

Critique

Helping Christians Develop Skill in Discernment

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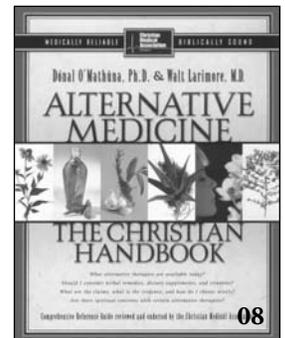
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Editor's Note



Work, Rest, and Busyness

A few months ago Dr. Richard Swenson, author of several books published by NavPress, lectured at L'Abri on margin and overload. "We do not know what heaven looks like," Swenson says,

"but this much we know: God is not pacing the throne room anxious and depressed because of the condition of the world. He knows, He is not surprised, and He is sovereign. It is okay if we have limits. He is able."

He challenged us to consider how progress always results in more and more of everything going faster and faster, so that at a certain point progress comes up against human limits. After all, we were created as finite creatures. In the 50's and 60's, he noted, all the futurists predicted a slower, not a faster life. In fact, many predicted that by the turn of the century there would be one wage earner per family working no more than 20 hours per week. Obviously, they didn't get that one quite right.

Wired magazine (December 1999) fills us in with some statistics on the topic. The average German worker, for example, works 34.35 hours/week and takes 30.0 paid vacation days each year. In France the average is 34.06 hours of work/week and 25.3 paid vacation days each year. In Norway the numbers are 29.31 work hours/week and 21.0 days paid vacation. In hard working Japan: 38.38 work-hours/week and 20.0 days vacation. And now the statistic you were waiting for: In the United States the average worker puts in 39.47 hours/week and takes 12.1 paid days of vacation each year.

Could we be too busy, saying Yes to too much? "Can you imagine," Dr. Swenson asked

us, "Jesus being paged out of the Last Supper? Or getting a call on his cell phone?"

Beyond Jabez

In *Critique* #9-2001, Donald Guthrie reviewed *The Prayer of Jabez*, a slim book that has become something of a publishing phenomenon. Now *re:generation quarterly* (issue #7.3, p. 6) has some fun with the topic asking why Jabez's prayer gets all the attention. "The Bible is full of obscure petitions ripe for spinning into the next self-help success," they point out. "All it takes is some digging." A few of their suggestions:

"The prayer of a righteous woman" recorded in Psalm 56:1: "O Lord, be merciful unto me, for men hotly pursue me."

Paul's prayer in Galatians 5:12: "Oh that these agitators would go all the way and emasculate themselves."

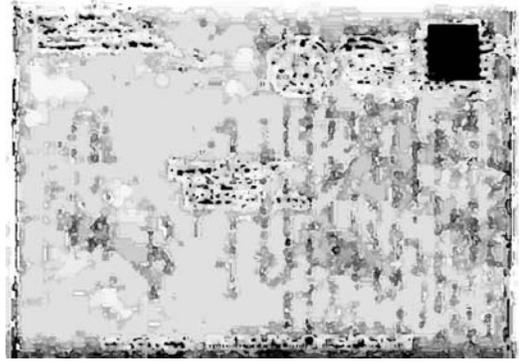
Or the prayer of the daughters of Edom in Lamentations 4:21: "I rejoice, that the cup shall pass me over and I will become drunk and make myself naked."

An introduction

You may not have noticed, but *Critique's* mast-head (the column immediately to the right on this page) grew by one name in the last issue. Rev. Ed Hague, pastor of Christ Church PCA in Athens, GA, joined Ransom's Board of Directors. We have been praying for years that God would provide a minister who shares Ransom's vision for cultural discernment and engagement to join the Board. Since so much of our work impacts the church, and is accomplished in and through the church, we wanted someone with a pastor's perspective to help direct the ministry. God has answered that prayer in Ed, and we are very grateful. ■

~Denis Haack

Dialogue



Abstinence Education continued...

You are invited to take part in *Critique's* Dialogue. Address all correspondence to:

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Unfortunately, we are unable to respond personally to all correspondence received, but each one is greatly appreciated. We reserve the right to edit letters for length.

Seel responds to Mr. Grooms: Thank you for taking the time to respond to the ongoing discussion regarding abstinence education. While we have never met, as a fellow Contributing Editor of *Critique*, I take your criticism seriously and am sorry my article disappointed you. It has been said that disagreement is an accomplishment. Too often we fail to understand the nub of a disagreement. Let me see if I can add further light on our differences. (Denis Haack's recent article, "Christ is Lord in Tolerant Babylon," has much to add to this discussion.)

Let me be clear that I am in favor of abstinence—chastity is a better term in that it associates sexual behavior with morality. I am only critical of how abstinence education is being presented in our public schools. I do not believe the approach being taken is an effective way to change behavior. It may also prove to be counterproductive, even undermining the good it is attempting to achieve.

Nor do I believe that our communication about life, morality, or even the gospel requires that we say everything. It is never an all or nothing presentation. Our words must be tailored to the context and the person. As you suggest, Christians can appeal to common grace in public life without having to agree or even assert the epistemic grounds for our shared understanding. There are many nonbelievers who hold to the importance of human dignity and freedom of conscience, for example, who do not have the philosophical foundation to make the claim. Often one finds that people hold to partial truth without the basis for doing so. This is the experience Paul speaks of as "holding the truth in unrighteousness."

Pre-evangelistic strategies, however, need to point beyond themselves rather than leaving the impression that they are sufficient in themselves. They need to be pointers and not promises, starters and not conclusions. C.S.

Lewis counsels, "What we want is not more little books about Christianity, but more little books by Christians on other subjects—with their Christianity latent." At issue is what "latent" means. It must remain consistent with a biblical worldview and not subtly accommodate itself to another one. Too often, well-intentioned evangelicals are guilty of communicating forms of religious humanism by promising change that in the end requires the gospel (i.e., have a great family life by learning these communication techniques).

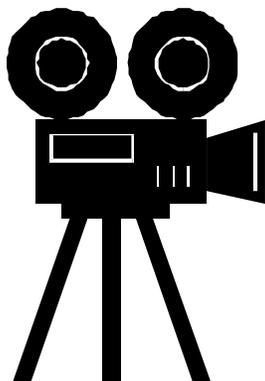
Abstinence education is being presented as a form of secular social policy. Politics establishes laws that constrain behavior. But laws constrain behavior effectively when their intent is also affirmed in the beliefs of the people. In the end, people cannot be coerced legislatively, as the failed attempt at Prohibition proves. If there was cultural support for chastity until marriage and significant shame when it was violated, abstinence education might still have purchase in the lives of young adults. But this is not the case as the movie *40 Days and 40 Nights* recently illustrated.

