Clarion Review

The Experience of Being Human: Talking With God
Michael Alan Paull
LLL Communications
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Three Stars (out of Five)

For author retired minister and poet Michael Alan Paull to be human is to accept oneself with all one's imperfections and become sensitive to the stirrings of desire in one's spirit that mark the urge to grow and discover oneself and the world in which one lives. The poems in the three volumes that make up the Experience of Being Human series were written over a period of time stretching from the 1970s through 2003. It was not the author's initial intention to publish them; they were for him companions through traumatic and troubling times: the end of his first marriage the accidental death of his eighteen-year-old son stressful times as the pastor of a church; and joyful times like finding new love and delighting in the presence of God.

Paull does not claim academic credentials as a poet nor does he adhere to structural or formal poetic styles rather he declares that the poems came to him "in completed form word for word with no corrections or alterations." Confessional in style they explore personal details of the writer's life and Paull invites readers to engage them while remaining open to the possibility of an encounter with their own spirit.

Talking With God the second volume in the series offers deeply felt musings on the author's path to maturity and wholeness a journey that while not devoid of suffering is nourished by faith and hope. Paull's "questions and casual conversations with God" are here marked by the sense that no matter what is happening he is secure in God's love.

The poems cover events and experiences in Paull's life from his early manhood through his growth to maturity as he tries to understand and find meaning in the events of his life. "Existence" finds the poet asking "Why is it that my existence / Seems to bring such pain to others?" "Decisions" explores how making choices leads one through doors that often have no handle on the other side that would allow one to return to a past reality. It expresses the unease often associated with having to make life choices.

Perhaps the most poignant poem in this volume "Waiting" describes Paull's anguish at circumstances that delayed his marriage to the woman he loved; "waiting for the fulfillment of

what already is…” strengthened his love and endurance.

There are many ways to read and appreciate poetry; some read for excellence in craft delighting in verbal edifices built of revered forms and structures while others may read just for the pleasure of the movement of language through mind or mouth; other readers may find a poet whose emotional make-up is like their own and allow the words to provoke pleasure or pain almost without noting whether or not the poet possess a fully developed sense of the craft. This last type of reader may take the most pleasure in the works of Paull and join with him in wrestling with the questions inherent in their own human experience.