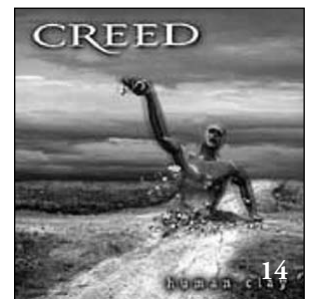


# Critique

Helping Christians Develop Skill in Discernment

## In This Issue

- 04 **Taking Doubt Seriously**  
Preston Jones explains how the gospel is full of surprises.



- 07 **Rabbi Jesus**  
An excerpt from *Finding the Lost* by Kenneth E. Bailey.

- 08 **Do Only The Strong Survive?**  
Drew Trotter reviews *Lawrence of Arabia*.

- 10 **Interpretation & Chance**  
Reviews of *Finding the Lost* and *Signs of Intelligence*.

- 12 **Literature and Compassion**  
Marsena Konkle gives a reason to read fiction.

02 Editor's Note

03 Dialogue

16 Clicks

- 14 **Creed**  
Fans ask if Creed is a Christian band; Denis Haack asks if that is the right question.

**Editor**

Denis Haack

**Managing Editor**

Marsena Konkle, MFA

**Contributing Editors**

Steven Garber, R. Greg Grooms,  
Donald Guthrie, John Mason  
Hodges, David John Seel, Jr.,  
Andrew H. Trotter, Jr.

**Board of Directors**

Craig M. Chambers MD  
*Dept. of Internal Medicine,  
Olmsted Medical Center*

Steven Garber  
*Scholar-in-Residence at Council  
for Christian Colleges and  
Universities*

Donald Guthrie  
*Vice President for  
Academics at Covenant  
Theological Seminary*

Denis and Margie Haack,  
*co-founders of Ransom Fellowship*

Bonnie Liefer  
*Director of Communications  
for Coalition for Christian  
Outreach*

Henry Tazelaar MD  
*Professor of Pathology,  
Mayo Medical School*

**Submissions & Correspondence**

*Critique* considers unsolicited manuscripts of book reviews, articles, and poetry. E-mail at marsena@itis.com or mail with

SASE to:

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

All other correspondence and changes of address:  
Denis D. Haack  
1150 West Center  
Rochester, MN 55902  
Ransom\_Fellowship@compuserve.com

Copyright © 2001 by  
Ransom Fellowship

# Editor's Note



## One less name

**T**hirty years ago when I heard Os Guinness talk on the Christian mind, he surprised some by insisting that thinking Christianly is not about developing a “Christian line” on every issue. This

means, among other things, that thoughtful Christians will not always agree at every point. The process of discernment takes us from Scripture to interpretation to principle to practice, and we need to take these steps with humility. Of course, the practice I adopt always seems so closely connected to the biblical text as to appear indistinguishable in my mind, but that is only an illusion born of my pride. The truth is that each step from the text—from text to interpretation to principle to practice—is indeed a step from the text, and so must be walked by faith.

I mention this because although I expected my review of the Harry Potter novels by J. K. Rowling to generate some controversy, I never expected to lose a Contributing Editor over it. “I was surprised and disheartened that you endorse the Harry Potter books,” Douglas Groothuis wrote, because “after studying new religious movements and the occult for many years, my verdict is that Potter is very bad news indeed for children...I wrote the Foreword to Richard Abanes’ new book, *Harry Potter and the Bible* (Horizon Books), which provides copious documentation and argumentation to the effect that the book is, in fact, occultic and unhealthy in outlook. I hope you will read this book.”

Doug asked that Abanes be allowed to write a response to my review, or that we reprint his Foreword, but I declined both offers. Not

because I fear having my ideas challenged in these pages—something I would find stimulating—but because so much has already been published on this topic. I don’t want to take up the few pages of *Critique* to go over ground that’s already been covered so extensively. I asked Doug to write a letter to the editor for this issue, stating his disagreement and calling attention to Abanes’ book, but he felt that was inadequate. So he asked to have his name removed from *Critique’s* masthead.

I am sorry for Doug’s decision. And since he declined my offer to write a letter, I decided to use this column to explain what has transpired and to mention Abanes’ book.

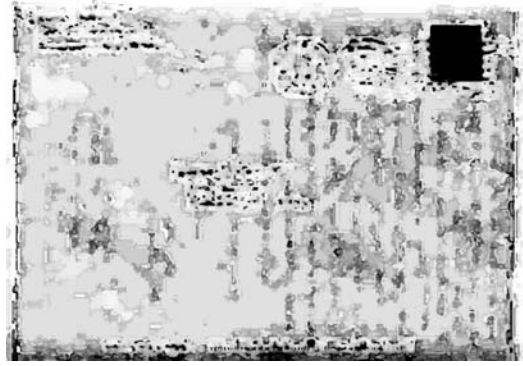
Interestingly, around the same time Doug and I were corresponding about this, Byron Borger of Hearts & Minds Bookstore sent an email to Margie, commending *What’s a Christian to do With Harry Potter?* by Connie Nash. “Have you seen the new book about Potter from Waterbrook Press? Very, very nice. (I wondered if it might quote you or Denis. Or even my little letter to the editor in *Christianity Today* as it reprints some of the stuff that has been said pro & con.) It is brave of them to publish it, and I have been glad to have it around.”

I haven’t read either book. Perhaps I will, but then several other books arrived this week that I’m very eager to read.

It would be comforting, of course, if all thoughtful believers always agreed all the time about everything. But that is too much to hope for in a fallen world. And though it would be nice, it would also tempt us to trust the “Christian line” instead of God. We’re called to a walk of faith, and though that might feel less comfortable at times, it is a far more glorious—and secure—path. ■

~Denis Haack

# Dialogue



**A**s I teach in the area of Apologetics and Christian Thought, I tackled *Critique* with some anticipation. And indeed, I found a lot to be excited about. I am however a little perturbed. Am I to assume that sophisticated and culture-sensitive Christians in America are not overtly concerned about maintaining and portraying biblical standards of morality (cf. Tracy Mendham, who “lives in Brooklyn with her partner,” #2-2001, p. 13)? And should I be discerning enough not to subscribe to *Critique*?

**James B. Krohn**  
Cape Town, South Africa

## Denis Haack replies:

You correctly noticed the byline describing Tracy Mendham—which she supplied at our request. Tracy is not a Christian, but we published her poem because in it she speaks the truth beautifully. One of the misconceptions we are dedicated to countering is that Christians can’t learn from unbelievers, or that publications dedicated to Christian discernment must only publish material penned by Christians. Non-Christians sometimes write truth, while believers, sadly, sometimes don’t. Thus, since it is truth believers are concerned to identify, we have to learn to discern far more than whether the author claims faith in Christ.

**I** read with some anticipation the article about the Harry Potter books. I have read all 4 books myself and in many areas agree with Denis about their worth; however, I must disagree with his wholehearted approval.

First of all, do you not think it would be worthwhile to discuss the clearly eastern religion world view assumed by the books? Evil and Good are promoted as equal opposites. Voldemort and Harry are somehow linked and also seem to be two sides of the same coin. They use the same kind of wand, they

both know the language of snakes, and even their power seems linked. This world view is very similar to the Star Wars world view, where good and evil **MUST** exist together because you cannot have one without the other.

