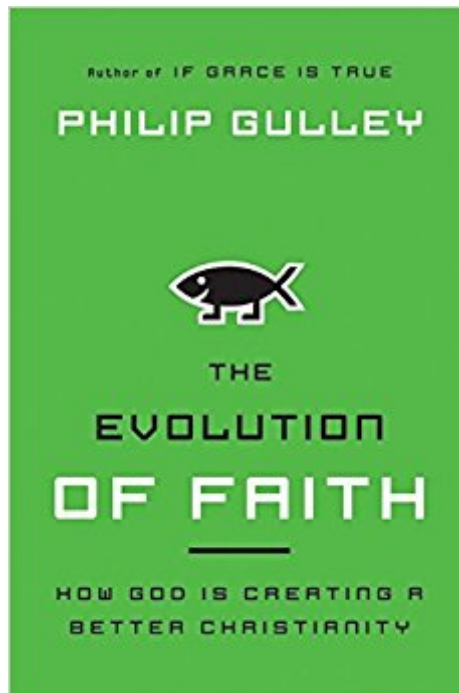




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# The Evolution Of Faith: How God Is Creating A Better Christianity



## Synopsis

"No one raises provocative questions about Christianity more kindly than Philip Gulley. "

• Diana Butler Bass, author of Christianity for the Rest of Us "Every serious Christian ought to read this book, ponder it, wrestle with it, but above all, be grateful for its presence in today's urgent conversation about what we are and are becoming as a people of God."

• Phyllis Tickle, author of The Great Emergence Renowned Quaker minister Philip Gulley, bestselling author of If the Church Were Christian, delivers a practical, insightful guide to developing a living, flexible, personal Christianity • a faith that allows you to confront the profound challenges facing every believer in today's difficult world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"No one raises provocative questions about Christianity more kindly than Philip Gulley.

• (Diana Butler Bass, author of Christianity for the Rest of Us) "In our ever changing world, Gulley's book is much needed. An important book for any person of faith."

• (Archbishop Desmond Tutu, author of Made for Goodness) "Every serious Christian ought to read this book, ponder it, wrestle with it, but above all, be grateful for its presence in today's urgent conversation about what we are and are becoming as a people of God."

• (Phyllis Tickle, author of The Great Emergence) "If I were forced to pretend to believe in God again, I would choose Philip Gulley's God: a deity who cares not whether you worship him, but how you treat other people."

• (Dan Barker, author of Godless) "The verve and clarity

of Gulley's writing underscore the welcome nature of his message to many thoughtful "unchurched" or alienated Christians. (Library Journal (starred review)) "Because of the gentle intelligence of his storytelling as much as his homely, experiential theology, he may convince many that they are progressive Christians, too." (Booklist)

For too long, American Christianity has been poisoned by a narrowness of mind and spirit, demanding we believe the implausible, affirm the absurd, and despise the different. For many, the concepts of original sin, a God who sends people to hell, and Jesus as the only path to God can no longer be stomached. Thus thoughtful people leave the church in droves, no longer willing to diminish their lives or the lives of others for the sake of faith. But what if there were another way? What if God wanted us to grow and change, both in our theology and our beliefs? In *The Evolution of Faith*, Philip Gulley invites us to put aside slavish obedience to antiquated faith claims and worldviews that no longer ring true, and discover what we really believe, rather than what we've always been taught. Instead of looking for answers outside ourselves, Gulley encourages us to develop our own apologetics, a belief system open to change. In this paradigm, faith should always be seen as a work in progress. Only when we break free from the tenets of Christianity that no longer further the faith can we create a vital and believable Christianity—a Christianity that brings out the best in us, not the worst; a Christianity at home with people of other faiths; a Christianity grateful for scientific knowledge. This is a Christianity many of us have longed for, but haven't yet found. This book is Gulley's effort to discover a Christianity we, and all the world, can live with.

