

than Kentucky (277), but nevertheless believes that had he lived he would have been drawn back (380), whether permanently or not: “Merton clearly favored the option of undergoing a kind of monastic experiment by remaining a monk of the Abbey of Gethsemani while somehow living as a distant hermit in Alaska” (382). But she also believes that no earthly place could or would perfectly fulfill the yearnings of Merton’s restless spirit.

As for the author herself, this memoir makes it clear that her own pilgrimage continues beyond the confines of her book. The final chapters relate some of her own more recent painful struggles but also her growing sense of peace, her own “epiphany” associated particularly with an extended return visit to Yakutat and its environs. She writes,

We are not drunkards here, carousers immune to the sufferings of the world. We are all poets here, bound to one another through the inner spirit, one beating heart to another. This was the silent prayer I muttered: “God, thank you for all you have given me, though I did not always see, and I did not always understand what you were trying to tell me.” . . . It was in the solitude and contemplation of Yakutat, and through Merton’s legacy, that I realized God took me here to that faraway place to quiet me, to give me time to scrape off the hardened crust of my false self. . . . I found my footing in Mother Alaska. With Merton, I understood what a centering was, what a real prayer was, what contemplation was. My Faith in God was confirmed under the Prophet Mountain. (390-91)

Kathleen Tarr quotes Merton’s statement in his Alaskan journal that “I am here in answer to someone’s prayer” (*TMA* 10), to which she responds, “And as I came to believe, those prayers were mine” (306). Readers of this moving memoir, with its informative insights into Merton’s brief but important stay in her home state and its testimony to the monk’s transformative influence on one fellow pilgrim’s journey, may well find themselves nodding their heads in agreement

Patrick F. O’Connell

DALLMAYR, Fred R., *Spiritual Guides: Pathfinders in the Desert* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), pp. 176. ISBN 978-0-268-10258-6 (cloth) \$45.00.

The cover of Fred Dallmayr’s book *Spiritual Guides: Pathfinders in the Desert* depicts four spiritual guides: Paul Tillich, Raimon Panikkar, Thomas Merton and Pope Francis. But the scope of the book goes beyond these four figures. Rather than merely raise up these particular

spiritual guides, Dallmayr explores what makes a spiritual guide worthy of following in the twenty-first century. These four are but examples of a larger principle: that spiritual guides today must forge pathways through the desert of contemporary Western culture. Even if that sounds overly dramatic, it is hard not to agree that Tillich, Panikkar, Merton and Pope Francis fit that description.

To forge a path through the desert, according to Dallmayr, means to embody an *agape* spirituality rather than a gnostic spirituality. A gnostic spirituality is vertical in its orientation. It suggests that spirituality is a private matter between an individual and God, perhaps culminating in union with God. This kind of spirituality certainly has roots within the Christian tradition, but Dallmayr helpfully points out that a gnostic spirituality can be found in other traditions, such as Islam, as well. An *agape* spirituality, in contrast, is horizontal in its orientation. It is a spirituality that turns outward to the world in both loving embrace and prophetic critique. It is this, often more challenging, approach to spirituality that Dallmayr wishes to promote – and rightly, to my mind. This form of spirituality is likewise found in other traditions, although the Christian tradition is Dallmayr’s focus in the four profiles.

The chapter on Tillich is easily the most difficult of the four profiles. Since the most relevant portions of Tillich’s life took place in Germany rather than the United States, it is hard to draw direct parallels to how an American Christian might respond to the world today. (German readers might have a different perspective, but I suspect that since Germany has changed drastically since World War II they might find the particulars of Tillich’s life equally difficult to apply.) Nevertheless, Tillich’s commitment to socialism in his context does offer a concrete example of how one’s spiritual convictions might display themselves in political action. The remaining chapters, on Panikkar, Merton and Pope Francis, map out pathways that acknowledge the sacramental nature of reality. Panikkar describes the interrelatedness, not only of world religions, but more fundamentally of humanity, the cosmos and the divine. Consequently, contemplation of the divine leads to action in the world – a transformation of oneself and one’s environment. In the chapter on Merton, Dallmayr challenges the idea that contemplation for Merton was of the more gnostic, vertical variety by putting *New Seeds of Contemplation* into dialogue with more politically concerned texts such as his *Cold War Letters*. The result is a “spiritual humanism” that uncovers spirituality both within and beyond Christianity (71). Pope Francis similarly follows the Spirit, and joy, beyond church walls to unlikely places such as the United Nations and the United States Congress.

All four profiles are consistently positive in their portrayals of each subject's spirituality. There is no mention, for example, of the strained relationship between Tillich and his wife nor of any critiques or missteps during Pope Francis' papacy.

