



Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life

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A fresh way of thinking about spirituality that grows throughout life In *Falling Upward*, Fr. Richard Rohr seeks to help readers understand the tasks of the two halves of life and to show them that those who have fallen, failed, or "gone down" are the only ones who understand "up." Most of us tend to think of the second half of life as largely about getting old, dealing with health issues, and letting go of life, but the whole thesis of this book is exactly the opposite. What looks like falling down can largely be experienced as "falling upward." In fact, it is not a loss but somehow actually a gain, as we have all seen with elders who have come to their fullness.

Explains why the second half of life can and should be full of spiritual richness

Offers a new view of how spiritual growth happens? loss is gain

Richard. Rohr is a regular contributing writer for Sojourners and Tikkun magazines

This important book explores the counterintuitive message that we grow spiritually much more by doing wrong than by doing right.

Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life Details

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From Reader Review *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* for online ebook

Kevin Fuller says

Mr. Rohr does us all a service with this gem by applying Jungian thought and Joseph Campbell mythology to spirituality. By doing so, he has tapped into a deeper strata of the religious life and requested we all take the Hero's Quest with him.

Beginning with the plight of Odysseus, (love the homeric reference material) Rohr highlights that the quest will be fraught with danger and temptation and will always be an invitation to go even further than what the initial task requires. Home is where the heart is, but alas, in this earthly sphere, we may never arrive!

'The Two Halves' refers to Jung's program of life, where in the first half, we build the Ego and secure a 'living'. There is more, however to this story, and oftentimes the unconscious pushes us into terra incognito... thrusts us into an initiation of maturity, that if heeded, brings a fuller, richer energy to the Self, or the totality of the conscious Ego and unconscious Archetypes. And this journey, the journey of the Self is nothing, if not Archetypal and transpersonal.

Drawing from the great world Traditions, (not Christianity alone), Mr. Rohr effectively poses many prescient questions and even offers answers to boot.

Bill Kerwin says

As part of my continuing exploration of spiritual books in preparation for a June retirement, I decided, on the recommendation of a trusted few, to read Richard Rohr's *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*. I am glad I did.

Rohr has helped me realize that much of the impatience and frustration I have been feeling with certain trends in my profession (I am a teacher at a Catholic high school) may derive from the fact that my own path has moved beyond the institutional structures that inform and often dictate what I can accomplish. Although such structures may be of value for the integrity of the institutions themselves, and for younger teachers who are establishing their identities within it, they are of little use to those who are in the second half of life (and even less so, I suspect, for those in the last quarter of their lives, like me).

Our task in the first half of life, Rohr tells us, is to construct "the proper container" for our lives and adopt a system of rules that will keep our "container" strong enough to endure the challenges of the early years, all the while permitting the self to flower. First half folks are often obsessed with law, order, custom, tradition, correct rituals, controlling (or refusing to control) passion and pleasure, safety, and intellectual certainty.

Second-half folks who get stuck in first-half tasks—or, like me, in a first-half institution—find it difficult to continue their explorations the way the second half of life requires. For us, it is the tragic sense of life that matters, the sense that growth and redemption spring naturally from inevitable sins and necessary sorrows. It is in this—not in any nit-picky concepts of right and wrong—that we find our meaning and consolation. The container itself is no longer enough, and we begin to journey toward an ancient self with a new

homesickness, to enter into a second simplicity, to accept, with a new inner brightness, the old inescapable sadness.

There are drawbacks to *Falling Upward*. Stylistically, Rohr has little but clarity to recommend him (although that, in itself, is a great gift), and he is a little too much in the Joseph Campbell/Robert Bly mythic mode for my taste. But there is a lot of wisdom here; I have only touched the surface.

Mary Frances says

I was less than impressed with this book. I did find a few nuggets of wisdom, but as with much of Rohr's writings it seems as if he thinks his readers need simplistic explanations, and as always it's very self referential. Rohr's good thoughts are too often marred in his writings by a sense that he is not sharing a journey but lecturing to poor souls who aren't able to get his profound wisdom. And since a great deal of what he says is not profound, it get annoying. The worst section was when he presents a Thomas Merton poem to illustrate a point but then, not content to let Merton's words speak to the reader as they will, he deconstructs the poem as a "meditation" by explaining the "meaning" of the lines in his own much less evocative language. I have often garnered a bit of insight from Rohr's work , esp. His work on the enneagram, but this may be my last foray into his work.

