

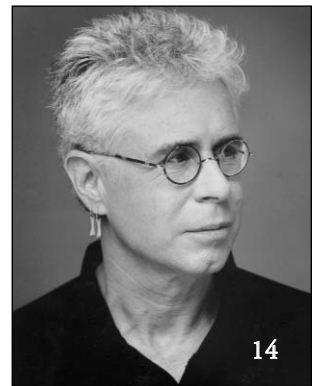
# Critique

Helping Christians Develop Skill in Discernment

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Would you drive a Muslim friend to their mosque? Denis D. Haack raises questions that arise from our religiously pluralistic culture.



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# Editor's Note

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**R**ansom Fellowship is a ministry with so many facets that it's difficult to summarize. I think the closest we can come is to say that our goal is to develop discernment and deepening discipleship in all aspects of life. Medicine. Art. Scripture. Rest. Suffering. Calling. Prayer. Stewardship of time, money, and creation. All these issues and a great many more are of concern to Ransom because they are part of the wholeness of human experience, and if we are to live faithfully before our God, each area of life is as vital as the other.

When Denis asked me to redesign *Critique*, I was thrilled. I have long felt that the content of the newsletter is more highly relevant than was immediately apparent in the design. I couldn't have done this, however, without design inspirations from *The X-files Official Magazine*, and the insightful, patient, and good-natured advice of Bonnie Liefer, graphic designer extraordinaire. However, central to any design changes I introduced was the desire to accurately reflect the multi-faceted nature of Ransom's ministry in every issue of *Critique*. This led to increasing the newsletter from 12 to 16 pages and developing the following columns which we hope will appear regularly.

**Dialogue.** Discussion is central to Ransom's ministry and this is our way of providing *Critique* readers with an avenue for voicing their responses to the content of each issue.

**Out of Their Minds.** No, we don't believe authors are out of their minds. Rather, they often express things more eloquently than we can. Reproducing excerpts from published works provides direct access to some of the greatest minds in ancient and modern times.

**The Discerning Life.** The dilemmas we face as Christians are rarely cut and dried. In this column, we pose issues and dilemmas along with discussion questions as a way to grapple with hard choices.

**The Darkened Room.** Movies not only provide insight into our culture, but also give us opportunities to begin discussions with nonbelievers about some of the most important questions in life.

**Reading the World.** We need to be in the world, but not of it. This column is dedicated to helping us understand our world so we can respond with discernment.

**Reading the Word.** Everything, finally, must be founded upon and tested against scripture. God's word is what makes developing discernment and deepening discipleship possible.

**Poetry.** We believe in art's ability to illuminate, exhilarate, and point us to God. In the future we hope to publish short fiction as well.

**Resources.** Here you will find recommendations for books, tapes, videos, newsletters, and whatever else we think is useful for developing discernment or understanding our culture.

**Digressions.** Mini-musings from Denis that illustrate how many issues we must think through in order to live faithfully.

**Tuned In.** Music and television, perhaps more than anything else, defines and divides the generations. We encourage thoughtful responses to both because they can be used to gain insight into the passions, fears, and hopes of our neighbors, children, friends, and even ourselves.

**Clicks.** Websites will be noted and rated.

It is my hope that the redesign of *Critique* will be more than a simple facelift—that it will allow the newsletter to appeal to more readers for the purpose of developing discernment and deepening discipleship within God's people. ■

—Marsena Konkle  
Managing Editor

## Critique

Issue #2 - 2000



Developing Discernment  
Deepening Discipleship

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Denis Haack

### Managing Editor

Marsena Konkle

### Contributing Editors

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Douglas Groothuis, Ph.D.

Donald Guthrie

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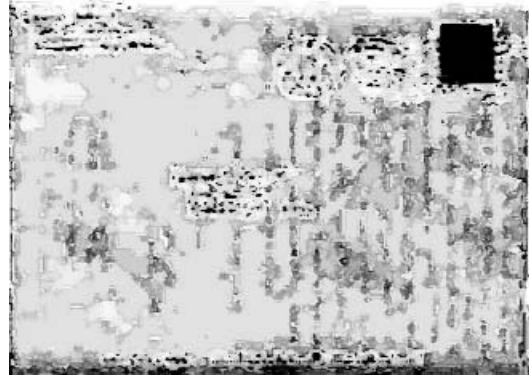
*Critique* considers unsolicited manuscripts for fiction and poetry. Include SASE with manuscript submissions and mail to:

Marsena Konkle  
*Critique* Managing Editor  
406 Bowman Avenue  
Madison, WI 53716

All other correspondence:  
Denis D. Haack  
Ransom Fellowship  
1150 West Center  
Rochester, MN 55902

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# Dialogue



## Missed hole-punches and favorite movie websites...

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

Marsena Konkle  
*Critique* Managing Editor  
406 Bowman Avenue  
Madison, WI 53716

or e-mail:  
Critique\_Letters@yahoo.com

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.

### Correction

In *Critique* Issue #1 - 2000, words were attributed to Denis D. Haack that were, in fact, quotes from an article by James Gleick. The quotes are found in the 2nd paragraph on page 5 and the 2nd and 3rd paragraphs under "Saving Time" on page 13. We sincerely regret the error.

I just want you to know how pleased I was to see the new *Critique*. Although the content has always been strong, now the presentation is too—before I'd glance at it quickly to see if there was something I had to read...now I want to explore it and I find myself reading things I didn't think I was interested in. WELL DONE.

**Stephen Bickley**  
Rochester, MN

The new format for *Critique* is OK with me, but I miss the holes. I keep back issues in a binder. Guess I will drill them now as they arrive.

**Jim Jordan**  
Essex Junction, VT

I really appreciate *Critique* and the work of the Haacks. I've been to hear Denis and Margie at L'Abri conferences in Rochester, and enjoyed their view of movies and popular culture.

I noticed your listing of movie websites [*Critique* #1 - 2000]. You mentioned that previewonline.com is a little narrow and negative (which I don't find hard to believe—I've struggled with Christian publications on pop culture for YEARS because of this). I would like to suggest an alternative. ScreenIt! (www.screenit.com) is not from a specifically Christian viewpoint, but it does honor traditional conservative values. It has the counting-how-many-curse-words-there-are thing, but it also includes an indepth analysis of each film both from an artistic viewpoint and from an overall moral viewpoint. ScreenIt! can be quite helpful. The IMDb, incidentally, is my favorite website in the whole world.

