"For decades, pioneering contemplative theologian Constance FitzGerald has been creatively exploring how the wisdom of the Carmelite tradition can help address our contemporary experience of impasse and darkness, and our deepest desires for personal and social transformation, in the face of so many current crises. Gathered here are seven of her most important essays, together with contributions from a variety of theologians, who draw upon her insights as they grapple with such issues as the COVID-19 pandemic, economic injustice, environmental degradation, violence and dehumanization, systemic racism, and the oppression of women and minorities. Sometimes provocative, always thought provoking and change-oriented, this anthology is a rich resource for all those 'urgently longing' for a timely reintegration of theology, contemplation, and the struggle for social justice."

—Steven Payne, OCD, author of *The Carmelite Tradition: Spirituality in History*

"Laurie Cassidy and M. Shawn Copeland have performed an astonishing service to the Christian community in collecting seven of Constance FitzGerald's essays on profound themes, specifically dark night experiences, in the works of St. John of the Cross that shed light on and offer guidance in confronting several situations of impasse in contemporary society. Although FitzGerald rarely directly alludes to her personal experience in prayer in her appropriation of the teaching of John of the Cross for our times, there are moments when the reader catches glimpses when FitzGerald's own experience all but merges with that of John of the Cross."

—Janet Ruffing, RSM, PhD
Yale Divinity School

"At once eternal and timely, this book is the most rare of treasures for those who want to think deeply about the spiritual journey of our time, one shaped by twin pandemics, 'the coronavirus disease and white racist supremacy.' FitzGerald's singular wisdom invariably invites greater intimacy with God, but particularly so during this time of impasse. She illuminates the path of prophetic hope. In this book, FitzGerald's outstanding interpreters lay bare the enduring fecundity of her contribution. By any measure, a must read."

—Nancy Pineda-Madrid
Loyola Marymount University

"Wonderful and unusual in equal parts, this is truly an extraordinary book. It may be that this collection of essays illumines Karl Rahner's remark that the Christian of the future will be a mystic or will not exist at all. But what is undoubtedly true is that it reveals how prayerful theology today needs to be if it is to help to lead us beyond the many impasses of our times."

—Paul Lakeland
Fairfield University

"In this generous book we encounter a secret treasure: the wide, wise heart and mind of a great lover of the divine and of humanity. Shawn Copeland and Laurie Cassidy have done theologians, 'nones,' and lovers everywhere an enormous service by introducing Constance FitzGerald and her cloud of witnesses to a broader audience. May their light shine long and brightly."

—Dr. Wendy Farley
Graduate School of Theology
Redlands University

"What a rare marvel this book is. While emphatically celebrating the God awareness, spirituality, and theological prowess of Carmelite contemplative theologian Sister Constance FitzGerald, these essays deeply engage FitzGerald's understanding of desire, darkness, hope, passion, impasse, and prayer—all in her yearning for and union with God. These essays are a timely invitation into the spiritual life of FitzGerald as she offers hope and wisdom in these disconcerting times."

—Maurice J. Nutt, CSsR
Convener, Black Catholic Theological Symposium

"This volume is an invaluable contribution to the deepening reflection in the theological academy on the role of the Christian (especially the Carmelite) mystical tradition in the project of engaging the most important issues of personal and social transformation in our time. It makes available seven of the now classic studies of that tradition by Carmelite scholar, Constance FitzGerald, OCD, which are each engaged by scholars with expertise in the areas in question."

—Sandra M. Schneiders, IHM
Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University

Desire, Darkness, and Hope

Theology in a Time of Impasse

Engaging the Thought
of Constance FitzGerald, OCD

Edited by
Laurie Cassidy and M. Shawn Copeland

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With Deepest Gratitude
to

Constance FitzGerald, OCD

Carmelite, Contemplative Theologian, Friend of God, and Prophet,

whose passionate desire
illumines a way in the deepest darkness that is God

Contents

Foreword

Constance FitzGerald, OCD, who is the stimulus for these theological articles, is widely recognized as a contemplative theologian. This is manifest in both *how* she writes and *what* she writes.

In recent years, I have come to know first-hand how Sister FitzGerald operates as a writer. Everything she publishes gives evidence of profound wrestling with God, of careful pondering over that *agonia,* and of the great labor of finding the least inaccurate way of interpreting the experience, first for herself and then for others. But the evidence is indirect, it is hinted at, because Sister FitzGerald does not display her own religious experience for all the world to see. What arrives on the page is the fruit of the dialogue in her of her experience with her appropriation of Scripture and Tradition in its broadest sense. This is what ensures that her writings will be of perennial interest to scholars and seekers. But behind the prose is an author who tests the truth of what she writes on the anvil of her own heart. Her actual thinking and writing of each article is a way of the cross for her, a sharing in the paschal mystery. I am not dramatizing here: she suffers her way into print.

For example, if Sister FitzGerald writes about impasse and dark night, you know that the very writing of that classic essay is the fruit of engaging with impasse in her own life as she contemplatively takes in the sin and violence of our world. All the while she remains rooted, by raw faith, in the hidden Christ who gives her the strength to move *through* the impasse to the new hope beyond hopes, which comes to her as gift and in no way achievement. But I must say again that this very personal wrestling is always drawn into dialogue with the sources of revelation and with classical and contemporary philosophical, theological, and literary resources.

For example, her extensive study of Paul Ricoeur and Hans-Georg Gadamer has made her hermeneutically savvy, and this protects her from any naïve understandings of experience and its validity.

Of course, Sister FitzGerald's primary guides are St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. The Carmelite world and beyond recognizes in her a true and reliable interpreter of their classic texts, the fruit of years of study and of instructing young nuns in formation, and many years of involvement in the Carmelite Forum, which met for many years in South Bend, Indiana.

A privileged way in which I have been able to experience Sister FitzGerald as a writer involved spending a couple of years working with her on the interconnections between Carmelite spirituality and Ignatian spirituality. The context we have been using is that of human evolution, taking our cue from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ, who insisted that the future of evolution will come to pass on the level of human consciousness and its corresponding embodiments, personal and social. For this reason, we focused on the evolution of Christ consciousness (Christ union) and its corresponding embodiments and how these two traditions contributed, and continue to contribute, to that evolution.

Sister FitzGerald is deeply versed, of course, in John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, and I know something about Ignatius of Loyola and *The Spiritual Exercises*. The new learning for both of us was first of all with regard to the significant influence of two young (but helpful) Jesuit spiritual directors on Teresa and of her influence on them during the three years when she lived outside a Carmelite monastery. We learned that she "made" major portions of Ignatius' Exercises, in particular receiving graces proper to the First Week (knowledge of her sinfulness and experience of its forgiveness) and the Second Week (rediscovering the human Jesus), as well as learning from them about the discernment of spirits, which she masterfully uses in *The Interior Castle* when she shows how to determine the authenticity of visions, locutions, and other forms of embodied prayer. Second, we came to a new appreciation of Teresa's experience of those visions, locutions, ecstasies, and levitations, as temporary, anticipatory experiences of sharing in the eschatological gift of resurrected life. Carmelites tend to be silent about such experiences, and Jesuits ordinarily

haven't known how to deal with them. We came to see them as transient but grace-given experiences of the evolution of Christ consciousness *in its corresponding embodiments*.

