

Michael Novak: The Major Writings
Compiled by Derek Cross, Brian Anderson, Cornelius Hesters, and Grattan Brown

Over in the shadows of the darkened lots of the Bethlehem Steel Company, across the river from the Point Stadium in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, where he grew up, the young Michael Novak often saw molten red ingots cooling in the night air. That image burned into his memory as a metaphor for the way God's love penetrates the world and the incarnation suffuses itself into history. Thus, Novak's work has from his earliest days pressed the edges of new issues, exploring, pioneering, advancing Christian thought into various corners of contemporary culture in which theology has seldom gone. In *Belief and Unbelief*, he tried to advance a new method for approaching the presence of God through inquiry and reflection. In *The Experience of Nothingness*, he tried to meet the challenge articulated by Albert Camus: that anyone writing today about ethics must pass through the problematic of nihilism. His books were also the first to reflect theologically upon sports and on "the new ethnicity." So, too, in the economics area. He has constantly attempted pioneering work, to open up new territories for others.

Novak's major works can be divided into five categories: preparatory studies; statements of method and horizon; religious explorations in American culture; a trilogy on capitalism and socialism; the cultural ecology of liberty.

A. PREPARATORY STUDIES

1. SETTING THE AGENDA. *A New Generation: American and Catholic* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964). In this first collection of essays, Novak set out the aims of his lifetime work, as he then saw them: to deal with the two great, overriding facts of his time and place: being Catholic and being American. The United States is the creative land of this century, he held; the center of the struggle between the free human spirit and technology is fixed in her daily life. Respect for the person is not preserved by the insights of British empiricism and American pragmatism, but by inarticulate traditions in American and British life; our philosophy lags behind our living. We must extend the empirical and pragmatic temper into neglected experiences of human consciousness. Sustained reflection on new experiences, in the light of the open traditions of the past, seems also to be the most adequate philosophy for finding the vital relation of Christian faith to contemporary life.

2. CONTEXT AND STAGE: STATE OF THE QUESTION. *The Open Church: Vatican II, Act II* (New York: Macmillan, 1964). This report on the second session of the Second Vatican Council, tells the story of an apparently immobile Church finding its way back into the living sources of contemporary history. The conservative men who loved the splendor of papal Rome, the clarity of Roman law, and the absoluteness of non-historical theology, Novak found, are not despicable, mean, or uncouth men. They are men who have tried to live outside of history. Having shown how "non-historical orthodoxy" is unable to come to grips with history, the Council began proposing another way: through an open Church. In opening the Church, the Second Vatican Council spoke afresh to the world, changing centuries-old alignments and probabilities.

The Open Church was published again in 2002 (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers), with a 32-page introduction in which he describes with brilliant retrospect the historical setting and effect of the Second Council of Vatican II.

B. METHOD, HORIZON

3. *Belief and Unbelief: A Philosophy of Self-Knowledge* (New York: Macmillan, 1965). This book is an attempt to work out some of the problems of self-identity, and some of the problems of belief and unbelief. The roots of the two sets of problems are entangled. For in deciding who one is, one places oneself in relation to others, to the world, and to God. This study begins to elucidate those experiences of human intellectual life in which belief in God is rooted; that is, the experiences of "intelligent subjectivity." Its aim is to provide empirical tools for sorting out the elements of belief and unbelief in one's own experience. Under certain conditions, in the quality of experience they engender, belief and unbelief are quite close.

4. *The Experience of Nothingness* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970). The first philosophical problem of our time is how to interpret the experience of nothingness, how to plunge deeper into it and wrest from it a humanistic, revolutionary ethic. The experience of nothingness arises only under certain conditions. To notice them, to reinforce them, and to build one's life upon them is a choice which does not falsify the experience of nothingness. The experience of nothingness arises when we consciously become aware of – and appropriate – our own actual

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horizons. What seemed certain, necessary, and stable suddenly seems arbitrary and unfounded. We do not know who we are. Yet we continue to throw up symbols against the dark. This book does not intend to remove, cover over, or alleviate the experience of nothingness. It unmask one piece of ideology only – that the experience of nothingness necessarily incapacitates one from further action. Granted that we have the experience of nothingness, what shall we do with it?

