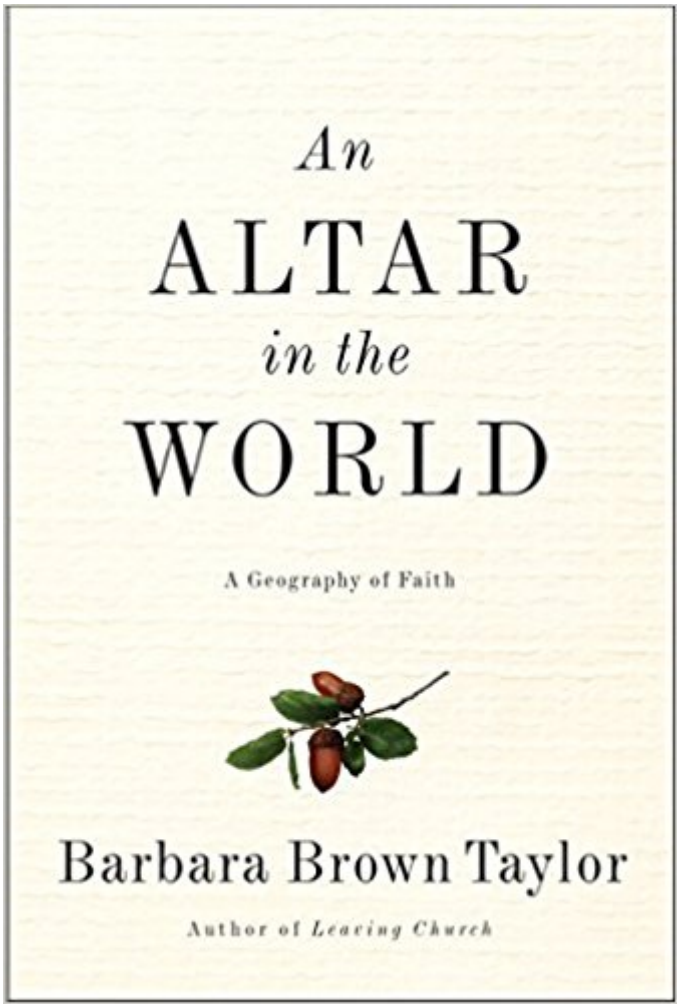
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# Altar In The World, An: A Geography Of Faith




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## Synopsis

In the New York Times bestseller An Altar in the World, acclaimed author Barbara Brown Taylor continues her spiritual journey by building upon where she left off in Leaving Church. With the honesty of Elizabeth Gilbert (Eat, Pray, Love) and the spiritual depth of Anne Lamott (Grace, Eventually), Taylor shares how she learned to find God beyond the church walls by embracing the sacred as a natural part of everyday life. In An Altar in the World, Taylor shows us how to discover altars everywhere we go and in nearly everything we do as we learn to live with purpose, pay attention, slow down, and revere the world we live in.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Author of an acclaimed memoir (Leaving Church) and a gifted preacher, Taylor is one of those rare people who truly can see the holy in everything. Since everyone should know such a person, those who don't canÃ¢â ¬â •no, mustÃ¢â ¬â •read this book, with its friendly reminders of everyday sacred. Taylor's 12 chapters mine the potentially sacred meaning of simple daily activities and conditions, like walking, paying attention, saying no to work one Sabbath day each week. Hanging laundry is setting up a prayer flag, for God's sake. Since Taylor, an Episcopal priest, no longer pastors a church, she can "do church" everywhere: in line at the grocery store interacting with the cashier, walking a moonlit path with her husband. Her candor is another of the book's virtues: she is a failure at prayer, and cannot explain why or how it is, or isn't, answered ("I do not know any way to talk about answered prayer without sounding like a huckster or a