As University of Virginia sociologist James Hunter explains, character education without a moral framework will have no binding address in individual lives. He concludes his book, *The Death of Character: Moral Education in an Age Without Good or Evil*, by saying, "It is difficult to think of another age when the key socializing institutions for the cultivation of normative ideals and virtuous habit have been so reluctant to communicate to children their standards and the god-terms that give them sanction... Against this formidable array of historical and sociological circumstances, our political establishment offers a range of trite palliatives." Likewise, Katie Roiphe in *Last Night in Paradise: Sex and Morality at the Century's End*, dismisses what

continued on page 11...

The Darkened Room

Things Have Changed



A review of **Changing Lanes**

by Drew Trotter

Hollywood is not exactly known for films that explore the difficulty modern man has with concepts like repentance or forgiveness. *Changing Lanes* is a stunning exception.

Lanes, the product of a collaboration between first time scriptwriter Chap Taylor and veteran Michael Tolkin (*The Player*, *The Rapture*), tells the story of two men, caught in the desperate situation of being late to court for hugely important, though hugely different, reasons, who have a minor accident that alters each of their lives forever. Gavin Banek (Ben Affleck) is a young, rich, white lawyer carrying important papers that will enable his superiors to profit from an unethical, if not illegal, action and he's trying to get to court to file those papers.

Doyle Gipson, played humbly, yet powerfully, by Samuel L. Jackson is an older, poor, black insurance salesman traveling to court for a final hearing on the custody of his two sons. The two men blame each other for their misfortunes and spend the rest of the day (importantly, Good Friday) playing out their anger in a series of punitive acts. The movie seems set up for a formulaic, tiresome *mano-a-mano* battle between these two with a hackneyed ending. Guess who, in Hollywood these days, would win?

Lanes gives us the battle we expect, but almost nothing else. From the moment of the car wreck, the movie takes twists and turns, usually relating to the consciences of the two main characters, that leave us baffled and questioning what will happen next. One of the two picks up the phone to call off the war and apologize just as a fax comes to the

office, angering and setting him off again. Another time, one is addressing an envelope containing the papers that will let the other off the hook, just as he listens to a phone message that turns him once again into a revenge-seeking monster. Back and forth the story goes, building in intensity until the two do blatantly criminal, even life-threatening, acts to one another. The plot severely strains credulity in several places, but the viewer doesn't care because its movements are so unexpected and deal with such serious moral questions that we don't have time to notice continuity problems.

And that is only one of the movie's strengths. Able and clear direction from Roger Michell (*Notting Hill*) enables Ben Affleck to give thus far the best performance of his career and Samuel L. Jackson to play the angry but conflicted Doyle with a subtlety and range that goes well beyond the talky script. All the supporting performances are magnificent, contributing to the film in the way minor characters are supposed to. Toni Collette, as Gavin's mistress/associate and Amanda Peet, as his wife, note special mention, but William Hurt, Kim Staunton and Sydney Pollack are no less remarkable in their roles. The actors all supplement a script heavy on dialogue and a cinematography with little interesting from a visual standpoint with elegant facial work (the film is filled with close-ups and two shots). Jackson's sad, hunched-over portrayal is a particularly virtuoso performance. He makes the middle-aged Gipson seem older than his years by physically portraying the effects of the character's alcoholism and pent-up anger without seeming affected in any way.

The movie has formal weaknesses (particularly some poor editing though the two-car wreck scenes are some of the best work ever), but form is not this movie's championing element. Rarely does a Hollywood movie in scene after scene raise such complex

Film Credits

Starring:

Ben Affleck

(Gavin Banek)

Samuel L. Jackson

(Doyle Gipson)

Kim Staunton

(Valerie Gipson)

Toni Collette

(Michelle)

Sydney Pollack

(Stephen Delano)

Richard Jenkins

(Walter Arnell)

Ileen Getz

(Ellen)

Amanda Peet

(Cynthia Banek)

William Hurt

(sponsor)

Director:

Roger Michell

Screenplay:

Chap Taylor

Michael Tolkin

Producers:

Ronald M. Bozman

Scott Rudin

Adam Schroeder

Original music:

David Arnold

Cinematographer:

Salvatore Totino

Costume Designer:

Ann Roth

Rated R for language.

moral questions; *Changing Lanes* is almost too full of them for the viewer to assimilate the ideas and sort them out without chaos resulting. Questions about ethical legal procedure, responsibility to one's employers, the importance of doing what is right over what is expedient, provision for one's children versus doing the neighborly thing, marital responsibility, resisting temptation—all these and more fill almost every scene. But chief among them is the question of pride and its effect on the human heart, especially when the pressure is on. Neither man is able to say “I am sorry” and forgive the other his sins, and this inability forms the moral center of the film, resulting in the mayhem that almost kills each of the main characters.

When the two finally do come to a resolution at the end of the film, their rapprochement carries a moral uplift that reverses the common, contentless, unbelievable Hollywood ending. The development of each character, especially that of Gipson, is well paced by Michell; the audience feels they have learned the futility of revenge by the time the two give up and reconcile.

The reconciliation, however, does have Hollywood-style consequences. We are supposed to believe that a single

off-camera conversation changes a woman's mind about staying with her husband when years of chaos and anger have made her take a hard line in custody proceedings just hours before. And an ambiguous dinner scene involving the blackmail of Gavin's father-in-law and employer, and with him Gavin's wife, purportedly forms the basis for a pro bono legal career in a sophisticated, Wall Street law firm. I'd like to see what that work place and

marriage will look like in a few years, much less what Gavin will be like. If he comes out of this moral framework as a good man, then God



Chief among the issues raised in this movie is the question of pride and its effect on the human heart, especially when the pressure is on.

really does live on Wall Street.

And perhaps most importantly, as in the movie reviewed last time in these pages, *In the Bedroom*, God is left out of the entire process. When Gavin, lost and seeking, drops into a Catholic church (remember: the action takes place entirely on Good Friday) for advice, the best the priest can muster as an answer to his dilemma is the Rogerian response, “Why does the world have to have meaning?” Gavin rightly throws up his hands as if to say, “If you don't know the answer to that question, I don't need to waste my time here anymore.” And if that is all the church does have to say, he is right.