Second, what reaction did you have to the last 50 pages of the fourth book? The ceremony of sacrifice that leads to Voldemort’s return to power was disturbing and occultic to me: the faithful servant cutting off his own hand, putting the “baby like” Voldemort into the cauldron [along with] blood taken from Harry? This section changed my mind about fully endorsing the reading of these books to the target age children, 8 to 12 years of age. I cannot in good conscience unreservedly recommend them to children or to be read to children.

Perhaps I should ask you, what do you mean when you highly recommend a book? In a past issue of *Critique*, you highly recommended books by J. I. Packer also. What is the difference between the recommendations?

**Melinda Brown**  
Plano, Texas

## Denis Haack replies:

Good questions. Rowling has not, so far at least, depicted Harry Potter’s universe in terms of either the New Age (as in Star Wars) or eastern religion (as in Hinduism). On a finite level, from the perspective of the characters in the unfolding story, good and evil may seem to be “equal opposites” without that being true on a metaphysical level. Surely we have all experienced that. A review of the basic tenets of both New Age and Eastern Pantheistic Monism as outlined in James Sire’s *The Universe Next Door*, reveals, I think, that a clear parallel does not exist between them and Potter’s world.

The last pages of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* are indeed disturbing, and so they should since they depict evil as truly

evil. You say you find them “occultic.” May I ask on what basis? I found the drama of those pages horrifying; an effective reminder that evil must not be reduced to poor choices or bad things. It always ends in death, dehumanizes and destroys, devouring our very souls.

I agree that the Harry Potter novels are not appropriate for children, for they are far too intense for young imaginations. I meant precisely that when I mentioned needing to wait until my granddaughter is old enough to read the books to her.

When I recommend a resource, it means that it’s something which can help us develop skill in discernment. Every article in every *Critique* is produced with this goal specifically in mind. A book by the Dalai Lama might help us think clearly about Buddhism (something needful in our pluralistic world), and so might also be recommended in these pages, but that doesn’t mean it reflects my world view. Finally, though, on a practical level, this shouldn’t make much difference; whether the book is by Packer or the Dalai Lama, it must be read with discernment.

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:  
marsena@itis.com

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.

## Taking Doubt Seriously

### Discernment in action.

**F**or a long time now I've wondered why so many people rise early each Sunday morning to trek to churches where they will be harangued. Of course, Christians know that selfishness, slavery to the flesh, and sin in general need to be identified and repented of; they know that preachers who always pull their punches aren't real preachers. But there is something excessive about the way some congregations get their brains beat out week after week. Witness more! Pray more! Give more! If you don't attend evening service, you're backslid! And thus burnout becomes a spiritual way of life.

Scanning the FM airwaves on a commute between Eagle River and Anchorage, Alaska, such a sermon caught my attention. The topic was hell and the five kinds of men destined for it. One type, said the preacher, is the religious guy who, though intellectually curious about theology, is yet unsaved. Another is the nice churchgoer who mistakenly thinks that his congenital goodness will get him into heaven. A third is the sort who grew up in church and got baptized but never made a personal confession. The fourth type, like the previous three, is a variation on the same theme.

The fifth type of hell-bound person, the preacher said, is the atheist: the stiff-necked man who hates God and shakes his fist at the unresponsive skies; the evolution loving, Christian hating, left-wing democrat who'd rather burn a Bible than look at you. He's going to hell because he wants to, even though he doesn't believe in it. The caricature is surely more common than the people it claims to describe.

I know that there are some who consciously rebel against God, choosing to shut him out of their lives. I tried this for a spell during my enlistment in the U.S. Navy though, being more miserable as an aspiring agnostic than I had been as a Christian, I gave it up. The character Julia in Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* rebelled for a time, but in the end she too determined that she couldn't shut herself off from God's mercy. But while some try to give up faith and fail, others, perhaps being sturdier, succeed. In recent years I've met more than a few former evangelicals who now believe,

*The Gospel is full of surprises, and more than once Jesus seems to suggest that those who think they have things figured out probably don't.*

basically, nothing.

Some of these arrived at unbelief almost despite themselves. They grew up believing that God is love but, as the years passed, found it impossible to believe that such a being could preside over so seemingly contingent and indifferent a universe. The pointlessness of much of modern life—two hour commutes; scrambling to the top of corporations that produce useless goods; the cruelty and environmental damage inherent in America's collective diet—wore them down, and life itself came to seem a rigmarole. Allegations of wrongdoing, historic and contemporary, among the clergy and at the Vatican, combined with the inevitable hypocrisies of Christianity's

human leaders and spokesmen, eroded their sense that anyone could be trusted. Moreover, well-meaning Sunday school teachers had taught them that if Jonah didn't really spend three days in the belly of a fish and if the world wasn't really just six thousand years old, then the whole Bible must be a fraud. And so, in time, they came to consider the Bible untrustworthy.

C.S. Lewis said that he was dragged kicking into the kingdom of God, the unhappiest convert in all of England. Christians also know that sometimes it goes the other way. Sometimes a man wants to believe but he finds belief slipping away. Sometimes a man will make an honest inquiry into matters of faith and still end up short of it. Sometimes a woman will seek and not find, and she'll continue to seek even though she has concluded that, perhaps, there's nothing out there. And sometimes the light of faith is ignited within a person but its flame is so small as to be indiscernible to human perception. This is the sort of person who appears so often in Flannery O'Connor's short stories.

It's a major premise of Jesus' teaching that there will be some turning heads in the kingdom of heaven. Some will be there who, by all earthly accounts, shouldn't be, and others widely acknowledged as destined for the pearly gates will not make it. ("Depart from me, I never knew you.") The Gospel is full of surprises, and more than once Jesus seems to suggest that those who think they have things figured out probably don't. Anglicans rightly pray for men and women "whose faith is known only to God."

I have sometimes thought that the French writer, Nobel Prize winner and self-proclaimed atheist Albert Camus may have been such a person. Certainly Camus, who gave secretly to charity, had a life-long interest in Christian faith: his doctoral dissertation had partly to do with Augustine, and he read Pascal later in life; his penultimate novel, *La chute* (*The Fall*), accepted the existence of God; he corresponded with clergy and was habitually respectful toward them; when he was criticized in 1956 for the religious tone of a play he directed (*Requiem pour une nonne*), he responded, somewhat contradictorily, "It's true that I don't believe in God, but that doesn't mean I'm an atheist;" and when he was in Stockholm to receive the Nobel Prize, Camus told an audience that he had "Christian concerns" though he was a "pagan by nature." (Camus's doctoral dissertation sought to reconcile Greek thought with Christianity.) Some have suspected that he possessed a secret, idiosyncratic faith that he couldn't ever quite enunciate.

If a recent contribution to the literature on Camus, Howard Mumma's memoir *Albert Camus and the Preacher* (2000), can be trusted, there are grounds for believing that Camus was very close to Christian belief in the years before his death in a car accident in 1960. Mumma, who was a preacher over several summers in the 1950s at the American Church in Paris, writes that he and Camus had several long conversations on matters of faith and that Camus eventually asked to be baptized—a request Mumma refused on the grounds that Camus wanted to undergo the rite in private and thus keep it secret. Mumma claims to have regretted his refusal after Camus's death.