By the way, I love the redesign! Kudos to Marsena Konkle!

**Jandy Stone**

## A Poem

### HOLY THURSDAY

Toward the basins and the towels  
Christ tonight we shuffle in silence  
Christ behind me Christ before me  
Christ to help me keep my balance  
Christ the unwashed Son of Man  
Whose pulsing scars live on my wrist  
Where is a greater mystery  
Washing each other we wash Christ

*Christ the infant sweet from her bath*  
*Christ the eighth-grader wracked with sex*  
*Christ the old woman slowing me down*  
*and the neighbor man who never speaks*  
*Christ the sullen secretary*  
*Christ the star in the limousine*  
*Christ my husband talking with the dog*  
*Christ on the corner selling cocaine*

*Christ the child in the treehouse crying*  
*Christ her daddy and his bad touch*  
*Christ the losers who do not love me*  
*and also those who love me too much*  
*Christ the young brutes who bully my child*  
*Christ all those who really mean well*  
*Christ the serial killers and senators*  
*and everyone I'm sure will roast in Hell*

*Christ the invisible Christ the refusable*  
*Christ the runaway under the bridge*  
*Christ the forgettable the insignificant*  
*living in shadow on the edge*  
*Christ the re-tard Christ the hippy*  
*Christ the communist Christ the queer*  
*Christ the many who live to annoy me*  
*Christ the sorry face in my mirror*

-Jane Greer

*Jane Greer is a public servant in Bismarck,  
North Dakota.*

## Freedom of Worship?

### Yes, but not on my property!

If anything is certain in this postmodern world, it is that we find ourselves living in an increasingly pluralistic society. Pluralistic not just in the ever-widening array of goods, services, and activities available for consumption, but a pluralism also in the marketplace of ideas, values, and world views. “Religious pluralism in Western Culture is a social reality,” L’Abri Worker Dick Keyes writes. “Today we are surrounded by a plurality of religious beliefs and institutions. We may or may not like it, but this fact is difficult to deny.”

It doesn’t take much study to see

that an ever-wider array of religions are growing and maintaining a presence in the public square. Even in the relatively small, conservative, Midwestern city in which I write this, the quickest glance around confirms not only that this religious pluralism is a fact of life, but that it is likely to increase. The Yellow Pages, along with the usual vast assortment of churches and synagogues, also lists a Zen Buddhist Society, the Soka Gakkai International (a second Buddhist group), and an Islamic Center. Muslims sponsor a regular cable-TV program in which they teach on Islam from the Bible, while daily prayer is held in a converted store front in the heart of downtown. Neo-paganism is reported to

be the single fastest growing religious commitment among American teenaged girls. And increasingly we talk to people who are embracing various forms of spirituality even if their spiritual quest does not include a commitment to any particular religion or involvement with an organized group or institution. It is estimated, by the way, that in America there are presently over 5,000,000 Muslims, over 900,000 Hindus, and almost a million Buddhists.

“Christians must learn to live in a world of religious plurality,” Winfried Corduan writes. For one thing, that means we must reflect seriously on what pre-evangelism and evangelism will look like in a pluralistic culture. “Many of

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What does it mean to live faithfully as Christians in a society of religious plurality? More specifically: Should a Christian who owns downtown property rent a storefront to Muslims to be used as an Islamic Center for daily prayer and instruction? Or a Christian real estate agent help an Islamic congregation find suitable property for a mosque? Should a Christian contractor seek to get the bid to build the mosque or to remodel the storefront? Why or why not?
2. Should a Christian church which rents rooms to outside groups rent to an Islamic discussion group? To a Jewish discussion group? Should a Christian family knowingly rent a room in their house to a non-Christian, say, to a practicing Buddhist? Does the age of the children matter? Is there a difference between a Christian renting a room and a church renting part of its facility? Why or why not? How would you make your case from Scripture?
3. If a friendly, hardworking Muslim or Buddhist family with children aged similarly to your own moved into your neighborhood, would you invite them to supper? To what extent does evangelism have to be part of the supper conversation for the evening to be a “success” in your mind? Would you say grace before the meal as usual? End the meal with a Bible reading or family devotions? If yes, how would you explain them? If they returned the favor by inviting your family to dinner-would you go? If they began the meal with a prayer or meditation, how would you respond?
4. Would you answer any of the above questions differently if you substitute “secularist” for the non-Christian under discussion? Why or why not?
5. What texts of Scripture would you appeal to as informing your thinking on these questions? How do you know they apply? How do you know your answers to these questions are the result of being discerning instead of simply finding proof texts to justify your reactions?
6. How much careful reading and thinking have you done about what it means to be faithful as a Christian in a religiously pluralistic society? What plans should you make?

## Calendar of Christ

these non-Christian folk appear to be happy with their religions and are not searching for a better way," Corduan notes. "They hold on to their beliefs and seem to find as much satisfaction in them as Christians do theirs. Thus, for Christians, the encounter with non-Christian believers more than ever appears to be a meeting between 'neighboring faiths.'"

Learning to live in a world of religious plurality also means we must reflect seriously on a number of practical discernment issues. Some Christians, for example, acknowledge that non-Christians certainly have the freedom to worship as they please, but they would refuse to do anything that could even be construed as aiding them in such worship. Some might not be willing to drive their Muslim neighbors to their mosque, while another Christian might be willing to use their carpentry skills to help remodel a building to be used as a center for Buddhist meditation and instruction.

All of which raises some interesting and important questions for discerning reflection and discussion. ■

~Denis D. Haack

### Sources:

Keyes from *Chameleon Christianity: Moving Beyond Safety and Conformity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Hourglass Books, a division of Baker Books; 1999) p. 72.

Corduan and statistics are both from *Neighboring Faiths: A Christian Introduction to World Religions* by Winfried Corduan (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press; 1998) pp.13-14.

### An Excerpt from a book by Robert Webber.

The secularization that worship has undergone is perhaps most obvious in the typical evangelical calendar. Generally, the evangelical calendars are full of special events revolving around Mother's Day, Father's Day, Children's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Labor Day. In some churches special attention is even given to Boy Scout and Girl Scout Day, as well as other national or even local days. This strange mixture of the patriotic, sentimental, and promotional shows how far removed we are from a Christian concept of time.

### *The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ are at the center of time.*

Some may object to the above analysis, pointing out that most Protestants do have a Christian year because Christmas and Easter are observed. While this is true, the celebration of these events too often lacks meaning because they are frequently entered into with haste, and sometimes even take commercial or promotional shape in the church.

