



# The Book Reviewer

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AUGUST 09

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### Through the Year with Fulton Sheen: Inspirational Readings for Each Day (Spirituality)

Archbishop Fulton Sheen has inspired, entertained, and instructed millions of people who heard him preach from the pulpit. His large audience also had the pleasure of enjoying his popular radio and television shows. When he died at age eighty-four, he had authored more than seventy books.

***Through the Year With Fulton Sheen*** is a collection of inspirational readings for each day of the year. The daily selections will provide a fresh per-

spective on what it means to be Catholic. He addresses the challenge of serving God and the blessings one receives for living a grace-filled life.

Henry Dietrich, editor, selected the passages which are included in the daily inspirational readings. Many of the talks from which these readings were drawn were originally sermons for Good Friday and Holy Week. Therefore, the reader will realize that many of the meditations have an under-

lying orientation toward the Passion of Christ. Since this mystery is at the center of our redemption, remembrance of the Passion is appropriate to any season of the year.

One reviewer of the book stated, "This book is wonderful; like sitting down and having an intelligent conversation with an old friend."

*Reviewed by Pat Dalcher*

### The New Atheism by John F. Haught (Theology)

John Haught is a senior Fellow in science and religion at Georgetown University and is eminently qualified to discuss both theology and the new discoveries of science. The same cannot be said of the authors of whom he writes in this well written response to the new atheism. Daniel Dennett, Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Samuel Harris have all been busy writing popular diatribes against religion and belief in God. Professor Haught writes that they are not at all interested in reading theology or in talking to theologians, with whom they might discuss religion on a rational level. Rather they choose to

address only the most uninformed and unenlightened, the fundamentalists who take the Bible literally, and creationists, who refuse to believe in evolution. These authors "unveil religion at its absolute ugliest." Having created a straw man from their obviously absurd reading of religion, they have no difficulty in knocking down their caricature. These authors are ignorant, and have no wish to be informed, of what it is that they are rejecting. It follows that they do not understand at any depth the older generation of atheists: Nietzsche, Sartre, Camus, et al., who vividly understood that the idea that God is dead

was no laughing matter. It was, rather, the stuff of nightmares, and of anarchy.

The new atheists blithely believe that they hold the high moral ground in their outrage at the wickedness of past and present practitioners of religion: inquisitors, terrorists, and hypocrites. "Do our new atheists seriously believe that a personal God of infinite beauty and unbounded love could be gathered as cheaply as the evidence for a scientific hypothesis? Their arguments are circular, assuming that lack of evidence is evidence.

*Reviewed by Clare Dinno*



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## Inscape by Fr. George A Maloney (Spirituality)

Like John Haught, Fr. Maloney has developed a theology of the Cosmic Christ. Both of these authors follow the lead of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in accepting evolution as established fact, and in building a brilliant vision of a credible God as both the creator and lover of all that is, which agrees with recent scientific discoveries. The word “inscape” as developed by the poet and Jesuit, Gerard Manley Hopkins, refers to the intuitive understanding of the essence of all things—matter,

people, concepts, works of art, etc.. Fr. Maloney uses the term here as the intuitive understanding of God as both transcendent and immanent in all of creation. Far from negating or changing the previous theology and teachings of the Church, he shows how this fits neatly into everything, from St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, and beyond.

Recent church scholars have been too timid to accept the recent scientific discoveries of an evolving cosmos for all of

the usual reasons—they are afraid of causing scandal among the laity. The “scandal” which they foresee concerns the concept of original sin. This is a problem largely created by the Church herself, which disappears upon a more accurate reading of her own theology, and of Scripture. Once the Church can get beyond her long list of hang-ups and begin to work with science rather than against, she can return to finding God at the heart of the universe.

*Reviewed by Clare Dinno*

## Five for Sorrow, Ten for Joy by Rumer Godden (Fiction)

Rumer Godden, author of *In This House of Brede* and *Black Narcissus*, again tells a “nun story” in this 1979 novel. However, as Sr. Joan Chittister points out in her introduction to the book, protagonist Elizabeth Fanshawe is really “an icon of what it means to be a human being....”

We pick up the ragged and tangled thread of “Lise’s” life shortly after she has driven an American general into Paris upon the liberation of France. Alone, intoxicated, and caught up in the revelry of celebration, she is taken in by a charming Frenchman who gives her a home and looks after her, all the while grooming her to be one of his “girls” - a prostitute on the Rue Duchesne.

In non-linear fashion, the story of Lise’s journey from brothel madam to murderer and from prison to holy orders is told in realistic and moving vignettes which reveal human nature at its most base and at its most sublime.

The key to Lise’s conversion is her interaction, while incarcerated, with the Sisters of Béthanie, who visit the female prisoners four times a year. In fact, this order was founded in 1948 by a French priest, Père Lataste, who sought to bring hope to imprisoned women and helped them to rebuild their lives spiritually. Lise is to become one of many in this religious community that once lived lives of crime, prostitution, or drug addiction.

It is during her new life as Soeur Marie Lise du Rosaire (the rosary plays a prominent and recurring role in her life) that Lise comes to acknowledge her inability to perceive the true nature of a soul as she seeks to distance herself from one annoying, though pure, postulant who clings to her, and as she works mightily for the happiness and redemption of a beautiful, manipulative woman whose depth of depravity escapes Lise’s recognition.

Godden’s story delivers a powerful revelation of God’s compassion, mercy, and redemption to those who in true humility reach out for his transformative healing.

*Reviewed by Susan Triplett*