Mumma's claims shouldn't be accepted uncritically. Neither of Camus's major biographers, Herbert Lottman and Olivier Todd,

have found in Camus a discernibly heightened interest in matters of faith in his last years. Then there's the problem that after Camus's death Mumma claims to have returned to the place where the Frenchman was killed and mourned the writer's "obvious" suicide. But Camus was one of four people in the car—two of whom were uninjured in the crash—and he wasn't driving the car. He simply died in an accident. It's odd that Mumma, who claims to have had deep feelings for Camus, never took the time to learn this basic fact.

And yet there is much in Mumma's text that rings true: Camus hated crowds and fawning public attention (thus his purported refusal to be baptized publicly makes sense);

***Christians sometimes respond to evil and unmerited suffering as if the Bible had a lot to say on the matter. But it doesn't.***

Camus was fond of organ music (thus Mumma's claim that Camus first went to the American Church to hear the organist Marcel Dupre is credible); and Camus never seems to have abandoned hope in the idea that life had inherent meaning. In the end, one puts down Mumma's memoir with the sense that he had in fact talked with Camus and that he (Camus) was deeply interested in faith in his final years.

As is the case with many unbelievers, or nominal believers, Camus' unbelief was rooted in an inability to believe that a good God could preside over a world infested with cruelty, vice and pain. So long as one innocent child suffered, Camus wrote, he could not—or would not—believe. For him, the only appropriate response to unwarranted suffering was a commitment to do one's part to

alleviate whatever suffering he could. One finds meaning in life by struggling against life's absurdity, and one does this by defending the innocent. Evil perpetrated upon the innocent outraged Camus, and no platitudes could console him. If he came to belief, it was in spite of his inability to reconcile the existence of a great and good God with unmerited suffering. If he did not come to faith, it was because the gap between the requirements of Christian belief and the workings of the real world was, to him, too vast.

Standard Christian responses to sentiments like Camus' are that men, being sinners, are responsible for the bad state of the world; that suffering brings people to God; that without evil people would not recognize God's grace; and that God loves men enough to grant them sufficient freedom to wreak havoc on the world if they wish to. Christians sometimes respond to evil and unmerited suffering as if the Bible had a lot to say on the matter. But it doesn't. Paul tells us that God works all things together for good for those who love God and are committed to His way, but Paul doesn't say that everything that happens will make sense in this life. The only direct biblical response to the problem of unmerited suffering not directly related to religious persecution that I can think of is God's reply to Job's inquiry, namely, that Job should shut up and mind his own business.

After the bombing of the federal government building in Oklahoma City, Billy Graham was asked why God allowed such things to happen. The evangelist famous for declaring what "the Bible says" said, in this instance, simply, "I don't know." It was one of the wisest theological pronouncements I've yet heard.

A reason Graham's response was wise is that, in my view, there is something vulgar about attempts philosophically to explain

# Discerning Life cont.

wickedness visited upon the innocent. The neo-conservative writer Norman Podhoretz once claimed that God himself could never say anything that could justify the Holocaust. Now advanced in age, perhaps Podhoretz would like to modify that statement. But the sentiment behind it is, I think, quite understandable: infants die of cancer, sex slavery continues to go from strength to strength in the third world, affluent pedophiles go unpunished, and the innocent starve. Podhoretz, like Camus, was right to be outraged, first by the evil done and then by the various efforts to make sense of it. And to the extent that Camus' moral rage led him to act to make the lives of a few better, his response to evil and suffering strikes me as being more realistic and thus superior to that of the air-conditioned seminary classroom. "Perhaps we cannot prevent this world from being a world in which children are tortured," said Camus to a Christian audience in 1948. "But we can reduce the number of tortured children. And if you [Christians] don't help us, who else in the world can help us?"

As it happens, I underlined those sentences from Camus's speech while deployed to the Pacific and Indian oceans in 1988 aboard the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Ranger. On this deployment the ship paid two visits to Subic Bay—also known as "pubic bay"—in the Philippines, third world disaster, mass producer and exporter of teenage sex slaves and impoverished prostitutes. Olongapo, the city outside the bay at Subic, was where sad girls were trapped in the bars, hemmed in like cattle by the local police; where a legless, filthy boy begged for change on the short bridge that linked the base and the city

and spanned the aptly named "S\*\*\* River;" where children swam in that feces-infested "river" diving for pennies tossed by American sailors; where one was regaled with stories of fathers selling their young daughters to sailors for fifty bucks a week, and of "short time" and "long time" and "three-holing."

***"We can reduce the number of tortured children. If you [Christians] don't help us, who else can?"***

All this was quite a lot for a cynical and sarcastic but patriotic young man who had, not long before, lectured his fellow high school students on the virtues of Reaganism.

I had grown up in a neighborhood where violence was normal, where murder took an acquaintance every few years, and where drug and welfare addiction formed a way of life. But I had never really thought that the suffering people endured there was unmerited. Certainly the innocent didn't deserve what befell them at the hands of criminals; but, as I saw it, they had gotten trapped there by virtue of their own stupidity. Insofar as the justice of the streets went thugs got what they deserved. Drug dealers got what they deserved. And those of us who were too foolish or too lazy or too obtuse to escape were made to pay as well.

The difference between the old 'hood and Olongapo was that in the latter place the kids had no choice: serve the sailors or starve. The Navy men said the girls could give up the brothels if they wished, but that was false—and everyone knew it. America's finest said that, well, if they didn't buy the girls, then how else

would they make their money? The girls (and some boys) were the victims of Christian America's patriots. The captain and the officers and the chaplains and the Department of Defense stood by, smiled, and handed out condoms. All this in the name of democracy.

I said above that during my time in the Navy I tried not to believe in God. As I wrote that, I recalled a certain day in Olongapo when, hung over, I considered the silent heavens and refused to pray. Then, stopping to buy a cheap snack from a street vendor, I noticed a little boy, typically filthy, nearby. I paid my quarter (or whatever it was) for the snack and walked up to the boy and, probably scowling, said to him, "This is for you." But in my mind, despite myself, I said, "Dear Jesus, this is for you."

And I have thought ever since that that was the most significant act of my life. ■

—Preston Jones

*Preston Jones, a contributing editor for Books & Culture and book reviewer for the National Post (Toronto) and Ottawa Citizen, teaches history at Logos Academy in Dallas, Texas.*

Copyright © 2001 by Preston Jones.

## Rabbi Jesus

An excerpt from *Finding the Lost* by Kenneth E. Bailey, reviewed on p. 10 of this issue.

Curiously, both Islam and popular Christianity have seen fit to honor their founders and to try to heighten the miraculous nature of their respective revelations by claiming that they were uneducated. Islam insists that Muhammad was *al-nabi al-'ummi* (the illiterate prophet). This affirmation is for Islam critical proof of the inspiration of the Qur'an. If the messenger was an illiterate man, then the case for the divine nature of the message, which comes in a lofty rhetorical style, is in their view greatly strengthened. In much the same vein, popular Christianity across the centuries has taken the evidence for Jesus being a carpenter (Mark 6:3) as an indication of his (uneducated) "blue collar" identity. The marvel of who he was and what he said is thus seen as all the more amazing. But Christian perceptions at this point are imprecise.

