



# BEYOND LITERAL BELIEF

David Tacey

**April 2015 | RRP \$34.95 | Garratt Publishing**

*'Extraordinarily provocative, at times I found Tacey's Beyond Literal Belief shocking and even offensive. Yet it became clear that the author's intention was not to destroy but to conserve the truth of faith. Stripped of the necessity for belief, Tacey's work offers potential for spiritual renewal ... I found this book compelling and life-affirming. In a world riven with fundamentalist extremism born of literalism, this book has the potential to be profoundly consequential. Read it!'*

**Professor Anne Boyd, University of Sydney**

As the West has become more sophisticated, the miracles and wonders of the religious tenets seem bizarrely out of step with the world, and people have been abandoning their religion in droves. They have treated it with contempt, as an insult to their intelligence. However, according to Australian author David Tacey, the problem is not with the scriptures as such, but with how they are interpreted.

In his new book *Beyond Literal Belief*, Tacey, a professor of literature, and a practicing Catholic, reveals the mystery of biblical language in a voice that is accessible, open and public. He suggests Biblical stories were metaphors appropriate for their time. The Virgin Birth, Physical Resurrection, Son of God, Heaven, Satan and the Apocalypse – all meant something once, hundreds of years ago, and made sense while believers remained uneducated. However today, even students in religious schools recoil from the 'fairytales' of religion. They seem unbelievable and make a mockery of their intelligence.

During his research, Tacey became aware that this debate about the metaphorical nature of scripture was well underway internationally. But it is a debate that is yet to begin here in Australia. In this groundbreaking book, Tacey shows that, with the aid of contemporary thought and depth psychology, we can re-read religious stories as metaphors of the spirit and the interior life. Moving beyond literal thinking could save religion from its greatest enemy, itself.

*'This book is a major achievement. In reading the gospels as myth – which, as David Tacey argues, is how they were written, he has demonstrated the difference between faith and belief, and brilliantly repudiated both Christian and atheistic fundamentalism. In an age when the conventional expressions of the religious message appear increasingly absurd, this is exactly what we need.'*

**Bernie Neville, Professor of Humanities,  
Swinburne University**

*'David Tacey makes a compelling case that the restoration of symbolic awareness would enhance religion and the contribution it could make to our wider culture. The work is an attempt to save religion from itself.'*

**John Dourley, Emeritus Professor of Religion,  
Carleton University, Ottawa**



## About David Tacey

David Tacey is an independent scholar and public intellectual who has written extensively on spirituality, religion, youth experience and mental health. He is the author of fourteen books, including *Edge of the Sacred*; *Re-Enchantment: The New Australian Spirituality*; and *The Spirituality Revolution*. His most recent books include *The Darkening Spirit: Jung, Spirituality and Religion* and *Gods and Diseases: Making Sense of Our Physical and Mental Wellbeing*.

David grew up in central Australia alongside Aboriginal cultures, and has a life-long interest in indigenous issues. He has written on Aboriginal spirituality and on the suicide epidemic in Aboriginal cultures. He studied literature, art history and philosophy at Flinders University and completed a PhD in literature and psychoanalysis at Adelaide University. He undertook post-doctoral studies in the United States on a Harkness Fellowship.



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