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Footnotes: Book Recs + Monte Cox + 9/11

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Footnotes¹

¹Curated Resources for Ministers



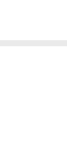
Welcome back to *Footnotes*.

I received some kind feedback regarding John Barton's responses in the last issue, which I think testifies to the ways that all of us want to engage the diversity of our communities. It is nice to have experts who can speak intelligently to those changes and recommend ways to respond. As we move ahead in a post-Christian context, it is vital to cleanse our system of many of our Christian assumptions. So, we will spend this issue thinking more about our religious, non-Christian neighbors.

I think this is one of those areas that is always relevant but never terribly urgent. I'm not sure there is much that could happen in the world this week that would cause a preacher to stand up and educate the church on Buddhism. That said, the topic is of incredible relevance for our witness in the world.

This issue will have a number of items that I'd put under the category of relevant, not urgent. The interview with Monte Cox is excellent for thinking about how we develop a disposition toward engaging our neighbors. No tips and tricks here, but more a way of being mindful about others. This issue also features a number of book recommendations---and some of these books can be slow. That said, I think they can be really helpful for cultivating a worldview. Oh, and don't miss the link to Deborah Savage. She puts forward a really interesting Catholic perspective on life.

Let's get on with it. As always, thank you for reading *Footnotes*.



Footnotes Roundtable:

Monte Cox

Monte Cox is the Dean of the College of Bible and Ministry at Harding University. He is on the Mt. Rushmore of people who have shaped my thinking and approach to ministry. Here is what he had to say about the faith of our neighbors.

BT: Is the USA still religious?

MC: [Diana Eck](#) who taught Comparative Religion at Harvard Divinity and founded [The Pluralism Project](#) wrote a book entitled [A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation](#). I'm not sure how she is measuring "most religiously diverse," but I don't doubt her conclusion. Surveys of the "Nones" consistently show that many are religiously unaffiliated. Americans still have an interest in spiritual pursuits. But for many, they are the customized spiritual practices Robert Bellah [famously called](#) "Sheila-ism."

BT: Its been 17 years since 9/11. Since then, many Americans have developed a greater appreciation for Islam. Yet, many others might view Muslims simply as terrorists. What would you say to the latter?

MC: I'm inclined to think they probably have never actually met a Muslim. That's one of the points Josh Graves made in [How Not to Kill a Muslim](#) (13-14), and he's right.

BT: Being aware of the diversity in our communities is one thing. But what strategies might you recommend to actually engage these populations?

MC: People who live in or near the larger American cities are bound to cross paths with adherents of other faiths. So don't be afraid; be hospitable. Reach out to the parent at the PTA or at Little League who wears a turban (Sikhs), to the Mom who wears a hijab (Muslims), or to the woman with a red dot on her forehead (from India). Make a friend. Someone asked me once, on a radio program that aired shortly after 9-11, "What do you say to a Muslim?" I wasn't being sarcastic when I answered, "Say `Hi, my name is [insert your name here]."

BT: Let's suppose I don't live in LA, Houston, DC, or one of the other cities where global faiths might be prominent. Suppose I live in Memphis, Birmingham, or Indianapolis. Where should I go to meet my neighbors?

MC: Places of worship are good places to begin, though not as personal as introducing yourself to an adherent of another faith that you meet in a more natural way (like at PTA or Little League). As a Bible class or a church small group, contact your local mosque, Buddhist Temple or Baha'i gathering, express your desire to learn about your new neighbors, pay them a visit together, and ask thoughtful questions.



Understanding 9/11

During this conversation on World Religions we've mentioned 9/11 a few times. I'll admit that this is one of the signature moments of my life, which brought together emotions of fear and anxiety with the larger conversations we're having about faith.

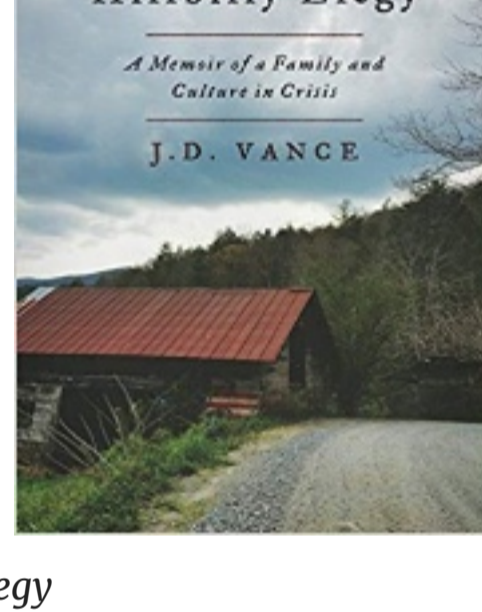
While many of you may remember where you were when it all happened, you may have now forgotten some other details. If so, I'd strongly encourage that you check out [Understanding 9/11](#). This site allows you to watch TV feeds from all over the world, witnessing 9/11 as it all happened. Plus, it allows you to see the details through the eyes of others. It's fascinating. Don't pull it up if you have somewhere to be in the next hour or so.



The Christian's Essential Reading List

Last week I spoke at the Harding University Lectureship about recent titles that I think Christian leaders should read. I considered six topics and then chose one book that might appear on the New York Times Bestseller List and paired it with a title more likely to be found in a Christian bookstore. I presented the first three during the first lecture and the second three at the next. I'll do the same in *Footnotes*. Here are the first six books I recommended.