The place from which we stand to develop a Christian view of time is not only Christmas or Easter but also the weekly Eucharist. Here we have, as Gregory Dix observed, "the enactment before God of the historical process of redemption, of the historical events of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus by which redemption has been achieved."

From a Christian point of view, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ are at the center of time, for from Christ we look backward toward creation, the Fall, the Covenants, and God's working in history to bring redemption. But from the time of the incarnation of Christ we also look forward to

the fulfillment of history in his second coming. For this reason time is understood, from the Christian point of view, in and through the redemptive presence of Jesus Christ symbolized in the bread and wine.

Oscar Cullmann has dealt with the biblical concept of time in his well-known book *Christ and Time*. He describes another way of rendering time meaningfully through the Christian concept of eschatology, for the Christian believes that history is moving toward a fulfillment, not an ending. In

this sense, the Christian view of time is similar to the Hebraic understanding. The Old Testament believer looked toward the fulfillment of time

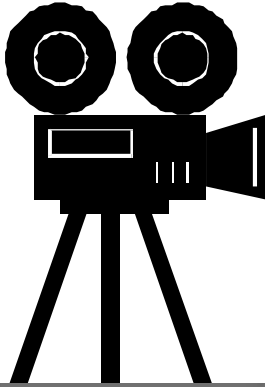
in the coming of the Messiah. Jesus' coming did not render the events of the Old Testament meaningless, and especially here we may think of the Hebrew sacred year, but by fulfilling them he established their meaning. In the same way the Christian believes that the end of time will fulfill and complete the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

For this reason the Christian year is based on the events in the life of Christ that shape the Christian's understanding of time. By observing the church year, time is aligned with the living, dying, rising, and coming of Christ. The Christian, in his or her view of time, makes a dramatic break with a secular view of time and begins to consciously meditate on the aspect of Christ's life currently being celebrated by the church. Time is actually experienced as *Christus Victor* time. ■

~Robert Webber

Source: *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* by Robert Webber (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books; 1999) pp. 111-112.

## A Talent For Destruction



### A Review of The Talented Mr. Ripley

by Dr. Andrew H. Trotter, Jr.

Movies are rarely about one theme as much as Anthony Minghella's brilliant new film *The Talented Mr. Ripley*. Deceit and the web of intrigue, cover-up, fractured relationships, and destroyed hope underlie every moment of this searching, disturbing movie.

Ripley derives its title from one of the few honest answers the lead character gives during the course of the film. Tom Ripley is asked by his friend, Dickie Greenleaf, what one talent he has. He answers without pause that he has three: "Forging signatures, telling lies, and impersonating almost anybody." This lavish film-noir spends the rest of its time showing just how well Tom Ripley knows himself.

*The Talented Mr. Ripley* is the second adaptation for the screen of a highly praised novel by Patricia Highsmith of the same name. The first is the little seen *Purple Noon* and presents Ripley as someone dashingly attractive, a psychopath one hates to love. Damon and Minghella eschew that tact, opting instead for a character who is deeply troubled, preferring, as he puts it, to "be a fake somebody than a real nobody." No one viewing the film could really like Tom Ripley (he is too chillingly despicable), but the genius of the character is that we are attracted to him because we fear deep down that, as the comic strip put it long ago, "We have met the enemy, and he is us."

Set in 1950's Italy, the movie's action takes place mostly in the sun-drenched waters of the Adriatic Sea and the romantic alleyways and apartments of cities like

Rome and Venice. A tone of soulless waste permeates the film, as the young, "restless ones" spend their parents' money lying on the beach by day and frequenting jazz bars by night. Minghella used the atmosphere created by both the heat of the Mediterranean out-of-doors and the opulence of European formal parties to create similar effects in his Academy Award winning giant *The English Patient*. In that movie, neither place could overcome the two lead characters morally, but here the empty, icy heart of Tom Ripley yearns for this "good" life. The viewer knows that this way lies only trouble.

Ripley is in Europe at the behest of Mr. Herbert Greenleaf, a wealthy shipping magnate played ably by James Rebhorn, to find his son and convince him to come home. Instead, Ripley joins Dickie and his girlfriend Marge in a ruse to live off Daddy's money. The movie follows Ripley as one vicious act after another changes his romantic dream into a terrible, bloody nightmare.

The plot of *Ripley* leaves something to be desired, but the filmmaker uses masterful techniques to create one of the most disquieting thrillers of recent memory. From the beginning, when the credits are shown during a sequence spotted by jagged, angular wipes (reminiscent of the opening credits of *Psycho*), to the closing shot of a lone figure in a mirror as the door to which it is attached slowly closes, Minghella uses the camera to spike the theme of

deceit and its consequences at every turn. Early shots half-observe Damon's face with corners of walls,



#### Film Credits

##### Starring:

Matt Damon  
(Tom Ripley)  
Gwyneth Paltrow  
(Marge Sherwood)  
Jude Law  
(Dickie Greenleaf)  
Cate Blanchett  
(Meredith Logue)  
Philip Seymour Hoffman  
(Freddie Miles)  
Jack Davenport  
(Peter Smith-Kingsley)  
James Rebhorn  
(Herbert Greenleaf)

##### Director:

Anthony Minghella

##### Screenwriter:

Anthony Minghella

##### Based on novel by:

Patricia Highsmith

##### Producers:

William Horberg  
Tom Sternberg  
Sydney Pollack

##### Music:

Gabriel Yared

##### Cinematography:

John Seale

##### Costume Design:

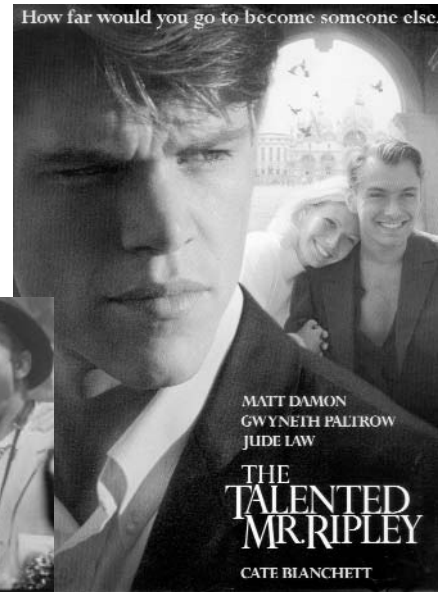
Ann Roth  
Gary Jones

139 minutes  
Rated R for violence,  
language, and brief  
nudity.

doorways, and table tops as he teaches himself jazz and memorizes the ways of the rich. Midway through, a dramatic zoom tracking shot at an opera, moving in on Ripley's face as he watches a duel on-stage result in bloody death, leaves the viewer breathless as we realize that the murderous predicament he so casually fell into now has become fascinating to him. The final shots of the movie, as Ripley is left to contemplate the emptiness of his fate, are incomparably distressing, the gentle bobbing of the ship and the mirror images showing him that he will never get out of the trap he has put himself into.

