



This Boy's Faith: Notes from a Southern Baptist Upbringing

Hamilton Cain

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An unforgettable memoir about growing up Southern, grappling with faith, and confronting a childhood colored by religion, Bible Belt culture, and a mother who minces words better than a food processor

A child stumbles upon a vintage photograph and glimpses salvation. A young girl vanishes in a famous cavern when she runs away from her tour group. A hijacked plane circles overhead, its passengers' lives in jeopardy. A mystical stranger, a refugee from the Holocaust, seals off her secrets behind an elusive smile. From simple blessings to historical tragedies to random twists of fate, *This Boy's Faith* plumbs the uncanny mysteries and surprising revelations at the heart of a Southern Baptist childhood.

Hamilton Cain came to Jesus on a trampoline, or as his devout parents described it, "He just jumped and bounced his way to the Lord." Growing up in Tennessee in the 1970s and '80s, he set himself on the path to becoming the best Baptist boy he could be. The veil between the concrete and the magical shimmered all around him, nourishing his soul. Religion was a map to help him navigate his life, to steer away from the reefs of temptation. Yet as he grew older, Hamilton began to notice fractures and cracks in a world that had once promised sanctuary and transcendence, perils threatening to shatter the protective shell of family and community. Like an escape artist, he cut himself free from his evangelical milieu, and eventually gravitated north, to cosmopolitan New York.

Twenty years later, the smooth flow of Hamilton's life reversed itself yet again when his first child was born with a grave genetic disease. Thrown into a chasm of confusion and despair, he found the primal voices of his original culture reaching out to him. He picked up that faded, half-forgotten script to see what values, if any, could steady him in the here and now. The result is a story of growing up Baptist, and then growing up. Haunting, evocative, and gorgeously written, Hamilton Cain's debut will resonate with fans of poignant personal memoir, readers interested in faith and spirituality, and anyone who has known what it's like to engage the complexities and contradictions of one's past.

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