



Water To Wine: Some of My Story

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Why would the pastor of a large and successful church risk everything in a quest to find a richer, deeper, fuller Christianity? In *Water To Wine* Brian Zahnd tells his story of disenchantment with pop Christianity and his search for a more substantive faith.

“I was halfway to ninety—midway through life—and I had reached a full-blown crisis. Call it garden variety mid-life crisis if you want, but it was something more. You might say it was a theological crisis, though that makes it sound too cerebral. The unease I felt came from a deeper place than a mental file labeled “theology.” I was wrestling with the uneasy feeling that the faith I had built my life around was somehow deficient. Not wrong, but lacking. It seemed watery, weak. In my most honest moments I couldn’t help but notice that the faith I knew seemed to lack the kind of robust authenticity that made Jesus so fascinating. And I had always been utterly fascinated by Jesus. What I knew was that the Jesus I believed in warranted a better Christianity than what I was familiar with. I was in Cana and the wine had run out. I needed Jesus to perform a miracle.” —*Water To Wine*

Water To Wine: Some of My Story Details

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From Reader Review Water To Wine: Some of My Story for online ebook

Levi Jones says

Water to Wine is the narration of Brian Zahnd's journey from a watered down Gospel to a deeper walk with Jesus. I resonated with the book because it mirrored so much of my own journey from fundamentalism to a sacramental understanding of life and ministry. The book was a quick read but it was full of depth as well. Zahnd points out the myriad ways that American Christianity has been co-opted by the culture and twisted it to something that it was never intended to be. He then calls Christians to retrace the steps of historic Christianity and to discover again the rich wine of Jesus.

Andrew says

The excellent memoir (and then some) of a fundamentalist charismatic evangelical American pastor who discovered a deeper Christian faith grounded in the depth and breadth of a tradition of thought and practice that spreads out left and right in our current era, and backwards through history to the foundations of Christianity - the full wealth of orthodoxy.

I had already heard most of the first third of the book via listening to conference talks given by Zahnd, and I'm pretty familiar with him, so I knew that the book was going to be good, but it is very good. Storytelling and teaching interweave beautifully, with a few too many references to Bob Dylan - but I'll forgive him that.

And now for a provocative quote:

"I want you to find the beautiful faith that lies beyond the cruel confines of fundamentalist fears and political agendas. I want you to find the generous orthodoxy that transcends tribalism. I want you to find the sacred mystery that is far deeper than shallow certitude. I want to say, 'Come with me, come to Cana, come to where Jesus turns water into wine.'"

Nick says

I really liked this one! Easy to read and resonated with me. I'll have to write a fuller review later when I'm not on vacation.

David says

Zahnd's book A Farewell to Mars on Christian nonviolence was a great read, both well-written and challenging. This offering by Zahnd is more of a memoir, as he speaks of how his life and faith deeply changed in 2004. At this time he began to see shallowness in the charismatic/evangelical Christian world he had always been a part of. Zahnd began to encounter the depth and beauty of the Christian tradition, reading everything from the Church Fathers to medieval mystics to contemporary authors who had never come

across his desk before. Through all of this, his faith went from weak water to beautiful wine. It was not easy though, as he faced challenges from his church as their pastor changed dramatically.

I resonated with so much of what Zahnd wrote, though any shifts or changes I have had were not nearly so dramatic. Many of the authors, living and dead, he refers to are ones I have read and been challenged by. At the same time, Zahnd's story at times comes across a bit strange for someone not steeped in the world of charismatic Christianity. He writes of vivid dreams he has had and how they moved him. I can't remember my dreams the next day and his three are burned in his memory. He has also traveled a lot, before and after 2004, which influences him and makes me jealous!

Overall though, this is a great book. Any Christian who is wondering if faith is shallow and too intertwined with consumerism or politics would benefit from this book.

Jeroen Koornstra says

Brian Zahnd has written better books, like 'Unconditional?'

I like his boldness to go against the flow and how he takes a stand against the typical American way of life and Americanized gospel. He has a point, something has to change.

He is a poet and a master in giving words to his thoughts. Ofcourse this book is his journey, so it is as it is. But I wonder where Zahnd will be in ten years from now. I doubt if the answer is in the mystical approach he now holds.

Paul was not mystical, instead he revealed which was a mystery for the prophets. Charismatic aspects were part of his life and teachings. I respect Zahnd and have been blessed by sermons and books, but the road he is now walking is not mine.

Stephen London says

This is a marvelous book. So beautiful. I love his vision of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. I will probably just read it again right away.

Rick Lee Lee James says

I started reading this book and could not stop. It took me about three hours to finish. Brian Zahnd has written another great book and this one is especially meaningful because he tells his story of being born again again. I think that everyone will benefit from reading this, but especially pastors who have become tired of consumer pop Christianity. For those of you who need a transformation and who need a change from easy cheesy cotton candy Christianity this book is for you. The ancient Faith is the way forward and Brian has been such a faithful witness to this movement of the spirit within the church and in his life and witness.

Evan says

"The Orthodox give us the Christ of Glory. The Orthodox have their beautiful icons and a high Christology.

