

Richard B. Patterson. *Becoming a Modern Contemplative: A Psychospiritual Model for Personal Growth*. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1995. 120 pages. Paper. \$9.95.

Frank X. Tuoti. *Why Not Be a Mystic*. New York: Crossroad, 1995. 192 pages. Paper. \$10.95.

Reviewed by Paul Wise

For Richard B. Patterson, contemplation necessitates a "movement *into* life and not *away* from it" (xii). Living a contemplative life involves moving back and forth from the inner to the outer, a withdrawal and return (69). Patterson applies the term "contemplative psychology" to the study of contemplation, meditation, and its effects, methods, and results, its "spontaneous experiences of wonder" (xii).

In chapter one, Patterson states that to become a modern contemplative (as opposed to an ancient one, perhaps), one must adopt certain stances in preparation for the journey. These stances include: (1) simplicity, not asceticism but a substitution in one's life of quality for quantity, substance for appearance, a reassessment of our attitudes about acquiring things and about the poor, and a willingness to become inwardly poor; (2) self discipline or the performance of "certain actions that may ultimately benefit us but which we are disinclined to perform"; (3) sensuality, an awakening and appreciation of the senses, including sexuality; (4) detachment, ceasing to try to control others or to desire riches, prestige, or the need to be unique (14); and (5) gratitude.

Patterson believes the means to achieve the contemplative state are "grounded in experiences that are available to us all" (61) such as journaling (in a helpful chapter that suggests writing down dreams and which explains the symbology of dreaming), recovering solitude, finding sacred places of retreat and reverence (which can include a church or an herb garden), and discovering a companion with whom to share our journey. Such companions can include spouses or lovers, friends, mentors, and therapists or spiritual directors. One of the greatest dangers to avoid on the mystical path is arrogance, thinking that one has "discovered all the outer and inner territory there is to chart" (49).

Chapter six of Patterson's book deals with five phases the contemplative movement has assumed, those of the meditator, the contemplative, the mystic, the prophet, and the clown. These phases are manifested constantly by contemplatives in everyday life. Being the meditator involves quieting the mind in order to achieve relaxation, not only of the physical body, but, more importantly, the letting go, at least temporarily, of the ego, the need to be in control, which is based upon fear. This relaxation response can be very healing and ultimately deepens self awareness and creates humility.

Becoming the contemplative involves reflecting upon the existence of others, of "beholding," suggesting the existence of an emotional response to what one sees or thinks about constituting a state of wonder. The mystic involves himself or herself with discerning the existence of God in all creation, of seeing the potential in situations, of viewing life simultaneously as it is and as it should be. The mystic also experiences the dark night of the soul, mainly loneliness and a feeling of the absence of God. Through love, however, the mystic can feel connected to all creation. The prophet is the hero returning from the quest. Often one has to deal with one or more temptations, which include burn-out, fame, rigidity and self-righteousness, persecution, and the use and/or abuse of anger and power. The clown is the aspect of contemplative movement that provides comic relief and can include any or all aspects of that individual or movement. The clown is able to integrate all aspects of the individual or movement.

Chapter seven suggests places to start and ways to begin the pilgrimage of the modern contemplative. Patterson suggests making an inventory of what has motivated and inspired one so far, such as works of literature, music, or art. He includes his own list of such works as an example. He suggests several "trail heads" or starting points for the inward journey, designed for each of the four spiritual "types."

Patterson, a clinical psychologist, clearly sees the modern contemplative as a figure who must maintain involvement with the outer world. He rejects the image of the lone, solitary ascetic who cuts off all ties to the world as a means to fasten all attention upon the ultimate or nonmaterial. Instead, Patterson suggests seeing the ultimate in all things. The "narrow way that leads into life" might include any of life's innumerable manifestations.