No film in recent memory contains the

variety and number of powerful discussion starters that *Changing Lanes* has. Though flawed, *Lanes* does not disappoint as a story that causes one to think, and think hard, about what we as a culture view as “repentance” and its consequences. It is a step in the right direction to present human forgiveness and reconciliation, and does so with power and grace. ■

~Drew Trotter

Dr. Andrew H. Trotter, Jr., is the executive director of the Center for Christian Study in Charlottesville, Virginia, where he teaches and writes on theology and culture, focusing on modern American film. Copyright © 2002 by Andrew H. Trotter, Jr.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Paintings play an important role in this film—as establishing shots, as background metaphors, as controlling images for a scene. Which use of a painting most affected you and why? What about the world-view represented in that painting, or perhaps by the painter, makes it a good one for use in the scene?
2. A technique called “slow ramping” (zooming in on a subject by increments rather than one, continuous lens activity) is used in the final scene. How does it contribute to what that scene means in the story?
3. As we have argued above, the formal power of this movie comes from its strong character development. Of the two main characters, which one was the most interesting to you? Why?
4. A major sub-theme of this movie is well-described by one of the main characters when he describes the world as a sewer. Do you see it this way? What do you mean by that?
5. Are these characters “real” to you? What makes them so? Focus on one scene and its dialogue to answer the question.

Aesthetic Faithfulness

People with renewed minds are not to approach life as if sensually numbed.

Steve Turner

Christians must discover a renewed vision for the arts, especially the visual arts—a “renewed vision” because the gifts of imagination and vision are a part of the Christian’s birthright.

William Dyrness

As evangelical Christians we have tended to relegate art to the very fringe of life. The rest of human life we feel is more important... We have misunderstood the concept of the Lordship of Christ over the whole of man and the whole of the universe and have not taken to us the riches that the Bible gives us for ourselves, for our lives and for our culture.

Francis Schaeffer

imagine

I first discovered Steve Turner in the 70’s through his poetry. At the time I was not given to reading much poetry, but his poems caught my attention: vibrant and surprising, Christian without being necessarily “religious,” and profoundly subversive. “Why don’t we try loving each other?” asks the opening line of “Humanist’s Love Poem.” “Feeling this molecular urge for you / we must chemically react if we can.” This was apologetics with a sense of humor, taking the Naturalism of the day with enough seriousness to expose its fatal flaw. Turner celebrated love and the glory of God’s good world, now so broken, and reflected on it in ways that prompted response. “Natural History,” for example, is a meditation on mortality and meaning that was worthy of Ecclesiastes’ Teacher. “Most of us,” it begins, “do not go down / in history, / we just go down...”

Nurtured at L’Abri as a young man, Turner’s pilgrimage has taken him into the world of popular art where he has sought to live with biblical integrity as a writer and poet. Along with several collections of poetry, he has written books on Eric Clapton, U2, and Van Morrison. Over the years I have been grateful for Steve Turner, returning again and again to poems that say so much so well. His faithful creativity has enriched my imagination, and increased my love of God.

Now, with a maturity born of a lifetime seeking to read the world as he reads the Word, Turner has written a book designed to help us be dis-



“The best art doesn’t tell people what to believe but enables them, for a short time, to see things differently.”

cerning in a world where art and culture are essential because people are made in the image of the Creator. But please ignore the subtitle. *A Vision for Christians in the Arts* suggests you can safely ignore this book if you aren’t an artist, but that would be an error. Please read it if you are an artist, and if you aren’t.

“The best art,” Turner argues, “doesn’t tell people what to believe but enables them, for a short time, to see things differently, and the Christian can enable people to momentarily glimpse the world through eyes that have been touched by Christ.” That challenge applies to more than artists, of course, but may God raise up a generation of artists among his people

who can lead the way. Besides helping us see art and culture in terms of the biblical story of Creation, Fall, and Redemption, Turner addresses the common concerns and misconceptions that so many believers have about art. Objections are treated with integrity, and Turner’s answers reveal his commitment to biblical orthodoxy. *Imagine* is compelling because it is rooted in the Scriptures, because it is written by someone who loves words, and because it is the product of a life lived out on the intersection of Christian faith and a post-Christian culture. Lively and practical, *Imagine* shows us what it means to think and live faithfully in relation to

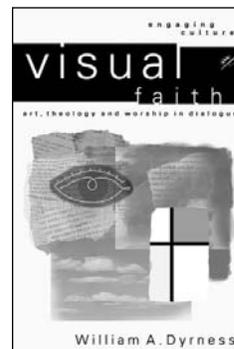
art, pop culture, creativity, and the grace of imagination. His illustrations throughout are insightful, and reveal his ability to listen with care to those who may not

share his deepest convictions and values. And, as you might guess, his analysis of much of what passes for “Christian” art and music is a thoughtful and much needed corrective.

I recommend *Imagine* to you highly. Though it doesn’t come with discussion questions, it would be an excellent study for small groups, and is provocative enough to generate discussion on its own.

Visual Faith

I discovered William Dyrness around the same time I discovered Turner, but truth be told, my reaction was quite different. Dyrness is a scholar who has much to teach me, but



Isn't Optional

whose scholarship requires discipline if I am to learn. He studied in Holland with Dr. Rookmaaker, and in 1971 published a thoughtful study of the themes of degradation and grace in the art of the painter Georges Rouault. L'Abri had taught me that, as Rookmaaker was fond of saying, art needs no justification and is included in the cultural mandate which defines biblical faithfulness. So I was eager to learn about art. *Rouault: A Vision of Suffering and Salvation* was to say the least, a very stretching read, but it also thrilled me as an example of a Christian scholar engaging the world of modern art in a way that glorifies Christ.

But then over time, a problem revealed itself—a rather Protestant problem. Evangelicals believe that the cultural mandate of Genesis calls us to faithfulness in the arts, but most also believe that art, especially visual art must never invade our worship.

In this they are following the Reformers who rid the Church of images, seeing them as idolatrous, a hindrance to the true worship of God. I remember Francis Schaeffer saying that he regretted that the Reformers did not preserve all that art instead of destroying it, but at the time they didn't see it as something worth preserving. Since then the Protestant church has tended to be devoid of visual art. This has always struck me as very unfortunate, and though I have understood the arguments behind it, they have always seemed to me to be contrary to Reformed theology. Christianity is an embodied faith, a fact underscored supremely by the Incarnation, and though visual art can like any good gift become a snare in this fallen world, that is no reason to conclude that true worship can not embrace both word and image.

“Making beautiful forms is theologically connected to our call both to listen and respond to God in prayer, praise, and sacrament.”

Now, in *Visual Faith: Art, Theology, and Worship in Dialogue*, Dr. Dyrness restores art to its rightful biblical place in the church in a carefully argued and balanced work of theology.

“Contrary to what our tradition may have taught us,” Dyrness writes, “I believe that making beautiful forms is theologically connected to our call both to listen and respond to God in prayer, praise, and sacrament.” He does not mean by this that the art should be limited to religious themes

appropriate for corporate worship, but he makes a compelling argument that this should be part of the recovery of a biblical view of art for Protestants.