Christianity does not hold sole claim to gnostic and *agape* forms of spirituality, and the West is not the only part of the world with deserts and pathways. While the scope of the book is limited to the West, as is obvious from the four chosen spiritual guides, Dallmayr follows up their profiles with a chapter detailing how Tillich, Panikkar and Merton offer not only pathways through the desert of Western culture but also bridges to the East, specifically Buddhism. While the chapter cannot offer a full account of Christian-Buddhist dialogue or Buddhist forms of spirituality, it does suggest that bridges are possible and that, at least in Panikkar's and Merton's analyses, there is a shared emphasis on liberating action in the world.

The book is worth reading for its insistence on an active spirituality that never fails to engage the world, even when the world is filled with pain, suffering and war. The temptation to escape to God is resisted by these spiritual guides, exemplifying an *agape* spirituality. Unfortunately, in order to read the book I just described, one must read the chapters out of order. Skip the four profiles and jump right to chapter 5, "Modes of Religious Spirituality: Some Christian and Islamic Legacies." This chapter lays out *agape* and gnostic forms of spirituality and argues that *agape* spirituality is to be preferred. It is only after reading this chapter that the importance of the four spiritual guides becomes apparent. After chapter 5, read the profiles and then jump to chapter 6 which suggests bridges to Buddhism. Be forewarned that Dallmayr uses the technical theological terminology of each spiritual guide. Consequently, academics will have a much easier time making their way through this book than theologians of the "armchair" variety, despite the potential appeal of the book's thesis to a more general audience.

Dallmayr should be commended for his desire to include diverse perspectives, including insights from both Islam and Buddhism. However, his ambition in this regard far outreaches his actual achievement. In the introduction he explains why he chose to focus on Tillich, Panikkar, Merton and Pope Francis, all Western figures. He writes, "My selection was guided by the assumption or conviction that it is in Western societies where social and ecological spoliation or *Verwüstung* is most advanced and where turn-around is hence most urgently needed" (6). It is not clear to me that this can be so easily generalized. He goes on to state, "I still can be accused of neglecting some of the rich folk traditions of spirituality

found in Africa, Latin America, and the Oceanic world. But I leave this exploration to others more competent and more thoroughly steeped in these legacies” (6). That seems fair enough as those contexts are clearly beyond the scope of this particular book. However, Dallmayr’s great care in noting all the cultural and religious traditions that could not find a place in this book only serves to highlight that Dallmayr appears completely oblivious of the fact that this book contains no women. That is not entirely accurate. There are exactly four mentions of women in the text: one sentence (which is a quotation from Panikkar) that mentions Simone Weil; three sentences that mention Pope Francis’ praise of Dorothy Day but also reduce her spirituality to mere “social activism” in contrast to Merton’s call for “inner renewal” (87); a paragraph on Teresa of Avila which is actually quite nice; and a quote from Grace Cali who is not named but rather referred to simply as Tillich’s secretary. In other words, there is exactly one sustained, positive treatment of a woman in the book (Teresa of Avila). This is not to say that Tillich, Panikkar, Merton and Pope Francis are not worthy guides; however, there are so many women’s voices that could have easily been included. Simone Weil, mentioned by Panikkar, would have been an obvious choice but so would Saint Teresa of Calcutta, Sr. Helen Prejean, Sr. Simone Campbell, M. Shawn Copeland and countless others. This massive oversight is disappointing.

Wendy Crosby

PLEKON, Michael P., *The World as Sacrament: An Ecumenical Path toward a Worldly Spirituality* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017), pp. vii + 252. ISBN: 978-0-8146-4556-9 (paper) \$24.95.

In *The World as Sacrament: An Ecumenical Path toward a Worldly Spirituality*, Eastern Orthodox priest Michael Plekon offers readers a journey through the ecumenical thought of twelve Christian thinkers. His subjects range from mid-twentieth century figures to those of today and represent Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, albeit in their more “liberal” manifestations. Plekon has no doubt gathered a fascinating assemblage for his project: Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, Mother Maria Skobtsova, Alexander Men, Nicholas Afanasiev, Lev Gillet, Paul Evdokimov, Thomas Merton, Marilynne Robinson, Richard Rohr, Barbara Brown Taylor, Joan Chittister and Kathleen Norris. All but five of the twelve thinkers he examines are deceased; and all but six are Eastern Orthodox (interestingly, excluding the author himself, not one of the Eastern Orthodox figures he examines is now living).

Plekon’s intent for the book is noble. As he says of his subjects, “Their