

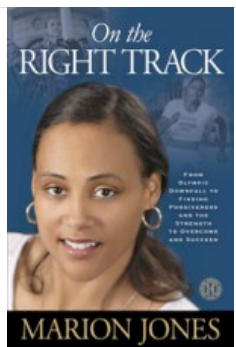
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Religion in Review

Oct 27, 2010

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Original RBL Reviews

On the Right Track: From Olympic Downfall to Finding Forgiveness and the Strength to Overcome and Succeed

Marion Jones with Maggie Greenwood-Robinson. Howard, \$25 (224p) ISBN 978-1-4516-1082-6

Jones had the gold medals, the family, the fame. As the result of one bad decision, she lost it all. In this inspirational account of the lies that took her from track to prison cell, the former Olympian turned professional basketball player takes the reader through her tale of suffering and redemption. Extending her apologies once more, she tells how she unknowingly took steroids, lied to federal agents, was stripped of her medals and records, and served six months in prison. Jones describes the indignities of the prison system and offers a compassionate view of imprisoned women. Now armed with hindsight and strength from God, she pleads for better care in prisons and for others to learn from her mistakes. Motivational clichés abound (“the past is the past,” “make a difference by taking a stand”), likely a result of her motivational speaking gigs. Yet fans will enjoy a behind-the-scenes look at an athlete who would prefer to be remembered more for her failures than her successes. (Nov.)

Signposts: A Devotional

Eric Kampmann. WND Books, \$15.95 trade paper (400p) ISBN 978-1-935071-30-3

Inspired by his conversion to faith through readings in the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer that took place two decades ago, publishing executive Kampmann offers this compendium of meditations that touches on the big themes of spiritual life. It is intended as a “daily companion for a long journey” to help readers “search and find the better way,” Kampmann writes. He enlivens his reflections on the daily scripture choices with references to his own life experiences, particularly his ongoing journey of hiking the entire 2,178-mile Appalachian Trail. While his readings are mostly taken from Hebrew scripture books such as Job, Psalms, and Proverbs, the writer weaves his deeply personal thoughts on fundamental Christian topics including suffering, salvation, Satan, and faith throughout the volume. Readers looking for provocative questions for personal growth or scholarly sophistication might want to seek elsewhere, but those happy to have a companion willing to walk alongside them as a fellow traveler may find something here. (Nov.)

Beyond a House Divided: The Moral Consensus Ignored by Washington, Wall Street, and the Media

Carl Anderson. Doubleday, \$12 trade paper (128p) ISBN 978-0-307-88774-0

Anderson (*A Civilization of Love*), head of the Catholic fraternal organization Knights of Columbus, argues in this slender book—the publication of which coincides with the 2010 elections—that Americans have a “moral consensus” on key social issues that goes unrecognized amid politically partisan gridlock. Using polling data gathered by the Marist College Institute of Public Opinion as well as other surveys, Anderson highlights positions and values that significant numbers of Americans support. Some of the data is surprising: nearly one-third of the millennial generation names “to be spiritual or close to God” as a top life goal, a finding that doesn’t square with the documented growth of people who say they have no religion and who are primarily found among the young. A chapter on abortion offers numbers suggesting two nuanced conclusions: most Americans favor some access to abortion, and, most Americans favor some restrictions on it. A chapter on marriage is the book’s weakest, refuting a straw man marriage-is-dead argument and drawing supporting data from the agenda-driven National Marriage Project. This book is too small to make a completely persuasive argument, but its findings deserve further examination and discussion. (Nov. 2)

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MOST POPULAR ARTICLES

The Face of God: The Rediscovery of the True Face of Jesus

Paul Badde, trans. by Henry Taylor. Ignatius, \$23.95 (350p) ISBN 978-0-58617-515-3

Badde (*Maria of Guadalupe*), Vatican correspondent for the German newspaper *Die Welt*, recounts the tangled story of what Catholics know as the "veil of Veronica," a relic venerated as a cloth used to wipe the face of Christ as he walked to his crucifixion. A cloth said to be the veil is housed in Rome, but Badde argues that the true veil can be found today in the small Italian village of Manoppello, which Pope Benedict XVI visited in 2006 "to know the Face of the Lord." Though he has written it to allow the reader to share the journey of discovery, Badde's narrative is hard to follow; a time line would have been most helpful, given the disputed and complex history of the artifact. The illustrations are useful. Catholic readers of a devotional bent may find this an adjunct to their prayer life; devotion to the Holy Face of Jesus is a prayer practice. Other readers will simply be puzzled. (*Nov.*)

