

# **LINCHPIN**

## **Publishing**

What some early readers are saying about  
*A View from the Back Pew: God, Religion & Our Personal Quest for Truth*

Christians throughout the ages have discovered that the Kingdom of God is within. O'Donnell's precise and unpretentious style makes his personal voyage of discovery **terrifically compelling**. The book is half spiritual autobiography, half demotic theologizing, and O'Donnell switches between halves remarkably comfortably. The autobiographical component limns a fairly faithful modern Catholic. Whacked by grade-school-teaching nuns, challenged by high-school-teaching priests, O'Donnell turned to theology and study in Rome before dropping out because of an epiphany he calls "the Deal." He met his end of the Deal by making enough in business by age 40 to retire and resume theology—for whose sake he would find out. He'd never really given theology up, of course, as chapters on all the major theological questions attest. His views won't surprise those who know of the breadth of Christian theology. Many will be dismayed by his critique of the church, though it isn't harsh or strident, and some may think that what he has become is a Quaker on low-dose steroids. **Unusually congenial and individualistic popular Christian theology.**

**Booklist**, January 1, 2011

**Entertaining and enlightening.** Tim O'Donnell's timely work presents us with a rare opportunity to delve deeply into the real issues of faith and personal spirituality. Powerful, poignant and refreshing.

Patricia Spadaro, Award Winning Author  
*Honor Yourself: The Inner Art of Giving and Receiving.*

O'Donnell carefully peels back the layers from centuries of gilded religious dogma, doctrine, rites and rituals to reveal the essence of human metaphysical spirituality independent of institutionalized religion. Part Joseph Campbell - part Eric Butterworth, while remaining uniquely his own. **His pragmatic blend of story-telling and philosophy does not criticize religion but probes, cajoles and explores it and eventually transcends it...** his circuitous journey became as entertaining as his destination was enlightening.

The book is well organized; O'Donnell patiently and methodically asks the pertinent questions befitting an investigative reporter. Never satisfied with half-truths, he digs for answers and he does not rest until he is satisfied and presents us with his own balanced, fair, and though-provoking conclusions. O'Donnell never tries to convert or evangelize his readers but he encourages them to search for what he calls our own "ascending urge" – truth and enlightenment beyond the labels and allegiances to the formal belief systems of ones heritage. **It is a satisfying journey of self-discovery, personal growth and fulfillment that leaves an indelible impression.**

Kevin O'Donnell (no relation)  
Author of *Fadó – A Memoir of Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness*

Tim O'Donnell's work, **similar to Thomas Moore's ("Care of the Soul")** is very related and accessible.

We are in the midst of a spiritual crisis, which has value if we recognize it and each begin a quest for "our" truth. **This book is a beacon of light** for those on this journey.

People are grappling with the issues addressed in *A View from the Back Pew* and it serves as a pointer to questions that need to be asked. **It is timely as many people today do not feel contained by religion and do not know where to turn;** it gives hope that we can still seek a spiritual practice as it broadens our concept of where we can go to connect with God – in a church or not, we can find meaning and connection as long as we continue to ask questions that clarify and awaken.

Cindy Stanberry, MA, MFT  
Marriage, Family and Spiritual Counselor

**I struggled with how to respond to this book**, because I don't want to come off as defensive of my tradition or the institution. **I must admit that the institution and the tradition need critique.** At the same time, while I found O'Donnell's book to be a well written and expressive of his own journey, I believe that there are important questions that need to be posed to those who have embraced this "spiritual but not religious" idea. And these questions need to be asked now while this movement is growing at an increasingly fast pace, **so fast that it is in many ways leading to the emptying out of the church that employs folks like me.** So, I do have a vested interest in this conversation.

**What we on the institutional side of things can learn here is that there is a strong sense of disappointment and frustration among the populace. The traditional institutions aren't speaking to their hearts or their minds. The question is why?** Why do people feel the need to strike out on their own? At the same time, I wonder if this new movement pushes the pendulum of institutionalism too far in the other direction, and what that will mean for people's journeys as they become less and less connected to traditions once held? These are all questions that I pose to further the conversation, and not cut it off.

