

E X P A N D E D E D I T I O N

critique

A RANSOM FELLOWSHIP PUBLICATION

ISSUES 2 & 3 2007

LOVE & PASTA

Recipes for long term
companionship

GLOBAL GROOVES

Introducing the ear to
a new world of flavors

GETTING 'B's FOR JESUS

And other myths of college life

IN THE BEGINNING

There was Bach

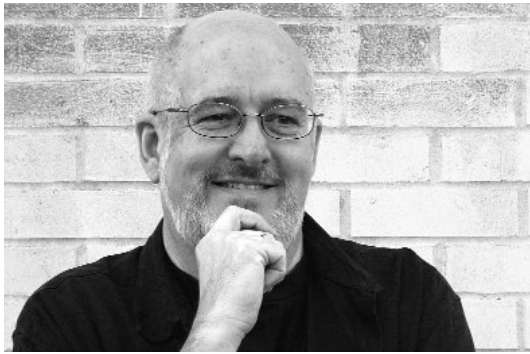
BEHIND THE SCENES

Of a *Grizzly* documentary

THE POSSIBILITY OF HOPE

A Review of the film & novel
Children of Men

Helping Christians Develop Skills In Discernment



Listening Before Writing

I have a new journal, creamy white lined pages in a black moleskin cover with an elastic band that holds it closed. A much appreciated gift, I've noticed this one on sale in bookstores as a replica of the notebooks used by famous authors. I can imagine Hemingway at an outdoor café in Europe, sipping espresso, and jotting down ideas in his.

Nothing has been written in mine yet. Actually I'm not certain when I will begin writing in it, though I've had it for months. Every time I think of beginning, I hesitate. I've finally figured out why. The reason is that mine is to be a prayer journal, and I've never kept a prayer journal before. I think it's entries should be of two types: what I say to my Father, and what I hear from him. It's the second part that is problematic. My hesitation in beginning is from a fear that the journal will fill up with what I say--but with precious little in the what I hear category.

It's not a problem of belief. I believe God speaks to his people in creation, providence, Scripture, and in Christ. The problem is not in his speaking but in my listening.

Quentin Schultz says we must be "God-listen-

accurately, I claim to believe them. If I really believed it--that the Almighty Creator and Judge is my Father who lovingly communicates in a way we can understand--if I believed that enough to stop just for a few minutes in order to listen with care, would I hesitate to begin using my prayer journal?

I am glad for the simple poem that is often attributed to W. H. Auden:

*I love to sin; God loves to forgive;
The world is admirably arranged.*

Which I think will be the first thing I'll write in my new prayer journal.

Sources:

Quentin Schultz in *Communicating for Life* (Baker Books; 2000) p. 19; W. H. Auden quoted in *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places* by Eugene Peterson (Erdmans Publishing; 2003) p. 43.

OF DATES AND ISSUES

Those of you keeping track of dates and the issue numbers on the cover of each *Critique* will have noticed that we are a bit behind. Changes in personnel, the redesigning of this publication, and writing and speaking deadlines of various sorts pushed our publishing schedule badly out of whack as the past six months unfolded. So, this year will see a series of expanded issues, like this one numbered #2 & #3 2007, which will help us get back on track. Hopefully, this will allow us to resume a regular schedule of sending you nine issues of 16 pages each over the course of the year in 2008.



ing communicators," but I find it easier to be the second rather than the first. Francis Schaeffer wrote a book entitled, *God is There & He is Not Silent* and I believe both propositions. Or more

critique

Issues 2 & 3 2007

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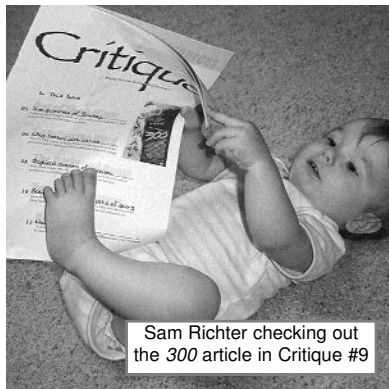
Books, movies and CDs of note

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Sam, Loss of Heroism, Bad Religion

To the editor:

Denis Haack's "Stylized Dreams of Heroism" [*Critique* #9-2006, a review of the movie *300*] reveals a tragic aspect to contemporary culture: there is a longing for heroic action without a worldview that makes it possible. Our consumer-driven hedonistic nihilism denies the heroic, because heroic action demands a sacrifice for something larger than oneself. When the self is supreme, meaningful sacrifice for others is gratuitous. With nothing to die for, one has nothing to live for. We live in a very different conceptual world from suicide bombers that attack the West and Spartan warriors who stood their ground at



Sam Richter checking out the 300 article in Critique #9

Thermopylae. We moderns may blanch at the blood and violence depicted on the screen, but there is something deep within our breasts that longs for a reality where self-sacrifice matters. The passion of Christ is more than history, it's mythic in that it reveals the deep nature of reality. There is a reason nations collapse when such values are depleted. There is a reason why many view the West as weak. Recently, a woman was stabbed in a department store. People took her picture with their cellphones as she lay bleeding on the floor. It was fifteen minutes before someone called 911. However shocking this story, it only serves to underscore that we live in a time when heroism is in marked decline.

David John Seel, Jr., Ph.D.
Walden Media

JOHN SEEL RESPONDS

Dear Mr. Edwards:

Thank you for correcting the lyrics of the song, "Sorrow," off Bad Religion's album, *Process of Belief*, quoted in my review article, "The Religious Good of Bad Religion." As you point out, the word is "herding" not "hurting." It was corrected on azlyric.com, where I got the lyrics originally, by a careful listener as well. The lyrics now read:

*Let me take you to the herding ground
Where all good men are trampled down
Just to settle a bet that could not be won
Between a prideful father and his son*

*Will you guide me now for I can't see a rea-
son*

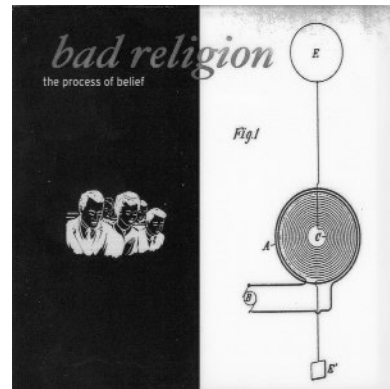
To the editor:

Hello, I'm writing in response to your online critique of Bad Religion.

I just thought I'd let you know that the lyrics to the song "Sorrow" [on their CD *The Process of Belief*] are "let me take you to the herding ground" not "hurting ground." Greg Graffin isn't talking about being hurt by his parents divorce. The "Father" he is referring to is a simile reference to [the] idea of God being like our father. Also, Bad Religion makes certain assumptions in order to facilitate their philosophy--every philosophy of life must assume certain truths. It's like how you would assume you have a personal relationship with God. You could call that faith, but it's still not proven. It's also a lot like assuming that children who grow up fatherless are prone toward atheistic belief. That is ignorant to say the least. Of course, you did read it in a book, but that doesn't make it truth. Observing the fallacy in another set of beliefs doesn't make your set of beliefs any more valid.

The "About Us" section of your web site claims that we're living in a post-Christian world. Consider for a moment who the current president is and which God we fight our wars in the name of. You're living, very much, in a Christian state.

Jonathan Edwards
via email



*For the suffering and this long misery
What if every living soul could be upright
and strong?*

When then I do imagine

*There will be sorrow
Yeah there will be sorrow
And there will be sorrow no more*

Rather than a lament over his parents' divorce, it appears that Graffin is raising the perennial question about God's alleged complicity with evil. This is a common question raised against Christian belief. Materialism, Mr. Graffin's worldview, tends to solve this problem by denying its reality. The problem of evil for the postmodernist is whether evil exists, not why it exists.

You are correct to note that every philosophy or worldview assumes cer-

tain starting presuppositions. These are variously conceived as common sense, intuition, or faith. "Faith," in this sense, is not unique to religious worldviews, but the foundation of all human knowing. To paraphrase Pascal, "There is more to knowing than knowing will ever know." There is certainly more to knowing than science can prove...even for science itself.

However, knowledge of God existence is not merely based on such assumed knowledge. There are good reasons to acknowledge God's existence as many ancient and contemporary thinkers have discovered. Yet, the analytical tools that work best on physical and visible realities are not the best ones to use in analyzing personal and invisible realities. The scientific method is powerful and useful,

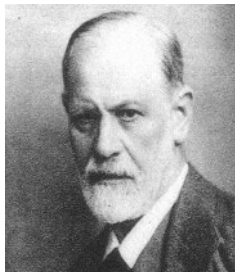
but it is not the only way of knowing. Nobel Prize winning physicist Erwin Schrödinger, the co-architect of quantum theory, wrote, "[Science] is ghastly silent about all and sundry that is really near to our heart; that really matters to us. It cannot tell us a word about red and blue, bitter and sweet, physical pain and physical delight, knows nothing of beautiful and ugly, good or bad, God and eternity. Science sometimes pretends to answer questions in these domains, but the answers are very often so silly that we are not inclined to take them seriously."

It was Freud who first proposed the notion that there is an intimate connection between the father complex and belief in God. New York University psychologist Paul Vitz in his book, *Faith of the Fatherless: The Psychology of Atheism*, explores this idea through a series of case studies of widely known atheists and, at the very least, discovers a pattern of weak or absent fathers in every case. While correlation does not prove causation, his book does counter the oft-cited assumption of psychoanalysis that goes the other way.

