

Chapter 16: Eight Authors of the Province of the Americas

We have already read of four authors who have been members of the Province of the Americas: Desmond Lionel Morse-Boycott (Chapter 1), H. Baxter Liebler (Chapter 1), Hugo Muller (Chapter 4), Harold MacDonald (Chapter 12), and Emmett Jarrett (Chapter 14). Here are eight others with reviews or excerpts drawn from the *Franciscan Times*.

William Haynes, *Professed 1989*

A Physician's Witness to the Power of Shared Prayer (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1990); *Minding the Whole Person: Cultivating a Healthy Lifestyle from Youth Through the Senior Years* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1994); *Is There a God in Health Care?: Toward a New Spirituality of Medicine* (New York: Haworth Pastoral Press, 2006.)

Is There a God in Health Care? Toward a New Spirituality of Medicine Review by Jonathan Steinhart, MD TSSF (*Franciscan Times*, Summer 2008)

Is there a God in health care? This is a good question for providers and patients, which is all of us, and particularly for those of us who are Christian and Third Order. The question implies a familiar dichotomy: science vs. religion, faith healing vs. technology. As a child, I watched on television, along with my parents, Oral Roberts “heal” people with a hand on their forehead and an incantation. This looked like all faith and miracle and no science. In many years of medical training, I laboriously studied the sciences, which underlie medicine and the technology, which makes it possible, and there was no mention of God or the role that religious faith may have in healing. Both these events and the divisions they implied were decades ago.

Fortunately, times have changed. There is now an ongoing dialogue between scientists and theologians, and medicine acknowledges that there is more to healing than drugs and surgery. Still, it is easy to compartmentalize our lives into the secular and spiritual. However, we, who are in the Third Order are challenged by our Rule to dissolve this barrier. Drs. Haynes and co-author Kelly address issues of spirituality and medicine in their new book.

The authors' backgrounds are complementary. Dr. Haynes is a retired cardiologist and Third Order Franciscan and Dr. Kelly is an associate of the De La Salle Christian Brothers, university professor, and Bonhoeffer scholar. Their exploration of these issues is comprehensive.

They examine familiar issues such as prayer and healing. Should doctors pray with and for their patients? Dr. Haynes became a strong believer in this practice over the years and when appropriate prayed with and for his patients. He says, “Indeed by praying with their patients, doctors can help God become a consoling presence for them in their suffering.”

They look at the role of health care in terminal illness. It is in this sphere that theology and medicine can enhance each other's effort. Healthcare providers can now do much to relieve physical suffering, but only by addressing the emotional issues and the spiritual concerns which may underlie them can they fully treat the needs of many of their patients. The issues of forgiveness and reconciliation are often critical to a patient and his or her family at this time and caregivers such as chaplains, social workers, and therapists can assist medical personnel in addressing these concerns.

Using Jesus as the model healer, they have an excellent chapter on “Listening from the Heart in Health Care.” They believe that some of the charm and maybe therapeutic power of Jesus is that he took the time and effort to listen to people who often were not heard in their society. The key to being a good listener is avoiding judgments based on preconceived attitudes and stereotypes. The joy that comes through medicine is the trust that develops between the caregiver and the person who has come for help. This only comes through active and unhurried listening, something that is important for us in the healthcare professions to realize as the increased workload, paperwork, and abundance of technology decrease our face-to-face time with patients.

In a chapter entitled, *Healing Services: Miracles, Cures, and Hope*, they look at the role of contemporary healing ministry. Sometimes a well-known religious healer such as Father DiOrio, with whom Dr. Kelly had a personal experience, fills this role. His daughter had a brain tumor and her condition remarkably improved and stabilized after an encounter with Father DiOrio at a communion service. They point out that Father DiOrio always makes it clear that he is not the healer but a conduit for the healing love of Jesus, the Divine Physician, and that Father DiOrio always counsels those who come to him to continue their medical treatments. Though less dramatic, both authors are strong supporters of the healing ministries in the church and its outreach ministries.

The authors briefly address contemporary social factors that affect health care: lack of universal health coverage in this country, a predilection for advanced weaponry and violence to solve problems, an environment with a diminishing water supply and replete with toxins. These problems go far beyond the reach of individual health care providers and the institutions with which they work. They believe we must foster in our lives and our churches



a spirituality that respects the environment, advocates for the poor, and seeks justice and mercy first to address global problems. Is not this what we are all about as Third Order Franciscans?

So where is God in healthcare? Drs. Kelly and Haynes lead us to believe that He is to be encountered on many fronts: in a physician's office, in a healing service, in intercessory prayer for the sick, in advocating for greater healthcare access, in the laboratory and the operating room. They do not suggest that "faith, prayer, and a spiritual relationship with God" are to be substituted for capable healthcare providers using modern medicine. They believe that God acts in health care through the spiritual life of healthcare providers, through the healing ministries in and out of the church, and through God-given advances in modern medicine and technological breakthroughs.

Over the years my parents become supporters of Oral Roberts and lived their final years in University Village, a retirement center in the shadow of the tall towers that once housed his medical school. They also inspired and help put a son through medical school. The frontiers of medicine and theology are continually expanding and merging, and I recommend this book to readers who are interested in new insights in this emerging dialogue.

Lucy Blount McCain, Professed 1997

Letters from a candidate's wife: it looks like a rough ride, but there's a rainbow in sight. (Montgomery, Ala: Lightbearers, 1994), *"Lamkins J. Flock, get off that heap!": an adult fable.* (Maryville, Tenn.: Lightbearers Publishers, 1997), *Letters to the Precious Group.* (Montgomery, Ala: Light-bearers Publishers, 1990), *The Story of Lucy What's-Her-Name!: And Your Name Too!* (Montgomery, Ala.: Lightbearers Publishers, 1990), *Lenten Love Letters.* (Maryville, Tenn.: Lightbearers Publishers, 1998), and Mary Barwick. *I Love You Greater Than Space!* Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2013).

Lenten Love Letters an excerpt (*Franciscan Times*, Winter 1998)

From "A Foreword" by The Rt. Rev. Henry N. Parsley, Jr., Bishop Coadjutor of Alabama

*Lent is sometimes called the **ver sacrum**, the sacred spring of the church. These letters have a spring-like quality which can help renew our sense of God's grace in all of life and find the inner rebirth to which this holy season invites us. May they cheer you and kindle your faith as they have kindled mine.*

Precious Sisters,

Good Friday

My name is Mary, the Handmaiden. I am Jesus's mother. He is the Messiah, the Lord and Savior of the world. He is the Messiah, the Lord and Savior of the world! I know. At the Annunciation I was told by our Father God Almighty's messenger. At His birth, shepherds and wise men recognized and worshipped Him. At His nine-day-old presentation to the temple, holy Simeon and Anna proclaimed Him. John the Baptist knew. His disciples knew, first the twelve and then hundreds, even thousands who followed Him knew. The miracles. The fulfilled prophecies. My Son Jesus is the Messiah, the Lord and Savior of the world!

