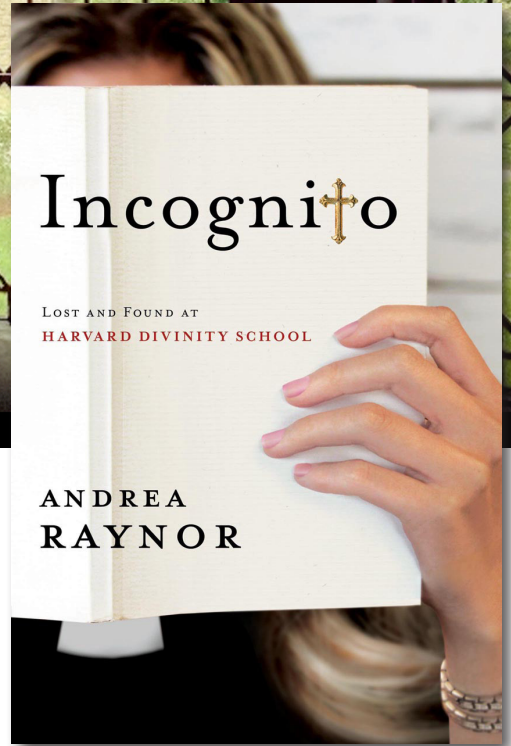




Excerpts from *Incognito*



I.

“What do you want me to do, Lord?” I prayed, nearly every day. It was my mantra. And it was applicable to almost every area of my life. I had a running dialogue with God, as constant as the tide rolling in and out. Being a minister still seemed a rather grim profession. Besides, I felt as if I would be a walking mixed signal if I were to be ordained, like a traffic light that flashes both green and red: Look! Don’t look! Normal! Not normal! Holy! Sinful! I just didn’t want it.

II.

During the bus ride back to Cambridge, I reviewed what had happened in the sanctuary. I saw myself standing at the lectern looking out at the congregation, and I could feel the words that had run through my head: This is what you are supposed to be doing. My first response had been an almost simultaneous Oh no! followed by all the reasons that I would make a terrible minister: I was too funky, I didn’t fit the part, I would never be able to be myself, I wasn’t holy enough. What a nightmare.

III.

These days would not come again; this opportunity would not come again. There may not be a “next semester” to study with a great scholar, to pray with a priest, or to run through the halls with a best friend. It also occurred to me that it might be my last year as a “normal” person, an unordained person—how was I to live it? One way, as it turned out, was going to be in a pair of black leather pants and some spiky hair.