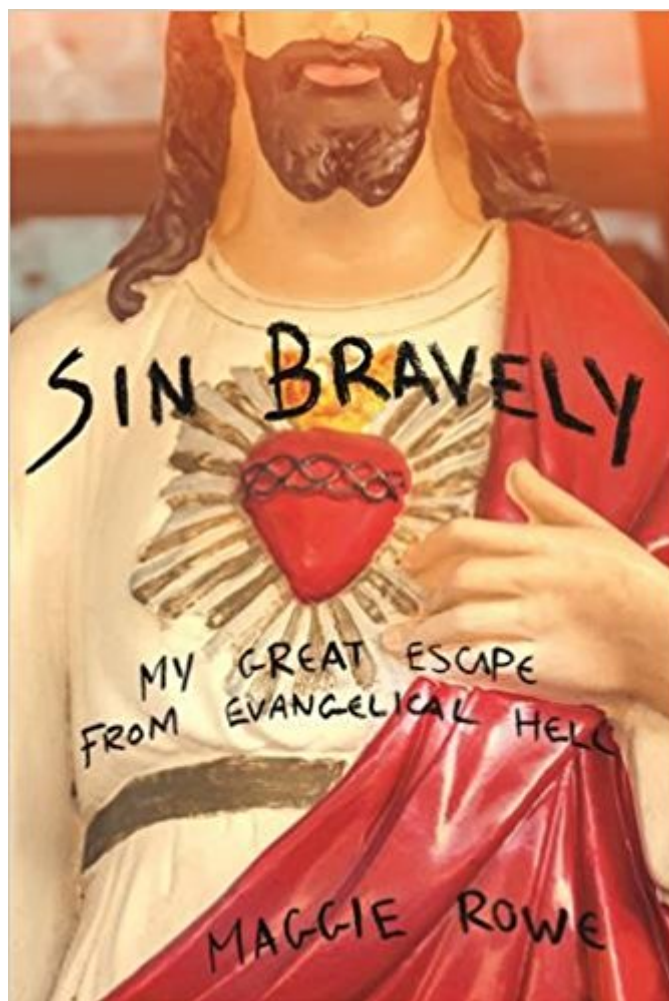


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# Sin Bravely: A Memoir Of Spiritual Disobedience



## Synopsis

As a young girl, Maggie Rowe took the idea of salvation very seriously. Growing up in a moderately religious household, her fear of eternal damnation turned into a childhood terror that drove her to become an outrageously dedicated Born-again Christian—regularly slinging Bible verses in cutthroat scripture memorization competitions and assaulting strangers at shopping malls with the “good news” that they were going to hell. Finally, at nineteen, crippled by her fear, she checked herself in to an Evangelical psychiatric facility. And that is where her journey really began. Surrounded by a ragtag cast of characters, including a former biker meth-head struggling with anger management issues, a set of identical twins tormented by erotic fantasies, a World War II veteran and artist of denial who insists that he’s only “locked up for a tune-up,” and a warm and upbeat chronic depressive who becomes the author’s closest ally, Maggie launches a campaign to, in the words of Martin Luther, “Sin bravely in order to know the forgiveness of God.” Told in a voice both funny and heartfelt, *Sin Bravely* is a tour de force, voice-driven debut that examines how one woman finally

## Book Information

Paperback: 225 pages

Publisher: Soft Skull Press (January 10, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1593766599

ISBN-13: 978-1593766597

Product Dimensions: 5.9 x 0.9 x 8.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 45 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #236,063 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #74 in Books > Humor &

Entertainment > Humor > Doctors & Medicine #84 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Humor >

Religion #1112 in Books > Literature & Fiction > United States > Humor

## Customer Reviews

Praise for *Sin Bravely* "Rowe deftly juxtaposes dark humor with raw emotion without ever yanking the reader out of the story." —The Guardian "Anxiety, guilt, and a debilitating fear of going to hell don't feel like they'd make for a great vacation read, but *Sin Bravely*, Maggie Rowe's hilarious and ultimately heartwarming story of her time spent in an Evangelical Christian rehab, is . . . Laugh-out-loud funny." —GOOP, 1 of 8 new reads for Labor Day Weekend "Rowe's

fantastic book is a born-again version of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*...Not for the faint of heart, this is a cutting examination of Rowe's spiritual evolution that plunges into the big questions with the fearlessness found in the most brilliant of comics." • Publishers Weekly, Starred Review

"A gripping exploration of the necessity of disobedience on the road to authenticity. A beautifully written, deeply funny memoir." • Jill Soloway, creator of *Transparent*

"This book is so honest, so chock full of struggle and philosophical profundity and ultimately so heartbreakingly funny; that one is only left to conclude that if Heaven is a place that won't let in the likes of Maggie Rowe, then why the hell would anyone even want to go there?" • Mitch Hurwitz, creator of *Arrested Development*

"A sharp, genuinely funny book about the dangers of literalism and fear of the afterlife. A must read for anyone on this side of eternity." • Bill Maher

"Maggie Rowe suffered for our sins so we don't have to. There are many laugh out loud moments in Maggie's deeply moving account of her spiritual wrestling match with a god she both feared and worshiped. A book with an original voice that should definitely be on your reading list." • Annabelle Gurwitch, author of the New York Times bestseller and Thurber Prize Finalist *I See You Made an Effort*

"Maggie Rowe's writing is a rare thing: brilliant, intelligent, hilarious, thoughtful, and, most importantly, utterly believable. *Sin Bravely* is a startling reminder of how 'faith' and 'belief' are often synonymous with pure terror of a fictional and seemingly very mean Guy, and of what He'll do if you doubt Him for even a second. Her fear of Hell is a hell in itself, lived through the mind of a fiercely intelligent woman. *Sin Bravely* deserves to sell more copies and scare more people than the Bible; this is what I call a 'good book.'" • Peter Baynham, co-writer, *Borat* and *Arthur Christmas*