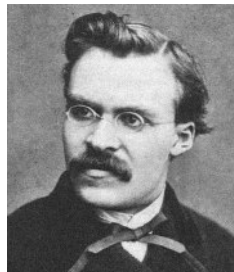
There are many reasons people come to their beliefs and it would be reductionistic and even rude to assume that psychology holds all the explanations. It is a fruitful exercise to turn the "sociology of knowledge" or the "hermeneutic of suspicion" back on



Schrödinger



Freud



Nietzsche

one's own beliefs from time to time. One rarely stops to reflect on one's basic assumptions--theistic, atheistic, or otherwise. There are three times such reflection is most commonly observed: during adolescence, at midlife, and when we are faced with a life threatening disease. See Eugene O'Kelly's *Chasing the Light: How My Forthcoming Death Transformed My Life*. If Socrates is correct in stating that "The unexamined life is not worth living," then in a world increasingly filled with diversion and indifference, such self-reflection is long overdue. It is for this and other reasons that Bad Religion's music has such a positive role to play particularly for Christian believers. There are many reasons why people come to religious belief, but there is only one sufficient reason: that it is true. Thus of all believers, religious or nonreligious, Christians should be known as passionate and non-defensive seekers of truth. Often they are not, to their own shame.

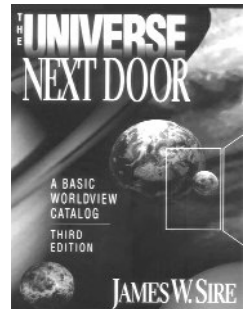
Princeton philosopher Walter Kaufmann was in his day the leading interpreter of Nietzsche. In his book, *Faith of a Heretic*, he challenges Christian believers to take the truth of their beliefs more seriously. "Heresy is 'an official offense against Christianity consisting in a denial of some of its essential doctrines, publicly avowed, and obstinately maintained,'" he writes. "What keeps most men in 'Christian' countries from being heretics in this sense is that they do not publicly avow their disbelief: it is better taste to be casual about lost beliefs, and a note of wistfulness generally ensures forgiveness. Obstinacy is rare. Millions do not even know that they deny essential Christian doctrines: they have never bothered to find out what the essential doctrines are. In extenuation they may even plead that

the evasiveness and the multiplicity of churches create a difficulty; but to be deterred by this when one's eternal destiny is said to be at stake bespeaks a glaring lack of seriousness."

You are exactly right in pointing out that "Observing the fallacy in another set of beliefs doesn't make your set of beliefs any more valid." A fallacy in one is not proof in another. There are four necessary stages in coming to mature belief--whatever its content. First, one must sense a need for an answer, which involves questioning one's currently held and frequently unconscious beliefs. Second, one must acknowledge an alternative as a possible answer. Third, one must determine whether that alternative is in fact true--whether it fits objective reality as well as one's own lived reality. Here thinkers have suggested that one should examine whether the belief or worldview is consistent (without contradictions), coherent (hangs together as a whole), comprehensive (addresses all types of data), and complete (existentially satisfying). You might want to read James Sire's book, *The Universe Next Door: A Worldview Catalog* for more on this aspect. Of course, if one doesn't care about truth or truthfulness, then any worldview is just as good as another. To take such a view is to deny the objective nature of truth, something that those concerned with scientific truth are often hesitant to abandon. Finally, one must accept the worldview as one's own and stake one's life upon it. Most persons are too lazy to engage in such careful reflection and careful thinking. Instead, they take the easy route accepting views that easily justify the ends they want--usually personal autonomy and sexual freedom. Boston College philosopher Peter Kreeft argues that the driving force of moral relativism in America seems to be almost exclusively sexual. He writes, "If reason doesn't rule passion, passion will rule reason, and then reason becomes rationalization." The existentialists call this sort of life commitment, "bad faith." You do not seem like the kind of person who is so facile in your beliefs and for this you are to be commended. We may disagree on our conclusions, but we should agree that we are each duty bound to be seekers of truth.

Certainly one of the tremendous services you, Greg Graffin, and other skeptics can play for those who follow the life and teachings of Jesus Christ is to question all forms of instrumental religion, religion that is being used as a means rather than an end. Certainly much of what is discussed as "religion" in the media is open to this criticism. Genuine Christianity should lead to humility rather than arrogance, love rather than hate, approachability rather than judgment, and justice rather than just us. This is not what we commonly see. Even though we have never met, let me encourage you in your search and thank you for helping to keep us real. Finally, let me encourage you to read a thoughtful email exchange between Preston Jones, a Christian history professor (and former rocker), and Greg Graffin of Bad Religion published in the book, *Is Belief in God Good, Bad, or Irrelevant?: A Professor and Punk Rocker Discuss Science, Religion, Naturalism & Christianity* (InterVarsity, 2006).

Warmly,
John Seel, Ph.D.



A Way of Loving

by Karen and Stephen Baldwin

In some people's thinking cuisine is ranked on the lower end of the scale of "the arts"--five star restaurants notwithstanding.

Unlike other disciplines, cooking is something that virtually anyone can do at some level, although to do it well requires learning and practice; to do it extremely well in the marketplace requires disciplined training and years of grueling work. Rather than an apology for cuisine as art, what follows is a redemptive-artistic reflection on food and cooking.

A LOST GRACE

When our three children were in their mid- to late- teens, we were living in Colorado in a modernist-style home that was often full of their friends. One afternoon the family room was alive with laughter, music, and the passionate voices of high school students rising through the stairway into the kitchen. I was beginning to think about dinner, which I don't plan days in advance unless it's a special occasion. It was late summer, so school had just started and homework was easy to put off--of course everyone would stay for dinner.

To satisfy the hungry crowd I decided the menu was to be pasta for twelve, a big salad, and lots of garlic bread. Some of Rachel's friends wandered into the kitchen as I was making the bread dough. Stephen was putting together the ingredients for the pasta. When they saw that the bread, the pasta and the sauce were not coming out of pre-packaged boxes and bottles, but were all being made from raw ingredients, they seemed almost disoriented. At the same time they were enticed by the sharp-sweet scent of garlic, tomatoes, and herbs

in hot extra-virgin olive oil. A mound of flour sat on the work-top ready to be transformed into pasta dough. The smells, and the time of day drew them into the kitchen in the first place, but the novelty of seeing food prepared from scratch can only be explained by the fact that the busyness in our culture is turning home cooking into a lost art.

With his usual enthusiasm, Stephen invited the spectators to help, showing them how to mix up pasta dough. David, our son, stepped in to take over rolling out and cutting the dough into fettuccine through the hand-cranked pasta machine. He was eager to show how fun and easy it was. Making pasta is simple but artistically impressive. In a few short minutes one goes from having a pile of flour, eggs, and olive oil to long smooth strands of fresh pasta hanging on drying racks to keep it from sticking together, ready for the pot of boiling water. From their reactions you would have thought we were performing magic. We were doing what we ordinarily do.

Before long the bread was baking in the oven releasing its warm, yeasty aroma. The

sauce was simmering on the stove top, and the lettuce was washed, drained and torn bite-sized. All that remained was to whisk up a fresh salad dressing and set the table. I never hesitate to put everyone to work, so I asked a couple of the girls to take on that job. We gathered up the cutlery, plates, napkins and glasses and headed to the dining room where I left them to it. After a few minutes I went back to check on the girls' progress and discovered neither had a clue how to set a table properly. All the cutlery was in the wrong place and the napkins on the wrong side. I was surprised that what seemed elementary to me was something that had never been taught in their homes. Using the occasion to teach the basics of table-setting, I spoke up. "The plate goes in front of the chair; the napkin goes on the left of the plate, folded; the salad and dinner forks go on top of it. The salad fork goes on the outside since salad is eaten first, and then nearest the plate is the dinner fork. On the other side of the plate the spoon goes on the outside since the soup or pasta course come before the main course, so nearest the plate goes your knife. The water glass goes



on the person's right hand, and the salad plate goes on their left." I told them that how a table is set not only communicates aesthetically, it also tells a story if you know the signals: if a spoon or fork is at the top of the plate it says, "there's dessert." They got it right and seemed happy to learn how to do set the stage for an act in which they would soon be among the players.

I was surprised that what seemed elementary to me was something that had never been taught in their homes.

Over the next several years similar scenes often played out in our home. I marveled at how little these orphans of success knew about preparing food, creating an inviting table setting, or how to use knives, forks and spoons. It is sad how foreign it is to sit unhurriedly, to eat lovingly crafted food attentively, and to have a meaningful, personal conversation during the meal. What we considered to be the usual way for families to connect was exceedingly rare. Many of our younger friends ate alone, at no particular time, and usually in front of the television. When we offer food thoughtfully and with respect, caring for and honoring those present at our table, it creates an atmosphere where sharing, laughing, and relating happens naturally. Offering our hospitality is a medium of grace that opens hearts to deeper things. It is a simple way of loving.

So, how can you begin to develop the confidence to plan and prepare a meal for the people God brings into your life? Start simply. If the weather is cold, make a simple soup. Add a grilled cheese sandwich or put together two or three cheeses on a cutting board with crackers or sliced baguette. Plan ahead how to serve your soup and

sandwich or cheese. Clear the clutter from the table and set it with the necessary cutlery and napkins. Use a casual tablecloth. Don't try to be fancy or presumptuous—that is not what you are looking for. You are creating a space that is warm and inviting: a place that feels safe for a person who needs safety in relationship. Warm the soup bowls and plates if you are serving something hot. Place the cheese, unwrapped, around the cutting board with knives for cutting the cheeses, and let the cheese come to room temperature. Put your bread or crackers in a basket lined with a napkin, or on a platter. Maybe cut up an apple, or a pear, or place some grapes on another plate. This is so simple and yet so appealing to a friend.

At the table set a tone that says, "this is a place to linger." Ask those at your table about their day, or what are they reading. Listen for clues to what makes them laugh, or makes them angry or frustrated. Nothing gets a conversation going like showing interest in someone and being willing to listen. If you have a friend who won't open up, you can talk about your day and what you are reading. As you talk you will be demonstrating how to have a meaningful conversation around a table without the distractions that usually hold our attention and keep us from touching each other's lives. Obviously (or maybe not in our day) in place of the television, turn on pleasant music (at a non-

intrusive volume). The focus of this art of the table is more than the food: it is the restoration of your soul and the souls of those who join you at your table.