He is also culturally sensitive and understands that evangelism in a postmodern world must include a concern for image and beauty. “It is true that the Protestant imagination has been nourished uniquely by the spoken and written Word, and therefore, we tend to think that everyone must be spiritually and morally nourished in the way that we (and our forebears) have been. Surely these verbal means are of critical importance. But our children and their friends have been raised in a different world; they are often uninterested in our traditional word-centered media. Instead, they are looking for a new imaginative vision of life and reality, one they can see and feel, as well as understand.”

Visual Faith is an important work of theology, correcting an unfortunate error which has plagued the evangelical Protestant community for far too long. It does so not by

introducing a new idea, but by calling us back to the Scriptures..

I commend *Visual Faith* to you. Please read it and give a copy to every elder in your church.

Postscript: studies & exercises

The Creative Life: A Workbook for Unearthing the Christian Imagination is a Bible study guide designed to provoke reflection on creativity and imagination from a Christian perspective. Some will want to use it for small group study, and it comes complete with a leader's guide for that purpose. And some of us (my preference) will want to extract some of the Bible studies and exercises as a supplement to studying *Imagine*. Either way, it's a useful resource. ■

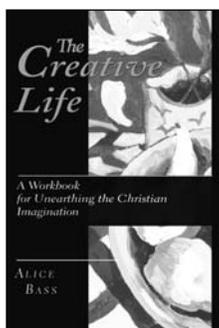
~Denis Haack

Sources:

Art & the Bible by Francis A. Schaeffer (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press; 1979) p. 7. *Up to Date: Poems for people who feel that poetry has forgotten them* by Steve Turner (Belleville, MI: Lion; 1976, 1980, 1982) p. 31, 79.

Books reviewed:

Imagine: A Vision for Christians in the Arts by Steve Turner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press; 2001) 128 pp. + notes. *Visual Faith: Art, Theology, & Worship in Dialogue* by William A. Dyrness (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker; 2001) 161 pp. + notes + index. *The Creative Life: A Workbook for Unearthing the Christian Imagination* by Alice Bass (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press; 2001) 115 pp. + leaders guide.



Examining Alternative

Place yourself in this situation. You have been told you have an illness for which conventional medicine does not have a known or desirable treatment and that many doctors don't believe exist—let's say the dreaded "dentopuritic syndrome*" whose main symptom is uncontrollable itching of the teeth. There are no laboratory tests to prove you have it, but you suffer significantly, always wondering why other people don't have the urge to chew on a Brillo pad.

You desire healing, you lift your concerns to the Lord in prayer, and you wait. Suddenly like a flash out of providence a subtitle on *Yoga Illustrated* grabs you: "Healing Touch Cured My Teeth-Itch." The national magazine touts a particular yoga *vinyasa* as "the path to breathing out the itch of dentopuritic disease." As you are paging through the article, a stranger notices and reveals that he too has DPS, and has been able to control his symptoms by chelation therapy and mega-dose herbal supplements.

What is this flood of potential alternative therapies? A gift of God? Or a trap

that would lead you to rely less upon his omnipotent rule, that would substitute for grace, and that would invite an unwanted spiritual force into your life? Should you ask your doctor? Would she dismiss your suffering, faith, or intuition? Should you ask your elders? Would they just stare with a blank expression, not

Our embodied souls and our ensouled bodies must each be treated as an intentional creation of our God.

knowing enough detail to provide you with fitting guidance?

The widespread nature of alternative therapies and the modern idolatry of perpetual youth have made the above quandary an everyday occurrence. Sadly, the more we learn about health, the more complicated our lives become. The questions raised above are difficult to answer, but necessary to address.

We must make choices on how we care for our body-temple. We must evaluate the trustworthiness and motivation of each messenger and the validity and

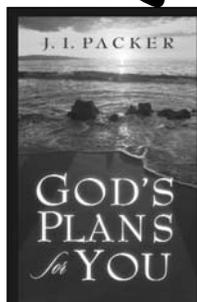
applicability of the message. Your next-door secular humanist will find it difficult enough to answer the question "Does it work and is it safe?" The Christian has an additional level of discernment to reach for: an examination of her situation in light of the truth of the Gospel and recognition of her position with relation to her creator/redeemer. In other words, "Is it lawful and wise to utilize?"

As a Christian family doctor that practices an ever-increasing amount of nutritional and preventive medicine I am accountable to God for the therapies I recommend. I teach and treat to the best of my ability and try to model my teachings to those who come to me for help. While there are individuals that derive no benefit from my efforts, there are many who note a significant improvement in their mental, spiritual, and physical well-being.

This sense of 'well-being' is a reflection of how closely an individual's perception of health and current experience match. How we define health dramatically influences our relationship with healers and our evaluation of therapeutic modalities.

Briefly Noted: Wisdom for living

by Denis Haack



I have only been in J. I. Packer's presence once. He lectured at a conference, and I approached him afterwards with a question. "Oh, I would have thought that obvious," he said, before helping me to understand why it should have been. Some of us need help thinking through what we believe, and for that, J. I. Packer is a wonderful mentor. *God's Plans for You* is a collection of 15 succinct essays on a variety of topics from joy to poor health to sanctification to church reformation. The chapter "Guidance: How God Leads Us," for example, is worth the price of the book. "The aim throughout [the book]," Packer says, "is to show how life looks and feels when lived by faith in the sovereign God of the Bible, and to help in forming attitudes, focusing values, and making decisions amid the perplexing cross-currents of decadence in the culture and the church." As with all his writing, Packer is never dry, and his passion for truth, love of God, and clarity of thought always leads us not just to faithfulness, but to adoration. ■

Book recommended: *God's Plans for You* by J. I. Packer (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books; 2001) 219 pp. + notes.

Medicine

ties. I have the privilege of caring for a man who seems to have half of the diseases in my internal medicine textbook, yet sees himself as healthy and able to contribute to the lives of those around him. Others, more numerous, have little objective disease, but much dis-ease about life.

The amount the U.S. spends on health care is expected to rise to \$1.37 trillion in 2002. That's equal to 13.9% of the gross domestic product. Is this right? "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Mt. 6:21). Is our health an idol? Is our relentless search for healing in part a symptom of the disease of faithlessness?

The Christian's perspective of *Health* should be fundamentally different given our knowledge that our nature is fallen, our salvation is secure, our mission is divine and our value is priceless. In modern times I believe we understand *health* as a greater good than *blessedness*. This is a perception that is well worth re-examination. People can be blessed, and therefore healthy, despite poor circumstances. For an exercise in understanding the depth of health our God would have for us go to the Beatitudes (Mt. 5:3-12) and replace the word *blessed* with *healthy*.

Our definition of Healing should have spiritual-eternal and physical-temporal facets; our embodied souls and our ensouled bodies must each be treated as an intentional creation of our God. Our bodies and human relationships teach us experientially about our Creator and serve as an ongoing analogy of our continuing need for grace. Some of us may need more teaching than others.

