



## Review Article O God, Where Are You?

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‘There is a plethora of religiosity but hardly any spirituality’, says the author, M.J. Thomas, S.J. This book, *O God, Where Are You*, is not a systematic treatment about spirituality but a collection of articles written on different occasions. But every article contains elements of genuine spirituality. The author states that the heart of Christian spirituality is sincere imitation of Jesus, not just acclamation or veneration of Jesus.

In the Introduction, he quotes Rev. Albert Nolan (of ‘*Jesus before Christianity*’ fame, who died Oct 17, 2022) at length. It is worth reproducing it here. “Many millions throughout the ages have venerated the name of Jesus, but few have understood him and fewer still have tried to put into practice what he wanted to see done. His words have been twisted and turned to mean everything, anything and nothing. His name has been used and abused to justify crimes, to frighten children, and to inspire men and women to heroic foolishness. Jesus has been frequently honoured and worshipped for what he did

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not mean than for what he did mean. The supreme irony is that some of the things he opposed most strongly in the world of his time were resurrected, preached and spread more widely throughout the world – in his name.”

Nolan continues; “In the last analysis faith is not a way of speaking or thinking, it is a way of living, and can be adequately articulated in a living praxis. To acknowledge that Jesus is Lord and Saviour is only meaningful only in so far as we try to live as he lived and order our lives according to his values. We need not theorize about Jesus, we need to reproduce him in our lives and our communities.”

### **Popularity of Spirituality Today**

We live in a world where everyone wants to become a spiritual guru and make others better. Spirituality today, unfortunately, has become part of a ‘do it yourself’ business, which gives them both profit and fame. Further, spirituality has become a catchword to lead a happy and harmonious life. It is part of our popular need to become successful and famous. In this sense, today spirituality has been tied with success, glamour, happiness and fame! Such a spirituality is linked with the rich and the powerful who are well-fed, well-educated and well-earning!

It is in this context that Fr M. J. Thomas presents a challenging book on authentic spirituality. Such an authentic spirituality, a sincere imitation of Christ, recognises that spirituality is related to psychology but not identified with it. It recognises that genuine spirituality is not to be equated with well-being, fame, wealth or success. It recognises that spirituality emerges from the down to earth living with its unavoidable pain, agony and terror. The cross of Jesus is intimately linked to the resurrection of Jesus. This is true for us, too, today.

## Elements of Genuine Spirituality

Genuine spirituality takes life seriously, recognises the injustice and pain and joys present in our world and moves to a world of meaning and significance.

The author states emphatically that direct, personal and intimate Father/son/daughter relationship with God is the most important element of genuine Christian spirituality. The article ‘My Dearest Father’ shows that such a relationship is possible and life-transforming. God is presented as one who is continuously labouring for us. There is an article on the ever fascinating nature of God. The article on ‘Contemplation’ is a help to make encounter with Jesus real and effective.

This book is a cry to find God in everything and everyone, including our own failing and sufferings. It is an earnest effort to discern God’s presence in everyone

Two articles bring out the most important elements of love, that love is unconditional and forgiving. ‘Handling Anger’ and ‘Absolution Every Night’ are very practical. Two other articles help make the celebration of the Eucharist and Confession fruitful, not a routine. The article ‘Be Responsible’ is a challenge to all. Important themes, like, who and what saves us, who gives grace, and will I be saved? are also handled. ‘Devotion to the Blessed Mother’ is a corrective to popular piety and veneration of saints.

A recurring theme in this short book is that prayer is not an end in itself nor a means to please God. According to the author, effective prayer should lead to conversion, making the praying person better and better. The final article is about making God's kingdom come, a kingdom of welfare for all.

This book is an inspiration to accept our broken and fragile lives, discern its sacredness, see its depth and meaning. In other words, this book enables us to be ‘mystics in the marketplace,’ seeing God in our ordinary experiences and natural phenomena. The author quotes the famous German theologian of the last century, Karl Rahner, SJ, “the

Christian of the future will be a mystic or nothing.” For me personally, reading the articles was a spiritual joy and stimulation.

## Conclusion

This book urges us to acknowledge our own weakness and the imperfection of the world, focusing our attention on the unconditional love of an ever active and saving God, and live as Jesus lived so that all may live in peace and prosperity. As such this book is a cry to find God in everything and everyone, including our own failing and sufferings. It is an earnest effort to discern God’s presence in everyone.

I would highly encourage all Christians to read this book, personalise it and live it so that their spirituality may be more and more genuine, making life joyful and fruitful.



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