Excellent book! It isn't your "traditional" faith book about how if the world would just come to Jesus that everything would be fine. Actually is kind of the opposite...I mean it is about God and spirituality, but YOU have to work for that change. Things just don't come about by asking God for them like he is Santa. Also it describes how God is love and loves everyone, of all walks of life. It brought me back closer to God. For a while I was becoming more agnostic, perhaps even athiest, I wasn't sure what to believe anymore. I live in the "Bible Belt" of the US, and this book strays a bit from what most people in the area believe (with the exception of me and a few others), I heard about this book, was intrigued, and gave it a try. Very happy I did, one of my favorite reads and I found I wasn't alone in what I believed.

The author traces his spiritual/religious personal history in depth. He is unashamed to proclaim change in his views of God, the church, ministry, and so forth. The writing is fluid; the illustrations penetrating; the teaching inspiring! I would not recommend this book to anyone who wants to hold on to the past believing it has answers for today or the future. Mind altering wisdom here. Go for it!

Mostly a good read. I did find some unevenness of his coverage of topics he chose to include in the book, skimming the surface occasionally. I share his perspective on many topics, which is probably not surprising since we have a common background. I found his acceptance of the views of others quite refreshing but was bothered by his seeming judgmental view of those struggling with addictions. Overall I enjoyed the book but after 200 pages I was ready to be done as he had covered all he had to say. If you are looking for a scholarly treatise this is not your book. Rather it is a positive view of the world, the role of religion, and how things have and should change with all religions.

Philip Gulley brings a beautiful and timely message for today's Christians. He reminds us that the original message and ethos of the Christian faith, despite what the conservative fundamentalist church would have you believe, is to live out a life of grace and mercy to others, not judgement or believing in the correct doctrine. A long-time Quaker pastor, he relates his own struggles with the church and its doctrines. He expresses his hopeful message well: that God is today building a better Christianity. A word of warning: if you are a traditionalist believer, if you believe that adherence to the correct doctrine is essential for salvation and that your faith tradition is the only one that is right, you will HATE this book. But for the rest of you, those who are willing to be a bit open-minded, I recommend this read. It is thought-provoking.

Gulley's background as an educated theologian and Quaker leader, his participation in and observation of the evolution of faith in the late 20th century and early 21st century, and his gift of folksy storytelling combine to create a very readable and insightful view of the quandries that plague today's Christians. I highly recommend it for both faithful church-goers as well as the "spiritual but not religious" who are seeking to understand how Christianity can survive and flourish in today's analytical and cynical society.

An excellent read for anyone looking for a new vision and hope for an honest approach to Christian faith. Gulley is able to present an accepting and loving view of Christian faith and doctrine that does

not require harsh judgements of those with whom we differ and may not agree. A book that could help many people take another serious look at the life of Jesus and the faith that has now become what we know as Christianity.

Wonderful conversation on Christianity, Faith, and ways of thinking. Worthy of passing on to others.

Christianity continues to change over the years. The "old time religion" doesn't cut it anymore. It is no more applicable in this day and age than your father's Oldsmobile. Scholarly study has uncovered some early understandings that can be clarified. Some of those teachings required leaps of logic that have repulsed an untold numbers of seekers. There is no requirement that we forsake our intellect to become a Christian. Philip Gulley has chosen about 10 of Christianity's stickiest issues and has given an exposition on each that unburdens them from antiquated interpretations. For example, humankind has been living under the curse of "Adam's sin". That is we are sinners before we have taken our first breath. Considering that Adam is a character in a myth, Gulley asks, why would a God who urged us to love and forgive others hold a grudge against all humanity for the sin that never happened, of one man" who, in fact, never was? In the chapter on Suffering and Evil, Gulley explains that in spite of the teaching that God is all knowing and all powerful, there is no evidence to suggest that devout Christians suffer less than non-believers. God does not intervene in the affairs of life. We cannot escape hardship and misfortune by sending more money to the TV evangelist. He states that while Christian people may not be able to avoid suffering, they might experience God's love and comfort through the ministry of a fellow sufferer. In so doing we become the answer to the prayers of another. While to many, these examples may seem heretical, even blasphemous, they are closer to the truth and remove many of the obstacles that stand in the way of honest seekers, who have been required to lay aside their intellect to accept the premises of the faith. Gulley uses narratives from his own experience to introduce his issues. To the open-minded reader, here is a fresh breath of air!

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