"A powerful debut memoir that hits the unusual sweet spot of rigorous theology, candid sexuality, and laugh-out-loud humor. Who knew theological inquiry and obsessive questioning of one's eternal fate could be so damn funny?" • Mishna Wolff, author of *I'm Down: A Memoir*

"Hilarious and heartbreaking. Hints of *The Bell Jar* in that Maggie Rowe makes a painful story feel vibrant and funny and alive. Immensely readable." • Ilyse Mimoun, author of *Choose Your Own Love Story*

"By turns harrowing and hilarious, Maggie Rowe takes us with her on a journey to the heart of faith and despair, love and madness." • Eric Kaplan, author *Does Santa Exist?: A Philosophical Investigation*

"Readers who have wrestled with self-doubt over the strength of their convictions will find a funny, frank companion in this frantically compelling memoir...Rowe's book does not provide easy answers, but her capacity to eventually sin bravely signals a new beginning. This engaging and adventurous book is an excellent companion for fellow seekers." • Booklist

"Rowe is a winning narrator...you can't help but root for her." • America Magazine

For the last fifteen years, Maggie Rowe has performed in and produced the Comedy Central stage show *Sitnspin*, Los Angeles's™ longest running spoken word, having taken over the reigns from creator Jill Soloway in 2002. She has written for *Arrested Development* and *Flaked* for Netflix. She co-wrote the screenplay for and directed the New Age religious mockumentary *'Bright Day'* and is the creator of the theatrical satires *Hollywood Hellhouse* and *Hollywood Purity Ball*. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband, writer Jim Vallely.

For anyone who grew up in the hot seat of Midwest morals this book is a pure JOY ride. Maggie's writing is honest and laugh out loud funny. Her ability to describe the feeling of confusion and the persistent desire for altruism for a person with obsessive thinking is spot on. She captures the eloquence of acute observation and coming of age fears. The cast of characters is hysterical-a group of believers who can't possibly have a multidimensional understanding of the universe mixed with a few who live so blissfully unaware. Please turn this into a screenplay!

I related to this story so many levels. Ms. Rowe details a horrifying time in her young life when, at 19 years old, her religious zeal landed her in an evangelical psych unit. Maggie was clearly a deep thinker from a young age, and the simplistic explanations she was given neither answered her questions nor calmed her soul. While there's a repeat of such blunders at the unit, she also meets some beautiful people who who give her the courage to do the impossible -- trust that life is not a test of righteousness, but a gift to be experienced, no matter how messy it gets. If you grew up with any kind of fundamentalism, secular or religious, this book is for you. Plus, it's hilarious. Thank you for baring your soul, Maggie. I loved this book.

I'm not a big fan of organized religion and this book affirms a lot of my dislike. The main character is a creative and very smart person who is confronted with the contradictions of religion. Throughout the book her relationship with religion is strengthened and then weakened. Strictly by her persistent intelligent questioning. I was unhappy for the character in that she was put in a spiritual counseling facility which only highlights how misguided such counselors are. Really a sweet book, very well written, engaging. If there's ever a sequel I recommend the title: *Sin Sweetly*

Great read! Wincingly funny, vulnerable, charming and heartbreaking! Maggie Rowe lays it all on the line and posits some fundamental questions along the way. *Sin Bravely* is a personal journey,

written bravely, that helped me to examine religion in a completely new and (thanks to Maggie baring it all) safe way! I could not put the book down as I needed to know how our sweet, little Heroine (it starts at age 5) could survive the squeezing pressures of Heaven and Hell! A must read, especially for EVERYONE, raising their children with religion.

Maggie Rowe is one of those writers whose work captures my attention immediately. Her words feel thoughtful, familiar, and candid - like those of a great friend. There is no agenda behind this story. It does not proselytize. It is a straight-forward honest adventure of someone struggling to live with a world view based on religious faith and a wager. Pascal's wager. While not proselytizing, Maggie's unquestioned premise is that there is a single, Christian god. The nature, purpose, and worthiness of this god are questioned continuously - but not His existence. There are no considerations of other gods, multiple gods, or the concept of god as fiction. In other words, Maggie represents the typical American world view and many readers will find comfort in that. There is comfort for atheists as well. Since Pascal's wager is a tool that many people use, perhaps unknowingly, to conclude that the best option in life is to believe the popular religious teaching of their family/society, this story is an example of how the one life we are sure we have can be damaged by force-fitting real life into a fictional story. Indeed, a similar book could be written from the perspective of any religion. If another book like this was written from some other religious perspective, I would want Maggie Rowe to write it.

Maggie Rowe's terrific memoir is a beautiful, hilarious, heartfelt spilling of some very brave beans. She shares a twisted story about a girl's (hers) coming-of-age, hamstrung by beliefs that crippled her. Her poor hormones took a beating. The fact that she emerged from an ordeal of religious zeal intact, to become a brilliant, insightful, funny writer and healthy, "normal" woman, makes this a really (literally) Good Book! I loved it. Brava!

A compelling book that took me along for the ride. Honest and compelling, echoing so many young folks I have encountered with challenges of mental illness. Her inner thoughts and conflicts lay bare the inherent problems and contradictions of Calvinist theology and fundamentalism. Worth reading!

I meant to write a review of this when it was fresher in my mind. I'll say this: I liked it so much that I have decided to teach it in a college-level course this semester. It's a moving, funny, completely absorbing memoir about the author's nervous breakdown, which was induced by a lifelong fear of

being damned, quite literally, to hell. What's especially compelling is how theologically canny she was as a very, very small child.

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