The cold ease with which Damon smiles, innocent as a lamb, while he is plotting to deceive, the faultless costuming and sets which create an atmosphere of decadent,

rich-kid trouble, and the polished performances by Paltrow, Law, Phillip Seymour Hoffman, Cate Blanchett, and Jack Davenport—all con-



***Could it be that we don't want to watch a morality play that tells us actions have consequences...that the heart of man "is deceitful above all things?"***

tribute to the viewers' ability to live within the story. Almost against our will, we are forced to wonder time and again, "What would we do now, if we were Tom Ripley?"

*Ripley*, while acknowledged by the Academy, received far fewer Oscar nominations and much less box office attention than it deserved. It is interesting to speculate why. Might it hit too close to home? Could it be

that we don't want to watch a morality play that tells us that actions have consequences, that evil can be so despicable and yet come in such attractive packages, that the heart of man "is deceitful above all things?"

Late in the movie, Ripley tells a friend that the past for him is like a room in the basement where he locks the things he regrets. He laments that from time to time

he meets people and "all you want to do is toss them the key, say open up, step inside, but you can't because it's dark and there are demons and if anybody saw how ugly it was..." *The Talented Mr. Ripley* demonstrates how dark (how many demons!) and how ugly that room is, and that such a house—elegant, full of rooms showing its owner to be a person of money and power—if it is built on lies and unreality, is a house of cards. ■

~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.*

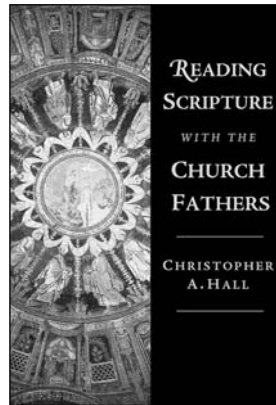
## **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION**

1. What was your initial or immediate reaction to the film? Why do you think you reacted that way?
2. What is the message(s) of the film? Where do you agree and disagree? Why? In the areas in which you disagree, how can you talk about and demonstrate the truth in a winsome and creative way?
3. In what ways were the techniques of film-making (casting, direction, script, music, sets, action, cinematography, editing, etc.) used to get the film's message(s) across, or to make the message plausible or compelling?
4. With whom did you identify in the film? Why? With whom were you meant to identify? Discuss each main character in the film and their significance to the story.
5. What insight does the film give into the way postmodern people see life, meaning, and reality? How can you use the film as a useful window of insight to better understand your non-Christian friends and neighbors?
6. Might the film be a useful point of contact for discussion with non-Christians? What plans should you make?

## Ancient Christian

**M**any Christians appear to believe that their primary task in reading and studying Scripture is to determine what the text means to them. And, though we usually don't say it in so many words, it seems rather obvious that any interpretation that is obvious to us must be, therefore, obviously true.

Sometimes this "right to interpret the Bible for ourselves" is defended as being a hallmark of the Reformation. Didn't the Reformers teach that the ordinary Christian could understand the Bible? That all believers should be encouraged to read and study it in the conviction that God speaks to his children through his written Word? Yes, they did (it's called the *perspicuity* of Scripture). However—and this is a very important clarification—they were also clear that this process of interpretation was to occur not individualistically, but within the accountability of the community of God's people. Theologian Richard Lints points out that "the Reformers held that the proper context for the interpretation of the text is not the subjective interaction between a particular passage and a particular person but rather the interaction of a given passage with the whole of Scripture itself, the essential unity of which was established by its divine origin. And determinations of this sort, they believed, are most effectively accomplished by the corporate study of the Scriptures." It is true that *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone) was championed by the Reformers, but "neither Luther nor Calvin ever intended that this principle serve as the means by which individual



interpreters might bypass the contributions of the larger interpretive community, either past or present."

As Christians we believe we are fallen, and that we do not somehow shed our sinfulness when we sit down to study the Bible. We are also finite, which means our understanding is always incomplete, at best, and that

***The process of interpretation is to occur not individualistically, but within the community of God's people.***

we're never fully free of cultural bias. It is the Enlightenment, not the Christian faith, which imagines that it is possible to be a neutral or utterly objective observer. We need quality commentaries as one way in which to be accountable as we interpret Scripture.

We need to be listening to voices that span the last 2000 years and that is why the *Ancient Christian Commentary* series is such an important resource, since it allows us to listen to commentators from the period of church history which up to now has been, for most of us, largely shrouded in silence. This includes the earliest centuries of church history, the period traditionally referred to as that of the patristic fathers.

Since few of us know much of the first seven centuries of the church, Christopher Hall's *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers* is an excellent place to begin. Written as an introduction to the *Ancient Christian Commentary* series, Hall orientates us to the patristic period, introduces us to eight key fathers of the

church (in the east, Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil the Great, & John Chrysostom, and in the west, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, & Gregory the Great), and helps us make sense of how the patristics approached and interpreted Scripture.

We need to "reacquaint ourselves with the classical Christian writers of our faith," Dr. Thomas Oden, the general editor of the series writes. "By the classical Christian faith (or ancient ecumenical

orthodoxy), I mean the Christian consensus of the first millennium. It must be asked here, What is the standard of orthodoxy in our post-modern world? In brief, it is that faith to which Vincent of Lérins pointed in the concise phrase 'that which has been everywhere and always and by everyone believed.'" Those of us who desire that sort of orthodoxy will find the *Ancient Christian Commentaries* an invaluable aid for our study of Scripture.

**D**avid Wells says about the series: "This new, but old, commentary takes us out of the small, closed-minded world in which much modern biblical scholarship is done into an earlier time marked by a Christian seriousness, by robust inquiry, and by believing faith. This commentary is a fresh breeze blowing in our empty, postmodern world."

