

Is Ann Coulter Among the Prophets?

by Robert Stacy McCain

*"And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast,
and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast?
Who is able to make war with him?"*

—Revelation 13:4

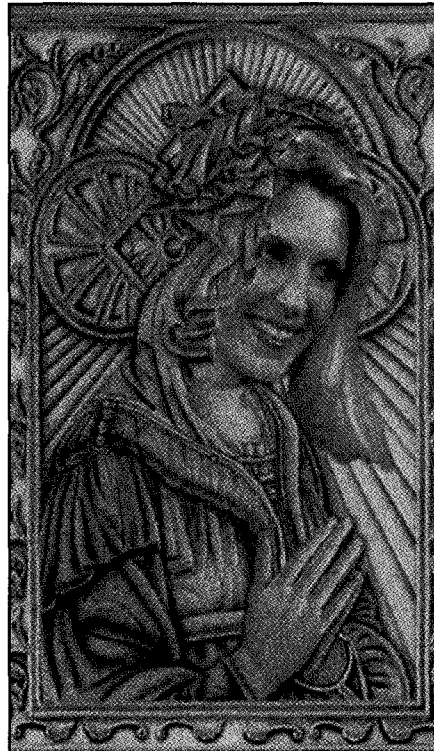
Godless: The Church of Liberalism
by Ann Coulter
New York: Crown Forum;
320 pp., \$27.95

Signs and omens have been everywhere this year. Amid wars and rumors of wars, one occasionally glimpses evidence that truth is now being revealed in ways that might astonish even battle-scarred veterans of the culture wars.

I knew the Apocalypse was upon us when I picked up Phyllis Chesler's *The Death of Feminism* and discovered that Chesler, bearing decades of liberal feminist credentials, had praised as "prophetic" Jean Raspail's *Camp of the Saints*. What next? Will we see Cornel West invoking Robert E. Lee? Or George Will paying tribute to M.E. Bradford?

Let him that hath understanding consider the significance when the latest best-seller by Ann Coulter—Sean Hannity's favorite TV guest—cites Joe Sobran. Like Raspail, Sobran is one of The Great Unmentionables, whose existence is not even to be acknowledged by respectable people in the conservative movement. Once you have been denounced as an Unpatriotic Conservative in the pages of *National Review*, your name disappears, with the resulting void serving as a warning to anyone else who might dare to offend the arbiters of conservative respectability.

Robert Stacy McCain is coauthor, with Lynn Vincent, of *Donkey Cons: Sex, Crime, and Corruption in the Democratic Party* (Nelson Current).



Melanie Anderson

And yet, there it was, on page 201 of *Godless*, where Coulter recognizes Darwinism as "the creation myth" of the Church of Liberalism and refers to evolutionary cultists as "the Darwiniacs"—adding, "as author and columnist Joe Sobran calls them." Not content with that offense to the Straussian archons, Coulter thanks Sobran in her acknowledgements, numbering him among her "long-suffering, magnificent friends." Coulter has even gone out of her way to call attention to her thoughtcrime. On the day her book was released—June 6, 2006, making use of the number of the beast as a publicity stunt—Coulter paid tribute to Sobran in an interview published by *Human Events*, calling him a "magnificent writer" who had given her "the greatest advice a writer could ever get."

Coulter herself has survived banishment from *National Review* without suf-

fering any discernible loss of popularity, and this survival evidently inspired in her an even-greater loathing of the pieties of political correctness. How else to explain her designation of Willie Horton as the "martyr" of the Church of Liberalism? She devotes a 17-page chapter to revisiting Horton's crimes, the Massachusetts prison furlough program that turned Horton loose, and the way in which Horton's furlough became an issue in the 1988 presidential election. Though Democratic-primary rival Al Gore was the first to use the Horton furlough against Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis, Democrats did not begin shouting "racism" until Republicans followed suit.