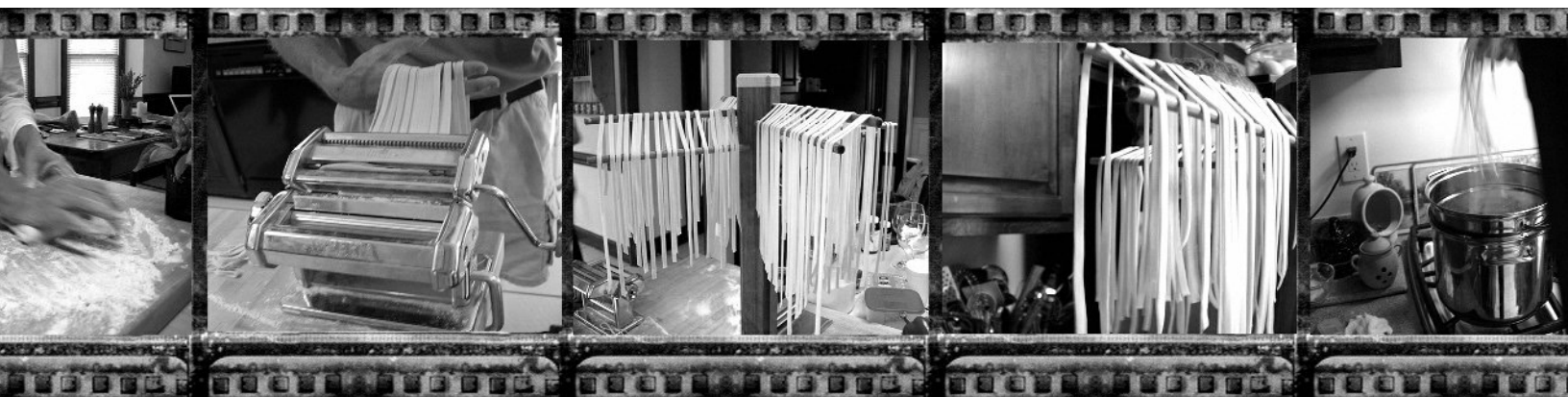
REFLECTIONS

Theologian Meredith Kline has observed that the Sabbath was "a celebration of a completed divine work." This is highly suggestive to us: when we sit down to a meal having just completed the work of preparation, we then enter into a celebration-rest together at the table where there is both food to nourish our bodies and fellowship to revive our souls. In this way every meal is a still life, in real time and space, of the convergence of God's creative and redemptive acts, even if this is not overtly explained with words in a blessing or a conversation. The complex array of tastes, colors, textures, and smells in which we participate around the table rise out of the wisdom, wonder and variety of God's creative acts.

...when we sit down to a meal having just completed the work of preparation, we then enter into a celebration-rest together at the table ...

The table fellowship is a foretaste of full redemption when Christ's finished work culminates in the wedding feast of the Lamb, at which we will sit and enjoy the finest of friends, good aged wine and the best of foods. Friends of food recognize Isaiah 25 as a notable description of the feast of redemption, where, as in *Babette's Feast*, earthly scruples will be swallowed up, utterly outstripped by God's lavish display of love and artistry for his children.

Assuming that our table is seated with friends we've made who may not share our deepest convictions, these ideas may not.





make sense to them. It may take several times sitting at table together before our friends respect and trust us enough to ask questions. Or for us to have a chance to explain. However, we have never felt timid about raising a glass of wine or lifting up the plate, and with simple gratitude and joy, extolling the Creator, who celebrated his creative power and genius by resting and blessing his handiwork, and who invites us to come and eat of the bread of life that he gives. And we don't recall any expectant mother or anxious student decline our request to pray for them as we pray before a meal. Our experience as we have cooked together and learned about food have also brought an increasing sense of awe and wonder in the Creator. For the nearly infinite diversity of his gifts of taste and smell, color and texture, combinations of which he has filled his world. All of it has moved our hearts and caused us to take delight in the simple sharing of food and table fellowship--a gift of God.

Steve has a stirring memory (no pun intended) of Karen cooking one day, entirely absorbed in her medium; all her senses engaged--the sight of food browning, the sound as its moisture content changed, smelling, tasting, and touching the food the way she always does. This day she mused quietly: "when I cook, it is worship."

Just so.

Basic Pasta Dough

2 1/2 to 3 cups flour
3 large eggs
1/2-teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil

Mound 1 1/2 cups of the flour in the center of a large wooden cutting board. Make a well in the middle of the flour and add the eggs and the olive oil. Using a fork, beat together the eggs and oil and begin to incorporate the flour, starting with the inner rim of the well.

As you expand the well, keep pushing the flour up from the base of the mound to retain the well shape. The dough will come together when half of the flour is incorporated.

Start kneading the dough with both hands, using the palms of your hands. Once you have a cohesive mass, remove the dough from the board and scrape up and discard any leftover bits. Lightly flour the board and continue kneading for 6 more minutes. The dough should be elastic and a little sticky. Wrap the dough in plastic and allow to rest for 30 minutes at room temperature. Roll or shape as desired.

Basic Tomato Sauce

1/4-cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 cloves garlic, peeled & sliced thin
2-inch sprig of fresh basil- stem and leaves
2 (28-ounce) cans peeled whole tomatoes
Salt & fresh ground pepper
Splash of balsamic vinegar
1 pat (1/2 tablespoon) butter

In a 3-quart saucepan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the garlic and cook until soft then add the basil. Next add the tomatoes and juice leaving the tomatoes whole for now season with salt and pepper. Let simmer for about 30 minutes. Now break up the tomatoes with a wood spoon add the balsamic vinegar and cook for 5 more minutes. Remove from the heat correct the seasonings and add torn fresh basil leaves and the pat of butter. Serve over fresh pasta with freshly grated Parmesan cheese.

Yield: 4 cups

Green Salad

Choose a mixture of lettuce of your choice or one of the mixtures available in most good grocery stores. Avoid lettuce sold in plastic bags, they are often not fresh and have picked up the smell of the plastic.

Vinaigrette

2 tablespoons of red wine vinegar
1/2-teaspoon honey
1/2-teaspoon grainy mustard
Salt & freshly ground pepper
5-6 tablespoons good quality olive oil

Wash and dry the salad leaves. Gently tear the lettuce into bite size pieces.

In a salad bowl, mix the vinegar, honey, salt & pepper together with a whisk. Next slowly whisk in the olive oil. Taste and correct the seasoning.

Place the lettuce gently on top of the dressing and toss just before serving.

Serves: 4

Karen and Stephen Baldwin live in Concord, North Carolina where Stephen is a teacher of the church, helping to plant a congregation that values people and art and where they pay tribute to good food as God's gift to man. Karen received her training at the Ballymaloe Cookery School, Shanagarry, County Cork, Ireland where an artistic community has sprung up and helped to inspire dozens of small, creative businesses that celebrate the land and sea and all that live there.

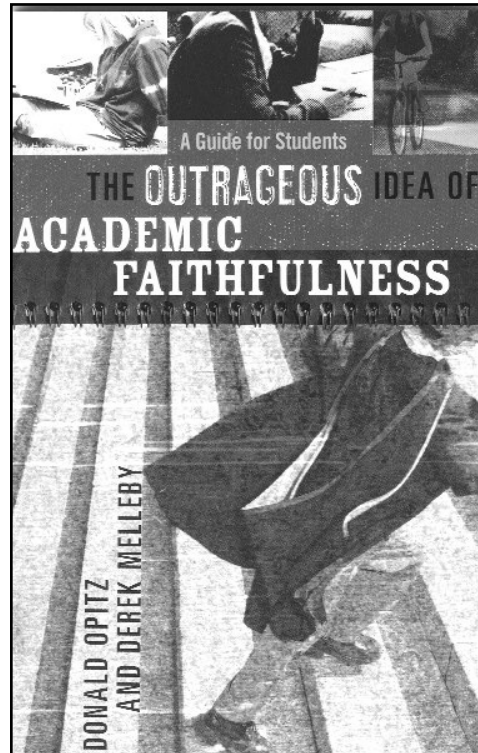
GETTING 'B'S FOR JESUS AND OTHER MYTHS OF COLLEGE LIFE

A Review of *The Outrageous Idea of Academic Faithfulness: A Guide for Students* by Donald Opitz and Derek Melleby (Brazos 2007)

It was a common view among the Christians who attended this prestigious Ivy League college that one should get "B's for Christ. Striving for an "A" was considered to be a mark of academic idolatry and a failure to put first things first. The notion is fraught with problems in spite of its apparent patina of piety. It undermines the validity of striving for academic excellence--doing one's best in everything. It undermines the validity of a student's calling to be a student. It undermines the importance of the mind and beliefs in the process of spiritual formation. Ivy League students are generally smart to start with. But this view disconnects a passion for studies with a passion for Jesus. It takes a half-truth--academics can be idolatry and grade grubbing can be a neurotic obsession--and turns it into a self-serving religious justification for academic sloth. Half-truths are a lie with a marketing campaign.

More and more high school seniors are going to college. Fewer and fewer have any idea why. Authors Donald Opitz and Derek Melleby write, "If you don't know why you're attending college there is a good chance that you will struggle and eventually lose your way." And many are, following blithely in the footsteps of Tom Wolfe's *Charlotte Simmons*. It is rarely the books and classes that undermine Christian students' faith--few take them that seriously--rather it is the pervasive ethic of fun, pleasure, and apathy. Nonbelieving students party and hook up. Christian students

play the game more moderately, but according to the same rules. Fun and relationships not ideas and calling pervade campus life.



There was a required freshman course at my college that was designed to undermine the faith of casual Christians. Students who registered for classes on the first day sporting "Young Life" T-shirts were

RESOURCE

www.academicfaithfulness.com

Here is a website which offers numerous resources such as bibliographies for undergraduates.

