



By Margaret Placentra Johnston

While over half of Americans claim to be Christian, the number of the unaffiliated has increased from 14 million in 1990 to 34 million in 2008. Insulated Christians rank atheists below criminals on their moral scale. ***Faith Beyond Belief: Stories of Good People Who Left Their Church Behind*** challenges this attitude by giving a much-needed voice to the “good” people who have left their church but whose spirituality continues to mature.

In ***Faith Beyond Belief***, Margaret Placentra Johnston correlates the work of 14 spiritual development theorists into a common thread, defining the spiritual journey as a growth process with several progressive stages. What makes her book so insightful and original is that she illustrates the process through ten real-life stories, bringing each stage to life for the general reader.

Some of these real-life accounts are by nonbelievers; others are by those among the growing numbers of the “spiritual but not religious.” The stories of the nonbelievers—including an ex-Catholic, a former Mormon and a clandestine Muslim apostate who left his community after the attacks of 9/11- show how complete confidence in human reason can lead away from literal religious interpretation, as exemplified in New Atheist writings. But, Johnston points out, while that step is a necessary one on the spiritual path, it is only intermediate. Beyond it, a person rejects human reason as the ultimate gauge of reality.

Her second set of stories are of people at this “mystic” level who can tolerate paradox, see truth and reality as multidimensional and view spiritual concepts metaphorically. They may even have returned to their original church, but now with the more evolved traits of humility, forgiveness, gratitude, acceptance and a unitive worldview in which religious differences are seen as mere details.

An optometrist, Johnston has made a career of helping people with their eyesight. Now she offers to correct blurred misconceptions on another level. ***Faith Beyond Belief*** points beyond the atheist/believer controversy wrecking such divisive havoc in our culture today. It will help doubters as well as those who are struggling to clarify their own spiritual vision to see things in a new light.

www.FaithBeyondBelief-book.com



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