Patterson views mysticism and contemplation through the eyes of a psychologist. His discussion of the dark night of the soul, as well

as the qualities of inner experience in general, sounds like an array of clinical symptoms to be minimized and brought under control by a positive attitude, instead of as profound disruptions that such experiences can actually be. One wonders how Patterson, as a clinical psychologist, might interpret an out-of-the-body experience or a case of "divine" illumination where the participant in religious ecstasy thought the room was aglow with a ruddy light. Patterson's book, however, is inspiring, especially to those who are more extroverted and can feel the presence God just as readily at the helm of a sailboat, for instance, as with their eyes shut in meditation while viewing the interior depths.

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Frank X. Tuoti's book *Why Not Be a Mystic* emphasizes a more inward, traditional approach and methodology than Patterson's book, as well as quotations, restatements, and synopses of classical works of mysticism applied to the modern would-be mystic. He quotes extensively from Thomas Merton's essay "The Inner Experience" and other writings by Merton. Tuoti frankly acknowledges his dependence upon other sources, wishing only to "recast in existential and contemporary language what has been handed down, lived, and treasured since the earliest Christian centuries" (24). Tuoti's purpose and method makes his book seem a bit like a *Reader's Digest* of mysticism, and that is not meant as a disparaging term. He states that the book is intended for "those who are already 'pray-ers' but who have an unexplainable hunger for something deeper and more experiential" (20). Tuoti states the purpose of commitment to the mystical life is not the same as taking up a hobby such as basketball or studying astronomy, science, philosophy, or the arts, but it is to "'see' God in an obscure yet most real experiential interior vision" (23). The viewing of this "luminous obscurity" is what Tuoti terms contemplation.

The book is divided into four parts and includes thirty-four chapters. In part one, "A Treasure Lost: Recovering the Pearl of Great Price," Tuoti takes up the definition of mysticism and contemplation, two "bloodied words" (25), according to Tuoti, who wonders why we are not instructed in the "art of meditation" by the Church. He believes that without this lost art the "'inner eye' of the soul cannot be open to the Reality within it" (36). Stressing the importance of the inner journey, Tuoti believes we have lost the true discipline of the "imageless

wordless prayer" (36). Tuoti believes that since the middle ages the Western Church has lost the "living waters" of contemplation (35).

Part two, "Contemplative Prayer, Beyond Words and Images," deals briefly with the nature, techniques, and discipline of contemplative prayer. Two basic approaches to contemplative prayer are discussed: discursive and nondiscursive prayer. Which method one uses depends upon one's personality and what works. Nondiscursive prayer can be achieved by the use of a mantra. Both methods aim to quiet the mind and achieve inner silence, the language, according to Meister Eckhart, that God speaks.

The ultimate form of prayer, says Tuoti, is when the Holy Spirit prays to God through the individual. This state is achieved by first quieting the "monkey mind" (ch. 12). In chapter seventeen, "Prometheus Chained," Tuoti says the cages we build for God with our own limited concepts become our own prison. We can escape this prison through "silent, wordless, formless prayer" (96).

Part three, "Night Birth: The Awakening Heart," concerns an aspect of apophatic mysticism, the dark night of the soul. Tuoti recounts the mystical truism, paraphrasing Gregory of Nyssa, that the spiritual journey is "a passage from light to darkness into light" (102). Quoting extensively from St. John of the Cross, Tuoti manages to make the same point as St. John of the Cross that the dark night really is not darkness at all but, paradoxically, greater illumination. Tuoti's description of the soul caught in such a state is quite graphic and useful to the contemplative who finds himself or herself in actual metaphysical darkness.

Part four, "Sentinel at the Gate: Guarding the Heart," outlines some of the spiritual diseases that can inhibit spiritual growth, such as attachment to the mundane and petty, needless activities, idle curiosity about everyday events and affairs. Concern for the superficial, the ordinary, and the transient is part of the illusion of this world brought about through the false self. The true self is the soul in union with God. However, one must have a balance between the "Mary" and the "Martha" forces in one's life.