Our collaboration in this area has strengthened our shared conviction that there is a deep complementarity between these two major streams of Christian spirituality. Three of the major contributions that the Ignatian tradition can offer those who find their principal guidance from the Carmelite perspective are (1) a pathway—or, if you will, a method—for growing in union with Christ in his humanity as revelatory of his relationship with the one he called "Abba"; (2) a generous array of methods of prayer for those who find discursive praying helpful; and (3) guidelines for learning how to notice and identify spiritual movements in oneself and then how to identify the various "spirits" from which they proceed, as well as wisdom regarding some of the kinds of evidence God gives a person who is seeking to do God's will.

Those in the Ignatian tradition need to familiarize themselves with Carmelite tradition regarding the dark nights of the senses of the spirit. Many of them will at some point find themselves in a place with God where the Ignatian conceptuality and vocabulary will be inadequate. John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila "map" the path for those whom the Holy Spirit leads into deeper purification and union. And, for sure, spiritual directors in the Ignatian tradition must have a basic awareness of Carmelite wisdom if they are not to confuse and frustrate those they accompany who are being led into the deeper waters where the Spirit is forming them to *attain* God's way of loving God, world, and self.

The contributors to this volume give eloquent witness to the fruitfulness of Constance FitzGerald's *oeuvre* by showing how her theological work has stimulated their own theological reflection. My hope is that their testimony will encourage seekers, spiritual directors, retreat directors as well as young and mature theologians to continue to discover the awesome potentiality of human experience, both personal and corporate, as a theological *locus*.

Brian O. McDermott, SJ, Dr. Theol.
Georgetown University

Acknowledgments

This collection grew out of years of conversations between the editors and contributors—conversations that probed the relationship of theology to spirituality and that relationship to the prevailing culture and society, the fractured way in which we, in the United States, live. In this way, we were led—some jointly, others independently—to deeper exploration of the spiritual traditions of our Catholic faith. Our encounters with Carmelite spirituality and theology through engagement with the thought and heart of Sister Constance FitzGerald, OCD, remain an inestimable and demanding gift. Editors and contributors all are grateful.

We are deeply appreciative of the patience, wisdom, and unfailing support of our publisher, Hans Christoffersen of Liturgical Press. We thank Lauren Murphy and Stephanie Lancour for meticulous editing, and the Boston College Association of Retired Faculty for financial assistance.

Finally, we are grateful that these many bleak months have been brightened by the presence, calm, and love of Barbara Bzura and John Sabo.

Laurie Cassidy
M. Shawn Copeland
December 14, 2020
The Feast of St. John of the Cross

Introduction

Rowing Toward God in an Anguished World

M. Shawn Copeland

> I am mooring my rowboat
> at the dock of the island called God.[1]

> One day [Jesus] got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." So they put out, and while they were sailing he fell asleep. A windstorm swept down on the lake, and the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger. They went to him and woke him up, shouting, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And he woke up and rebuked the wind and the raging waves; they ceased, and there was a calm.
> —Luke 8:22-24

The selection of Daniel Bonnell's painting, *Jesus Calms the Storm*, for the cover of *Desire, Darkness, and Hope* takes inspiration, not only from the familiar story found in Luke's gospel, but also from this poignant fact: we peoples of planet Earth *all* are in the same boat. We *all* are battered by the same coronavirus pandemic, *all* struggling for survival and safety, *all* anguished and yearning for life.

1. Anne Sexton, "The Rowing Endeth," in *The Awful Rowing toward God* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), 85.

As this volume comes to publication, we in the United States still find ourselves writhing under twin pandemics: the coronavirus disease *and* white racist supremacy. These lethal outbreaks confuse and confound, mock medical science and technological possibility, uncover and indulge virulent racism. Hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens have died and are dying of the disease, while millions have been diagnosed with it.[2] Healing possibilities may not be far off. In record time, selfless medical scientists and researchers around the globe have generated vaccines for COVID-19, and the human community has reasonable expectation of preventive measures and treatments, if not a cure.

The same cannot yet be said of white racist supremacy.[3] According to a CBS News report, in the first eight months of 2020, 164 black youth, women, and men have died either at the hands of police or their designated agents or under suspicious circumstances while in police custody or during police tactical responses.[4] More than six hundred Central American children have been separated from their parents in the attempt to cross the US border, and quite likely most of these children will never see their parents again.[5] We cannot forget that in August 2019, a man murdered twenty-three Hispanic and Latinx women and men in a Walmart store in El Paso, Texas.[6] We cannot forget that in October 2018, a man murdered eleven and injured ten Jewish women and men during worship at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.[7] We cannot forget that in June 2015,

2. Around our global village, the coronavirus disease has sickened more than 60,000,000 and more than 1,500,000 have died; https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/world/coronavirus-maps.html.

3. A lexical note: The editors have decided not to impose consistency on the capitalization of the words "black" and "white" but to allow each writer to exercise her or his determination.

4. See https://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/black-people-killed-by-police-in-the-u-s-in-2020/.

5. Josh Marcus, "US Still Hasn't Reunited 666 Children with Parents after 'Zero Tolerance' at Border," *Independent*, November 10, 2020, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/separated-child-migrants-us-mexico-border-trump-b1720053.html.

6. Patrick Wood Crusius is accused of this mass shooting.

7. Robert Gregory Bowers is accused of this mass shooting and was injured.

a man murdered nine African American women and men during Bible study at Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina.[8] *We cannot forget*. We cannot forget the names of Oscar Grant, Trayvon Martin, Andy Lopez, Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd.[9]

These and other acts of resentful, biased violence tear at those brittle scabs that ever so thinly cover the festering wounds beneath the epidermal layer of our society. Our nation's fragile racial ecology has been aggravated: resentments coddled to anger, anger sharpened to willful falsehood, willful falsehood shaped into policies, policies boiled to a violence that de-creates and disposes, detains and incarcerates, kills and chokes.