5. *Ascent of the Mountain, Flight of the Dove: An Invitation to Religious Studies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971). Religious studies are primarily the taking up of successive standpoints, from which one may assimilate a fresh horizon. Progress in religious studies is not a logical progression, within one fixed and unchanging standpoint. It is a series of “conversions” from standpoint to standpoint, of breakthroughs, of perspectival shifts. In our actions, intelligence is always intermixed with the work of the imagination and the sensibility – with experience, image, symbol, myth and narrative context. The concept *story* allows us to treat all parts of the self in one unified concept and to approach the problem of belief and unbelief in a fresh and more illuminating light.

C. EXPLORATIONS IN AMERICAN CULTURE

6. CULTURAL PLURALISM. *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics: Politics and Culture in the Seventies* (New York: Macmillan, 1972). The “new ethnicity” of the 1970s was a form of historical consciousness. This book is not a call to separatism but to self-consciousness. It does not seek division but rather accurate, mutual appreciation. For it is in possessing our own particularity that we come to feel at home with ourselves and are best able to enter into communion with others. The point of becoming ethnically alert and self-possessed is not self-enclosure, it is genuine community. This book maps the shape of long repressed sentiments of Southern and Eastern Europeans in cultural collision with British-Americans. Ethnicity, Novak predicted, would become an increasingly important dimension of social life around the world. Not surprisingly, this text received a second printing – *Unmeltable Ethnics: Politics & Culture in American Life* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1997). In his 35-page introduction to this new edition, Novak reflects upon the political changes since his 1972 proposals, and carefully distinguishes his own position on celebrating ethnicity from the new “multiculturalism.”

7. PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS, SYMBOLIC GEOMETRY. *Choosing Our King: Symbols of Political Leadership* (New York: Macmillan, 1974); 2nd ed. *Choosing Presidents: Symbols of Political Leadership* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1992). The American presidency is the most dramatic expression of America’s “civil religion.” Two presidential roles can be distinguished: the president as personification of the nation and the president as political leader. Symbols possess decisive power in American politics. Americans, lacking a king, necessarily invest kingly majesty in the office of the presidency. They seek and choose a man with whom they can identify – as they are and as they want to be. The President mirrors the people that elect him. There is a “geography of the soul” to be learned in understanding this continental nation. Sets of symbols that “work” in one place seem in another off-key. To communicate credibly with Americans about America, one must grasp a good many secrets of this symbolic geography.

8. LABOR UNION HISTORY, SLAVIC HISTORY. *The Guns of Lattimer* (New York: Basic, 1978). On September 10, 1887, in the hamlet of Lattimer Mines, Pennsylvania, an armed posse took aim and fired into a crowd of oncoming mine workers, who were marching in their corner of the coal-mining region to call their fellow miners out on strike. The marchers – Poles, Slovaks, and Hungarians, most of whom could not yet speak English – were themselves armed only with an American flag and a timid, budding confidence in their new-found rights as free men in their newly adopted country. The mine operators took another view of these rights and of the strange, alien men who claimed them. When the posse was done firing, nineteen of the demonstrators were dead and thirty-nine were seriously wounded. Some six months later a jury of their peers was to exonerate the deputies of any wrongdoing. The “Lattimer Massacre” is not only a powerful story in its own right (and an invaluable key to the history of the growth of the United Mine Workers), but an allegory of that peculiarly American experience undergone over and over again throughout the land, and down to this very day: the experience of new immigrants, still miserable with poverty and bewilderment and suffering the trauma of culture shock, being confronted by the hostility and blind contempt of the “real” Americans. The incident at Lattimer was a tragedy brought on not so much by inhumanity as by profound intercultural suspicion. The victims were not attracted to socialism, and did not denounce America even when they were denied justice; they believed doggedly that their children would live a better life. Injustice was not to them a new experience; liberty was.

9. *The Joy of Sports: End Zones, Bases, Baskets, Balls, and the Consecration of the American Spirit* (New York: Basic, 1976); 2nd ed. (Lanham, Md.: Madison Books, 1994). Far from feeling guilty over the hours spent in front of the television set watching grown men play games, American sports fans ought to recognize that they are engaging in an important public liturgy – it is not “mere entertainment.” Sports bring to human beings – whether as players or spectators – experiences more akin to natural religion than to diversion. Particularly in America, where religious forms have tended to fade, such indispensable aids to the spirit as sacred time and sacred space are found within the innings or quarters of a game and inside the park or stadium. It is play, not work, which truly civilizes people, touching them with the qualities of beauty, truth, and excellence. Each of the three games invented in America (and beloved by all social classes) – baseball, basketball, and football – has its own distinctive mythic content. You can’t understand America unless you understand its public, liturgical sports.

