



Concepts: A ProtoTheist Quest for Science-Minded Skeptics

Paul Dehn Carleton

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Why is belief in God so common? This book is a search for the source of such beliefs, for the roots of theism, termed prototheism. Prototheism is a science of religion, not a religion. Its notion is that theistic belief is an age-old misconception of an Urge to Life which emerges naturally from deep in humans. This Life Urge is innate in all Life. But in us humans it emerges into consciousness where, rather than being owned as inherent in human nature, it is more often experienced as 'faith' and projected out onto gods/God.

The book first looks at how belief in gods may have originated in early humans and evolved into the Greco-Roman religion which dominated the Mediterranean world when Christianity began. The book then suggests how Christianity itself came to dominate the western world. Next it examines the Concepts Christians used back then to explain their world, versus the Concepts that have gained acceptance in just the past few centuries to explain our world today. The book does this by going back to beginnings — of the Universe, of Earth, of Life, of animals and of humans — to trace evolution's trajectory. Then it surveys what has been learned about brains and consciousness in the past century.

With that updated perspective, the book takes a fresh look at 'religion' — at how belief in gods/God 'out there' might be reinterpreted as a Life Urge that emerges spontaneously in humans and at how a rapport with one's Life Urge might be fostered. And also from that perspective, the book looks at our runaway material culture and suggests a prototheistic ethic consistent with and supportive of evolution's trajectory, as we perceive it.

Throughout, but especially at the outset, the book tries to be sensitive to how theistic beliefs were instilled in most of us and may still linger in the ways we think and conceptualize our world. It suggests ways the reader might 'rewire their brain' in making this often arduous paradigm shift. Although addressed to Christians, appendixes speak to Jews and Muslims.

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