

## BOOK REVIEWS



**Stephen B. Roberts and Willard W. C. Ashley Sr., eds., *Disaster Spiritual Care: Practical Clergy Responses to Community, Regional and National Tragedy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Nashville: Skylight Paths, 2017), 416 pp.**

*Disaster Spiritual Care* shows clergy, chaplains, and disaster responders how to bring heaven to hell, how to be a light in dark places, how to give hope to the broken-hearted, and how to have a resilient faith in order to survive the traumas.

Having served in most of the big disasters since 9/11, I deeply appreciate this book's distillation of the best practices from tested experts who share an abundance of practical wisdom. Those involved in disaster work will find sound advice and valuable insights on every page. Each chapter addresses a vital issue that a responder will likely face and offers real-world guidance. The book provides useful lessons that are helpful to the responder and additional material ready to use for training.

The flyleaf promises a new section on ethics in disaster spiritual care. I could not find this material until I searched the word index in the back and found "ethical considerations" on page 16. This turned out to be a reprint of guidelines from a brochure by Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster. This material struck me as an entry-level grocery list of Sunday School platitudes that I call Sunshine Ethics.

There is nothing wrong with these guidelines or Sunshine Ethics so long as there is social order, luxury of time for reflection, and adequate resources. However, take all those away and, suddenly, Sunshine Ethics will not serve you. In the disasters where I serve, social order breaks down, guns are the authority, resources become a weapon, and hope is attacked.

***Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry***

ISSN 2325-2847 (print)\* ISSN 2325-2855 (online)

\* © Copyright 2018 *Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry*  
All Rights Reserved

## BOOK REVIEWS

On those occasions, responders need a robust utilitarian model I call Midnight Ethics.

In a future edition, I hope responders will be given an ethical model such as Midnight Ethics that deals with messy real-world choices that only God should make—how to decide between very wrong and very wrong, choosing between who lives and who dies. And, I hope that the next edition will help the responder deal with the guilt, shame, and dark knowledge that surely follow.

Do I recommend *Disaster Spiritual Care*? Yes, wholeheartedly and without reservation. The rest of the book meets a very high standard of best practices and insights that have the ring of truth.

Toby Nelson  
Concord, California