

The contours of G.'s contextual theology include "the whole burning issue of mission" insofar as "Christianity is often accused of being arrogant, intolerant and the cause of many societal ills," as well as "the need to be ecumenical and interreligious" in multireligious India (94). G.'s "cosmotheandric" (36) sacramental theology, following Raimundo Panikkar, keeps in perichoretic play the divine, human, and cosmic dimensions of symbolically mediated faith. The overarching concept he adopts from contemporary Western theology is "sacramentality," with constant citation of Bernard Cooke, along with other philosophers, anthropologists, and theologians whose work largely was completed by the late 1980s. The absence of more recent critical theorists in the fields of sacramental liturgy, ritual, and performance studies results, ironically, in G. idealistically insisting on what each sacrament "must" do, rather than wresting more analytically with what in church and society both promises and hinders the reform he so passionately advocates.

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*Death, Dying, and Mysticism: The Ecstasy of the End.* Edited by Thomas Cattoi and Christopher M. Moreman. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015. Pp. ix + 281. \$95.

The collaboration between the mysticism and the "death-and-dying" groups of the American Academy of Religion gave rise to this informative 14-chapter volume. Cattoi's introduction focuses on the great comforting Christian metanarrative of death in imitation of the saints that is based, in part, on the Cappadocian synthesis of Scripture, neo-Hellenism, common conceptions of humanity, and our shared human reason. He then brilliantly contrasts this with the banal, "end-of-life graffiti" metanarrative of postmodernism that views death as something one must do alone.

Especially impressive are Lee Irwin's and Candy Guenther Brown's excellent summaries of near-death phenomena, and of the conflicting interpretations surrounding them; Cynthia A. Hogan's scholarly summary and incisive criticism of the Jane Roberts's Seth material paradigm; Callum E. Cooper, Chris A. Roe, and Graham Mitchell's article on bereavement experiences; June-Ann Greeley's biography and insightful explanations of the controversial paintings of the tragic Frida Kahlo; June McDaniel's chapter on the arcane Bengali Shakta corpse ritual; and Martin J. M. Hoondert's chapter on Requiem Masses as an attempt to communicate and interpret life-and-death experiences. Most fascinating is Lloyd W. Pflueger's chapter on *sāmadhi* as the pure, unlimited consciousness of the nothingness of ultimate reality that he views as a true death.

Worthy of mention is Lucy Bregman's assessment of interviews with the terminally ill, most of whom discuss not religious issues, but reconciliation with family and their struggles with the medical environment. Darleen Pryds's chapter offers a wealth of information about Lady Jacopa, an aristocrat and spiritual friend, who ministered to the dying Francis of Assisi, and about hagiographers who attempted to suppress,

marginalize, or give her presence a miraculous meaning. Also to be mentioned are Stuart Jessen's focus on Simone Weil's idiosyncratic spirituality of death, Jin Sook Kim's chapter on Jacques Lacan and symbolic death, Jordan Paper's material on zero-experiences through which death loses significance (but this is hardly what most mystics seek), and Robert Michael Ruehl's chapter on Thoreau's nature spirituality and his concern for the plight of the Native people.

However, a volume with the term "mysticism" in its title that depends upon the outdated and refuted views of Agenanda Bharti, W. T. Stace, and Williams James but makes no mention of Bernard McGinn's works, the preeminent scholar of the Western Christian mystical tradition, is skewed. The volume abounds with a vague use of the terms "mysticism," "peak experiences," "paranormal," "supernatural," and "altered states of consciousness." Mysticism is often confused with spirituality, worldview, or religious sensibilities. A few authors seemingly do not realize that there are not only mystical experiences but also mystical states and mystical consciousness—or that one must differentiate between subjective and objective ultimates.

Is not death an analogous term: medical, mystical, psychological, and ritual, for example? Too uncritical a bias for Eastern mysticisms, an emphasis on the noetic aspect of mysticism ("heart" appears once in the volume), and little knowledge and appreciation of the orthodox undifferentiated-union view (positive apophaticism) of many Christian mystics (the tiresome trotting out of a poorly understood Eckhart) permeate this volume. The authors seem unaware of Christian positive mystical death, as John of the Cross illustrates, to give but one example: "I live [in God] not living where I live [on earth]." I wonder how many of the authors would share my view that a genuine mystical consciousness can be one saturated with the human spirit's unrestricted and infinite non-conceptual loving-knowledge of God that destroys the conceptual and the categorical insofar as these claim to be ultimate realities. Concerning much material presented, I share the opinion of the late British Jesuit, Herbert Thurston, a renowned scholar of the paranormal, who wrote that he was convinced that such phenomena existed but wished they did not.

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*Transformational Leadership: Conversations with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious.* Edited by Annmarie Sanders, IHM. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2015. Pp. xvi + 207.

Books on organizational leadership abound; this one is noteworthy both for the circumstances out of which it arises and for the sources consulted. Religious congregations in the United States have been tested in recent decades by their own efforts to strengthen their mission in light of declining personnel and resources. In addition the Vatican instituted a canonical visitation of each congregation as well as a doctrinal assessment of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR). Negotiating all of these challenges has forged a new generation of leaders.