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Von Anne Robertson

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BLOWING the LID OFF the GOD-BOX

Opening up to a Limitless Faith

Anne Robertson



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to stay put... Von Fr Kurt Messick Anne Robertson, a United Methodist minister in New England, writes, 'There are few things more upsetting than a God who refuses to stay put...' Anne Robertson gives a wonderful, personal development of the idea of God being bigger and broader than one can possibly imagine. I've often used the example in my preaching that God is more than any idea we could ever have of God; this is rather difficult for many people to grasp, but Robertson has a wonderful way of exploring this aspect of God. It can be challenging and disconcerting, because it is far from the norm in our everyday, quantifiable and measurable world. The modern world is uncomfortable with ambiguity, and often terrified of the unknown. Speaking of the women who went to the tomb on the first Easter morning, Robertson writes, 'The very thing that frightened the women - the unknown and the unexpected - is that same thing that frightens us today when we consider that God might be larger and more complex than our particular experience of God.' Robertson does her writing in confessional style (this is a literary/theological designation, rather than a penitential or 'just-the-facts, ma'am' kind of admission of guilt); she goes through her experiences both conservative and liberal, both within and outside the church, and casts her ideas for God's reality and God's presence with us in terms that many readers will find very familiar and easy to relate to. Her central cipher is that of the God-box. A box is a container (even when it is empty). Most of us (if not all of us) have a container of sorts, into which we pour our ideas of what and who God is. Even professional theologians (or perhaps most especially professional systematic theologians) do not escape the trap of trying to define God so precisely as to render God less than who God truly is, and can be. One crucial element Robertson identifies for the God-box is keeping it open in the context of community - what is in the box needs to be valuable and recognised as such by members of the community, and what other community members have in their God-boxes can be shared and used to enrich one's own. Careful not to make community a panacea for all ills, she nonetheless highlights the advantages, and shows the disadvantages of the 'go-it-alone' approach. The book continues with a look at common and uncommon images of God, the way in which we think about God both in scripture and tradition, the use and misuse of institutional religion and community, and finishes with a chapter that develops her device of the God-box in context of creedal statements familiar to many Christians through the centuries. This is a wonderful book to use for private and group study. Well-written and engaging both personally and spiritually, it is uplifting and thought-provoking in many ways.

Kurzbeschreibung Whats in your God-box? Each of us, says author Anne Robertson, builds our own way of understanding God our God-box-- and fills it up with bits of scripture, wisdom, and our experiences of God at work in our lives. Its a perfectly good way to puzzle out what God means to us. Encountering God through our human limitations, we learn something about the meaning of Incarnation. But to say that our experience of God is the only valid one is to put a lid on the box and create an idol. This book is about examining our God-boxes and bursting them wide open. Blowing the Lid Off the God-Box starts with the ministry of Jesus who blew the lid off everyones God-box by constantly challenging his followers with the unexpected. Subsequent chapters examine the God-boxes we create with scripture, worship, and political and social agendas. In a world marked by extremism on both the right and left, the author calls readers to spiritual balance as they learn to integrate others experiences of God, rather than insisting on their own. Anne Robertson is a United Methodist minister who leads a parish in Dover, New Hampshire. Active in the New England Conference of the United Methodist Church, she is a regular columnist for Zions Herald, a national publication.

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