As Others See It

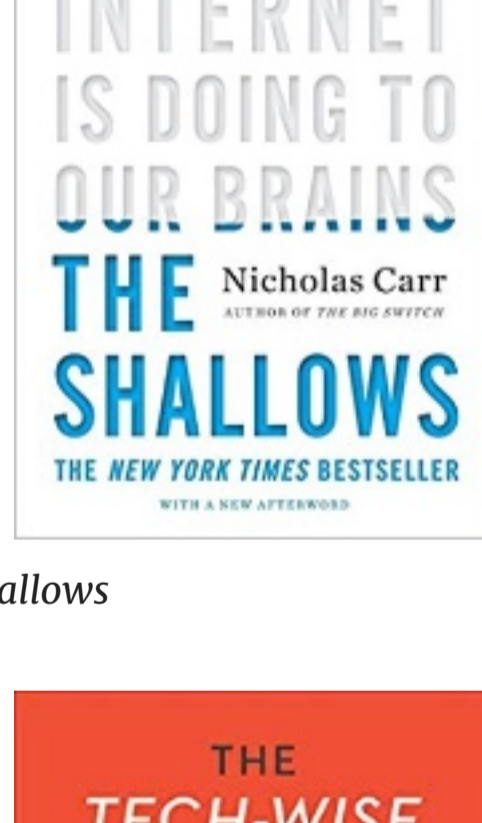


J.D. Vance, *Hillbilly Elegy*

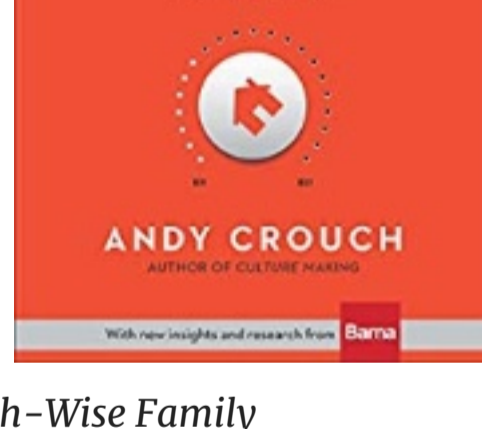


Monte Cox, *Significant Others*

The Problems with Screen Time

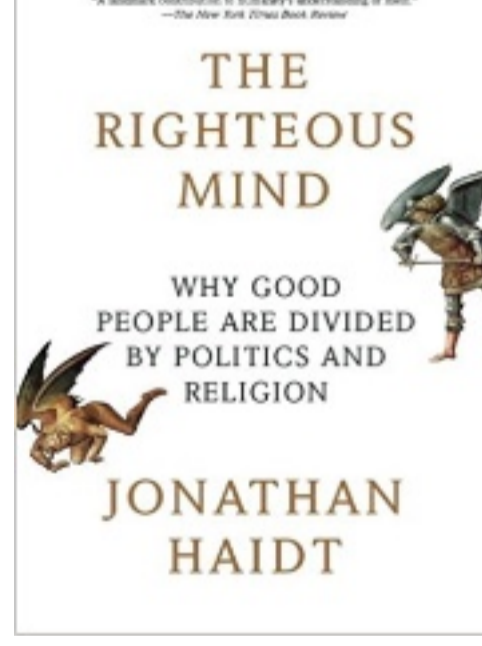


Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows*

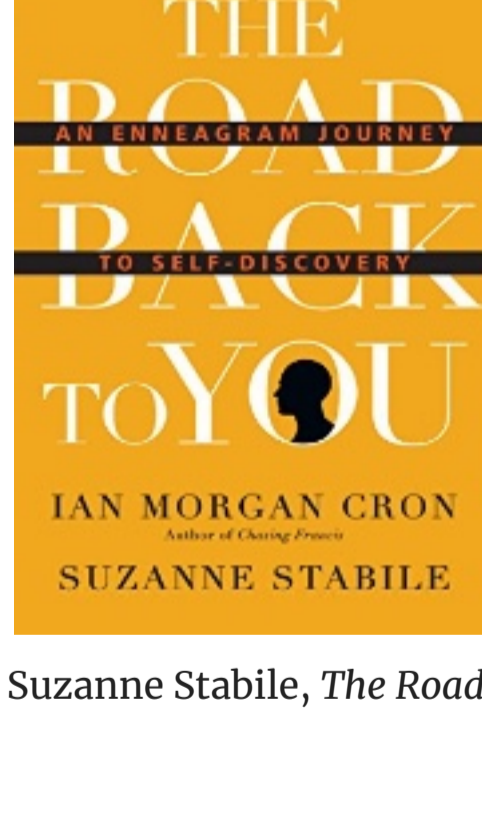


Andy Crouch, *The Tech-Wise Family*

Why We Are How We Are



Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*



Ian Morgan Cron and Suzanne Stabile, *The Road Back to You*



A Few More Footnotes

1. Evertt Huffard often gets asked whether [Allah and God are the same](#).
2. Deborah Savage, "[Reflections on the Revolution](#)."
3. Some have recently asked if Christianity has a [public intellectual](#). Perhaps it is [Alan Jacobs](#).
4. America's land laureate: [Wendell Berry](#).
5. Scholars dupe academic journal into accepting [their updated version](#) of....*Mein Kampf*?
6. For those interested in systemic injustice, race relations, prison overcrowding....*Serial Season 3* has been fantastic. If you are new to *Serial*, check out Season 1, but maybe skip 2.



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UPCOMING

October 24

The Enneagram

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