

research was moved to write this book to share what he considered to be a great gift to the contemporary church: a method of contemplative prayer. Much of his thought flows from his own experience. This means that he must draw a great deal from his experience as a Carmelite. One of the best chapters in the book, in fact, is the chapter in which he interfaces Carmelite spirituality and Christian Meditation, beginning with the early history of the Carmelite family through its apogee in the great Carmelite doctors of the church, Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross. In other chapters he explains the dynamics of Christian Meditation and gives further illustrations about this from his own experience. He looks into desert spirituality at the root of the Carmelite tradition and the teaching on Christian Meditation, and in the end he treats of mindfulness, another basic feature of all contemplative life and prayer. Some of the material has already appeared in other publications, but fits together well as a part of this book.

John Main's program is one of utter simplicity. He does not stress, though he may acknowledge in theory, the abstract differences between active prayer and contemplation or the different degrees of contemplation. But he treats them as one spiritual practice and says explicitly that meditation, meditative prayer, contemplation, and contemplative prayer are all synonyms. There is no need to measure where one is on the path. The important thing is to grow in purity of heart and receptivity to divine grace. This journey, Fr. Larkin holds, is the same in both John of the Cross and John Main, but it is described from different viewpoints. The repetition of the mantra can get one going on the journey and help one stay on the path. The silence of the mantra produces purity of heart. And the reward of purity of heart is the love of God and neighbor found in the gift of contemplation. The work of the mantra helps you escape from your old self created by many false desires.

What Fr. Larkin shows mainly in this book is how the Carmelite tradition and Christian Meditation dovetail. They fit beautifully together. Christian Meditation is a new way of understanding and applying the Carmelite tradition. The friends of Carmel, and all who are searching for a practical way of prayer, can thank Fr. Larkin for this excellent book.

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YOSHIKAWA, NAOË KUKITA, *Margery Kempe's Meditations: The Context of Medieval Devotional Literature, Liturgy and Iconography*. 2007, pp. xii, 193. University of Wales Press, 10 Columbus Walk, Brigantine Place, Cardiff, CF10 4UP, U.K. (www.wales.ac.uk/press). ISBN 978-0-7083-1910-9. £60.00.

In this carefully researched study, Naoë Yoshikawa states her intentions clearly: firstly she aims to contextualise Margery Kempe's meditations within the liturgy and devotional practices experienced in the parish; the second

argument is that there are five major meditations, which provide a structure for the *Book* and a theology which provides a stimulus for her spiritual growth and development.

It is 15 years since Eamon Duffy remarked that chapters 78-81 were a sustained Holy Week meditation and even longer since Denise L. Dupres noticed the link between the liturgical calendar and Margery's spiritual growth. It is surprising that these observations have not been considered further until now; after all it makes obvious sense for Margery's devotional life to be shaped by the daily practices of the church. Dr. Yoshikawa's most important achievement is to provide detailed evidence for this influence and to offer a new reading of the *Book* illuminated by these contexts. So, for example, she explores the themes of Penance and Judgement in the hymns, prayers and lection readings for Advent with its preparation for the Second Coming, together with its celebration of the intercessory role of the Virgin as Mother and Bride of Christ. She argues that these themes are developed in Margery's Advent meditations and prompt her tears and her conversion. Similarly she shows how the detailed description of Christ's wounds draws on the Mass of the Five Wounds.

She demonstrates also the significance of daily parish life and common devotional practices. Margery describes in some detail the practices of her local parish on Palm Sunday, including the procession, during which she imagines herself present at the original journey into Jerusalem and reflects, weeping, on the extent of Christ's sufferings. Similarly Margery's response to the parting of Christ's raiment, imagined as a violent act, draws on the acolytes' ritual re-enactment of the event as recorded in the lection passage for Good Friday from John 19. The Candlemas procession, with its lighted candles, prompts Margery to imagine herself physically present at the Temple with Mary and the priest Simeon. The candle with its rich symbolism is said to become 'an incarnational image' and prompts Margery's fervour and tears.

Visual images in churches and elsewhere are shown to influence her meditations; her understanding of traditional iconography enables her to make links between the joys and sorrows of the Virgin, for example. The image in the Dominican House in Lynn prompts a vision of the Virgin swathing the infant Christ in a white kerchief; Margery had seen a relic of this in Assisi and is aware that it was believed to prefigure the shroud in which Mary wrapped her son after the Crucifixion.

Yoshikawa's second argument concerns the structure of the *Book*. The dust jacket (adorned with an image from the 'reconstructed' Carmelite missal in the British Library) states that she 'breaks new ground with the provocative central premise that, far from being diffuse and disorganized, a detailed re-reading of the *Book* reveals its careful structuring and firm progression'. I am not sure that her claim is quite that bold. What she actually says is that Margery 'has an ability to combine external events of her life with spiritual recollections and creates the account of her life in a way that effectively fits into her scheme for elucidating her spiritual progress'. Five major meditations

are identified: on Advent and the Nativity (chs. 6-7), on the Passion during her pilgrimage to Jerusalem (chs. 28-9), on the Passion during the Holy Week liturgy (chs. 78-81), on the Purification at Candlemas (ch. 82), and Christ's long discourse on Communion (ch. 86). These, she argues, are interspersed with colloquies with Christ which guide her through an acknowledgement of Christ's sufferings, her own sinfulness, her acceptance of the Virgin and female saints as role models who help her grow towards her calling as a Bride of Christ and finally lead her to redirect herself towards the Mixed Life. Whether progress was as much a preoccupation in the Middle Ages as now is a moot point, though Yoshikawa is persuasive when she argues that Margery retrospectively charts a growing maturity in her spiritual understanding. The *Book* is not neat, however. The details of Margery's life intervene too often; the many accounts of the opposition she encountered reveal an abiding need for validation. It closes with Christ's promise that she has 'the ryght way to heven' but the journey has been rather bumpier than Yoshikawa allows.

Readers with an interest in *Carmelitana* might be disappointed that although Yoshikawa's book contains various references to the Order it does not offer a self-contained chapter on the influence of Carmelite liturgy and spirituality upon Kempe (this research has been published previously in this journal). Nonetheless *Margery Kempe's Meditations* is very much to be welcomed. It shows clearly the influence on Margery's spirituality of the liturgical and devotional practices of the church, including the use of visual images and devotional reading. It challenges the view that the *Book* lacks structure and offers a reading in which Margery may be seen to give a coherent account of her spiritual growth.

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KILIAN J. HEALY, O.CARM., *Methods of Prayer in the Directory of the Carmelite Reform of Touraine*, Edizioni Carmelitane, Roma 2005, pp. 190. ISBN-88-7288-085-8

Padre J. Kilian Healy (1912-2003), di nazionalità americana, è stato per dodici anni Priore Generale dell'Ordine Carmelitano dell'Antica Osservanza. Dottore in teologia, ha scritto importanti studi sulla vita spirituale. Il presente libro, una preziosa esposizione della vita spirituale scritta nel 1956, costituisce una valida interpretazione della *Riforma di Touraine*, considerata come punto di riferimento per recuperare la caratteristica della spirituale dell'Ordine nelle sue origini. Questa riforma, iniziata alla fine del sec. XVI, alimentò nel sec. XVII un desiderio essenziale di riformare l'Ordine in Francia, così come viene detto all'inizio del libro.

La nuova edizione del libro, a cura di William Harry, O.Carm. e di Joachim Smet, O.Carm., mette in luce il significato della Riforma di Touraine, facendo vedere come, mentre in Italia e in Spagna si diffuse la riforma