ForeWord Reviews

BODY, MIND & SPIRIT

The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment
Eckhart Tolle
New World Library
978-1-57731-152-2
(Sep 27, 1999)

"Enlightenment" is a word so casually and frequently used these days that it is sometimes less meaningful than at other times. Thankfully, Tolle, a German-born spiritual teacher now residing in Vancouver, provides a clear definition at the outset of this guide to discovering the deepest self: "it is simply your natural state of felt oneness with Being. It is a state of connectedness with something immeasurable and indestructible, something that, almost paradoxically, is essentially you and yet is much greater than you. It is finding your true nature beyond name and form."

Getting to this state, according to Tolle, requires simply freeing oneself of dominance by the mind by learning to live in awareness in the present. Teachers of meditation have instructed followers for thousands of years on techniques to achieve this transformation and books in the spiritual and "New Age" genre have proliferated in the past decade or so leading some critics to accuse such seekers as being pampered, self-absorbed naval-gazers too preoccupied with their own inner lives to tackle "real problems." Tolle has succeeded on two fronts: synthesizing the teachings of masters such as Jesus and the Buddha into an easily-accessible guide to achieving spiritual consciousness and making a strong case that the inability of humans to free themselves from dominance by the mind and live in the present is the root cause of misery in the world. For example, Tolle states that an estimated fifty million people were murdered to further the cause of communism, "a chilling example of how belief in a future heaven creates a present hell."

Tolle shares his own life-changing experience when, at age twenty-nine, he was near suicide, thinking that he could no longer live with himself. Suddenly he recognized the presence of two selves—the ego that had been dominating his life and his true nature. His thoughts stopped, yet he remained fully conscious, as he felt drawn into "what seemed a vortex of energy." He emerged in a state of bliss and years later, after studying spiritual texts for an explanation of what happened to him, began answering questions from people who asked how to get what he had.

The author writes with compassion, not criticizing, blaming or ridiculing the reader. He makes enlightenment seem attainable and necessary for both individual peace and the health of

the planet.

Sharon Flesher