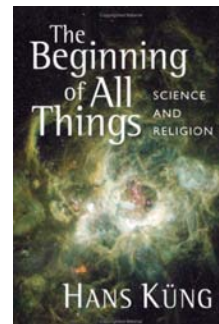


The Beginning of All Things by Hans Küng

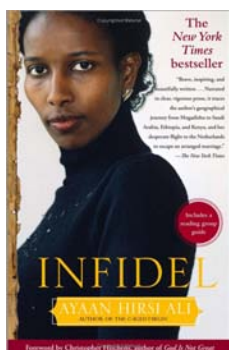
Küng is one of the clearest theologians thinkers writing today. There are a glut of books out there promising to weigh in on some pressing issue that concerns the science/ religion controversy. I personally believe that it is a bogus issue largely fed by the publishing industry. That said, I think Kung's book is one of the few on the subject worth reading. I have read Dawkins and Hitchens and am generally sympathetic with their views. But Kung points out that while science (and history) may have much to say about human beings and perhaps what drives religious movements, it has absolutely nothing to say about God. Kung reminds us of the often forgotten distinction between religious experience and religious organizations. This book lays out the fundamental issue more clearly than any I have encountered. R. Heiderer, Boulder Colorado



September 22, 2008

6:30 pm

Miller Hall



Infidel by Ayaan Hirsi Ali

Readers with an eye on European politics will recognize Ali as the Somali-born member of the Dutch parliament who faced death threats after collaborating on a film about domestic violence against Muslim women with controversial director Theo van Gogh (who was himself assassinated). Even before then, her attacks on Islamic culture as "brutal, bigoted, [and] fixated on controlling women" had generated much controversy. In this suspenseful account of her life and her internal struggle with her Muslim faith, she discusses how these views were shaped by her experiences amid the political chaos of Somalia and other African nations, where she was subjected to genital mutilation and later forced into an unwanted marriage. Apart from feelings of guilt over van Gogh's death, her voice is forceful and unbowed—like Irshad Manji, she delivers a powerful feminist critique of Islam informed by a genuine understanding of the religion. From Publishers Weekly Starred Review

October 20, 2008

6:30 pm

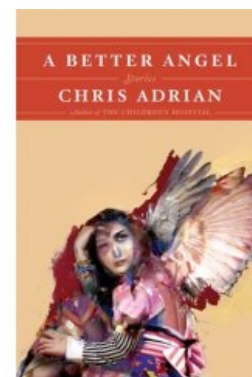
Miller Hall

A Better Angel: Stories by Chris Adrian

In his lovely, potent new story collection, Chris Adrian succeeds in snaring some elusive nuances of big subjects: loss and grief, and in particular the dubious ways in which we try to work around life's incomprehensibilities. Though frequently told from a child's point of view (Adrian's day job: pediatrician), these stories don't resort to cuteness or cheap comfort, but through wit and furious inventiveness earn our trust and achieve a hypnotic grace.

Adrian is especially adept at rendering the uneasy relationship between the living and the dead. In "The Sum of Our Parts," a woman on life support hovers over the hospital staff as they attempt to save her, investing herself as much in their private lives as they have in hers.

Adrian's handling of 9/11 in several stories captures his strongest suits: an instinctive mistrust of the glib and easy, and an insistent undertow pulling toward greater depths. Caroline McCloskey-Elle, August 2008



November 24, 2008

6:30 pm

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G.W. Heinen