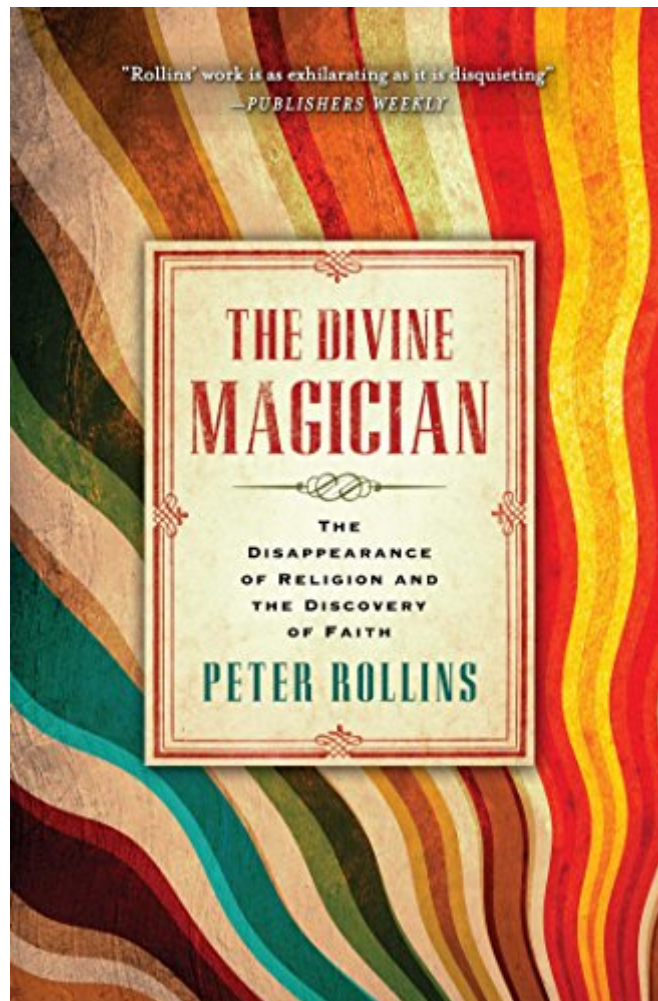


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The Divine Magician: The Disappearance Of Religion And The Discovery Of Faith



Synopsis

In this mind-bending exploration of traditional Christianity, firebrand Peter Rollins turns the tables on conventional wisdom, offering a fresh perspective focused on a life filled with love. Peter Rollins knows one magic trick—now, make sure you watch closely. It has three parts: the Pledge, the Turn, and the Prestige. In *Divine Magician*, each part comes into play as he explores a radical view of interacting with the world in love. Rollins argues that the Christian event, reenacted in the Eucharist, is indeed a type of magic trick, one that is echoed in the great vanishing acts performed by magicians throughout the ages. In this trick, a divine object is presented to us (the Pledge), disappears (the Turn), and then returns (the Prestige). But just as the returned object in a classic vanishing act is not really the same object—but another that looks the same—so this book argues that the return of God is not simply the return of what was initially presented, but rather a radical way of interacting with the world. In an effort to unearth the power of Christianity, Rollins uses this framework to explain the mystery of faith that has been lost on the church. In the same vein as Rob Bell's™ bestseller *Love Wins*, this book pushes the boundaries of theology, presenting a stirring vision at the forefront of re-imagined modern Christianity. As a dynamic speaker as he is in writing, Rollins examines traditional religious notions from a revolutionary and refreshingly original perspective. At the heart of his message is a life lived through profound love. Just perhaps, says Rollins, the radical message found in Christianity might be one that the church can show allegiance to.

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Customer Reviews

If it had been written to its potential, this book should have been titled: "Life sucks and then you love it." Instead, a more accurate title would be: "Life sucks and then you love it but we aren't going to talk about that much. Let's talk about how everyone else has it wrong." I have never read any of Rollins' books before and I read this book upon the suggestion of a friend. This book is short and a fairly easy read. Rollins keeps things interesting with various analogies, stories and pop culture references. Most of the time, these vehicles do well to explain his ideas. Other times, Rollins pushes an analogy too far and it does more harm than good (I'm primarily referring to the main analogy of the entire book: the magic trick). Fairly rarely, Rollins does start to speak unintelligibly with a sage-like mystical phraseology. But thankfully this is relegated to just a few pages. Overall, be ready to have all of your core assumptions questioned. Rollins doesn't shy away from challenging the establishment. Rollins opens with the introduction of an analogy that sets the theme for the rest of the book: the magic trick. This magic trick concept is composed of three parts: the pledge, the turn and the prestige. This analogy is used to represent man's existential search for meaning, the ultimate futility of the search and how we can remodel that futility into something truly meaningful. Rollins explores these representations in varying degrees of width and depth using various other stories and analogies from history and pop culture. In Section 1 "The Pledge" (covering chapters 1 and 2), Rollins is on firm empirical psychodynamic ground in discussing man's "lack" which we often assume can be filled by some imagined object.

In grad school I took a class once called The Politics of Ideas. On the first day the professor warned us that each class period he would take us all into the metaphorical abyss where we would be un-moored from everything we thought we knew and understood to be real, "but don't worry," he added, "before the bell rings I will pull you out again into the sunlight and stable ground." Peter Rollins offers no such assurances! In his new book The Divine Magician: The Disappearance of Religion and the Discovery of Faith Rollins takes aim at the "sacred object" which always lies just

beyond our reach yet draws us like moths to the flame with its promises of wholeness and completeness. Whether that "sacred object" is Forbidden Fruit, The Holy of Holies, or even God himself, The Divine Magician will call into question your motivations for pursuit and assumptions of what you will eventually find when you finally peek behind the curtain. Using the 3 essential parts of a magician's trick, the Pledge, the Turn, and the Prestige, Rollins argues that this "trick" is actually a convention that continually echoes in the lives of all people. We feel incomplete! We lack wholeness! We are depressed! Then there is always something that promises to take away that pain whether it be a new relationship, a new job, a large pizza with everything, or even God. This "sacred object" is presented to us like the Pledge of a magician who waves the large silver coin to his audience. In life of course two things can happen in our pursuit of this object promising wholeness.

Sometimes a book just leaves me scratching my head, wondering "What was the point of all that?" That's how I felt about Peter Rollins's *The Divine Magician: The Disappearance of Religion and the Discovery of Faith*. Not only was I left wondering what exactly Rollins was trying to accomplish, I was wondering where this guy has been to church? Is he really drawing on his own experiences or on some stereotypical picture of church? I'm no perfect Christian, and certainly no perfect church member, and I've never been to a perfect church, as if there is such a thing. When people like Rollins start talking about what's wrong with "the church" or with "religion," it always seems like they get into straw man arguments that don't hold up in reality. Rollins talks about the "snake oil claims of religious movements." He talks about "pious professionals" in whose hands "'God' is presented as nothing less than an object that promises satisfaction and certainty." Those professionals "hand out placebos," offer a "security blanket," and their followers rely on belief as "an emotional crutch." To Rollins, Christianity has become "an ideological system." Churches "create their own constellation of beliefs and practices that tell their congregants how to think and behave." His whole point is that faith in institutions and leaders is bound to disappoint, that fulfillment can't be found in ritual and dogma. So this is news? All my life, I have heard affirmations like the simple phrase, "Christianity is not about religion, it's relationship."

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