But where is everybody now? I don't understand. I kneel on the ground looking up. My eyes are fixed on His. I'm trying to give Him strength with my gaze. There is an excruciating pain in my heart. My head is throbbing. My breath has become labored like His. Am I also dying? Once again I don't understand. I don't understand what's going on. But, that's all right. I've learned that I don't have to understand, but rather I have to trust and in trusting comes acceptance and I can, I must, I will proclaim my eternal continual response to our Lord God. "Yes."

My precious, precious sisters. I am in agony. If I could, I would climb up on that cross and die in my Son's place. You know I would, all mothers would. Right now I have to stay here as if glued to this spot.

"God is Love. My Son is the Messiah. God is Love. My Son is the Messiah." This thin line of words has become my Hymn, my chant, my lifeline.

"God, give me the strength to see this moment through and once more say 'yes'."

Sisters, do you still want to be a handmaiden, a servant too? Today I am clothed not only in humility, but the garment of love has also been added. God's ways are not our ways. I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that our Father God's love is about to crash through this darkness and that my Son's Messiahship is about to be eternally proclaimed.

My arms are outstretched. I seem to be dying too, dying to self as I look upon Him. At the same time, this exquisite sense of love seems to be blossoming.

Look. Look! Do you see? Do you feel? Do you sense the same? Stretch your arms out. Look up into His eyes. All else seems to be dropping, drifting, departing away. This Light—This Love—In this darkness. Ah! "Yes, Lord, Yes."

My sisters—

Humbly, lovingly,

Serve the Lord with gladness"

Mary

I Love You Greater Than Space Review by Janet C. Nail (*Franciscan Times*, Summer 2013)

Remember finding *The Song of Solomon* in the Bible when you were in junior high school? This was a book that your parents and teachers definitely did NOT want you to read! In fact, they seemed to be embarrassed that it was included in the Bible. Maybe they tried to etherealize it by describing it as an analogy of God's love and pursuit of the church.

Anything but the love of a man and woman! I feel that Lucy Dunn Blount may have been influenced by the Song of Solomon in writing *I Love You Greater Than Space*, a paean to the love she shared with Duncan MacLeod.

Lucy and Duncan met at Monteagle Sunday School Assembly. Both are wounded and healing; he is a widower, she a divorcee. Their mutual attraction may have come to nothing had not Duncan's daughter learned that Lucy made an annual retreat to St. Mary's, an Anglican Convent in Freeland, England, a convenient mile-and-a-half from the MacLeod home in Long Hanborough.

Two months passed before their first date; in another two months they were married, and their love was so strong it was obvious to everyone they encountered.

Again, they were in Monteagle, as the season was coming to an end. After a grand day of activities, they retired to their room. In the middle of the night, Duncan awoke in obvious pain. Sitting up in bed, he took a deep breath and made motions with his arms as though swimming; then he was still, dead of a massive heart attack.

They had been married a glorious 623 days.

Their love story, told in poetry by Lucy, is not a delicate, unearthly tale. It is as much part of the world as Lucy and Duncan are, concrete, hearty, and solid. This is a love of flesh, of conversation, of silence, of walks and meals and drinks in the evening. It is walking hand in hand, admitting that she is smitten by his very blue eyes. It is rejoicing in embraces and caresses. It is the love for which God created man and woman.

Stylistically, the book includes three parts. "Soaring Songs" is the story of the courtship and marriage. Each stanza of a poem is written as a haiku, an interesting conceit that differs from the usual notion that a haiku stands alone, complete. This gives flow to the poetry and saves it from the facile rhythm of most love poetry (who has not suffered from the "See Saw, Margery Daw" scansion of those magazine poems?).



The progress of love is so real that one occasionally feels like a voyeur reading it, but it is not embarrassing. It feels somewhat like sitting with old friends whose marriage is so grounded in love and in God that you bask in the warmth! You feel your own relationships enriched.

The second part, "Duncan Doodle-Dog," is the achingly beautiful effort to explain Duncan's death to their grandchildren, to ease their grief. In so doing, she embraces her own and moves to releasing him to God. I found myself choked up reading this section (and if you can read the story of the stuffed dog without tearing up, you have lost something!)

The third part, "Ta, Gorgeous," is the sad journey of learning to accept the change from wife to widow. Everything ordinary is now strange; a journey to Birmingham, being home alone for the first time, introducing herself at a retreat—all is changed, changed; a terrible beauty can be born only through the bedrock of her faith, of his faith. She sees them as separated yet together, looking forward to the day they will be together again.

Faith in God is the continuing golden thread in these poems. Loving God made it possible for Lucy and Duncan to love one another, loving God made it possible to continue life with a shout of "Grateful, grateful!"

Read *I Love You Greater Than Space* to reassure yourself that love is of God, and all your love is part of God.

Jeff Golliver, *Professed* 2004

A Deeper Faith: A Journey into Spirituality (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2008), *Moving Through Fear: Cultivating the 7 Spiritual Instincts for a Fearless Life* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2011)

A Deeper Faith: A Journey into Spirituality. Review by Masud Ibn Sydullah (*Franciscan Times*, Winter 2008)

A Deeper Faith is an extraordinary book of spiritual guidance. Written in a style reminiscent of C.S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters*, Jeff offers spiritual direction in the form of letters, responding to letters sent to him from a spiritual directee. Such an approach helps to create a sense of intimacy and personal care as Jeff engages the questions, concerns, and life situations of the directee.

A Deeper Faith is written for a broad spectrum of people on a spiritual journey. While being absolutely appropriate and helpful for dedicated Christians, it is quite accessible to the seeker—those who are not quite sure what path they may want to take, but are committed to responding to the call of Spirit in their lives.

The book is honest, addressing nearly all aspects of human experience and the life of faith. Jeff courageously shares his own experiences and challenges of faith and faithfulness. Remarkably, he strikes a balance—telling enough of his own story to be self-revealing without being self-indulgent. The style convincingly conveys the relationship of a faithful spiritual director/soul friend sharing with another on a spiritual journey. Organized in chapters relating to the Liturgical Year of the Church, one is able to relate the concerns of the letters to the themes of the Church Year, as well as have empathy with both the director and directee as the author guides us through what one of the collects of *The Book of Common Prayer* calls “the chances and changes of life.”

I highly recommend *A Deeper Faith*, and since we are just about to enter Advent, it would be a perfect time to begin. However, wisely, Jeff has written this book so that it really does not matter when, or with what chapter, one begins to read. In any case, one is invited (and guided) into *A Deeper Faith*.

Moving Through Fear. Review by Mary Teresa Rogers (*Franciscan Times*, Summer 2011)

Jeff Gollhofer is a great storyteller. Because I know him, I can hear his North Carolina accent behind the stories he tells in *Moving Through Fear*. Many of these stories are from his childhood in the rural south; some from his adult life as a priest. All the stories illustrate a very particular encounter with fear and the chance to move through and past it.