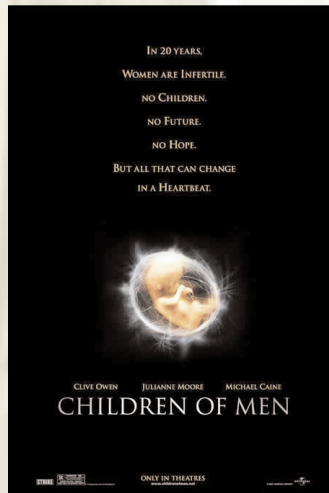
John is a cultural analyst and educational reformer currently serving as a viral marketing consultant to Walden Media. He and his wife, Kathryn, live in Cohasset, MA. He can

often sleeping with their girlfriends by the end of the first semester. A number of Christian students decided to do something about it. We created with the help of some seminary professors and our Inter-Varsity campus staff worker a parallel syllabus, which we put on reserve in the library. We held study groups, promising students good grades if they participated. We were determined to double study, to out think the ideas and issues being raised in this class. Bit by bit it made a difference. Christians gained a reputation for academic seriousness. One day out of the blue, a notorious campus playboy and fellow philosophy major called me up wanting to discuss Christ. I thought he was just playing games with me. But he was serious. His routine of alcohol and sex had run its inevitable course.

Opitz and Melleby have written a book that is long overdue. Here is a plea for students to take their academic pursuits as part of their faithfulness to Christ. It is the practical sequel to Steve Garber's *The Fabric of Faithfulness*. The book provides a map of what it means "to take every thought captive to Christ"--in their own words, a "fitness campaign for the Christian mind." It is a book that pastors, youth leaders, and parents should place in the hands of every starting college freshman. I'm sending a copy to my nephew. The next step is getting them to actually read it. If they do, they will be exposed to a vision of college life beyond their wildest dreams.

THE POSSIBILITY OF HOPE

A review of the film and novel *Children of Men*



Credits

Starring:

Clive Owen (Theo Faron)
Julianne Moore (Julian Taylor)
Michael Caine (Jasper Palmer)
Claire-Hope Ashitey (Kee)
Chiwetel Ejiofor (Luke)
Pam Ferris (Miriam)

Director: Alfonso Cuarón
Screenplay: Alfonso Cuarón,
Timothy J. Sexton, David Arata,
Mark Fergus & Hawk Ostby;
Novel: P.D. James
Producers: Armyan Bernstein;
Thomas Bliss
Original Music: John Tavener
Cinematographer: Emmanuel Lubezki

Runtime: 109 minutes
Release: USA; 2006
Rated R (for strong violence,
language, some drug use and
brief nudity)

There is something precious about the birth of a child. An event of wonder and promise, it engenders hope. That much is agreed; what is up for debate is the meaning of hope.

Naturalists argue that hope is actually ephemeral. It's an ultimately meaningless chemical interaction that evolved over millennia in response to life managing, against all odds, to continue in a dangerous universe. Postmoderns point out that human life is impossible without hope. We don't just exist, we live by planning for tomorrow. In this view the stories we tell to buttress our hopes are necessary fictions. They shouldn't be dismissed, though they can't be fully believed, either. Hoping in tomorrow is necessary and right, but seen for what it is, tomorrow is like a ship forever drifting on the ever changing sea of time. The wonder, in both these views, is that we hope at all, and that it sustains us through generations.

The ancient narrative of Scripture provides a more satisfying explanation, rooted in the promise of God. Things are not as they should be, and our first parents saw the fabric of life and creation rip ruinously when they decided that living by God's word was too confining. Too late to undo what they had done and unable to mend the break, hope was born in a gracious promise of God. One would be born, the Creator said, who would embrace the horror, be broken, and overcome it. So hope linked to birth was born, and the sons of Adam and daughters of Eve have sensed it ever since, in every generation.

Now imagine a world in which no babies are born. None. A global search is undertaken but all the efforts of science and government are unavailing. Infertility reigns. No babies. What is discovered is the identity of the last child born. Just a child, but suddenly the world's attention is on them. They are like a signal, a living sign that the end is near.

British novelist P. D. James imagined such a time and asked, what would life be like in such a world? The death of hope is devastating and

so the story of such a time will likely reveal some of the worst that is found in humankind. This world without babies, without hope, is the story James tells in the novel, *The Children of Men*. Set in the near future, the world seems to be adrift, with anarchy threatening, strange cults and groups forming, revolutionaries gathering, for those in despair an approved program of euthanasia, and governments that use ever more force in a vain attempt to restrain the inevitable decay. Then, what if, James proposes in *Children*, what if a woman turns up pregnant? And what if a man, a passive academic, is drawn into a plot to help a revolutionary group keep this young woman and her precious baby out of the clutches of an ever more authoritative, untrustworthy State?

The Children of Men is a well-crafted novel, a compelling story that uses not cheap thrills but the deepest questions of life to highlight both tension and grace in a deeply broken world.

In 2006, the Mexican film director, Alfonso Cuarón, adapted P. D. James' story for the screen. More accurately, Cuarón took James'



basic idea and developed his own story based on it. The story of the film is a metaphor for issues we find ourselves inexplicably entangled in today. "Infertility is but a metaphor" a film critic in the *Village Voice* wrote, "that enables *Children of Men* to entertain the possibility of No Future. The only parents these days who assume their children will inhabit a better world are either those living in the gated communities of the super-rich or the immigrants imported to tend their gardens. That these 'fugees are visu

alized as the persecuted rabble of a crumbling empire is only one of this movie's inconvenient truths." Kenneth Turan in the *Los Angeles Times* says *Children of Men* is the *Blade Runner* for the 21st century.



"Perhaps most delicate of all is the way director Cuarón has made *Children of Men* comment on the problems society faces today, crises involving racism, terrorism, decaying infrastructure, threatened environment, government-inspired paranoia and more. This is a world of rubble, fear and hopelessness whose connections to our own are never forced; Cuarón is such a fluid director with such a powerful imagination, they don't have to be. This could well be our future, and we know it."

Though Cuarón's *Children of Men* is different from the novel, the film is worth watching. The musical score by John Tavener, superb acting, the intricately crafted sets and backgrounds, and the strikingly filmed action scenes bring the story alive in startling ways. Even the differences between the novel and the film are worth discussion.

SOURCES

Village Voice Online
(http://www.villagevoice.com/film/0651_hobeman_75337_20.html);

LA Times Online (http://www.calendarlive.com/printedition/calendar/cletchildren22dec22_0_1800835.story)

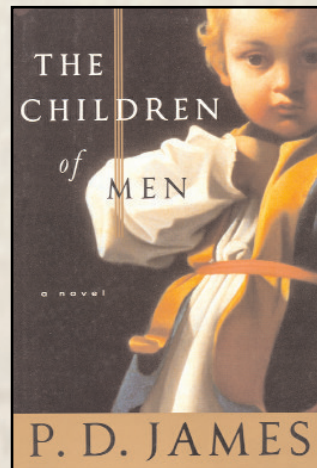
P. D. James quote online (<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/28/movies/28men.html?ex=1324962000&en=bc5565519588066a&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss>)

Time to Be Earnest: a fragment of autobiography by P. D. James (1999) p. 199;

Cuarón interview online (http://www.moviefreak.com/artman/publish/interviews_alfonsocuaron.shtml)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What was your first reaction to the film? To the novel? Why did you respond the way you did?
2. What are the strengths of the film? What are the strengths of the novel?
3. In what ways were the techniques of film-making (casting, direction, lighting, script, music, sets and backgrounds, action, cinematography, editing, etc.) used to get the film's message(s) across, or to make the message plausible or compelling? In what ways were they ineffective or misused?
4. Identify and describe, as objectively as possible, each of the main characters in the story. What is their role and significance? With whom do you identify? With whom are we meant to identify? How do you know? Is there any significance to their names?
5. Are there any clear heroes in the film? In the novel? What makes them heroic?
6. Are there any villains? What makes them so? Did you sympathize with any of these characters? If so, how was the author able to arouse your sympathy?
7. To what extent do you agree that Cuarón's *Children of Men* uses infertility to comment on the world of today? What headlines and issues do you think the film addresses? Do you think James' novel does the same thing? Why or why not? In an interview Cuarón said of the film: "It's not about the future—I don't care about the future. The whole intent of the movie was to make an adventure that goes through the state of things, what I consider to be the state of things today." Discuss.
8. One of the features on the DVD of *Children of Men* has a philosopher reflecting on the meaning of the film. As objectively as possible, restate his position in your own words. Discuss.
9. P. D. James is a Christian. To what extent, and in what ways, is her Christian faith and world view reflected in the novel? In the film? Compare and contrast, taking care to treat each work with integrity, the perspectives of Cuarón and James as reflected in their art.



10. Stories, whether told in a movie or a novel are only as captivating as they are plausible. To what extent did you find the film plausible? The novel?
11. If a sympathetic but unobtrusive stranger followed you around for an entire month, would they conclude you are optimistic, or pessimistic, or hopeful? Which do you think you are? Why? What would this stranger point to as concrete evidence for their conclusion?
12. How is humor used in the unfolding of the story in the film? In the novel?
13. In an interview P.D. James has referred to her novel as a "Christian fable." Do you see her novel that way? To what extent is this reflected in the film?
14. When her novel was published, author P. D. James commented: "The detective novel affirms our belief in a rational universe because, at the end, the mystery is solved. In *The Children of Men* there is no such comforting resolution." Did you read the ending of the book that way?
15. In her autobiography, James says that *The Children of Men* is the only book of hers (she primarily writes wonderfully plotted detective novels) that has failed to sell enough copies to earn back what her publisher paid her in advance. A "depressing and somewhat demeaning thought," James adds, though she also notes that "it has produced more correspondence... than any other novel I have written." Why do you think this might be?
16. What specific scenes in the novel, in the film, stand out as particularly impressive? What makes them so?
17. "I believe that if there is hope," Cuarón has stated, "and it is hope that comes from a standpoint of a very realistic position, than hope can be a very important springboard for transformation. But only if it comes from a very realistic standpoint in the sense that first you must accept the reality in which we are living; really accepting it, not being in this constant state of denial." Do you agree? Why or why not? Is your hope rooted in this sort of realism? How do you know?

