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Shaw's "Pioneers of modern spirituality: The neglected Anglican innovators of a 'spiritual but not religious' age" (book review)

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Book Review



Shaw J. (2018). *Pioneers of modern spirituality: The neglected Anglican innovators of a 'spiritual but not religious' age*. New York: NY. Church Publishing. 126 pp. 14.95. SBN 9780898691672.

This book was written when the author was probably working on the book *GEN Z, explained: The art of living in a Digital Age*. Instead of the present this book concentrates on the past. Dr. Shaw looks at four figures on how they saw spirituality. Two that left the church and came back and two that lived within the fringes of the church. The first four chapters are historical in nature rather than philosophical. These chapters are dedicated to Evelyn Underhill, Reginald Somerset, Percy Dearmer, and Rose McCauley. Each of the chapters have a theme, the chapter on Percy Dearmer focuses on his belief in the importance of beauty. The author talks about how he liked to color coordinate a church, to him it had a spiritual tone to it. The biographies of each character are short around 20 pages for each person. The author is also restricted by what she feels will keep in her audience, the lay person, engaged. Some of this engagement does not aid in the discussion such as all the positions a priest mentioned in the text, held. This book has the feel of free form writing, the book has direction but there is room to briefly to talk about other things the author feels important or on her mind such as the issue of female priests.

Chapter five is the important chapter where the past is melded with the present. How those of the past, their ideas and issues still need to be addressed in the present. An example would be making the church an integral part of the community such as one church that now has a post office and other amenities inside the church. Open the churches up so that people can stay the night and witness the beauty of the church while on a pilgrimage. Another idea, is a food pantry that is done at the altar to be closer to God. Not much different than the heated arguments about what a library should do to stay relevant and operationally solvent.

This book uses terminology, ideas and doctrines of worship that would be foreign to many outside the Anglican community. I would not recommend it for most academic classes/libraries, the audience of this book is not academic and the exploration is superficial. It is also too denominational specific for a public library. The copious notes are useful if you want to learn more about these four individuals. It also could be used for a book group at a local Anglican church exploring what makes a church significant to the community from a historical view with present day solutions.

Reviewer

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