

BOOK REVIEW

Beyond Christianity

Frank Parkinson

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This is a brief (148pp), intelligible excursion for the non-specialist into the possibilities of a post-religion faith that enriches humanity's self-awareness today. As such it is a hopeful combination of evolutionary science and belief which offers a sense of the Divine in human existence. For those unfamiliar with this subject, it is a very good introduction. While a slim volume, the evidence and arguments are presented with a logic and perspective in line with the academic background of the author.

This worthy addition to the debate on the nature and meaning of a theocentric life in the twenty-first century finds the author taking the reader beyond the current *impasse* often experienced between Christianity, secularism and science. For those who have had enough of overbearing tradition and hierarchical top down theology, this is a very welcome breath of fresh air. He successfully de-clutters the gospel from the church in his attempt to find the God of the Prodigal Son. For as he reminds the reader, faith is about love rather than law. Faith that fails to reveal a God of love is missing the mark.

Parkinson reflects on the origins of religion and its various expressions in several different historical contexts explaining why previous systems of belief no longer serve as the spiritual guide they once were. The thoughts of radical free thinkers in the past who believed beyond the distortions of institutional belief are drawn on extensively. Here you will find Eckhart along with St John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila and Teilhard de Chardin, Thich Nhat Nanh and Karl Rahner, Bede Griffiths and Thomas Merton. Moreover, to explain the nature of belief within the development of the human being he includes a diagram of Maslow's hierarchy of needs together with one on the emergence of our universe in space and time.

The author is clear that he is covering detailed and extensive subjects with some brevity but the advantage of this is that the reader is given an overview of a complex subject unencumbered by too much detail.

The final chapters offer interesting and helpful suggestions for a Christ inspired life beyond Christianity. These rely heavily on a discussion of Entheism by which we can communicate with the primal creating force while aligning our lives with its perceived purpose.

The writing is accessible, engaging and always interesting. It is well presented and deeply thoughtful, effectively combining several disciplines in the exploration of a common cosmic spirituality.

This, Frank Parkinson's final book, is enjoyable and challenging as he offers a way to imbed the Divine in human nature in this scientific age. The reader will be enriched by the insights of a lifetime of research and reflection offered within these pages.

ANDREW CLITHEROW