Jesus was indeed a *tehton* which is probably better understood as a carpenter/builder than a cabinetmaker. Middle Eastern peasants have very little wooden furniture in their homes. But everyone has a house with doors, windows, and roof beams, all constructed of wood. Furthermore, a significant number of gospel parables exhibit builders' imagery, but the cabinetmaker never appears. In any case, he was a worker with his hands, a craftsman. However, the Western image of blue collar is misleading.

In both the East and the West today the popular image of blue collar worker is that of a *nonintellectual*. But in the rabbinic tradition, the rabbi was *expected* to have an earthy, practical profession working with his hands.

The title *Rabbi* was just beginning to come into common use early in the first century. It is applied unreservedly to Jesus. Obviously his contemporaries saw him as a religious teacher of merit who deserved this

title. Indeed, in the NT period (before the fall of Jerusalem) formal rabbinic training was not a critical matter for a religious professional. One could be a priest and even become the high priest without such training. After the fall of Jerusalem and the formation of the rabbinic schools around Jabneh in Palestine, and more particularly in the second century, such a title was more formalized and applied specifically to official graduates of recognized schools. But in the time of Jesus, this address was more fluid and could be applied generally to anyone recognized as a religious authority.

At the same time there were opportunities available across the countryside in first century Galilee and Judea to learn the tradition. These were the local religious clubs called the *babirim* (associates).

The *babirim* were associates of scrupulous Jews who pledged themselves to the study and strict observance of the law. To join such a society one needed only take a pledge in the presence of three members.

The remarkable account of Jesus in the temple at age 12 (Luke 2:40-52) is the only canonical window into the "silent years" from the birth stories until the opening of his public ministry. Generally, discussion of this text focuses on the self-awareness of Jesus or on the Lucan affirmation of Jesus as Son of God. However, the passage itself appears to have a different emphasis.

A reference to *wisdom* opens and closes the story. In the center the reader is told first that Jesus is a *student* (v. 46). Just past the center (v. 47), Jesus has become a teacher. The student who is *asking questions* is suddenly doing the *teaching*. All are "amazed at his understanding and *his answers*." In this manner the theme of *wisdom* is affirmed at the beginning and at the end and comes to

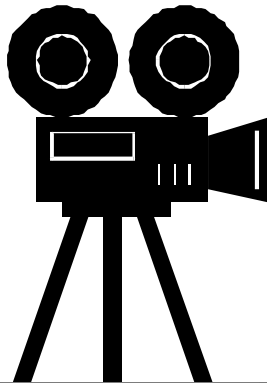
its critical expression in the center. Thus the rhetorical structure of the material affirms the wisdom, understanding, and answers of Jesus as the central focus of the passage. So the inevitable question becomes, What does this text assume about the intervening years from this scene until Luke 4:1, when at age 30 the public ministry of Jesus begins?

If there is even a shred of history in the Luke 2:40-52 account, then the first-century Jewish reader would naturally assume that Jesus remains in the village, labors at his carpenter's bench, and continues asking questions and giving answers. He becomes a part of the *babirim*. At age 30 he has had 18 years of almost daily discussion with the brightest minds in the village about Moses and the prophets and what it is that God is expecting of them in their day. As his public ministry opens, the people instinctively recognize the speech of a master of the tradition and thus naturally call him Rabbi. He accepts the title because of its appropriateness. His ability to hold his own in debate is evidenced all through the gospels. Such skills are only gradually acquired by anyone. No supernatural gifts are ever assumed by the text as sources for these debating skills. Thus we are left with the picture of a very bright young man who joins the *babirim*, and after he has spent nearly two decades in serious study, reflection, and debate on the sacred tradition of the past, he is finally ready for his "manifestation to Israel." The theologian is ready to take on his fellow theologians in public and he proceeds to do so. ■

This is an excerpt compiled from pp 22-28 of *Finding the Lost: Cultural Keys to Luke 15* by Kenneth Bailey (St Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House; 1992).

# The Darkened Room

## Do Only the Strong Survive?



### A review of *Lawrence of Arabia*

by Drew Trotter

**L***awrence of Arabia*, academy award winner as best picture of 1962, is perhaps the greatest epic film of all time. One could claim that right for *The Godfather*, but *The Godfather* is not an epic in the true sense of the word because the canvas on which it is painted is the world of the city, and the interiors of buildings, not the vast, sweeping outdoors of Nature. The memorable scenes in *The Godfather* happen in darkened rooms, kitchens, bars, restaurants, but in *Lawrence*, there is one dominant set, and therein lies the key to this film. *Lawrence of Arabia* is about a man who seeks to discover himself by finding his place in the world...and his place is the desert.

Simply put, T. E. Lawrence was a young English army officer who helped the British effort in World War I by uniting the disparate Arab tribes against the Turks, creating enough havoc to allow General Allenby to fight, and win, in Palestine and Syria without danger from a vulnerable right flank. But to state it simply is to misstate. Lawrence really was one of the most fascinating and complex characters of the twentieth century, and the movie David Lean (*Bridge on the River Kwai*, *Dr. Zhivago*) made about his war experience shows just how fascinating and complex he was.

The movie begins with Lawrence's death, suffered in a motorcycle accident on a country lane in the garden area of Dorset near his home in England. Remarks by those leaving his funeral take the viewer

back to the story of how he became famous. There is little plot to the film. Lawrence is dispatched as a translator by the British to the tents of Prince Feisal, but shows himself to have two qualities that cause him to win the trust of the Arabs over all his superior officers: 1) a deep knowledge of, and love and respect for, the Arab way of life, and 2) a strength of will that seems born from the challenge of the desert. He suggests a daring raid on Aqabah, proposing to cross the uncrossable desert, pulls it off, and the rest, as they say, is history.

But this film is much more than a war film. It explores the ambiguities and difficulties of being the product of one culture, while longing to be the product of another. Lawrence, the Oxford-educated archaeologist—physically awkward, unsure of himself in uniform, quiet, humble, scholarly—becomes “Aurents” when he joins with the Arab tribes in the desert, a leader of men into battle, proudly strutting atop a captured Turkish train with his white robes flowing behind him. But he also becomes a bloodthirsty slaughterer of men, a frustrated defender of human dignity in the face of the Arabs' cruel ethnic bias against outcasts, and a megalomaniacal believer in his

#### Film Credits

##### Starring:

Alec Guinness  
(Prince Feisal)  
Anthony Quinn  
(Auda abu Tayi)  
Jack Hawkins  
(General Allenby)  
Omar Sharif  
(Sherif Ali)  
José Ferrer  
(Turkish Bey)  
Anthony Quayle  
(Colonel Brighton)  
Claude Rains  
(Mr. Dryden)  
Arthur Kennedy  
(Jackson Bentley)  
Donald Wolfitt  
(General Murray)

##### Director:

David Lean

##### Writers:

T.E. Lawrence  
Robert Bolt

##### Producers:

Robert A. Harris  
Sam Spiegel

##### Original music:

Maurice Jarre

##### Cinematographer:

Freddie Young

##### Costume Designer:

Phyllis Dalton

222 minutes

Not Rated





own myth of invulnerability until he is beaten and humiliated by an amused Turkish officer. Lawrence, the dreamer and idealist, comes face to face with reality when the war is over and the Arabs cannot even agree on how to generate electricity in Damascus. Though they have fought and died side by side in the desert, they kill each other over the baubles and trinkets of the spoils of war. In the last scene of the film, a despondent and disillusioned Lawrence slumps in despair as his driver reminds him cheerily that he's going home to England.