Pauline says

"Be Not Afraid" to Fall Upward

I have given this book as a gift to somewhere between 40 and 50 people, which tells you how much I like it. It is one of the finest books I have read on the spiritual journey. I am considering using it in a spirituality and work class that I teach, even though the students are not at mid-life. I think the book addresses important concepts relevant to people of all ages, and all faiths.

I have read many of Richard Rohr's books, and this is amongst my favorites. While sometimes critical of organized religion, Father Rohr writes eloquently about how religion can be a healthy or unhealthy experience. This is not a book for people who believe that fundamentalism (of any type) is the road to salvation. Rohr is pluralistic, open, and fully engaged in all that life has to offer. Of critical importance is his message that we learn more from our crucibles in life than we do from our major successes. This book is particularly relevant during these difficult times, as it emphasizes that we must embrace all that happening in our lives--both good and bad. When I counsel students, I cite from page 6 of this book that reminds us that "Be Not Afraid" is stated 365 times in the Bible. That's worth remembering!

This review is posted at amazon.com <http://www.amazon.com/gp/cdp/member-r...>

Kate says

It has been a long time since I wrote in the margins of a book, or even underlined anything. I found myself pulling out a pen to highlight much of what Father Rohr had to say. I give away almost every book I read. But this one is a keeper. Rohr writes about the two halves of life, focusing on the second half--the half more neglected by society, but the wisdom of which is desperately needed. He explains what should, but often

doesn't happen in that first half of life; the consequences of our permanent cultural adolescence, and how we might grow beyond that adolescence into full, free, grace-filled selves.

If that sounds distinctively Christian, it is. Father Rohr is very comfortable in interfaith circles, but he has a decidedly Franciscan vein in his approach to spirituality. Hebrew and Christian scriptures pop up regularly in his prose, but in fresh, deep ways. His scholarship is also very deep, quoting everyone from Church Founders to Paul Ricoeur. He is challenging, but in a deeply personal, friendly way.

This deceptively short, little book took a long time to digest, because it is densely packed with thought-provoking spiritual gems like this one, a quote from Ken Keyes: "More suffering comes into the world by those taking offense than by those intending to give offense." Or his own "I do not think you should get rid of your sin until you have learned what it has to teach you." Pretty pithy, eh? The book is not just some quick feel-good devotional read. It's a real thought-provoker--something you can spend hours reflecting on, as I did.

Father Rohr points out, again and again, that there is a path here, through the later years of life, as age and the slings and arrows of existence take their toll, if we pay attention long enough to find the path. It can lead us home, and it can lead us into generativity and contributions to the greater good of society. Great message. Great book. I really, really liked it.

So, why did I not LOVE it? Why four stars and not five?

For someone who is basking in the uncertainties and quirks of human experience, there are some things he's a little too sure of himself about. He seems to think that people who turn out best have so-called "conservative" upbringings. Now, the conservative reader of this review may be either pumping their head up in down in fierce agreement, and the more liberal reader may be squinting in doubt right now. Being more progressive myself, I question this statement. From what follows in the book, I think he means to say, people who turn out best have consistent structure in their early lives. A family with liberal values can have just as consistent a structure as a family with conservative values. Conservative is a loaded word in this day and age, and its meaning is not at all clear anymore. He is also carried away with the "truth" of the enneagram--a system of categorizing the human personality that he has studied deeply and on which he is, by all accounts, an expert. I have no bone to pick with the usefulness of the enneagram. However, people deeply connected to theories often confuse the map of their theory for the far more nuanced and complex territory of reality. Father Rohr errs into this territory with his comments on the enneagram, useful map though it might be.

In addition, and this is my biggest bone to pick with him, he steepes the book in masculine hero tales, and then says, basically, "Ladies, you can go find your equivalent lady hero tale." Well, it's not necessarily equivalent. Women's spiritual development may look very different than men's spiritual development, as many authors have pointed out. Father Rohr could have given that more than a passing sentence and done a little more to address more than half his audience, whom, I assume, are female.

