

guidance for those seeking contemplative experience in the midst of everyday activity.

Joy A. Schroeder

KIRVAN, John, *Grace through Simplicity: The Practical Spirituality of Evelyn Underhill* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2004), pp. 7-206. ISBN 1594710260 (paperback). \$8.95.

This little book, one in the series “30-Days with a Great Spiritual Teacher,” elaborates and explores in prayerful form the insights of an extraordinary lay spiritual teacher, scholar of mysticism, guide to the contemplative life, and pioneer in the retreat movement. Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941) was a prolific author and editor, who both reclaimed the treasures of the mystical tradition and translated their wisdom, making them accessible to what she called “normal” people. Her most influential book, *Mysticism: A Study of the Nature and Development of Man’s Spiritual Consciousness*, was published in 1911 and has remained in print continuously. In 1921 at mid-point in her writing career she moved from the life of scholarship to one in which she interpreted the mystical tradition for clergy and laity through popular writing, lecturing, and the giving of retreats. At the end of her life she became a pacifist, applying literally the mandate of the love of God that she discovered first in the mystics. Her corpus was very large, focusing not only on the mystical tradition but also on holiness, prayer, worship and the spiritual life. It established her as one of the early twentieth century foremothers of the contemporary burgeoning interest in spirituality. Among others, she influenced T.S. Eliot and the young Columbia University student, Thomas Merton.

Kirvan, who conceived of the 30-Days series and has authored most of its titles, wrote *God Hunger*, *Silent Hope*, *Raw Faith*, and *There is a God, There is No God*. The purpose of *Grace Through Simplicity* is to make the spiritual experience and wisdom of Underhill accessible and to invite the reader to meditate and pray her words daily for a month. Each meditation is structured in the same tripartite way: “My Day Begins,” “All Through the Day” and “My Day is Ending.”

“My Day Begins” includes some ten to fifteen lines from Underhill. “All Through the Day” recapitulates one line from that selection, and “My Day is Ending” is Kirvan’s prayer emerging from meditation on her words. As envisioned by Kirvan, the book

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