

Every Branch in Me: Essays on the Meaning of Man

This collection of essays by 18 thinkers and spiritual leaders of recent times offers a variety of perspectives on the age-old question that poses itself to each new generation: What is human life all about, and what should I do to make my life fit into this greater scheme?

The unanimous response from these writers is that human beings find their ultimate fulfillment only through spirituality.

The various essays focus on topics ranging from observations on the nature of genius, to examining the meaning and purpose of our everyday work and activities, to realizing new strength through a critical illness. Although every essay approaches the question from a different angle, each comes to the same conclusion: Human beings (and by extension whole

civilizations) can find true inner peace and wholeness only by regaining the spiritual heritage that is at the very heart of being human.

What is being said about *Every Branch in Me*?

“The sovereign purpose of this anthology, as the editor reminds us, is to reawaken a sense of man's sacred vocation and thus to immunize us against ‘the despair and nihilism which are the final outcomes of the secular and relativist ideologies of our time’ (page xi of the Introduction).

It might be said that the structure of *Every Branch in Me* is polyphonic: various melodies and motifs recur throughout, with each being inflected in new and different ways but always sustaining the central theme. The editor is to be commended on not only the selection of materials but their arrangement. Like all of the books produced by World Wisdom, this one has been meticulously and attractively produced.

Every Branch in Me is a most welcome addition to the library of perennialist works; indeed, it is the most significant anthology of its kind since *The Sword of Gnosis* appeared more than twenty-five years ago. It will return some readers to the sources from which these essays are taken while for others it will serve as an introduction to those riches which are to be found in the spiritual treasuries of the world's great religions. World Wisdom intends to publish a series of companion volumes on related themes, a development which we can await with the keenest anticipation. It is but rarely that one is able to review a book with unqualified enthusiasm—but here is one such occasion. It is the heartfelt wish of this reviewer that *Every Branch in Me* will find the widest possible audience. The contemporary world stands in the most urgent need of that timeless wisdom which these authors have sought to re-express in a way which, even in these dark and troubled times, is accessible and intelligible. In so doing they offer us some signposts along the path we must travel if we are to be true to our human vocation.”

—Dr. Harry Oldmeadow, Coordinator of Philosophy and Religious Studies in the Department of Arts, La Trobe University Bendigo, Australia. He is the author of *Traditionalism: Religion in the Light of the Perennial Philosophy*

Who are the contributors to *Every Branch in Me*?

There are 18 contributors. Here is a representative selection of contributors:

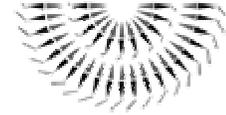
- ❖ Frithjof Schuon and Titus Burckhardt, both of whom died in the late 20th century, were leading authors of the “Perennialist” school.
- ❖ Thomas Yellowtail was the Sun Dance Chief who was largely responsible for renewing the Sun Dance religion in the Crow tribe of Montana.
- ❖ Lilian Stavelly was from an aristocratic English family in the early 20th century, and secretly wrote beautiful, mystical prose on her spiritual life.
- ❖ Seyyed Hossein Nasr is one of the world’s most authoritative voices on the inner dimensions of Islam (Sufism).
- ❖ Huston Smith is a highly respected professor and author on religion. He is probably most famous for his widely known book *The World’s Religions*.
- ❖ James Cutsinger is a university professor and scholar of traditional Christianity and a leading thinker and writer on Traditionalist/Perennialist topics today.

Who will want to read the book?

Every Branch in Me: Essays on the Meaning of Man should appeal to serious spiritual seekers of various educational backgrounds and from a variety of faiths. Some of the essays are undoubtedly ‘academic’ in style and language, while others will be accessible to almost any reader. It is likely that readers will first focus on those essays that appeal most to their individual tastes and aptitudes and then later explore other selections that will broaden their horizons. The book should speak equally to Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists—anyone who is trying to make sense of modern life and its unreal demands upon the deepest level of our shared human nature.

What are some additional publication details on the book?

- ❖ *Every Branch in Me: Essays on the Meaning of Man* is available now (September, 2002) from World Wisdom.
- ❖ The book has 368 pages.
- ❖ There is a detailed index.
- ❖ It has a suggested retail price of \$19.95.



Editor of
Every Branch in Me: Essays on the Meaning of Man

Barry C. McDonald

Barry McDonald's approach to the world's religions has been formed by a combination of academic study and first-hand contact with various sacred traditions throughout the world. In 1973 he spent six months in the Middle East, which initiated an ongoing study of the world's great religions, followed by travels to Asia, North Africa, Europe and the American West. He was closely associated with Frithjof Schuon for almost 20 years. Thomas Yellowtail, the venerable Crow medicine man and Sun Dance chief, adopted McDonald into the Crow tribe.



Mr. McDonald has edited *Every Branch in Me: Essays on The Meaning of Man*, and is in the process of editing *Seeing God Everywhere: Essays on Nature and the Sacred*, and, with Patrick Laude, *Music of the Sky: an Anthology of Sacred Poetry*, both scheduled for publication in the Fall of 2003. His poetry has appeared in such journals as *CrossCurrents*, *Sacred Web*, *Sufi*, and others.

Contributors of essays in Every Branch in Me

Kurt Almqvist was a Swedish philosopher, university professor, poet, editor and translator.