Pastor Bob Cornwall  
Central Woodward Christian Church, Troy MI.

I'll admit, **I wrestled with this book a lot. But I also couldn't put it down.** You may hate his theology, or conclude he's not a "real" Christian. Or you may be comforted that even with his beliefs and questions, his faith is still intact. You may read his book as a cautionary tale of the spirituality that the church (especially the Catholic church) is producing. **But his story is addictively compelling, and kept me reading to the end.**

Reverend Matt Appling  
The Church of No People.com

I was born into a family split between Buddhists and Catholics and I questioned what O'Donnell questions and found Truth in what he wrote. **The gift *A View from the Back Pew* is the bridge it builds from dogma and doctrine to a true spiritual connection to God.**

I was engrossed in O'Donnell's personal story but the "lessons" led me to a more relevant view of religion. He does the research and delivers it in a way that gives a foundation to what I'd been feeling about the Church. **My "Aha moment" was when he broke down the Lord's Prayer with a new spiritual twist – it gave me a welcome shift.**

Phong Dao,  
Clinical Psychologist

Tim O'Donnell's book is **an enjoyable awakening to the unvarnished Truth behind our historical belief systems.** In revisiting these beliefs, you rediscover the original intentions of Jesus and the authentic Truths of other spiritual masters. **I was especially touched, being reminded to look within myself (not outside) to discover our oneness with God.** We learn our core identity; that we're all expressions of God.

Tom Jacobs  
Meditation and Yoga Instructor; former Benedictine Monk

To his credit, **O'Donnell writes humbly and without pretense**, staking no claim to theological or philosophical expertise. Rather, *A View From The Back Pew* is the story of his personal journey from "ritualistic systems of belief to a more vital connection with the intelligence that animates the universe, the essence we are trained to call God." O'Donnell **writes in an easily understood, conversational style. O'Donnell's approach makes each chapter a stand-alone resource**, but to see his full spiritual transformation, the book must be read from beginning to end. ... an enjoyable read.

Colloquim.com

The book is truly outstanding and it can be such a valuable asset for so many of us out there to move into a space of religious and spiritual maturity. **If you have ever pondered on why you believe what you believe, if you have ever thought that something doesn't add up, if you yearn for a closer relationship with and understanding of God, I strongly encourage you to pick up Tim's book.**

EvolvingBeings.com

Many Christians will scoff that this is nothing more than subjective emotionalism, but, frankly, it's not all that different from the fundamental rationale I've heard from countless other Christians (and leaders) ... **Tim just has the courage to admit that he really is the final arbiter of truth according to his worldview.**

Jason Coker  
Pastoralia.com

O'Donnell does a good job of discussing his personal spiritual quest. His stories are amusing, his tone is conversational, and he comes across as an honest, caring man. **He takes some difficult concepts and makes his view of them accessible.**

Carol's Notebook

**O'Donnell was probably one of those boys that aggravated the nuns to no end** - smart enough to see the logical flaws in some of the specifics of the Catholic dogma while interested enough in the questions of religion to persist in their pursuit... In the end, formal religion becomes a stumbling block for O'Donnell, even while the teachings of Jesus and an understanding of God are not. **I respect and honor the fact that O'Donnell calls for real questioning to be a part of our faith, even if I disagree with his final conclusions.** Ironically even some of the precepts about God that he takes to be fact were things that we examined and questioned in my Seminary education.

Random Thoughts of a Lutheran Geek.com

Ideas that are best described by **one strong word: heresy.** I state flatly that **this book should be avoided.**

Why I Am Catholic.com

In his mind, he is superior because he has reached a covenant with God, which he blatantly calls a "Deal", and thus can know God. **I don't presume to have the answers to the questions that O'Donnell asks, and answers himself, but I do ask them.**

Regular Ruminations.com

Tim O'Donnell's **A View From The Back Pew** had me from the sub-title. It drew me in even further with the first two sentences: "*Questions. Beautiful, fantastic, enlightening, and exciting!*" **I knew that I was in for a treat and I was not disappointed.** What I did not expect was that O'Donnell's book would help me to regain the sense of connection that I have been missing.