Early in the book he tells the story of St. Francis and the wolf of Gubbio. Later on he talks about his first meeting with a terrifying three-foot-long snake when he was five years old, and his subsequent teenage and adult fascination with snakes. All of which led up to a seemingly simple event on St. Francis Day at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in NYC, when he and other clergy sat in the cathedral garden to bless hundreds of pets:

The last person who came to him that day was a young boy carrying a garter snake in a cage. Jeff writes, “The boy watched me intently...I could bless the snake through the cage, that is, without actually holding him in my hands. It would be a blessing of sorts. Or I could give the real blessing that the boy wanted to see...Rather than thinking about it or deliberating, I reached into the cage, gently took the snake in my hand, held it in my lap, and blessed it. It was the simplest thing in the world. The young boy and I looked into each others’ eyes and smiled.

The simplest thing in the world—that is what many of Jeff’s stories add up to. Although he is clear that fear is sometimes just what we need to respond to a real danger, so much of our fear needlessly complicates our lives.



The spiritual practices he suggests—those that nurture and cultivate the seven spiritual instincts—are simple as well. That’s part of why this feels like such a Franciscan book. It’s also earthy: rejoicing in the details of a swarm of bees, of the sacredness of a family meal, of the spiritual struggles of children who are bullied and who fight back, of the last and intimate visit with a dying friend.

It is characteristically Franciscan that Jeff ends with an epilogue called “In Defense of Joy.” “The defense of joy is the best of all possible defenses,” he writes. When he took up the practice of searching for joyful people, the ones he found helped him open his eyes to see even more. “Joyful people insist on creating and living the kind of life that they believe we are all meant to share.” Looking for joyful people—a practice that is deeply incarnational.

Susan Pitchford, *Professed* 2004

Following Francis: The Franciscan Way for Everyone. (Harrisburg, Pa: Morehouse Pub, 2006), *God in the Dark: Suffering and Desire in the Spiritual Life*. (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2011), *The Sacred Gaze*. (Collegeville, Minnesota : Liturgical Press, 2014)

Following Francis: The Franciscan Way for Everyone. Review by Ted Witham, Former MP of Australia

Susan Pitchford's new book is written with love and insight. I liked it for two main reasons:

1. It reminded me of my own journey as a novice in the Third Order of the Society of Saint Francis 25 years ago towards a fuller realisation of my vocation as a Franciscan.
2. Pitchford's struggles with aspects of our life like simplicity and chastity inspired me to go deeper into those areas in my life to make it conform a little more to what a Franciscan might be.

Novices will appreciate the way some of the jargon of the Third Order has been demystified by showing how words like "Rule," "Joy" and "Obedience" are concepts that can reinvigorate Christian living.

The chapter on prayer as desire and fulfilment shows a second great influence on Susan Pitchford's life: Teresa of Avila. In his 2006 encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict XVI approves the idea that eros is a characteristic of God. God's desire for us - as Pitchford shows by reference to Teresa as well as Francis - is the basis of the life of prayer. Thomas Keating's phrase “exuberant mysticism” describes Franciscan prayer well.

Following Francis is funny. It frequently made me chuckle out loud. Wry and humorous observations, say of birds from a window, are

exemplars of how following Francis is fun.

Susan Pitchford knows the cost of being a Franciscan, having, for example, foregone tenure as a professor. Such decisions are painful and difficult, not the least because colleagues either can't understand or are threatened by these decisions.

These personal examples give the book its strength. For many of us in the U.S. and Australia, the challenge of being a tertiary is complicated by our middle class lives. In our wealthy countries, it can be counter-productive to give away all our money and possessions. We are held by so many safety nets - most of which we middle-class folk make good use of - that trying to stand aside from our wealth might simply make us dependent not on God, but inappropriately on other people.

I struggle with these issues, and I was very encouraged by Pitchford's struggles with them.

And I enjoyed going on "Franciscan road trips" to Ghana and Cambridge in England. Pitchford shows imaginative ways in which we can bridge the great divide between us and the poverty in this world.

With its easy-to-read style and helpful exercises at the end of each chapter, this book is clearly aimed at Third Order members starting out, but would be equally helpful to anyone considering how Franciscan spirituality could refresh their Christian life.

Tertiaries and others who have been on the Franciscan journey for some more years can continue to gain from insights into retreats as *yichud*, into the power of the Profession vows and their renewal each year, and so on.

I read many good books about the life of Francis, some excellent books about the ideal of Franciscan spirituality and the story of the Franciscan family. But this book is about being a Franciscan, in particular about being a Third Order Franciscan. It's an insider's book, and as such will be helpful for many.

God in the Dark: Suffering and Desire in the Spiritual Life. Review by John Brockmann (*Franciscan Times*, Summer 2011)

We have all profited by Susan's 2006 book, *Following Francis: The Franciscan Way for Everyone*, in how she ruminated on our formation material in *Forming the Soul of a Franciscan*. On March 10, Susan released a new book, and this is how she introduces it on her website:

*"Eros is one of God's names." The late Dorothee Soelle wrote these words in *Mysticism and Resistance*, and Christian writers are increasingly meeting God under this strange and ancient name. A growing number of books address either our longing for God or our grief when suffering comes and God seems far away. What is lacking is work that shows the relationship between our longing and our grief. *God in the Dark* portrays suffering and desire as the two faces of passion, and passion itself as the essential energizing force of the spiritual life.*

*Western Christianity in the twenty-first century urgently needs to know both sides of passion. The religious routines, partisan squabbling and mundane daily upkeep of the institutional church often obscure the passionate love at the heart of the Gospel. Overburdened by the demands of our lives, we settle for an hour of peace each week over intimacy with the living God, and what began as a love affair cools into a banal religious complacency. *God in the Dark* invites readers to reconsider the God whom the Bible describes as both "love" (1 John 4:8) and a "consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29).*

*There is also an acute need among spiritual seekers for a better understanding of suffering, especially spiritual suffering. Many people were shocked to learn through her letters that Mother Teresa had spent much of her life in a state of spiritual darkness. The struggle to reconcile this with her reputation for holiness reveals that the role of darkness and suffering in the spiritual life is not widely understood. *God in the Dark* invites readers to reinterpret the dark nights of their lives, to learn that darkness is not necessarily a place of failure and abandonment, but can be a place of intimacy and growth. When we learn that God does some of his best work in the dark, we will be drawn there by our desire, and when the night closes in around us, we will welcome its embrace.*

Alan Jones, Dean emeritus of Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, wrote the Foreword of the book and this is what he had to say about it:

*'There be in God, some say, a deep but dazzling darkness.' The 17th century poet Henry Vaughan expresses a vital truth, which is explored with intelligence, passion and humor by Susan Pitchford. In spite of her disclaimers to be a theologian, her book is a discerning work of the moral and theological imagination. It is an exploration well suited for our times, marked as they are, by both shallowness and fierceness in religion. The *God of God in the Dark* is passionate and intractably mysterious. And because we are all made in that divine image, so we too are driven by passion to embrace the unknown. Spirituality isn't a 'product.' It can neither be bought nor sold and Susan Pitchford skewers this misunderstanding with down-to-earth accessible writing, marked with humor and honesty. The book is refreshing and yet stands in a long mystical tradition. It is a great gift for a floundering, atomized culture—water in the desert.*



John Michael Talbot had this to say about the book:

Susan R. Pitchford has penned (or at least word processed!) a new book with a master's touch in God in the Dark. Coming from a Franciscan orientation, she has tapped into a broad spectrum of the ancient mystical heritage of Christianity in a way that speaks to the average person in a fast-paced, modern world. Readers will find it a fine addition to their modern mystical books, or a great introduction to the mystical tradition for new seekers and first-time readers.