No serious student of the 1988 presidential campaign has ever expressed doubt that the South Carolina-born Lee Atwater, campaign boss for George H.W. Bush, knew exactly what he was doing when he summoned forth the dark specter of Willie Horton. A murderer serving life without parole, Horton was furloughed as part of a program staunchly defended by Dukakis and other Massachusetts liberals. He then kidnapped and tortured a Maryland couple—pistol-whipped, bound, gagged, and sadistically tortured the man, then forced him to listen to his fiancée's screams as Horton repeatedly raped her. This incident would have been a scathing indictment of Dukakis's commitment to public safety whatever Horton's race, but because Horton was black, his crimes held a deeper symbolism.

The Willie Horton ads turned Dukakis's boast of being a "card-carrying member of the ACLU" into a fatal cam-

paign liability. In reaction, Democrats accused Republicans of having appealed to primal racial fears of the sort that once inspired lynch mobs and made D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* the original Hollywood blockbuster. Republicans have spent nearly two decades denying this, and Coulter is not about to give liberals any satisfaction:

Since none of their other defenses of Dukakis's furlough program were working, the Democrats reverted to their default argument: they accused Republicans of racism. This was consistent with author Peter Brimelow's definition of "racist" as "someone who is winning an argument with a liberal."

(See? There she goes again, bringing up the name of yet another conservative banished from polite society.)

I only wish that Coulter had acknowledged the extent to which the liberal criticisms were fair. One need not be a liberal to say that a black rapist represents a symbolic fear to many Americans, nor is it racist to question whether this symbolism is strictly irrational. Is it racist to admit into evidence Eldridge Cleaver's testimony about the implications of rape as "symbol" and "metaphor"? Yet Coulter, while boldly violating the Republican taboo against discussing the 1988 ads, still seems compelled to respect other taboos—or risk providing ammunition to those who regularly accuse her of fomenting hatred. Coulter clearly understands that, when liberals express a desire for honest, forthright "racial dialogue," what they actually mean is: *Shut up.*

The initial indignation over *Godless* had nothing to do with Willie Horton, however, but with Coulter's treatment of the "Jersey Girls"—the group of women widowed in the World Trade Center attacks who gained fame as prominent critics of the Bush administration. Coulter styles Kristen Breitweiser and her cohorts "the Witches of East Brunswick" and accuses them of deploying their grief for partisan gain after demanding over one million dollars in federal compensation for their loss:

These self-obsessed women seemed genuinely unaware that 9/11 was an attack on our nation and acted as if the terrorist attacks happened only to them. The whole

nation was wounded, all of our lives reduced. But they believed the entire country was required to marinate in their exquisite personal agony. Apparently, denouncing Bush was an important part of their closure process. These broads are millionaires, lionized on TV and in articles about them, reveling in their status as celebrities and stalked by grief-arazzis. I've never seen people enjoying their husbands' deaths so much.

Here, quite apart from partisan or ideological allegiances, can we all agree that Coulter has taken hyperbole entirely beyond defensible limits? As much as anyone might wish to criticize the publicity seeking and griefmongering of Breitweiser *et al.*, it is both cruel and false to say that they are "enjoying" the deaths of their spouses. In reading that offending sentence, I wondered how an editor could have failed to demand that it be recast, or why Coulter would have insisted it stand as written. Indefensible as argument, it makes sense only as a punch line. Its stark clarity is its only conceivable excuse, and I suspect that Coulter demanded that it be printed for the same reason that Lyndon Johnson once sought to accuse a Texas political foe of barnyard bestiality: "I just want to hear the S.O.B. deny it."

The usual "respectable" Republican types have joined many genuine conservatives in lamenting Coulter's penchant for such rhetorical abuses. Coulter is vulnerable to the charge of committing the same sins of which she accuses liberals. (Imagine her reaction if any liberal had accused Horton's rape victim of "enjoying" it.) Even if turnabout is fair play or if two wrongs could make a right, even if one might enjoy Coulter's high-wire act as a sort of showbiz spectacle, one might also wish that some friendly editor would take the time to talk her out of the most egregious of her excesses.