The complete series will consist of 27 volumes, which will cover the Old and New Testaments and the Apocrypha. Since the church fathers did not (often) write commentaries, none of the *Commentaries* are by a single author, but rather consist of an artful blending of a variety of ancient teachers addressing a single text of Scripture. The comments



# Commentaries

are drawn from sermons, letters, and numerous other types of documents that have been preserved over time, many of which have been translated into English for the first time here. And if this description of the editing process sounds like the commentaries will be difficult to read or cumbersome in their prose, please trust me when I say that neither is the case. Possible only now that the massive literature of the patristic period has been computerized by scholars around the world, the *Ancient Christian Commentaries* are designed for thoughtful lay Christians, and will enrich their study of the Scriptures.

Available from InterVarsity Press, families who feel they can not afford a set for themselves should consider purchasing a copy together for their church library. ■

~Denis D. Haack

## Books reviewed:

*Reading Scriptures with the Church Fathers* by Christopher A. Hall (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press; 1998) 200 pp. + notes + indices.

*Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, series general editor Thomas C. Oden (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press).

## Sources:

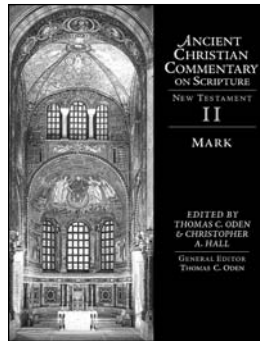
*The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* by Richard Lints (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company; 1993) p. 93, 291.

“On Not Whoring After the Spirit of the Age” by Thomas Oden in *No God But God: Breaking With the Idols of Our Age* edited by Os Guinness and John Seel (Chicago, IL: Moody Press; 1992) p. 202.

## ACCS Continuity Program:

For information on subscriptions contact InterVarsity Press by phone (630-734-4110 or toll-free 800-843-1019); mail (P. O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515); email (mail@ivpress.com); or visit them at (www.ivpress.com). Please mention you heard about it in *Critique*.

*An excerpt from ACCS (New Testament volume II): Mark edited by Thomas Oden and Christopher Hall (1998) pp. 226-227, including the entire entry for the text Mark 15:16-20 except for footnotes detailing passages of Scriptures cited and sources for the patristic commentary.*



Mark 15:16-20 THE MOCKING BY THE SOLDIERS

<sup>16</sup>And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the praetorium); and they called together the whole battalion. <sup>17</sup>And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and plaiting a crown of thorns they put it on him. <sup>18</sup>And they began to salute him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” <sup>19</sup>And they struck his head with a reed, and spat upon him, and they knelt down in homage to him. <sup>20</sup>And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak, and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.

**OVERVIEW:** Ironies abound: The giver of the cloak of righteousness that hides our sin was himself stripped of his earthly clothing. His face is covered with spittle, who cured with spittle the eyes of the blind (CYPRIAN). Even their mockery obliquely served to reveal the revealer, to crown the humbled Lord of glory (CYRIL OF JERUSALEM). A conclusive reversal was being consummated in human history through his mock crowning. The judge is judged; the Word is silent (CYPRIAN).

## 15:17 *A Purple Cloak and a Crown of Thorns*

**THE REVERSAL IN THE FORM OF MOCKERY.** CYPRIAN: He who now gives true palms to the victors was beaten in the face with hostile palms; he who clothes all others with the garments of immortality was stripped of his earthly garment. THE GOOD OF PATIENCE 7.

**HOW THE MOCKERY ECHOED PROPHECY.** CYRIL OF JERUSALEM: When they “clothed him in purple,” it was in mockery, yet ironically it was a fulfillment of prophecy, for he indeed was a king, so even their parody indirectly served divine revelation. Even though they did it in a spirit of derision, still they did it, and his regal dignity was by that symbolically heralded. So, likewise, though it was with thorns they crowned him, it was still a crown. SERMON ON THE PARALYTIC 12.

## 15:19 *They Spat upon Him*

**THE SPITTLE OF HIS REVILERS AND THE SPITTLE BY WHICH HE HEALED** CYPRIAN: In that very hour of his passion and cross, before they had come to the cruel act of his slaughter and the shedding of his blood, what violent abuses he listened to with patience, and what shameful insults he endured! He was even covered with the spittle of his revilers, when, but a short time before, with his own spittle he had cured the eyes of the blind man. THE GOOD OF PATIENCE 7.

## 15:20 *They Led Him Out to Crucify Him*

**THE PARADOX OF HIS BEING “LED OUT.”** CYPRIAN: He who has given the food of heaven was fed with gall; he who has offered us the cup of salvation was given vinegar to drink. He the innocent, he the just, nay rather, innocence itself and justice itself is counted among criminals, and truth is concealed by false testimonies. He who is to judge is judged and the Word of God, silent, is led to the cross. The elements are disturbed, the earth trembles, night blots out the day, “the sun withdraws both its rays” and its eyes lest it be forced to gaze upon the crime of the people. Though the stars are confounded at the crucifixion of the Lord, he does not speak, nor is he moved, nor does he proclaim his majesty, even during the suffering itself. He endures all things even to the end with constant perseverance so that in Christ a full and perfect patience may find its realization. THE GOOD OF PATIENCE 7.

## Hospitable Sheep

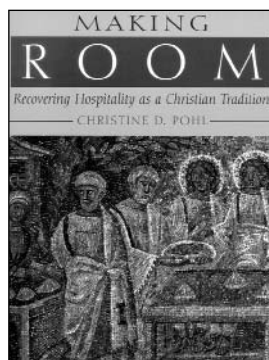
**M**aking Room: *Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* by Christine D. Pohl (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing; 1999) 195 pp. + bibliography + index.

It is interesting—and perhaps instructive—that one of the most troubling texts of Scripture rarely seems to trouble most Christians. The text I have in mind is the passage near the end of Matthew’s Gospel in which Jesus describes the judgment of the nations. “All the nations will be gathered” before him, he says, at which time he “will separate the people from one another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats” (25:32). The sheep are welcomed into his kingdom, while the goats are banished into “eternal

### *Hospitality is a way of life fundamental to Christian identity.*

fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (34, 41). This is hardly a popular doctrine in these postmodern times, of course, but Christians do in fact believe in a judgment, and confess as much each time they say the Apostles’ Creed. And I suspect that most of us who claim to be Christians aren’t much troubled by the prospect of this judgment because we assume that since we’re Christians, we have nothing to worry about. But notice what Jesus says next:

“Then the King will say to [the sheep], ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry



and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me” (34-36).