Stuart Schlegel, Professed 2000

Wisdom from a Rainforest: The Spiritual Journey of an Anthropologist. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998) (This book was later made into a New York play in 2005 entitled *Kegedewan*, which means *The Gift*.) In the play, Stuart informed me: “At one point, my bishop (in the play, a much more self-righteous and pious guy than was actually the case!) says to me on an occasion when I come out of the forest for a break: “Father, did you teach them the gospel?” and I reply, “Bishop, they taught ME the gospel.”

A reviewer of the play wrote: “*Kegedewan* is that rare example of theater that is potentially both cathartic and eternally memorable. Its exploration of individuality, gender identity, freedom of will, and grace under pressure is breathtakingly remarkable.”

The book was a finalist for National Book Award in the Philippines. Stuart received lots of email in response to the book, but he told me he prizes this one most: “I received an email from a British soldier in Basra, Iraq, which was their area of responsibility, and he said that he had been given a copy of *Wisdom* by his padre (their term for chaplain, as you know — who knows how he got ahold of it!), and he was deeply moved to read about such a nonviolent, loving people amidst the terrible carnage all around him.)

This was the excerpt and dialogue that appeared in the *Franciscan Times*, Summer 1998.

Prologue

This book is a love story.

In the middle of a dark night in July 1967, deep in a Philippine rainforest, I realized that my son Len, sleeping beside me on the bamboo slat floor of my tiny house, was sick. The heat of his feverish body had awakened me. Rain, which had begun the day before, pounded loudly against the grass roof, but I could still hear him moaning. Len was only six years old, and his mother—who knew much more than I did about sick children—was far away. But I knew that he was too hot. I woke him up and gave him an aspirin with a little water I kept by the sleeping mat. As the night went on he became hotter and hotter. I lit a kerosene lamp, climbed out of the mosquito net we were sharing, and poured more cool water. I sponged off his arms and legs, hoping that by cooling them I might bring down the fever. Perhaps it helped; I couldn't tell. Len kept moaning and I waited impatiently for morning, my mind filled with dark apprehension.

We were in a place called Figel, a small Teduray settlement alongside the Dakel Teran River on the island of Mindanao. Len and I had walked in the day before, wading across the wide river numerous times. It was a long, hard, full day's trek into the heart of the forest.



Morning finally came and—at last—I heard the playing of gongs which greeted each sunrise in Figel. I saw several Teduray friends up and stretching in the morning mist, their sleeping sarongs cowed over their heads against the damp coolness of the new day, and I called for them to come over and look at my son. By then he seemed to me to be much worse. He had lost control of his bowels and bladder, and he was obviously seriously ill.

Several women and men discussed the situation among themselves. They saw my fear and concern, and some of the men said that they would leave immediately and carry Len out to the coastal town of Lebak, where there was a large plywood factory that had “my kind of doctor.” Normally the trail to Lebak involved fording the winding river about a dozen times as it snaked its way to the sea. But that would be impossible now: the night's hard rain had swollen the river, removing any hope of crossing it. It was strong and swift and twice its usual arm pit depth. People never tried to go to town under such conditions. But my Teduray companions saw that I desperately wanted my son to see the coastal doctor, and knowing this touched a deep chord in them, in their understanding of how life should be lived. The Teduray I knew in Figel never ever took someone's wants or needs lightly. They were willing to risk their lives to take him there.

They would attempt this unimaginably dangerous trip even though they were certain that Len's illness was due to his having unintentionally angered a spirit. The Figel people had

no concept whatsoever of germs, or even any awareness of what my kind of doctor did, and although no one said anything, I knew they had informed one of the Figel shamans, who would litigate with the offended spirit as soon as possible to effect a cure.

One of the men quickly cut down two six-foot lengths of bamboo from a nearby grove and hung a sarong between them. We then put Len, who seemed to me barely conscious, in this makeshift stretcher. The trek would be agonizingly slow with the river so treacherous; no one would ever attempt it unless forced to by an emergency. But within twenty minutes of the gongs' announcement

of the dawn, we were off. Our little group— six Teduray men, Len and me—made its way, deliberately and torturously, along the full length of the flooded, furious river, clinging to its banks. Fear for myself and my friends' safety now joined my anxiety about Len's condition. In many places the men carrying Len had no firm footing and, their muscles taut and glistening with sweat, were forced to grasp exposed tree roots or shrubs as the river crashed by just below them. The going was slow. Although we stopped for very few breaks, the day passed all too quickly and we were still far from the coast.

After sundown darkness filled the forest, but our little band struggled on. There was a half-moon for part of the night, but not much of its light penetrated the canopy of high trees to reach us on the forest floor. When the night became too dim and the darkness too dangerous we paused and made torches of tree resin applied to the end of short sticks. As we continued along the river banks, we held the torches high with our free hands so that we could see where to put our feet and grasp for firm handholds.

I stumbled alongside my sick and frightened son trying to comfort him, awkwardly keeping up as best I could with these men who had spent their whole lives on this river and in this forest. I put cool cloths on his forehead and spoke to him whenever we stopped for a break or to switch litter bearers.

The trip was a twenty-hour nightmare of physical exertion and danger. We crawled along the river through most of the night, resting only occasionally for a few short moments—which seemed to refresh the Teduray but which did little for my fear and headache. I knew the breaks in the pace were necessary—it was incredible that these men didn't need more of them—but Len seemed to be getting hotter and weaker, and the horrible possibility that he might not make it weighed on me.

Just as morning was about to dawn, we finally dragged ourselves out of the forest and reached the road that led to Lebak. I found someone who had a jeep, and he agreed to take Len and me into town, while my Teduray friends rested a few hours before starting back to Figel. At the plywood factory, the doctor checked Len carefully and told me that my son was not really all that critical, that he had a kind of viral flu that produced nasty symptoms but was not actually life-threatening. My feeling of relief at that welcome news soaked into every cell of my weary mind and body. I remember the moment clearly still today.

But what especially sticks in my mind, and continues now, many years later, to cause me wonder and even awe, is the gift that those Teduray men gave me and my boy by rallying around us and risking themselves so willingly to do what I felt Len needed. It was a true gift, given simply; a gift of life, and of themselves. It was a gift of love.