Our Healer must always be recognized to be the one, true God and not His agents on this earth. There are lawful and unlawful forms of healing for the follower of the one true God. Two kings of Israel illustrate this.

Now Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria and injured

himself. So he sent messengers, saying to them, "Go and consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, to see if I will recover from this injury." But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Go up and meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and ask them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going off to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?' Therefore this is what the LORD says: 'You will not leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!'" So Elijah went. 2 Kings 1:2-4

In contrast, King Hezekiah of Judah became deathly ill and was told by the prophet Isaiah that he would not recover. Hezekiah chose to respond differently than Ahaziah.

Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, "Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes." And Hezekiah wept bitterly. Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah: "Go and tell Hezekiah, 'This is what the LORD, the God of your father David says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will add fifteen years to your life.'" Isaiah 38:2-5; 2 Kings 20:2-6

God's reply to the kings shows that our health care choices are not value neutral. Our obedience and submission to the one true God must be paramount and not denigrated by the form of healing we pursue—whether conventional or alternative.

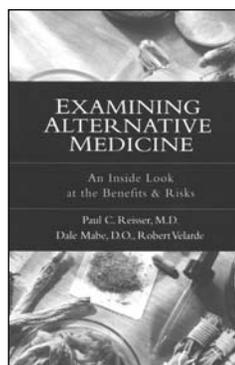
Still, the questions remain. What is a person with DPS to do? Does it work? Is it safe? Is it lawful? Is it wise? Should I use it? Clearly, more information is needed about DPS and its treatment. References on alter-

native medicine abound at the bookstores, but few address the topic from a Christian perspective. However, there are three recent publications which all deal with the integration of Christian faith and alternative medicine.

The Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity as part of their "BioBasics Series" has published a basic, concise guide, *Basic Questions on Alternative Medicine: What is Good and What is Not*—quite a lofty undertaking for less than 100 small pages. Authored by a seven person team, it exudes the wisdom of counsel, speaking clearly and concisely on the interaction of faith and alternative medicine. The question-answer format is very easy to navigate and the entire book may be read in a few hours.

Examining Alternative Medicine: An Inside Look at the Benefits and Risks, by Paul C. Reisser, MD, Dale Mabe, DO, and Robert Velarde. I found the book to be well-written and persuasive rather than informative in its style. Several hot topics of Alternative Medicine and its mainstream leaders (Andrew Weil and Deepak Chopra) are given a chapter for thoughtful discussion.

The role of postmodern thought and the rise in acceptance of alternative therapies is appropriately titled "Escape From Reason." The authors state, "...if we muzzle the skeptic, insist that 'how I feel' is the only basis for evaluating any treatment and demand that any and all claims about healing are equally valid, we can bid medical progress farewell." A discussion of homeopathy and Therapeutic Touch details the seemingly absurd assertions of these two fields of practice and explores the difficulty a post-modern culture imposes on the disciplined investigation of the claims made.



Resources cont.

Mabe, in a chapter entitled “Why I Left: A Former New Age Practitioner Tells His Story,” beautifully recounts the grace of God in his life and the reconciliation of faith and alternative medicine in his practice. Unfortunately, I found the general tone of this book to be somewhat arrogant. I can understand how the authors desire to maintain truth and objectivity, but truth is not made stronger by prideful connotation. If you want to sharpen your conventional medicine axe, their grinding wheel is spinning at full clip.

Finally, *Alternative Medicine: The Christian Handbook* by Dónal O’Mathúna, PhD, and Walt Larimore, MD, is really two books in one. The first several chapters examine health, disease and suffering, principles of good health, and an overview of conventional, alternative, and ‘Christian’ therapies. The later chapters are a well-researched and structured encyclopedic evaluation of popular alternative therapies, herbal remedies, vitamins and dietary supplements. It includes a scripture index as well as a subject index. I found the book easy (and interesting) to read, broad in scope, focused in detail, with easy to understand summaries of each topic. Discussion was fair and respectful, yet decisive when Biblical truth gave such direction. Extensive scriptural notation and contextual biblical quotations abounded in the text. Especially enlightening discussions revolved around “Christian therapies” such as the Hallelujah Diet—a vegetarian diet focused on raw foods and barley supplements. The authors let the Bible speak for itself in evaluating this “Diet from God” and

There is both danger and potential good in alternative medicine.

its founder and proponent Rev. George Malkmus, giving criticism and praise where it’s due. Finally, *Alternative Medicine* also effectively turns the examination microscope back upon conventional medicine. I highly recommend this book.

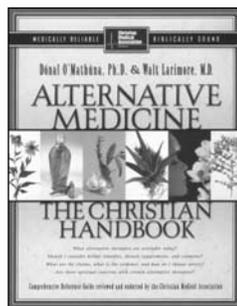
Let’s come back to your case of DPS. After investigating Yoga, you learn that it is Hindu in origin and that traditional yogic exercises of posture and breath are intended to culminate in spiritual enlightenment. One way this occurs is in the experience of “Kundalini arousal.” In Hindu mythology Kundalini is the serpent goddess who rests at

the base of the spine and when aroused travels up the spine, activating the person’s *prana* (life-force breath) and clearing the person’s *charkas* (energy stations). Doesn’t sound so ideal for the Christian, eh? I interviewed a Christian that maintains a regular yoga practice and she said, “When you practice a series of *asanas* (or poses) and combine that with deep breathing and relaxation it produces a heightened level of spiritual awareness. As a Christian, after a yoga practice I can (and do) open my bible and discern with greater clarity because the mental and physical distractions of this world have been removed, creating space for the workings of the Holy Spirit. The general focus of yoga is to empty oneself to be open to the divine. Since I know no other divine but Christ who lives in me, I am meditating in obedience, but the

same practice for another person who is searching for truth would be at best meaningless and at worst opening oneself to the demonic.”

We are called to be as wise as a serpent and as gentle as a dove (Mt. 10: 16b). There is both danger and potential good in alternative medicine. There is right and wrong, truth and falsehood, Christian freedom and responsibility. Our mission is to be faithful—for this there is no alternative in medicine or in life. ■

~David H. Haase, MD



*Dentopuritic Syndrome (DPS) is a fictitious disorder I just made up. If your teeth have begun to itch uncontrollably while reading this article you may actually be suffering from hyper-suggestability syndrome, a far greater problem than DPS, but treatable through daily exercises in discernment.

David H. Haase M.D. and family are currently homeless and jobless, sponging off family and friends until he starts his new practice in Clarksville, TN. He hopes to practice “Whatever is wise and works,” to the glory of God. Any charitable donations for his support may be given to the American DPS Society, or Ransom Fellowship in his honor.