Joseph Epes Brown was a university professor and a renowned author in the field of American Indian traditions. His best-known book was *The Sacred Pipe* (1953), in which the legendary holy man Black Elk recounted to him the sacred rites of the Oglala Sioux.

Titus Burckhardt was one of the primary authors of the Traditionalist school of thought. He wrote on metaphysics, cosmology, art, architecture, alchemy, symbolism, and traditional civilization. An anthology of his work, *The Essential Titus Burckhardt*, will be published by World Wisdom for Spring 2003.

James S. Cutsinger is Professor of Theology and Religious Thought at the University of South Carolina. He has written *Advice to the Serious Seeker: Meditations on the Teaching of Frithjof Schuon* (1997), and edited both *Reclaiming the Great Tradition: Evangelicals, Catholics, and Orthodox in Dialogue* (1997) and the recent *Paths to the Heart: Sufism and the Christian East* (2002).

Gray Henry lectures and writes on the spirituality of the world's sacred traditions, and is founder and trustee of the Islamic Texts Society and former director of Quinta Essentia Publications. She currently directs Fons Vitae Press as well as being a consulting editor for the journal *Parabola*.

Brian Keeble is co-founder of Temenos Academy (a teaching organization dedicated to the arts and imagination), is the founder of Golgonooza Press (a publisher of important books on the subject of sacred art), and is the author of *Art: For Whom and For What?* (1998).

Patrick Laude is Professor of French at Georgetown University and the author of numerous articles, translations, and books on the relationship between mysticism, symbolism and literature, including his recent *The Way of Poetry: Essays on Poetics and Contemplative Transformation* (2002).

Tage Lindbom was one of the great Traditionalist writers of Sweden, often focusing on the tension between religion and modern secular ideology.

Jean-Louis Michon is a Traditionalist French scholar specializing in Islam and Sufism in North Africa. He served for years as chief advisor on UNESCO projects to preserve Morocco's cultural heritage. He has written several books, including *The Autobiography of a Moroccan Sufi, Ibn Ajibaa (1747-1809)* (2000).

Seyyed Hossein Nasr is one of the world's most recognized authorities on Islam. He is University Professor of Islamic Studies at George Washington University and the author of over 30 books and three hundred articles on topics ranging from comparative religion to traditional Islamic philosophy, cosmology, art, ecology, and mysticism. His books include *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (1966), *Knowledge and the Sacred* (the 1981 Gifford Lectures), *Sufi Essays* (1991), and *Religion and the Order of Nature* (1996).

Lord Northbourne was a frequent contributor to the influential British journal *Studies in Comparative Religion* and wrote *Religion in the Modern World* (1963) and *Looking Back on Progress* (1970).

Marco Pallis was a Traditionalist writer, translator, musician, and teacher, as well as an expert mountaineer. His writings include the popular *Peaks and Lamas* (1939), an account of his experiences in Tibet, and *A Buddhist Spectrum*, which will be republished by World Wisdom for Fall 2003.

Mark Perry is an author and translator who has contributed articles to the journals *Connaissance des Religions* and *Sophia*, and to an anthology of writings on Frithjof Schuon, *Le Dossier H: Frithjof Schuon* (2002). He has also written the recent book *On Awakening and Remembering* (2000).

Frithjof Schuon was the foremost expositor of the Perennialist perspective in the twentieth century. He is best known as a philosopher in the metaphysical current of Shankara and Plato, writing more than 25 books on metaphysical and religious themes, and publishing other books of his selected paintings and mystical poetry. His analyses of spiritual problems facing modern people and societies were unique in content and style and continue to influence a new generation of Traditionalist/Perennialist thinkers.

Huston Smith is widely regarded as one of the most accessible contemporary authorities on the religions of the world. He has served as the Thomas J. Watson Professor of Religion and Distinguished Professor (Emeritus) of Philosophy at Syracuse University. Dr. Smith's classic *The World's Religions* (1991) has been standard reading in many university comparative religion courses. In addition to his many books, his film documentaries on Hinduism, Tibetan Buddhism, and Sufism have all won international awards.

Lilian Staveley was the author of two works that reveal the spiritual insights of a mystically inclined contemplative soul: *The Golden Fountain* (World Wisdom edition, 1982), and an autobiography, *The Prodigal Returns* (1921), both written in complete anonymity from family and society in early twentieth century England.

William Stoddart is a writer, translator, and editor who served for many years as assistant editor of the journal *Studies in Comparative Religion*. He is the author of the books *Sufism: The Mystical Doctrines and Methods of Islam* (1976), *An Outline of Hinduism* (1993), and *An Outline of Buddhism* (1998). He recently edited *The Essential Titus Burckhardt*, which will be published by World Wisdom in 2003.

Thomas Yellowtail was Medicine Man and Sun Dance Chief of the Crow tribe, raised with the old timers who knew the freedom and sacred ways of the pre-reservation era. As the principal figure in the Crow-Shoshone Sun Dance religion during the last half of the 20th century and one of the last links to the pre-reservation days, he kept alive the spiritual traditions of the Crow tribe. His biography, *Yellowtail: Crow Medicine Man and Sun Dance Chief* (edited by Michael Oren Fitzgerald) was published in 1991.