At which they respond, when did we do that? And Jesus says “I tell you the

truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (40). And then he turns to the goats and calls them “cursed” because they did not show such hospitality. “Then they will go away to eternal punishment,” Jesus says, “but the righteous to eternal life” (46).

Which is one reason why Christine Pohl, professor of Christian social ethics at Asbury Theological Seminary, argues that “Hospitality is a way of life fundamental to Christian identity.” In *Making Room* Dr. Pohl explains the biblical mandate for hospitality, distinguishes it from

“entertaining friends,” traces how the practice has been understood throughout church history, and helps us reflect on how hospitality can be restored to its rightful place in our lives, individually and corporately as the people of God. And if there ever was a time when opening our homes and lives to strangers was absolutely essential, it is now, in our deeply broken and fragmented age. “By God’s grace we can grow more willing,” Dr. Pohl writes, “more eager, to open the door to a needy neighbor, a weary sister or brother, a stranger in distress. Perhaps as we open that door more regularly, we will grow increasingly sensitive to the quiet knock of angels. In the midst of a

life-giving practice, we too might catch glimpses of Jesus who asks for our welcome and welcomes us home.”

Hospitality is risky in a fallen world, however, and to Pohl’s credit she faces this issue squarely. She points out, for example, that prior to the modern era hospitality was offered to strangers in the public square, in settings where extended family and neighbors knew when someone was opening their home to a stranger. She argues this is not merely a cultural quirk, but a practical safeguard against the risks inherent in hospitality, and suggests ways in which similar safeguards can be erected today. Pohl has not only thought deeply on the topic, she has lived it, and then spent time at ministries like L’Abri and L’Arche to learn from those who center their lives and work around community and opening their lives and homes to others. *Making Room* is the result of her Bible study, numerous interviews, ongoing practical experience, and careful reading of 2000 years of Church teaching.

We recommend *Making Room* to you. And if you are like me, so busy that the mere thought of hospitality is wear-



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# & Intelligent Design

some, may I suggest that we might be wise to meditate on what Jesus taught in Matthew 25:31-46. ■

-Denis D. Haack

For those who take both science and the biblical doctrine of Creation seriously, the Intelligent Design movement is worth serious consideration. Unlike “creation science,” which begins with Genesis—with prior religious commitments, in other words—and then works to find evidence in nature for them, “intelligent design,” William Dembski says, “starts with the data of nature and from there argues to an intelligent cause responsible for the specified complexity in nature.”

We have already recommended Michael Behe’s book, *Darwin’s Black Box* in these pages (*Critique* #1-1997). And we are happy to recommend the following resources concerning intelligent design here:

*Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity* “Intelligent Design” issue (July/August 1999).

This issue of the magazine is given over completely to a thoughtful compilation of articles on Intelligent Design, including:

“The Wedge: Breaking the Modernist Monopoly on Science” by Phillip Johnson (Jefferson Peysner Professor of Law at the University of California and author of *Darwin on Trial* and *Reason in the Balance*).

“The Regeneration of Science and Culture: The Cultural Implications of Scientific Materialism Versus Intelligent Design” by John West (Assistant Professor of Political Science at Seattle Pacific University).

“Darwin’s Breakdown: Irreducible Complexity and Design at the Foundation of Life” by Michael Behe (Associate Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at Lehigh University and author of *Darwin’s Black Box*).

“Word Games: DNA, Design, and Intelligence” by Stephen Meyer (Associate Professor of Philosophy at Whitworth College).

“The Cambrian Explosion: The Fossil Record and Intelligent Design” by Robert DeHaan (retired Professor of Developmental

***Scientists are able to discern both a complexity and a specificity that suggests intelligent design in the universe.***

Psychology, University of Chicago) and John Wiester (Chairman of the Science Education Commission of the American Scientific Affiliation).

“The ‘Just So’ Universe: The Fine-Tuning of Constants and Conditions in the Cosmos” by Walter Bradley (Professor of Mechanical Engineering at Texas A & M

University and coauthor, with Charles Thaxton, of *The Mystery of Life’s Origin*).

“Signs of Intelligence: A Primer on the Discernment of Intelligent Design” by William Dembski (Fellow of the Discovery Institute’s Center for the Renewal of Science and Culture and author of *Intelligent Design*).

We recommend this issue of *Touchstone* to you. If you have read little about Intelligent Design, this would be an excellent introduction. And if you have been following the discussion, you’ll want these essays in your library.

To order a copy of *Touchstone* (Volume 12, Number 4; July/August 1999) send \$8 (plus \$3 shipping) to PMA/Touchstone, 129 Phelps Avenue, Suite 312, Rockford, IL 61108.

## Briefly Noted



*Engaging the Closed Minded: Presenting Your Faith to the Confirmed Unbeliever* by Dan Story (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999) 112 pp.

Good popular books on apologetics are rare. Apologetics should be practical. It is not an academic game, but a battle for souls. But apologetics also involves matters of philosophical depth not easily summarized. Story only partially succeeds in striking this difficult balance. He nicely explains how to do apologetics by asking challenging questions, using understandable language, and adjusting

one’s approach to individual people. He uses Scripture and real-life examples to make his points. However, his approach is sometimes simplistic and misguided. His documentation is too thin. Although Story’s approach is typically rational and factual, he surprisingly says that we should use postmodernist methods that downplay rationality and facts. This seems inconsistent with much of what he claims elsewhere. It is also a bad policy for apologetics, as I argue in *Truth Decay*. Story errs in claiming that “Pascal believed that there are no rational arguments for belief in God.” Pascal skillfully used evidence in apologetics. The works of Ronald Nash and James Sire provide a better grounding in basic apologetics.

by Douglas Groothuis, Ph.D.

# Resources cont.

**I**ntelligent Design: *The Bridge Between Science and Theology* by William Dembski (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press; 1999) 279 pp. + notes + index.

The idea of intelligent design has been around for a very long time, but being able to identify design reliably has been a problem. After all, if I point to something that appears in nature and claim it is so complex that it must have been designed, someone can counter that claim by arguing it merely appears designed because science isn't sophisticated enough yet to unravel its complexity. That doesn't necessarily end the discussion, but it has made the concept a difficult one in scientific circles.