* * *

In February 1972, five years after my Figel friends carried Len along the banks of the Dakel Teran, I was standing in one of the main lecture halls at the University of California, Santa Cruz. The day was lovely, sunny yet crisply cool. From behind the lectern in that familiar room where I had so often taught I looked at my students with tears in my eyes. In a few pained words I told them that the Teduray people of Figel, the community of people I had lived with in the rainforest for two years, had been massacred by a ragged band of outlaws.

My cracked voice and the horror of my message brought gasps from throughout the room. These were upper-division anthropology majors, and they had heard me speak at length about Teduray life and culture. From slide shows and many informal discussions as well as in classes, they had grown familiar with the ways and even the faces of the far-off Figel people. I believe most of my students admired the forest Teduray greatly, and they all knew that I had been personally touched by them in a way that went far beyond professional respect. They knew that I loved these people of Figel. I could not teach that morning and so merely dismissed the class. But first I asked them to stand with me for a few moments of silence in honor of those good and peaceful people, who never wanted any part of the violence that raged outside of the forest but who nonetheless had fallen before its terrible fury.

This book began to be written in my mind on that day. I believe that in their death the Figel Teduray left their story to me, that they commissioned me to be their voice to a wider world. Ever since, in formal teaching and research volumes, in conversations, in lectures and homilies to the communities where I have lived, I have told the story of the Teduray of Figel and their gracious way of life. In this book I pass on their wisdom to you. I waited a long time to write it, until I could retire from scholarly writing, until I was freed from the demands of two careers, and until a heartbreak in my family had run its course.

This is an intensely personal book, because it is not only about the Teduray; it is about me as well. I lived in Figel as an anthropologist for two years. But the story is much more personal than just an ethnographer's report from the field. In the pages that follow, I will take you into the Teduray's rainforest and deep into their understanding of reality. I will also take you into some extraordinarily sensitive times in my own life. I want to introduce you to the thinking of these people in all its beauty and elegance. But beyond that, I want to tell you about the tremendous impact their thinking had on me as a human being and the wisdom that it offers us all.

Their gracious, life-affirming, compassionate ways transformed the foundations of my life: my thinking, my feelings, my relationships, and my career. I hope a wider world will hear the voices I heard in that remote forest and realize, as I came to, that the Teduray speak eloquently to us all of tolerance, cooperation, grace, and gentleness, that their understanding of the world contains lessons that all of us pursuing "the good life" need to hear.

I hope that the Teduray move you in a deep and fundamental way, as they did me. Knowing and living with them was one of the greatest gifts of my life. This book is my gift of them to you.

A Pair of Letters After Reading Stuart's Book

Dear Stuart,

Wow, Stuart, I finished your manuscript all in one-sitting all day on Monday. I'm all goose-bumps at being struck that the Teduray and all the "cooperative" societies may have been the last original visions of the Kingdom of God; that Francis and Jesus and all the prophets living within "dominator" societies were all trying to show the way back/the way to such a rainforest world.

What would be fascinating is to almost do a comparison of sayings of Francis to the rainforest world you encountered—my sense is that it would be pretty close.

And now a question to you, Herr Professor and priest-who's-been-at-it-way-longer-than-me, how close is the proclamation of the Kingdom of God to the cooperative society you encountered in the rainforest? Am I barking up the wrong tree? Did Eisler re-find the Kingdom message via the seemingly secular path of anthropology? How important is it that I read her book, *The Cross and the Blade*?

Thank you for a wonderful gift this Holy Week—it has become the leitmotif of all my experiences and sermons.
Shalom, John Brockmann

Dear John:

Yes, I think you are precisely correct in seeing the Teduray social and cultural world as a form of the Kingdom of God as preached by Jesus and Francis. I intentionally did not explicitly make much of the Teduray way of life being so much a realization of the K of G, as Jesus and Francis saw it, but tried to SHOW it rather than TELL it. I no longer can think of the Kingdom of God in any other terms than what I experienced there for two years: a world that was non-ranked, and made no use of power of domination, no use of violence, no place for competition but rather proclaimed abundance for those who care and cooperate. In spite of the quite human lapses from living up to all the values, theirs was a kingdom of love in as pure a form as I ever think we will encounter on earth. And that realization and experience, of course, is what changed my life and my understanding of Christianity.

I think Eisler's *Chalice and Blade* is an important book. Her book was a very significant one and certainly well worth reading; it did help me organize my thinking about the Teduray. She speaks of "the partnership way" as opposed to the "dominator way" and this helped me conceptualize the Teduray. But the strong parallel between Teduray life and the Kingdom was my insight.

Rick Bellows, Professed 1997

Peace that Passes Understanding: Hope and Healing for Anxious Times (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012).
Review by John Brockmann

Rick and his wife Danni have been dear friends of mine in TSSF for many years. Many of us in the Northeast Convocations and at the New Orleans Provincial Convocation recall Rick and Danni with their two children, Elanna and Jacob, in tow. Rick has been known to many of us for the TSSF liturgies he has composed, including the "Eucharist for Francis and Clare" in our *Devotional Companion*, and the new liturgy for "Celebrating the Anniversary of a Profession," as well as his occasional pieces here in the *Franciscan Times* in which he integrates his nature photography with his poems and prayers. A big problem, however, with presenting his work in the *Times* is that we cannot reproduce the beauty and complexity of color. This book of his work does not have that limitation!

The Peace that Passes Understanding: Hope and Healing for Anxious Times is a collection of his nature photography with his poems and prayers. Here's the description from Amazon.com:

In August of 2008, photographer, priest, and poet, Richard Bellows, began sending cards of his photographs and written reflections to Laurel, a woman living with cancer. Because she found the cards "have the awesome power to bring peace and a tranquility that allows for healing," Richard expanded the card list to include others, including Paul and Jodi. The cards meant so much to Jodi, even though she was nearly blind, she would take her favorites pinned to a bulletin board whenever she would be admitted to the hospital. Their daughter wrote, "Rick's cards...gave us the strength we needed from God to continue on our journey. The cards were truly cherished treasures for a very difficult time leading up to and after my parents' deaths." Now collected in this book, you, too, can find hope and healing in these pages. As a Christian inspired by St. Francis, Richard sees God in the world—in creation, in people, and in community. He encourages an open-minded Christian faith that notices God sending us messages of love and wisdom—gifts wrapped in the beauty of nature. By unwrapping these gifts we find hope and healing. The author is a member of the Third Order, Society of St. Francis, an Episcopal religious order. He started his career as a geologist, and finished as a parish priest after nearly thirteen years serving as rector of parishes. At age 42 he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, which forced him to retire and move at age 48. Richard, his wife, and two children (when they aren't away at college), live in Westfield, Massachusetts, where he gardens, takes pictures, and writes.



