

raveled very very slowly under Bartlett Sher's deliberate direction, accompanied by frequent changes of Michael Yeargan's architectural settings and Catherine Zuber's sumptuous costumes. It is also rather preposterous. Margaret, a Southern matron (played by Victoria Clark as an alternately forbidding and compassionate soprano), and her daughter Clara (a fresh ingenue turn by Kelli O'Hara) have come to Florence on holiday. A young Italian named Fabrizio (the very engaging Matthew Morrison) falls in love with Clara at first sight, and after fumbling past a lot of language barriers, the couple plan to get married.

The hidden obstacle on the path of true love is that when Clara was a young girl, she got kicked in the head by a pony. As a result, she is now intellectually and emotionally retarded, although only her parents seem to recognize this. The audience is admitted to the secret through small bursts of plot, such as when she strokes the penis of a nude statue or throws wine on the dress of her future sister-in-law after the woman has kissed her fiancé on his lips. Apart from these relatively insignificant lapses, Clara behaves no more strangely than any other glandular American girl, so the apprehension expressed by her irate father and

anxious mother seems entirely misplaced, if not bewildering. As for Fabrizio's father, his only concern is about Clara's age—the match is almost called off when he discovers that she is six years older than his son. By show's end, Fabrizio and Clara join hands in marriage, and love is permitted to conquer all mental handicaps. But whether Clara will ever display any real signs of her condition remains shrouded in mystery. The greater mystery is why the Beaumont has expended such extravagant resources on such old-fashioned material.

The prosecution rests. Does the defense wish to cross-examine? ■

Ernest R. May

When Government Writes History

A memoir of the 9/11 Commission.

THE 9/11 COMMISSION WAS "set up to fail." So says its chairman, former Republican Governor of New Jersey Thomas Kean. "If you want something to fail," he explains, "you take a controversial topic and appoint five people from each party. You make sure they are appointed by the most partisan people from each party—the leaders of the party. And, just to be sure, let's ask the commission to finish the report during the most partisan period of time—the presidential election season." He could have added that President Bush and Republican leaders in Congress had agreed to create the commission only under unrelenting pressure from the families of the victims, and also that Congress had given it a meager budget and a requirement to get all its work done in a scant eighteen months. He could have added, too, that he was the president's second choice as chairman, Henry Kissinger having stepped down after sixteen days because of the demand by the families that he disclose the names of clients of his consulting firm, and that Kean started under the handicap of never having worked in Washington. It was to be mid-March 2003 be-

fore he even had the security clearances needed to read pre-September 11 intelligence reports.

As late as December 2003, with the deadline for the commission's final report only five months away, pundits were debating whether it would even get its Warholian fifteen minutes of fame. But things worked out very differently. The commission's hearings provided headline news from January to June. When it issued its final report in July (having wrested a two-month extension from a resistant Bush and an even more resistant Dennis Hastert), the front page bore the signatures of all ten commissioners. Not one, Republican or Democrat, dissented from a single word in the report's 567 pages. *Newsday* typified media commentary when it called this election-year bipartisanship "miraculous." Equally surprising was the fact that Congress stayed in session to debate the commission's recommendations and that, in December, many of those recommendations became law.

Preceding the report's two chapters of recommendations are eleven chapters on the history of September 11. *THE NEW REPUBLIC* described these chapters as "novelistically intense." *Time* said they held "one of the most riveting, disturbing and revealing accounts of crime, espionage and the inner workings of gov-

ernment ever written." And John Updike commented in *The New Yorker* that the King James Bible was "our language's lone masterpiece produced by committee, at least until this year's 9/11 Commission Report." It was even nominated for the National Book Award. Clearly something extraordinary had taken place.

The overall success of the commission was the result of many factors. Insistent, emotional, but hardheaded lobbying by the families was critical. So was the calm, undeviatingly bipartisan leadership of Kean and his vice chair, Lee Hamilton; the dedication of the other eight commissioners; and the skillful management by the commission's "front office"—executive director Philip Zelikow; his deputy, Christopher Kojm; and general counsel Daniel Marcus. As the commission's senior adviser, I was a fourth member of this "front office," but I had no managerial responsibility. My job was to help produce the historical narrative.

