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Is Organized Religion Our Biggest Problem?

Kansas City, MO. November 1, 2010 - Anne Rice says she's "quitting Christianity but will remain a follower of Christ". A Phoenix nun is "excommunicated" for saving a woman's life. Divisive confrontations over the building of a mosque in New York. Americans fret over the belief system of their president and a pastor of a tiny church in Florida gains worldwide renown for threatening to burn the Islamic holy book. Are we becoming preoccupied with religion?

In a country with such a longstanding tradition of keeping religious matters private, why are we seeing issues of faith headlining the news daily, while ironically, escalating numbers of Americans are abandoning their ties to formal religion and simply claiming to be "spiritual"?

A recent Pew study reveals 91% of Americans believe in God; 44% have switched religions; 71% of young Americans label themselves spiritual but not religious. The Catholic Church estimates, one third of American Catholics are lapsed. We are a nation under God it seems, but very much questioning our systems of belief. Americans are in a state of flux regarding religious affiliation.

There is undoubtedly a *collective* shifting away from formal religion to fulfill spiritual needs, but before the *individual* can make the transition, they are aided by examining what they were indoctrinated to believe in the first place.

Former daily newspaper publisher Tim O'Donnell in his book, *A View from the Back Pew, God, Religion & Our Personal Quest for Truth*, researches the core mysteries of Christianity by asking straightforward questions and reports in a plainspoken exposé that answers the questions respectfully and also narrates an entertaining and relevant personal story.

A small sample of the questions:

Where does religion come from; why are we pious? • Is one religion truer than another? • Is organized religion the only path to God? • Did Jesus intend to start a new religion; did he claim to be God? • Who really wrote the Gospels; is there any pagan influence in Christian theology? • What is the Trinity; when did it become doctrine; is it Biblical? • How does the Bible conflict over the virgin birth? • Is celibacy of the clergy scriptural; is it doctrinal; how did it come about?

A View from the Back Pew is not written for theologians or the so-called spiritual illuminati, but for ordinary people who are asking deeper questions about what they were taught to believe. Before one can venture from the safe harbor of organized religion to the open water of spirituality, it helps to become clear about the doctrines and rituals that are causing the quandary. This book helps the reader deal with the impact that religious training carries forward from the past before they embrace new ideas without the burden of guilt commonly associated with asking such questions.