D. TRILOGY ON CAPITALISM v. SOCIALISM AND CATHOLIC THOUGHT.

10. THREE SYSTEMS. *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982). Of all the systems of political economy which have shaped our history, none has so revolutionized ordinary expectations of human life – lengthened the life span, made the elimination of poverty and famine thinkable, enlarged the range of human choice – as democratic capitalism. And yet, for two centuries now, democratic capitalism has had little appeal for the human spirit. To invoke loyalty to it because of the prosperity it brings is regarded by most Western intellectuals as simply materialistic and, at worst, even corrupt. The “moral high ground” has been regularly conceded to socialism. The practice of democratic capitalism has been informed by presuppositions that until now have remained largely unarticulated. Democratic capitalism is a novel unity of political democracy, a market and incentive economy, and a liberal and pluralistic culture. The idea of this threefold social system, based on respect for the inalienable dignity of the individual, the rule of law, and compassion for the poor, has an inherently greater moral and spiritual power than the idea of socialism. This book is about the life of the spirit which makes democratic capitalism, as well as its vision of high moral purpose, both possible and spiritually fruitful.

11. *Freedom with Justice: Catholic Social Thought and Liberal Institutions* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984). Although the Catholic church during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries set itself against liberalism as an ideology, it has slowly come to admire liberal institutions such as democracy and free markets. Between the Catholic vision of social justice and liberal institutions, there is a profound consonance (but not identity). One may cherish liberal institutions without embracing the philosophies of the liberal thinkers who first promoted them. Institutions have a life of their own in history, that permits genuine but often-unpredictable development from the germ of earlier intuitions. One may, indeed, undergird liberal institutions with the more adequate Catholic philosophy of the human person, its deep sense of community, and its long-experienced respect for “intermediate associations” or “mediating structures.”

12. *Will It Liberate? Questions About Liberation Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1986). “Liberation theology” presents itself as an alternative to the sterile theoretical thought of the Old World. It offers a vision of history and human salvation that borrows heavily from a Marxian analysis of society. This book offers the empirical hypothesis that the liberal society, built around a capitalist economy that promotes discovery and entrepreneurship among the poor, will succeed more quickly, more thoroughly, and in a more liberating fashion than the socialist societies so far conceived of by liberation theologians. Liberation theologians seem to misunderstand systematically the spiritual resources and economic dynamism of liberal societies. Of course, a pluralism of theologies entails serious disagreements. Identifying those disagreements exactly requires each participant in the debate to “cross over” into the point of departure and dynamic of the other points of view, both with sympathy and with alert skepticism, but in the end with a painstaking desire to understand. Novak tries to read the liberation theologians with seriousness and dogged inquiry, to understand and to raise further questions. The main question: what will actually work to help the poor out of poverty?

E. CULTURAL ECOLOGY

13. SOLVING A KEY PUZZLE: HOW TO RECONCILE THE INCOMMENSURABLE VALUE OF PERSON WITH THE COMMON GOOD? *Free Persons and the Common Good* (Lanham, Md.: Madison Books, 1989). This work seeks to bridge the gap between liberalism and the Catholic notion of the “common good” by showing that the liberal tradition includes

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a vision of the common good, a vision both historically original and crucial to its defense of the human person. Too often, the liberal tradition is discussed wholly in terms of the individual, the rational economic agent, self-interest, and something like the utilitarian calculus. On the other side, too often the classical view of the common good is presented as though it did not respect the freedom of the human person, the rights of the individual, and the unique properties of the many different spheres through which the common good is cumulatively realized. Yet the liberal tradition has in fact greatly expanded and enriched the concept of the common good. And the Catholic tradition – through its distinctive concepts of the person, will, self-deception, virtue, practical wisdom, “the dark night of the soul,” and insight itself – has thickened and enriched our understanding of the individual. On matters of institutional realism, the liberal tradition has made discoveries that the Catholic tradition sorely needs; reciprocally, regarding certain philosophical-theological conceptions, the Catholic tradition has achieved some insights (e.g., into the nature of the human person, the human community, and mediating institutions) in which many in the liberal intellectual tradition are now expressing interest. The two traditions need each other, each being weaker where the other is stronger.

