Books about inexplicable occurrences and improbable anomalies have a long pedigree: among the most famous are the myriad citations collected in four books by Charles Fort, published from 1919 to 1932. Nearly 100 years later, Godfrey, who has published over a dozen books on this topic, and can therefore reasonably be cited as an authority, has written another book about Things Which Shouldn’t Be So— but which, apparently are. Can we trust the evidence of our senses? Ms. Godfrey is somewhat noncommittal, but seems to think that, in most instances, we can and we should. Aren’t the stories we tell one another akin to the warning cries that animals exchange among themselves to signal predators in their midst? Ms. Godfrey speculates that they may at least be “subtly dishonest handbooks for the ‘collecting universe’,” a word with the wise admonition that “legend is not synonymous with untrue.” —Francis DiMemo

God and Love on Route 80: The Hidden Mystery of Human Connectedness
Stephen G. Post

Stephen G. Post is the best-selling author of Good Things Happen to Good People. He has taught at the University of Chicago Medical School, Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, and the Renaissance School of Medicine at Stony Brook University. His latest book, God and Love on Route 80, attempts to show how compassion improves the lives of others and explains how this can apply to everyone on the planet. God and Love on Route 80 describes episodes in Post’s trip from New Hampshire to Oregon after his graduation from prep school. The book interlaces episodes with pictures of and quotes from spiritual teachers. It gives the reader a feel for the people Post met on his journey, the towns he was in, and how he embarked upon his spiritual path regardless of obstacles.

In the prelude, the author recalls himself as a boy in New Hampshire. He never heard the voice of God, although he did dismiss the possibility. When he was young, he had a repeating dream in which he saw the light-blue image of an angel’s face and heard it say, “If you save him, you too shall live.” The boy knew that some dreams could express divine intent. He was able to understand this calling years later at the Pacific end of Interstate 80, nearly 300 miles away in Oregon. His trip there enabled him to experience synchronicity and the way it works.

The car that Post started out with broke down, so he hitched rides and made a variety of interesting people. For income, he played guitar in restaurants to earn tips. He went into a Buddhist temple for the first time and started chanting with others. He liked chanting because it gave him a sense that the boundaries between himself and others had disappeared. In his travel, Post met the author Ken Kesey while he was writing his book, Sometimes a Great Nation. In a bookstore, Post heard the poet Robert Bly read selections of his book Light around the Body.

The author purchased a Buddhist scripture, a sacred object that helps the person who possesses it to solve problems. It assisted Post in keeping someone from jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. The experience gave meaning to the words he had heard in his dream; “If you save him, you too shall live.” After his journey, Post completed his college education and went on to teach medicine and become the president of the Institute for Research on Unlimted Love. In 2016 the institute’s website was taken down and replaced with the black flag of ISIS, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. To counteract this, Post came up with the idea of the Route 80 Youth Essay Contest. It was for young people to write about their thoughts, their dreams, or what they thought encouraged them to hate and how they turned that into something positive. They shared their abilities to support the principles of religious freedom, tolerance, and love for all of humanity.

Post was invited to the United Nations Population Fund to help reflect on a sustainable and practically positive lifestyle. He spoke about the essay contest and how the ISIS hacking had inspired it. The UN had the contest winners present their essays, and the event was broadcast to 80 million young people worldwide.

This book is both enjoyable and easy to read. It shows how the writer had the courage to be adventurous and turn opposition around in order to bring God and love to the lives of others on a global level.

Marie Otte

The Art and Science of Initiation
Edited by Jedidah French and Angel Millar

What is initiation? Its fundamental meaning of “to begin” sounds straightforward, but its effects in magical or religious practices are often far more complex. This book goes argument, for instance, as to whether initiation simply confirms what candidates have already attained through their own efforts, or whether it ushers them into an entirely new state. Perhaps it can be both, with varying emphasis. If there is no element of shock or surprise, such as in the modern-day ordination of a priest, where everyone knows every step of the ritual in advance, it is more of a confirmation, although the ordinand may well still experience a change of state during the service. If it is an initiation, we learn more from the story-telling than from the weighty sermons.

And there is C.R. Dunning’s “Contemplation and Ritual Initiation,” affirming the principle of awareness as the active transformative ingredient in both ritual and initiation. “Our present concern is not about bringing something new into Masonic experience but rather about intentionally and consciously creating conditions of self-abnegation to make the most of Masonic initiation.”

Quick Dennis’s analysis points out the value of silence, of study, of reflection; in other words, not the dramatic blindfoldings and dunkings of initiation, but the consciousness that we have at our disposal to transform our inner state of being. By being present in the action, and being aware of what is happening, we act out our own initiation.

Cherry Gilchrist

Cherry Gilchrist’s latest book is The Circle of Nine: An Archetypal Journey to Awaken the Divine Feminine Within.