Shalom/Salaam: A Story of a Mystical Fraternity

Thomas Block. Fons Vitae, \$25.95 trade paper (260p) ISBN 978-1-89178-548-1

Block, a Jew, independent scholar, and "citizen-diplomat," spent more than 10 years researching and uncovering the hidden links between the mystical systems within Islam and Judaism, expressed in Sufism and Kabbalah, respectively. In what he believes is the only book on the topic, Block demonstrates the influence of Sufism on historic and modern Kabbalah and even Judaism, assembling and juxtaposing a variety of sources. Seminal medieval figures in Kabbalah (whom Block affectionately refers to as "Jewish-Sufi" and whom he profiles throughout) looked to Sufi themes and attitudes for "innovation" in their own practice—so successfully that some hymns sung in synagogues today, among other practices, are clearly Islamic in origin. An entire chapter devoted to Spanish Jewish Kabbalists' usage of Sufism describes the glory of the multifaith, historic Cordoba and Arab Spain of the eighth through 15th centuries, where Jews participated as equals in the Muslim-run state. Block's evident enthusiasm for the revelation of these common roots as a way forward for Muslim-Jewish relations propels this great read. (*Nov.*)

Sneak Peek: Religion Book Reviews Coming in PW Nov. 8

Escape from the Land of Snows: The Young Dalai Lama's Harrowing Flight to Freedom and the Making of a Spiritual Hero

Stephan Talty. Crown, \$26 (320p) ISBN 978-0-307-46095-0

Drawing from written eyewitness accounts and interviews with survivors, Talty (*The Illustrious Dead*) describes the events in 1959 that irrevocably altered the future of Tibet. He skillfully moves between protests in Lhasa and the Dalai Lama's escape toward the border, tracing stories of the many people involved. Adding complexity to this narrative are details about CIA support of Tibetans fighting against the Chinese regime, the U.S. role in securing permission for the Dalai Lama's entry into India, and the worldwide media frenzy that shaped the public's perceptions of Tibet. Witness reports include those of the Dalai Lama's mother and brothers, rebels and refugees, members of the CIA's Tibetan Task Force, and former prisoners of the Chinese. From these multiple voices the author has woven a vivid picture of a dangerous journey and a country in crisis. The accompanying analysis provides context for the intricate events that changed the young leader into a "movable Tibet," and an isolated mountain society into an international cause and "a place of the mind." (*Jan.*)

Love Food & Live Well: Lose Weight, Get Fit & Taste Life at Its Very Best

Chantel Hobbs. WaterBrook, \$19.99 (240p) ISBN 978-0-307-45784-4

Author and speaker Hobbs (*Never Say Diet*) has a story about dieting that will refute any number of doubting challenges to her plan for getting in shape and staying that way. Hobbs, who lost 200 pounds and has maintained that weight loss by changing the way she approaches food and life, offers anyone struggling with weight problems a different way of handling uncontrollable desires for food. With a friendly, breezy style, Hobbs engages readers first on an emotional level as she tells of her private pain as a morbidly obese woman, then smoothly transitions into helping individuals understand the whys and wherefores of their inner battle with edible comfort. The author's clear message of Christian spirituality will appeal especially to evangelicals, while her hard-fought battle with pounds will resonate with everyone. Hobbs's method is a friendlier, gentler approach than that of hardcore television fitness trainers' (think Jillian Michaels) more brutal systems. (*Dec.*)

A First Look at the Stars: Starred Religion Book Reviews Coming in PW Nov. 8

★ Unconditional? The Call of Jesus to Radical Forgiveness

Brian Zahnd. Strang/Charisma House, \$19.99 (256p) ISBN 978-1-61638-025-0

In this insightful critique of contemporary Christianity, Zahnd (*What to Do on the Worst Day of Your Life*), pastor and founder of Word of Life Church in St. Joseph, Mo., challenges Christians to make Jesus' call to forgiveness central to their faith. He bases his argument that Christians are not merely forgiven—a belief he considers "cheap grace"—but also called to "extend the grace of forgiveness to others" on his compelling analysis of the Sermon on the Mount, as well as Jesus' teaching and life, particularly Jesus' own plea on behalf of his executioners. In addition to drawing examples of radical forgiveness from scripture and literature, Zahnd provides powerful role models from recent history: Nelson Mandela's seeking reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa; the astonishing response of the Amish community to the murder of Amish schoolchildren in 2006; Pope John Paul II's befriending of his would-be assassin; and numerous others who chose to "end the cycle of revenge." Zahnd's evident preaching skills enliven this thought-provoking book; for example, he asks: "Who has fired the gun of hate at your heart?" The author may shake up his

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BLOGS

Beyond Her Book
Barbara Vey
Just a Quickie Update



Just wanted to let you know that I will be attending Comic Con in San Diego after all this year thanks to an invite from RWA member Lisa Kessler. She'll be my videographer. (I'll see you there Cal! ...

ShelfTalker
Josie Leavitt

Fire at a Bookstore
In the years I've been open, there have been a handful of bookstore fires throughout the country, but Sunday night there was one close to home, and it's shaken me up....

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A few surprises and a lot of good reading recommendations....



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