The film has so many exceptional qualities it is difficult to enumerate them. The script by Robert Bolt (*A Man for All Seasons*) has been called "the greatest script ever written for the medium of film" by no less an authority than Steven Spielberg. The acting is superb: Peter O'Toole and Omar Sharif came crashing into film stardom in this movie, and Alec Guinness, Anthony Quinn and Jack

Hawkins play their roles with an *élan* and clarity that appears effortless. The musical score also won an academy award, as did Lean's direction.

But the true genius in this film lies in its cinematography. As Roger Ebert put it in his review of the restored and expanded version released in 1989, "It is spectacle and experience, and its ideas are about things you can see or feel, not things you can say." In one of the most famous entrances in movie history, Omar Sharif rides out of a mirage in the desert, in one long take symbolizing how the Arab way of life flows from the desert and, to survive, must disappear back into it again. The dunes, the swirls, the scrub, the baked, cracked, white-hot sand—all contribute to one overwhelming idea: the desert is harsh and unrelenting, and it will

*Lawrence really was one of the most fascinating and complex characters of the twentieth century.*

either destroy you or change you into a being not unlike itself—immeasurably strong but primal, cruel, relentless.

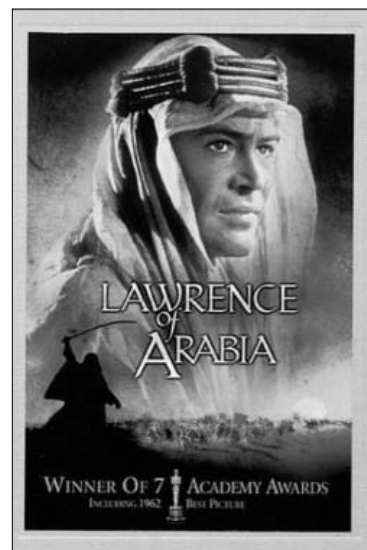
W. H. Auden once described Lawrence's life as "an allegory of the transformation of the Truly Weak Man into the Truly Strong Man." When, near the end of the film, a half-crazed Lawrence yells "No prisoners!"

and leads a charge upon a weary, defenseless Turkish battalion, shooting, stabbing and cutting them to pieces, the camera comes to rest on a blood-soaked Lawrence, unable to understand himself any longer. Such is the price he had to pay to discover strength.

*Lawrence of Arabia* has recently been released in a two disc DVD that includes an hour-long documentary on the movie and a number of interesting additional features. ■

~Drew Trotter

*Dr. Andrew H. Trotter, Jr., is the executive director of the Center for Christian Study in Charlottesville, Virginia, where he teaches and writes on theology and culture, focusing on modern American film. Copyright © 2001 by Andrew H. Trotter, Jr.*



## 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 can you add to the above about the role of the desert in Lawrence's life? What is the "place of place" in our lives? How does the physical terrain of our everyday existence shape both who we are and the way we think and act?
3. In a crucial scene in Prince Feisal's tent, Lawrence quotes from the Qur'an by heart. What other references to Islam are there in the film, and how do they contribute to the picture the film builds of the Arab way of life? Where you disagree with the message of the film, how can you talk about and demonstrate the truth in a winsome and creative way?
5. The apostle Paul claims "When I am weak, then am I strong." What does Paul mean by that? How does this compare to Lawrence's understanding of the development of human character in the movie?
6. There are a great many memorable shots in this movie; which made the greatest impact on you? Why?
7. Lawrence seems to vacillate greatly between the deepest humility and the greatest hubris. In which scenes do you see one or the other (or both) in him? What does the movie teach you about the costs or the benefits of pride and humility?
8. Might the film be a useful point of contact for discussion with non-Christians?

## An Original Interpretation

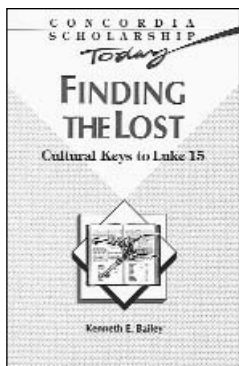
Since the Bible is a literary work set in a particular cultural and historical setting, we must seek to read the text as the original author intended, and as the original readers would have understood it. As Dr. Doriani puts it in *Getting the Message*: “The more we understand about the world of the Bible, the better we understand the Bible itself.” The reason is that to the extent our perspective differs from that of the first century there is the possibility we will either read into the text something that isn’t there, or miss something the original readers understood but which remains hidden to us.

Thus, nurturing an understanding of the history and culture of the biblical world enriches our understanding of God’s word.

There are a number of things we can do which will help us be better students of Scripture at this point. One is to observe carefully the cultural and historical data in the text itself. Such material is not extraneous, but is part of the inspired text and therefore is God’s word to us as much as is any teaching found in the passage. Another thing we can do is be self-aware, a student of our own culture in order to identify as much as is possible, the various prejudices we bring to the text. Our penchant for individualism, for example, can easily be read into the Scriptures, inadvertently but effectively blunting the biblical emphasis on covenant community.

Another thing we can do is build a library of resources by scholars who can help us see more clearly from the literary, cultural, and historical perspective of the first century. One book to include in that

library is Kenneth Bailey’s *Finding the Lost*. In one sense it is a simple book; a study of the three parables of lost things recorded in Luke 15: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. It is also a scholarly and detailed study which will deepen your understanding not just of these parables, but of the entire New Testament. (Dr. Bailey is a theologian whose specialty is the cultural background and literary forms of the New Testament, and who for over 35 years has taught the Scriptures in Egypt, Lebanon, Jerusalem, and Cyprus.) Consider, for example, one



***Nurturing an understanding of the history and culture of the biblical world enriches our understanding of God’s word.***

small detail in the parable of the lost sheep. In Luke 15 Jesus is talking to the Pharisees who have criticized him for eating with “sinners and tax-collectors” (v. 2). In response he tells them three stories, the implication being that in each case he seeks to recover what has been lost. This is something the Pharisees would not do, since they remained apart from “sinners” who might defile them. Now, when we read how Jesus identified himself—and the Pharisees, by implication, as Israel’s spiritual leaders—as shepherds, we tend to have a warm feeling about the image. David was a shepherd before he was king, and even God is viewed as a shepherd in the Old Testament (Psalm 23). Sheep, particularly lambs, are cuddly creatures, and shepherds are noble peasants pursuing an honorable vocation, braving the elements

for the sake of their flock. This may be our view of it, Bailey argues, but it’s not how the Jews of the first century saw it. They saw shepherds as untrustworthy, men who made a living by driving their flocks intentionally onto other people’s land. “Shepherds in the oral law,” Bailey notes, “were a proscribed trade. These trades were listed by the rabbis as being those professions which no law-abiding Jew should teach to his son because in the judgment of the rabbis it was impossible to keep the law and practice such trades... Thus to address Pharisees as if they were shepherds would be considered

by the Pharisees as aggressive and offensive.” And not merely shepherds, mind you, but failed shepherds who have to go out looking for lost sheep. In other words, the very image in the text

that we see as positive and endearing, the first audience perceived as negative and insulting.