Books reviewed:

Basic Questions on Alternative Medicine: What is Good and What is Not edited by Gary P. Stewart (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications; 1998) 64 pp. *Examining Alternative Medicine: An Inside Look at the Benefits and Risks* by Paul Reisser, et al (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press; 2001) 320 pp. *Alternative Medicine: The Christian Handbook* by Donal O’Mathúna and Walt Larimore (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan; 2001) 512 pp.

Discussing Sex Education

...Abstinence Education continued from page 3.

she calls “morality light.” “Abstinence, sexual harassment codes, date-rape pamphlets, ‘safer sex,’ and *The Rules* give us the fervor, the romance, and trappings of self-denial without its deeper moral purpose.” This dismissal of abstinence education is from a woman who acknowledges both her past promiscuity and her unbelief in God. Roiphe, as well as teenagers, longs for moral clarity. It is high time we provide it. How else are we to be salt in decay and light in darkness?

Knowing what is right and having the power to do what is right—particularly on Friday night—are not the same. In the end, heart change is needed. Short of conversion, as we deal with nonbelievers, we should avoid reducing sex to biology and abstinence to disease. Instead, we should be calling them to their highest dignity as those made in God’s image. Men are more than rabbits. Women are more than objects. Humanness demands it—which is why God does. Morality is rooted in who we are. Morality is tied to metaphysics. This is why Fyodor Dostoyevsky could warn, “If God doesn’t exist, everything is permitted.”

Whether we are talking to our neighbor over the fence or in a public school assembly, we need to be truthful in what we say, even if we don’t say all that we know to be true. Abstinence education, as it is commonly presented in public high schools, based as it is on a medical and therapeutic paradigm, doesn’t seem to meet this test. The issues you raise are important. They get at the heart of our engagement in a pluralistic society, a society in which we can no longer assume an understanding of objective moral standards—whether it’s about sex or evil itself. Sex, it turns out, raises more questions than just sex.

John Seel

Though we do not have abstinence presentations at our Christian school, I have previously been a student at schools with such programs. After reading Mr. Greg Grooms’ response [*Critique #2 - 2002*] to Dr. Seel’s article, “Scaring the Sex Out of You,” I found several points that I think Mr. Grooms misunderstood. Mr. Grooms thinks these programs “convict students of sin,” yet they do not present sex in terms of right or wrong at all. The presenters merely show pictures of the awful diseases and guarantee the loss of the audience’s appetite. Dr. Seel realizes those external steps such as “exercise, rest, proper nutrition, and accountability structures” as well as prayer is important, but he also knows that if you don’t reach kids at the heart level, their behavior is not going to change. Scare tactics only work for so long. Eventually, the fear wears off and the curiosity perks back up. To talk on the heart level to kids about sex, Jesus does not even have to enter into the conversation. Every single person deals with the deep longing to be loved, to have intimacy; by focusing on these desires a speaker can point to God in a way that everyone can relate to on a deeper level. Perhaps more students would be encouraged to think through their sexual decisions after some heart-level reflection. I’m just not convinced by Mr. Grooms’ argument that a granola bar and a couple of miles on the Nordic track will do the trick.

**Anne Briggs
Dallas, Texas**

How do you stop kids, like me, from having sex? During my school career, I have encountered two distinct approaches by school officials. In my public high school, we had an assembly for all fresh-

men on abstinence. While I cannot account for the boys’ presentation, I have it on good authority that it was much like the girls’: a list of horrible consequences that could happen if I chose to engage in sexual activity. Among this list were various STDs, heartbreak, and the worst of them all...PREGNANCY. (Gasp.) The second approach I encountered when I transferred to The Cambridge School of Dallas and took some of Dr. Seel’s classes, including Apologetics. We discussed sexuality as opposed to its consequences outside of marriage. We discussed sex as a good gift from God and intrinsic to our identity as humans. Sex was discussed in its moral and spiritual context.

I had two different responses to these approaches: the former made me nauseous and the latter helped me integrate my faith with my sexuality, be compassionate towards others, and understand the embodiment of human nature on a deeper level. The latter had a lasting impression and the former didn’t.

While abstinence education does not necessarily need to explicitly state the gospel or even use Christ’s name, these presentations should approach sex as intrinsic to humanness and morality. They should point to Christ even if they don’t say his name. Linking sex’s biology with morality will give kids a larger framework from which to approach sexuality as a whole.

As a Christian high school student preparing for college, I am very nervous for my friends who don’t have sex because they don’t want herpes or a baby. For them sex is not a gift from God that is intrinsic to who they are, but something they can get away with if they’re careful.

**Emily Hyslop
Dallas, Texas**

Christian Classical

Many Christian parents have grown disenchanted with public education, and some have opted to send their kids to one of the over two hundred “Christian classical schools” that have been established across the country since the early 1990s. The Christian classical education movement, which comprises schools with names such as Nehemiah Christian Academy (CA) and the Geneva School of Manhattan, is growing rapidly and is a major contributor to the revival of interest in Latin and classical Greek now underway.

“A classical Christian school...is seeking theologically Reformed grammar and secondary teachers,” declares a common classified ad in *World* magazine. This particular school, like the some 170 educational institutions formally linked to the Association of Classical and Christian Schools as of April of last year, is serious about learning. Its eighth graders read, among other demanding texts, *The Iliad*. They also study the New Testament in Latin, and they have a year-long course in logic.

While such schools are classical in several respects, there is a tendency among them to embrace the word with insufficient discernment. Infanticide, ruthless gods and blood sports are part of classical civilization, and being ancient doesn't make something worthwhile. Many classical schools also seem to be less than discerning when it comes to interdenominational cooperation; for while they seek breadth insofar as the wealth of the Christian intellectual tradition is concerned, they tend to be narrowly exclusive. According to an article published last year in *World* by Douglas Wilson, founder of the Logos School in

Moscow, Idaho, and “father” of the classical school movement, Christian schools can't operate within a “broad and generic” evangelicalism but only under the umbrella of “classical Protestantism,” that is, Reformed Christianity. Wilson notes that many Catholic schools can justly claim the word “classical” (they teach Greek and Latin, too). But, with some exceptions, Catholic teachers are excluded from participation.

While this is the general point of view among most of the classical schools, a few have come to see that there's something strange about embracing—indeed making central—a pedagogical device invented by Catholics (the medieval trivium which emphasizes grammar, logic and rhetoric) and studying Latin, which the Reformation did so much to shove aside, while at the same time excluding

Elements of the Christian classical schools movement are motivated by cultural and denominational separatism, but many just want what's best for their kids.

