

God's Defenders: What They Believe and Why They Are Wrong

By S. T. Joshi



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Committed atheist S. T. Joshi takes up this long-dormant "call to arms" in this highly acerbic critique of the religious point of view. With the aim of "combating religious mummery and obscurantism" he dissects the arguments offered by well-known apologists for various tenets of belief. Taking on both the famous intellectuals of the recent past as well as leading defenders of the supernatural today, he rigorously examines their claims and in every case finds them deficient in logic, evidence, or both. Nonetheless, he points out that despite the rather obvious fallacies of religious apologies, people continue to believe, whether from ignorance or psychological need. Accusing his fellow nonbelievers of complicity through their silence in perpetuating religious nonsense, he argues that a more vocal and vigorously asserted atheism is needed today.

In ten chapters he considers and rebuts the defenses of William James, G. K. Chesterton, T. S. Eliot, C. S. Lewis, William F. Buckley, Stephen L. Carter, Jerry Falwell, Reynolds Price, Annie Dillard, Elisabeth Knbler-Ross, Neale Donald Walsch, and Guenter Lewy. Though all of these very different people - poets, preachers, psychologists, visionaries, and writers - explain religion from utterly different perspectives, Joshi notes that they all share an underlying unwillingness or inability to answer the crucial question: Is religion true? Religion, if it is to survive, insists Joshi, must like science show that its claims are true. For over two hundred years science has been clearly demonstrating the truth of its propositions about reality, while religion has at the same time been consistently failing this test. As long as influential people continue to defend religion, it is time, says Joshi, for nonbelievers to point out -loudly and clearly - that the emperor has no clothes.



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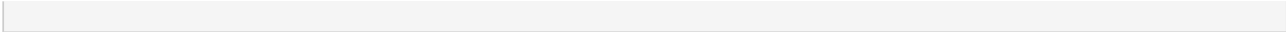
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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this biting but crude atheist manifesto, Joshi, author of *Atheism: A Reader*, laments the current lack of ridicule and derision for religious pieties in our "overly polite and deferential age." Hence these venomous essays attacking defenders of religion, including William F. Buckley (a "crippled" mind "more to be pitied than scorned"), Annie Dillard ("moony and muddle-headed"), Reynolds Price ("leave this dunce cap on"), Elizabeth Kubler-Ross ("descended from a sober scientist to an hysterical special pleader") and Neale Donald Walsch ("poor deluded fellow"). Along the way, Joshi excoriates the lapses in reasoning and evidence in such doctrines as the immortality of the soul, the benevolence of God and the authority of scripture, and underlines the incompatibility between religion and science. Far from being a foundation for public morals, he asserts, religious precepts buttress such ills as sexism and cruelty to animals and are antithetical to an enlightened society. Joshi often comments perceptively, as in an essay on William James, on the rhetorical strategies with which apologists for religion evade the challenge of science and secularism. But the book's focus on disputing religion's "truth-claims" leads to a fixation on niceties of logic-Joshi likens himself to Star Trek's skeptical Mr. Spock, and spends six bizarre pages demonstrating that there is no logical reason to oppose "the extirpation of humanity"-that ultimately seems wrongheaded. For most people, religious faith is a consolation, not a syllogism, but Joshi's frustration at this truth curdles into disdain for "the stupidity of the common people" who lack the scientific education to overcome their childhood brainwashing with religious dogma. God's defenders deserve a better critique than this misanthropic rant. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Review

"We non-believers have been taking it lying down, and what this country needs is a good hot religious war, with the pen, not the sword."

From the Inside Flap

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