

Review

Reviewed Work(s): I Remember Your Name in the Night. Thinking about death by Donagh O'Shea

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aspects of the Old Testament was primarily spiritual rather than historical, that John's Gospel may well have evolved from the second generation of Christian disciples, that Revelation did not become a definitive part of the New Testament canon until the fifth century ... But such matters might certainly require more than a little 'unpackaging' at the average parish Bible study.

What emerges from his writing is a tremendous grasp of an inherent unity in biblical revelation. For George Simms, grace and truth dance out of every page of the Bible. And the Bible is always a book to be enjoyed and to be visualized. For him, Numbers is clearly as much a book for the imagination, as would be Psalms or Revelation. The introductions to each of the books of the Bible, although inevitably small in scale, are never cursory, but whether this is a book for the absolute beginner must be open to doubt. It is more certainly a book for the man or woman who wishes to return afresh to the Bible.

We must also be grateful to Dr David Egar and Professor John Bartlett for tidying and editing Bishop Simms's unfinished manuscript for the book. They have tackled their task with great delicacy for it is clearly the voice of George Simms which we can hear as we read.

+RICHARD CLARKE

*Moyglare, Maynooth*

**I remember your name in the night.** *Thinking about death.* Donagh O'Shea. Dublin: Dominican Publications. Pp. 143. n.p.g.

Those who are already familiar with Fr O'Shea's reflections in books such as *Take nothing for the journey* (1990) will be delighted to hear from him again. His own personal journey has continued and he invites the reader to join him, this time for some meditations on life and, more specifically, on death. O'Shea speaks of the moment of death; of our fears and struggles in the face of our own impending death and that of loved ones. But he situates the death question right in the midst of life and invites us to reflect on how we are dying, and, consequently, living here and now. Thus, the book is not of relevance only, for example, to someone recently bereaved or suffering severe illness. It is for anyone who is prepared to face the transience of life and to take the risk of discovering their own transcendent dignity.

The book takes the form of reflections, each of a few pages long. Titles include 'Redeeming the time', 'Midlife', 'The weaver's shuttle', 'Fear of the end', 'Shoes off', 'Knowing death to the bone'. A few pages can go a long way and it is good that the book is written in such a way that it can be put down for a while and the contents mulled over. *Thinking about death* requires relaxed reading. But this is not to say that it is in any way heavy going. And the book is anything but depressing. It is the thoughts and feelings which the content is likely to (and should) evoke, rather than the concepts themselves which slow down the pace. Watch out for those deceptively simple questions.

O'Shea has a great gift of being able to be present to the joy and the sorrow hidden in the most ordinary of human experiences. The very way

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in which he uses language is itself a revelation and he has a fascination with etymology. I know of no other scholar who has succeeded in allowing the insight of Meister Eckhardt to speak so simply and profoundly at the same time. O'Shea also knows how to blend sound psychology with common sense and place both within the context of our searching for and discovery of God. He is hard on the ego, and if one stays with it, this book will bring about a death and resurrection of its own.

EAMONN CONWAY

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## *Shorter Notices*

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**Colum Cille 1400: a Saint and his Legacy** (Fr John J. Silke. Ull Printers, Falcarragh. Pp. 20. Price £1.00) This is a scholarly work, with much information, and many insights into the life and labours of St Colum Cille. It is a special tribute to the saint to mark the fourteenth centenary of his death. It will be of particular interest to the reader who has a good grounding in early Irish history associated with the saint, and a knowledge of the topography off the place of his birth. The life of this noble son of Christian Ireland is sketched in its manifold facets – the monk and his monasteries, the man of God devoted to the Word and contemplation, the man of friendship and hospitality, the missionary and spiritual guide, the poet and naturalist ... Here is a saint whose spirit is alive today in the hearts of many, and nowhere more so than the people of Donegal.

**The Beauty of God's Holiness** (Thomas L. Trevethan. Pp. 278. Price £9.99). A passionate treatise on God's holiness, for 'the health of the Church depends on embracing the reality of God's holiness'.

**Sorchar Nan Reul** (Auldgate Records, 3 Auldgate, Kirkliston, West Lothian, Scotland. Price £6 including p. and p.). In the latest Auldgate tape Ellen Wycherley puts to music for voice, harp and flute eleven Gaelic hymns from the *Carmina Gadelica* of Alexander Carmichael with English translations. The legendary Kitty McLeod hails this as representing what she calls 'classical Gaelic singing'.

**Living Between Worlds** (Philip Sheldrake. Darton, Longman and Todd. Pp. 114. Price £6.95). This beautifully written account of place and journey in Celtic spirituality should find a place in every shelf of books on Celtic spirituality.