In the thick of our global anguish, the Lukan story and Bonnell's painting witness to our human need for help and guidance in plague and racial hurt, in anguish and storm. Yet, story and painting also witness to our deep human desire for more: for holding out for and holding on to hope, for life, for loving union and communion—with God and others. In the thick of our

8. Dylan Roof is charged with this shooting.

9. Oscar Grant III, a twenty-two-year-old African American man, was killed in Oakland, California, by BART Police Officer Johannes Mehserle on January 1, 2009. Trayvon Martin, an unarmed seventeen-year-old African American teenager, was shot in Sanford, Florida, by neighborhood watchman George Zimmerman on February 26, 2012. Andy Lopez, a thirteen-year-old Mexican American teenager, was killed in Santa Rosa, California, by Deputy Sheriff Erick Gelhaus as he walked through a vacant lot carrying an airsoft gun designed to resemble an assault rifle on October 22, 2013. Michael Brown, an unarmed eighteen-year-old African American teenager, was shot in Ferguson, Missouri, by police officer Darren Wilson on August 9, 2014. Sandra Bland, an unarmed twenty-eight-year-old African American woman, having been stopped by police for failing to signal while switching lanes, was arrested for allegedly assaulting a police officer and was found hanged in a jail cell in Waller County, Texas, on July 13, 2015. Ahmaud Arbery, an unarmed twenty-five-year-old African American man, was pursued and murdered while jogging by Travis McMichael, Gregory McMichael, and William Bryan in Glynn County, Georgia, on February 23, 2020. Breonna Taylor, a twenty-six-year-old African American woman, was killed by police who forced entry into her apartment as she slept on March 13, 2020. George Floyd, an unarmed forty-six-year-old African American man, was killed during an arrest as police officer Derek Chauvin knelt on his neck for roughly eight minutes and forty-six seconds on May 25, 2020.

global anguish, we turn to the wisdom, symbols, practices, rituals, texts, and language of our religious traditions "for orienting our desire,"[10] for nurturing our hope. Indeed, our religious traditions, as Wendy Farley affirms, "enable us to speak together about this desire and to find ways to speak together about this desire and to find ways to live more deeply into this desire."[11]

Having steeped herself in the texts of St. John of the Cross, Carmelite theologian Constance FitzGerald perceives the gravity and possibility of our situation, naming that situation as one of "impasse," as "the dark night of the world."[12] Few theologians or spiritual writers capture so well the connection between spirituality and the ordinary or the here-and-now, between spirituality and our global material context with its cruel and spreading "zones of abandonment."[13] Even fewer writers have done so with as much intellectual acuity, psychological sensitivity, and spiritual insight as has Sister FitzGerald. Surely and sadly, we recognize our world, our nation, ourselves in her account of impasse, that situation from which there is

> no rational escape from, what imprisons [us]. . . . [E]very normal manner of acting is brought to a standstill, and ironically, impasse is experienced not only in the problem itself but also in any solution rationally attempted. Every logical solution remains unsatisfying, at the very least. . . . Any movement out, any next step, is canceled and the most dangerous temptation is to give up, to quit, to surrender to cynicism and despair, in the face of the disappointment, disenchantment, hopelessness, and loss of meaning.[14]

10. Wendy Farley, *The Wounding and Healing of Desire: Weaving Heaven and Earth* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 14.

11. Farley, *The Wounding and Healing of Desire*, 14.

12. Constance FitzGerald, "Impasse and Dark Night," in *Living with Apocalypse: Spiritual Resources for Social Compassion*, ed. Tilden H. Edwards (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1984), 94.

13. Joao Guilherme Biehl, "Vital: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment," *Social Text* 68, vol. 19, no. 3 (Fall 2001): 131–49; see also Ivan Petrella, *Beyond Liberation Theology: A Polemic* (London: SCM Press, 2008), loc. 705–43, Kindle ed.

14. FitzGerald, "Impasse and Dark Night," 94.

Impasse: the strange and discomfiting societal situation that we ourselves have made through our refusals *to live mindfully, attentively, reasonably, responsibly, and lovingly* in relation to the Divine, to other human persons, and to the entire created order.

For nearly four decades, Constance FitzGerald's theological thought and spiritual insight have been a well-known secret among Carmelite religious, members of other religious orders of women and men, spiritual directors or advisers, academic students and practitioners of Christian spirituality and mysticism, and theologians. Widely recognized as an expert on the writings of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, FitzGerald has taught and lectured on spirituality and has advocated for and assisted communities of cloistered nuns in adaptation and renewal. In 2009, Sister FitzGerald was the first cloistered nun to address the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA).[15] In 2017, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR)[16] honored her for her profound impact on women religious in the United States. And the highly regarded Cambridge University theologian David Ford wrote that FitzGerald's interpretation of Thérèse of Lisieux "reads like an illustration of Ricoeur's 'self as another.' "[17]

Desire, Darkness, and Hope: Theology in a Time of Impasse aims to introduce FitzGerald's work to a wider and more diverse audience, particularly laywomen and laymen, young people and "the Nones,"[18] theologians—any and all who hunger to sharpen the

15. The Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA) is the primary professional association of Catholic theologians in the United States and Canada; its membership numbers about 1,300.

16. The Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) is an organization of 1,350 members representing nearly 80 percent of 44,000 women religious in the United States.

17. David Ford, *Self and Salvation: Being Transformed* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 225n49.

18. Frank Newport, "Millennials' Religiosity amidst the Rise of the Nones," *Polling Matters*, October 29, 2019, https://news.gallup.com/opinion/polling-matters/267920/millennials-religiosity-amidst-rise-nones.aspx. The term "nones" refers to the increase of Americans who, when interviewed by researchers about their religious affiliation, say "none."

"searching character"[19] of their lives, who yearn to deepen personal or scholarly theological reflection on spirituality, who endeavor to make sense of perplexing and dispiriting times. To that end, this volume gathers and makes available several of Sister FitzGerald's most vital essays. At the same time, it includes essays by social activists, contemplatives, spiritual directors, and theologians who take inspiration from and *engage* her thought. Perhaps the inclusion of these essays suggests that this book is a *festschrift* or celebratory volume prepared in Sister FitzGerald's honor; after all, the book is dedicated to her. It is not. As the reader quickly will ascertain, these interpretative essays function neither as simplistic agreement nor as naïve tribute. Rather, the authors *engage* critically with FitzGerald's thought to draw out ways of responding and relating to their own desire *to act*, *to live*, *to be* for God and for neighbor in the midst of the dark night of our world. Moreover, their critical *engagement* aims to facilitate the reader's own encounter, *engagement*, dialogue, even wrestling with FitzGerald's thought, but, more important, the reader's response to the pull of that grounding desire of all desires—union with God.