Finally, he identifies Victor Turner as a leader of the male spirituality movement. Victor Turner was not that. Victor Turner was an anthropologist--an expert in ritual process whose work was frequently appropriated by the male spirituality movement, mostly by the Joseph Campbell, mythopoetic crowd. I have nothing against that crowd crediting Victor Turner with some of their basic tenets, but he wasn't some big Male Spirituality Guru. Not a big deal. I just want Rohr to get it right.

But don't think that, because of these points, I didn't get a lot out of "Falling Upward". If you are interested in the spiritual journey from a nuanced, Christian perspective, "Falling Upward" is definitely worth a read.

Adam Shields says

A Short second reading review: I still think that this is an overall helpful book. But I was more irritated by the platitudes this read. There are wisdom all over this book. The overall theme is a good and important one. But because you sound esoteric, does not mean you are wise. There are lots of instances where I just wish he would speak clearly without so many 'wise' quotes. Some of those quotes really are helpful.

the second full review is on my blog at <http://bookwi.se/falling-upward/>

Short review: This is a book about embracing maturity. Age is not maturity, we all know immature people that are advanced in years. Rohr believes that we need to embrace the different parts of life. Our younger years are concerned with identity (what we do, who we marry, etc.). Our older years should be concerned with meaning. So if we properly understand how to mature, we live inside the structures of of life in our younger years and then we learn when to leave the structures of live in our older years.

This is in interesting book. Rohr uses the story of Odysseus as a structure for understanding maturity. He is quite fluent in modern psychology and anthropology as well as the ancient myths. Rohr believes that the ancient myths in many ways better understand how we should live.

This was the first book I received from the Amazon Vine program for purposes of review.

Full review on my blog at <http://bookwi.se/falling-upward-rohr/>

Jordan Shirkman says

If you're expecting a book about how the gospel and following Jesus lead us to maturity and into the "second half of life", this is not the book for you. That was what I expected from a Franciscan priest. Father Richard Rohr has strayed so far from orthodoxy that anything and everything—Buddhism, Islam, Zen Masters and some out-of-context teachings of Jesus—can lead us to the second half of life. In this second half, he encourages us to to fall down and get back up through our own enlightenment about what life is really all about. A fine sentiment, but ultimately an unsatisfying explanation of how that is to take place through rejecting any and all faiths in their orthodox forms and looking deep within to find our meaning.

Here's what I enjoyed about the book:

It's not age that leads us to maturity, but how we handle suffering and what we learn from those experiences. It's easy for us to be so content in the comfortable at "home" that we never venture out and thus never truly grow and understand.

His observation about Westerners not being comfortable to hold in tension truths that at first seem paradoxically but are actually congruent and trying to rush to a conclusion too quickly rings true for me personally.

There are a handful of quotes worth pondering:

“More suffering comes into the world by people taking offense than by people intending to give offense.” – Ken Keyes

“We can save ourselves a lot of distress and accusation by knowing when, where, to whom, and how to talk about spiritually mature things.”

“When we are only victorious in small things, it leaves us feeling small.”

“You learn how to recover from falling by falling.”

“We clergy have gotten ourselves into the job of ‘sin management’ instead of sin transformation.”

“Self-help...will help you only if you pay attention to life itself.”

That’s where the good abruptly stops.

Here’s what I hated about the book:

He slams orthodoxy and fundamentalism constantly and essentially rules it out as a path for growth and “enlightenment.” He views historical Christian views (and historical, orthodox views of other religions for that matter) as an obstacle rather than a path.

He uses the same quotes from the same people and examples from the same stories ad nauseam. Odysseus this and that, Lady Julian “fall...and...recover(y)...both are the mercy of God”, Carl Jung almost every chapter. It’s fine to have a favorite few authors, but he doesn’t just quote them on different topics, he uses the same quote from the same author multiple times.