Listening to Music from Across the Globe



What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of "world music" ? Pygmies in Africa pounding on animal skins? Mariachi bands during Cinco de Mayo? The background music at your favorite Indian restaurant?

You have probably heard global rhythms on main stream radio waves where Latin, African and Caribbean grooves frequently intertwine with pop vocals and heavy guitars. Artists from Madonna to the Black Eyed Peas to P.O.D. draw from a global spice cupboard to add flare to their music. This isn't a new phenomenon; rock greats Paul Simon, Peter Gabriel, David Byrne and Sting have tapped global grooves and leading world musicians for their recordings for quite some time now.

Listening to music from other cultures and other continents serves to open one's ears to new "flavors" of sound. The flavor metaphor works well as you can liken ethnic music to ethnic food with its variety of spices and variations. Also, like food, some global sounds grow on you quickly, while others are an acquired taste.

Why listen to music from other cultures?

First, it's a God thing. God created all people in His image. God also blesses each person with a unique voice and with languages which can be used in song.

Second, music is used to communicate messages to an audience. These messages may address religion, family, community, politics, or any number of topics.

And last, by opening up our souls to the rich palette of global musical styles we also find ourselves open to the stories of people who live very different from us. And by opening our ears, we in turn open our eyes, hearts and minds to what is going on in the world around us.

World Music Listening Party

Draw from your own collection; check out music from the library; download MP3 files from the internet; purchase compilation CDs from your favorite local music shop, then:

Invite friends over and play a few of your favorite World Music tracks.

Ask your guests what they think of the music. If you get a positive reaction: play more in that genre. If you get a negative reaction: ask what they don't like about the sound.

When you get a chance, point out the many popular artists who draw from World Music influences: Paul Simon, Sting, Peter Gabriel, David Byrne and so on. If your friends are still not impressed don't push the issue—try again at another time. If your friends enjoy the music, recommend CDs to them, loan them some of yours and turn them onto resources to learn more.

Tips:

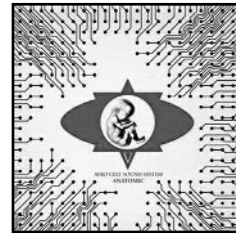
1. Don't force your opinions and be respectful of others.
2. Be wary of too much of a good thing—don't overload your audience.

Add additional spice to your party by requesting that your guests bring food inspired by other cultures.

*This idea inspired by: <http://www.insideworldmusic.com/library/howto/htfriend.htm>

Getting Started On A World Music Quest

I'd recommend a visit to the websites of some of the key world music labels:



Putumayo World Music www.putumayo.com

Real World www.realworld.co.uk

Six Degrees www.sixdegreesrecords.com

Luaka Bop www.luakabop.com

Crammed Disc www.crammed.be

Rough Guides www2.worldmusic.net

Smithsonian Folkways www.folkways.si.edu

Magnatune www.magnatune.com

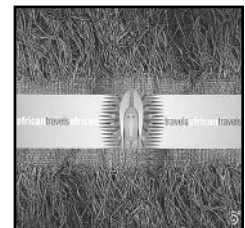


Many of these sites have jukeboxes, radio stations or sample tracks (full or :30 samples). You can also find recordings from many of these labels at your favorite music store.

I would use listening stations to sample various CDs.

World Music compilations can be a good place to sample different musical styles and see what you like. These releases are often compiled by geography. Many of the labels above have created compilations that you will find at local record and book stores or online. You can start your own World Music library by

purchasing some sampler CDs that feature artists you like. Your local library is another place where you can sample world music. Once you have amassed some music you like host a *World Music Listening Party*.



Listening Room: Five Fresh Global Recordings

How does one go about picking five fresh recordings that best speak to the contemporary global music scene? That is a good question, and one I faced preparing to write this review. After scanning the pages of *Global Rhythm* magazine and surfing through tracks on some of my favorite world music sites, I was ready to head out CD shopping. Ironically, only one of my purchases was even slightly premeditated; the other four were all complete surprises based on what I could sample using the headsets at the CD browsing racks in the store.

What I walked out with were five CDs featuring various African, Arabic and Latin artists. Common to all of these releases were topics they sing about: politics, faith, community and family. Three of the recordings (Spanish Harlem Orchestra, Vusi Mahlasela, Zap Mama) feature guest performances from well-known American pop stars such as Paul Simon, Dave Matthews and Michael Franti. Two of the releases (Tcheka, Tinariwen) were very pure and very unique in their sounds and musical textures. I highly recommend all five of these releases to you. They are all widely distributed and should be available at your favorite CD shop.

EXERCISE

Pick one of the CDs reviewed.

Listen to just the music. What mood does it evoke?

Listen to the lyrics closely. Are they in English? If not, is there a translation or description available in the liner notes? What is being addressed? Religion, politics, family or culture at large?

What strikes you most about this recording?

Wait a day and listen to the recording again.

Have any of your attitudes, perceptions, observations changed since the day before?

Brussels

Zap Mama: *Supermoon* (2007, Heads Up)



With *Supermoon* Zap Mama has moved from a female a cappella group to solo offering from vocalist Marie Dauline. This is a splendid recording in which some of world's finest musicians join together to fuse African, Caribbean and Funk rhythms under the layers of vocal harmonies from Dauline. If you like what you hear with *Supermoon* I recommend that you track back to earlier Zap Mama releases like the hip-hop/reggae-laced *Amazon* (1999) to the fully a cappella *Adventures in Afropea* (1993)

Mali

Tinariwen: Aman Iman: *Water is Life* (2007, Harmonia Mundi/World Village)



"In a Touareg tent in a dusty desert town of Kidal, northeastern Mali, a stick-thin ragged man with a loose afro took a turn on a cheap electric guitar plugged into a battery powered amp." This recording is amazing. It is raw. It is real. It is rock and roll. And yet...it is not. What happens when Western instruments end up in the hands of those living in the desert who are familiar with traditional instruments and African and Arabic rhythms. That is Tinariwen. It is organic, original, worldly and magical.

South Africa

Vusi Mahlasela: *Guiding Star* (2007, Ato Records)



Songs in Zulu, Sotho and English speak to stark realities. Mahlasela is joined by friends like Dave Matthews, Ladysmith Black Mambazo and others. Lyrics are packed with power. The "Song for Thandi" speaks of a young woman who is terrorized and handed a gun for the purpose of killing herself: "She picked up the gun. Metal was against her head. Telling herself she'd be better off dead. When suddenly...She felt a baby kicking inside. It was good to be alive." You must hear the whole song for the full impact. I was moved by many of these songs.

New York

Spanish Harlem Orchestra: *United We Swing* (2007, Six Degrees)



Picture yourself on the streets in Harlem. Black, brown and white skin intermingling. Dancing to the killer Latin rhythms of the Spanish Harlem Orchestra. Okay. So maybe you're in your kitchen in Iowa, or living room in Colorado, or sun room in Saint Louis. This music WILL make you get up and dance. I recommend having someone around to dance with you when you pop this on the CD player.

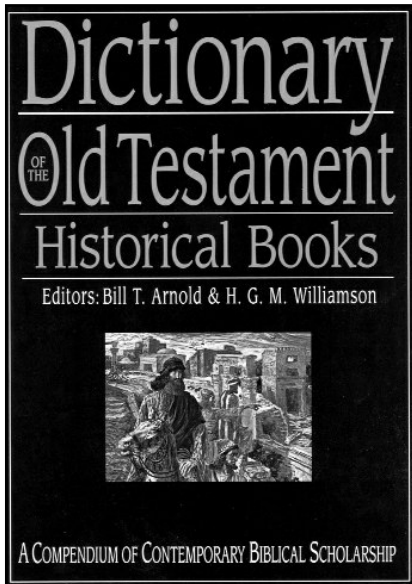
Cape Verde

Tcheka: *Nu Monda* (2007, Times Square/Four Quarters)



This music will stir your soul. This is deeply personal and deeply spiritual music. Tcheka has a unique approach to guitar that is both percussive and melodic. Behind him is an additional guitar, bass and percussion. The copy I picked up had an accompanying DVD with an 80 minute concert video. Watching Tcheka perform live gives you a sense of the joy that emanates from his person. It is with sincerity, love and deep passion that he delivers his lyrics and interacts with his fellow instrumentalists.

I recommend each of these recordings to you. Vusi Mahlasela and Tcheka are very accessible points of entry into the world music scene. If you like Angelique Kidjo or Bjork you will like Zap Mama. If you like Latin flavored beats, then the Spanish Harlem Orchestra is a must (this will make you want to dance). Lastly, Tinariwen falls somewhere amidst the realms of 70's funk, punk and reggae with an infusion of Arabic sensibilities. This is truly unique music and yet very easy on the ears.

**BOOK RECOMMENDED**

Dictionary of the Old Testament Historical Books: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship

Edited by Bill T. Arnold and H. G. M. Williamson
(Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press; 2005)
1025 pp. + indices.

It's biblical... ...but is it history?

The history books of the Hebrew Old Testament are full of amazing stories, full of conquest, warfare and violence, intrigue and sex, godly reformers and wicked despots, prophets and royalty, freedom and enslavement. Though clearly written from a theological perspective, these texts are just as clearly meant to be taken seriously as history. And that raises all sorts of fascinating questions for the Christian who wants to study them as part of God's revelation of himself in Scripture. What is the significance of these books to those of us who live so long after the events recorded in them occurred? To what extent are they true history? To what extent has the theological intention of the author(s) effected the historical accuracy? Is our

definition of "true history" identical to or different from the authors of these books? How can we keep track of all the places, people, and events, and how do they fit into a single chronology? Do the findings of historians and archaeologists confirm the statements recorded in the Bible? And when the findings of extra-biblical studies raise challenges, how should these be addressed?

