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### April 7, 2010: Will Jon Meacham's religion last?

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Title: Will Jon Meacham's religion last?

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4/7/2010—I predict that Jon Meacham's religion will not last. Meacham is a liberal Episcopalian who writes of his religion and family, "I am an Episcopalian who takes the faith of my fathers seriously (if unemotionally), and I would, I think, be disheartened if my own young children were to turn away from the church when they grow up. I am also a critic of Christianity, if by critic one means an observer who brings historical and literary judgment to bear on the texts and traditions of the church." He writes this in the New York Times Sunday book review, reviewing Diarmaid MacCulloch's book, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (review [here](#)). Of MacCulloch, Meacham writes that "I sense a kind of kinship". But Diarmaid is not a Christian. He writes of himself, as Meacham notes, "'I would now describe myself as a candid friend of Christianity. I still appreciate the seriousness which a religious mentality brings to the mystery and misery of human existence, and I appreciate the solemnity of religious liturgy as a way of confronting these problems.'"

Now, on one level, it is easy to say that Meacham's religion will not last. Nothing lasts. Everyone's children, or their children, or the children of their children, turn away from something that you and I find very important. So I guess I mean more than that. I mean that Meacham's young children will themselves probably turn away from his contorted Episcopalianism. At least my children did from my equally fraught Judaism.

The problem is that Christianity is supernatural. Not in its detail, but at its heart. In the very liberal Religion Dispatches yesterday, I was a little surprised to find this statement by Rev. C. Joshua Villines about what Christians believe: "Christians are people who believe in a divine reality, one beyond the material world perceived by our five senses. We believe that there is more to life than what we can control or understand. We believe that there is something beyond our comprehension, and that "something" is conscious, vital, wise, and loving in a way that is not limited by space or time. While Christians might have different perspectives on the value of the experiences and content of the material world, we are united in our belief that there is *more*."

I was only surprised because in such a liberal magazine, I would have expected an acknowledgment that some people who call themselves "Christians" would have a hard time calling this reality "conscious". Once you do that, using the word "something" is irrelevant. This is the biblical supernatural God.

And belief in this God, who could control the natural forces in the world, is the crucial stopping point for people like me and, perhaps, like Meacham. Without it, though, the kids don't stay in the religion.

The next question is, why write about this? I said in the book *Hallowed Secularism*, that I had nothing against liberal religion even though I could not sustain it for myself. Yet I find myself often writing against it, as here. Next blog I will take up the question of why that might be.