

Feature Article (400-600 words)

THE FATE OF FAITH IN ONE MINISTER'S STORY

In her memoir, *The Fog of Faith: Surviving My Impotent God*, Rev. Dr. Leona Stucky takes a more nuanced route than ministers like Dan Barker or Jerry DeWitt, who renounced their faith and took a stand for atheism. She tells a personal traumatic story of her Mennonite farm family's struggle against violence and desperate health conditions, and her step-by-step disappointment with faith as the problems persisted. She reveals the harm her faith caused as well as the blessings it offered and her necessary journey away from and toward the impossibility and the inevitability of belief.

The tension she holds crosses the boundaries of rationality and emotional needs. In her memoir Dr. Stucky grapples with her family's core human longings. Later in her life, when counseling people who have lost loved ones, she notes for them what she learned at age twenty-three, that scientific explanations seem unable to touch the raw human grasping for connection beyond separation, even beyond death. She remembers and re-experiences grief with her clients. She watches tenderness rise up in the human mind, where love and reality confront one another and fight to the death, because death itself brings on this fight. How can active daily love endure absence? How can we grieve enough to accept what is an anathema to our existence?

In her memoir, she addresses this conundrum **not** by theological disputations but simply by telling her own story, with all its terrors, fascinations, and triumphs. Ms. Magazine recommended this story as a great read. After noting Dr. Stucky's reckoning with domestic violence, Ms. Magazine says, "In her chilling and tumultuous memoir, Stucky recounts her attempts to play by the rules of the Mennonite Church that failed to protect her, and her embrace of feminist notions ... that finally led her to a new life."

Reviewers often say they were unable to put the book down, they didn't want it to end, and they felt like they were engaged in a real-life thriller. One reader says the memoir, "has made an indelible impression on my heart and soul that will be with me forever." Others also see this is more than a simple story, but an important work that will have lasting effects.

When read carefully to absorb layers of meaning, Dr. Stucky's memoir is both a well-written work of art and a clarion call to address honestly the human condition that makes us need belief, while it also shows us the inadequacy of faith.

Dr. Stucky said in a recent talk at El Castillo, a senior center in Santa Fe, that as a psychotherapist she has the opportunity to observe the way people deify their mythical images. If, in one faith or another, these images were intended to be factual or historical representations, they didn't live up to that designation. Myths and legends are just that. What moves her deeply is the ongoing and almost catastrophic need for *More* that permeates client stories, history, everyday conversations, meaning-making ideas about events, and the longing for love—a longing that humans palpably embody.

This human longing is evident throughout Dr. Stucky's passionate memoir, revealed and actualized in unimaginable ways that she interprets with an unusual wisdom. And yet her story is, with its peculiarities and extremes, completely identifiable as a faith journey, one that demands our attention and teaches us courage, patience, and a remarkable way of knowing what we know.