

The story of god by Robert Winston.
Bantam press 2005.

As an admirer of Robert Winston as a scientist, writer and highly engaging TV presenter I was keen to read his personal journey into the world of science and religion, the story of god. As an orthodox Jew, it was always going to be interesting to see him navigate a path between the teachings to which he subscribes, the tenets of other faiths, and the facts of modern science.

It is good to report that the book does not disappoint. Winston divides his analysis into 9 sections, Religions' Roots: What did Prehistoric Humans Believe?, A Question of Survival, Finding the One God, The World's Greatest Book, The God of Change, Muhammad and Islam, Heresies and Schisms, God in Retreat, Religion in the Modern Age, preceded by a prologue entitled Wrestling with God.

As might be expected Winston is lucid, engaging, informative and even amusing as he tours through the development of what he calls the 'Divine Idea' and its manifestation in different faiths across the world and across history. The story of god is thus highly informative for those seeking to enquire dispassionately about the world's major religions, their origins, and the development of their particular Divine Idea.

My one slight cavil, and it is minor, is to register disappointment that in his citations from the Hebrew Bible he used those from either the King James' Bible or the Hertz Chumash, rather than from any one of the excellent modern translations that are readily available.

My one complaint, which is somewhat greater, is that for some reason in his chapter Heresies and Schisms he makes no mention of Reform Judaism, concentrating instead on Chasidism whose impact on 19th-21st century Judaism cannot be compared in any way or on any level with that of Reform Judaism. This is a lacuna which could so easily have been avoided and which ought to be addressed for any paperback edition.

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