Constance FitzGerald's Theology: Desire, Passion, Prayer

Constance FitzGerald's life has been galvanized by a single-minded pursuit of the luminous end of contemplative prayer, the passionately sought fulfillment of that grounding desire of all desires—union with God. Sister FitzGerald radiates what the great Spanish Carmelite mystic John of Cross teaches: the human person has an infinite capacity for God. At the same time, her life in Carmel for God reflects a motto of the Order of Preachers—*contemplare contemplata aliis tradere*, to contemplate and to hand on the fruit of contemplation. Hence, two characteristics come readily to mind when thinking of her theological thought and writing—passionate and perceptive.[20] This choice is not ran-

19. Roger Haight, *Spirituality Seeking Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014), 4.

20. FitzGerald clarifies this in "Passion in the Carmelite Tradition: Edith Stein," *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 217–35:

dom; indeed, FitzGerald identifies three questions as shaping her theological work:

> First, where do we really find passion or excess in the Carmelite tradition? Second, how does the passion of the Carmelite tradition meet the hunger of our own time for spirituality and even mystical experience, the thirst for the divine and for community? Third, how does the Carmelite tradition move out from the familiar, from an enclosure of language and esotericism into new social and cultural situations?[21]

FitzGerald commits herself to the rigorous activity of understanding, appropriating, explicating, and interpretating the writings of the Carmelite tradition, with particular attention to John of the Cross. In this endeavor, the leading edge of her work has been to illuminate the meaning and power of *passion* in the spiritual life—passion as love and desire for union with God and, through that passion, passionate compassion for an anguished and suffering world, for suffering others.

For example, in "Passion and the Carmelite Tradition: Edith Stein," FitzGerald tracks the transformation of a young scholar's "raw passion for greatness that can only be assuaged by the absorption of self into an overwhelming plan beyond her own personal life" through to its evolution into "complete, unconditional commitment to God and the Cross in radical solidarity with her own Jewish People."[22] The deep passion that runs through the course of Stein's life allows FitzGerald to conclude that

> in her life as an intellectual, in her death in the Holocaust as a voluntary scapegoat, Edith broke through the traditional form of the Carmelite nun, a stone rejected and yet destined to become, in the twenty-first century, a cornerstone in Carmel. This is why we dare

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"The Carmelite tradition transmits a legacy of profound passion. . . . The way the Carmelite prayer tradition helps and educates is by showing us how passion for God matures, that is, how desire grows in ardor, how communion and being God's partner in love comes about in our lives" (217).

21. FitzGerald, "Passion in the Carmelite Tradition: Edith Stein," 232–33n1.

22. Ibid., 219.

> not minimize the extent of the influence of her passionate intellectual life upon her equally passionate contemplative prayer life nor the radicality of her total involvement in the social situation.[23]

Might we say much the same of Sister FitzGerald? We ought not to minimize the interactional influence of FitzGerald's own passionate intellectual life upon her passionate contemplative prayer life and sharp grasp of the complex cultural and social situation within which she finds herself. To read FitzGerald's work is to encounter a probing, subtle, and capacious mind at home in history, theology, philosophy, psychology, modern science, feminist thought, and the literature of diverse cultures—to name areas in which she has become far more than conversant, even expert. FitzGerald's work bears the mark of close, conversational, open-ended reading—reading that spirals into further questions and leads to new responses; these in turn rebound in fresh questions and provoke new answers. Such reading "motivates abiding" with the text.[24] Abiding, waiting patiently, with the text enables FitzGerald to reach not only subtle understanding that is alert to the historical situatedness of author and text but fitting re-interpretation in and for new and different contexts. FitzGerald builds up insights so that categories generative in one context might be transposed adequately and vividly into another context. A good example of this is found in the way in which FitzGerald grapples with Stein's appropriation of classical theologies of salvation and their resulting categories of sacrifice, satisfaction, substitution, and expiation. If contemporary Christians recoil from these notions, expiation in particular, during the 1930s and 1940s these ideas flooded the commonsense religious consciousness of the church at large and certainly were "operative, viable theological constructions [that were] profoundly influential and inspiring in the spiritual life of Carmel."[25] Thus, FitzGerald

23. Ibid., 232. I have been reading FitzGerald through Stein.

24. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Zwischen Phänomenologie und Dialektik," *Hermeneutik* II, 9, cited in Frederick G. Lawrence, *The Fragility of Consciousness: Faith, Reason, and the Human Good* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 38.

25. FitzGerald, "Passion in the Carmelite Tradition: Edith Stein," 226.

renders Stein's understanding of expiation and her death in Auschwitz as "an opening of [Stein's] heart to God's freely offered love" for liberation from resentment and an absorption of the evil all around.[26] In light of Stein's passion, FitzGerald critiques our modern/postmodern loss of "passion as evidenced by a certain spiritual fatigue, softness and malaise." She continues:

> Modernity, with its often one-sided emphasis on the development and realization of the autonomous self without adequate concern for the common good or multipersonal community, has left us bereft of passion, and herein, I suggest, lies a radical call to self-transcendence. Our passionless, "so-what" society needs a new language of selflessness or of the Cross that describes and supports the loss of possessive selfhood. Such a forfeiture is indispensable in the contemporary quest for the transforming love, universal communion and cosmic consciousness that seem today beyond the achievement of human ability.[27]

Then, in an explanatory note, FitzGerald acknowledges the grave harm that self-transcendence, so improperly deployed, has done to women:

> I am aware that some have difficulty with a call to "self-transcendence." They see it as a denial of the human, of the need for a strong, well-developed sense of self. This is especially threatening and even unfair for women, many of whom have come so belatedly into full selfhood. Nevertheless, the summons to a cosmic consciousness is so urgent and the spiritual experience of some women so compelling that I think we must speak of self-transcendence until we have another word that expresses the real radicality of the challenge today.[28]

FitzGerald's theological method may be characterized as *critical contemplative trialectics*.[29] This method refers to varied cognitive

26. Ibid., 227.

27. Ibid., 218.

28. Ibid., 233n8.

29. There is considerable debate about method among scholars who research, write, and teach the academic study of spirituality. Biblical scholar and expert on Christian spirituality Sandra M. Schneiders claims that there is no single method

acts or operations, including attentiveness to and questioning of history and society, of sociality, of spaciality; interrupting and unsettling, marshalling and weighing, reviewing and reflecting, embracing silence, attentive judging and deciding and interpreting. At the same time, the nature of cloistered Carmelite communal life requires and creates space for the interior growth of each individual nun (hermit) even as that life weaves strong and thick, yet translucent, webs of relationships. For FitzGerald, her community *stands* as the indispensable finite ground of her theological thought and praxis:

> [T]he heart of my dream and my community's dream has been the reinterpretation of the Carmelite tradition for the times in which we live. In other words, we want to offer a contemporary interpretation that is accessible, comprehensible and relevant for people so the ancient mystical tradition might serve as both a guide and stimulus for a deeper spiritual life. This dream is the basis for everything that we have done, and it has guided all our practical decisions about contemplative life.[30]

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for the study of spirituality; rather, such study necessarily requires an interdisciplinary approach. See her "Spirituality in the Academy," *Theological Studies* 50 (December 1989): 676–97. Mary Frohlich has pushed this question of method forward in her essay "Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality: Revisiting Questions of Definition and Method," *Spiritus* 1, no. 1 (2001): 65–78. In a later essay, Schneiders cites three approaches to the academic study of spirituality—the historical, the theological, and the anthropological. See "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Holder (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005), 15–33, at 19–28.

