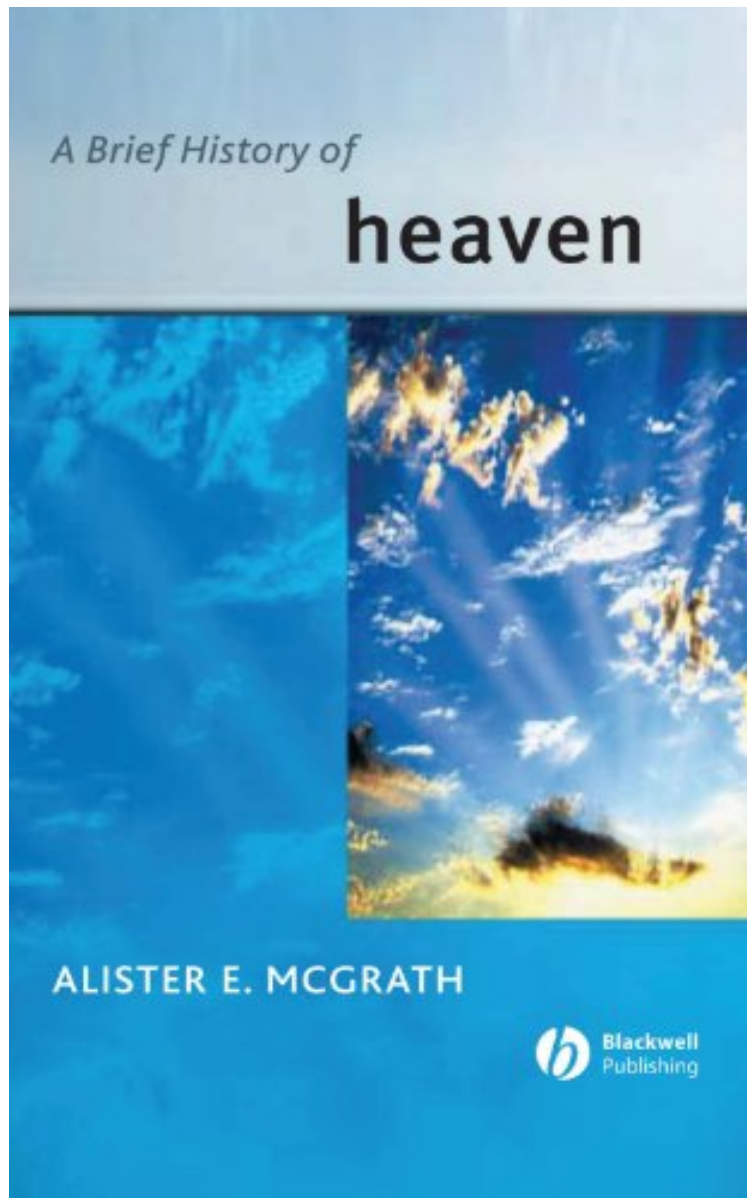


A Brief History of Heaven

Alister E. McGrath

*ePub | *DOC | audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF*



 Download

 Read Online

#1120845 in Books 2003-02-04Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 6.80 x .68 x 4.80l, .42 #File Name: 0631233547216 pages | File size: 43.Mb

Alister E. McGrath : A Brief History of Heaven before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Brief History of Heaven:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Jonathan P. BinnieMcGrath is absolutely first rate/1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. good bookBy Soulja4truthgood book13 of 15 people found the following

review helpful. A Brief History of Heaven By A Life-Long Learner As is sometimes said, "There's more than one way to skin a cat." In a similar vein, the topic of heaven can be broached from multiple angles. If you take nothing else from Dr. Alister McGrath's book, *A Brief History of Heaven*, you will at the very least learn that the Christian concept of heaven can be thought of in different ways. *A Brief History of Heaven* is a unique little book (184 pages) where theology meets the arts. McGrath provides a nice blend of theological reflection on heaven with a mapped development of Christian conceptions of heaven throughout the Church's history. This latter feature often takes the form of rich citations. I personally found these extra-biblical references enriching, not to mention nostalgic. After all, many of the classic works mentioned I had taken in my introductory course to English Literature in first-year university. For example, McGrath draws on authors like Dante Alighieri, John Donne, George Herbert, John Milton, John Bunyan, Matthew Arnold, and others, not to mention classic works like *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Beowulf*, *Everyman*, etc. McGrath spends the first two of six chapters discussing perhaps the two primal images of heaven in Christian thought: Heaven as a city (the City of God) and as a garden (Paradise). The reader cannot help but be gripped by the fact that, "...the Christian concept of heaven is iconic, rather than intellectual - something that makes its appeal to the imagination, rather than the intellect, which calls out to be visualized rather than merely understood." (McGrath, 2003, p. 166) In the middle chapters of *A Brief History of Heaven*, McGrath veers off the beaten path somewhat and looks at how the Christian's longing for heaven is satisfied and, perhaps more fundamentally, why such a desire arises in the first place. In chapter five, McGrath examines the notion of heaven as a place of rest and consolation for those, who have experienced grief and sorrow in this life such as at the loss of a loved one. *A Brief History of Heaven* concludes with due attention given to the profound question of how Christians are to hold onto this longing for heaven when once they finally meet up with it. Admittedly, this book is not for everyone. If the reader is looking for a purely biblical or theological treatment of the doctrine of heaven, then (s)he is best to look elsewhere. For those who earnestly desire a work that will arouse the imagination and create a homesickness for heaven, however, McGrath may meet the doctor's orders. I think *A Brief History of Heaven* will serve those readers best, who are looking for a work that will point them in other directions as they pursue the topic of heaven. For example, a good exercise would be to track down and read the different literary works McGrath makes reference to. Regardless of your decision on this book, it should be obvious that as Christians we need to engage our imaginations with the concept of heaven. We need to induce a homesickness for heaven. It is perhaps the irony of twenty-first century evangelicalism that great appeals can be made to non-Christians on the grounds of the hope of heaven that we have, all the while being guilty of gross negligence by giving but sparse details - if any at all - about this heaven we so hope and long for.