For this task, I had two comparative advantages. The first was a long career as a historian. The second was a lack of partisan bias. Many years earlier, I had been a commissioner myself. The commission was to recommend laws making presidential papers public property. (From Washington's time to Nixon's, they had been private property.) The statute required that one commissioner

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be a Republican, one a Democrat, and one nonpartisan. I was the last, and was so certified by a 100-0 vote in the Senate. For commissioners and staff who suspected that some part of the 9/11 report might get a political or ideological slant, my OK seemed to be something like a Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval. What follows is my own brief and blinkered account of how that narrative came into being.

IN JANUARY 2003, ZELIKOW phoned me at home in Cambridge, Massachusetts to say that Hamilton had approached him about becoming executive director, and that he wanted to discuss the pros and cons. Zelikow had been a trial lawyer in Texas, a fast-track foreign service officer, a faculty member at Harvard, and then a professor of history at the University of Virginia. He had served on the National Security Council staff with Condoleezza Rice, at that time Bush's national security adviser, and he and Rice had co-authored a scholarly book on the post-Cold War unification of Germany. At Harvard, Zelikow and I and the late Richard Neustadt had taught courses together. He and I had collaborated on a number of projects, among them the book *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis*, which became the basis for the movie *Thirteen Days*.

On that January evening, we talked on the phone for more than an hour. We agreed that prospects for the 9/11 Commission were anything but bright. But we also agreed that a thorough government inquiry was urgently important. September 11, 2001 was a watershed moment, on a par at least with Pearl Harbor. We discussed the three investigations of Pearl Harbor, all of which had focused on blaming Americans, and had left the Japanese role to be reconstructed by scholars years later. Since the commission's charter called for it to investigate all "facts and circumstances relating to the terrorist attacks" and gave it subpoena powers, and since many leaders in Al Qaeda, the Islamist terrorist network behind the sinister plot, had been captured in Afghanistan or elsewhere, along with hard disks and other files, here was an opportunity to try to tell the whole story from both sides.

Typically, government reports focus on "findings" and array the evidence accordingly. None, to our knowledge,

had ever attempted simply to produce professional-quality narrative history. None, certainly, had been conceived as international history, not just American history. None had aspired to deal not only with the immediate past but also with the long background that would be needed if, as we said to each other, the report was to remain the reference volume on September 11 sitting on the shelves of high school and college teachers a generation hence.

ZELIKOW SUBSEQUENTLY SPOKE with Kean. He reported back that Kean saw the opportunity exactly as we did. A Hudson Valley aristocrat who graduated from Princeton, Kean taught for three years at his Massachusetts prep school, St. Mark's, and then studied for a doctorate at Columbia, working with Richard Hofstadter and our later colleague Neustadt. Zelikow found that Kean already had in mind a concept much like ours. Kean would later say that "we want a report that our grandchildren can take off the shelf in fifty years and say, 'This is what happened.'"

Lee Hamilton had no difficulty accepting this ambitious concept. He always attached more importance to the commission's recommendations than to its report. Based on his long experience, he predicted that members of Congress and officials would read only an executive summary. Still, he saw at once that couching the report as a history might at least delay a partisan split within the commission, for the commissioners could begin by debating the facts of the story rather than their conclusions or their recommendations.

After Zelikow agreed to become executive director and I signed on as a consultant, he and I worked up an outline for a sixteen-chapter report. By the middle of March 2003, the outline had chapter headings, subheadings, and sub-subheadings. We discussed this outline with Kean and then with Hamilton and Kojm (who had been Hamilton's assistant on Capitol Hill and was his alter ego within the commission). They all approved, but agreed that for the moment it should be shared with no one else except Marcus. We said to one another that for the time being the outline should be treated as if it were the most highly classified document the commission possessed, for premature debate about the shape of the report could easily dissolve

into a partisan wrangle.

THE FINAL REPORT DIFFERED from the original outline in three major respects. The outline had called for starting with the rise of Al Qaeda, perhaps even beginning with the birth of Islam, then moving through the story chronologically. Late in the process of drafting, Democratic commissioner Tim Roemer (like Hamilton, a former congressman from Indiana) recommended that the opening chapter instead tell what happened on September 11, expanding the outline's notion of handling this in a prologue. Fred Fielding, a Republican commissioner who had been White House counsel under Presidents Nixon and Reagan, seconded Roemer's proposal. All the other commissioners quickly agreed. It was an inspired suggestion that added to the narrative power of the report.