My interpretation of Sister FitzGerald's theological thought and method takes cues from the theological work of Wendy Farley, Howard Thurman, and Bernard Lonergan. I am particularly grateful to Joy Bostic for the notion of *trialectics* that dovetails so well with my working out of critical contemplative dialectic. See Joy Bostic, *African American Female Mysticism: Nineteenth-Century Religious Activism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 3, 45; see Copeland, "What Is Poetics? A Response to Mayra Rivera," https://syndicate.network/symposia/theology/poetics-of-the-flesh/.

30. FitzGerald, "Pursuing Our Dreams in Times of Darkness," in *Transformational Leadership: Conversations with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious*, ed. Annmarie Sanders (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015), 12. The choice of the word *stands* is significant. On more than one occasion (e.g., the nuns' funerals

On Bernard Lonergan's account, this method and the theology that emerges from its exercise are rooted in the theologian's authenticity expressed as self-transcendence through the threefold conversions—intellectual, religious, and moral. "This threefold conversion is, not a set of propositions that a theologian utters," Lonergan declares, "but a fundamental and momentous change in the human reality that a theologian is."[31] Moreover, religious conversion remains the specifically theological principle.[32] Theology emerges from love, is rooted in falling in love with God; thus, FitzGerald's theology begins in loving conversation with God, which overflows in love of neighbor. FitzGerald's theology begins on her knees.[33]

Sister FitzGerald's theological thought arises from and is the result of differentiated consciousness. In ordinary or commonsense usage, consciousness refers to awareness, but, Lonergan observes, "more properly, 'consciousness' is an awareness of oneself or of some aspect of oneself."[34] While undifferentiated consciousness pertains to the manner or operations of common sense, differentiated consciousness denotes complex comprehension and control of a realm or realms of religion, art, theory,

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or jubilee celebrations), FitzGerald has quoted Susan Griffin's "The Way We Stand," in *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1978, 1980), 220–21. The passage describes trees in a forest, growing together, leaning together in the same direction, dead limbs leaning on living ones that grow around them.

31. Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), 270.

32. In this introduction of Sister FitzGerald's theological thought and method, her spiritual life and practice are assumed implicitly. Hence, falling in God as religious conversion forms the specifically theological principle.

33. In "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality," Schneiders begins with a general definition of spirituality as "the actualization of the basic human capacity for transcendence." Then, for the purposes of that particular essay, Schneiders specifies spirituality as "the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the horizon of ultimate value one perceives" (15, 17).

34. Bernard Lonergan, "Prolegomena to the Study of the Emerging Religious Consciousness of Our Time," in *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985), 55.

scholarship, interiority.[35] Scholarly and religiously differentiated consciousness are of significance in interpreting and appreciating Sister FitzGerald's thought. Hence, Lonergan again:

> Religiously differentiated consciousness is approached by the ascetic and reached by the mystic. In the latter there are two quite different modes of apprehension, of being related, of consciously existing, namely, the commonsense mode operating in the world mediated by meaning and the mystical mode withdrawing from the world mediated by meaning into a silent and all-absorbing self-surrender in response to God's gift of [divine] love.[36]

Sister FitzGerald's skill in understanding and interpreting history and texts (including spiritual, theological, scientific, philosophic texts) discloses scholarly differentiation of consciousness. In other words, while critically recognizing and disciplining the common sense of her own place and time, FitzGerald ably combines this recognition and discipline "with a commonsense style of understanding that grasps meanings and intentions in the words and deeds" of writers such as John of the Cross or Teresa of Avila or Thérèse of Lisieux or Edith Stein.[37] Religiously differentiated consciousness as grace-given fruition of union with God is the aspiration of Carmelite (mystical) life. Such life, such union can never be attained, only gifted by Gift. But to write of that gifted life—to grasp its grace-given possibility and radical incarnational character; to interpret its inner exigences with delicate openness, stark honesty, and fierce reverence; to invite and encourage others to respond to the desire and embrace of Divine Love—to do this is to carve from the rock of contemplation a rekindled hope, a path toward a new consciousness.

35. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 273. He notes: "Fully differentiated consciousness is the fruit of an extremely prolonged development" (*Method in Theology*, 257).

36. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 273. Lonergan notes here the manifold character of mystical attainment—there are mystics of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Indigenous religions, etc.

37. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 274; see also, pp. 257–62, 302–5.

Since the 1990s, Sister FitzGerald's reading, study, writing, and speaking have given increasing attention to the relation between theology and modern science. More than twenty years ago, she addressed the need for a "quantum leap" in human consciousness in order to address the lag of the "mental machinery" of our species in evolving quickly enough to address the monumental global problems we face.[38] Echoing the early appeals of Vaclav Havel and Thomas Berry, Robert Ornstein and Paul Ehrlich, Sister FitzGerald turns with passion and acute perception to the evolutionary possibility of contemplation, to the transformation of individual human consciousness for global change.[39] We can no longer, Sister FitzGerald insists,

> afford to bypass contemplation, interiority, or desire for God, as though they were esoteric experiences for the lazy or unbalanced elite, but not for us who value above all else reason, sanity, and the ability to control our destinies. Certainly without contemplative prayer and the transformation it really can effect, the deepest dimension of the human person and of humanity itself lies forever dormant and beyond our reach. But even more, without it the true evolutionary possibilities completely dependent on the inbuilt purpose and aspirations of the human soul are beyond us. . . . [T]his is the era of contemplation and the stakes are very high.
>
> We need to understand and to speak, therefore, of the unleashed power, influence and freedom of contemplative love and wisdom, of their ability to pass beyond the limits by which both person and humanity are confined, the boundaries within which human consciousness, desire, culture, evolution and religion are now enclosed.[40]

Such is the vision of being human and human be-*ing*, of Christian spirituality, of mysticism to which the theology of Constance

38. FitzGerald, "The Desire for God and the Transformative Power of Contemplation," in *Light Burdens, Heavy Blessings: Challenges of Church and Culture in the Post Vatican II Era, Essays in Honor of Margaret R. Brennan, IHM,* ed. Mary Heather MacKinnon, et al. (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press Quincy University, 2000), 213–14.

39. Ibid., 215.

40. Ibid., 215–16.

FitzGerald invites us. This vision breaks through signs of decline, breakdown, and death and turns us toward healing, creating, and new life. This vision summons us to recognize, acknowledge, and accept God's great and gracious desire for us—the Divine Desire who lights the dark night of our world and guides our rowing to open arms of Holy Mystery.

