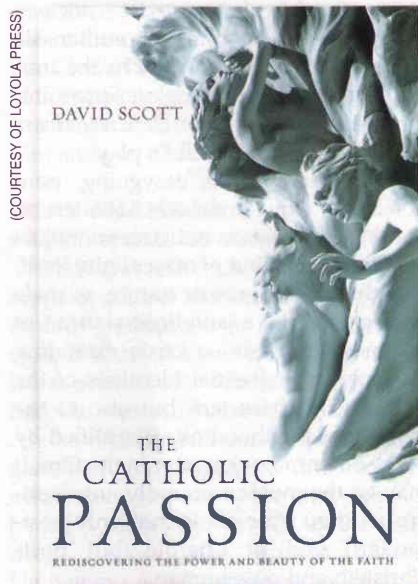


A Passion for the Faith



The Catholic Passion: Rediscovering the Power and Beauty of the Faith by David Scott, Loyola Press (2005).

Reviewed by MICHAEL DUBRUEIL

Pope Benedict's first encyclical takes on the theme of love, quoting from the First Letter of John: "God is love." He declares that in our times "love" is often misunderstood and is sadly separated from God—the true source of love—and the Holy Father points us back in the right direction.

In a different way, but with great effect, David Scott in *The Catholic Passion: Rediscovering the Power and Beauty of the Faith* also expounds upon the love of God in his presentation of how to be a Catholic. What he has written is a love story.

There are two lovers here. First, there is David Scott himself, whose writing reveals a fascination with the Church, a love affair—fueled by the many great witnesses of the Faith—that has moved him to follow in their footsteps.

David Scott's new book is both a celebration of the Catholic faith and the exposition of the love story between God and man.

In a survey of other reviews of *The Catholic Passion*, almost all gave it great praise, although Anne Carr did not in her review published in *America* magazine. Carr believed that Scott had ignored the pluralism present in the Church and did not discuss what unifies us as Catholics. I disagree. Carr apparently wanted Scott to focus more on what isn't Catholic rather than what really is the unifying "passion" of the Catholic Church; the love of God that has touched Scott and countless other Catholics throughout the ages. This is the "Catholic passion" and, to paraphrase St. Paul, without it we are just noisemakers. Scott's "passion" returns us to what is essential, just as Pope Benedict has begun his papacy by recalling *Deus caritas est*.

Scott sees the Church in the same way that a lover sees the object of his affection. There is a pleasant blindness to what then-Cardinal Ratzinger—in his meditation on the Ninth Station of the Cross on Good Friday in Rome last year—bemoaned as the "filth" present in the Church. This is an uplifting book at a time where those seeking to know more about the Church are likely to encounter lurid exposés and attacks on the Church rather than the glories of the Faith and its triumph.

The Catholic Passion is a positive look at the Catholic Church that sings of her ideals while relegating to individual ungratefulness the faults and scandals that we read about in the news today and the history pages of yesterday. *The Catholic Passion* is all about the Bride of Christ ready to meet Christ as well as sorrows over the foolish bridesmaids

not ready to receive him. Scott quotes G. K. Chesterton's response to the question "What is wrong with the world today?"

"Dear Sirs:

I am.

Sincerely, G.K. Chesterton"

The "filth" exists because we are ungrateful lovers—the "worthless wretch" in the parable of the wedding guests, unworthy to be called sons of so good and merciful a Father.

The "tremendous lover"

The Father is the other lover in Scott's *Passion*. He quotes Paul Claudel, a 19th century poet, playwright, and French diplomat: "Look, see God striding across the earth like a sower; he takes his heart in both hands and scatters it over the face of the earth!"

In the second chapter, he adds: "The whole Bible can be read as an epic chase—an adventure of divine pursuit." To understand Catholicism one must begin with the "tremendous lover" that is God.

The Catholic faith unfolds in *The Catholic Passion* like a slow blooming rose. Every aspect of Divine Revelation, the Incarnation, the Church, and her sacramental life continues to show forth how much we are loved by God. The sadness of those who reject this great love, who fall by the wayside on this pilgrimage of faith, accepting instead the empty love of self, is bemoaned. The reader is drawn into this story of love and it becomes his own story: will he accept the love that God is offering in his Church or will he reject it?

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(COURTESY OF LOYOLA PRESS)

■ David Scott.

The most fascinating aspect of Scott's exposition was his excellent use of illustrative material to highlight his points.

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For example, he used a quote from Epiphanius, a fourth-century monk, who imagines Jesus addressing Adam:

"See on my face the spit I received in order to restore life to you the life I once breathed into you. See there the marks of the blows I received to re-fashion your warped nature in my image. On my back see the marks of the scourging I endured to remove the burden of sin that weighs upon your back. See my hands, nailed firmly to a tree, for you who once wickedly stretched out your hand to a tree."

This is just one of a plethora of great quotes, illuminative illustrations, and stunning meditations that have the effect of forcing a pause to reflect deeper on the truth presented. Perhaps you might even take a look at your own hands and wonder if you are grasping the cross in your life or "wickedly" stretching out for the forbidden fruits that temptation offers.

Throughout the book, the truths of the Church, the Sacraments, the Mass, and the Last Things are illustrated by characters from the Gospels, the lives of the saints, and cultural figures. The former two one would expect in such a book, but in presenting the third group, Scott shows that the effects of Catholicism don't stop at the doors of the

Church but reach out into the world and are changing the culture continuously.

Who knew that the great playwright Eugene O'Neill, having left his Catholic faith behind, could recite Francis Thompson's poem *The Hound of Heaven* from memory and its haunting tale of a soul who fled and was pursued by the great lover, God? That Dorothy Day listened to him recite this poem in a hang-out called "The Hell Hole"? What better illustration of the Divine pursuit of God, who thirsts for every soul?

In the end Scott writes, "If what the Catholic believes is true, there is nothing that God has not or will not do to win our love." *The Catholic Passion* presents us with the "everything" that we know through faith that God has done

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with him in baptism, to commune with us in the intimate act of Holy Communion, to be one with us in our vocation, to share his Spirit with us freely, to show us the way from this life to the next.

The Catholic Passion is an excellent exposition of what God will do and has done to win our love. Hopefully those who read David Scott's fine work will "rediscover the power and beauty of the faith"—their faith. ■

Michael Dubrueil is acquisitions editor at the Catholic publisher, Our Sunday Visitor.

to make himself known to us, becoming one of us, putting himself into our hands, suffering and rising from the dead, continuing to be present to us in the Church. Here the Divine love continues as God invites us to die and rise

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