Another change was in the report's ending. The outline had called for six short chapters offering recommendations grouped under, for example, "intelligence," "national defense," and "homeland security." In the end, the commissioners decided to fold all their recommendations into two chapters, one on future counterterrorist strategy, the other on how to organize the government to pursue that strategy.

The only other major change was the addition of a chapter dealing with intelligence warnings in the summer of 2001. We had intended this to be a section within one of two chapters on American counterterrorism policy. The staff members working on the subject resisted trimming away details of these warnings. They were right. The public needed to be told about every warning that Al Qaeda might attack inside the United States. At the same time, the public needed to see that these warnings had been blips on a screen teeming with warnings of possible attacks outside the United States.

To some extent, the concept of the report as a narrative history influenced the recruitment of staff. There were many other constraints. The urgent reporting deadline made it advantageous if a potential member of the staff already had high-level security clearances. (Zelikow had them as a member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. I had them as a member of the Intelligence Science Board.) That meant preference for people who could be detailed from national security agencies or who had

been on the staff of one of the congressional intelligence oversight committees. Of the fifty-odd men and women who counted as professional rather than administrative staff, at least half had such backgrounds. For the most part, these government veterans tended to assume that the commission would produce a report of the traditional type. They had to be educated to the idea of writing a narrative.

We were fortunate that the idea appealed immediately to several key staff members. In the very early period, before Hamilton persuaded the CIA to lend the commission a secure facility in downtown Washington, the commission's only headquarters was Zelikow's hotel room. From there, he and I telephoned Douglas MacEachin at his retirement home in France. A onetime Marine who had become an intelligence analyst, MacEachin had ended up as head of the CIA's Directorate of Intelligence. After his retirement in the mid-1990s, he had been a research associate at Harvard, working with Zelikow and me and producing several exquisite monographs on intelligence history. When MacEachin agreed to join us, the commission had a ten-strike, for he combined a historian's instincts with unlimited energy, an ability to inspire teamwork, and, no less important, a wide acquaintance within the intelligence community—something that, in terms of access to documents and to witnesses, proved an invaluable complement to the formal authority of the commission.

Working with Kean, Hamilton, Kojm, Marcus, and others, Zelikow recruited others qualified to work on the kind of report we had envisioned. Michael Hurley was a career officer in the CIA's Directorate of Operations, but he also had a law degree and happened to be an avid reader of history. Having represented the CIA on the National Security Council staff, he, too, brought to the commission a useful personal network. Another catch—to mention only one of several—was Lloyd Salvetti, another CIA operations officer. His last post had been as head of the CIA's internal think tank, the Center for the Study of Intelligence. There, he had worked closely with Zelikow and me on a Harvard executive program for senior intelligence analysts, part of which had involved developing historical case studies for classroom use. Yet another—to mention only one more—was former New Jersey attorney general John Farmer, recruited by Kean.

ZELIKOW AND I WERE THE architects of the report, but it had many, many authors. With Kojm and Marcus, we acted as general editors. The four of us helped to give the report its style and, above all, to keep it a narrative accessible now and a generation from now. Its first eleven chapters would not tell such a riveting story if the commissioners and the staff had not accepted and internalized the idea of the report's being an enduringly readable history. And no language appeared anywhere in the final text unless Zelikow or I or both of us—and all the commissioners—had accepted it.

With agreement from the commissioners and his colleagues in the front office, Zelikow divided the staff into teams, more or less coinciding with topics in the outline. MacEachin headed one studying Al Qaeda. In time, this team split in two, with Dietrich Snell captaining a group that worked specifically on the 9/11 plot and the movements of the hijackers. Though a lawyer through and through, Snell had prosecuted terrorists in New York, was fascinated by the terrible story, and proved to be both a natural-born historian and a gifted writer. Hurley led the team that focused on U.S. counterterrorism activity prior to September 11.

MacEachin's, Snell's, and Hurley's teams found offices in the premises that Hamilton had obtained from the CIA. So did a team that concentrated on the intelligence community, as well as parts of a team that dealt with terrorist finance. This Special Compartmented Information Facility (SCIF, pronounced "skiff"), essentially one large safe, housed also the front office and the commission's sensitive files. It had the commission's principal conference room. Other staff in Washington and New York worked on topics such as emergency response on September 11, which required less access to highly classified material, but the SCIF was where the commission met and where all drafts for the final report ended up.