A resource that will help you as you study the biblical books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah is the *Dictionary of the Old Testament Historical Books*. Not everyone needs to own a copy, but church libraries should be encouraged to stock one.

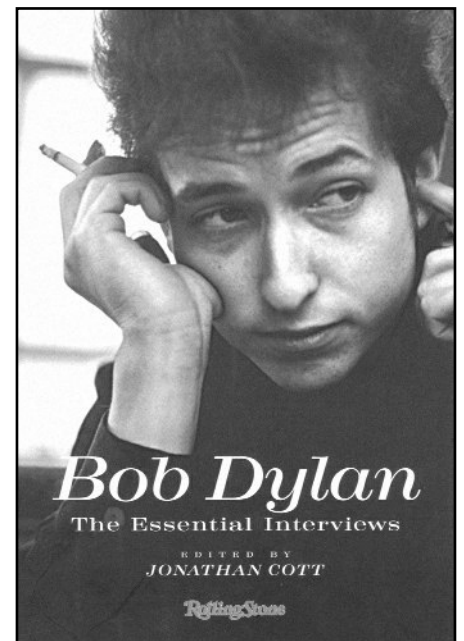
Dylan Talks (1962 to 2004)

The title of Jonathan Cott's book both sums up its content and identifies the people who should read it. *Bob Dylan: The Essential Interviews* includes 31 interviews of Dylan spanning five decades; it's for readers who understand how interviews with the musician are "essential."

Cott, a writer for *Rolling Stone* and *The New Yorker* and author of *Dylan* (a biography), knows something of Dylan's significance not just for popular music, but for the globalized culture which reaches far beyond the borders of the United States. In his song "Highlands" Dylan identifies something of the reality of our common

humanity, saying we are "prisoners in a world of mystery." A mystery of brokenness and grace that he has helped those with ears to hear live in with greater clarity and wonder.

"Now for me," Dylan said in 1991 describing composing music, "the environment to write the song is extremely important. The environment has to bring something out in me that wants to be brought out. It's a contemplative, reflective thing. Feelings really aren't my thing. See, I don't write lies."

**BOOK RECOMMENDED**

Bob Dylan: The Essential Interviews
Edited by Jonathan Cott
(New York, NY: Wenner Books; 2006)
445 pp.

IN THE BEGINNING... WAS BACH: A BACH PRIMER



The enormity of Bach's talent, standing, and output can put off those who might like to delve into his art. Where do we begin? We will have a brief look at his life, some salient musical categories and then end with some suggestions for reading, listening, and congregational use.

BACH: HIS LIFE

Bach (1685-1750) came from a working class family of musicians. His parents died when he was ten and his brother raised him. His gifts, coming from such a family, were not a surprise, although surely his genius was. He took up posts in Arnstadt, Muhlhausen, Weimar, Cothen, and finally Leipzig, where he spent the last 27 years of his life. His compositional gifts and as an organist and harpsichordist marked his work throughout his lifetime--although he was far better known as a performer than as a composer. Bach was also well respected as a tester of organs, often asked for his opinion of a new or refurbished instrument.

He was an orthodox Lutheran, with a pietistic bent. His religion was personal, as we can see by the autograph scores that are marked at the beginning "JJ" (meaning Jesus help!) and SDG at the end (for Soli Deo Gloria: to God alone be the praise.) We also see this clearly from his annotations in his copy of the Calov Bible.

One is staggered by what he accomplished as a musician, both as a performer and composer. In addition, he married twice (Bach's first wife died in 1720) and was the father of twenty children, eight of which survived infancy. He dealt with a great deal of frustration and grief in his life but enjoyed the riches of loving spouses and children, and the respect of fellow musicians.

BACH: HIS MUSIC

Bach's output was tremendous in all the expected areas save opera. For church use, we can narrow the list to the following areas: Liturgical/cantatas, motets, passions and masses. Even with this limitation the amount of music is enormous. Let's look at a few examples.

One of the near-perfect pieces of church music ever penned is Bach's "Magnificat." The song of Mary (Luke 1:46-55) was written for Christmas, 1723, to be performed at the Thomas Kirke in Leipzig. Scored for five soloists (two sopranos, alto, tenor, and bass), choir, and orchestra (with brilliant trumpets and tympani), the work (at roughly 35 minutes) is a great introduction to his music. Each of the Bible verses is scored in a fresh manner with an astonishing degree of vocal and instrumental color.

This is the first of a series of articles giving some insight and road maps to some of the great church music of the past and present. There seemed to be one obvious place to start which is not stylistic or chronological: the music of Johann Sebastian Bach.

Bach's love of numbers and artistic/theological understanding is clearly seen in the weighting and arrangement of the movements. By any standard, this is an energetic, beautiful, and meticulously prepared piece of worship music.

CANTATAS

The cantatas are the largest of Bach's copious output. They were written as liturgies for Sabbath worship at the various Lutheran churches. They are meant to illustrate the scripture of the day in what one might call a pre-sermon. Some are very intimate works for solo voice and small orchestra while others are grand works employing choir, soloists and orchestra (much like the "Magnificat"). Ranging in duration from 15 to 45 minutes, Bach composed over three hundred cantatas, of which something over 200 have survived. (Amazingly, he planned to compose 500!) He often composed, copied, rehearsed, and provided



the works for worship in the same week. It should be noted that the numbers assigned to the cantatas mean very little. The early editors of the Bach Ausgabe (complete works) were faced with a staggering task of publishing and editing this magnum opus. They simply numbered the works as they came to them.

Two places to begin are Cantatas 140, "Wachet auf, Ruft uns die Stimme" ("Awake, call the voices") and # 82 "Ich habe genug" ("I've had enough").

Cantata 140 was written for the 27th week after Trinity, right before Advent, an unusual Sunday as it only occurs when Easter comes early in the year. Bach premiered this work in worship on November 25, 1731. The text is taken from the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel according to St Matthew, the parable of the wise virgins. We see the brilliance of the formal construction, the seven movements climaxing in the fourth with the well-known chorale melody.

The unusual scoring of using two oboes and the larger oboe da caccia together gives the first movement a peculiar and anticipatory sound. A French horn, doubling the soprano part, also makes an excellent juxtaposition with the brightness of the oboes and draws attention the uniqueness of the message. The coming of Christ the bridegroom is announced by the tenor, the famous middle chorale movement being flanked by two duets for the soul and Christ. The first is in minor key with an impressive violin obbligato. It displays a questioning flavor; is the soul prepared to meet its savior? The second--after a reassuring recitative (a section of speech-like character) from the bass speaking reassuringly the words of Christ--is a joyous love duet with a lilting oboe melody. The whole congregation joins at the end with the hymn setting of the original chorale melody.

The title of Cantata 82, "Ich Habe Genug," can be loosely translated as "I've had it!" It is a solo cantata using a bass, an oboe, strings and continuo. The dark colors are most helpful for the times in life when things are difficult, life is sad and grey, and one had hoped for more. (With over half of his children dying in infancy, Bach must have known these feelings well.) The text is taken from Luke 2: 22-32, as Simeon prophesies of the birth of Christ. This canticle is known as the "Nunc Dimittis" ("Lord let thy servant depart in peace"). The cantata sympathizes with us and then points us to Christ with the reassurance of his grace and goodness. The lovely oboe melody in the first movement is quite similar to the famous aria "Erbarme Dich" ("Have Mercy, Oh Lord") from the "St. Matthew Passion." The plaintive quality of the first movement leads to a lengthy middle movement that is reminiscent of a lullaby. One imagines the calming words of our Savior as he comforts the believer in his arms. The energetic final movement is again in minor key with the believer praising God and looking forward to death with the assurance of Christ's love. If one tires of art that seems to lack the reality of the real Christian life, try out "Ich Habe Genug"--here is the truth of the matter.

MOTETS

The motets are few in number (6) but are superb. Some were written for funeral services, and are thought to have been sung at the gravesite. (With such intricate music, this must have been some feat.) Their difficulty points to performances by professional musicians Bach would have at his disposal in Leipzig. They are scored for choir and continuo (bass instrument: cello, bass, bassoon), and keyboard (organ or harpsichord).

The incredible richness of the settings can be seen in "Jesu, Meine Freude" ("Jesus, Priceless Treasure"). As always with Bach, the texts are always underlined by the musical setting. The

eleven movements are symmetrically put together to underline the sovereignty of God in all manners of life, and most importantly in death. The chorale stanzas are spaced throughout the motet to give the believer time to meditate on Christ as savior and friend in sorrow.

PASSIONS

The St John and St Matthew "Passions" are the telling of the events leading up to and including the crucifixion of our Lord. The St John is more intimate while the St Matthew is grander in scope and uses larger forces. One can hardly imagine greater meditations on sin and the meaning of the cross. These are not short works (the St Matthew clocks in at about 3.5 hours), but the size of the canvas is necessary for such a subject. Bach patterned his passion settings after Handel's "Brockes Passion," which used liturgical and operatic means to set a remarkably dramatic story. The chorales (we are all familiar with "O Sacred

Head Now Wounded") were used as devotional moments of praise and meditation for the congregation. Although there is much energetic discussion over whether the choir or the whole congregation sang the chorales, clearly everyone in the church would be familiar with texts and tunes. In their brilliance, richness of artistry and theological sensitivity there are no greater pieces for worship for Good Friday.

