

Turner's book will be a useful supplement for courses on American Christianity, and while its repetitive themes might seem too deliberate at times, students could but profit by the recycling. Students, and others, need to know that leading evangelicals during the 1960s moved with the times and exercised, if hesitantly, their political voice. William Martin's *With God on Our Side* (New York: Broadway, 1996) broadened our awareness of evangelical politics prior to Jerry Falwell, but we need more works like Turner's to deepen our understanding.

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***Pat Robertson: An American Life.*** By **David John Marley.** Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007. x + 315 pp. \$26.95 cloth.

A Virginia senator's blueblood son, architect of a religious broadcasting empire, pioneer in the use of satellite and cable technology, and longtime influence within grass-roots charismatic circles. An influential mover and shaker in the strategies and efforts of the Religious Right, he was a surprisingly strong candidate for the 1988 Republican nomination. A shrewd wheeler-dealer, multimillionaire and, in his spare time, founder of a major university—not the usual vita of mediocrity. Yet, in American public perception, Marion Gordon “Pat” Robertson has been largely reduced to right-wing bogeyman for opportunistic liberal journalists and fundraisers, and fodder for late-night comedians as the wacky televangelist with a penchant for bizarre off-the-cuff pronouncements. But if there is one thing that David John Marley's workmanlike biography makes clear, Pat Robertson has made a lifetime habit of routinely disproving others' blithe dismissals of his capacities and dreams, whether they lay in religion, broadcasting, politics, business, or education—he is someone to take seriously.

An updated look at Robertson's career and impact is certainly long overdue. With the exception of populist left-leaning portraits like Rob Boston's *The Most Dangerous Man in America?* (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus, 1996), there has been no serious biographical examination since David Edwin Harrell's very able, but bare-bones, *Pat Robertson: A Personal, Religious, and Political Portrait* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987) was rushed onto bookshelves in anticipation of Robertson's 1988 presidential run. A new biography at this time presents an opportunity not only to provide an update on the two decades that have passed since Harrell's book, but also a chance to re-assess

Robertson's career in terms of the larger contexts of American religion and culture. For the most part, Marley's examination succeeds more on the former score than the latter.

From the get-go it is apparent that Marley's volume fits the current journalistic and academic fixation with the political dimensions of evangelicalism as embodied in the Religious Right. Indeed, he fairly speeds his way through the first four-plus decades of Robertson's life. His childhood and youth, his conversion, his transformation of a ramshackle Norfolk UHF station into the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN), and his role as a cable and satellite visionary are all largely reduced to a mere backdrop to later political doings. With the coming of the born-again Jimmy Carter's candidacy, however, Marley's treatment shifts gears and begins to take a more in-depth look at Robertson. Of particular interest is his outline of Robertson's political worldview, an idiosyncratic mix of traditional Jeffersonian political thought, anti-communism, and a scripture-based set of concepts Robertson eventually tabbed the "Laws of Dominion." Taken together, Robertson's thought, Marley argues, has much in common with the Reconstructionist school of theology touted by the likes of R. J. Rushdoony and Gary North. Marley notes Robertson's denunciations of their views as "extreme" and "mistaken" (88), a judgment largely triggered by their postmillennial viewpoint wherein Christians will usher in the Kingdom of God. Yet, Marley illustrates how comfortable Robertson could be with these views in his selection of Reconstructionist Herb Titus as dean of Regent University's Law School, a choice he lived with for over a decade before an ego-charged battle for control of Regent pushed Titus out the door in the mid-1990s.

Beyond the ins and outs of Robertson's political worldview, Marley recounts the ups and downs of his political involvement, particularly the lukewarm relationships—personally and ideologically—he maintained with apparently evangelical-friendly occupants of the White House from Carter on down through George W. Bush. Naturally, much attention is paid to Robertson's long-shot presidential bid, which ultimately foundered on the antipathy of mainstream Republicans and the body blow of the 1987–1988 televangelist scandals. However, Marley contends that his subsequent role in creating the Christian Coalition and his selection of the precocious Ralph Reed was Robertson's greatest political triumph—a triumph that was short-lived, as it was effectively killed by the combination of Reed's resignation, contention between Robertson and James Dobson for leadership of the Religious Right, and the machinations of GOP strategist Karl Rove to freeze out evangelicals in the 2000 nomination process.

There has been much more to Pat Robertson's story in the last two decades, however, than its political dimension, and Marley does dutifully

catalog the non-political side, highlighting Robertson's shrewd leadership and questionable dealings. He details CBN's ascendancy to its place as a cable giant in the late 1980s, the Kalo-Vita nutrition product scandal of the early 1990s, the enormously profitable Family Channel deal with Rupert Murdoch in 1997, Robertson's involvement with the corrupt government of Liberia, diamond mine investments in Zaire, and the scandal over the diversion of CBN's relief arm—Operation Blessing—in diamond mining interests. In the end, Marley is amazed at how Robertson emerged from these various escapades rich, free, and—most astonishingly of all—relatively un-criticized by his CBN constituency after plowing the well-intentioned charitable gifts of millions of small donors into his personal business and political efforts. In this alone there is much about Robertson, his vision, authority, and his relationship to his audience that could really serve to make us better understand both Robertson and American evangelicalism. Unfortunately, Marley is too often content to convey information and leave much of the analysis up to the next biographer.

For the most part, this book evidences good research and a readable narrative style. However, it could have profited from a firmer editorial hand to weed out repetition and help impose order upon some tortured organization—particularly in the pre-Carter portion of the book. Additionally, a scattering of oversimplifications and errors (for instance, Billy Graham is cited as having founded his own Christian university [101]) mars what is otherwise a competent examination of Robertson's career. Overall, while it could have been more, *Pat Robertson: An American Life* is a useful update to our understanding of an important—but underestimated—figure in recent American religion and culture.

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***Film and Religion: An Introduction.*** By **Paul V. M. Flesher** and **Robert Torry**. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 2007. xiv 306 pp.  
\$25.50 paper.

Paul V. M. Flesher and Robert Torry, a Bible scholar and an English professor at the University of Wyoming, created this book from notes for a course on religion and film. They begin by introducing their method and using it to analyze *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* (1967 and 2000). They go on to discuss two dozen films (plus many more mentioned in passing) under four