

pie without paying for it now—would force us all to consider just how much we want our serving.

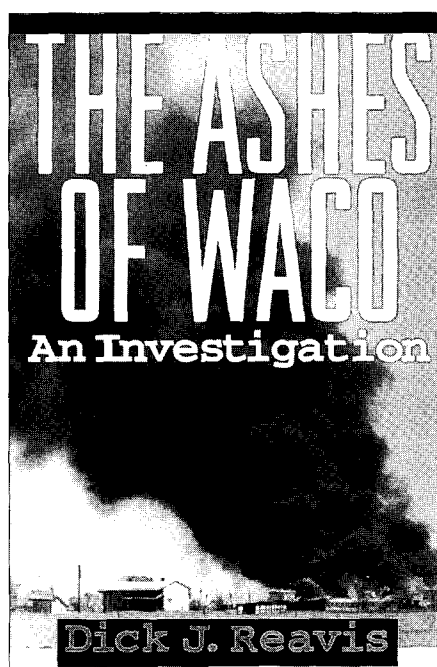
Kinsley makes the same mistake with regard to term limits, which he describes as “the silliest expression of America’s failure of democratic followership [as opposed to leadership],” because their purpose is to prevent voters from hurting themselves through their own freely cast ballots. Well, yes. Each of us will be tempted to choose the best pork hauler available if that’s the way the system works, so we elect a Congress of Robert Byrds. But is it so silly to collectively agree instead, at the constitutional level, that to reduce this incentive none of our representatives will serve more than three terms? Then maybe our representatives will keep the national interest in mind even when we don’t.

On this point, it might be noted that Kinsley regularly chides Reagan Republicans for having told voters they could have tax cuts without spending reductions. Again he has a certain point. But who started the game of telling voters that government could raise their kids, take care of the old folks, lend them money for a house, and improve their love lives while somebody else picked up the check? It worked for the Democrats for some 60 years; is it any surprise that Republicans were tempted to pick it up?

Notwithstanding the above, Kinsley’s strongest suit is as critic of conservative arguments and hypocrisies. One theme of his book is the incoherence of the conservative position on antidiscrimination law and affirmative action. Conservatives proclaim ringingly that they are all for vigorous enforcement of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which they say quite properly outlaws all public and private racial discrimination. Then they endorse “affirmative action voluntarily practiced.” But isn’t that racial discrimination? Now, Kinsley is insufficiently appreciative of the distinction between public and private—that is, between coerced and voluntary—action. But he has identified here a logical trap for conservatives.

Kinsley also notes that conservatives decry the culture of victimization while loudly draping the victim mantle around conservative college students and white men. In pointing out that William F.

Buckley, Jr., in his 1951 book *God and Man at Yale* called on his alma mater to “impose...on its students a conservative orthodoxy of capitalism and Christianity,” while Dinesh D’Souza in 1991’s *Illiberal Education* calls for an end to campus orthodoxy, Kinsley seems to indict the Right for hypocrisy. But what the shift really points to is the virtual disappearance of conservative thinking in the academy over that 40-year period. By 1991, all conservatives dared dream of was a campus where their ideas were not ridiculed and suppressed. That is probably a better vision for a university anyway, and whether some conserv-



atives might prefer Buckley’s original concept or not, its ideological opposite is the current reality.

In a 1988 column musing on the possibility of annexing Canada, Kinsley demonstrates his political radar. He notes that “right-wing American nationalists, white racists, and so on ought to relish the prospect of a vast infusion of Anglo-Saxon stock into the American melting pot...millions of citizens with sturdy names like Mulroney and Turner.” Just two years later Pat Buchanan seized on the idea, crying that “tribe and race, language and faith, history and culture” prompt us to dream of “an English-speaking nation, extending from Key West to the North Pole,” and concluding, “Who speaks for the Euro-Americans, who founded the U.S.A.?”

Michael Kinsley is an incisive critic of conservative and libertarian ideas. But he’s better with the assassin’s stiletto than with a builder’s trowel. Reading his essays, it’s hard to see what he’s *for*. He lacks the vision thing, as one hapless former president put it. In this, Kinsley perfectly represents liberalism in our time. *Vanity Fair* has called him “his generation’s leading liberal light, the man with all the answers.” His light is indeed piercing. But like contemporary liberalism itself he is all thrust and parry—with very few answers.

*David Boaz is executive vice president of the Cato Institute.*

## DAVIDIANS VS. GOLIATH

By Carol Moore

*The Ashes of Waco: An Investigation*  
By Dick J. Reavis (Simon & Schuster:  
New York) 320 pages, \$24

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms assault that killed six Branch Davidians. The Federal Bureau of Investigation’s harsh 51-day siege. The April 19 gas and tank attack that led to the fiery deaths of 76 men, women, and children. Were these fully justified law enforcement actions, bungled police operations, or a brutal attack on an obscure religious group? In *The Ashes of Waco* Dick Reavis attempts to bring journalistic neutrality to the subject. His analysis suggests bungling, though some of the evidence he presents points to some self-justifying conspiring among BATF and FBI agents at Waco.

After working for the *Texas Monthly* and *Dallas Observer*, Reavis quit his job with an “alternative” paper in Texas to research this book because he saw no other professional journalists taking up the task. His sources include in-depth interviews with Davidian survivors, trial and congressional hearing transcripts, and the 18,000 pages of transcribed negotiations between the Davidians and FBI negotiators.