14. *This Hemisphere of Liberty: A Philosophy of the Americas* (Washington, D.C.: AEI Press, 1990). To call attention to the distinctive complex of mental tendencies that speaks to the Latin American condition, in this book Michael Novak coins the phrase “the Catholic Whig tradition.” Lord Acton called Thomas Aquinas the first Whig. The ancient Whig pedigree, far older than the now defunct British and American parties of that name, includes Bellarmine, Alexis de Tocqueville, Acton himself, Jacques Maritain, Yves R. Simon, and others. Catholic Whigs, like Progressives, believe in the dignity of the human person, in human liberty, in institutional reform, in gradual progress. But they also have a deep respect for language, law, liturgy, custom, habit, and tradition that marks them, simultaneously, as conservatives. With the conservatives, the Catholic Whigs have an awareness of the force of cultural habit and the role of passion and sin in human affairs. With the liberals, they give central importance to human liberty, especially the slow building of institutions of liberty. The Catholic Whigs see liberty as ordered liberty – not the liberty to do what one wishes, but the liberty to do what one ought. Working within this horizon, this book shows how institutions of liberty may be built in this hemisphere (and the other). The liberation of Latin America, especially its economic liberation, has not yet been accomplished. In the precapitalist mode, Latin American economies are characterized by markets, private property, and profits. These do not, contrary to Marx, suffice to constitute a capitalist system. Latin America offers few legal or cultural supports for the essential mark of the capitalist economy: enterprise, innovation, creativity. Only from the dynamic energy of moral striving (through ideas, habits, and institutions) can a political economy take life. Economies work better when human persons are given institutional support to become creators of wealth, not merely dependents on government. Development means empowering the poor to incorporate their own businesses, to own their own land, to improve their education and skills, and to exercise their God-given right to personal economic initiative.

15. SUMMARIZING THE WORK OF ONE DECADE AND POSING QUESTIONS FOR THE NEXT... *The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Free Press, 1993). This book offers a fuller theory of the Catholic social ethic and capitalism, a practical agenda for addressing the critical problems of poverty, race, and ethnicity, and an approach to the problem yet unaddressed: the ecology of liberty. Out of a hundred-year debate within the Catholic Church has come a vision of the capitalist ethic more full and satisfying than Max Weber’s Protestant ethic. No other religious tradition has wrestled so long with, or been so reluctant to come to terms with, the capitalist reality. This book chronicles the Catholic opposition to capitalism and the beginnings of modern papal social thought, including an account of how Pope John Paul II’s commitment to human liberty came to include economic as well as religious and political liberty. Novak offers a new and practical definition of “social justice,” designed to rescue this central concept of papal social thought from the powerful objections of Friedrich Hayek. It reinterprets social justice as the distinctive virtue of free persons associating themselves together, cooperatively, within a free society. It also delinks social justice from an uncritical reliance on the blind leviathan of the state and links it, instead, to the concrete intelligence of individuals and their free associations within “the civic forum.” This new definition of social justice, which emphasizes “civil society,” not the “state,” gives rise to a new approach to government and social activism, which Novak calls “the civil society project.” This project addresses several social perplexities of the near future, including the desperate condition of many of the world’s poor, ethnicity and race, and the new factory in cultural ecology, the omnipresent media or communications. The combination of democracy and capitalism can do more to free the poor from poverty and tyranny when the welfare state is redesigned to open up the sphere of free associations and “little platoons” that express the social side of human nature. In matters of race and ethnicity, a wise focus is the development of “human capital” among the most vulnerable, as the chief ground on which an

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individual can build a sense of dignity, achievement, and pride. Finally, the primary flaw in free society today lies not so much in its political or economic systems, but in its moral-cultural system. Today, one must scrutinize especially the cultural elites who create the stories, images, and symbols of the nation's self-understanding and moral direction. The new frontier of the twenty-first century is likely to be contestation for the soul of the moral-cultural system. Building up civilizations that respect the true and nature-fulfilling "moral ecology," in which the virtues of ordered liberty flourish, is a demanding task which will occupy the human race throughout the coming century. Novak calls this "the ecology of liberty."