The Impact of the Contemplative on Contemporary Theology

For several decades, theologians have bemoaned theology's break or estrangement from spirituality, from mysticism. Healing this rupture begins where theology exists—the minds and hearts and prayer and lives of theologians. In a homily given at the convention liturgy of the annual meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America, Dominican William Hill declared that if theologians are to speak and write of God meaningfully, we must "show who God will be for [humankind] and what humankind must be for God." This requires, Hill said,

> undertaking an inner spiritual voyage with no set itinerary. And if we are to tell God's people of it . . . we must travel it ourselves. And it is a pilgrimage which takes place in the deep places of our spirit, in that country of the heart whose native language is prayer. Not prayer simply as a means and a method, but as a mode of being, as living in and with Christ.[41]

The contributors to *Desire, Darkness, and Hope* are theologians—critical thinkers, skilled readers of religious texts, perceptive interpreters of our national and global material contexts. Their academic theological specializations include systematic, philosophical, pastoral, black, liberation, political, feminist, and womanist theology; theological and social ethics; critical race theory;

41. William Hill, "The Theologian: On Pilgrimage with Christ; Appendix B: Homily, Convention Liturgy," *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 40 (1985): 230–32, at 230. Retrieved from https://ejournals.bc.edu/index.php/ctsa/article/view/3320.

cultural, gender, and peace studies. Their reading, research, and writing reflect their commitment not only to intellectual rigor but to theology as mediation of God's active and abiding presence in the dark night of our world, to the inner journey, to prayer as a mode of being, as living in and with Christ.

These theologians risk encounter with the contemplative.[42] At the heart of differentiated consciousness lies interiority that "promotes us from consciousness of self to knowledge of self."[43] Such knowledge is the fruit of self-appropriation through which not only do we affirm and verify cognitional activities[44] but such self-knowledge renders our living authentic. And it is Constance FitzGerald's authenticity, her fidelity to the pull of the divine call to self-transcendence that, in turn, calls and attracts—nudges and turns them to attend to their own interiority, to embark on the inner spiritual journey.

These theologians risk grappling with contemplation. They recognize and

> point to an incarnational depth in the world in which Christian faith and teaching might renew itself. If that depth also requires . . . a disciplined unknowing, it is not as an escape from knowledge. Rather it lends contemplative attention to the opacity of our own self-constitution in an intimate multiplicity of relations.

42. Of course, we should not overlook the double meaning of "contemplative" in the context of this volume. Like every human person, Constance FitzGerald remains a mystery even to those who love and cherish her dearly. And, just like each of us, she remains a mystery, not because she is an enigma, but because she cannot be contained or confined by simplistic categorization or convenient labeling. Sister FitzGerald is a cloistered nun, yet cloister has taken her to distant and near places in the world. She is a contemplative, yet contemplative life has made her an activist for contemplatives and contemplative life, for theology. She lives in solitude, yet her solitude thrives on community, collaboration, and friendship. She is sophisticated and humble, gregarious and disciplined, direct and street-smart, serious and fun loving. And above all, Constance FitzGerald is thoroughly in love with Jesus-Sophia.

43. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 259.

44. Ibid., 14–15.

> Otherwise we may miss the point at which the planetary multitude lays its specific claim, its truth, and its justice, upon our gifts.[45]

These theologians contest postmodernity's infatuation with abstraction—its distancing relation to history, the world, the flesh, the body as well as its ambivalent relation to religion. These writers seek solidarity with wounded flesh and bodies—children, youth, women, and men. Through word, the theologian or writer makes present flesh and blood, bread and wine, life and water to open, excite, comfort, honor, inspire, and accompany the reader's famished heart and soul. These essays evoke and seek to prepare us for another kind of transfiguration through which the ordinary life radiates the holy, performs another kind of transubstantiation (confects another kind of *eucharist—of thanksgiving*). *The dark night of the world is (re)charged not only with the grandeur and glory but also with the mystery of God*.

Desire, Darkness, and Hope invites reading as spiritual and contemplative practice. Such practice calls for slow, deliberate, patient, and open-ended reading and reflection; for testing one's own experience in coming face-to-face with that of another; for waiting, even in the tension of activism. The volume opens with Sister FitzGerald's essay on the great voices of the Carmelite tradition, "A Discipleship of Equals: Voices from the Tradition—Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross." The current prioress of the Baltimore Carmel, Colette Ackerman, OCD, situates Sister FitzGerald within cloistered contemplative religious life and considers the renewal of that life as prompted by the Second Vatican Council (1958–1963). Sister Ackerman emphasizes the importance of community (hermits living together) and clarifies the meaning of the five-hundred-year-old Carmelite tradition for twenty-first-century women.

"Impasse and Dark Night"[46] remains the most well known and most often cited of Sister FitzGerald's publications. Strikingly prescient, this classic essay continues to nourish the hearts and

45. Catherine Keller and Laurel C. Schneider, eds., "Introduction," in *Polydoxy: Theology of Multiplicity and Relation* (London: Routledge, 2011), 4.

46. FitzGerald, "Impasse and Dark Night," 93–116.

minds and souls of hundreds who hunger for God and yearn to embrace the world in passion and compassion and yet who are painfully self-aware of crusted barriers of personal and cultural and societal limitation, of forfeiture and powerlessness and failure and loss—of impasse. These themes are reiterated in "Desolation as Dark Night: The Transformative Influence of Wisdom in John of the Cross."[47] Laurie Cassidy, Roberto Goizueta, and Margaret Pfeil consider societal impasses presented by white racist supremacy, the abandonment of the poor, and the spiraling collapse of the natural environment.

Cassidy faces squarely the impasse that white supremacy presents not only to the "ever more perfect union" of the United States but to the development and flourishing of the interior lives of white women and men. Cassidy explores the possibilities of a contemplative approach through which white women and men might open themselves to God in the midst of societal dark night—not only for themselves, but for relations of mutuality and communion for future generations. Goizueta considers the relation between impasse and liberation theology's notion of the preferential option for the poor. In his reading of Gustavo Gutiérrez's liberation theology, Goizueta retrieves the Peruvian theologian's indebtedness to the thought of Christian mystics and, thus, enacts a conversation between Gutiérrez and FitzGerald that allows Goizueta to conclude that "in the experience of impasse, the mystic and the revolutionary are revealed as one." Pfeil analyzes narrative accounts of the effects of the global climate crisis in order to deepen our understanding of the collective experience of impasse. Pfeil argues that FitzGerald's work leads us to turn with humility and openness to the transformative power of contemplation, which well might be the way that we inhabitants of Earth grasp the interrelationship of the whole of God's creation.

47. FitzGerald, "Desolation as Dark Night, the Transformative Influence of Wisdom in John of the Cross," *Ignatian Prayer: The Way Supplement* 82 (Spring 1995): 96–108. Here FitzGerald accords critical attention to consciousness and personal transformation through encounter with the feminist apprehension of Wisdom, of Jesus-Sophia.

