

is a "gateway" into Underhill, steeping the reader in her insights and then leading into prayer. The quotes selected focus heavily on what Underhill calls Reality and the individual's lifelong journey to bring oneself into correspondence with that Reality. This focus is consonant with Underhill's principal contribution, namely to establish the human need to be in relationship with its source. As such the book serves to companion one on a spiritual journey through life. There are disappointments, however. Nothing is delineated by quotation marks, and no citations are given to enable the reader to track down the source for further examination. Nonetheless, this very brief and portable book will serve to introduce one of the foremost twentieth century writers about the life of the spirit.

Dana Greene

PATTERSON, Richard B., *Writing Your Spiritual Autobiography* (Allen, TX: Thomas More Publishing, 2002), pp. 175. ISBN 0-88347-488-3 (paperback). \$12.00.

In this practical, hands-on book, Richard B. Patterson, a clinical and consulting psychologist, suggests that writing one's spiritual autobiography is an effective way to cultivate and deepen one's awareness and understanding of his or her spirituality in relation to life's many dimensions. *Writing Your Spiritual Autobiography* consists of twenty-two chapters plus an annotated bibliography. Each chapter focuses on particular topics including prayer, thinking and doubting, parenting, one's image of God, addiction, suffering, and ethics, to name a few. On each topic, Patterson shares his own experience and insight as a "struggling traveler" versus a religious expert or theologian, then asks reflection questions and provides space to write. The nature of the questions encourage sober reflection upon oneself in relation to religious beliefs, spirituality, family, careers, morality, ethics, prayer, sex, suffering, and more.

A particularly attractive characteristic of Patterson's approach is his partially psychodynamic orientation and desire for the reader to *learn* rather than simply to feel inspired or motivated about spiritual growth. Key to such learning requires facing fears, mistakes and loss through thoughtful exploration and patience. A true mark of spiritual maturity shows itself when Patterson suggests that writing one's spiritual autobiography should ideally lead to richer

questions rather than pat answers. Patterson states, "By writing your spiritual autobiography, hopefully you will clarify for yourself first of all exactly what you believe .... Perhaps you will also discover that what you actually believe and what you thought you believed are a little different, that difference coming to light only when you take the time to examine your beliefs" (p. 13).

Chapter five, "On Mysticism," for example, underscores the dual nature of spiritual exploration, and how this characteristic makes such an endeavor challenging if not intimidating. Patterson rightly notes that mysticism and mystical experiences can be both positive and negative, meaning that mysticism is not limited to a safe, intimate encounter with God. A mystical experience may also occur within a tragedy such as September 11, 2001, where horrifying wonder strikes, leaving those affected momentarily speechless and psychologically paralyzed. The point, however, is that we grow and develop spiritually as a result of such life experiences, assuming God's equal presence and availability.

Patterson, who is Catholic, writes from an ecumenical perspective, exploring religion as metaphor rather than dogma. He says the latter tends to complicate psychological and spiritual growth while the former encourages wonder and intrigue. Beyond family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances, Patterson's influences range from Thomas Merton, C.S. Lewis and Teilhard de Chardin to Zen Buddhism, Harold Kushner and Jewish mysticism to Viktor Frankl, Carl Jung and psychoanalysis. As a "self-help" book, *Writing Your Spiritual Autobiography* stands out due to its author's broad interests, influences and ecumenical spirit.

Glenn Crider

NOUWEN, Henri J.M., *Out of Solitude: Three Meditations on the Christian Life* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2004), pp.64. ISBN 0-87793-495-9. \$7.95.

FORD, Michael (ed.), *Eternal Seasons: A Liturgical Journey with Henri J.M. Nouwen* (Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books, 2004), pp.190. ISBN 1-893732-77-0. \$18.95.

I am grateful for the opportunity to review these two recent publications from Henri Nouwen as it is unlikely that I would otherwise have picked them up. Not that I am unfamiliar with Nouwen's writings; that's the point, in a way I am too familiar