All his pictures are exquisite, ranging from the very, very close-up on nature to the wide-angle view of a horizon at dawn or dusk. His prose poems that accompany the pictures also range from just one or two lines to several pages. And yet despite the variety of text and picture, each is anchored in a very specific date and place in the church calendar (Easter, Epiphany, Advent, etc.), and the dates

and pictures and prose poems take us through four years of Rick's life from 2008 to 2012. All of this arises from Rick's search for the signs of God's presence and peace in his life so that he and we may become "signs of God welcomed into our lives—living evidence of grace and healing." Rick invites the reader to join him in welcoming the mysteries of peace, hope, and trust, and it's an invitation that we all should accept.

Emily Gardiner Neal, Professed 1967

Emily had a successful career as a journalist, publishing over 50 articles in popular magazines such as *Look*, *Redbook*, *McCall's*, and *Reader's Digest*. However, Emily's life was changed dramatically after attending a healing service—an event that she described in her first book, *A Reporter Finds God through Spiritual Healing* (New York: Morehouse-Gorham Co, 1956). From then on, she became a lecturer and counselor on the subject of spiritual healing. In 1961 she was appointed to the Joint Commission on the Ministry of Healing, and she wrote the commission's report to the 1964 General Convention. She always resisted the label of "healer" in reference to her work and preferred to say that she was simply an "enabler of healing" or "an instrument that is used for God's healing." In 1976 after the death of her husband, Emily moved to Cincinnati, where she lived on the grounds of the Convent of the Transfiguration. She served on the staff of St. Thomas Episcopal Church as deacon, leading weekly healing services and counseling. At the Convent she also served as deacon leading a monthly healing service and counseled weekly. The Episcopal Healing Ministry Foundation was founded in her honor in 1987, and she was its first president. She died in 1989. (Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr., David Hein, *The Episcopalians* 2004, p. 262)

From Hawley Todd, TSSF, Current President of the Episcopal Healing Ministry Foundation

Where Emily and I both connected was in a deep love for Jesus. I believe that is why each of us loved Francis because in him we found a kindred soul—a human who passionately loved Jesus and who followed Jesus.

Francis embodied a fallible broken human who simply wanted to follow in the footprints of his Lord—a God with a human face—known as Jesus. We love Francis because he is human—not because he is an idolized saint. I find it interesting that many who knew Emily wanted to make her into a "holy icon"—a saint in the present day. Yet like Francis, she struggled with what it means to be human. Many knew her as a "saint." I knew her as a wonderful human who at times was very transparent and a window to "divine presence," and, at times, had all the sins and weaknesses that we all have within us. I find it interesting that people confused both Francis and Emily with the ONE they loved and embodied.

I believe Emily also was attracted to Francis because he tried to be an authentic human being and still remain loyal to the Church. Personally I have extreme difficulties with "The Church" and wonder if it has not grown far removed from anything to do with the one we call Jesus. Yet she loved the church. She also loved Mary.

Emily, as a person who works in healing, knew God as REAL and ALIVE and ACTIVE. The Holy Spirit actually touched lives and transformed people. God was not just a concept or an intellectual doctrine or a dogma of faith. God was a force that was present in our lives in the here and now. That is how both Emily and I knew/know God. And that is how Francis knew God; a real God who was and is real, incarnate, en-fleshed, active, mysterious; a God who loves and redeems us in the PRESENT.

One of the reasons Emily recommended TSSF to me is that she felt it was real. What I mean by that is that so much of Christianity is far removed from the reality of living in the moment-to-moment presence of Christ. I had no interest in being connected with any group who did not know and live a life that was fully alive in the Holy Spirit. And Francis was where I could connect with another in the tradition who had an intimate, passionate, alive connection with Jesus.

Emily also believed a rule of life and discipline were essential tools to staying open to God. TSSF offered an excellent way to do that in an intentional way. While I did become an Associate of the Convent of the Transfiguration, I am unsure if Emily was. She did live on the grounds though in her own apartment. She did a healing service there every Tuesday morning and one at St. Thomas every Monday evening for many years. The "religious life" helped her to stay focused on God.

Emily and I both are/were members of TSSF. Yet we did not worship Francis. Francis was our brother—a trusted guide and example on how one might live an authentic life as a Christ follower.

Francis used creation as a ladder to reach his beloved. [1 Cel 165, I believe] And I believe that for both Emily and myself, Francis has helped to be a ladder we have used to be with our beloved. Again for both us, it is not so much a matter of being a member of TSSF. It has been a process of becoming and transformation that TSSF has provided for us. And the goal was always God incarnate—the one called Jesus. Discovering who we are and living in integrity in the Holy Spirit.

As one nun said to me in India in the ashram from which the original Third Order Rule was taken: "If you don't experience Christ daily, why bother to call yourself a Christian?" While that seems or can be a bit harsh if used the wrong way, it does get at a truth. God is real and as accessible as each breath we take. Why settle for anything less? Why expect anything less?

The Healing Ministry: A Personal Journal by Emily Gardiner Neal (Crossroad, 1982.)

Review from the *Living Church* by Dora P. Chaplin (reprinted in the *Franciscan Times*, June 1983)

This splendid hook has been written out of the experience of many years of healing and counseling, which are still in progress.

Although it is a profound work with a deep biblical foundation, and is theologically sound, it reads like an adventure story. The author says it is “the continuation of the most exciting adventure any of us can undertake—the journey of a Christian pilgrim.”

Emily Gardiner Neal lives on the grounds of an Episcopal convent and takes part in their daily offices. The Church Year gives her journal an ordered background. At the weekly healing services in her parish church, all is done in the context of the Eucharist because the approach is both catholic and evangelical. The author works among many denominations. She was ordained to the diaconate of the Episcopal Church in 1978 and has no intentions of being ordained to the priesthood.

Prayer is inextricably bound up with healing, and it is stressed that God heals by prayer alone. We are also reminded that “salvation and healing are the same word in Greek: the entire Gospel is a healing Gospel, and the healing ministry is the Gospel in action.” Because of this, it is natural to find much teaching on the life of worship and prayer, given so well that I believe the book will become a prayer manual for many.

Spiritual direction is given through the saints and scholars of the past, and through reference to modern saints. The relationship of modern medical understanding and psychology to prayer is also shown, but no flip or sentimental answers are given. It is a mature work in which the experienced healer and the beginner will find help.

This is a joyful book, not because complete physical healing is always the result, but because the movement of the spirit in changed lives and relationships, although sometimes very slow, is a great reality. A beautiful balance is given by the quotation on page 48: “He cannot heal who has not suffered much, for only sorrow, sorrow understands.”

(Franciscan Times, review by Joanne Maynard)

Now I can tell you about this marvelous book from my own experience! I have found it to be a real “shot in the arm” for my spirit, as well as an interesting story of a period in Mrs. Neal’s life, and an instruction in the area of spiritual healing. These are actual entries from Emily’s personal journal, telling about her life, her ministry, her contacts with others, her worship, her prayer, as well as her frustrations and fears. Fears? Yes, in telling about her daughter’s frightening diagnosis (which turned out to be an error) she was afraid and struggled with it, which gave me heart, because I also have done this where my children are concerned. She tells about wonderful instant healings, and healings that took a long time and much prayer. She stresses that the most important healing is the inner healing of one’s relationships with God and other people. Do read this book, by a Franciscan tertiary. It will be a blessing to you.

