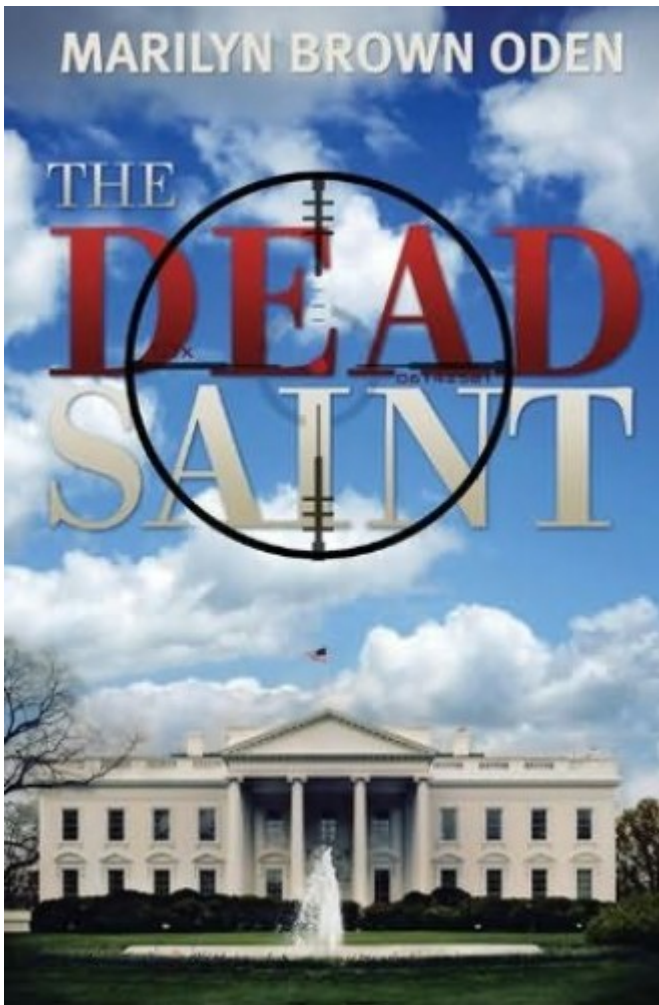


The Dead Saint, by Marilyn Brown Oden

reviewed by [John Killinger](#) in the [July 26, 2011](#) issue

In Review



The Dead Saint

By Marilyn Brown Oden
Abingdon

The Dead Saint is a big Ludlumesque, Dan Brown-ish terror novel saturated with a pronounced, take-sides morality. The saint in this story is not, as one might suspect because the book is published by Abingdon, a saint in the usual sense of the word, but a member of the formidable New Orleans Saints football team. He is killed not because he toyed with the affections of another's wife or ruined some gambling syndicate's point spread, but because he is a member of a secret organization dedicated to saving the world from people like the Patriot, the nickname of a man who is close to the president of the United States and who turns out to be the half-brother of the Saint himself.

So the kernel of the novel is the ancient Cain and Abel story, the mythic relationship between brothers, and the reminder that a deep-seated enmity is at work in the world and will be there, festering and dividing humanity, until the end of time.

The central figure in the story is a United Methodist bishop named Lynn Peterson, who becomes involved in unraveling the complicated intertwining of personalities and events because she is trusted by the president, who is also a woman. Her activities as a traveling bishop make her a perfect courier for the president and, as it turns out, a more formidable opponent of the duplicitous Patriot than most people would have suspected her of being.

The story whirls through numerous scenes, from New Orleans, where the murder of the Saint occurs, to Vienna to Sarajevo, with conspiracies becoming ever deeper and more ominous as the reader wonders who will be taken out next and who will remain standing when the novel ends.

This is the most gripping suspense novel I have ever read. It held me more spellbound than any book has since I came upon Frederick Forsyth's *The Day of the Jackal* years ago. *The Dead Saint* has all the important ingredients to be made into a blockbuster movie: a sinister plot, credible bad and good characters, moments of great suspense, and a thoughtful, admirable interlocutor who fearlessly pieces together the information that eventually leads to a solution of the problem.

But more than anything else, the importance of this book lies in its profound and invincible moral sense that though the world is spinning into irretrievable chaos, God's care for creation and its inhabitants continually raises up heroes of conscience who will stand against the world's (and their) ultimate destruction. Because Lynn Peterson is a bishop with international standing, she can say at a worship service in

Sarajevo, where World War I began and where her opponent hopes to provoke World War III, that blood is not only "something that runs in the streets" but a deep and abiding symbol of the gift of life. She's right. And not just of life, but of abundant life.