Reavis devotes nearly a third of his book to exploring how David Koresh’s beliefs and teachings colored the Davidians’ reactions to the paramilitary attacks on their community. He places Koresh’s vision firmly in the tradition of Ellen White,

founder of the Seventh Day Adventists. Among other things, White taught that God continues to enlighten humans through "present day" prophets and that Christ will return after a time of government persecution of true believers.

After Koresh took over the Branch Davidians, an Adventist spinoff, in 1988, a series of visions convinced him that it was his mission to teach, and then fulfill, the Seven Seals of the Book of Revelation. Koresh believed that through study of the Seven Seals he could transform his followers into a new order of being who would transcend human appetites. Mount Carmel became a monastery—except that Koresh was given a special charge to produce a number of sacred children.

It was this last belief—that girls who reached the age of puberty were to be his wives—that particularly inflamed former members against Koresh. Their allegations of child abuse resulted in an investigation by the state of Texas. This increased the intensity of Koresh's fear that the government persecution of true believers prophesized by Ellen White was at hand. While this persecution might lead to their deaths, if Davidians were sufficiently obedient to God they might be "translated" into the Kingdom of God without having to die, he instructed. Davidians reacted to BATF and FBI actions, Reavis explains, within the context of their sincerely held view that the attack was a sign from God that the end was near, and that Koresh should spread his message to the world.

Reavis's evidence indicates that the original BATF assault was conducted despite David Koresh's good faith invitation to the BATF to come inspect his weapons; that BATF agents spread false information about the presence at Mt. Carmel of a methamphetamine laboratory; that BATF agents fired first at the front door, mortally wounding David Koresh's father-in-law Perry Jones in the abdomen; that medical examiners may have lied when they denied Jones was so wounded; that BATF agents fired indiscriminately from helicopters, killing four Davidians; that BATF agents may have assassinated a wounded Davidian trying to return to Mount Carmel; that the FBI may have prevented Texas Rangers from gathering evidence of the crime; that the FBI destroyed evidence that might

have proved the Davidians did relatively little firing; that the FBI withheld critical evidence about the status of negotiations and the gas plan from Attorney General Janet Reno; and that the building may have caught fire because of FBI negligence.

The information about Waco that millions of Americans of diverse political views are searching for today is not more detail on the peculiar theology of the Davidians but rather an explanation for the actions of federal agents and officials in the showdown. Perhaps fearful of being labeled a "conspiracy theorist," Reavis treads lightly here. He repeatedly mentions the anti-authoritarian attitudes of the Davidians. Wayne Martin rejected the BATF's offer of medical aid saying, "We don't want any help from your country." David Koresh asked negotiators, "If the Vatican can have its own little country, can't I have my own little country?" However, Reavis does not explore the possibility that the federal government considered the Davidians to be separatists who had to be crushed because they were mocking and undermining the authority of the United States government. As former FBI Deputy Director Larry Potts said the day after the fire, "These people had thumbed their nose at law enforcement."

*The Ashes of Waco* is an insightful introduction to a tragic event. However, only the appointment of an independent counsel with a full staff of investigators and the ability to grant immunity to agents and officials can get to the real truth about what happened at Waco and why.

*Carol Moore is author of The Davidian Massacre.*

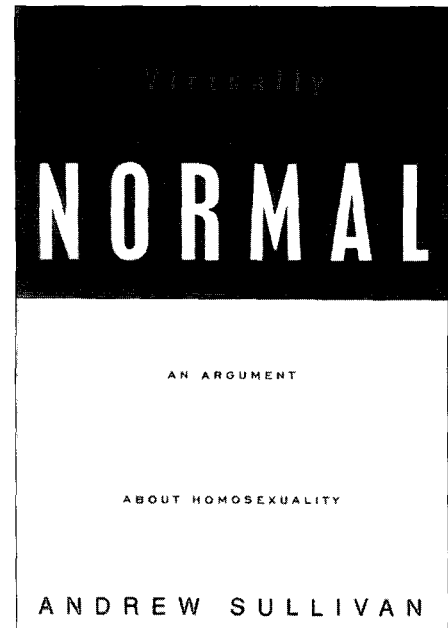
## NOT NATURAL

By Scott Walter

*Virtually Normal: An Argument About Homosexuality*

By Andrew Sullivan, (Knopf: New York), 224 pages, \$22

Early on, the reader of Andrew Sullivan's defense of "gay rights" encounters his notion of homosexual coupling as a valuable "complement" to heterosexual relations—"a variation that does not eclipse



the theme," much as "redheads offer a startling contrast to the blandness of their peers." Waxing grandiloquent, Sullivan adds that "prohibiting" homosexuality (which seems to include any public disapproval) is "the real crime against nature, a refusal to accept the variety of God's creation, a denial of the way in which the other need not threaten, but may actually give depth and contrast to, the self."

Sullivan mixes this sort of elegant sophistry with paeans to monogamy. He attacks radical homosexual activists for their nihilistic dreams of "liberation" and defends bourgeois preferences for "emotional stability." He also insists that all political responses to homosexuality heretofore conceived—liberal or conservative—are unworkable. Our only salvation lies in his solution: permit no official discrimination by sexual orientation, but tolerate private discrimination. Translated, that means open homosexuals in the military, homosexual marriage and adoption, and "basic education about homosexuality in the high schools," but no legal requirement that Orthodox Jewish landlords rent to homosexuals, or that gay bars hire straight employees.

Under Sullivan's regime we should apparently expect to see the gay lifestyle take a turn toward healthier practices while the culture wars simultaneously cool down. But skeptics may wonder: Once we have started cherishing and legally protecting

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