*Finding the Lost* is accessible and clearly written, a good resource for serious students of the Bible. I began this book assuming I’d seen most of what there is to see in the three parables of Luke 15; by the end I was seeing with new eyes. ■

~Denis D. Haack

**Sources:** *Getting the Message: A Plan for Interpreting and Applying the Bible* by Daniel Doriani (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing; 1996) p. 47; *Finding the Lost* p. 65.

**Book reviewed:** *Finding the Lost: Cultural Keys to Luke 15* by Kenneth Bailey (St Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House; 1992) 212 pp. + bibliography + index.

## Chance or Design

### An introduction to ID.

If you have been waiting for a book designed to provide ordinary readers with a basic understanding of the intelligent design (ID) movement, your wait is over. *Signs of Intelligence* brings together fourteen essays by leading thinkers in the movement, written not primarily for scientists but for the interested lay reader.

ID argues that the notion of intelligent design is already known and used by scientists. Those involved with SETI, for example, the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence, scan the heavens with radio telescopes listening for a discernable pattern in the random noise generated in universe. As depicted in the film *Cosmos*, scientists assume that if they happen upon such a pattern they will not only be able to identify it as such, but that it is proper to assume that such a pattern is designed by an intelligent agent.

ID seeks to broaden the application of such thinking more widely in the field of biology, in opposition to a doctrinaire naturalism which insists all complexity is the product of chance. "The world is a mirror representing the divine life," William Dembski writes. "The mechanical philosophy was ever blind to this fact. Intelligent design, on the other hand, readily embraces the sacramental nature of physical reality. Indeed, intelligent design is just the Logos theology of John's Gospel restated in the idiom of information theory."

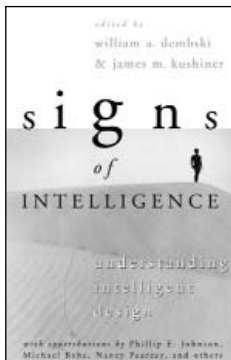
Chapters include:

"Design and the Discriminating Public: Gaining a Hearing from Ordinary People" by Nancy Pearcey

(senior fellow at the Discovery Institute's Center for the Renewal of Science and Culture; former executive editor of BreakPoint radio).

"The Cambrian Explosion: The Fossil Record and Intelligent Design" by Robert DeHaan (retired professor of psychology, Hope College) and John Wiester (chairman, 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,



*"The world is a mirror representing the divine life...Intelligent design readily embraces the sacramental nature of physical reality."*

Texas A & M University).

"Signs of Intelligence: A Primer on the Discernment of Intelligent Design" by William Dembski (author of *The Design Inference*).

"Is Intelligent Design Science? The Scientific Status and Future of Design-Theoretic Explanations" by Bruce Gordon (interim director of the Baylor University's Science and Religion Project).

We recommend *Signs of Intelligence* to you. (Most of the essays in this book appeared originally in the July/August 1999 issue of *Touchstone* magazine.)

### A lively debate.

The ID movement has been generating controversy—and not merely from secularists and young-

earth creationists. One example worth noting involves a review of Phillip Johnson's book, *The Wedge of Truth* (InterVarsity Press) in the January 2001 issue of *First Things* (pp.48-52). The reviewer, Edward T. Oakes, a Catholic priest and professor at Regis University, has some sharply critical comments to make about the quality of Johnson's arguments and the ID movement as a whole. Fr. Oakes and his critics, including a number of the authors of essays in *Signs of Intelligence*, have an extended exchange in the April 2001 issue of *First Things* (pp. 5-13). ■

—Denis D. Haack

### Book Reviewed:

*Signs of Intelligence: Understanding Intelligent Design* edited by Williams A. Dembski and James M. Kushiner (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press; 2001) 216 pp. + notes.

### Order From:



Distinctive Books and Music

www.heartsandmindsbooks.com  
read@heartsandmindsbooks.com

234 East Main Street  
Dallastown, PA 17313  
(717) 246-3333

All books mentioned in *Critique* may be ordered directly from Hearts and Minds. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to Ransom Fellowship.

## Literature and

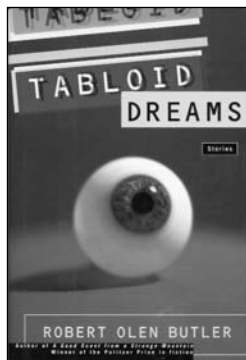
Literature enlarges our being by admitting us to experiences not our own,” wrote C.S. Lewis. “They may be beautiful, terrible, awe-inspiring, exhilarating, pathetic, comic, or merely piquant. Literature gives the entrée to them all.” When I hear these words from a man who not only loved to read but wrote some of the most beloved literature of all time, a thrill goes through me. Yes, I think. *That’s it exactly!* One of the reasons I read literature is because it opens up new worlds to me, enlarging my own existence and helping me to viscerally understand people in situations vastly different from my own.

The children in C.S. Lewis’s Narnia series had access to a wonderful and sometimes frightening new world through an old wardrobe—sometimes that wardrobe had a wooden back as would be expected of such things, and other times, the coats gave way to snowy tree branches, fantastical creatures, and exciting adventures. I am not so lucky as to have a closet like this, but at least my rooms are lined with favorite books offering entrée into a myriad of different worlds.

When I was younger, many of my evenings were spent curled up under a blanket with my brother and sister, eating hot, buttered popcorn while Mom read to us. *Little House on the Prairie* gave way to *Wind in the Willows* led to *Where the Red Fern Grows* and on and on. There were sword fights and horse chases and families making their way through the wilderness and clashes between good and

evil. Although I was an American child growing up in a small Midwest town in the twentieth century, my experiences were not limited by time or space or by my own small life.

Being an avid reader means that I never stop growing. Thanks to Chaim Potok, author of *The Chosen* and *The Promise*, I understand something of what it’s like to be a Hasidic Jew and to disappoint your Rabbi father by deciding to become a psychiatrist rather than his successor. Rueven and Danny, the two main characters in these books, started out as enemies, but became fast friends, opening themselves to the joys and sor-



***It is easier for me to accept with compassion someone else’s struggle if I can understand even the tiniest part of it, for there is a direct link between understanding and compassion.***

rows inherent in loving another person deeply, giving voice to elements of yearning in my own life.

Joy Kogawa, author of *Obasan*, helped me to feel what it must have been like to be Japanese-Canadian during World War II when people of Japanese descent were forced from their homes and sent to internment or labor camps. I also know something of the Japanese culture and how it affects the Nisei and Issei, the second and third generations born in Canada. Looking at history and family and tradition through Naomi’s quiet eyes, I wonder how I could have thought that the American way of approaching life was the best or only way.

