

BLOMMESTIJN, HEIN, *et al* (eds.) with the help of Wendy Litjens, *Seeing the Seeker – Explorations in the Discipline of Spirituality: A Festschrift for Kees Waaijman on the occasion of his 65th birthday*. Titus Brandsma Institute – Studies in Spirituality, Supplement 19. 2008, pp. viii, 687. Peeters, Bondgenotenlaan 153, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium (www.peeters-leuven.be). ISBN 978-90-429-2163-4. € 85.00.

This handsome volume is a fitting tribute to Professor Kees Waaijman, O.Carm., on the occasion of his 65th birthday. It constitutes a timely and well deserved recognition of his monumental contribution to the academic study of spirituality. For forty years the Titus Brandsma Institute has nurtured and been graced by Waaijman's scholarly work and he in turn has inspired or been part of a whole new generation of researchers and scholars, eleven of whom feature in this collection. Appreciation for Kees Waaijman's contribution to the scientific study of spirituality is warmly expressed by fellow scholars and colleagues from eleven different countries and five continents. The predominance of voices from the Netherlands is understandable among these, notably: Hein Blommestijn, Jos Huls, Elizabeth Hense, Toine van den Hoogen, Charles Caspers, Fritz Mertens, Peter Nissen and Huub Welzen. Because of the excellence and variety of the material, I am selfish enough to wish that all articles were written in English to maximise my full enjoyment of this work.

The forty essays displayed here are divided, albeit unevenly, into seven categories. Some overlapping occurs which demonstrates the need for a broad canvas to showcase the multifaceted nature of the evolving discipline of Spirituality today. Categories represented include: Foundations, Biblical Spirituality, History, Modern devotion, Currents trends, Mysticism and Mystagogy. The styles of writing range from scientific empirical to contemplative mystical with a strong mystagogical emphasis throughout. There is something for everyone: from a study of Burn-out (Mertens and Blommestijn) and its implication for spirituality to a discernible engagement with embodiment issues with emphasis on the need for spirituality in the field of medical care. When it comes to mystical content, it is understandable (and gratifying) that a high concentration of Carmelite riches prevails.

One might be surprised at finding among the contents a delightful Middle-Dutch miracle play of Mary (Teule) which can be proved to have Arabic roots. The world-wide phenomenon which witnesses to a raising to consciousness of mystical awareness is evident in a number of essays. Celia Kourie's seminal essay makes the important point that 'mystical consciousness can be a meeting-place for the encounter between east and west; and can contribute in so many diverse ways 'to the many-faceted splendour of the Ultimate...' (p. 620).

There is much to be learned from traditions not our own: from Calvinist (Jochemson), Islamic (Mercado) and Hindu Christian (Vineeth) spiritualities. These can evoke mutual understanding and respect while proffering

undeniable enrichment and fresh insight into one's own tradition. Having recently attended a Spiritual Directors' Conference in the Netherlands, I was interested to learn how Calvinist Spirituality helps one understand the Dutch temperament better; a fact which confirms the contextual nature of all spirituality. An exploration of metaphors central to Islamic Spirituality is of enormous interest since we learn that themes such as 'the Desert', 'the Guide' and 'the Path' are common landmarks in the three Semitic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and emphasise a common heritage.

With a volume of this size and scope, the reviewer is tempted to pick and choose, focussing on what is of immediate interest. There are three recommendations I would make as reviewer. There is first and foremost an important introductory biographical tribute made by Professor Peter Nissen to Kees Waaijman which recounts how this prodigious talent has evolved and was fostered over the years. Thanks to Wendy Litgens there is a complete bibliography of his writings. The way is paved, therefore for a full length biography and analysis of Waaijman's work. Secondly there is huge scope for the scholar who is interested in areas of research in the field of Biblical spirituality, interspirituality, spirituality in the field of medicine and care for the sick, as well as in the doctor-patient relationship (Post and Bouwer). Specialist areas, such as spirituality and the city (Sheldrake) are given scholarly treatment and tribute paid to the great work of Michel de Certeau, a modern pioneer of 'finding God in all things'.

With the growing need for a spiritual focus in people's lives today, the twin topics of discernment and spiritual direction attract attention. Greater nuance must be applied when these topics are studied in and through the life of St Thérèse. In her case a distinction is made between direct communication from God, evidenced in her divinely inspired 'Little Way', and her own practice of discernment in the direction of her novices. Distinctions exemplified in the saint's life are carefully addressed through the painstaking scholarship of Chris O'Donnell, O.Carm., who wisely concludes that while spiritual guidance and discernment can be taught and practised, room must be left for 'that extra which God may provide by way of charism' (p. 354). It is interesting to read O'Donnell side by side with Wil Derkse who links the practice of discernment in Ignatius and Benedict. Both saints offer a framework for 'seeking God and following Christ'.

The practice of Ignatian discernment is one way while the cultivation of Benedict's twelve step ladder to humility and wisdom to choose 'the garden of a blessed life' is another. Both practices, though closely allied, reflect the unique temperaments of their authors. The findings of Janet Ruffing's qualitative research based on the narratives of contemporary people, some of whom suffer mental disintegration, point to the phenomenon of hearing voices today. Such states may indicate genuine mystical phenomena and indicate 'the in-break of the Divine' in people's lives. The hearer is guided towards reflection and discernment; proof that competent spiritual direction is a much needed spiritual practice today.

