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978-1-107-11272-8 - Taking Rites Seriously: Law, Politics, and the Reasonableness of Faith

Francis J. Beckwith

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## Taking Rites Seriously

*Taking Rites Seriously* is about how religious beliefs and religious believers are assessed by judges and legal scholars and are sometimes mischaracterized and misunderstood by those who are critical of the influence of religion in politics or in the formation of law. Covering three general topics – reason and motive, dignity and personhood, nature and sex – philosopher and legal theorist Francis J. Beckwith carefully addresses several contentious legal and cultural questions over which religious and nonreligious citizens often disagree: the rationality of religious belief, religiously motivated legislation, human dignity in bioethics, abortion and embryonic stem cell research, reproductive rights and religious liberty, evolutionary theory, and the nature of marriage. In the process, he responds to some well-known critics of public faith – including Brian Leiter, Steven Pinker, Suzanna Sherry, Ronald Dworkin, John Rawls, and Richard Dawkins – as well as to some religiously conservative critics of secularism such as the advocates for intelligent design.

Francis J. Beckwith is Professor of Philosophy and Church-State Studies at Baylor University, where he also serves as Associate Director of the Graduate Program on Philosophy as well as Co-Director (with Trent Dougherty) of the Program in Philosophical Studies of Religion. He has held visiting faculty appointments at Princeton and Notre Dame and has published extensively on social ethics, applied ethics, legal philosophy, and the philosophy of religion. A graduate of Fordham University (Ph.D., philosophy) and the Washington University School of Law, St. Louis (M.J.S.), his many books include *Politics for Christians: Statecraft as Soulcraft* (2010) and *Defending Life: A Moral and Legal Case Against Abortion Choice* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

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FRANCIS J. BECKWITH

*Baylor University*



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To Robert P. George

A man in whom many of us have found, what St. Thomas More's contemporaries found in him: "friendship and courage, cheerfulness and charity, diligence in duties, counsel in adversity, patience in pain – their good servant, but God's first." (from "A Lawyer's Prayer to St. Thomas More")

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Some of the ideas and arguments that I include in this book were initially presented in columns I published in the online magazine *The Catholic Thing* (<http://catholicthing.org>), for which I have been writing a regular column every two weeks since October 2010. I would like to thank both its editor-in-chief, Robert Royal, and senior editor, Brad Miner, for providing me with such a wonderful platform.

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The title of this book, *Taking Rites Seriously*, is taken from the title of an article by Paul Weithman, "Taking Rites Seriously," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 75 (1994): 272–294. It is such a clever title that I wish I had thought of it myself. Fortunately, for me, titles cannot be copyrighted. Thus, no one can accuse me of not taking *copyrights* seriously.

This book is the first I have published since the death of my father, Harold Joseph Beckwith (1930–2015). It is because of his support and love, in tandem with the same from my mother, Elizabeth, that I chose to pursue the life of a college professor. *Risposa in pace, mio padre.*