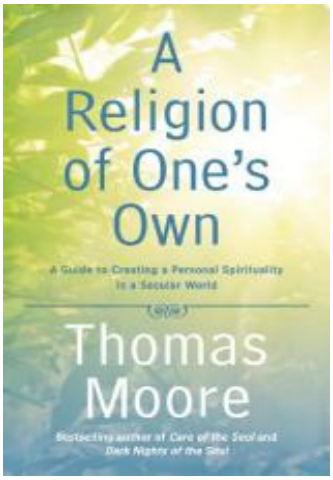
A Religion of One's Own: A Guide to Creating a Personal Spirituality in a Secular World

by Thomas Moore



About the Book

Something essential is missing from modern life. Many who?ve turned away from religious institutions --- and others who have lived wholly without religion --- hunger for more than what contemporary secular life has to offer but are reluctant to follow organized religion?s strict and often inflexible path to spirituality. In A RELIGION OF ONE?S OWN, bestselling author and former monk Thomas Moore explores the myriad possibilities of creating a personal spiritual style, either inside or outside formal religion.

Two decades ago, Moore?s *Care of the Soul* touched a chord with millions of readers yearning to integrate spirituality into their everyday lives. In A RELIGION OF ONE?S OWN, Moore expands on the topics he first explored shortly after leaving the monastery. He recounts the benefits of contemplative living that he learned during his twelve years as a monk but also the more original and imaginative spirituality that he later developed and embraced in his secular life. Here, he shares stories of others who are creating their own path: a former football player now on a spiritual quest with the Pueblo Indians, a friend who makes a meditative practice of floral arrangements, and a well-known classical pianist whose audiences sometimes describe having a mystical experience while listening to her performances. Moore weaves their experiences with the wisdom of philosophers, writers, and artists who have rejected materialism and infused their secular lives with transcendence.

At a time when so many feel disillusioned with or detached from organized religion yet long for a way to move beyond an exclusively materialistic, rational lifestyle, A RELIGION OF ONE?S OWN points the way to creating an amplified inner life and a world of greater purpose, meaning, and reflection.

Discussion Guide

1. Were you raised within a particular faith? If so, do you still belong to it now? Why or why not?

2. Might the rigidity of formal religion have suited earlier eras in human history? Is it possible for religious institutions to adapt to the needs of modern humanity?

3. Have you ever felt diminished by the absence of spirituality in your own life? In what ways has this absence manifested itself?

4. Moore describes the plays of Samuel Beckett, the poetry of Rainer Marie Rilke, and the writings of C. G. Jung as ?secular writings that go so deep in their reflections on human experience that I place them alongside the sacred texts? (p. 23). What are some texts that connect you to the sacred? Before now, were you aware of their importance in your spiritual life?

5. Do you agree with Moore?s practice of integrating ?civic, world religious and personal holy days? (p. 34) into his own liturgical calendar? If you were to create your own personal liturgical calendar, what are some of the significant dates you would include?

6. Moore writes about his Uncle Tom, a farmer and a hard drinker who did not go to Church, but also a man whom Moore regarded as ?something of a mystic ? who lived in tune with the seasons and the changing sky and landscape? (p. 50). Is there someone in your own life whom you regard in a similar way?

7. Who is the most spiritual person you know? What are the qualities that define him or her?

8. In his psychotherapy practice, Moore has seen how a troubled soul can impede a person?s spiritual life. Has this happened in your own spiritual life? If so, how have you worked to heal your soul?

9. Moore believes that both erotic desire and a sensual appreciation of the world are an integral part of our relationship to the divine. Do you agree? How do they manifest themselves in your life?

10. Has reading A RELIGION OF ONE'S OWN inspired you to incorporate new spiritual practices into your life?

11. Without naming him or her, discuss someone whom you believe would deeply benefit from reading Moore?s book and why.

12. What would you describe as the key facets of your personal religion?

Author Bio

Thomas Moore is a bestselling author, university professor, musician, and psychotherapist who lectures widely on holistic medicine, spirituality, psychotherapy, and the arts. He has been awarded numerous honors, including the Humanitarian Award from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University. The author of eighteen previous books, Moore lives in New Hampshire.

Critical Praise

[Moore's] counsel is consistently sensible and affirming. This book should appeal to many of the unchurched, as well as the faithful across traditions.

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