In chapter five Tuoti quotes Carl Jung: "'It is high time' Jung wrote, 'that we realize it is pointless to praise the light if nobody can see it'" (Tuoti's emphasis, 42). If so, instead of referring to the light recounted and expounded upon in so many mystical writings as "luminous obscurity" (a descriptive term taken from *The Cloud of Unknowing*), one wonders why Tuoti, writing in the post-inquisition era of the twentieth

century, does not refer to it as actual, tangible light, instead of covering it up with some kind of metaphorical significance. The light of God, if it exists, is not simply a metaphor for the knowledge or understanding it conveys. It exists apart from the understanding, according to St. John of the Cross. If it is actual light we are supposed to witness, Tuoti might be more specific about where and how we as aspiring mystics are to see it, or else state that the light is indeed metaphorical. The Bible does not say that St. Paul was blinded for three days on the road to Damascus only by great understanding or knowledge, though overwhelming knowledge and understanding certainly did accompany the light and the voice from heaven. St. Paul actually *saw* and *heard* something. The light of God is not merely a figure of speech but is beyond words, a point Tuoti would like to make against "deconstructive post-modernism" (21). However, the situation does improve, and Tuoti makes his case for an actual light more strongly in chapter sixteen, "The Garden of Night."

Another inconsistency in Tuoti's book resides in his dual condemnation of, and yet his dependence upon, symbol as a signpost to spiritual consciousness. His constant use of Christian symbology to deal with a subject (mysticism) that incorporates experience that is in no way confined to the Christian or to any other religious tradition limits the concept of universality he says mysticism achieves. Tuoti claims that mystics will eventually form a "Church of the little flock." The truth is that mysticism has always been the interest of the few, not the many, of every religion, and the Church of the little flock that Tuoti envisions where a "large number of perfunctory Catholics will defect" has already formed, only it is the mystics who have defected. The rest have simply stayed where they are, taking the symbol for the reality instead of what the symbol supposedly symbolizes.

Tuoti's chapter entitled "The Woman Who Weeps" paraphrases Carl Jung, a Protestant, who "sees the rejection of devotion to Mary by his fellow Protestants as an opportunity lost." Supposedly, worship of Mary as feminine principle, Jung's *anima*, would be good for mystics, at least male ones. But, again, Tuoti is in danger of confusing the symbol with what it is meant to symbolize, referring to Mary as "Our Lady" and "Holy Virgin," lending a powerful symbol a quality of mystery, while at the same time debunking Marian groups for excessive sentimentality. One wonders why other female symbols could not do just as good a job of playing the role of *anima* as well.

The positive side to Tuoti's use of so much orthodox rhetoric to make his point is that already mystically-inclined church members may be given insight into the mystical origin of the Scriptures. It was spirit that created symbols, not the other way around. Tuoti's book may help some Church members see through the rhetoric and the symbolism of religion to discover the living truth the symbols attempt to embody. Tuoti sometimes makes deliberate use of Christian rhetoric to illustrate his (mostly) more universal points. But mysticism is the essence of all religions, not just Christianity. One could wish that not only Frank Tuoti, but other writers on the subject of mysticism could be more explicit about what these symbols mean.

Cyrus Lee. *Thomas Merton and Chinese Wisdom*. Erie, Pa.: Sino-American Institute, n.d. vi + 138 pages. Paper. \$14.95.

Beatrice Bruteau. *What We Can Learn from the East*. New York: Crossroad, 1995. 126 pages. Paper. \$11.95.

Reviewed by Roger Corless

These are two very personal books. The reader who wishes to meet the authors, empathize with their points of view, and then think for him- or herself will find much nourishment here. One who comes looking for new scholarly insights will be disappointed.

Cyrus Lee is a philosopher and psychologist who was born in "China" (the biographical information is no more specific than that, but it appears to mean the Republic of China, or Taiwan), has lived and taught in the West for many years, and is currently active in intercultural and transpersonal research.

Thomas Merton and Chinese Wisdom at first appears to be a collection of papers read at academic meetings, but soon reveals itself as actually a series of Ignatian style contemplations—exercises of the imaginative will in which one places oneself in the context of a past event or puts oneself in the presence of a dead personality and acts and converses (performs a colloquy) as if the person were alive or the event contemporary. Those with whom colloquies are performed include, first and foremost of course, Merton himself, and, almost as prominently, John C. H. Wu (who taught Chinese Philosophy at St. John's