ForeWord Reviews

AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

Imagine No Religion: An Autobiography
Blase Bonpane
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Inspiring, fascinating, and passionate, Blase Bonpane chronicles his life from a boyhood in Los Angeles to an adulthood spent fighting for peace and justice.

Even when describing remarkable changes in his life—such as being expelled from Guatemala for "subversion"—Bonpane maintains a tone of humility and awe, secure in his belief that communities can change the world, and that within every heart is the chance to be a peacemaker.

He begins his remarkable tale with the moment that he snuck out of the house to become a Maryknoll priest, after serving in the Marine Corps reserves during World War II and against his parents' wishes. The priesthood appealed to him for its ability to bring change to underserved areas, and he eagerly accepted an assignment to Guatemala in 1966, a time of political unrest, when many who resisted the government became "disappeared."

When Bonpane began to help student leaders leave the country, the police destroyed the Maryknoll headquarters there and the priest was ushered out under threat of violence. He writes, "My view of community is global, and I have always felt connected, even having a sense of community while driving on a freeway. Being disconnected, uprooted, is a painful form of death."

But Bonpane turned his pain into peace work, eventually releasing vital information to the US press about the situation in Guatemala, and separating from the Maryknoll Fathers as a result. After accepting a teaching position at UCLA, Bonpane married a former Maryknoll sister and the pair began political justice efforts, including working with Cesar Chávez, forming the Office of the Americas, and visiting numerous countries, including Iraq, Nicaragua, Columbia, and Cuba.

Details on many of his trips can be found in the five books he's written previously, including *Common Sense for the Twenty-First Century* and *Guerrillas of Peace: Liberation Theology and the Central American Revolution.*

Bonpane's belief that we can have a more peaceful world transcends religion, culture,

and time. He tells his life story simply, with a tone of genuine wonder mixed with ardent conviction that there's still much work to be done. This concise-yet-powerful autobiography will lead many to look into their own lives and see what impact they, too, can have on creating peace in their communities and in their hearts.

Elizabeth Millard