**I found myself laughing out loud** reading his descriptions of grade school taught by nuns. Children getting black eyes for asking questions at school shouldn't be funny but Tim O'Donnell makes it so. Throw in a teen-aged road trip, College in Rome and finding God within himself and **you have a book that is a little hard to put down.**

I think that part of what I most loved about this book is that **the author's conclusions were not born out of a sense of anger or any rejection of the Church, in fact quite the opposite.** It is hard to shake the feeling that all of this came from a deep sense of love and connection.

I would not recommend that you read this book if you are personally threatened by ideas that differ from what you already believe. *A View From The Back Pew* is among other things about spiritual evolution.

**It is a book that is for those who wish to question, explore and grow.**

Jenny Fraser  
Arriving at Your Own Door.com

I had heard both good and bad things about O'Donnell's book. **Some loved it; others disliked it.** Where do I fall in my thinking after reading this book? I fall somewhere in the middle, honestly.

Reviews by Molly

I really enjoyed how he got me thinking about my relationship with God. **He got me questioning and pondering.** And Tim asks lots of questions (which in turn made me look inward more)! I loved the last chapter in the book, Practicing Oneness. The chapter opens with these questions: "Why am I here?" "What is my purpose?" "Where am I going?" Ohhhh...I eat up questions like that. They make you stop and look at your life (it's not always pretty or easy). **I think this is a great book for anyone who questions their faith and may even disagree with some of the dogma.**

ConstantlyEvolving.com

**Every once in awhile a book comes along that really makes me think.** Like *really* think. I love when that happens. *A View From The Back Pew*, by Tim O'Donnell, is such a book.

*A View From The Back Pew* is a wonderful and thought provoking blend of the history of Christianity and Tim's own spiritual quest. The discourse on Christianity is factual; the stories of his spiritual quest are **delightfully inspirational.**

Silver&Grace.com

*A View From The Back Pew* was a very thought provoking book and one that justified some of my own feelings about the church & religion in making me feel not so alone for questioning. I felt as if O'Donnell was sitting across from me having a discussion. This is one of those books I'll go back through and re-read again just to pick up anything I might have missed.

The Book Faery.com

*A View from the Back Pew* is very much in tune with my own search for truth and the doubts I've had about my religion; the questions are much better defined than they had been in my own mind. **Tim O'Donnell has done the research and articulated many issues** for me, which was exciting - even liberating.

O'Donnell's transformation was gradual and a result of a deliberative, thoughtful process. He extracted meaning from his own experiences, he pondered, studied and shares some specific conclusions. **It is not shrill, preachy or intolerant of religion** and it is surprisingly not anti-Catholic. (I thought after the first chapter, it was headed in that direction.)

O'Donnell doesn't blame religion as an impediment, but the emphasis is on the gift of the discovery, it's not a roast of the hurdles he overcame to find his way. He conveys a feeling of happiness and peace with what he learned and offers it to the reader to consider.

**He's acted affirmatively to discover God and the reader is helped in his own search by going along for the ride.**

Mike Salvi, Esq.

A fun and comforting read for those that have questions surrounding the history and mystery of the world's largest religion. In a sincere and un-offensive manner, O'Donnell presents **an informative personal journey that is a soothing salve for the intellectually dissatisfied spiritual seeker.**

It is certainly thought provoking and **sure to encourage discussion.** The author's story of his two fold path to spiritual reconciliation and the American dream really **had me asking if his purpose is indeed divinely inspired.** He was able to **address some very controversial questions in a refreshing way that departs from the overly critical rhetoric that often comes with modern religious examinations....**will provide some much needed insight to people who are turned off by the Church....pleasantly enlightening

Brady (review from Amazon.com)