Like good movies, books have a way of pushing me out of my comfort zone, of challenging me to think beyond

myself. Whether or not I become friends with a Hasidic Jew or Japanese-Canadian, I am filled with compassion for the hardships their people have experienced, and am not completely ignorant of their values, beliefs, and practices.

But what difference does all this make, really? In the end, does it matter whether I understand why the loss of a throwing arm can send a baseball-loving man spiraling into depression (something I discovered in *The Brothers K* by David James Duncan)? I believe it does matter. The legacy my parents gave me of loving literature isn’t simply that they’ve handed down a nice hobby; no, the worth of lit-

erature reaches far deeper than that.

Jesus was a man of compassion—he understood without being told that a leper, bereft of all contact with other humans, would be hungry not just for healing, but for the soft touch of a hand. When Jesus was approached by a leper, the Healer reached out and touched *before* making the leper’s skin smooth and healthy (Mark 40:41).

Jesus understood that a prostitute’s most meaningful gesture was to use all her hard-earned money on perfume to pour over his feet, using her hair to wipe them. And to help the Pharisees—those obtuse, all-too finite men—understand why he would allow such a gesture, he told them a story (Luke 7: 36-50)!

I am as finite, and often as thick, as the Pharisees. There is much I don’t

# Compassion

understand and many a gesture I quickly misunderstand and judge. It is easier for me to accept with compassion someone else's struggle if I can understand even the tiniest part of it, for there is a direct link between understanding and compassion. Often, I learn as the Pharisees did—through story.

**R**obert Olen Butler, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for his collection *Good Scent from a Strange Mountain*, consistently surprises me with his fiction. He can write convincingly from almost any point of view: male, female, old, young, Vietnamese, American, educated, uneducated, human, alien. His new collection, *Tabloid Dreams*, is a strange composite of stories inspired by titles you'd see in a tabloid while standing in line at the grocery store. "Woman Uses Glass Eye to Spy on Philandering Husband." "Nine-Year-Old Boy Is World's Youngest Hit Man." "Boy Born with Tattoo of Elvis."

These fantastical tales appear at first to be mere extensions of tabloid fodder, yet at the heart of every story is the human impulse to find meaning and love in the midst of broken relationships and mundane lives. Butler, whether he is a Christian or not, is worth reading because he writes truthfully about what it's like to live in a fallen world.

"Every Man She Kisses Dies" is about a woman (you can probably guess) whose boyfriends die after kissing her. She doesn't immediately make the connection between their deaths and her kiss, but eventually it's impossible for her to deny. The first time, she's in a boat with her boyfriend and after they kiss, he rolls out of the boat and disappears beneath the waves, never to be heard from again. She goes to a baseball game with Frank and "before he could look back to the next pitch, I moved my face toward him and he was ready and we kissed and our lips had barely touched when there was a crack in the distance and then a crack very nearby and his

lips lurched hard into mine and slid away. They say the ball rebounded out past second base. Ryne Sandberg made a one-handed catch. Frank would have liked that. But he was dead."

If the story continued in this vein, simply detailing the ways in which all the boyfriends died, it would be a frivolous story and as shallow as those found in the grocer's check-out lanes.

But there's more to it. Butler's character continues: "There is enough of my daddy's sense of the world in me to understand after two in a row that something was happening here that was providential. Not that I didn't test it some more. Not that my own impro-

*Present in every story is the human impulse to find meaning and love in the midst of broken relationships and mundane lives.*

vised half-theology didn't cling to the notion of a God who would look on the yearning of a woman and a man to touch and take solace—or even a woman and a woman—any two people who found themselves in the terror and isolation of this life they did not choose—I half imaged a God who would look on such creatures and pity them and love them and try very hard to show Himself in those moments when the two people, whoever they were, were letting go of their own selfishness and fears and faithlessness and trying to find a way to cling hard and long and permanently to each other. And if they failed at that, God would see just the yearning for it as worthy of a gift of all the grace a God could give."

At the heart of this story is a woman who believes in God, but struggles to separate her preacher father's legalism from God's love. As is common in our culture, sex is

equated with love, even though the consequences of such intimacy is high.

What would you say to such a person? Would you see only saw the outward actions—the movement from one sexually active relationship to another? To speak of sin would not accomplish anything nor would a speech on the consequences of a sinful lifestyle. As Denis Haack so frequently asks within the pages of *Critique*, how would you winsomely—and in a way that makes sense to your listener—share your faith?

To be honest, it's a difficult question that I am still grappling with. I can't arm myself with a memorized answer to all of life's questions because each person I encounter will

have a unique context, different questions, and buried misconceptions about God just as the woman in this story illustrates. Will I have the patience to ask questions first, to look

beyond the evidence of sin, to understand the person before me? Will I zero in on what's really at stake and respond with compassion as Jesus so consistently did?

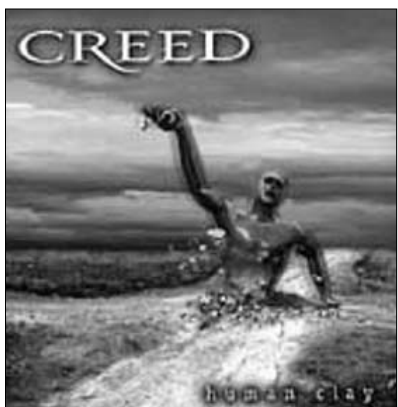
Reading Butler's story compels me to think about all of these things while increasing my sense of compassion for someone whose lifestyle I don't understand. In the words of C.S. Lewis, "Those of us who have been true readers all our life seldom realize the enormous extension of our being that we owe to authors. We realize it best when we talk with an unliterary friend. He may be full of goodness and good sense but he inhabits a tiny world." ■

—Marsena Konkle

#### Sources:

*Jack: A Life of C.S. Lewis* by George Sayer (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1994), p. 399. *Tabloid Dreams* by Robert Olen Butler (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996), pp. 127-128.

## Creed



In 1997 a group of rock musicians from Tallahassee, Florida calling themselves Creed pooled \$6000 and recorded their first CD, *My Own Prison*. Four of their songs rose to be #1 hits. Their second album, *Human Clay* was released in 1999, with over 10 million copies sold, and as of this writing, on Billboard's Top 200 hit list for 82 consecutive weeks.

The first thing many notice about Creed is that a number of their songs contain biblical phrases

and imagery.

**Are  
They?  
Or  
Are  
They  
Not?**

*Can you take me higher?  
To the place where blind men see  
Can you take me higher?  
To the place with golden streets.*  
from "Higher"

*Step inside the light and see the fear  
Of God burn inside of me*  
from "Unforgiven"

*His yoke is easy and His burden is light  
He looked me right in the eyes  
Direct and concise to remind me  
To always do what's right*  
from "Faceless Man"

Creed's lyrics tackle serious topics—sin, conscience, the joy on discovering you will soon be a father, forgiveness, abortion—and in terms that should cause Christians to stop and listen.