His exegesis of the (admittedly many) Bible passages cited is gut-wrenchingly bad. He takes so many passages out of context and obscures the meaning or rips out a pair of verses out of the context a passage to give it whatever meaning he wants. He does this so often I can’t cite all of the examples here. The worst is when he mentions Jesus saying to let the wheat and the weeds grow together (Matthew 13:29-30) as an argument for universalism, ignoring the end of verse 30 when Jesus says to bundle up the weeds to be burned.

His use of scare quotes is unbelievable and belittles majority understanding whenever he gets a chance.

“Salvation” “heaven” and “hell” are all just made up terms that are actually connected to modern psychology. He assigns whatever meaning he wants to Jesus’s words.

Rohr tries to use exceptions to make the rule, in the case of “salvation.” He says that because there are mentally ill people, we can’t believe “any of our theories about the necessity of some kind of correct thinking as the definition of ‘salvation.’”

He puts all of “Christian Europe” at fault for entering into WWI + WWII, and implies that they shouldn’t have tolerated those wars (leaving the option of tolerating Hitler and Stalin’s destruction of millions of people). He also reminds us that the “official church” (whatever that means) doesn’t say that Hitler and Stalin are in hell (a place that is merely where we put ourselves by not growing).

Rohr can’t rectify a loving and just God. His god simply allows and accepts all things and acts (like those of Hitler and Stalin) and just wants people to grow beyond systems and orthodox religion.

Although any Bible-reading Christian from a non-cult sect would say that Jesus is the Son of God and that he died to pay for the sins of man, Rohr tells us that there is no one theology of Jesus so there can't be any true theology of Jesus.

He mocks substitutionary atonement because he built a strawman argument which completely misses what it is. He doesn't understand that Jesus didn't die *so that* God would love us, but Jesus died *because* God loves us.

He comments on the fact that many other religions do a better job of understanding God and man, yet remains a "Catholic" because of the "tools" the church gave him. Tools which apparently allowed him to deny all of that church's doctrine and still call himself a priest.

I nearly threw the book away at page 102 when he talks down at us for misunderstanding God. Although earlier Rohr commends paradoxes, when he finds one he doesn't like, he condemns it. He tells us that "If you accept a punitive notion of God...you have an absurd universe where most people on this earth end up being more loving than God." So he tells us that a loving God cannot be a just God, fully contrary to Jesus's own teachings. He goes on to say that Jesus's love is unconditional and never requires anything, except that in all of the passages he mentions Jesus loves the people and commends them for their faith in him. Rohr also pretends that Jesus never mentioned hell, although he did so more than any other person in the New Testament.

Although he does some things in humility, his hubris is frustrating and laughable at times: "The only people who do not believe that the Enneagram is true are those who do not understand it or have never used it well." So we can't believe any faith is the end all be all, but the Enneagram is?

The above list is not exhaustive. I'll summarize by saying this: It's not just that I disagree with the Rohr (which I expect to some degree with any author) it's that he pretends to write with humility yet comes across constantly with an air of superiority. He says things like, "It is very surprising to me that so many Christians who read the Scriptures do not see this" as he explains that you must leave any religion or system to truly mature since these systems and faiths are too limiting. He tells us that if our view of heaven excludes anyone (i.e. if it isn't universalism) then it is not heaven. So now Rohr gets to define heaven instead of the Creator of Heaven defining it.

This book is a mixed bag of the occasional encouraging or thought-provoking quote, but the bag is mixed mostly with garbage and I don't recommend plodding through the frustrating contradictions, statements of superiority, and New Age "look within" and reject-the-system junk that it requires to find the rare gem.

`Ashlula` Ayse says

"God hides and is found, precisely in the depths of everything....Sin is to stay on the surface of even holy things...."

"Once you touch upon the Real, there is an inner insistence that the Real, if it is the Real, has to be forever."

This book is a guide for realizing your path, shedding your excess and becoming wiser. Its definitely not

suited for most people under 40. As it states, it defines and targets the second phase of one's life; where most of the tools in your toolbox from the first phase (that were so useful in excelling in life and constructing your shell), simply won't work. This book focuses on the meaning of one's naked existence (without titles, riches, possessions); the role of evil, the difference between suffering and enduring. It's a great book if you are at a point in life where you are counting your gains and losses, and ready to dive into a new adventure behind the looking glass.