From Chapter 16 in *The Healing Ministry: A Personal Journal*

October 4, Saint Francis of Assisi

This day has very special meaning for me as it is the one on which I customarily renew my annual vows as a Third Order Franciscan. The chaplain received my vows this morning at mass, and the blessing of Saint Francis, prayed over me, still rings in my ears: “The Lord bless thee and keep thee. May He show His face to thee and have mercy on thee. May He turn His countenance to thee and give thee peace. The Lord bless thee!” And so He has beyond all my deserts.

I was life-professed as a tertiary 15 years ago, as it seemed the closest I could come to the religious life to which I then felt called. Within the Franciscan “family” founded by Saint Francis in the thirteenth century, there are three orders: the first, comprised of brothers (friars) and sisters; the second, the Poor Clares of Reparation and Adoration. These are religious, living in their respective houses under the traditional vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. The Third Order, originally known as Brothers and Sisters of Penance, now simply as “tertiaries,” is composed of laypeople and clergy, married and unmarried, living in the world in the spirit of the counsels and under rule. The three orders are bound together by their common aim to make Jesus Christ known and loved everywhere, the same aim as their founder had so many centuries ago. The outstanding characteristics of all Franciscans are those preeminently exemplified by the life of Francis himself: joy, humility, and love.

Saint Francis, the *poverello* (little poor man) of Assisi, is one of the best-loved of all the saints and probably one of the least emulated. Few of us in the world today share his fervent love of Lady Poverty. We who are tertiaries are bound only to live simply and without undue extravagance.

I have derived much satisfaction in living here in what, for me, is a very Franciscan manner. However, I must admit it is not as Franciscan now as it was when I first came. The community, considering that it fit into the category of “permanent improvement,” has put in the most glorious bedroom closet for me, which runs the length of one whole wall. Curious how one’s sense of values change: no longer do I take for granted a large closet. Having been without any closet in my bedroom for so long, I now feel I am living in the lap of luxury, and am unashamedly ecstatic!

Actually, I am afraid I am not a very good Franciscan as far as poverty goes. I have one seemingly uncontrollable extravagance—buying books. There is really no excuse for this, as the convent has a large and excellent library. The trouble is, that if I like a book want to be free to mark and underline passages in it. Obviously this means I must own it.

I often think (but most especially when a newly ordered book arrives as one did today) of how, a long time ago, Father Paul told me that at the friary the brothers changed their cells (rooms) frequently. They could take with them to their new quarters only what they could carry in both hands. Anything more than this had to be disposed of. I look around a bit guiltily, as I realize that it would take a

large van to move just my books! I rationalize this by calling my books the tools with which I work. In a sense this is true, but do I need so many tools?

Saint Francis, like the majority of the great saints, was both a contemplative and an activist, a combination of gifts I wish more of us possessed. We tend to be either-or people.

Francis spent his life preaching the Gospel, making known the Lord Jesus Christ and His love, spreading the spirit of brotherhood, and serving others wherever there was a need. At the same time, he spent entire nights in contemplative prayer, the silence only occasionally broken by his cry, "My God and my all." He lived out the words of Saint Augustine, "Without God, I cannot; without me, God will not."

The key words of our lives as Christians today, as they were of Saint Francis, might well be, "I will give..." and not only of our worldly goods, but perhaps even more importantly, "of ourselves."

I often reflect on all the times I could have given more and wish that I had. And then, lest I embark on a guilt trip from which there is no return, I remember those times when I was dead-tired, and a call would come, which meant getting out of bed, dressing and driving, perhaps many miles. (Everywhere I go seems to be twenty-five miles from where I am!) I recall faces bright with gratitude, and I offer thanksgiving to God that He got me out of bed and let me go in the strength of Christ. I pray that perhaps some good was accomplished in His name and for His sake. "I will give. This is a vital part of the Gospel message and as such, of the healing ministry.

With Saint Francis, I pray this day his prayer: "Lord make me an instrument of Thy peace; where there is hate that I may bring love; where there is offence that I may bring pardon; where there is discord that I may bring union; where there is error that I may bring truth; where there is doubt that I may bring faith; where there is despair that I may bring hope; where there is darkness that I may bring light; where there is sadness that I may bring joy. O Master, make me not so much to be consoled as to console; not much to be loved as to love; not so much to be understood as understand. For it is in giving that one receives; it is in self-forgetfulness that one finds; it is in pardoning that one is pardoned; it is in dying that one finds eternal life."



Evening

Following the age-long custom of the Church, we had the blessing of animals in the chapel this afternoon. Frances, the all-American dog who belongs to one of the sisters but is in effect the "convent" dog, was first in line. Of course she has lived here a time, and knows the ropes. In fact, she often comes to the summer services in the chapel, walking through the open door and lying quietly in the sanctuary, sometimes across the feet of the chaplain. On more than one occasion, I have had to step over her to get to the altar rail. As I love dogs, it delights my heart that the sisters do not even look up when Frances comes to mass; they take it for granted.

Next in line for her blessing was Jay-Jay, a beautiful Dalmatian belonging to another of the sisters. Then came several cats followed by various and sundry other animals (including goldfish)

brought by the village children. They all behaved with splendid decorum.

"Praised be my Lord by all His creatures." "Let every creature in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and land and sea and all that is in them, Praise and exalt Him above all forever" (Saint Francis).

Another Review of Her Books from the Franciscan Times

The Healing Power of Christ. New York: Hawthorn Books, 1972. (*Franciscan Times* review, December 1972)

Although the title of the book announces that it is about healing, it also deals with how to handle suffering. This is more than just another book. Here are a few snatches of our Third Order sister's words:

"As we discover with impelling impact through the healing ministry that Christ does indeed live today, we find in Him the meaning of our lives. In our subsequent commitment to Him we find new purpose, for we know at last the reason for our being. When we say and mean, 'Thou art the Christ' we open our hearts to the love and enabling power of the living God within us. We open our hearts to the transcendent God, Who directs and rules our lives. We see His hand in all the blessings of this life, both great and small."

Her other books include: *Let Go and Let God: God Can Heal You Now* (1951), *In the Midst of Life, A Reporter Finds God through Spiritual Healing* (1963), *Father Bob and His Boys* (1963), *Where There's Smoke: The Mystery of Christian Healing. With a Foreword to the Skeptic* (1967) *The Lord is Our Healer* (1968), *The Healing power of Christ/ Dare to Live Now* (1972), *Healing Ministry* (1982), and *Celebration of Healing* (1992).