16. A NEW LOOK AT DEMOCRATIC CAPITALISM – FROM WITHIN. *Business as a Calling: Work and the Examined Life* (New York: Free Press, 1996). Drawing on interviews with men and women who work in business, as well as published accounts and wide-ranging research, this book brings us inside the everyday world of business. What unifies Novak's report is the conviction that, *pace* the treatment it usually receives from Hollywood, the news media, and counter-culture intellectuals, business life is morally serious, and it constitutes what religious believers (and even a few secularists) recognize as a *calling*: unique to each individual; requiring talent; revealing itself by the pleasure and sense of accomplishment its practice yields us; and not always easy to discover among the false paths life presents. Novak begins his discussion of business as a calling by examining the ideals and possibilities inherent in industry and commerce, considering both the virtues internal to business and the myriad ethical responsibilities of businessmen and women. He then discusses democratic capitalism as a system, underscoring the two most powerful arguments for capitalism: that it better helps the poor to escape from poverty than any other economic system, and that it is a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for democracy. But while Novak is clear about the virtues of business life, and the moral legitimacy of democratic capitalism, he is also acutely aware of the threat posed by modern culture to the moral capital of the West. Both intellectual elites and the national media have been remarkably incurious about virtue and religion for some years, threatening our nation's moral ecology. Because business is dependent on the moral and cultural institutions of the free society, corporations cannot afford to ignore this threat to a healthy public ethos of virtue. What becomes clear by the end of Novak's study is that, as in all human affairs, one can do both good and evil in business – whether one owns a small coffee shop or works in a large telecom corporation – but that to do evil corrupts the inner *telos* of business as a calling.

17. *The Fire of Invention: Civil Society and the Future of the Corporation* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997) This book evolved from three lectures at the American Enterprise Institute on three distinct but related topics: the history and distinctive nature of the business corporation; the animating force that gives birth to the business corporation, "the fire of invention," and patents and copyrights; and questions of structure and governance of the corporation. It looks at the business corporation's influence on civil society and, in the post-socialist era opening before us, assesses some of the principal new threats to the corporation appearing on the horizon. Novak presents a brief history of the corporation, tracing its roots back to Medieval monastic life, and argues that it is a primary institution of the free society, second only to religion (the corporation is the major material, while religion is the major spiritual, institution of civil society). But Novak's analysis is prescriptive, too. The business corporation has come under fire from a new set of enemies, including those, like the British financial journalist Will Hutton, who call for a "stakeholder" society in which political elites will set out vast new corporate responsibilities under the heading of "corporate governance." Much of the discussion surrounding corporate governance, Novak argues, misapplies categories of political philosophy – designed for political institutions – to the corporation, which is not a political community. It is therefore crucial, Novak argues, for the corporation to take account of its own identity and its central role in the building of the chief alternative to government: civil society. One of Novak's principal themes in this book is the trade-off between risk and security in the free society. Americans have traditionally been more open to risk than Europeans – as Tocqueville indicated in *Democracy in America*. Hence the greater dynamism of American economic life, the flourishing of corporation in American soil, and the vast sums of venture capital invested by Americans in risky new firms. This emphasis on dynamism and creativity is perfectly captured in the American respect for intellectual property. Accordingly, Novak illumines the complex field of patents and copyrights with the help of Abraham Lincoln, for whom "all of nature is a wholly unexplored mine." Patent regimes grant inventors and authors the fruit of their labor, and thereby serve the common good through the inventions and works of the spirit they promote. *The Fire of Invention* opens a new and exciting field of inquiry, the business corporation, to scholars in humanistic studies.

F. WORDS FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

18. *Tell Me Why: A Father Answers His Daughter's Questions About God*, with Jana Novak (New York: Pocket Books, 1998). Beginning with a fax of honest and pressing questions about religion sent by his daughter Jana, Novak launches into a discussion with her on crucial issues of faith, religion, and meaning. At once autobiographical and philosophically and theologically searching, the book reveals that, far from being an opiate of the masses, as Marx held, true religion cuts to the core of existence, and that, in the dark night of the soul, it can be of little short-term solace. What the exploration of faith is finally about, Novak explains, is *truth*. The book is written as a dialogue, with each chapter framed by a question from Jana on God, religious institutions, and morality. While answering his daughter's often-skeptical queries on such issues as the decision to have faith, the variety of organized religions, and the nature and importance of God, Novak explains both the many ideas that different world religions have in common and the central beliefs and principles of Catholicism. Following Chesterton, who described the Catholic faith as "the democracy of the dead," Novak stresses the importance of tradition and ritual in giving continuity and substance to life's most important events. More, Novak rejects the view that it is unrealistic to expect modern men and women to adhere to church teachings on sex and morals. On the contrary, the challenge those teachings offer serves to *intensify* experience, to make life richer for those who adhere to them. No controversy is skirted here: Novak addresses the role of women in the Church; abortion and contraception; charity; science and faith; and religion and the free society. *Tell Me Why* is a return, thirty years on, to the existential and theological concerns that first animated Novak's thought.

