

## Belief and Unbelief

**Barbara G. Walker**

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*A well-researched analysis of the impact of faith and beliefs on society advocates for a peaceful secular world.*

Barbara G. Walker, author of twenty-four books, including the bestselling *The Women's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, and past winner of the American Humanist Association's Humanist Heroine Award, gives religion a series of knock-out punches in the twenty-two hard-hitting essays compiled in *Belief and Unbelief*.

"As a species, we seem to want marvels more than facts," Walker writes. Her newest book explores why humans are so inclined to believe the unbelievable and be convinced by improbable religious assertions, often labeling them "miraculous" to forestall rational investigation. In concise and pointed prose backed up by research and historical records, she demonstrates how patriarchal religion has been the greatest source of murder, destruction, and mayhem on the planet.

Walker quotes some of the most revered figures in religious history, showing how they encouraged irrational belief in what would be unbelievable to an open, free mind; she declares that the mindset that allows for such belief is the same as that needed to allow for the kind of control that churches and religions have historically exerted over the mass of humanity. St. Augustine is quoted as having written, "Faith is to believe what we do not see; and the reward of this faith is to see what we believe."

Walker's essays, supported by an ample bibliography, touch on topics as relevant as whether or not people can live good, moral lives without religion (they can, and do, she affirms); the cruelty of the God of the scriptures; life on earth before patriarchy; how the history of Christianity is the story of how women have been silenced, deprived of their rights, and abused; how the church has sanctioned war; and more.

Walker advocates for a world in which humanity has outgrown its need for gods and devils, and her book offers cogent arguments, comfort, and support for those who wish to have done with unproved beliefs and unjustifiable, often cruel and violence-prone faiths.

KRISTINE MORRIS (Spring 2015)

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