Scott Robinson, *Professed* 2001

The Dark Hills. Sacred Feet, The Interfaith/Interpersonal Intra-Tantric Publishing Imprint of Slate Branch Ashram, 2015

(*Franciscan Times* review by Jeff Gollither, Advent 2016)

A few days ago, my wife, Asha, asked me to tell her about *The Dark Hills* and my reaction to it. She's a community-oriented librarian, so we often talk about the larger significance of books. My first response was like this: "It's not easy to describe, which amounts to high praise for the writer ... I admire what he's doing ... never mind that he's a Third Order Franciscan, an Episcopalian, and an interfaith minister trained at the New Seminary in New York, with which the Cathedral of St. John the Divine had a close relationship when I worked there some years ago ... My personal bias is to like this book ... but, setting that aside, I admire his work because he is exploring ways to recover the broken relationship between our experience, on the one hand, and the purpose of spiritual teachings and practice, on the other."

This is no ordinary book, and I have no desire to review it in the usual way. That would entirely miss the point of his contribution. In keeping with what the author has actually done, I want to tell you about the book by sharing a few thoughts on the experience of reading it. What I write here will, by its very nature, be personal. Life is personal. The spiritual path is personal, and Robinson is taking the spiritual path seriously, which makes *The Dark Hills* a very interesting and compelling book, and the writer an interesting and compelling person. He has something to say that's worth reading, not because he gives "the answers," which would diminish nearly everything that he is, in fact, doing. Rather, he's finding light within, through, and beyond the darkness of the contemporary world and revealing what he sees along the way. Robinson has many gifts, talents, and roles, but one of them is surely being a teacher. All the above, in my understanding, makes him also a spiritual pathfinder. We need a lot more people like that – not to follow him, but to follow the path.

The writer speaks, now and again, about psychological depression and his struggle through it with frequent references to the help that spiritual traditions, both Eastern and Western, have provided. In this review, I would like to comment on that, knowing that many prospective readers might stumble over both (the psychological and the interfaith dimensions of his book).

First – concerning psychological depression. I was once friends with James Hillman, the wise and sometimes controversial psychotherapist and writer. James would be among the first to say that depression is a national malady, speaking of the United States as a whole. Does that mean that every American is depressed? Well, no, but there's more going on here than meets the eye, just as there's a whole lot more going on in Robinson's book than you might think at first glance. Similarly, back in the 1930s and 1940s, American cultural anthropologists, like Ruth Benedict, sometimes spoke of American culture as "paranoid." There was some truth in that too. Yet, is every American paranoid? No, of course not; and yet, something deeply depressing and paranoid has been crystallizing within our national life (and world) for some time, and we're all involved, like it or not. So, when Robinson speaks of *his* depression or former depression, I believe him and I admire his honesty, integrity, and courage in writing about it publicly. And (this is the crucial point) it would be a huge mistake to misinterpret this fact of the writer's life – "someone who has experienced depression" -- to mean that this is a "certain kind of person" and "kind of book," and draw the mistaken conclusion that if you've never experienced depression, then this book has no value or meaning for you. Let me assure you that this kind of logic illustrates precisely the broken relationship between our lived experience, on the one hand, and the purpose of spiritual teachings and practice, on the other, that the writer has so bravely taken up. *Note to the reader: I'm not actually defending Robinson here. What I'm doing is trying to remove likely obstacles for you, in the hope that you'll read what he has to say for yourself. As I said, this is an unusual, interesting, timely, and compelling book.*



Second – concerning the question of Eastern and (or *versus*) Western spiritual traditions. As some readers will probably know, I am a Franciscan, Third Order, and a recent member of Chapter, Province of the Americas. I'm an Episcopal priest. I'm also a cultural anthropologist who spent quite a bit of time living with indigenous peoples in Central America. I'm Christian; Asha is Jewish; and we have both been initiates in a yogic tradition for many years. I don't recall that we've ever seen ourselves as "being different," at least in any religious or spiritual sense. We're joined at the spiritual hip – a union of souls. So when Robinson quotes from Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, and many others of various spiritual traditions, he sees them as fellow travelers, rather than foreigners on a different path. I know what he means.

I'm bringing this to your attention because as good as the Franciscan Convocation in Minneapolis was a few years ago – an event that addressed perspectives and spiritual understandings of indigenous peoples -- my feeling is that we have a long way to go in intercultural and interfaith matters. In his own distinctive way, Robinson is a spiritual pathfinder in this regard too. I have to tell you that stories about St. Francis and Franciscan teachings play no large part in his book. Is this a problem, or should this be a reason for not reading his book or for assuming that it has limited significance for Franciscans? Definitely, no.

Let me come at this from another angle. The experience of reading *The Dark Hills* brought to mind a gift that I received, some years ago, from Lady Beverley Reeves, wife of Archbishop Sir Paul Reeves of New Zealand, who was also a leader among the Maori. A day or so after his funeral in New Zealand, Lady Reeves handed me a jade Maori pendant, called *pekapeka*, that he wore on special spiritual occasions. The *pekapeka* symbolizes the sacred bat, which, from a spiritual point of view, is understood as a superb flier through the darkness. That is what spiritual pathfinders do -- shamans, saints, and holy ones. They help us fly through the darkness.

The dove is another perfectly good symbol for the same lived experience, seen from another point of view. But let's face it, as our Celtic Christian ancestors did years ago, we (in the colonial, colonized West) have always had a bad habit of interpreting the dove in ways that are way too tame. The Celts preferred the wild goose, which seems more Franciscan to me. And so does the bat. I would imagine that St. Francis was one of the best fliers through the darkness that the Christian tradition has ever known, as was Ramakrishna in his. Are all these traditions so different? No they're not, not at a certain spiritual depth, and we need to explore that possibility soon. The darkness of the world is thick and growing thicker by the day. As the testimony of his book reveals, Robinson has some insight into what flying through the darkness involves; and for that reason alone, reading his book is important. Just don't expect a lot of dove talk – meaning no disrespect for her/him, the Spirit. Are we still stumbling over the possible gender of the Holy Spirit, rather than learning to fly spiritually? Following the Incarnation and Francis, Robinson would know that we have to get back into our bodies first, and Earth's body. This is a Brother Sun, Sister Moon place to be. So, do I see St. Francis and the spirit of Francis in Robinson's book? Definitely, yes -- not necessarily written on the pages, but between and within nearly every line.

Okay -- I've said my piece. These are difficult times, and life, God's creation and everyone and everything that's part of it are precious and sacred. That's why I hope you will read what Robinson has written. It's a very personal collection of thirty-seven relatively short chapters with titles like "Welcome to the Real World," "Make Our Lives a Blessing," "Always Be Ready to Be Surprised," and "The Pearl of Great Price." Some of the chapters have been published previously in yogic and other journals. In a way, it's a collection, but not really.

Is this a well-written book? I haven't thought of it that way, and I'll tell you why. Imagine that you're having a conversation with a friend, and it's one of those unfortunately rare, but grace-filled times when the truth of one's soul pours out like the River of Life. Darkness and light fill the room or sky with beautiful radiance. *The Dark Hills* is one of those conversations. In moments like that, we don't turn to our friend and say, "ya know, you could have said that better," as if our job is to improve (or pass judgment on) the Holy Spirit's sense of style. Episcopalians are prone to that; Franciscans, not so much. Saint Francis and especially Jesus – not a chance.