Until William Dembski, that is. As Michael Behe explains in the Foreword to *Intelligent Design*:

"Dembski's insight, first elaborated in his scholarly monograph *The Design Inference* and explained here for a broader readership, is that we recognize design in what he calls 'specified complexity' or equivalently 'specified small probability.' In other words, we apprehend design in highly improbable (complex) events that also fit some independently identifiable pattern (specification). For example, if we turned the corner and saw a couple of Scrabble letters on a table that spelled AN, we would not, just on that basis, be able to decide if they were purposely arranged. Even though they spelled a word, the probability of getting a short word by chance is not prohibitive. On the other hand, the probability of seeing some particular long sequence of Scrabble letters, such as NDEIRUABFDMMOJHRIINKE, is quite small (around one in a bil-

lion billion billion). Nonetheless, if we saw that sequence lined up on a table, we would think little of it because it is not specified—it matches no recognizable pattern. But if we saw a sequence of letters that read, say, METHINKSITIS-LIKEAWASEL, we would easily conclude that the letters were intelligently arranged that way. The sequence of letters is not only highly improbable, but it also matches an intelligible English sentence. It is a product of intelligent design."

In other words, Dembski has provided the mathematical and philosophical tools required to identify design in naturally occurring systems. His argument is that specified complexity is a reliable criterion for detecting design. Thus, by using design theory in empirical study of natural phenomena, scientists are able to discern both a complexity and a specificity that suggests intelligent design in the universe rather than merely random, undirected processes.

Warning: though the concept seems simple enough—those Scrabble tiles

aren't too hard to understand—the actual details of Dembski's argument are more than a little challenging. Still, if you'd like some serious reading on the topic, we recommend *Intelligent Design* to you. ■

~Denis D. Haack.

**I**ntelligent Design and its Critics. A Conference (June 22-24, 2000, Concordia University, Mequon, WI).

A conference on Intelligent Design with leading proponents and opponents of design-theoretical research, cosponsored by *Touchstone* and Concordia University's Cranach Institute. For more information contact Angus Menuge, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Concordia University, by mail (12800 North Lake Shore Drive, Mequon, WI 53097), or by phone (262-243-4249), or by email (angus.menuge@cuw.edu). ■

## Briefly Noted

*Evangelical Faith: A Personal Plea for Unity, Integrity, and Faithfulness* by John Stott (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press; 1999) 126 pp. + notes.

At a time when the evangelical movement continues to fragment instead of demonstrating unity in Christ, when many believers who identify themselves as evangelicals are unable to identify what, precisely, that designation means, and when more and more outsiders speak of the movement with undisguised scorn, the elder-statesman of evangelicalism offers what he calls a "little statement on evangelical faith." Stott uses that expression, it is worth noting, as he reflects on the fact that he will soon reach the end of his life. "I would like to leave behind me as a kind of spiritual legacy this little statement of evangelical faith, this personal appeal to the rising generation," he writes. "This is how I would wish to be remembered and judged as I prepare to stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

Evangelicals need to take this plea seriously. Not because it is written by Stott—though that is not without significance—but because we say we believe in truth, unity, integrity, and faithfulness.

by Denis D. Haack

## Friends & Designer Gods

**S**he was a good Christian, and so had many non-Christian friends.” That observation was made of a woman whose unbelieving friends packed out the church at her wedding. Many didn’t like the vows they heard her take that day, but apparently all that did was provide her an opportunity to talk about things that matter.

If we don’t always think of having many non-Christian friends as a characteristic of a good Christian, we need to reread the Gospels. Jesus attracted unbelievers in droves,

*An excellent epitaph on a tombstone:  
She had many non-Christian friends.*

if for no other reason that he—and his message—was supremely attractive. It is true there is an offense to the cross, and the Gospels also record instances where people turned from Christ and walked away.

Still, if we want to be like Christ, we too will want to have many non-Christian friends. And if that doesn’t seem to be possible, it might be wise to ask just how attractive we and our message are to those who do not share our deepest convictions. Or just who we are spending our time with.

Come to think of it, the compliment would make an excellent epitaph on a tombstone: She was a good Christian—like her Lord, she had many non-Christian friends. ■

—Denis D. Haack

**I**n “Deus Ex Silico: A Physicist Explains Why God is in the Chips,” Frank Tipler predicts that as far as computer technology is concerned, we haven’t seen anything yet.

Within a hundred years, he says, “All educated people will accept God as a fact.” What they won’t find plausible, he says, is the notion of a soul. The reason? By that

time computers will be so powerful and hard drives will be so big that it will be possible to upload a human being.

“It will be perfectly obvious to them that what we regard as the metaphysical and transcendent human essence is nothing more than a particular (and very complicated) computer program run on a computing machine called the brain.”

And computer technology will continue to develop, he says, until finally the distinction between human and

machine—even cosmos and machine—no longer exists.

“The first human-to-computer uploads of 2100 will prove that a perfect simulation is the thing being simulated,

that a silicon soul doesn’t need a physical body to inhabit,” Tipler concludes. “So eventually everybody who ever lived will be resurrected inside a living machine indistinguishable from God. Isn’t it amazing what you can do with unlimited hard-drive space? Amen.”

It is tempting to dismiss this as the musing of a nerd who has no social life. It was not written as satire. As a matter of fact, a growing number of people find these ideas both plausible and attractive. And that should remind us how seductive virtual reality is compared to the painful reality of living in a fallen world.

It is interesting to see how fears and dreams develop in a culture over time. Only a few decades ago the idea of aliens from outer space triggered fear, as Orson Welles’s “War of the Worlds” demonstrated. Now, since Carl Sagan’s popularization of the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI), aliens are less the

object of fear than of curiosity—as programs like *The X-Files* reveal.

Another great fear which has long been a theme in science fiction has been the danger that machines pose for the human race—witness, for example, *The Matrix*. But now the machine can even be envisioned as god, who is one with all of life and with all the cosmos. Not too surprising in a technological age, I suppose. After all, Jesus taught that people worship what they love (see Matthew 6:21, for example).

Still, I wonder. Hasn’t Frank Tipler ever tried to load a new version of Windows? ■  
—Denis D. Haack

Source:

“Deus Ex Silico” appeared in *Wired* (January 2000) p. 219.

*Computer technology will continue to develop until finally the distinction between human and machine no longer exists.*

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## The Truth



**Listening  
with  
Discernment  
to  
Music  
Christians  
Love  
to  
Criticize**

**B**ruce Cockburn (pronounced Ko-burn) recently released his twenty-fifth CD, *Breakfast in New Orleans Dinner in Timbuktu*. An inspired lyricist whose style is a soothing blend of folk, rock, and blues, Cockburn is the first to admit that religion is not the focal point of his music. Sadly, his CDs are not sold in most Christian bookstores and a quick listen to one of his songs may not be enough to identify him as a believer. For many Christians, this is a definite strike against him.