Yet that would spoil the fun of periodically turning on the television to see Coulter running rings around Matt Lauer or whatever other liberal spokesman has drawn the unenviable assignment of confronting her in a live interview. A lawyer by training, Coulter is quick-witted and tenacious, with a carefully honed knack for making liberal antagonists look foolish.

Thus with the "Jersey Girls." Coulter's attack on Breitweiser is part of a chapter in which she correctly points out that lib-

erals have

hit on an ingenious strategy: They would choose only messengers whom we're not allowed to respond to. That's why all Democratic spokesmen these days are sobbing, hysterical women. You can't respond to them because that would be questioning the authenticity of their suffering.

She includes in this category various individuals (Valerie Plame, Rep. John Murtha, Cindy Sheehan) whom she treats as examples of a single phenomenon:

What crackpot argument can't be immunized by the Left's invocation of infallibility based on personal experience? . . . If these Democrat human shields have a point worth making, how about allowing it to be made by someone we're allowed to respond to?

That Coulter was criticizing the Oprahfication of politics was a point lost in the immediate uproar over her "Witches of East Brunswick" line. Her point will be understood better by the thousands who buy her books, among whom are many College Republicans who will seek to emulate her defiance of liberal sensibilities. This is why liberals so hate Coulter: If she can get rich by sarcastically denouncing the myths and martyrs of the liberal faith, she will inspire others to similar impiety, and liberals must dread that nightmare future when cable TV news is fully stocked with Ann Coulter wannabes, as talk radio is now dominated by Rush Limbaugh clones.

Most genuine conservatives probably do not relish a future in which political debate is conducted in one-liners, even if liberalism is the butt of the joke. And Coulter's enthusiasm for the war in Iraq will annoy those readers of Thucydides who understand that Nicias was right in opposing the Sicilian campaign, even if Alcibiades won the debate in Athens. Still, *Godless* has much to recommend it.

In her 20-page chapter on abortion—the "holiest sacrament" of the Church of Liberalism—Coulter is unrelenting. "No Republican is as crazily obsessed with any issue as the Democrats are with abortion," she observes, labeling them the "Abortion Party." Coulter anticipates that some will respond by point-

ing to pro-life Democrats and is ready to show that these commitments are routinely discarded by Democrats with national ambitions:

Showing the raw principle of the modern Democratic Party, among the Democrats who have abandoned pro-life positions to become pro-choice are former president Jimmy Carter, Senator Dick Durbin, former representative Richard Gephardt, Representative Dennis Kucinich, the Reverend Jesse Jackson, and [former vice president] Al Gore. . . . It's easy to imagine a person going from being pro-abortion to anti-abortion based on new information—ultrasounds, medical advances, pictures of babies smiling in the womb. But it's hard to see how new information could produce the reverse conversion.

On abortion, Coulter thus takes her stand with one of the most influential, though least prestigious, of the Republican Party's constituencies, the Religious Right. Here again, she invites censure from the GOP elite, who scarcely conceal their embarrassment at their party's

reliance on the votes of devout Catholics and hard-shell evangelical Protestants. And her proclivity for adding insult to injury is further evidenced when she concludes with three chapters (82 pages) attacking Darwinism.

Her critique of Darwinian evolution will offer few surprises to the reader who has followed the development of the Intelligence Design (ID) argument over the past two decades. Coulter acknowledges the assistance of ID's leading theorists (Michael Behe, David Berlinski, and William Dembski) and also mentions Berkeley law professor Phillip E. Johnson, who has explored the philosophical terrain staked out by evolutionists. And, in the end, she presents the same argument, really, that Johnson made a decade ago in his book, *Reason in the Balance*. Johnson, however, is not a long-stemmed blonde with a caustic wit, nor does he have Sean Hannity's private number on speed-dial. Coulter's notoriety enables her to reach many thousands who would never read a Berkeley law professor's book, let alone anything by Joe Sobran or Peter Brimelow.

