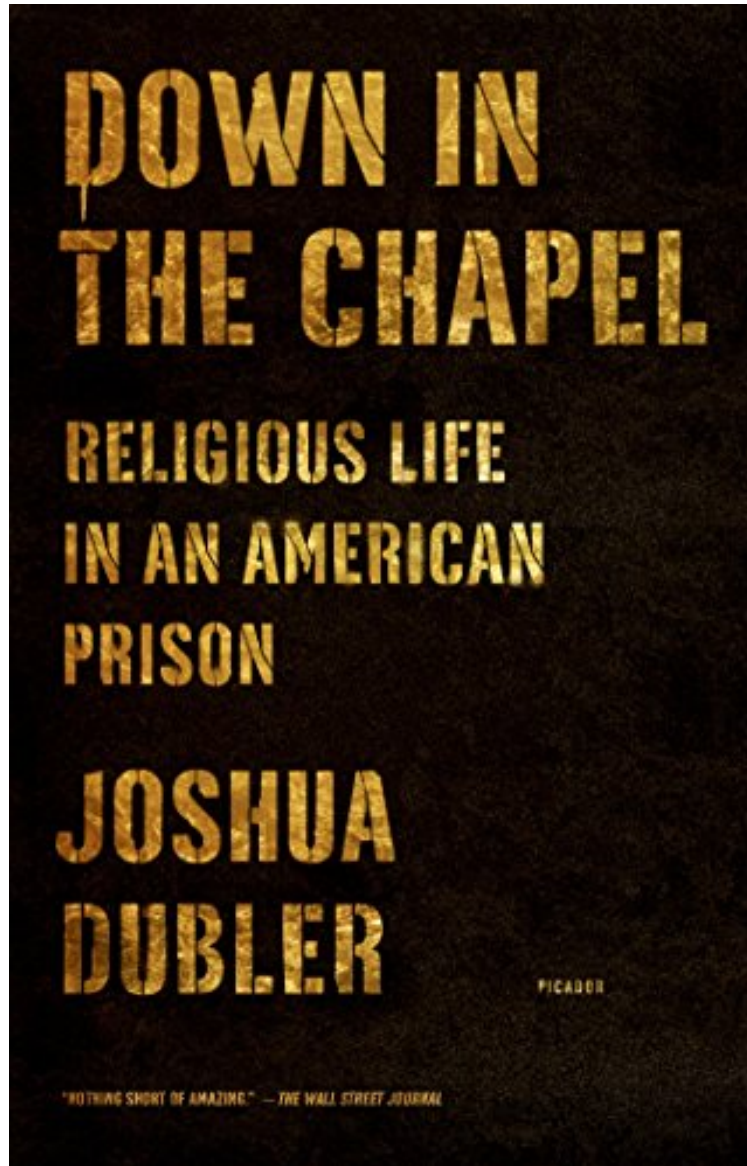


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Down in the Chapel: Religious Life in an American Prison

Joshua Dubler

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Joshua Dubler : Down in the Chapel: Religious Life in an American Prison before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Down in the Chapel: Religious Life in an American Prison:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A compelling fascinating read. Could not put it down.By Ken WrightThis book is absolutely essential, as well as a very compelling read, for anyone whowants to know what really goes on inside a prison, especially from a religious, missionoriented point of view.The ability of Joshua Dubler to gain

the trust of the prisoners to the point that they would actually confide in him their truths, which is unheard of in a prison, is outstanding and a tribute to Joshua's dedication to his purpose and faith. No simple, naive "do gooder" is Joshua: He knows his stuff and holds his own with all the postulations of the prisoners he encountered over his year inside. Anyone considering a mission effort to a prison should read this first to get a first hand, realistic view of what he/she is getting into. Ken Wright, North Palm Beach, Florida 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Buddha LLC Insightful meditation into both doing this volunteer work, and the meaning of our lives 10 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Groundbreaking Examination of American Religious Life By Joshua M For anyone interested in America, the prison-industrial complex, religion, ethnography, or philosophy, this book is a must read. This is to say that there is something for everyone in *Down in the Chapel*. Dubler's chronicle of 7 days in the lives of prisoners in the chapel of Graterford Prison is a dynamic look at the way that individuals conceive of themselves religiously in the modern day. Mixing incisive critical thoughts on the American obsession with incarceration, penetrating comments about what makes us believe and draws us to religion, and deeply humanizing portrayals of prisoners, Dubler has written a must-read book. There is so much to pore over and explore-- it's the type of book you want to keep permanently on your desk so as to have it for easy reference for its nuggets of wisdom, moments of pathos and hilarity, and its absorbing writing-- you might want to buy 8 copies of it for your closest friends. One can only rejoice in the possibility of future publications by Dubler. This book is a must-read.