The Catholics give us the Suffering Christ, which is why the crucifix is so prominent in Catholicism. The Anglicans give us Christ the Teacher—so many of our best theologians either come from the Anglicans or eventually find their home there. Protestants give us the Reforming Christ, the Jesus who challenges the Pharisees and cleanses the Temple. Evangelicals give us the Personal Jesus, the Jesus who calls his disciples by name and talks to Nicodemus about being born again. Pentecostals give us the miracle-working Jesus, who heals the sick and casts out demons." (Zahnd)

The content here is deep and engaging. So much of what Zahnd writes about his journey resonates with me and my own journey.

No fifth star from me because of my own stylistic bias. A book deals with deep contemplative faith shouldn't be written in the same style of prose as the "trite little tomes of pop Christianity" it seeks to distance itself from. :)

Robert Grisham says

This was another one of those right time, right place kinds of books. I was on amazon looking at something, and this book was on the "you might like this book also" line. I clicked on it and saw that it was available on kindle unlimited, and since I had that for another 6 weeks I picked it up. I read it in a few days. It was so timely. I especially enjoyed his chapter on fixed hour prayer, and I've been practicing his prayer liturgy most days during the last few weeks.

Tristan Sherwin says

For those of us who feel restless with our faith, for those of us who feel that modern Christianity can often be too shallow, fundamentalist and obsessed with material progress, then this book is for you.

Water To Wine traces Brian Zahnd's personal journey from drinking and dispensing 'grape juice' Christianity, to being awakened and intoxicated by the vintage wine of the Christian faith.

Brian's words are a prophetic challenge and call to certain segments of the western church to let go of it's immaturity, consumerism and marriage to modern civil religion, and to once more rediscover and journey on the ancient pilgrim trail formed by those who traveled in the centuries before us. This is a summons to be re-acquainted with our rich heritage; to follow the road-markings of sacrament, creed and prayer; to seek a discipleship which is historically communal and cross-culturally diverse. This is an invitation to lose ourselves in the way of Jesus.

Zahnd's previous works (*Beauty Will Save the World* and *A Farewell To Mars*) have all been encouraging and inspirational, giving a resonance to my own wandering over the last seven years. And *Water To Wine* follows suit in a beautiful and humble way.

This is great piece of spiritual writing. A road-map to authentic religious experience. And a book all Christians should read.

---Tristan Sherwin, author of *Love: Expressed*

Benjamin Shurance says

I appreciate many of this book's points and resonate a lot with the spirituality of Zahnd. His critique of U.S. evangelicalism is warranted and his signposts for renewal are helpful.

Still, the book is not particularly strong for the following reasons:

- unnecessary poetry, usually of not great quality
- very personalistic in its approach (most chapters are structured around his dreams/insights/experiences)
- he name drops a bit much (all guys whom I respect, but still felt cumbersome)

Reading the book in the two-thirds world, I couldn't help but marvel at his travel budget, which seemingly includes regular excursions in the Rockies and frequent trips to Europe and the Middle East. How easily is the vintage, majestic faith he speaks of accessible to the majority of evangelicals living around the world? (Granted, the book's audience is U.S. evangelicals.)

Jodi Koepke says

Thought-provoking

This book was recommended to me and I am grateful. It put into words some of the journey I have felt myself on. My soul resonated with much of it. Other parts have challenged me to think and process slowly with God.

Lori says

For this book to be a life-changer, I'd have to swallow a few too many statements that the author wants me to accept out of hand. However, that does not mean this book was completely without merit.

I wholeheartedly agree with the author's belief that the Church in America has bought into a consumerized version of Christianity and that it needs to return to strong theological roots. I found that chapter 4, in particular, resonated with me. The principles I gleaned from it alone are worth the price of the book.

After the 4th chapter, I had a lot harder time with the book. It was rambling and sometimes came off as smug. Some of the applications he made from Scripture seemed to be a reach. I'd have to do some more study to be convinced. For its descriptive telling of one man's spiritual awakening, I can appreciate this book. I learned (or was reminded of) a few timely things. But for the ways Zahnd seemed to want the out-working of his journey to be prescriptive for the rest of us, I have a harder time buying in.

Jeff says

Water to Wine is the story of a successful mega-church pastor in middle America coming to know Christ in

the way of a peace-loving, Kingdom of God seeking, contemplative Christian. And what a wonderful story it is! Who would have thought that the further and ongoing spiritual formation of a dynamic young Christian minister could yield even more fruit in ministry and more joy in serving God. It's true and it could happen to you!

Ansley Gerhard says

I've always enjoyed Brian Zahnd's commentary from Twitter but this was the first book of his that I finished. It was excellent. At 45, he realizes that the Christianity he had dedicated his life to as a pastor, is deeply lacking. He was caught in the Evangelical charismatic Christianity movement, peddling what he now calls cotton candy theology. Finding himself deeply unsatisfied, he starts to dig in into the writing of the early Church Fathers and Mothers, particularly the mystics. Through this journey he discovers a much richer Christianity that is nothing like the tribalistic us against them self help pop theology that is so prevalent in American Christianity. He discovers the liturgy and the practice of contemplative prayer. Water to Wine is a memoir but it's also a call to move beyond elementary theology to a richer and robust understanding of the Divine.
