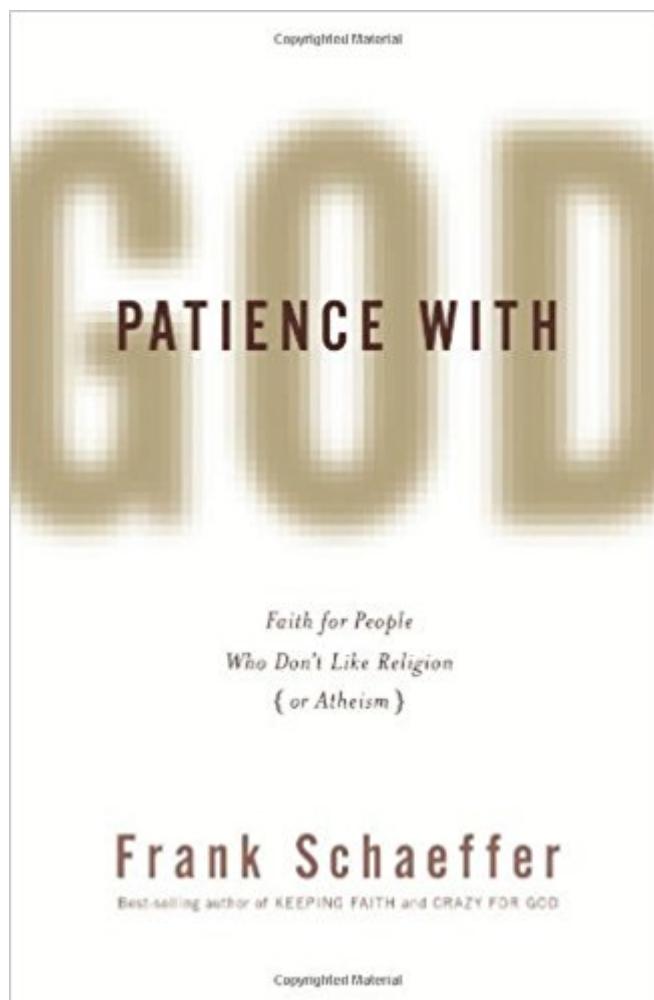


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Patience With God: Faith For People Who Don't Like Religion (or Atheism)



Synopsis

Frank Schaeffer has a problem with Dawkins, Hitchens, Harris, Dennett, and the rest of the New Atheists; the self-anointed Brights. He also has a problem with the Rick Warrens and Tim LaHayes of the world. The problem is that he doesn't see much of a difference between the two camps. As Schaeffer puts it, they often share the same fallacy: truth claims that reek of false certainties. I believe that there is an alternative that actually matches the way life is lived rather than how we usually talk about belief. Sparing no one and nothing, including himself and his fiery evangelical past, and invoking subtleties too easily ignored by the pontificators, Schaeffer adds much-needed nuance to the conversation. My writing has smoked out so many individuals who seem to be thinking about the same questions. I hope that this book will provide a meeting place for us, the scattered refugees of what I'll call The Church of Hopeful Uncertainty.

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Customer Reviews

Author Schaeffer (Keeping Faith) adopts a feisty tone in this essay about evangelical Christianity and aggressive atheism. In the first half of the book, he rebuts justifications from both sides, taking aim at the ideas of such celebrity atheists as Richard Dawkins as well as religious leaders like Rick Warren. Schaeffer asks each side to allow for an evolving religion in which allegory takes precedence over literalism. In the first half of the book, the author quotes lengthy passages from atheist writings, leaving little room for his own optimistic ideas. In the second half, he gives space for

his own memories, recalling moments that led him to a middle path of hopeful uncertainty. Growing up in a well-known evangelical family, then leaving it behind for secular Hollywood, Schaeffer learned to see the world as aesthetic and contemplative rather than scientific. By embracing mystery and love, he suggests the two movements can exist side-by-side: It is possible to buck the trend of cynicism and to believe in each other more than in the rightness of our particular ideas. (Nov.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Former evangelical Christian political agitator Schaeffer has been born yet again. This time, he has been reborn into what he calls the Church of Hopeful Uncertainty, as defined by his belief that the vast majority of people inhabit a middle ground between the two fundamentalist extremes battling one another for followers in the world today. He suffers no one who advocates a devotion so rigid as to exclude any but the staunchest. He names names but is an equal-opportunity assailant, laying into fundamentalist atheists and religious zealots alike, decrying both for inflexibility and the blatant commercialism of their enterprises. Make no mistake, Schaeffer is not proselytizing. He knows, or at least hopes, that with this book he is singing to the choir of millions fed up with or unable to commit to full-blown atheism or stiff-necked religion of any kind. His belief that faith, in God or not, ought to support and enrich one's life, not run it into the ground, strikes, he hopes, a universally appealing chord. --Donna Chavez