This engaging book by one of today's best-known Christian writers explores the history of heaven, from its origins in biblical writings to its most recent representations. A short, accessible book on the history of heaven. Draws together representations of heaven by a wide range of writers, theologians, politicians and artists. Covers literary works such as Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and the poems of George Herbert. Considers discussions by Marx and Freud of heaven's role in society. Based on serious scholarship but is ideal for the non-specialist who wants to learn more about the idea of heaven. Alister E. McGrath is one of today's best-known Christian writers.

From Publishers Weekly Christians throughout history have imagined heaven in many diverse ways: a celestial city (sometimes called the "New Jerusalem"); a kingdom where God resides on a throne; a perpetual feast with an abundance of food and drink; a garden of paradise. Heaven has also served different theological purposes as a consolation for earthly suffering, a reward for good works or a promise of reunion with loved ones. After many years of studying Christianity's enormous body of historical literature on heaven, author and theologian McGrath notes at least one common theme that unites all these different visions and purposes: "The Christian concept of heaven is iconic, rather than intellectual-something that makes its appeal to the imagination, rather than the intellect, which calls out to be visualized rather than merely understood." Herein lay the rich possibilities and contemplative pleasures of this historically detailed discussion. McGrath, a professor of historical theology at Oxford University, organizes most of his narrative around the prevailing "visuals" of heaven, and how these have influenced Christian spirituality. After all, he notes, "It is much easier to reflect upon an image than an idea." From the way Christians built churches to the music they wrote for hymnals, the ever-morphing images of heaven have shaped this religion enormously. Though clearly a scholar, McGrath transcends the drone of the academic dissertation, offering an accessible and thorough narrative. Using the rich visual imagery of heaven, McGrath has created a fascinating kaleidoscope for viewing the evolution of Christian worship. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. Alister McGrath invariably combines enormous scholarship with an accessible and engaging style. This book is no exception - a splendid survey of a centrally important subject, covering theology and the arts with equal grace and clarity. Dr Rowan Williams, The Archbishop of Canterbury "Bringing together literature, theology, politics and the arts, this fascinating book traces the remarkable influence that the idea of heaven has had - and continues to have - on western culture." Publishing News "It is delightfully lucid and insightful...Recommended for large public libraries as well as academic libraries offering a

variety of Christian religious courses." Joyce Smothers, Library Journal "Though clearly a scholar, McGrath transcends the drone of the academic dissertation, offering an accessible and thorough narrative. Using the rich visual imagery of heaven, McGrath has created a fascinating kaleidoscope for viewing the evolution of Christian worship." Publishers Weekly "Pick of the week...It's an ambitious, immensely accessible, erudite and entertaining exploration of the way the idea of heaven has been constructed over the centuries." The Saturday Age Alister McGrath invariably combines enormous scholarship with an accessible and engaging style. This book is no exception - a splendid survey of a centrally important subject, covering theology and the arts with equal grace and clarity. Dr Rowan Williams, The Archbishop of Canterbury "Bringing together literature, theology, politics and the arts, this fascinating book traces the remarkable influence that the idea of heaven has had - and continues to have - on western culture." Publishing News "It is delightfully lucid and insightful...Recommended for large public libraries as well as academic libraries offering a variety of Christian religious courses." Joyce Smothers, Library Journal "Though clearly a scholar, McGrath transcends the drone of the academic dissertation, offering an accessible and thorough narrative. Using the rich visual imagery of heaven, McGrath has created a fascinating kaleidoscope for viewing the evolution of Christian worship." Publishers Weekly "Pick of the week...It's an ambitious, immensely accessible, erudite and entertaining exploration of the way the idea of heaven has been constructed over the centuries." The Saturday Age