Catholics from the classroom. Among those who are taking this more open view are Robert Littlejohn, founder and director of the Eastern Consortium for Classical Christian Schooling (ECCCS) and Charles Evans, Dean of Faculty at St. Timothy's-Hale School (Raleigh, NC) and editor of the ECCCS's newsletter.

Insofar as academic integrity combined with traditional yet ecumenical faith is concerned, the ECCCS is the most promising association within the broader Christian classical school movement. Charles Evans says that the goal of the ECCCS is to “provide a network

of resources that will stimulate thought and encourage an increasingly mature understanding of the integration of classical learning and the Christian worldview among schools that dare accept the challenge of a genuinely counter-cultural education.” And in contrast to the reactionary language one sometimes hears from better-known classical school leaders, Littlejohn says things like, “Christians and educators...must be diligent to pursue truth with humility... We must read, pray, discuss, and examine our ideas and attitudes, and we must remain open to the work of the Holy Spirit [in our efforts to educate children].”

If the Christian classical schools movement is going to be taken seriously in the academic world in the long run, its members would probably do well to distance themselves from some of their current leaders. In addition to openly working against Christian interdenominationalism, Douglas Wilson has co-authored a short book titled *Southern Slavery As it Was* (Canon Press) which maintains, among other things, that the antebellum South was, literally, a holy land and that slavery bred mutual respect between the races—indeed, that relations between blacks and whites were never better than in the South before the Civil War. Wilson's co-laborer in this effort is a neo-Confederate Presbyterian minister and League of the South leader named J. Steven Wilkins, whose views are profiled in the spring 2001 issue of *Intelligence Report*. Wilkins has been a speaker at major conferences of the ACCS, and at their national conference in Memphis last June were featured the wares of a

Learning

neo-Confederate vendor.

So, the growing Christian classical schools movement has its challenges.

The good news is that thousands of Christian kids have received a good education in their classical schools. Most of the parents who send their children to schools affiliated with the ACCS aren't aware of the nature of some of the leaders' views, and one assumes that those views aren't widely taught in ACCS schools. Keen students taught at ACCS-affiliated schools have become freshmen at competitive universities (e.g. Vanderbilt and the University of Virginia), and many of them can quote long passages of Scripture and great literature from memory. At some of these schools, average students have five or six Advanced Placement examinations behind them by the time they graduate from high school.

It's a sorry fact that Christian education

is often academically inferior to what can be had at good public schools. It's also sad that elements of the Christian classical schools movement are motivated by cultural and denominational separatism—in the worst cases, by neo-Confederate civil religionism. But many in the movement want nothing to do with separatism. They just want what's best for their kids, which partly means that they want their children to grow into adults who are wise and, with God's help, able to navigate the rapids of this odd life. ■

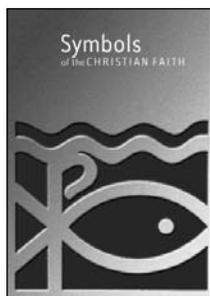
~Preston Jones

Preston Jones, a contributing editor to Books & Culture, teaches history, psychology and politics at The Cambridge School of Dallas (formerly Logos Academy). Copyright © 2002 by Preston Jones.

Correction

In the last issue of *Critique*, we called attention to Byron Berger and encouraged readers to use his bookstore, Hearts and Minds, as a resource. Unfortunately, we gave the wrong URL, sending folks to a clearinghouse on terrorism, human rights, and addiction. The correct URL is www.heartsandmindsbooks.com and we regret the error. Thanks to Ed Hague for spotting the error.

Briefly Noted: Christian Symbols



Though you wouldn't guess it from the tiresome fish emblems adorning cars today, Christians have over the centuries developed a rich and creative array of symbols to express aspects of their faith. Now Alva Steffler, professor of art at Wheaton College, in a simple and helpful book gathers, illustrates, and briefly describes hundreds of them for a generation of evangelicals who have only recently discovered that visual symbols communicate truth in ways that words simply can not. *Symbols of the Christian Faith* is a wonderful resource, useful in all sorts of ways. It will increase our understanding of our Christian heritage. It will also broaden our imagination and deepen our love for the truth in all its clarity and mystery. It is a resource which can enliven our discussion handouts and studies. And unlike the over-worked fish, Steffler introduces us to a host of new (yet ancient) symbols which, if used creatively, may perhaps prompt questions and discussion in a cynical yet visually-oriented world. ■

Book recommended: *Symbols of the Christian Faith* by Alva William Steffler (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; 2002) 140 pp. + bib. + index.

Order From:



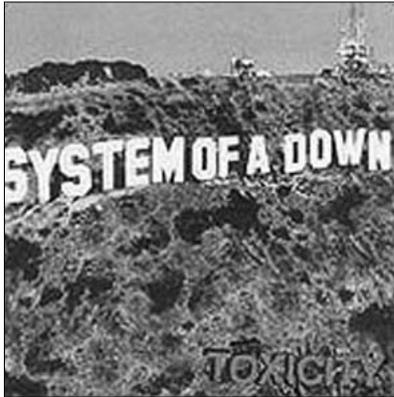
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Stuff That Matters:



The Radical-ization of Pop

I don't make a habit of listening to heavy metal music—particularly metal with a decidedly anti-Christian, Green Party, left-leaning bias. But I do try to listen to what's important to young adults. It's my calling as a father, educator, and sociologist.

A month after September 11, I was in New York to visit my eighteen-year-old son, Alex, who attends a boarding school there. During our visit he insisted that I purchase

System of a Down's latest album, *Toxicity*. A month after its September 4, 2001, release, *Toxicity* went platinum. The record store clerk went on and on with an animated description of the group's significance as I pulled out my credit card. [*Rolling Stone*: "smart rock and ardent social argument;" *Time Magazine*: "band screams loudest and most eloquently."] For months the CD sat on my desk, unopened. I really don't like metal.

And then this spring my twenty-three year-old-son, Dave, was pictured in *The Washington Post* leading an anti-globalization/environmental protest march in Washington, DC. The byline under his picture read, "Dave Seel of Waterville, Maine [Colby College] protests U.S. foreign policy in Columbia as the procession makes its way toward the Capitol on the National Mall." All of a sudden, System of a Down seemed a lot more relevant. It had become personal. I opened the CD and listened. The words on the first cut, "Prison Song," caught my attention:

Utilizing drugs to pay for secret wars around the world / Drugs are now your global policy / Drug money is used to rig elections / And train brutal corporate sponsored dictators around the world

This is not a typical "boy band." These musicians have something to say.

