, where silence reigned, this would be less a problem.

As for my second conjectured and certainly more serious reason why Merton might have agonized over his Franciscan vocation, how could a twenty-five-year-old who had allegedly fathered a child at university, who even in high school was reported by a classmate to have consorted with “not the right type of girls,” who at Columbia no doubt enjoyed physical intimacy with women, why would anyone like him not have paused and agonized at the immediate and not just imagined prospect of a life of celibacy and aspirational chastity? Horan alludes to this conjectured reason more judiciously than I just have, but while it’s none of my business either, I would want to study Merton’s quashed journals and investigate what had to be its major theme of how he must have agonized over how he could possibly pull off chastity down at the farm, after having so freely enjoyed “Paree.”

Horan communicates with clarity. While he introduces his personal voice in describing the effects of Saint Francis and Merton on his own development, and while he often employs a conversational tone to his paragraphs, there is nothing lightweight about his text. Father Horan is a fine scholar who has the ability to expose his learning judiciously while being more pastorally aware of his general reader. I do judge, however, along with Horan himself, that his book is not an introduction into the thought and life of Thomas Merton. Readers will more appreciate this new book if they have encountered Merton more generally elsewhere, yet *The Franciscan Heart of Thomas Merton* valuably mines the Merton corpus anew so that hidden veins of Merton’s intellectual history can be more exposed and the rich Christian tradition below the surfaces of his life and thought can be better exhibited.

As the International Thomas Merton Society will return to Saint Bonaventure University in Olean, New York to celebrate its biennial general meeting in June 2017, Daniel Horan’s new book is the perfect guide to have in one’s pocket before and at the meeting so as to more enjoy this major Merton “place” and the legacy of its Franciscan influences on one of Christianity’s significant spiritual writers, who for now remains emergent in his relevance – even should the future prove it was only for an important moment.

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