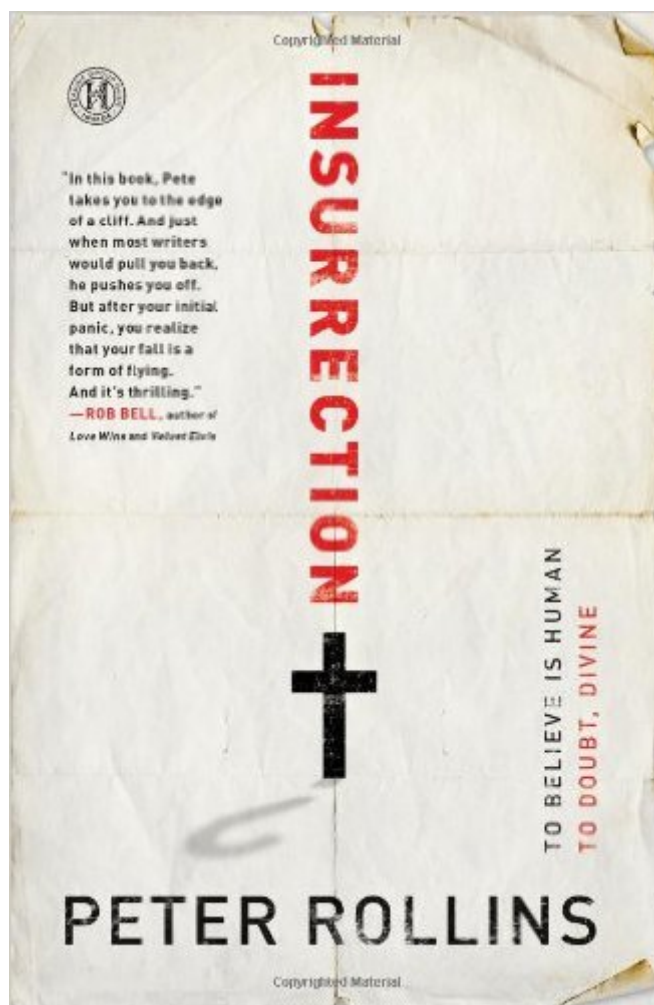


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# Insurrection: To Believe Is Human To Doubt, Divine



## Synopsis

In this incendiary new work, the controversial author and speaker Peter Rollins proclaims that the Christian faith is not primarily concerned with questions regarding life after death but with the possibility of life before death. In order to unearth this truth, Rollins prescribes a radical and wholesale critique of contemporary Christianity that he calls pyro-theology. It is only as we submit our spiritual practices, religious rituals, and dogmatic affirmations to the flames of fearless interrogation that we come into contact with the reality that Christianity is in the business of transforming our world rather than offering a way of interpreting or escaping it. Belief in the Resurrection means but one thing: Participation in an Insurrection. "What Pete does in this book is take you to the edge of a cliff where you can see how high you are and how far you would fall if you lost your footing. And just when most writers would kindly pull you back from edge, he pushes you off, and you find yourself without any solid footing, disoriented, and in a bit of a panicâuntil you realize that your fall is in fact, a form of flying. And it's thrilling." --Rob Bell, author of *Love Wins* and *Velvet Elvis* "While others labor to save the Church as they know it, Peter Rollins takes an ax to the roots of the tree. Those who have enjoyed its shade will want to stop him, but his strokes are so clean and true that his motive soon becomes clear: this man trusts the way of death and resurrection so much that he has become fearless of religion." --Barbara Brown Taylor, author of *Leaving Church* and *An Altar in the World* "Rollins writes and thinks like a new Bonhoeffer, crucifying the trappings of religion in order to lay bare a radical, religionless and insurrectional Christianity. A brilliant new voiceâan activist, a storyteller and a theologian all in oneâand not a moment too soon." --John D. Caputo, Thomas J. Watson Professor of Religion Emeritus, Syracuse University "What does it mean when the Son of God cries out, 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me'?" Brilliantly, candidly, and faithfully, Rollins wrestles here with that question. You may not agree with his answers and conclusions, but you owe it to yourself and to the Church at large to read what he says." --Phyllis Tickle, author, *The Great Emergence* "Excellent thinking and excellent writing! I hope this fine book receives the broad reading it deserves. It will change lives, and our understanding of what religion is all about!" --Rohr, O.F.M., Center for Action and Contemplation; Albuquerque, New Mexico