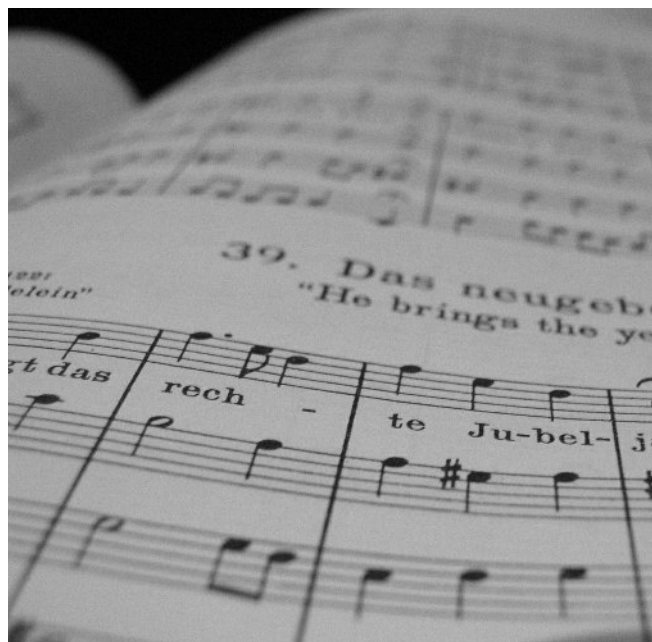
MASSSES

Although Bach composed several settings of the mass, the "Mass in b Minor" is the summation of his work. He put it together (with no plans of a complete performance) as a testament to God's faithfulness, and as an outline of his life's work.

It uses the richest possible complement of voices and instruments to set the text of the mass, familiar to Lutheran worship. From the imposing opening statement of "Kyrie Eleison" to the brilliance of the "Gloria," to the breathless energy of the "Cum Sancto Spiritu" to the grinding, painful dissonances of the "Crucifixus," to the dance-like exaltations of the "Et Resurrexit" and the "Sanctus," the bitter-sweet character of the "Benedictus" to the warm piety of the "Dona Nobis Pacem," this fabulous work is one of the most complete musical statements of the Christian faith.

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Although I have attempted to stay within the world of Bach's liturgical music, I am compelled to include one remarkable instrumental composition. In Bach's time at Cothen, he served a Calvinist court where church music was minimal compared to the Lutheran manner. Bach turned his genius to writing mostly instrumental music. Many pieces for harpsichord, chamber ensemble and orchestra were written at this time (1718-1722).



The unaccompanied sonatas and partitas for solo violin include the extraordinary "Chaconne in d minor." It has long been a work favored by the great virtuosi for both its technical demands but also its range of emotion and handling of variation form. A Chaconne is a set of variations on a given theme. Bach meant this piece to be an epitaph in music for his first wife, Maria Barbara. It was a means of working out his grief from the loss of his first wife and a testament to his faithful Lord. The breathtaking way he wove the chorale tunes into the brocade of the formal working out of the Chaconne is extraordinary by any definition. That he would take the time to do such a thing speaks eloquently to the depth of his genius and faith.

CONGREGATIONAL USE

Where can we begin using Bach in congregational worship? Begin with the hymnal. "Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light" (coming from the "Christmas Oratorio") is a splendid chorale, as are "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded," and "Now Thank we all our God."

There are many editions of the chorale setting "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring." It comes from Cantata 147 and is accessible for most congregations. A piano or string quartet (or combination) would do very nicely. Note: it should go much faster than it is normally heard--check out Joshua Rifkin's recording: it becomes a Gigue, a dance! Instead of the normal tired-sounding piety it becomes truly "Jesus is the JOY of man's desiring."

The chorale tune "Wachet auf" ("Sleepers, Awake!") comes from Cantata 140 and is not terribly taxing as it is performable with one voice and keyboard. Adding the rest of the string complement and the rest of a men's choir will add additional color to a wonderful composition.

The cantatas are available on CD-ROM and are quite inexpensive although they are without English translations. A great place to begin is *Bach for All Seasons*, a well-edited collection, usable for many churches, published by Augsburg Fortress. (It comes with English translations and a CD.)



Recommended Reading

The New Grove Bach Family. Drawn from the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, these articles are erudite and a good introduction to Bach's life and work. There are lengthy sections on the different genres of Bach's music and a splendid works list.

The New Bach Reader. These are documents written by Bach, to him, or pertaining to him after his death. Included is his famous letter of 1730 detailing the needs of a well-appointed church musician. In addition, one finds a series of letters from the mid-1730's where a feud with the head of the school of the school in Leipzig is documented. It fleshes out the difficulties of a man who not only thought of composing masterworks but also dealt with the week in, week out preparation of musical worship and education.

Bach and Liturgical Life in Leipzig. (Günter Stiller) A classic work describing how the Lutheran liturgy was used in Bach's time and how he served the church.

My Only Comfort. Calvin Stappert (a professor at Calvin College) uses portions of the Heidelberg Catechism as a basis for a discussion of death in the music of Bach.

Bach by Phillip Spitta. The classic biography of Bach, it is not as accurate as later works.

Johann Sebastian Bach. by Christian Wolff. Professor Wolff teaches at Yale and is one of the preeminent Bach scholars of the day. His biography includes the most up to date scholarship.

Go forth, learn and enjoy. There are huge amounts of this man's work I have not mentioned. His example and opus is vast and rich, there for us to discover and share.

Following graduation from the Eastman School of Music in 1980, Jeffrey Heyl taught in public schools in New York and Pennsylvania, and worked as a freelance musician. In 1988 he obtained a Master's Degree in Opera from the Hartt School of Music at the University of Hartford, where he also taught voice in the community school. In 1995, he received his Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Iowa. In addition to his work with Covenant Seminary, where he serves as Adjunct Professor in Practical Theology, Heyl serves on the faculties of Missouri Baptist University and Lindenwood University. Since 1998 he has been minister of music at the Kirk of the Hills Presbyterian Church in St. Louis.

Recommended Recordings

Dr. Masaaki Suzuki, Bach Collegium of Japan. Dr. Suzuki was trained in the Netherlands and uses authentic performance practice (as close as we might get to what Bach would have known or desired). His performances are well polished, with exciting rhythms and rich colors. This author attended an outstanding performance of the "St Matthew Passion" directed by Dr. Suzuki, which proved to be both musically and spiritually rewarding.

Helmuth Rilling. Rilling's complete recordings of the cantatas and the major choral works can be purchased at a budget price. He uses modern instruments but the balances are well thought out.

Nicholas Harnoncourt, Ton Koopman, John Eliot Gardener, Joshua Rifkin. These four conductors are truly exemplary musicians, all favoring authentic performance practice. To some their readings are a bit dry but they shed valuable light on the textures of Bach scores.

Karl Richter (10 CD set). Richter served St Thomas's church in Leipzig as cantor, as Bach had. Richter's interpretations were an early rethinking of Bach textures but with tremendous warmth and drama. Some of his tempi are slow to modern ears but the dramas of the passions are vitally brought forth. Deutsches Gramophone has issued an ultra budget set of 10 CD's that includes the "Passions," the "Mass in b minor," the "Magnificat" and the "Christmas Oratorio." This author was drawn to Christ by Richter's TV account of a St Matthew broadcast on public TV. (It is now available on DVD)

Karl Munchinger (10 CD set). Similar to Richter's work, Munchinger's set includes the "Passions," the "Mass in b minor," and the Christmas and Easter Oratorios. If the choral work is not the most beautiful, it is serviceable. The solo work (especially of soprano Elly Ameling, tenor Fritz Wunderlich and baritones Hermann Prey and Tom Krause) is the best. The conducting is quite fine as well.

Morimur. This is the CD recording of the "Ciaccona (Chaconne)" from the "d minor Partita," performed by violinist Christoph Poppen and the Hilliard Ensemble. A quartet of singers sing the chorales as Poppen plays the Ciaccona. It is an amazing recording creating an eerie and brilliant effect. The liner notes are outstanding.

Music for

The Wild

A Review of In the Edges: The Grizzly Man Sessions

For thirteen years Timothy Treadwell chose to live among the grizzlies deep in the wilds of Alaska. Treadwell filmed the bears--and himself--continuously, ignoring warnings that he was putting his life in danger. Obsessed with protecting the bears, over time his narration became more passionate and more paranoid, until it seemed that Treadwell identified more with the bears than with his own kind. Finally in October 2003, Treadwell and his lover, a fellow activist named Amie Huguenard were attacked, killed, and eaten by the bears they wanted so badly to preserve. In the documentary *Grizzly Man*, German film director Werner Herzog adds interviews and narration to the footage Treadwell shot to tell his story.

The film is interesting by itself, a beautifully crafted documentary about a species of bear that is equally fascinating, majestic, and frightening. *Grizzly Man* is also about a deeply troubled man who ends up being, no pun intended, consumed by a passion to save these creatures from the predations of humankind.

Equally interesting is a feature included on the DVD of *Grizzly Man*. "In the Edges: The Grizzly Man Sessions," is a 50 minute documentary on the making of the music for the film. Herzog gathered a talented group of musicians in a studio under the leadership of British guitarist and

song-writer Richard Thompson. Herzog would show them a section of the film and explain what he wanted. The musicians would then begin to jam, and in the unfolding conversation between them and Herzog over a period of two days, the musical score for the film was composed.

For those of us who love music but are not musicians, "In the Edges" is a rare glimpse into the world of artistic creation. We get to watch and listen as gifted artists work together for a common purpose. It is a study of collaboration, the blending of different musical instruments to make the unfolding story told in a film take on a deeper sense of reality.

We recommend *Grizzly Man* and "In the Edges" to you. The music is also available on CD, which is worth having as well.