The author makes references to some of my favorite philosopher/writers like Unamuno, Pema Chodron, CG Jung and Fromm; and his thinking is inline with them. Although the author cites the Bible many times, this book is more of a philosophical approach to the meaning of existence and maturation, than just a religious reading. It goes far beyond the formative/authoritative concept of any religion, by focusing on the individual, where God actually resides.

Pearlie says

I was attracted to this book first by the title and then by the cover. And then I thought I have for myself a wonderful book when I read its introduction - it promises a lot of things I was looking for.

But alas it feels from the sky to the very depths of the underworld. I could not continue with it and stopped at Chapter 6 with 6 more chapters to go.

I was indeed looking forward to read about what it means to build a life in Christ. I did know from the start that Richard Rohr is a Catholic priest, but little did I know he is as one Amazon reviewer termed him as a "progressive Catholic". I would say that he is pluralistic more than anything.

His views about how life in reality is true and I agree with him. I also agree with him that many areas of our lives and the church needs to undergo a more radical transformation than they have. But I could not agree with his means, and his treatment of theology and Scripture. He gives statements that are blatant and I could not agree with his explanation and justification.

For example, his treatment of sin is rather light, with statements like "you cannot avoid sin...anyway". I find it too absolute - cannot...anyway. Yes, it is difficult to avoid sin, but something we can do and should strive to do.

In reference to Paul's "It is when I am weak that I am strong", he writes, "he was merely building on what he called the 'folly' of the crucifixion on Jesus." Merely?

He writes that Jesus praised faith and trust more than love. Really? Where in the Bible did he find that?

He writes, "People who know how to creatively break the rules also know why the rules were there in the first place." Excuse me?

He writes, "You must first eat the fruit of the garden, so you know what it tastes like." If he is referring to the forbidden fruit of the Garden of Eden...I really do not know how to respond to that. I suppose I can, in a tirade, but I am just rendered speechless for now.

And this is among the last ones that made me stop reading the book: he writes, "There is not one clear

theology of God, Jesus, or history presented, despite our attempt to pretend there is."

I rest my case.

Terry says

Richard Rohr is a Catholic priest and founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, NM. This book examines the arc of spiritual growth through our adult lives, using concepts from psychology and mythology to help illuminate the transitions that lead us on this spiritual journey. The sub-title, "A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life" invokes Carl Jung's idea of "two halves of life" -- the 1st where we internalize rules, discover who we are, enter a career, marriage, etc. We build the "container" of our lives in the 1st half. The "second half of life" is spent discovering what that container holds and finding that God enlarges the container with His grace. While Rohr makes it clear that deep spiritual understanding and growth isn't limited by age, the fact is that most people are in their mid-40s or later before they start on this "second journey". I have found my own concepts of God and my own spiritual needs changing and morphing in ways that have sometimes been troubling. Rohr's book has confirmed that the questions that arise with age and experience are not only a common experience, but a necessary one if we are to recapture our "true selves" before God. This spiritual journey brings freedom and a centeredness to our lives, but demands our continued personal growth. As we grow into a "second half of life spirituality", we become more loving, more inclusive, more compassionate, more introspective. Our lives more fully reflect God's grace, which allows us to more fully do His work.

Tee Minn says

I didn't actually read this book, I listened to it on CDs as told by the author with my husband. Maybe the best day of the vacation was listening to six hours of tapes on my journey home ripe with the quest to explore more in-depth spiritually. We had conversations that were new to us. Finally able to ask the right questions and free enough to risk responding openly as we see it now, knowing we are incomplete, but seeking wholeness. I love Richard's incorporation of quotes from spiritual leaders of all times, poets, anthropologists, psychologists, and "thinkers". Being a Catholic, and like Rohr less a Roman Catholic, I appreciate how he incorporates the real gems of my faith into his guide. A lot of what I have discovered, am working towards, was clarified with this wisdom. I will buy the book to mark up and reread again and again. I am encouraged that I will use my current and future "stumbling blocks" in ways that will bring me more peace.