Concern for integrating the role of dark night and impasse experience in personal and societal crises features in the contributions of Maria Teresa Morgan and Susie Paulik Babka. Morgan uses recollection of her childhood experience of being lovingly carried on the shoulders of her father, the "watchman," as he walked each evening through the streets of their town. Morgan brings together John of the Cross, Rainer Marie Rilke, and FitzGerald in order to propose an understanding of dark night that opens possibilities for personal and communal interpretations during the present fearful COVID-19 pandemic. Babka sets up a dialogue between catastrophe and impasse. Her essay works upward from personal grief at the tragic death of her father to a reflection on societal grief. She focuses on catastrophic suffering—COVID-19, HIV/AIDS, and the Ebola outbreak (2014–2016)—and its barbarism made manifest in shattered families, broken lives, economic hardship, anxiety, loneliness, death. With FitzGerald, Babka recognizes the "suffering Other as the locus of the desire for God."

Like Cassidy, Alex Mikulich and Bryan Massingale probe Sister FitzGerald's emphasis on the transforming power of contemplation in grappling with white racist supremacy in the United States. Beneath evident displays of personal and institutional racism and of the persistent dominative colonial matrix of power, Massingale and Mikulich, respectively, uncover white supremacy as a culture, a worldview, and uncover "the darker side of Western Modernity."[48] Mikulich reads FitzGerald's critique of modernity and radical concern for contemplative transformation as an expression of decolonial praxis. He proposes that we must unlearn modernity's fateful *habitus;*[49] to do so requires that we retrieve

48. Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 16.

49. The term *habitus* as deployed by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu refers to "a product of history, produces individual and collective practice in accordance with the schemes generated by history. . . . As an acquired system of generative schemes, the habitus makes possible the free production of all thoughts, perceptions and actions inherent in the particular conditions of its production—and only those" (*The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980/1990], 54, 55).

and relearn our differentiated and interconnected pasts in order to realize new and communal futures for the flourishing of all creation. Analyzing the "soul-sickness" that infects people from white racist supremacy, Massingale insists on a spiritual (r)evolution.

"Suffering and confusion," Wendy Farley states simply, "are intrinsic to the process of transformation."[50] Andrew Prevot's essay engages Sister FitzGerald's interpretation of philosopher and Carmelite Edith Stein; M. Catherine Hilkert considers the contribution her thought might make to preachers as they proclaim the wisdom of the cross in an anguished world. Both FitzGerald and Prevot describe the sexism and anti-Semitism to which Stein was subjected in Nazi-occupied Germany; both take into account Stein's conversion to Catholicism and her entrance to Carmel; both emphasize the significance of Stein's Jewish familial and philosophical formation for her contemplative life and theology, for her example of discipleship in a world of violence. Hilkert's essay urges preachers to attend carefully to contemporary signs and experiences of impasse and dark night. Indeed, Hilkert quotes Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*, "a preacher has to contemplate the word, but [the preacher] also has to contemplate [the] people, . . . paying attention 'to actual people, to using their language, their signs and symbols, to answering the questions they ask.' "[51] Such attention, Hilkert argues, begs for cultivation of empathy, solidarity, and communion with those children, youth, women, and men who endure personal and societally imposed suffering.

These essays *stand* as critical reflection on religious faith that yearns to *become flesh* in knowledge and love in the radical transformation of oppressive systems; that *abandons* ideological or dogmatic certitudes and makes an intentional option for openness to the unknown, the unforeseen, and the impossible; that *embraces* the interrelatedness and multiplicity of existence and existents; that engages "critical *apophasis* or critical nonknowingness as an energy of epistemological and theological integrity."[52]

50. Farley, *Wounding and Healing of Desire*, 135.

51. Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium/The Joy of the Gospel* 154 (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2013), 78.

52. Keller and Schneider, "Introduction," 3.

Docking on the Island Who Is God

The Lukan story of Jesus calming not only the storm but the fear and anxiety of his disciples and Daniel Bonnell's rendering of this account turn us toward the One who equips us for growth, for life, for life beyond impasse, for flourishing beyond the dark night of our world. The theologians writing here disclose the impact of contemplative prayer and practice not only on themselves as Christian thinkers but on theology. Taking inspiration from the theological thought and work of Constance FitzGerald, in confrontation with impasse, with the dark night of our world, these theologians advocate passionately for justice, truth, solidarity, and equity through radical attentiveness to development of the interior life, through spiritual transformation.

The rower pulls and is pulled. The rower seeks Transcendent Holy Mystery—Truth, Beauty, Goodness, and Justice. Still, the rower cannot see the form; the light in its excess dazzles. There is "no option but faith," Constance FitzGerald counsels.

> It is precisely as broken, poor, and powerless that one opens oneself to the dark mystery of God in loving, peaceful waiting. When the pain of human finitude is appropriated with consciousness and consent and handed over in one's own person to the influence of Jesus' spirit in the contemplative process, the new and deeper experience gradually takes over, the new vision slowly breaks through, and the new understanding and mutuality are progressively experienced.[53]

We row on to the Island who is God.

53. FitzGerald, "Impasse and Dark Night," 104, 103.

Contributors

Colette Ackerman, OCD, is currently prioress of the Baltimore Carmel community. She studied anthropology and history at Towson University, Baltimore. Sr. Ackerman is the archivist for Carmelite Communities Associated (CCA), the first association of Carmelite nuns in the United States. She has served CCA in leadership and as a consultant, most recently helping to plan the association's fiftieth anniversary celebration. Sr. Ackerman has served in the ministry of initial formation for her community and has published on St. Therese of Lisieux and other areas of Carmelite spirituality and history. Her areas of special interest include the development of a strong community life based on St. Teresa's model of friendship, inclusion, and care; the transmission of Carmelite spirituality through various forms of outreach; and, especially, the witness of a contemporary, contemplative community sharing liturgy, prayer, and companionship with those seeking a connection with God in their daily lives of struggle and hope.

Susie Paulik Babka is associate professor of theology and religious studies at the University of San Diego, where she teaches courses specializing in the relationship between art and religion, theological aesthetics, the doctrine of God, and the consideration of aesthetics in interreligious encounter. She is the author of *Through the Dark Field: The Incarnation through an Aesthetics of Vulnerability* (Liturgical Press, 2017); is coeditor of *"You Say You Want a Revolution": 1968–2018 in Theological Perspective*, with Elena Procario-Foley and Sandra Yocum (Orbis, 2019); and is currently working on *Ambiguity and Resilience*, which explores the role art plays in empowering communities. She has published articles on a variety of subjects exploring the role of visual art in religious belief, including on Kathe Kollwitz as witness to suffering, the Virgin of Guadalupe and

female self-portraiture, Superman and Jesus, Buddhist-Christian dialogue and modern art's influence on the Catholic Church. Her PhD is from the University of Notre Dame.