Zelikow asked all the teams to start preparing timelines and monographs for their subjects. For some, this was the first hint that they might not be writing a conventional government report—that they would be writing history. MacEachin set the example, turning out a rolling chronology into which he fitted every new scrap of information. Nearly all members of the staff accommodated to this way of sorting evidence—and

this way of thinking about it. In the late spring of 2003, when the outline was finally unveiled before all the commissioners, it appeared to have won acceptance among the staff. The commission endorsed it almost without debate.

THE RESEARCH EFFORT BEHIND the report involved the examination of approximately two and a half million documents and interviews with more than twelve hundred witnesses. Needless to say, problems arose. Subpoenas had to be handed to the Federal Aviation Administration and the North American Air Defense Command because of their slowness in producing material requested by the commission. On the whole, negotiations by Kean, Hamilton, and Zelikow made it possible for the commission's researchers to lay hands on all the documents they wished to see.

The news media gave play to a dispute about access to the President's Daily Brief, a closely held document brought to the White House every morning from the CIA. The White House at first refused any access. Eventually it compromised. Zelikow, a Republican, and Jamie Gorelick, a Democratic commissioner who had been deputy attorney general under Clinton, were allowed to see the full run of PDBs. Kean and Hamilton would look at those identified as bearing directly on September 11 (though they eventually reviewed them all, too).

In fact, the White House was much more helpful to the commission than the media perceived. Select members of the staff had access to the Senior Executive Intelligence Brief (SEIB, or "seeb"), a parallel daily summary of CIA reportage, which was more widely distributed because it was usually not so precise in identifying sources or methods. Also, the commissioners and a few of the rest of us were allowed to see all records of the National Security Council staff bearing on counterterrorism policy. Since the lawyers at the White House feared compromising executive privilege, our notes required special handling: they were not to be copied, and had to be returned before the commission turned its files over to the National Archives. But, so far as I could tell, we were allowed to see every document the White House staff could turn up.

A reader of the commission report should bear in mind that its documentary base was extraordinarily deep but

also extraordinarily narrow. The documents were necessarily only those relating to terrorism and counterterrorism. They gave few glimmers of what else had been on the active agenda of the White House and executive departments. We were aware of this limitation. The extent to which the commission's report would have been skewed if it had relied only on documentary evidence can be suggested by two examples—the National Security Council and the Department of Defense.

What we read in National Security Council files told us chiefly about the work of Richard Clarke, the staff member concentrating on terrorism. We saw hardly a single piece of paper reporting what was being done or said by others on the staff, or what other items had been on the agenda of the national security adviser or the president. A story written solely from this documentary record would have centered on Clarke even more than does his own memoir.

The documentary base for our narrative was equally skewed in the Pentagon. We saw records from the office of the assistant secretary of defense for special operations and low intensity conflict (SOLIC, or “so-lick”). That office dealt with terrorism. Its records told about counterterrorist planning by the military as well as by civilians. But the SOLIC records said little about other concerns, and it gave no clues as to how terrorism had ranked among those concerns.

We overcame these limitations by means of interviews and testimony. Only a small part of the testimony came in public hearings. The commission included skilled trial lawyers. One on the Republican side was Slade Gorton, a former senator from the state of Washington now practicing in Seattle. Another was former Illinois governor James Thompson. On the Democratic side were Gorelick and Richard Ben-Veniste, onetime chief of the Watergate Task Force. Their questioning sometimes caused witnesses to say more than they had said in private. Most of the testimony, however, was given behind closed doors, with the record classified and with, as a rule, not more than one or two commissioners present at any one time. (They had day jobs, as did I.) Some sessions were long. Richard Clarke's ran for three days, George Tenet's for two days. While many of our questions arose out of documents and focused directly on terrorism, we also tried to ask about contexts.

