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Word Publishing, 2001.

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Review:

Gary Bauer. *Doing Things Right*. Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 2001.

"Virtually every major problem that bedevils our country is,
at its core, essentially a moral issue" (Bauer 102).

Mr. Bauer's book is probably not one that I, or for that matter, a lot of college professors would pick up or even peruse at the library or our local bookstores. Having said that, a review of Mr. Bauer's work is worthwhile for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the editorial policy of this journal, and the editors' desires to see the works of each invited campus speaker reviewed. It is an established precedent within *The Journal of Civil Discourse*, and one that is worthy of continuation. Having said that, then, a review of *Doing Things Right*, (at least this review) begins with the warning to the reader that this is a difficult book to find. A search of several bookstores as well as public and university libraries did not prove to be successful in finding this (or other Gary Bauer) books, and therefore, potential readers should probably be aware that ordering this book on-line is about the only sure way of finding it.

Gary Bauer sought the Republican nomination for President in 2000, and this book *Doing Things Right*, is largely a result of that experience. As such, the tone of the book makes his stance on issues quite apparent, and reads very much like a long campaign speech. The book is filled with flowery rhetoric that, like all political tomes, seems to glamorize the author's hardscrabble youth, and the many positive influences in his life, in the face of an otherwise mundane middle class upbringing. Like other books written and sometimes ghost written by political figures, Bauer's book becomes largely autobiographical, as he mixes stories of people he met along the campaign trail with recollections of his youth, and influences upon his life ranging from his parents and grandparents to Ronald Reagan and Barry Goldwater.

The words Bauer uses to describe his love of country, family values, and the theme of freedom, could well be taken from the speeches of political leaders of either major party over the last several decades. His deeply held conservative values are on display in his brief discussion of a wide-range of topics from gay marriage to abortion, to guns: "the horrifying violence in American life has little to do with the availability of guns and everything to do with our growing virtue deficit" (23). One really doesn't need to read Bauer's book to know his views on abortion, but perhaps this paragraph sums up Bauer's views on a variety of social issues: "back in the '50s and early '60s we had not yet seen the undermining of the sanctity of human life that was unleashed in the early '70s by *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court decision that removed all legal protection from defenseless unborn children" (24). Many pages are devoted to Bauer's core belief that *Roe v. Wade* should be overturned. His admiration for former President Reagan can in large part be attributed to his belief that Reagan, like himself, was devoted to overturning *Roe v. Wade*.

Bauer's quote, with which I began this review, illustrates that "moral issues" are the cornerstone, not only of his presidential campaign, but also of his writing and his thinking. Also, as one can probably imagine, groups such as the ACLU, and individuals such as Jesse Jackson, Barney Frank, and Bill Clinton all take a beating in the pages of this book, while conservative icons such as Ronald Reagan fare very well. Knowing Bauer's political affiliation and devotion to the GOP and particularly his strong belief in what he perceives to be the power of organized religion, it would be difficult to imagine a book of his written in any other manner. In fairness, Bauer acknowledges that "neither party has a monopoly on virtue or vice" (109). He chastises Vice-President Cheney for taking the position that it would be acceptable if a state authorized same-sex marriages. He also points out apparent hypocrisy when he mentions that "Christians in the GOP were tough on Clinton's conduct, but strangely silent when it came to disclosures about the personal behavior of some leading Republicans" (110).

In essence, *Doing Things Right* is no more "preachy" than any of a number of political figures' books in which they share their broad and grand visions of America, and make some suggestions as to why they might do a better job of governing than those who've been doing the governing. The bestseller rack at any bookstore seems to always feature the book of a political leader, and usually the impression those books make

on our culture is no longer than the length of a given campaign season. Is Bauer's work significantly better or worse than any of those other authors who wrote about their campaigns and their "visions" for America? My answer after reading it, remains much as I would've surmised prior to reading it: probably not. But, as such, anything that informs the reader and allows us a glimpse into the mind of a public figure is probably more positive than it could be construed negative. Those seeking either to laud or to vilify Bauer probably won't find anything in the book that they didn't already know and/or suspect about him, and as such *Doing Things Right* makes for a good and pleasant "how to manual" for those who admire his political leanings, and a rather civil, if disagreeable "how not to manual" for those who disagree with his politics.

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