Frank Schaeffer believes that the "New Atheists" and "Fundamentalist Christians are ideological opposites. He argues in this book that truth claims of both camps wreak of false certainties. Does he set up "strawmen" to attack as claimed by a recent review? I don't believe he does. I believe that his criticisms of both camps are fair, informed, and much needed. Frank was once a part of the "Religious Right" and is the son of Evangelical superstar Francis Schaeffer. So he is not some ill-informed atheist making silly criticisms from afar. His nuanced criticisms of mega pastor Rick Warren and other Evangelical superstars had me agreeing out loud. I too am a former evangelical who clings to a faith in God even though I am plagued with doubt. Guys like Rick Warren and Billy Graham can never be genuine, they can never voice any doubts without being railroaded by the Evangelical community. And we know that everyone has doubts. He also argues that Evangelical fundamentalists can never truly be part of higher learning because they reach an answer before the learning. The New Atheists deride all religions and use proselytizing techniques that resemble Evangelical Christianity. Like Richard Dawkins lapel pin with a big letter "A" on it. This is to get

people to ask what the "A" stands for to get conversations started. ("A" is for atheism) He points out the strange motives of Hitchens agenda. He actually likes Daniel Dennett's writings for they seem to be most genuine. He credits Fredric Nietzsche, Charles Darwin, and Bertrand Russell with having a better grasp on spirituality than many Evangelical leaders. The Author's analogy of Fundamentalist Christians and Marine bootcamp in chapter 12 was brilliant. Frank's son John is a Marine and he was allowed to go and observe some of his bootcamp training. He saw that the harsh training was a way to get the marines ready for combat. It was for the purpose of removing selfishness from each recruit. Fundamentalist Christians need to move beyond bootcamp. Many practices in bootcamp are not repeated ever again, they serve the purpose of training the recruit. Jesus sums up life as loving God and loving thy neighbor. We don't have to believe that the world is 6000 years old, or that evolution is a ploy by the devil. We don't have to worship the bible and take every word literally. Life is a paradox that should be embraced. We don't have to have all the answers. The God of evangelicalism sets up an impossible criteria that push people away sooner or later. Many things in life do not make sense. We cannot have loss and tragedy without love, but it is a risk we take over and over again. Read this book and you may find a real faith that embraces the paradox of life and God.

This is my third book by Frank Schaeffer (son of Francis Schaeffer) in 2 months. I am so thankful for his perspective. *Crazy for God* was probably the best all around, *Sex Mom and God*, was less well written in my opinion and this one was great for trying to figure out what is realistic about faith in God. In this book he begins by telling the reader about how he can't handle Atheism. He goes through authors like Christopher Hitchens (who he doesn't like) and Daniel Dennett (who he does like). He is frustrated with most of them because he believes there is more to humanity than random chance and chemicals. He also thinks they have chosen their side and are vehemently fighting for it, ignoring all doubt and screaming louder when applicable. Second, he talks about how he can't handle his previous evangelicalism/religious right. This part hit close to home, and I'm thankful for it. He is frustrated with most of them because he believes they are blinded by the culture they are in. He says they have chosen their side and are vehemently fighting for it, ignoring all doubt and screaming louder when applicable. In the third and final part of the book, he outlines what he believes, tells a few stories from his own life. This part is great. He is Greek Orthodox now, enjoying their liturgy and the peaceful way they acknowledge the mystery that is God. He is not always sure there is a God, or at least that God is the person Christians have explained him to be. There is a lot of controversy in this book, but I would highly recommend it to the right person. As he does in all his

books, some of his rants I believe are a little over the top, but if you take the book as a whole, I think he presents a balanced picture. I also wish he would have spent a little more time in Biblical studies rather than philosophy/theology. Some of the things he says about the Bible are a little under-informed. This book was almost a 5 star for me, I think maybe it was just slightly redundant (after reading his other two) so I took it down to 4 instead of 5. That may change as I continue to process what I read.

I have read many of Schaeffer's delightful books, from his trilogy and 3 other fictional novels to "Crazy for God" and "Sex, Mom and God." According to my recollection of the latter two non-fiction books, "Patience with God" is a more serious treatise, although his tongue-in-cheek manner of writing and his frequent caustic quips are mixed in with the seriousness. Frank just can't be too serious for too long, which is what makes his books so delightful and what makes him one of my two favorite authors (the other being John Shelby Spong). I'm not sure I can differentiate the Atheists as "New Agers" or otherwise, although he attempted an explanation. Of course Schaeffer wouldn't be Schaeffer without at least a degree of fundamentalist-bashing. Having "been there, done that," I have to snicker to myself as I nod my head in agreement with his choice of stinging words. Bravo, Frank. After reading "Patience with God," I immediately looked for a more in-depth explanation of Apophatic Theology, which I had never heard of. I'm in the process of studying that now. I agree that mankind is on an evolutionary journey, and we as individuals are on a "religious" journey (for lack of a better word) journey as opposed to the evangelical belief of having been "saved" at a given moment in time. A "journey" makes more sense and gives us time to change and adapt as the need and new knowledge arises, and to grow as it were - into the fullness of God (although this isn't exactly how Schaeffer put it). All in all, a worthwhile read. I rated it 4 stars instead of 5 because some of his stories, for instance, Parris Island, boot camp and his son in the Marines were long and wordy, and to me at least seemed to be an interruption from his theme although it's his book and he can write anything he wants to; it just wasn't my reading preference.

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