It seemed significant sometimes if an individual had no recollection at all of a document or meeting. We had seen, for example, an elaborate plan called “Plan Delenda” that was developed by Clarke in 1998. (As our staff statement explained, “the term ‘Delenda’ is from the Latin ‘to destroy,’ evoking the famous Roman vow to erase rival Carthage.”) It outlined a program of active measures against Al Qaeda. In his private and public testimony for the commission, Clarke made much of this plan. But we found that neither President Clinton nor any individual high up in his administration, including Sandy Berger and his deputy James Steinberg, recalled ever having heard of “Plan Delenda.” Similarly, we learned that many documents in SOLIC files never reached—or at least made no impression on—secretaries or deputy secretaries or other assistant secretaries of defense or senior military officers. Pentagon witnesses reminded us that they had had a lot of other matters on their minds, including military operations in Bosnia and Kosovo and the reshaping of forces to fit a post-Cold War world.

A telling moment in an interview came in October 2003. Army Major General Russell Honoré, though he had been vice director of operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said he had known almost nothing about Al Qaeda. As the commission report summarizes his testimony, Honoré “commented to us that intelligence and planning documents relating to al Qaeda arrived in a ziplock red package and that many flag and general officers never had the clearances to see its contents.”

THE ACTUAL DRAFTING OF THE report was collective. I produced some first-draft material. MacEachin, Snell, Hurley, and members of their teams and other teams also produced first drafts. Each draft went to every staff member with the requisite clearances. The front office produced revised drafts, sometimes as a result of sitting together and looking at text projected on a screen in the conference room. We set an arbitrary word limit and tried hard to enforce it, but the limit had to keep moving upward as members of the staff battled successfully for inclusion of particular pieces of evidence. The device nevertheless helped to make drafters shift into footnotes language that interfered with the narrative flow. Everyone became a storyteller.

The staff statements, read out at the beginning of relevant public hearings, contributed to the development of a common voice. Work on these statements sometimes went on through entire nights. The effect was to produce agreed-upon language, some of which would be borrowed for the final report. The process heightened everyone's sensitivity to terms and meanings. (One endless debate concerned the question of whether “Islamism” and “Islamic extremism” were synonyms.) Since each staff statement had to be cleared for public release, the process also helped measurably to induce the White House, the CIA, and others to allow publication of the final report without prolonged battles over classification issues.

Writing the bulk of the report as straightforward narrative helped the commission achieve its surprising unanimity. The report tells of a plot that developed mostly while Bill Clinton was president. It describes the evolution of American policy under both Clinton and Bush. Hence, any point potentially reflecting unfavorably on one administration could be balanced with a point reflecting unfavorably on the other. In the matter of counterterrorism, there were no heroes in the American government in the years leading up to September 11. It was also possible to strip away interpretive language, even adjectives and adverbs, so as to assure the reader that we were just reciting the historical facts.

COMPOSING A REPORT THAT all commissioners could endorse carried costs. The report has weaknesses; and these weaknesses diminish somewhat the extent to which it fulfills Kean's goal of telling future generations, “This is how it happened.”

For one thing, the report skirts the question of whether American policies and actions fed the anger that manifested itself on September 11. I think myself that the report is right in saying that Al Qaeda attacked the United States because of what the nation was rather than because of what it did. Still, the report is weak in laying out evidence for the alternative argument that the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the Capitol might not have been targeted absent America's identification with Israel, support for regimes such as those in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan, and insensitivity to Muslims' feelings about

their holy places. The commissioners believed that American foreign policy was too controversial to be discussed except in recommendations written in the future tense. Here we compromised our commitment to set forth the full story.

Second, the report often pairs contradictory assertions without helping the reader to evaluate them. This was the case, for example, in the report's discussion of U.S. cruise missile strikes on Afghanistan and Sudan in 1998. These were the Clinton administration's response to Al Qaeda's bombing of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The text notes glancingly that the strikes coincided with the worst moments of the Monica Lewinsky scandal and that this contributed to public skepticism—the "Wag the Dog" canard. The report goes on to say that this "likely had a cumulative effect on future decisions about the use of force against Bin Ladin." And it adds immediately: "Berger told us that he did not feel any sense of constraint." Which statement is more believable? The reader has to guess.

Third, and most troubling to me, the report is probably too balanced. Its harshest criticism is directed at institutions and procedures, particularly the CIA, the FBI, and communications links within the counterterrorist community. But many on the staff had worked in these or other national security agencies. They felt loyal to them and some of them expected to return to work there. Collective drafting led to the introduction of passages that offset criticism of an agency with words of praise. Not all these words were deserved.