Laurie Cassidy is a theologian and spiritual director currently teaching in the Christian Spirituality Program at Creighton University. An award-winning author and editor, her books include *Interrupting White Privilege: Catholic Theologians Break the Silence*, edited with Alex Mikulich. Her latest book, *The Scandal of White Complicity and US Hyper-Incarceration: A Nonviolent Spirituality of White Resistance*, is coauthored with Alex Mikulich and Margaret Pfeil (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). As well as being an antiracist activist, she has ministered in the area of spirituality for the past thirty years and provided spiritual direction, retreats, and workshops across the United States. Her research and writing explore the political and cultural impact of Christian mysticism in personal and social transformation.

M. Shawn Copeland, professor of systematic theology emerita at Boston College, is an internationally recognized and award-winning writer and scholar. She is the author and/or editor of six books including *Knowing Christ Crucified: The Witness of African American Religious Experience* (2018) and *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (2010), as well as 130 articles, book chapters, and essays on spirituality, theological anthropology, political theology, social suffering, gender, and race. A former president of the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA), Professor Copeland is the recipient of six honorary degrees and has been recognized for outstanding contributions to theology by the Catholic Theological Society of America with the John Courtney Murray Award (2018) and by the University of Dayton with the Marianist Award (2017) and by the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities with the Monika Hellwig Award for outstanding contributions to Catholic intellectual life.

Constance FitzGerald, OCD, a member of the Carmelite Community in Baltimore, Maryland, is a theologian. Not only has

she served her community as prioress, formation director, archivist/historian and treasurer, she was one of the founders of the Association of Contemplative Sisters in the U.S. (1969), a founding member of the Carmelite Forum (1982–2013), and a key consultant to the early work of the Institute for Communal Contemplation and Dialogue. Sr. FitzGerald has devoted her life to the explication and interpretation of the writings of the great Carmelite mystics, with special attention to the writings of Saint John of the Cross. In 2009, she became the first contemplative nun to address the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA) and in 2017 the first contemplative nun to be honored by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) with the Outstanding Leadership Award in recognition of her spiritually creative and prophetic contributions to religious life.

Roberto S. Goizueta is the Margaret O'Brien Flatley Professor Emeritus of Catholic Theology at Boston College. Dr. Goizueta is a former president of both the Catholic Theological Society of America and the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States. The *National Catholic Reporter* named him one of the ten most influential US Latino/a educators, pastors, and theologians. His book *Caminemos con Jesús: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment* (Orbis, 1995) was named one of the "Fifty Foundational Books in Race, Ethnicity, and Religion" by the *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion.*

Mary Catherine Hilkert, OP, a member of the Dominican Sisters of Peace, is professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame. She is the author of *Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination* and *Speaking with Authority: Catherine of Siena and the Voices of Women Today* and coeditor with Robert J. Schreiter of *The Praxis of the Reign of God: An Introduction to the Theology of Edward Schillebeeckx*.

Bryan N. Massingale is the James and Nancy Buckman Professor of Theological and Social Ethics, as well as the senior ethics fellow in Fordham's Center for Ethics Education. Professor Massingale

is a leader in the field of theological ethics and a noted authority on issues of social and racial justice. He is president-elect of the Society of Christian Ethics, past convener of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium, and a former president of the Catholic Theological Society of America. An award-winning author, Professor Massingale has served on the editorial boards of *Theological Studies*, the *Journal of Moral Theology*, and the *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*. The recipient of four honorary degrees, his contributions to justice advocacy have been recognized on numerous occasions, and in 2012 he received Catholic Charities USA's Centennial Gold Medal for leadership and service in the social mission of the Roman Catholic Church and the YWCA's "Eliminating Racism" award in 2014.

Brian O. McDermott, SJ, is currently special assistant to the president of Georgetown University. He received his doctorate in systematic theology from the University of Nijmegen in Holland in 1973. For twenty-seven years he was a professor at Weston Jesuit School of Theology. He is the author of books and articles on Christology and grace and articles on the intersection of authority, leadership, and spirituality.

Alex Mikulich is an antiracist Catholic social ethicist and activist. He coedited and contributed to *The Scandal of White Complicity and US Hyper-Incarceration: A Nonviolent Spirituality of White Resistance* and *Interrupting White Privilege: Catholic Theologians Break the Silence* (Orbis, 2007), which won the 2008 Theological Book of the Year Award from the College Theology Society. He is author of *Embracing Racial Intimacy: A Way of Unlearning White Supremacy* (2021). The *National Catholic Reporter* publishes his monthly column "Decolonizing Faith and Society," which questions the oppressive side of Western modernity and Christianity to imagine communal futures in which the earth and all peoples may thrive. He and his beloved lifetime partner Kara are proud parents of two African American children. He currently cares for adults with special needs in a farm-to-table shared-living community in the Berkshire mountains.

Maria Teresa Morgan is assistant professor of theology at Saint John Vianney College Seminary, where she also coordinates the Humanities Program. She is a frequent contributor to *El Ignaciano*, the online Jesuit magazine of the Pedro Arrupe Institute. Her area of interest lies in Christian spirituality and in theological aesthetics. Her contribution, "The Sentinel," draws from Constance FitzGerald's concept of societal impasse and presents a reflection on the dark night in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. Maria Teresa and her husband Robert reside in Miami, Florida.

Dr. Margaret R. Pfeil holds a joint appointment in the Theology Department and in the Center for Social Concerns at the University of Notre Dame. She is a faculty fellow of the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. Her research interests include Catholic social thought, racial justice, ecological ethics, ecumenical dialogue, and peace studies. With Tobias Winright, she coedited *Violence, Transformation, and the Sacred: They Shall Be Called Children of God* (Orbis, 2012). With Gerald Schlabach, she coedited *Sharing Peace: Mennonites and Catholics in Conversation* (Liturgical Press, 2013), and with Laurie Cassidy and Alex Mikulich she is coauthor of *The Scandal of White Complicity and US Hyper-Incarceration: A Nonviolent Spirituality of White Resistance*. With Fr. Don McNeill, CSC, she edited the volume *Act Justly, Love Mercifully, Walk Humbly with Your God* (Andrews McMeel Universal, 2016). She is a cofounder and resident of the St. Peter Claver Catholic Worker Community in South Bend, Indiana.

Andrew Prevot is associate professor of theology at Boston College. His research spans the areas of spiritual and mystical theology, philosophical theology and continental philosophy of religion, and various forms of political, liberation, black, and womanist theology. He is the author of *Theology and Race: Black and Womanist Traditions in the United States* (Brill, 2018) and *Thinking Prayer: Theology and Spirituality amid the Crises of Modernity* (Notre Dame, 2015) and coeditor of *Anti-Blackness and Christian Ethics* (Orbis, 2017). He is currently working on a book-length study on the mysticism of ordinary life.

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