honeymooner"). Savor this book. (Feb.) Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Ã¢â ¬Å“This is the most completely beautiful book in religion that I have read in a very long time. Gentle, humbly crafted, lyrical, and deeply wise, Altar is Barbara Brown Taylor as she was meant to be, a pastor who understands that knowing God occurs in a place beyond theology.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Phyllis Tickle, author of The Great Emergence)Ã¢â ¬Å“This book is the most practical but everyday mystical book I have read on spiritual practices.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Kate Campbell, singer-songwriter)Ã¢â ¬Å“Elegant, wise, and insightful, this book is also sacramental: it mediates the life it describes.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Marcus Borg, author of Jesus)Ã¢â ¬Å“An Altar in the World is about how faith can be both practical and sensuous.In Barbara Brown TaylorÃ¢â ¬â„¢s hands, the old division between heaven and earth is healed and both come alive. Your mind, your body and your soul will be well fed by this wonderful book.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Nora Gallagher, author of Things Seen and Unseen and Changing Light)Ã¢â ¬Å“Taylor writes fluently, with an eye and ear for the striking image and memorable phrase. Many readers, especially the vast numbers of the Ã¢â ¬Å“unchurchedÃ¢â ¬Â• but Ã¢â ¬Å“spiritual,Ã¢â ¬Â• will find support and useful counsel.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Library Journal)Ã¢â ¬Å“[A] lovely book. One of the best-known preachers in the country offers equal amounts of wisdom and erudition spent longing for more meaning, more feeling, more connection.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Booklist)Ã¢â ¬Å“TaylorÃ¢â ¬â„¢s spiritual reflections are original, bringing fresh air to her topics because her spirituality is steeped in everyday life while illuminated by the ancient Christian spiritual tradition.Ã¢â ¬Â• (National Catholic Reporter)Ã¢â ¬Å“The author seems simply incapable of writing a bad book. . . . Taylor is a great gift to the Christian church. And this volume, which focuses on spiritual practices, simply adds to her growing reputation.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Kansas City Star)Ã¢â ¬Å“Taylor is one of those rare people who truly can see the holy in everything. . . . Savor this book.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Publishers Weekly (starred review))Ã¢â ¬Å“SheÃ¢â ¬â„¢s deliberately exploring the turf where our feet hit the floorboards each morning - and where the day takes us into the world. Even if youÃ¢â ¬â„¢re not a Christian, youÃ¢â ¬â„¢ll find a wise friend in BarbaraÃ¢â ¬â„¢s book.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Read the Spirit)Ã¢â ¬Å“An Altar in the World is a delight to the eyes, mind and heart, a book I will certainly return to again at a later time, if only to remind myself of the spirituality of everyday living.Ã¢â ¬Â• (America Magazine)Ã¢â ¬Å“Taylor serves up beefy soul food.. . . Though she did not write the book to speak to the economic crash, those suffering from lost jobs, homes and status will find plenty to feed thought and faith.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Atlanta Journal-Constitution)Ã¢â ¬Å“A marvelous book. Barbara Brown

TaylorÃ¢â ¬â„¢s honesty is so fantastic, and she writes with such wit, that this book is a delight to read and a profound experience .Ã¢â ¬Â• (ExploreFaith)Ã¢â ¬Å“Leaving Church settled it for me that Taylor, as thinker and stylist, ranks with the best. The new book confirms that. . . . This book is not a page-turner. ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s a page-lingerer. I wore out a highlighter marking passages I want to read again.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Dallas Morning News)Ã¢â ¬Å“Without denigrating altars in churches, Brown helps us discover and honor all the Ã¢â ¬Ëœaltars in the worldÃ¢â ¬â„¢--the red Xs that mark the spot, but that we cannot see because we are standing on them. She does so with a depth that readers will appreciate and savor.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Ã¢â ¬â •U.S. Catholic)Ã¢â ¬Å“Ã¢â ¬Â¦[H]er honest elegance... express[es] truths that throw open windows in our everyday livesÃ¢â ¬â œallowing fresh perspectives on life. YouÃ¢â ¬â„¢ll finish her book with dozens of pages folded over or marked in some other fashion so you can find and re-read favorite lines again.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Read the Spirit)Ã¢â ¬Å“Barbara Brown Taylor is a favorite among church members who struggle to connect the sacred and secular, the heavenly and the earthly. These readers appreciate the candor with which she writes about it.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Raleigh News and Observer)Ã¢â ¬Å“OverallÃ¢â ¬Â¦ if one can read TaylorÃ¢â ¬â„¢s insights reflectively, with an eye toward Scripture, Altar will serve as a refreshing reminder that the physical world is designed to help us experience the spiritual one.Ã¢â ¬Â• (ChristianityToday.com)Ã¢â ¬Å“Barbara Brown Taylor penetrates the religious clutter. She comforts. She revives our spirits. With lovely words she finds Ã¢â ¬Ëœalters in our world.Ã¢â ¬â„¢Ã¢â ¬Â• (The Congregationalist)Ã¢â ¬Å“While I donÃ¢â ¬â„¢t like long books, this one could have been 500 pages longer with no complaints from me.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Christian Science Monitor)

The author is a well-known Episcopal priest, teacher, and author. She was recognized in 1996 by Baylor University as one of the most effective preachers in the English-speaking world and received the Emory medal in 1998 for distinguished achievement in education. She is a remarkable story-teller and I have always enjoyed her sermons.Her most recent writings have a very different feel to them and are more like collections of essays than the sermon collections of the past. Taylor wrote a memoir of her shift from parish ministry to teaching in a book entitled ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Leaving Church,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• and her latest work is ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• These later works seem to target the ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“spiritual but not religiousÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• segment of the reading public and are filled with the same skilled prose that marked her earlier writings.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“An Altar in the WorldÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• reviews a variety of spiritual practices with the laudable goal of showing the