Individuals, especially the two presidents and their intimate advisers, received even more indulgent treatment. The text does not describe Clinton's crippling handicaps as leader of his own national security community. Extraordinarily quick and intelligent, he, more than almost anyone else, had an imaginative grasp of the threat posed by Al Qaeda. But he had almost no authority enabling him to get his government to

address this threat. His Vietnam record and the controversy over gays in the military, among other things, made him an object of scorn in much of the Pentagon. All elements in the CIA felt alienated when he failed to attend the ceremony for two employees shot down outside headquarters by a Pakistani terrorist, sending his wife in his place. And that was only the beginning of a parade of Clinton's offenses against the intelligence community. His relations with the FBI started badly and became worse. He and director Louis Freeh did not speak to each other. Of course, officials in all these agencies would have obeyed the president's orders, but few were prepared to help him figure out what those orders might be. The report veils all this.

Passages in the report dealing with the Bush administration can be read as preoccupied with avoiding even implicit endorsement of Clarke's public charge that the president and his aides "considered terrorism an important issue but not an urgent issue." I think myself that the charge was manifestly true—for both administrations. But the language that shields Bush's advisers may be unfair to the president himself. Deeply buried in a footnote is evidence that Bush called for action against Al Qaeda well before any of his high-level advisers. The footnote cites Clarke as affirming and re-affirming that he heard Bush in March 2001 complain that current policy for coping with terrorism amounted to little more than swatting flies. This was two months before anyone else in his administration exhibited serious concern about shortcomings in American counterterrorist strategy.

THE LAST PHASE OF THE COMMISSION'S formal work was hectic. Some of the commissioners worked over drafts as they emerged from negotiations between teams and the front office. In some instances, we were able to persuade commissioners that the staff-written text was preferable. In most instances, we yielded—more often than not because the commissioners' changes were improvements. Gorton and former Navy Secretary John Lehman on the Republican side and Gorelick and former Nebraska Senator Bob Kerrey among the Democrats were careful writers who improved many passages. Kerrey was principal author of the eloquent preface stressing how the commissioners set an

example of working cooperatively.

Kean and Hamilton had accepted Zelikow's suggestion that the commission test the possibility of the report's being brought out by a commercial publisher. The Government Printing Office, the customary publisher of official reports, Zelikow presumed, would produce something hard to get and expensive. Eventually, the commission signed a contract with W. W. Norton, stipulating that the report be put on sale in most bookstores in America on the day of its public release and that the price not exceed ten dollars. Norton agreed that if the book made a substantial profit, at least some of that profit would go to charity. (Neither the government nor the commission could accept royalties.)

A copy editor cleared for access to classified data went to work in the SCIF. Staff technicians set up computers from which page-proof copy could be transmitted directly to the printer. The already crowded SCIF found space for delegations from the CIA, the Pentagon, the FBI, and other agencies combing the text for possible disclosures of classified information. From writing his collaborative book with Rice, Zelikow had learned that except in very rare cases, the identifying data for a classified document was not itself classified. Therefore, for example, the report could cite a Top Secret Codeword memorandum from Clarke to George Tenet so long as the citation said simply "Clarke to Tenet" with enough other identification so that some researcher could find it later in the National Archives. To question the text that made reference to this document, agency reviewers had to make a case that the specific words in the body of the report would, if made public, jeopardize national security or reveal intelligence sources and methods. Negotiations with agency teams caused us occasionally to cloud the narrative so as not to risk identifying a human source or a particular interception capability. In no instance, to my knowledge, did we change an assertion about or a quotation relating to a policy debate within the U.S. government. Where we dug in our heels, we won.

The only point on which I fault Kean, Hamilton, and the other commissioners is their reluctance ever to challenge the CIA's walling off Al Qaeda detainees. The agency gave us all interrogation reports bearing on September 11. It even put to the detainees some questions sent them by commission staff. But the CIA

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refused to permit any direct access either to the detainees or to the interrogators and their interpreters. We never had full confidence in the interrogation reports as historical sources. Often we found more reliable the testimony that had been given in open court by those prosecuted for the East African embassy bombings and other crimes. At the end, the CIA refused permission for the report to name detainees other than those whose apprehension had been officially acknowledged. The report's text and footnotes hide the identity of a score of others whose names had actually appeared in the news media. I think the commission could have successfully challenged the CIA on both access to detainees and release of names, but it chose not to fight these battles.

