

What's New in the Chapel Collection?

Spirited Readings Series Review

From the Adoration Chapel Librarian



Heaven- The Heart's Deepest Longing by Peter Kreeft
Ignatius Press-Expanded Edition

A quick survey of the table of contents of Kreeft's book produces a gold mine of intriguing sub-chapter titles that signal the intensity of his hope for the reader: a personal examination of 'Why am I here and where am I going?' Classical Roman philosophy employed the question 'Quo Vadis' in addressing this ultimate self-interrogation, but the modern soul also yearns for its own question to be answered, 'What do I really want?' The 'want' is not for material goods, fame or even power. It is a need for belonging- a belonging that possesses an eternal quality.

A careful reading provides a tight review of Western and Eastern philosophical principles from Heidegger, Bacon, Augustine and Kreeft's favorite, C.S. Lewis to the teachings of Buddha, Hinduism and the Prophet Mohamed. Page by page, Dr. Kreeft puts our mental feet on a road of discovery, a quest for heart and soul. In the first chapter he poses the blockbuster question, "What do we want? A political savior? A superstar? A superman? If so, Jesus is not our answer. He does not fit our expectations...Our hearts are too small for him. He gives us more than we want so we can want what he gives us. Is it perhaps a new birth, a new being that we want? Divine life?" Under the repressive Roman yoke, the Jews prayed for their own divine superman to free them with fire and sword, but instead a carpenter's son from Nazareth showed up preaching love and forgiveness. This Jesus stirred up the populace and this belly fire is still with us. Kreeft quotes St. Augustine, "Thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee."

Kreeft suggests that there is risk in this quest. While digging deep into the longing of mankind, an internal abyss may present itself. "The first American Indian to see the Grand

Canyon, according to the legend, tied himself to a tree in terror. We tie ourselves to our little external worlds because we are terrified of our inner Grand Canyon, our abyss.” Yet, those who possess the courage to explore will follow a golden trail of short treatises to enrich the heart. Kreeft begins with “The History of Hope” and then continues to nourish his spelunkers with the intriguing “Alienation: Our Greatest Blessing” to “What Does Heaven Mean to Me?” Through this challenging mental quest, Dr. Kreeft assures us that the way is not lost. We do seek Christ and we do long for his peace. In seeking Jesus we discover that our need is our hope. This hope is then translated into our lives and is active in our love for one another.

Of course, the quest is not easy. Many become mired and confused, but Dr. Kreeft’s book is an outline of the footprints others have made as we tread the path and leave our own. Christ’s example, his words in Scripture, and the great thinkers of the church offer all the support and inspiration needed. The French mathematician Pascal condensed the results of treading the path. “There are only three sorts of people: those who have found God and serve him; those who are busy seeking him and have not found him; those who live without either seeking or finding him. The first are reasonable and happy, the last are foolish and unhappy, those in the middle are unhappy and reasonable.” There lies the divide. Still, there is always the continuing hope in God’s mercy. C.S. Lewis reminds us that “the hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men, and his compulsion is our liberation.”

To some the eternity of heaven and its unity with the Almighty may be like that first look at the Grand Canyon—awesome and frightening. Dr. Kreeft’s book provides a solid pathway paved with scriptural stones. No tree is needed to desperately anchor us to earth if we believe heaven is our home.

Dr. Kreeft is a Catholic theologian and professor of philosophy at King’s College and Boston College. His latest book is entitled **Jesus Shock**.

