

This monograph serves as a good though brief introduction to Anselm's personal spirituality and prayers and encourages the reader not only to examine carefully Anselm's prayers, but also to pray them and, following Anselm's own advice, to create prayers of one's own.

In the very first lines of the first section, Ward cites Southern who wrote: "In his prayers and meditations Anselm created a new kind of poetry, the poetry of intimate personal devotion." Ward explains that Southern himself prayed the prayers of Anselm and so not only did he "illustrate their continuing power and influence" (p. 1) in his studies and publications, but also, and perhaps even more, did he do so in his personal life. Reading Ward on Anselm as a teacher of prayer in this and her other writings, one cannot help but think that the same should be said of Mother Benedicta.

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A Benedictine Reader (II) 1530–1930, Hugh Feiss, O.S.B., and Maureen M. O'Brien, eds. (Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications/Liturgical Press, 2023. Pp. 500. Paperback, \$49.95. ISBN 978-0-8790-7169-1).

When explaining the experience of Benedictines in nineteenth century America, Boniface Wimmer, O.S.B., wrote, "We belong to the whole world." Wimmer's saying might appear grandiose to the reader at first. Though after carefully reading *A Benedictine Reader: 1530–1930*, I posit that Wimmer may have been on to something. Likewise, Maureen M. O'Brien, in her preface to this work, issues a challenge to the readership: "As you read the selections before you . . . ask yourself this question: what is Benedictine here? What makes Benedictines Benedictines when circumstances beyond their control force them to change? How pliable is Benedictinism?" (xii). What then do a compendium of Benedictine early modern and modern sources, a short-list of reading questions proposed by a twenty-first century academic, and an answer offered by a nineteenth-century Benedictine abbot, have in common? They come together to demonstrate the integral contribution of Benedictines within history, and the ways in which these Benedictine women and men studied, lived, felt joy, survived difficulties, prayed, sang, mourned, thrived, and found answers to the questions being asked by people of their

times and places. In many cases, Benedictines are so deeply woven into the fabric of historical events that it takes a collection like this, along with some distance of time, to begin to discern the warp from the weft. The editors, Hugh Feiss, O.S.B., and Maureen M. O'Brien, do just that as curators of this important compilation of Benedictine writings that express the diversity of Benedictine experiences in a variety of locales over four centuries.

A Benedictine Reader (*BR* from here) serves as a portable library of essential Benedictine thought presented in modern English, with thorough scholarly introductions to each individual piece of literature in the collection. *BR* opens with an important introduction by Hugh Feiss that offers the reader an opportunity to be quickly educated about the historical epochs of the past half-millennium, and gives a teaser of the forthcoming third volume of *BR*. The present volume is then divided into four historical periods, namely the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the eighteenth century, the nineteenth century, and the twentieth century. Together, the four divisions contain a total of twenty-three texts. Each text is introduced by a scholar suited to the task of presenting the history and substance of the text. The text introductions provide the reader with precise historical background for the text at hand, as well as familiarize the reader with historical and linguistic nuance, and utilize scholarship both to frame the significance of each text in its time and to show how it might connect to modernity.

The editors have chosen texts that would not necessarily be widely read outside of academia. That is one reason why this collection is so important. It brings texts out of manuscript folios and library books and gives them new life. Here is a taste of the vivid accounts readers will experience: Benedictine Fray Pedro and sign language in sixteenth century Spain; Dame Gertrude and the life of a nun living in the diaspora several generations after Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries; entry into the mind of a French reformer, Abbess Françoise through the writings of her diary; as well delving into the constitutions of a new congregation as composed by Mother Mechtilde de Bar; the pivotal experiences of the communities envisioned by Maurus Wolter at Beuron and Prosper Gueranger at Solesmes; and the bringing of monasticism to the Americas by Benedicta Riepp and Boniface Wimmer. The editors incorporate texts from non-western Benedictine experiences with the monastic foundation in Western Australia and missions to the Aboriginal Peoples begun by Rosando Salvado. The experiences of the introduction of Benedictinism into

Africa are explored through the travel journals of Norbert Weber of the Ottilien Congregation. The reader will join the modern search for a Catholic Benedictine spirituality as seen in the writings of Columba Marmion and lastly experience the liturgical brilliance of a lived liturgy found in the writings of Virgil Michel.

The editors, along with the strong cohort of contributors, make *BR* a stand-out volume of Benedictine history and literature. One might be tempted to focus one's recommendation of this work as essential reading solely for monastic formation. I would recommend all novices and juniors read it. However, Feiss and O'Brien and their scholarly cohort have assembled this volume for use outside the cloister as well. *BR* is a unique collection of Benedictine literature. One will find items within this collection that haven't come to light in many years. Its diversity in selection of texts is its strength. According to the editors and contributors, it seems that Benedictines do "belong to the whole world." These texts are important for scholars, teachers, and students. *BR* strips away the romantic notions of history so that we, the readers, might engage—in "real time"—the minds of those women and men who trod the path of Benedict in earlier times. This volume is important as a portable library that highlights Benedictine thought in the early modern and modern context. The scholarly introductions to each text are masterful, yet accessible. They ignite passion and interest even before the reader has read the text at hand. This reader's only lament is that there are fewer Benedictine women showcased than there are Benedictine men. This is by no means the fault of the editors nor of the contributors. As a historian, I realize there are a multitude of reasons for the missing voices of women in history. However, may we not tire in our search for the recorded wisdom of Benedictine women throughout history.

Within the pages of this volume readers will discover essential early modern and modern Benedictine texts that have shaped, refocused, advanced, and proposed ideas of the human understanding of life, thought, prayer, work, and study. The volume places these writings in the context of questions that demand answers as to how, and why, and where things became and become Benedictine, and thus answer Maureen O'Brien's initial query, "What makes Benedictines *Benedictines*?"

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