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is an off-the-top-of-my-head review of Peter Rollins newest book "Insurrection", which I read this weekend. The book was incredibly good, in that I deeply enjoyed reading it, and it gave me a great deal to ponder and wrestle with. At the end of the day, I value Rollins' ideas about how to existentially live out our faith in Christ on a daily basis. However, I have serious concerns over Rollins' re-visioning and re-definition of key elements of the Christian tradition. As such, Rollins is a sort of "frenemy" who, on one hand is a very helpful friend in elucidating certain aspects of what it means to follow Jesus in our culture. On the other hand, he is an enemy of certain historic Christian affirmations about God and Christ. As a "frenemy" of Christ, Rollins maintains a place for God, at the cost of flattening God into just a Name for the structure of human psychological experience. As such, his thought is helpful as a bridge to Christ, in the same way that pantheism, panentheism, psychoanalysis and even Marxism can be bridges to Christ, all of which offer various points of commonality and intersection with Christ while also displaying broad areas of discordance. Here are some of the theological moves that Rollins makes in the book: His key theological code-words are God, Truth, Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection. He does not seem to mind if these ideas are given "historic" content as things that happened in space time and which are cognitively affirmed as such. But for Rollins this affirmation is irrelevant, usually distracting, and simply meaningless for the postmodern person. Rather, their true meaning and relevance comes from their identity as descriptions of human experience.

I read a lot of books on theology. I generally only review the ones I like. For example, I read (most of) *The End of Religion: Encountering the Subversive Spirituality of Jesus* and found it not nearly subversive enough- along with a few other books I haven't even bothered to finish. Rob Bell's *Love Wins* (reviewed here) was supposed to be so controversial (snore). So, when I got Peter Rollins'

book with a quote from Rob Bell on the cover as to how it was supposed to push me off the edge of a cliff I wasn't exactly shaking in my boots. This, though is probably one of the three most dangerous books I have ever read, ranking right up there with Pagan Christianity and How to Quit Church Without Quitting God. Right there in the introduction Peter introduces us to the idea of pyro-theology, burning away the rot to reveal that which cannot be destroyed. Peter immediately sets the place on fire by saying that having faith in the god of religion is not a divine characteristic but a human one. We all naturally desire someone to love us unconditionally, someone to watch over us and make sure that everything is all right and that we make ourselves believe in this god. This claim may sound familiar- as atheists have been saying it for decades. What is surprising is hearing this come from a Christian author- in his opening chapter. The first thing he challenges us to do is to unplug from this God of religion and open ourselves up to doubt and unknowing. The central theme of the first part of the book is that the crucifixion is a (the?) defining moment in the life of Jesus. Taking part in Jesus' crucifixion is not the abandoning of everything for religion or for God. Taking part in the crucifixion is the abandoning of everything, including God and the certainty and comfort that provides us.

Insurrection is a work that seems to make a great deal of effort in joining great theological minds such as Bonhoeffer and Augustine, and touts an impressive on-cover review by an author I consider to be a brilliant modern leader of the Church. But where other notable theologians have been powerful, controversial, and inspiring, Rollins seems to miss, being overly vague instead of poignant, presumptuous instead of observant, and passionate instead of scriptural. The entire book revolves around his theology of the cross, particularly the moment that Jesus cries out "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" He adds that "The cross is the moment when we join with Christ in crying out 'Why have you forsaken me?' " I would reply that the cross is the moment that Christ endured a suffering on our behalf, as a ransom for many (Mark 10:46). Then there is Rollin's most controversial concept: Jesus' cry of abandonment is "a profoundly personal, painful, and existential atheism. (ch.2)" Are we to presume then, as Jesus is dropping hints in the temple cleansing (Jn. 2:19), intentionally dismissing Judas to sell him out (Jn. 13:27), and sweating blood while praying (Lk. 22:44), that he was unaware of the implications of the death (or in his words, glorification - Jn. 17) that he was about to undergo? Was he unaware of its spiritual, eternal, salvational significance? I know it seems remarkably tolerant and new-agey to identify a moment of disbelief of God in His own son, but truth and shock-value are not always the same. Not even in the Bible. This book is not without some meritorious assertions, and I appreciate anyone who will admit that the church cannot

make their "personal Jesus" into a security blanket from their doubts. In ch.

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