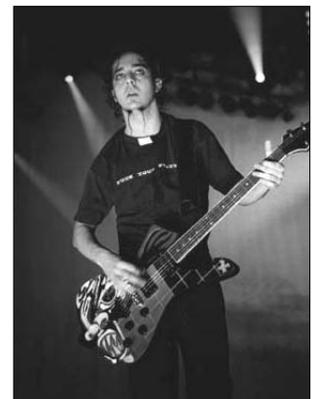
System of a Down (SOAD) is a Los Angeles group comprised of four American Armenians—Serj Tankian (lyrics/lead singer), Daron Malakian

(lyrics/singer), John Dolmayan (drums), Shavo Odadjian (bass). They have released two albums: *System of a Down* in 1997 and *Toxicity* in 2001. Raised in L.A.'s "Little Armenia," the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923 looms as a large shadow over their personal biographies and consciousness.

In a century of genocide, the massacre of 1.5 million Armenians (many of them Christians) by Turkish Muslims is both the forgotten genocide and the archetype of all that would follow. Hitler would later justify to his top military commanders his quest to rid the world of Jews in August 22, 1939, when he said rhetorically, "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?" This was a quote that would later be repeated at the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal. (See Kevork B. Bardakjian's *Hitler and the Armenian Genocide*.)

SOAD's lead singer Serj Tankian's grandfather was raised in an American missionary orphanage in Armenia after his parents and family were exterminated. "I would not be alive if not for the American orphanages that raised my grandfather after the Armenian Genocide of 1915, so I have a lot of love and respect for the good things that America has and can continue to achieve," Tankian told *CMJ* magazine. Religiously inspired hatred and violence is a deeply personal reality for these four musicians. We may forget. They cannot.

SOAD is hard to categorize politically or musically. They are musically genre-bending—seeing metal as a malleable form. An eighth grade student at my school commented, "It's like combining metal and Opera." They are sometimes compared to the now disbanded East L.A. political rockers, Rage Against the Machine. But



System of a Down

System is far more nuanced. “While Rage was much more in-your-face with their political standpoints, System is able to deliver them in a brilliant, finely tuned way that would get you to give your house to Stalin if they told you to,” writes Mike Hess in *Night Times*.

System of a Down wants you to think—and to think about things that matter. They are not about single-issue politics or superficial Hollywood activism—but the natural expression of a radicalized consciousness that is critical of hypocrisy and injustice wrapped in red, white, and blue symbols of capitalist greed. “If there is a message to the music, it is ‘Wake up!’ And not necessarily in any political way, but just think freely and think more. It’s like you watch television and listen to the radio and you let ‘em think and choose for you. Don’t be afraid about what someone is going to think about you. The reason why people tell us that our sound is so real and different is because we’re not afraid to do what we like doing. It’s like Serj’s line that says, ‘Free thinkers are dangerous.’ Get dangerous... What satisfies me at the end of the day is knowing that I didn’t conform to the norm. As long as I can stay true to myself and be proud of what I’m doing, then I’m cool. Everything else is just an outside opinion,” singer Daron Malakian told *Mean Street Magazine* in September.

Their politics is not free-form libertarianism, but the politics of radical ecology. In the song, “ATWA,” which stands for “air, trees, water, animals,” SOAD espouses killer Charles Manson’s ecological philosophy. “The main problem is that people don’t consider themselves as nature,” Tankian remarked recently. In the song, “Forest,” he sings:

Why can't you see that you are my child / Why don't you know that you are my mind / Tell everyone in the world, that I am you / Take this promise to the end of you

Serj acknowledges that he voted for Ralph Nader. “I feel sorry for the universe. I don’t believe in any of those globalist pigs. I voted for the person

who would think of humanity and the planet before corporations.” Nor does he have any confidence in science or technology.

Science has failed our world / Science has failed our mother earth / Spirit-moves-through-all-things

System is right; their concern is more than politics. It’s a worldview, a way of seeing reality. Their views represent a loose mix of Rousseauian romanticism, neo-pagan earth worship, and anti-globalist economics. “My belief is that violence in all forms is a low-level human energy output, and undermines our existence as beings of light... All of us are radiant beings with physical temporary shells that seem to define us more than it should. When you listen to music and you are uplifted, the place you go is not physical,” Tankian explains on the SOAD web page. For a far more realistic appreciation of nature and of our responsibility to it, one would do far better to read anything by Wendell Berry.

Christians are as quick to dismiss political differences as religious ones. But there are three themes that we need to hear in System’s message: authenticity, connection, and significance. SOAD is authentic—close to their fans and inured of celebrity status. They haven’t “sold out.” This is a difficult balance to maintain in the music business where pressures for market success are as high as in any multinational corporate boardroom. SOAD is a reminder that there is more to life than the commodity form. Human authenticity demands it.

Second, SOAD longs to enhance connections—between people and between people and nature. In a fragmented world, we have lost all sense of inter-connection. This is the meaning of their album title, “toxicity.” Christians will disagree with the pantheistic direction of their solution. But we must acknowledge that the reason this solution is so attractive is rooted in our uncritical acceptance of

continued on next page...



**by
David
John
Seel,
Jr.**

Tuned In cont.

...continued from previous page.

free-market radical individualism (a conservative form of Social Darwinism) that rarely asks the question, "Who is my neighbor?"

Third, System of a Down calls us to live lives of significance. Tankian chides, "We're not singing about bull s**t, but stuff that matters." Perhaps this suggests a cultural shift. Edna Gundersen of *USA Today* writes, "System resists categorization as fringe mascots or single-issue activists. Malakian embraces multiple causes, political, and musical, that he hopes will gain currency as the masses tire of bland entertainment and social decay. The time is ripe for cultural explosion, he says." It is time to wake up. Free thinkers are dangerous. "In the 50's, they were singing, 'Let's do the twist,' which isn't far from singing about

sex. We went from the twist to protest songs in the '60s. We've been in a shallow phase, but people get bored by shallow stuff. I think the times are starting to change," Malakian explained to Gundersen.

I hope so. The starting point of Christian discernment is not to agree or disagree about religion, politics, or music, but to listen for the heart of the other person. This is where human connection begins as well as social change. And so, for Alex, I have finally written this review. For Dave, I sent this email after his brush with fame: "I'm proud of you for taking a stand on matters that matter in a day when youth culture is trapped by its worship of consumerism and entertainment. Justice begins when one asks the question, 'Who is my brother?'" These are lessons a father can learn from a heavy metal CD. ■

~John Seel

John Seel is the headmaster of The Cambridge School of Dallas, a Christ-centered, classical college preparatory school. He is the author of Parenting Without Perfection: Being a Kingdom Influence in a Toxic World (NavPress, 2000) and a frequent speaker on education, teenagers, and culture. Copyright © 2002 by David John Seel, Jr.

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Critique is a newsletter (published nine times each year, funds permitting) designed to accomplish, by God's grace, three things:

1. To call attention to resources of interest to thinking Christians.
2. To model Christian discernment.
3. To stimulate believers to think biblically about all of life.

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