Conservative intellectuals may disdain Coulter as a shallow popularizer, but, so

long as she's popularizing the right ideas, she is doing the Lord's work. She goes where angels fear to tread and seems to have been blessed with some mystical protection against the conservative establishment's desire to rid itself of inconvenient associations. The SPLC can scream all it wants about Coulter's friendships—in May, she wrote a column about immigration that cited *VDare.com*—and she'll just toss her blonde mane and laugh.

This apparent immunity to rebuke is enviable, as was noted *en passant* by Samuel Francis a few years before his death. Coulter had just got herself banished from *National Review Online* and had responded by calling Jonah Goldberg and Rich Lowry "girly boys." Noting a series of neocon attacks on Coulter in 2003, Francis dryly observed, "it may be that Miss Coulter kind of ODs on the hyperbole. I know the problem myself." Don't we all? But we cannot all be blue-eyed blondes, and, in the Age of Media, many must toil in thankless obscurity while a favored few reap fame and fortune.

Rather than succumb to envy, however, we the obscure ought to count our blessings and remain steadfast in faith. For the signs indicate that the day is coming when "the first shall be last." ☞

The Morality of Everyday Life: Rediscovering an Ancient Alternative to the Liberal Tradition by Thomas Fleming

What passes for conservatism today is really nothing more than the impossible moral and social theories of the Renaissance and Enlightenment, in which universal abstractions, such as democracy and equality, are presented as hard truths, when, in fact, they have never existed in any society in human history. Nonetheless, they are to be applied worldwide, at the tip of a spear (or cruise missile) if necessary.

Dr. Fleming's alternative is rooted in "everyday life," the local realities of blood and soil, custom and tradition, friendship and faith, and in the wisdom born of the experiences these realities beget. This wisdom finds expression in folktales and fables, in ancient Hebrew Scriptures and Greek philosophy, and in medieval casuistry. It is the method to solving ethical problems great and small, and it is the method that undergirds authentic conservatism.

"No more important book has been published in this new century."

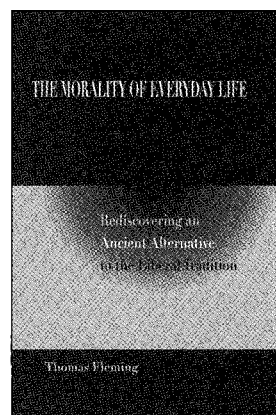
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Hardcover Price \$49.95
(\$44.95 + \$5.00 shipping and handling)

In a Savage World

by Thomas Fleming

Empty Bed Blues

by George Garrett

Columbia: University of Missouri Press;
179 pp., \$19.95

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This latest volume of George Garrett's stories and sketches is proof that the old fox has not forgotten how to raid our American cultural henhouse without running away with a few plump chickens. *Chronicles* readers should not have to be told that Garrett, a long-time contributing editor to this magazine, is the master of several literary genres. In three books set in the early 17th century, *Death of a Fox*, *The Succession*, and *Entered From the Sun*, he practically reinvented the historical novel as a serious literary form, and, among his short fiction, there are tales of such perfection as Maupassant only dreamed of writing. As a teacher, he has inspired many serious writers across the country. Though Garrett is admittedly "getting on in years" and afflicted by maladies that only he can make seem funny, he has not lost his ability to surprise the reader into understanding.

George Garrett's fiction is marked by several characteristics. Most obviously, there is his fondness for multiple points of view and multiple voices, a technique that has influenced several disciples, such as Madison Smartt Bell. More successfully than the most avant-garde postmodernists, Garrett has been able to incorporate our omnipresent popular culture into his writing, without ever (or hardly ever) descending to the trivial level of New York brat-pack writers. He has even succeeded in adapting techniques of film, television, and documentaries, though readers should never forget that he is the author of perhaps the worst film scenario ever produced, *Frankenstein Meets the Space Monster*. (Garrett blames the movie on the producers' decision to mix two separate versions—one, deliberately funny; the other, only accidentally so. Every viewer will have to judge for himself.) In reading *The King of Babylon Shall Not Come Against You* (1998), I was struck not only by the pop-culture references but even more by the brilliant way he used a sequence of photographs to piece together a story. He might have

taken a hint from Antonioni's film *Blow-up*, where solution of a murder mystery meant nothing, but, in Garrett's hands, the shuffling of photos gives us an insight into the fraudulence of public life.

