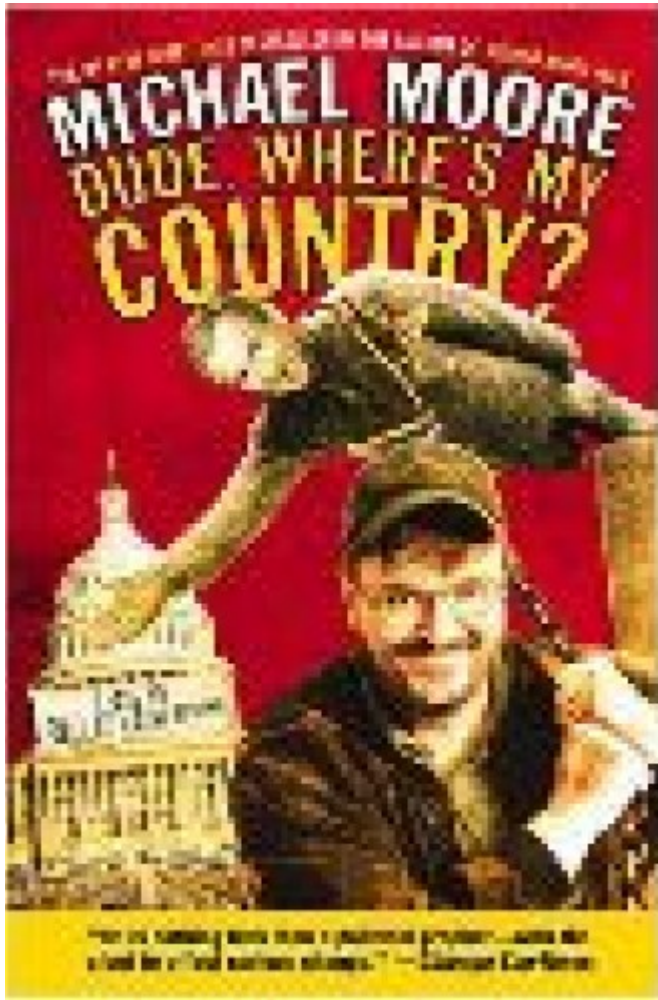


Dude, Where's My Country?

reviewed by [Arthur Paul Boers](#) in the [March 23, 2004](#) issue

In Review



Dude, Where's My Country?

Michael Moore
Warner

Psalm 107 declares that "God pours contempt upon rulers." Perhaps Michael Moore, a passionate critic of America's leaders, corporate and political, is imitating God. His

brash, in-your-face, over-the-top rhetoric can make him easy to dismiss, but he marshals impressive evidence for his claims. And his award-winning documentaries and best-selling books are among the few popular voices that defend liberal points of view. While often dismissed as an “extreme leftist,” Moore promotes values that most Western nations accept as a given.

Dude, Where’s My Country? is an unrelentingly funny and unstinting critique of the latest rush to war and, in particular, of the Bush administration’s disastrous policies of promoting corporate interests. Moore cites major news sources that raise serious questions about Bush connections with both the Taliban and the Bin Laden family. He challenges a national policy of fear and steadily debunks untruths told to justify the war in Iraq. He notes the double standard of impeaching a president for deception regarding sexual behavior but being unwilling to contest war-provoking prevarications. He laments the suspension of civil rights. He wonders why Attorney General John Ashcroft protected the gun rights of 9/11 terrorists (denying the FBI the right to examine their gun purchase records), while wanting to see the library records of U.S. residents.

More than we need protection from terrorism, Moore argues, we need protection from corporations that “rip off our old-age pensions, destroy the environment, deplete irreplaceable fossil fuels in the name of profit, deny us our right to universal health care, take people’s jobs away whenever the mood hits them.” He asks, “What do you call a 19 percent increase in the homeless and the hungry from 2001 to 2002? Are these not acts of terrorism? Do they not cost lives?”

Ted Schmidt, editor of Canada’s *Catholic New Times*, calls Moore “America’s most effective Catholic.” Moore is getting increasingly explicit about his religious underpinnings. Raised Roman Catholic in working-class Flint, Michigan, he includes in his latest book a satirical chapter titled “Jesus W. Christ.” At a recent book promotion in Indianapolis he said he is reluctant to discuss his faith because he does not want to proselytize. His parents raised him to believe we are judged by how we treat the most vulnerable—a passion evident in *Dude*.

“Jesus W. Christ” takes on the right-wing usurping of the gospel. (Earlier, Moore criticizes “Reverend John” Ashcroft.) The chapter purports to be a first-person jeremiad from God, who regards George W. as an embarrassment. In Moore’s familiar satirical style, God dismisses the Holy Spirit as “useless, never around, never leaves a forwarding address” and notes that his relationship with the Son has

been “a little strained” since the first coming. Bizarrely, Moore portrays God as regarding violence as a divine prerogative, while condemning most human forms of it. (According to Moore’s God, however, abortion can be good.) Do not look here for deft theological reflection. One does not read Moore for nuance.

It is refreshing to see someone confront outrageous right-wing God claims, even if Moore creates God in his own image. At least he advocates the sound Christian approach of “making war on our own dark impulses” rather than on externalized enemies. If all Moore did was to “pour contempt” on others, he would be tiresome. But he also critiques liberals for a host of weaknesses, including their overseriousness and inability to have fun.

Sometimes comedy with a social edge gives me hope. This is perhaps in keeping with Psalm 2, which points out that while the “nations conspire,” “the peoples plot in vain” and “rulers take counsel together, against the Lord,” God “sits in the heavens and laughs.”