A BOLD AND PROVOCATIVE EXPLORATION OF ONE OF THE MOST RELIGIOUSLY VIBRANT PLACES IN AMERICA
A STATE PENITENTIARY
Baraka, Al, Teddy, and Sayyid: Four black men from South Philly, two Christian and two Muslim, are serving life at Pennsylvania's maximum-security Graterford Prison. All of them work in the prison chapel, where they have regular opportunities to dispute the workings of God, faith, and self-transformation. And then Sayyid disappears. *Down in the Chapel* tells the story of one week in Graterford's chapel. We learn how the men at Graterford pass their time, care for themselves, foster relationships, and commune with their makers. We observe Evangelicals, Catholics, Jews, and black Muslims at prayer and study and song. And we watch what happens when an interloping scholar of religion is thrown into the mix with hopes of making sense of it all. When prisoners turn to God, they are often scorned as "bad men" who fake their piety or as "poor men" who have no better option than to adopt simplistic and rigid creeds. Joshua Dubler goes beyond these stereotypes to show the religious life of a prison in all its vital complexity. An essential interpretation of faith in an age of mass incarceration, *Down in the Chapel* reveals what prisoners do with religion, and what religion does with them.

From Publishers Weekly Starred . University of Rochester religion professor Dubler (Bang! Thud: World Spirit from a Texas School Book Depository) takes readers where every American should go at least once to prison. The highly religious United States also has the highest incarceration rate in the world. Examining chapel life at Pennsylvania's maximum-security prison at Graterford, readers follow two prison guards, five chaplains, 15 prisoner-workers, 20 volunteers, one secular professor of religion, and hundreds of religious followers of Sunni Islam, Salafi Islam, Judaism, Nation of Islam, Moorish Science Temple, Evangelicals, Catholics, Christian Science, Native American Church, and more. His postmodern frame keeps Dubler, as the interpreter, always in plain view, while profitably weaving in Graterford's social location (an era that prioritizes punishment, not rehabilitation), and historical context (Pennsylvania's early experiments in reforming prisoners through religious instruction and solitary confinement). In this important book, Dubler reveals an essential American conversation that is complex, nuanced, highly intellectual, woefully uninformed, often humorous, and deeply theological among men held in violent, repressive circumstances. This book aptly proves Dostoyevsky's claim that one can judge a society's civilization by entering its prisons. Agent: Tina Bennett, WME. (Aug.) From Booklist Heavenly Father, thank you for . . . comforting the guys that are in the hole. In the prayers of a convicted killer, Dubler finds signs of a remarkably vibrant spiritual life behind prison bars. During a week spent at Pennsylvania's Graterford Prison, Dubler learns how robbers, drug dealers, rapists, and murderers worship and serve God. Readers see how the distinctive beliefs of Jewish, Islamic, Evangelical, and Catholic convicts animate enclaves of prison faith, enclaves always open to new converts but zealously watchful of their dogmatic boundaries. Within these enclaves, readers encounter men who profess an often rough-edged piety. They also confront the difficulties chaplains face in trying to soften the prisons institutionalized callousness by ministering to these men. Scholars will appreciate Dubler's intellectual sophistication, evident in his insightful references to the theology of Kierkegaard and Tillich, and to the philosophy of Hegel and Nietzsche. But a broader circle of readers will respond to the compelling immediacy of Dubler's narrative, rich with humanizing detail. An eye-opening inquiry into a surprising religious world. --Bryce Christensen Nothing short of amazing. The Wall Street Journal Powerful and often surprising. The Christian Science Monitor A fascinating look inside an American prison. The Daily Beast This book is a masterful and magisterial probing into our new Jim Crow, told with subtle intelligence and genuine compassion. I salute Brother Joshua Dubler! Cornel West