These 15 stories illustrate the breadth of Garrett's range as a fiction writer. In the first or Prologue (a brief sketch of the type the author has honed in telling and retelling over the years), he recalls the "Independence Day" his family spent at the beach only to discover that the nice young men in the next-door cabin were John Dillinger and associates. One, "Ghost Me What's Holy Now," might have been an outtake from one of his Elizabethan novels, while in "Spilling the Beans: A Letter to Linda Evangelista," Garrett resurrects his infamous alter ego, John Towne, the "hero" (if you'll pardon the expression) of *Poison Pen*, a novel in the form of nasty and insinuating letters to famous people (e.g., one by a "Mexican" asking LBJ to reward him for all the many times he and his dead relatives have voted in every election). The author gives the ungrateful Towne an opportunity to quarrel with him over the very premise of his *Poison Pen* letters: Garrett's "crackpot, cockeyed vision of America as a huge nation of celebrity lovers (starf--kers without portfolio or hope of redemption), peasants worshipping their sleazy lesser gods." He concedes to Miss Linda: "As a Godless people we need something to love and worship. In the absence of God (who has gone only He knows where), we are left with nothing but you people."

Garrett has almost infinite patience and kindness for the often sad people who populate his stories: an adolescent obsessed with pornography and a Jewish girl obsessed with his obsession; a reluctant Nazi saboteur who alerts Hoover to the plot but gets 30 years for his pains; a classic doofus in the Army who succeeds in getting himself killed as a hero. The saddest fate is reserved for a young girl being exploited by pornographers. The sheriff (progressive but corrupt) can trap the pornographers by illegal means, but no one can rescue the girl. The sheriff does not know what happened to her after her exploiters were driven out of town. "Moved out to the West Coast, I heard. Where she probably has resumed her movie career and is hoping to be discovered some day and to become the next Kim Basinger or Michelle Pfeiffer."

Or Linda Evangelista.

In a culture that adores celebrity-prostitutes, it is difficult even to mourn the destruction of innocence and the exploita-

tion of children. Readers who have not experienced American popular culture (Amishmen over 70, for example) may not wish to confront Garrett's honest depiction of the harsh reality. The rest of us should heed the words of the narrator in "Gator Bait":

We must teach and encourage our children to be deeply and sincerely cynical. Otherwise they will be lost victims in the savage world we have made and are giving over to them.

Those who profess to be alarmed about the power and prevalence of cynicism in our time are really and truly (and maybe only) concerned that others will see through the pathetic shabby veils of their dedicated self-interest and self-aggrandizement.

Thomas Fleming is the editor of *Chronicles* and the author of *The Morality of Everyday Life*.

Dawn Goes Down to Day

by Mark Royden Winchell

Nothing Gold Can Stay: A Memoir

by Walter Sullivan

Columbia: University of Missouri Press;
196 pp., \$29.95

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Walter Sullivan entered Vanderbilt University in 1941 as an 18-year-old freshman. Two years later, he left during World War II to join the Marine Corps. He returned in 1946 to finish his degree in English and left again in 1947 to pursue an MFA at the Iowa Writers' Workshop, where he studied with Robie Macauley and Paul Engle; became acquainted with Andrew Lytle, John Crowe Ransom, and Robert Lowell; and first met the star of the fiction program—a brilliant young girl from Georgia named Flannery O'Connor. In 1949, Sullivan again returned to Vanderbilt, where he taught until his retirement in 2001.

Recalling the "hot June day" when he moved his last belongings out of his office, Sullivan writes:

Most of what I knew I had learned