*Well I just heard the news today  
It seems my life is going to change  
I closed my eyes, begin to pray  
Then tears of joy stream down my face*  
from "With Arms Wide Open"

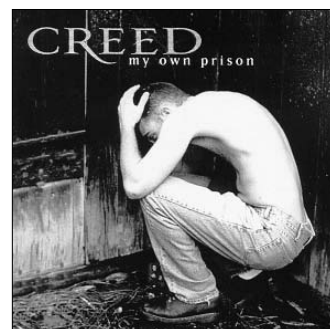
*Only in America  
We're slaves to be free  
Only in America we kill the unborn*

*To make ends meet  
Only in America  
Sexuality is democracy  
Only in America we stamp our god  
"In God We Trust"*  
from "In America"

*I know I can't hold the hate inside my mind  
'Cause what consumes your thoughts controls  
your life  
So I'll just ask a question  
What if?  
What if your words could be judged like a  
crime?*  
from "What It"

Still, for all that, Creed is discomfiting to many conservative believers. They do not record with a Christian label. One song contains a swear word. They appeared at Woodstock '99. Their songs were used in the soundtracks of *Scream 3* and *Halloween H2O*, two horror films which failed to win the hearts—or approval—of conservative reviewers. And their hard-driving beat and intense sound sets them apart from the praise music which dominates the Contemporary Christian Music scene.

"Are we a Christian band?" Lead vocalist and song writer Scott Stapp asks on their web site ([www.creednet.com](http://www.creednet.com)). "This is a question we are asked a lot because of some of the references made in the lyrics. No, we are not a Christian band. A Christian band has an agenda to lead others to believe in their specific religious beliefs. We have no agenda! Those references were made at a time in my life when I was questioning how I was raised, and searching for where I stood concerning those issues. This is not to say I have abandoned those beliefs, just search-



ing for where they fit into my life.”

The band members do have Christian backgrounds. Stapp was raised, for example, in a Pentecostal home, but he left when he was 17 years old, and has struggled to make sense of his faith. “View Creed,” *Christianity Today* suggests, “not as a Christian band but as a God-haunted band.” Stapp, I think, would agree. “I am haunted by my past,” he says. “I am haunted by God.”

I wonder why so many believers ask Creed whether they are a “Christian band.” Maybe they are concerned for the salvation of Scott Stapp and his fellow band members, but I doubt it. Those I have talked to haven’t had this in mind. Listeners may also wonder what influences have shaped their imaginations to write songs in which hints of faith and biblical phrases and images are scattered through the lyrics. But if that’s the case, wouldn’t it make more sense to ask about the faith of the lyricist, rather than whether the band itself is Christian? What exactly is a Christian band, anyway?

Many I have talked to ask the question because they ask it about everything. For them the world is divided into two camps, which must be identified. Us and Them. Safe and Unsafe. In and Out. Good and Bad—or if not Bad, at least Questionable. This is an understandable reaction in a fallen world, but it really shouldn’t be taken as part of discernment. It’s the reaction which gives rise to Christian Yellow Pages, and the other forms of tribalism infecting the Christian community. Though we may not like it, reality in a fallen world is far more messy than the question assumes. An author may be a Christian, but his book may be poorly written and subtly untrue. A poet may be both a lesbian and an unbeliever, but she might make us stop and wonder at the searing beauty of the truth she captures in words. Being discerning cuts deeper than simple categories.

The question can even be intimidating and inappropriate in some instances. “Are you a Christian?” is easy for those with assurance—and for the merely self-assured—but harder for others. Young people who grew up in legalistic homes and churches struggle to make sense of the faith, hoping that grace is greater than the tradition they were

given. Deeply aware of their struggle, many are too honest to declare themselves too quickly, if for no other reason than they were taught that such struggles do not occur in those who truly know God. Better to ask about their “spiritual pilgrimage”—a question which opens the door to conversation, regardless of the answer.

God is calling out a people to himself, of that we are sure. If we act as though the process must proceed neatly, however, with clear boundaries at every point, we will be disappointed. We live in the time of Not Yet, when redemption is breathtakingly real and salvation is heartrendingly incomplete. The questions we ask—and the music we embrace—should reflect that reality. ■

**Sources:**

“Frequently Asked Questions” on [www.creednet.com](http://www.creednet.com).  
“Rock’s Real Rebels” by Kevin A. Miller in *Christianity Today* (January 8, 2001; pp. 90-91). Review of *Human Clay* by JS on [www.strangerthingsmag.com](http://www.strangerthingsmag.com). “About Creed” on [www.geocities.com](http://www.geocities.com).

**Albums reviewed:**

*My Own Prison* (Wind-up Records; 1977; CD# 60150-13049-2).  
*Human Clay* (Wind-up Records; 1999, 2000; CD# 60150-13053-2).



by

**Denis**

**D.**

**Haack**

# Software & Verifying Facts

<http://www.freebiblesoftware.com>

## The Ephesians 4 Group

A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, The E4 Group gives away Logos 2.1 Bible study software free (a nominal shipping charge applies) to anyone who logs on to their web site and requests a copy. Additional libraries available (to those who make a donation) include the works of A. W. Pink, Spurgeon, Jonathan Edwards, J. I. Packer, and more. E4 members (donors who give \$25/month for one year or a one-time gift of \$300) receive ten copies of the Logos CD to give as gifts. Though we have never used this particular Bible study software, the price makes this offer worth considering.

## Ransom Ratings

**Design:** Simple but sufficient.

**Content:** Primarily geared to distributing the software. Occasional software updates and new libraries of resources are listed as they become available.

**Ease of Use:** Designed to make signing up for free software easy.

<http://www.truthorfiction.com>

## Truth or Fiction

Every week I receive various email messages alerting me to the latest virus cruising the Internet or telling me some story which is meant to be either shocking or inspirational. Over the past couple of months, for example, one included Bill Gates' "Eleven Rules of Life" which, the email informed me, he gave in a speech to a group of high school students. Examples: "#1. Life is not fair—get used to it... #4. If you think your teacher is tough, wait till you get a boss. He doesn't have tenure... #11. Be nice to nerds. Chances are you'll end up working for one." Another told how George W. Bush led a young man to faith in Christ at a banquet for campaign workers. People who are tempted to Forward such material should log onto Truth or Fiction first, where such stories are researched.

## Ransom Ratings

**Design:** Not elaborate, but very functional.

**Content:** Rumors distributed via email are listed, and the research on their veracity is clearly explained. For example, Gates' supposed "Rules of Life" actually were lifted from a book by Charles Sykes called *Dumbing Down our Kids*, and though Truth or Fiction documents in detail Mr. Bush's profession of faith, it reveals the "banquet witness" to be fictional.

**Ease of Use:** A few mouse clicks puts their research at your disposal. If people used Truth or Fiction regularly, fewer lies would be disseminated.

*Critique* is not available by **subscription**; rather it is sent as a ministry to all donors to Ransom Fellowship, which is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, tax-deductible ministry. Everyone on Ransom's mailing list also receive *Notes from Toad Hall*, a newsletter written by Margie Haack in which she reflects on what it means to be faithful in the ordinary and routine of daily life, and gives news about Ransom's ministry.

*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.

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.