reader that ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“the treasure we seek requires no lengthy expedition, no expensive equipment, no superior aptitude or special company.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• For the author, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“there is no spiritual treasure to be found apart from the bodily experiences of human life on the earth.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• She states, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“If you have run out of breath yourselfÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •or out of faithÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •then this book is for you.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• Her hope for the book is that it will help the reader ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“recognize some of the altars in this worldÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •ordinary looking places where human beings have met and may continue to meet up with the divine More that they sometimes call God.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•Taylor is very comfortable writing about themes in spirituality from a progressive viewpoint. In an interview given in 2000, she observed, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“I am on the edge of Christianity, and I expect to get a letter telling me IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ve been kicked out any day. But my choice, at this point in my life, is to practice the religion of Jesus instead of the religion about Jesus.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• And yet I perceive that by moving to what she calls the ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“edgeÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• she has lost some of her distinctive voice and fallen in with the largely homogenized voices of progressive Christianity. By striving to become edgy she has becomeÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •somewhat ironicallyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •conventional.I think that a certain text from this work provides a litmus test of how you will feel about the book. Take a look at the following extract from the essay, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The Practice of Wearing SkinÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•:ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“One of the most remarkable conversations I have ever had about the physics of divine love took place in a far country, where a male colleague and I were involved in a month-long service project. We were done with our work for the day. We were enjoying a good dinner over a bottle of equally good wine. After two glasses of it, the conversation turned to our physical attractionÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •not for each other, but for God. Sometimes, he said, when he was preaching a sermon he really cared about, he grew so aware of GodÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s presence that he became physically aroused. He rose to GodÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s presence as to the presence of the Beloved. His sense of spiritual intimacy flowed straight into his sense of physical intimacy. They were not two but one. He was not two but one. He and God were not two but one.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Inspired by his divine audacity, I allowed as how I had experienced the same thing myself, although with different physical equipment. Sometimes when I was praying, my body could not tell the difference between that and making love. Every cell in my body rose to the occasion, so that I felt the prayer prick my breasts and warm my belly, lifting every hair on my body in full alert. Body and soul were not two but one. I was not two but one. God and I were not two but one.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•If you find this passage to be exciting and in the best tradition of St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila, then I think that you will like this

book very much. If you are more skeptical about this bit of sharing and think it has more in common with ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Eat, Pray, Love,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• than with the biblical spirituality of, for example, the Song of Songs, then I recommend that you skip this book in favor of the authorÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s earlier work.My goal for this review is to alert the potential reader of this book that the author is in a very different place than when we first met her in ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The Preaching LifeÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• or ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“When God was Silent,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• and I am not yet persuaded that this represents a good change. I, for one, lament the loss of the ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“homiletical restraintÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• espoused in the authorÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s earlier work. I know that I am swimming upstream with this review! If you are tempted to move the cursor toward a ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“not helpfulÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• vote for this review, please consider leaving a comment instead and begin a conversation with me about this author. Or do both. I frequently revise my reviews in light of reader comments and welcome the interaction.

"The last place people look  is right under their feet, in the every day activities, accidents and encounters in their lives.""An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith" - Barbara Brown TaylorI can’t remember the last time I have read a "religious" book that resonated with me so strongly that it moved me to tears right out of the gate. Seriously, I cried twice in the first chapter alone. Maybe it’s because I have also walked the lava flows on the Big Island of Hawai’i and felt the same raw power in the earth beneath my feet and the newness of black rock that is younger than I am, that Taylor describes so vividly in the first few pages of that chapter. Maybe it’s because throughout the book, the author voices so eloquently feelings that I have harbored for years and I now feel vindicated and no longer alone.By Taylor’s reckoning, even the tiniest, sometimes most inconsequential things in our daily lives can be a source of meditation, introspection and spiritual nourishment in their own way. From learning to love and accept ourselves in our own skin, to embracing and recognizing the simple joys that can be found in physical labor. Even allowing ourselves to find the inner strength that lies deep within the core of each of us when we face physical pain. Chapter by chapter, she leads us by example through the moments of her life where she found reasons to feel reverence and awe in the chaos and quietude of everyday living and encourages us to do the same in each passing day.This book is a treasure and I highly recommend it to everyone. I know that it is one that I will return to again and again whenever I need to be reminded to stop, take a deep breath and simply allow myself... to Be.

After reading about the author in Time magazine I decided to try An Altar In The World. The book

discusses twelve spiritual practices, not necessarily religious or churchy, but tending to the earthy and everyday. Things like physical work, paying attention to our surroundings, appreciating the people who pass through our lives mostly unnoticed, the practice of blessing, and several others. These are elegant, well-written homilies, very accessible, and easy to read.Author Barbara Brown Taylor is an episcopal priest renowned for her preaching, with a good sense of humor, and extensive learning. Her material is not totally original, but it doesn't need to be. It draws the reader in and invites the reader to experiment with the practices. She incorporates teachings from various spiritual traditions, which appealed to this reviewer.The book should be read slowly, a little at a time, so that the teachings can be savored, considered and tried. It is a good book for pondering, rather than for quick scanning. If you're looking for a book of spiritual teaching which is accessible, down to earth, and thoughtful, this might be just what you're looking for. I recommend it. Reviewed by Louis N. Gruber.

Any Barbara Brown Taylor book is excellent. I've been blessed to have taken a class from her. She writes just like she speaks; you feel you're listen to her tell a story or are having a conversation with her. I've read a LOT of spirituality books, especially those on spiritual practices. So I was very pleasantly surprised to learn of more practices....everyday things that are not normally considered spiritual practices. Often I read only a few pages at a time, wanting to savor and ponder what she wrote. I delayed finishing the book because I didn't want it to end. Highly recommend.

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