Clarion Review

Poetry

Gold Beneath My Feet: The Homeward Bound Collection
Pat Gowdy
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Two Stars (out of Five)

This eclectic collection of commentary on the book of Revelation enters the realm of parables with reflective poetry and prose.

A mix of photographs, poems, and essays, Pat Gowdy's debut is a heartfelt collection. While introducing the project, the author asserts that "the Kingdom of God is at hand" and proffers a wish that his readership will accept its rewards. The pages that follow are brightened by a colorful array of photographs, most of which capture ephemeral moments in nature, from rainbows to sunsets. These cheerful images are placed in uneasy juxtaposition to his texts, which are meditations, in both prose and poetry, on the empty temptations of this world and the exceeding grandeur of the next.

Gowdy draws upon his own experiences to make his points. An early poem, "Light Beams," is prefaced by a reflection on unhappy moments in his life, times wherein he found himself too caught up in the bustle of a fractured world. But the revelation of God to him, Gowdy says, made all other worries disappear. Now he thirsts to "ride sunbeams" into the hearts of his hurting neighbors, to illumine them from the inside out with the same transcendent knowledge he benefited from.

Topically, Gowdy moves from such invitations to anticipations of the end times, projections which draw from the book of Revelation in the Bible. The final portions of Gowdy's book are devoted to brief essays in which he muses on proper living in these last of days. "Finding Treasures," an essay which centers on the industrious nature of ants, enters the realm of parables, with particular strength.

Poems trade between reflections on the gospels, with particular focus on Calvary, and appeals to Christians to reject the tumult and glitter all around them and to focus, instead, on

God's love. "There never seems … enough," Gowdy empathizes in a poem titled "Stuff," but such preoccupations with things place human beings "in the crosshairs of Satan's sights."

Indeed, Gowdy sees much evidence of Satan at work in the world, not only in the pursuit for the material but in the promises made by those in power. A late essay likens Lyndon Johnson's Great Society to the devil's work, going so far as to say that "[Satan] has raped us repeatedly and filled our minds with untruths." Such hyperbole may alienate the very readers Gowdy hopes to convince.

The glaring faux pas of his rape metaphor coupled with other missteps (from the continual misuse of "its," among other malapropisms, to the project's often errant punctuation) suggests that the book may have benefited from closer editing. Some of its early poems are pleasantly rhythmic, though many also make use of clichés ("Mine eyes have seen" is recurrent) and dubious diction (a shining, eternal light is described as "dreary").

Gowdy's tone is predominantly earnest, and his concern for those around him seems very sincere, but the end result is imperfectly persuasive. *Gold Beneath My Feet* is an enthusiastically drawn testimonial, but despite its best efforts, it may have esoteric evangelical potential.

Michelle Anne Schingler