

"With the eye of a poet and the heart of a saint, Christopher Martin explores a theology of love in this honest, gritty, and transcendent book."

JANISSE RAY, author of *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*

PART MEMOIR, PART ESSAY COLLECTION, PART SPIRITUAL JOURNAL, *This Gladdening Light* offers a unique perspective on the interconnectedness of universal themes—doubt and devotion, childhood and parenthood, disconnection and ecological mindfulness, anguish and empathy—all told at the level of the ground.

This much-anticipated nonfiction debut from Christopher Martin is, ultimately, a work of belonging. Through narrative prose that moves between a rain-soaked Appalachian cove, Thoreau's hut site at Walden Pond, hospital rooms in Atlanta and Cherokee County, Civil War battlefields crossed by highways, and the suburbanized, ore-red hills of Northwest Georgia, Martin paints a spirituality of the ordinary, of the creaturely world. Lyrical meditations abound with wasps enduring in derelict farm machinery, wildflowers dwelling on the rocks of Arabia Mountain, and two children—whether singing old R.E.M. songs, seeking insignificant butterflies in a roadside ditch, or simply abiding within the timbre of their mother's heartbeat—all embody an "anonymous and unknown Christ who comes in merciful hiddenness to the distraught pilgrim," as Thomas Merton wrote.

This spirituality of the ordinary cannot ignore violence and injustice—the turmoil so often dismissed by manifestations of faith that lean toward prosperity, individualistic salvation, and the otherworldly—and Martin speaks to these themes, as well. The Gospel of Mary asks its readers to follow the "child of true humanity" that exists within. *This Gladdening Light* is no map to that inner child, as no map exists. But it is certainly one path along the pilgrimage.

Christopher Martin is author of three poetry chapbooks, and his essays and poems have appeared in publications across the country. He is the founding editor of *Flycatcher*, an ecological journal, and a contributing editor at *New Southerner*, an online magazine promoting self-sufficiency, environmental stewardship, and support for local economies.

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This Gladdening Light

An Ecology of Fatherhood and Faith



CHRISTOPHER MARTIN