

A BRIEF CHRIST BIBLIOGRAPHY

by Edward Jayne

What seems an avalanche of books regarding Christianity is available to the American public, most of them frankly inspirational. The belief in both a Christian God and Christ's unique role as the Son of God is taken for granted in these books, so the bulk of their argument consists of ethical observations useful to the Christian believer. Few of these books may be found in used-book stores, but they are available in chain bookstores, Christian bookstores, and yard sales and public library sales. A second category of Christian books, specifically devoted to theological issues, is far less accessible in the American book market. These works are justifiably treasured by Christian scholars and clergy who take a serious professional interest in the faith they can accept. But almost inevitably these books once again reflect belief in a Christian God and Christ's unique role as the Son of God.

What seems, however, to be far less accessible to the American public are books by disbelievers, authors who either reject the existence of Christ (rarely today) or who judge Christ as a misguided individual whose contribution to western civilization has been fraught with dangerous consequences. These books explore the pagan sources of Christianity as well as the dangerous excesses of Christian dogma, for example with the medieval Inquisition, the seventeenth century witchcraft trials, and the incessant warfare since the fall of Rome that has inevitably encouraged dependence on Christian belief supportive of military aggression. These books are almost totally unknown to the average layman, but they do exist, and the relatively difficult task for readers who wish to pursue the question of Christian fallibility is to find them. For their information is often highly instructive, since Christianity, like any other ideology, is seldom best explained by its proponents regarding its weaknesses. Just as dyed-in-the-wool Stalinists are not the best judges of the failure of socialism in the U.S.S.R., died-in-the-wool Christian theologians aren't the best judges of the doctrinal shortcomings that beset orthodox Christianity. Moreover, these theologians are not going to disclose the identity of authors lacking this impediment, even the few they know of. Inspirational Christian authors don't bother with the enemy, and orthodox theologians exclude them from their bibliographies. Nor can atheists, apostates and the like be found in used bookstores without a good deal of effort. And for the most part, one can only guess why, they won't be found in either public or university libraries.

Fortunately, internet book purchase services now make these unspeakable books and authors available to customers with the patience to await their inclusion on search lists. However, the question remains how exactly they can be identified in the first place? What should one be looking for? Toward easing this task, I offer a necessarily partial list of those books I have found useful. Most are skeptics, deists, agnostics, and outright atheists--some of them (for example McCabe and Robertson) both pedantic to a fault and hostile against Christianity. As indicated by coded xxx's, a few of the included authors are Christians whose expert thoroughness nevertheless makes their scholarship useful.

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xxx = useful references, but from a traditionalist Christian perspective

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