We have a tendency to compartmentalize life into the “spiritual” (i.e., important) and the “unspiritual” (i.e., unimportant at best, sinful at worst). While it is certainly vital to discern between what is good and what is not, life shouldn’t be divided into the spiritual and unspiritual, because it is this very distinction that leads some to believe that being a missionary is more important than being a grocer or to assume that a CD found in a Christian bookstore is better or more true than one that’s not.

Scripture tells us that we were created in God’s image and that He called His creation good. If we take these words seriously, we must believe that every aspect of human life is pleasing to God (except for sin). He created us to experience life in all its rich fullness—to talk with one another and with Him, to fall in love and work with our hands, to develop friendships and use our minds, to sing and laugh and cry. If we live as though only a small portion of our existence is spiritual and important, we deny the full humanity in which God created us and we disagree with the Creator who called His handiwork good.

The best poets are able to express in words the very essence of what it means to be fully human. The point is not to

distinguish between Christian and non-Christian poets by their use of certain Christian words or themes, but by their truthfulness, their accurate portrayal of what it means to be human.

Bruce Cockburn is a poet of great skill and creativity, who told David Batstone, in a September 1994 *Sojourners* interview: “It makes no difference whether I write a love song or tell a story about being in a refugee camp. For me it comes from the same place. I just want to touch people. It’s a passing on of my understanding of reality, trying to put it into a form that is interesting and entertaining to somebody else.”

Whether his subject is politics, God, despair, or sex, Cockburn is a master of truthfully portraying all aspects of humanity. In “Pacing the Cage” (on his album *The Charity of Night*), Cockburn sings of depression—something that even the most faithful Christians can experience in a fallen world.

*Sometimes you feel like you've lived too long  
Days drip slowly on the page...  
Sometimes the best map will not guide you  
You can't see what's round the bend  
Sometimes the road leads through dark places  
Sometimes the darkness is your friend*



# About Poets

But he doesn't end there. For those of us who know God, there is a glimmer of hope even in our darkest hours:

*Today these eyes scan bleached-out land  
For the coming of the outbound stage*

On the same album, Cockburn laments the damage done to humans by humans in "The Mines of Mozambique:"

*There's a wealth of amputation  
Waiting in the ground  
But no one can remember  
Where they put it down  
If you're the child who finds it there  
You will rise upon the sound  
Of the mines of Mozambique*

In his newest album, *Breakfast in New Orleans Dinner in Timbuktu*, Cockburn continues to address a plethora of issues. You'll find friendship in "Isn't That What Friends are For?"

*Love's supposed to heal, but it  
Breaks my heart to feel  
The pain in your voice -  
But you know, it's all going  
Somewhere  
And I would crush my heart and  
Throw it in the street  
If I could pay for your choice  
Isn't that what friends are for?*

"Let the Bad Air Out" has an angry undertone over the failure and hypocrisy of politics:

*Traitors in high places take my  
Money, tell me lies  
Take a walk past parliament, it  
Smells like something died  
They ask for trust, but some-  
How I've got serious doubts  
Open up the window, let the  
Bad air out*

Often, Cockburn juxtaposes the profound with the ordinary—of drinking champagne while pondering what he would do on the last night of the world ("Last Night of the World"):

*I learned as a child not to  
Trust in my body  
I've carried that burden  
Through my life  
But there's a day when we all  
Have to be pried loose*

*I've seen the flame of hope  
Among the hopeless  
And that was truly the biggest  
Heartbreak of all  
That was the straw that broke  
Me open*

*If this were the last night of  
The world  
What would I do?  
What would I do that was  
Different  
Unless it was champagne  
With you?*

Perhaps you can understand why Bruce Cockburn is something of a mystery to the Christian community. He doesn't use his music to "evangelize" and this leads some to devalue his songs and even his witness. But, like the poetry found in the Psalms or the Song of Solomon, Cockburn's words resonate within our souls because we recognize our world and our own experience in what he says.

I often find myself wondering why this isn't good enough. After all, isn't this what we should all be doing? Living every moment before God, developing the skills He has given us, and trusting that we will someday witness "the coming of the outbound stage?" ■

-Marsena J. Konkle



by  
**Marsena  
Kongle**

## A Brief Discography:

*Breakfast in New Orleans Dinner in Timbuktu* (1999 Rykodisc)

*Charity of the Night* (1997 Rykodisc)

*Dart to the Heart* (1994 Sony/Columbia)

*Humans* (1980 Sony/Columbia)

*Dancing in the Dragon's Jaws* (1979 Sony/Columbia)

# Cockburn & Persecution

[www.kingsfield.com/cockburn/index.htm](http://www.kingsfield.com/cockburn/index.htm)

## The Unofficial Bruce Cockburn Page

A labor of love by a Bruce Cockburn fan—everything you could possibly want to know about Cockburn is on this website.

### Ransom Ratings

#### Design:

The colors and fonts are a little obnoxious (as is the constant use of the word “stuff”), but the site is fairly well-organized and laid-out.

#### Content:

You'll find Cockburn's discography, biography, interviews, articles, concert information and links to other Cockburn sites on the internet. If you're interested in buying a CD, you can link directly to amazon.com or Rykodisc, Cockburn's record company.

#### Ease of Use:

Getting back and forth on the site is easy and doesn't take long, but the extensive archive of interviews and articles would be easier to navigate if they were broken into smaller sections by topic or date.

[www.persecutedchurch.org/home.dfm](http://www.persecutedchurch.org/home.dfm)

## The Persecuted Church

The cold war is over and we're living in a culture of increasing tolerance for spiritual beliefs, so it is hard to believe that people still suffer for their faith. But it happens every day to people across the world and this website helps us understand the real situation.

### Ransom Ratings

#### Design:

Simple, straight-forward design with poignant photos of believers who live where persecution is a reality.

#### Content:

Though not as detailed as it could be, this website gives information on specific instances of persecution along with ways we can be involved—either through prayer or through advocacy groups and letter writing. As important as the website itself are the additional resources for those who want to dig even deeper.

#### Ease of Use:

Easy to navigate, although the graphics may cause problems for those with slow modems.

Bruce Cockburn on the Web

International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church

The articles and resources reproduced or recommended in *Critique* do not necessarily reflect the thinking of Ransom Fellowship. The purpose of this newsletter is to encourage thought, not dictate points of view.

*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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