THE VERY LAST STAGES WERE delicate. Kean and Hamilton wanted to brief the White House and leaders in both houses of Congress, but they did not want to give anyone an advance copy of the report. They were sure it would be leaked. The publisher had to hold up actual printing so that Kean and Hamilton could say truthfully on the day before release that they had not themselves yet seen copies of the final report. And a dreadful moment came on the day before publication. An aide to a powerful member of the House telephoned the commission asking angrily about a rumor that the report would be issued by a private publisher. "It's a report to Congress," the aide thundered. The person on our end of the line remarked that stories about the commission's publication plans had been featured in *The New York Times* weeks earlier. "We don't read the fucking *New York Times*" was the reply. (Fortunately, the individual decided not to pursue the complaint.)

Almost miraculously, Norton managed to print six hundred thousand copies overnight and express them to bookstores across the country so that they could go on sale more or less precisely at noon on July 22, 2004. The copies flew off booksellers' tables. Norton had to print another half-million within a week. Over the next eight months, the Norton edition and versions issued by other publishers sold something like two million copies, and an astounding 6.9 million copies were downloaded from the commission's website.

The reader of a history certainly ben-

efits from knowing the writers' contexts; and this will always be true for the 9/11 Commission Report, which was written in a period of partisanship almost as intense as the 1790s or the 1850s. But the report was dedicated to the idea that a genuine concern for communicating an accurate picture of our reality to future generations may allow us to transcend

the passions of the moment. For this reason, I hope that this official report will not be the last government document of its kind. In these perilous times, there will surely be other events that will require the principles of historiography allied to the resources of government, so that urgency will sometimes become the friend of truth. ■

Alan Wolfe

What God Owes Jefferson

**GOD'S POLITICS:
WHY THE RIGHT GETS IT WRONG
AND THE LEFT DOESN'T GET IT**
By Jim Wallis
(*HarperSanFrancisco*, 384 pp., \$24.95)

TAKING FAITH SERIOUSLY
Edited by Mary Jo Bane,
Brent Coffin, and Richard Higgins
(*Harvard University Press*,
381 pp., \$29.95)

I.
THE PHENOMENON OF martyrdom demonstrates that political success and personal salvation do not generally go together. The faithful find grace not in building winning coalitions, but in worshipping God's glory. Gazing toward heaven means stumbling on earth, a small price to pay for the rewards that await.

For a deeply religious society, the United States has had little or no culture of martyrdom. There are those—bless them—who share the suffering of the downtrodden. But America's voluble religious rightists, those who are most visible in their insistence that they embody the true faith, are too busy celebrating their victories to have much time for defeat. They have rendered under Caesar what is Caesar's: themselves, as it happens, and all the political power that comes with them. They dwell not in the house of the Lord, but in the House of Representatives. Their prayer breakfasts are strategy sessions, their churches are auxiliaries of political parties, their pastors are political bosses. Their God *must* be great: look at the clout of his constituency.

Once confined to the margins of American politics, the religious right seems to be everywhere these days, rallying to the cause of Terri Schiavo or lobbying intently for conservative judges. No wonder that activists on the left of the political spectrum find themselves filled with wonder. Surely, they believe, it ought to be possible to remind Americans that Jesus was a man of compassion who turned swords into plowshares. On theological grounds alone, the left's case to rally God to its side ought to be stronger than the right's. "It's time to take back faith in the public square," writes Jim Wallis, America's leading evangelist for progressive causes. In the presidential campaign last year, Howard Dean asserted that he belonged to the Democratic wing of the Democratic Party. Jim Wallis insists that he belongs to the Christian wing of Christianity.

Wallis is not the only prominent believer with progressive instincts to challenge the religious right's influence in American politics. *Taking Faith Seriously* offers a collection of policy papers written by scholars associated with Harvard's Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations. Arguing that religious organizations are a crucial aspect of America's network of ever-spawning voluntary associations, these writers aim to use the insights of social science to better understand the role that religion plays in American public life. Although Jim Wallis worked with them from time to time, their book is not written in his prophetic yet strangely inside-the-Beltway tone. Still, even if they write with greater analytical precision, there is no masking their larger political point: liberal democracy has a place for religious believers, in no

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