Maybe being a grandparent and seeing parents in their later years gives me pause to ask "where do I fit in? What will yield the fruit I am to produce?" I have been doing some Falling Upwards work through Alanon and my new franciscan based church community where Rohr's "everything belongs" is a motto. His "Both/And" inclusionary philosophy is biblically referenced which strengthens my love for the pursuit of that spirit which is within us all. Being a fan of biographies, I want to read Merton, Dali Lama, Helen Keller, and others who lived a full second half life.

Being a fan of The Wizard of Oz, I love his metaphor of Dorothy coming home, but the world is all different. I have much work to do, I guess I have fallings in my future that will yield me peace, fuller acceptance and less shadows and more light.

Caroline Mathews says

I've finished reading "Falling Upward" by Fr. Rohr. Not only that but also, I am familiar with much of his research material. I've read Bourgeault's "Centering Prayer;" Chodron's "Start Where You Are;" rather much of the Jung, the Xavier, and Pearson's "Six Archetypes We Live By." When you read a Kindle edition, you don't usually find the bibliography until last. There isn't a huge option for an early thumb-through.

The index of words, some explained and others neglected, is missing Taoism, but the idea of falling upward into the second life is prominent in Chinese Taoist art. Images of Ma Yaun's "Two Sages ... Under a Plum Tree" and "Self-Portrait" by Shen Chou came into my mind quickly and quietly as I read.

Not only for the Taoist, but for the rest of us, life is change. There is the quick, constant change, particularly that shifting of fortune captured daily in Eastern culture by anyone who plays at the "I Ching;" the larger, seasonal rotation and stages of life changes (to everything, turn, turn, turn....); the heroic life's journey into self-awareness i.e. "The Odyssey" and "Monkey;" and finally, even our Western notion of retirement at age 65.

The premise of "Falling Upward" is that one must experience the downs of life's first half in order to fully comprehend, contemplate, and appreciate the ups of the second half. The ups of the second half, which may never be forthcoming, calm us into a new understanding of our impending, inevitable deaths that are not extinction at all but are instead, life everlasting.

The book is not simplistic. It is I who am cramming the whole thesis into a nutshell for the sake of time and tide – which always changing, wait for no man.

I woke up an hour ago from a sound sleep remembering my friend Mohammed who is from Cairo. His father retired several years ago. Mohammed told me that in this "second" half of life, male Muslims become contemplative and studious. The burdens of living are lifted somewhat and they can pursue the Koran and the meanings of life and death. Sure enough, the old gentleman began to spend more time outside of the city in his birth village where he also owned all the land. He read, he talked, he saw a different side of himself.

You've read some of my reviews. You know how I get about research and bibliography. You know these types of works become topic papers to me and that I begin to speed read. Yet, the thesis was a good (even if not a new) one, thought provoking, well-said, and well annotated. And the book got me thinking, didn't it? That is the sign that something is worthy of reading. It gave a new name and further meaning to a concept as old as our collective mythology and certainly well documented by the words of Jesus himself.

What sunk in was, first and foremost, that familiar line of Jesus, "Do not be afraid." Don't be afraid to think, to study, to reappraise, to act, or even to die. If the packaging will no longer hold you with your new thoughts, knowledge, ideas, and actions the book suggests you become a new package! Death? It's nothing to fear, if one is prepared to look at it through the eyes of the Master.

MG Maudlin says

I love Richard Rohr and feel he is one of the wisest and spiritually alive people I know. But I don't think he is a very good writer. He is abstract, goes off on tangents, and often requires multiple readings to connect his ideas and grasp his point. He even sounds a little smug at times in his wisdom. Still, if I was as wise, I am sure I would be much worse. There is a lot to take in and digest here about what is needed for the second stage of life and Richard is a wonderful guide. It is worth struggling through the book. Enjoy.