Grizzly Man

Starring:

Werner Herzog (narrator/interviewer)
Timothy Treadwell (himself, archive footage)
Amie Huguenard (herself, archive footage)

Director: Werner Herzog

Writer: Werner Herzog
Producers: Kevin Beggs, Erik Nelson, Tom Ortberg, Jewel Palovak
Original Music: Richard Thompson
Cinematographer: Peter Zeitlinger

Runtime: 103 minutes
Release: USA; 2005



For reflection and discussion:

1. Did you notice the musical score the first time you watched *Grizzly Man* (before watching "In the Edges")? What did you notice? What was your response to it?
2. What is your first impression of "In the Edges"? Why do you think you responded this way?
3. What form of creativity do you express? How have you nurtured it?
4. Does the score of *Grizzly Man* increase or decrease the effectiveness of the film? How would you describe the relationship between a film and its score?
5. How did seeing "In the Edges" effect your view of *Grizzly Man*? Of Herzog's ability, as a film director to capture in words what he wanted expressed in music? Of the musicians ability to create on-the-fly?
6. How can beauty, in the musical score and film footage, co-exist with danger and horror in the unfolding of Treadwell's tragic story?
7. What passion gives purpose to your life? How do you maintain a proper balance in life without quenching the passion?
8. To what extent do you care for the earth? What plans should you make?

Choosing Our Spirituality

In the April 2007 issue of *Sun*, a literary magazine, the editor featured an interview with John O'Donohue, an Irish poet/philosopher and former priest. Much of the interview centered on what many people would refer to as spirituality, or in O'Donohue's words, "the secret landscapes of imagination and spirit."

The interview began with O'Donohue being asked, "Do you think there is a spiritual hunger in the U.S. today?" Here is his response:

There is a fierce hunger for spirit at the heart of an American culture that has lost all belief in the old language about God. That language no longer resonates for most Americans, nor leads them to wells of nourishment. Ironically, in other areas of American culture, there is a fundamentalist obsession with God. But inevitably this God tends to be a monolith and an emperor of the blandest singularity. Attention to the living God, who incorporates the beauty of the senses and spirit, and is the deepest source of the imagination and the highest calling of intellect, seems very scarce.

New Age spirituality is rising up to try to fill the gap. I do not wish to criticize any system that can nourish people's spirits, but I find that a lot of New Age writing cherry-picks the attractive bits from the ancient traditions and makes collages of them; it usually excises the ascetic dimension. In general it is not rigorously thought out, but is what I would call 'soft' thinking.

Granted, it is difficult to write well about spirit: namely, to bring the lyrical and the philosophical into a true tension. In my writing, I endeavor to excavate the Celtic and the Judeo-Christian philosophical and literary traditions and to bring them into conversation with our modern hunger and questioning.

Then, in response to O'Donohue's comments, a letter to the editor appeared in the August 2007 issue of *Sun*.

John O'Donohue says that some New Age writers 'cherry-pick... from ancient traditions,' which he believes is 'soft thinking.' Actually, that's thinking. Far better to be an adherent who makes choices than a blind follower, swallowing doctrine like a goose destined for pâté.

I take pride in being a cherry-picker. I am a Buddhist, Pagan, Native American, Shinto, Christian 'openist,' for lack of a better term. Too many religious adherents have become insistent that their way is the only way, and I call that soft thinking.

Wouldn't it be great if we worshiped ideals rather than books? Then, when we encountered the same ideal in another culture, we would recognize its divinity. How many religious wars could be prevented if ideals took precedence over the desire to name and claim? Rather than bending a knee to prophets, we could bend a knee to truth. Rather than idolizing Kwan Yin or Jesus, we could celebrate compassion. Rather than praying to a static entity to show pity on our hungry brethren, we would rise up and act, for the worship of ideals compels us to live up to them.

*Darling Poor
San Diego, California*

SOURCES

Sun (April 2007) pp.5-6; (August 2007) p. 3.



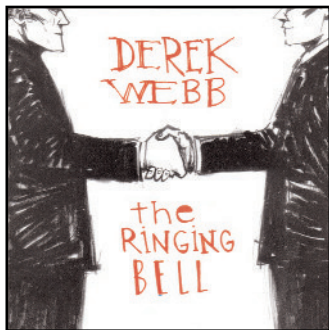
Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What do you find attractive in O'Donohue's comments? With what do you agree? How would you have answered the question the interviewer posed?
2. What do you find attractive in the letter to the editor from Darling Poor? With what do you agree?
3. How would you define spirituality? How would you express your definition in the marketplace if your desire is to prompt further discussion among your co-workers?
4. What is the historic biblical definition of "spirituality"? What does it mean, from a Christian perspective, when a non-Christian expresses a "spiritual hunger" or a "yearning for transcendence"?
5. Compose a letter to the editor in response to O'Donohue's comments.
6. What book(s) on spirituality have you read in the past year? What book(s) would you recommend to a Christian on the topic? To a non-Christian? Why would you recommend the same/different books?
7. Who is the most spiritual person you know personally? What marks them as being "spiritual"?
8. What biblical texts are most essential in a study of Christian spirituality? How do you know?
9. Did O'Donohue say anything which you would challenge or question or disagree? How would you express it in a way to further conversation instead of ending discussion? What questions could you ask that would communicate a real interest in him?
10. Did Poor say anything which you would challenge or question or disagree? How would you express it in a way to further conversation instead of ending discussion? What questions could you ask that would communicate a real interest in her?
11. Have you noticed neighbors or co-workers talking about or expressing interest in issues of spirituality? If "traditional Christianity" comes up in these conversations, what is usually said about it? Why do you think that is? How should a Christian respond to such comments? What questions could you ask that would communicate a real interest in them?
12. Given these reflections, what plans should you make?

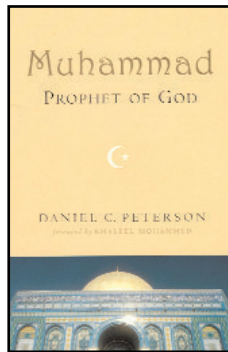


Walter Fane (played by Edward Norton) and Kitty (played by Naomi Watts) marry soon after meeting. Both are in a hurry. Dr Fane is about to leave for China to study infectious disease; his bride is desperate to escape her stifling upper-class British family. When cholera breaks out in the interior, Fane drags Kitty to a remote Chinese village where long-smoldering resentment against intrusive Westerners threatens to erupt into open rebellion. Based on a 1925 novel by M. Somerset Maugham (1874-1965), the film moves too slowly, but unfolds a sensitive, thoughtful story of love, lust, marriage, relationships, forgiveness, and communication. As the tagline notes, "Forgiveness comes at a price."

(125 minutes. Rated PG-13 for sexual themes and brief drug usage. U.S.A)



"What would you do / If someone would tell you the truth / But only if you torture them half to death." Derek Webb, formerly of Caedmon's Call, raises questions on *The Ringing Bell* (2007) that many of his Christian fans may prefer to ignore. In a time of war and violence, Webb insists, correctly, that he's "facing enemies / On both sides of the gun." There is passion here, a fine love-song ("I Wanna Marry You Again"), and hope. "There is a day that's been inaugurated but has not yet come / That we can proclaim by showing that there's a better way." Exactly right: we live in the tension of a Kingdom come, but not yet fully realized, so the questions and our answers matter. With well crafted instrumentation and a voice that carries his conviction, I look forward to Webb's next offering.

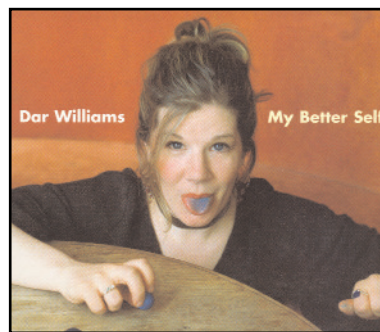


With an estimated 6+ million Muslims living in the U.S., a number that some dispute but that all agree is growing rapidly, it is essential that Christians be informed about Islam.

Daniel Peterson, who teaches Islamic studies and Arabic at Brigham Young University, provides a very readable yet scholarly history of Muhammad and the beginnings of Islam.

The Prophet's life and sayings are as important to Islam as is the record of the revelations which came to him via the angel Gabriel, as recorded in the *Qur'an*. Neither a polemic nor an apologetic, *Muhammad* is an even-handed, irenic introduction to a man who changed history, and whose followers are our neighbors.

Muhammad: Prophet of God by Daniel C. Peterson (Eerdmans; 2007) 186 pp.

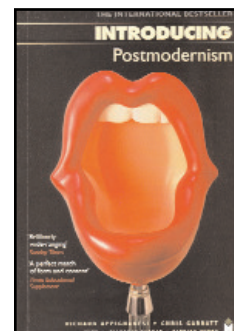


Listen closely to the 13 songs on Dar Williams' *My Better Self* (2005) and you can hear an echo of the heart's cry of an entire generation. "Teen for God" evokes vivid memories of summer church camp, followed by disillusionment. "Help me know four years from now / I won't believe in you anyhow / And I'll mope around a campus and I'll feel betrayed / All those guilty summers I stayed, but / Then I'll laugh that I fell for the lure / Of the pain of desire to feel so pure / And I'll bear all the burdens of my little daily crimes / And wish I had a God for such cynical times." Her clear voice and compelling honesty reveals a heart yearning for love, redemption, and an almost desperate hope that someone will be there for her in the end.



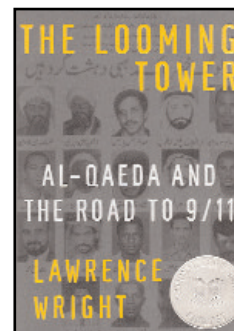
A professor of history details 18 decades of popular culture reflecting, shaping American culture, and always fueling culture wars.

With Amusement for All: A History of American Popular Culture Since 1830 by LeRoy Ashby (University Press of KY; 2006) 648 pp.



An accessible introduction to the important thinkers and ideas shaping postmodern art, theory, history and the world in which we live.

Introducing Postmodernism by Richard Appignanesi and Chris Garratt (Totem Books; 2003) 192 pp.



Pulitzer prize winning history (that reads like a novel) of the key ideas and people that gave birth to Islamic jihadism.

The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda & the Road to 9/11 by Lawrence Wright (Knopf; 2007) 470 pp.