Although the Bible has always been a source of spirituality, the discipline of Biblical Spirituality is relatively recent as evidenced in the separate contributions of Lombaard, de Villiers and Welzen. These three contributions warrant careful study by students of Spirituality since they demonstrate how Waaijman's hermeneutic research methodology can be applied to 'a spiritual reading of Biblical and mystical texts'. Authentic Biblical Spirituality has the transformation of the reader at heart. The effectiveness of the word of God in the Lucan corpus causes the reader's heart 'to burn'. The liberating, transformative love of the Revelation of John holds the firm conviction that spirituality is 'not a method of literary analysis but of appropriation'. Lombaard, writing from a South African perspective, proposes a possible four-stranded working model for the discipline of Biblical Spirituality. He believes ultimately that Scripturally speaking, history does not have the final word but it is when histories meet that faith happens; when there is an overlap between the text of Scripture and the substance of people's live. The Holy Spirit is truly at work when a fragment of text touches a fragment of life experience.

Carmelus readers in particular will find in Donna Ursuto's essay on 'Carmelite Spirituality Today' a compelling call to live as people 'on fire with God's love', 'to turn every place into a Carmel' and live everywhere as contemplative community in today's spiritually thirsty world. Several rich contributions in the field of contemplative mystical prayer (with multiple references to the Carmelite mystics) will facilitate this process. Since it is love which gives real access to God, Bernard McGinn takes up the challenge of relating human and divine *eros*. Mystical love of God indicates that human *eros* 'could be, in some way at least, a metaphor for and even a participation in the divine *eros* that creates and redeems the world' (p. 230).

Keith Egan, T.O.Carm., and Kevin Culligan, O.C.D., masterfully explore the roles of divine and human love in the mystical journeys toward union in John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila respectively. Again and again the role of *eros* is accentuated in contemplative prayer, with a perennial return to the *Song of Songs* as its seminal text. For Egan, the integration of *agape* and *eros*, 'two fundamental forms of love', have far-reaching effects for Christian theology and spirituality. His exploration of *eros* in John of the Cross's 'Dark Night', with its 'unmistakeable erotic story line', ends with the admonition that our ultimate testing will be in love, a love that retains its human *eros*. Culligan shows how an intense and even intoxicating joy in the Beloved engenders a strong desire to serve, hence the reference in his must-read essay recounting 'Martha and Mary Working Together'. In the tradition of John of Saint-Samson and the Russian pilgrim depicted in *The Way of the Pilgrim*, Hein Blommestijn, O.Carm., introduces and explains the purifying power of aspiring prayer, which is the secret of praying always. 'Aspiring, we are no longer ourselves, but we become Himself'; such prayer is transformative (p. 558).

On a more analytic note, Rob Faesan upholds the radical humanism of the Christian mystic which seems to have upset the totalitarian 'applecart' of the Later Middle Ages and caused ecclesial conflict. 'When the human person

is essentially an “individual”, then he or she can be easily considered an interchangeable unit in the socio-economic fabric’, whereas when the vision of the human person is theocentric as upheld by the mystics, he/she is capable of union in a love encounter with God, which renders the person irreplaceable. The discipline of Spirituality cries out for this kind of anthropology which has Hadewijch, Eckhart and Ruusbroec among its exponents. It is an anthropology however, which can and should be expressed in contemporary language, integrating contemporary findings from the human sciences as has already been done in Pittsburgh, U.S.A., by another great Dutch national, Adrian van Kaam, CSSp. The authentic individuality of the mystic has the constant search for God at heart, as Nissen masterfully points out in his Carthusian-based ‘topography of solitude’ which may be simultaneously a ‘solitary paradise of love’ and ‘a battleground of stern struggle’. Though many of these articles come under the category of ‘History of Spirituality’, they have a strong mystagogical thrust and directive.

This volume indeed, merits a review for each section of its contents. While the manner in which I have selected some articles over others may seem unfair, I cannot, given my obvious limitations, do full justice to all of its contents. This assessment is at least a beginning; a first reading of some wonderful material inspired by and evidencing a growing expertise in the field of Spirituality. I congratulate Kees Waaijman on his coming of age. Having recently met him in his home country, I can confidently wish him many further years of fruitful scholarship. *Ad Multos Annos!*

DR. UNÁ AGNEW, SSL
Milltown Institute of Philosophy and Theology, Dublin, Ireland

EUNICE DOS SANTOS; *La morte mistica in san Paolo della Croce*, Città Nuova, Roma 2007, pp. 172, ISBN 978-88-311-73366-0. € 14.00

Il presente studio sulla vita spirituale e mistica di San Paolo della Croce (1694 - 1775) è un prezioso lavoro, fatto da una consacrata laica e dottoressa in teologia (Roma, Teresianum). È un libro non completamente nuovo, ma interessante e informativo per molte persone cristiane, come valido aiuto per poter godere l'esempio della vita e l'insegnamento di questo Maestro di spiritualità. Su Paolo della Croce, infatti, esistono altri studi, tutti ancora fatti nel secolo scorso. Per questo, egli è stato promosso da Giovanni Paolo II, come un esempio di una particolare vita laica, in cui emerge il modello di *sequela Christi*. Paolo della Croce ha condotto una vita completamente consacrata a Dio, una vita laica di completo abbandono alla volontà divina con la disposizione ad accettare l'esperienza della morte mistica, da lui identificata con la morte di S. Giovanni della Croce.

Il presente libro ci introduce a Paolo della Croce, nato a Ovada (AL), il 3 gennaio 1694, con il nome secolare Paolo Danei, e morto a Roma, il 18 ottobre 1775. Già all'età di 19 anni intraprese una via di perfezione evangelica.