Glen Grunau says

This book was uncanny in clarifying many of the often confusing inner movements of my life in the past 5+ years. Could it be that I have been encountering a "falling upward" from a "first-half-of-life" into a "second half of life"? Although there is a newly acquired peace and softness that comes with this "falling" Rohr reminds us that we do not attain this second-half-of life simply as a factor of our chronological age. In fact, he speaks of how deeply saddened he is whenever he finds old folks stuck in first-half-of-life, as illustrated by how they "are still full of themselves and their absolute opinions about everything". In fact, he suggests that most people will end up stuck here . . . "unless people have done their inner work, at least some shadow work, and thereby entered into wisdom, or non-dualistic thinking".

His chapter on "The Shadowlands" invites us to confront the shadow of our persona or false self - the one that we all must spend the first-half-of-life erecting from our ego in order to survive in our world and make ourselves acceptable and loveable in the eyes of others. I was sobered by his litmus test for unfinished shadow work (work which by the way is never done, but well along the way with second-half-of-life people): "Invariably, whenever something upsets you, and you have a strong emotional reaction out of proportion to the moment, your shadow self has just been exposed . . . notice that the cock of St. Peter has just crowed!" Although there is much in this book that has given me hope, there was plenty to keep me humble, particularly as I recognize the extensive "shadow boxing" still required in my life.

It is no secret to those who know me well that I have become increasingly dis-enfranchised with my church experience in recent years. Rohr explained for me much of my dissatisfaction within this "upward falling" phenomenon. In fact, his treatment of much of organized religion, although indicting, was also quite gracious. He suggests that "most groups and institutions (including churches) are first-half-of-life structures that are necessarily concerned with identity, boundaries, self-maintenance, self-perpetuation, and self-congratulation". If we recognize this, it guards us from losing hope by having false expectations and expecting, or even demanding, what these groups cannot give. It follows, of course, that to judge or condemn these organizations is proof that we are still likely first-half-of-life people. Rohr goes on to suggest that "in the second-half-of-life, you can actually bless others in what they feel they must do, allow them to do what they must do, challenge them if they are hurting themselves or others - but you can no longer join them in the first half of life." This reflected very closely my recent ability to inwardly bless and wish my best friend success in his recent joining of our church board - the same church board that I recently left for what I now sense are many of the reasons Rohr seems to cover in this book.

Much of this falling upward has involved what Rohr calls a "necessary suffering" - to strip away some of the ego agendas that comprise so much of the "first half of life". Two of the greatest "wisdom" gifts I have been given in the last 5 years are offered by Rohr in two of his previous books - a willingness to accept necessary suffering ("Everything Belongs") and the freedom to move beyond the judging, categorizing dualistic mind into the freedom of non-dualistic thinking ("The Naked Now"). In this book, Rohr further develops these ideas, among others, to illustrate the journey into a second-half-of-life.

As usual, Richard draws heavily from the gospels to reveal how Jesus, whom Rohr calls the first non-dualistic teacher to the West, was a second-half-of-life-man who was given the unenviable task of trying to teach and reach and be understood by a largely first-half-of-life history, church, and culture. No wonder they judged, excluded, and ultimately killed him! But Rohr also draws from the world's great mythologies to illustrate how this second-half-of-life wisdom, and the pilgrimage required to attain it, is represented in the collective unconscious of humanity and illustrated in such great stories as Homer's tale The Odyssey - written 700 years before Christ! This particular emphasis on truth revealed in the stories and fables of humanity very much reminded me of the premise of another book that had a significant impact on me in years past - The Sacred Romance, by John Eldredge.

I'm not sure how much this book will be appreciated by those who have not read some of Rohr's earlier work. But for anyone willing to entertain the notion that old age does not automatically lead to wisdom, it is a provocative read.

Kasey Jueds says

I've been reading this book slowly--about a chapter every week, for the past several months--partly because I loved and wanted to savor it, partly because it's so rich that I couldn't take in too much at once. Fr. Rohr is a Franciscan priest with a particularly capacious sense of what it means to be Christian (which I'm not, but this feels like a book about Christianity that is really for everyone). He draws on Buddhism and Jungian thought as well as twelve step programs and the teachings of Jesus, and writes with a lovely and rare sort of clarity and accessibility about matters that are hard to make accessible without dumbing them down. Now that I've finished I feel I could happily start this book again from the beginning and still get so much out of it.