19. *A Free Society Reader* (ed. by Novak, Brailsford, and Heesters; Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2000). Foreseeing the need for a "primer" for future leaders of free societies, Novak compiled some of his own essays, as well as those by Pierre Manent, Rocco Buttiglione, Richard John Neuhaus, George Weigel, Ryszard Legutko, and others. Organized into three major sections – "Economics and the Free Society," "Democracy and the Free Society," and "Culture and the Free Society," the book contains concise essays describing different aspects of the relation between freedom, virtue and prosperity. Titles are as diverse as "The Architecture of Freedom," "Modern Individualism," "Behind *Centesimus Annus*," "The Liberalism of John Paul II," "The Trouble With Toleration," and "The Love That Moves the Sun." The concluding pages provide background documentation in the form of original sources ranging from *The Federalist Papers* to De Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, from Pope John Paul II's *Centesimus Annus* to the pontiff's speech on the American Experiment.

20. *Three in One* (ed. by Edward Younkins; Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001). Professor Edward Younkins has selected 29 articles from newspapers and journals, beginning with Novak's first break from social democracy "A Closet Capitalist Confesses" *Washington Post* (March 1976) and "An Underpraised and Undervalued System" (*Worldview* August, 1977) up to "Solidarity in a Time of Globalization." He collects these essays under five headings -- the theory of democratic capitalism; free persons and the common good; religion and morality; the responsibilities of the corporation; the global arena - and concludes with the autobiographical essay "Controversial Engagements." Younkins located these articles in well-known journals such as *The Public Interest* and *First Things*, in lesser-known journals such as *Worldview*, *Public Opinion*, *Economic Affairs* (London) *The Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, and the *Dravo Review* and previously unpublished material. He has included substantial essays such as "The Communitarian Individual in America," "The Silent Artillery of Communism," "The Evangelical Basis of a Social Market Economy," "The Future of Civil Society," "The Jewish and Christian Foundation of Human Dignity," "Economics as Humanism," and "The International Vocation of American Business." He also retrieved two unpublished pieces, one of which offers a new definition of social justice to overcome the powerful objections of Friedrich Hayek. Much of the periodical literature in which Novak has developed the idea of democratic capitalism over the years appears in this collection, in addition, Younkins appends a valuable bibliography listing further articles. The collection displays the development of Novak's thought on democratic capitalism from its embryonic beginnings through its later unfolding.

21. *On Two Wings: Humble Faith and Common Sense at the American Founding* (San Francisco, Ca.: Encounter Books, 2002)

Contrary to conventional histories, the American Republic took flight on two wings: not only on the Enlightenment, but also on faith in the God of the ancient Hebrews, the God of liberty. In "Jewish Metaphysics at the Founding," the author shows that the God of the founders was not the God of Deism. The public acts of the Continental

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Congress employ the Hebrew names of God and their implied metaphysics of open history, contingency, individuality, and liberty. Of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence and 38 signers of the Constitution, all but one or two were deeply influenced by the Hebrew Bible. Chapter two, "Plain Reason and Humble Faith," shows that by "reason" the founders meant the qualities of mind to which the Federalist addressed its arguments: sober reflection and calm deliberation; an ability to overcome passion and self-interest; a capacity to consider the larger picture; and a due regard for the long experience of mankind. Chapter three weaves together separate strands of American experience: the inalienable loneliness of individual conscience before the face of God; a new type of moral community; and a new religious architectonic. Chapter four, "A Religious Theory of Rights," highlights the Founders' deep sense of personal responsibility before the Divine Judge. No human agency can interfere with that responsibility. Each man and woman has been created by God, and is called to be a friend of God, and will be held responsible for a personal response. In chapter five, the author replies to ten questions. The Appendix, "The Forgotten Founders," selects nineteen vignettes from the lives of *the top one-hundred leaders* of the founding generation, especially the lesser-known figures who signed the *Declaration of Independence* or the *Constitution*, plus a few other opinion leaders.