

# critique

A RANSOM FELLOWSHIP PUBLICATION

ISSUE ONE 2008

## ***Shouting About Nothing***

**R. Greg Grooms  
reviews**

***No Country for Old Men***



**Reading The Word** Seamless Fabric & X-Rated Evangelism  
**World Around Us** Expressing Faith Indian Style: The Aradhna Interview  
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**Resources** Gadgets, Grids & Glory; Sex God "This is Really About That"  
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**Helping Christians Develop Skill In Discernment**



## At Peace, Always Troubled

*The greatest goodness is a peaceful mind.*

- Atisa Dipankara Shrijnana

982-1054 AD, Tibetan Buddhist teacher

A sense of deep inner peace is a curious thing. We all yearn for it, especially on frustrating, frantic days, but on the other hand we can feel most deeply alive in its absence. Say, when we've intentionally stepped outside our comfort zone to do something good, maybe even important, but the step into the unknown brands the moment into our memory. This may be one reason why extreme sports and tattoos are so popular-when numbness seems normal, the rush and pain can be reassuring.

Jesus promised peace for his followers, which several of them pointed out recently when I questioned the importance of inner peace for Christians. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you," Jesus told his disciples. "Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." True enough, I responded-but that's not all he said on the topic. Later in the same exchange with his disciples Jesus told them he would soon be leaving them in a broken world, but would not forsake them; God's Holy Spirit would come to live within them. "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Peace and trouble is what he promised.

So, if by inner peace we mean a sense of bliss from being detached from the hard reality of a broken world, we have mistaken Buddhist enlightenment for Christian redemption. If by peace we mean withdrawing into a protected world of middle class comfort, we have mistaken the American dream for Christian obedience. And if by peace we mean sliding into society hiding the sharp claims of faith to accommodate societal preferences, we have mistaken worldliness for Christian faithfulness. Whatever the peace is, it's not an absence of trouble.

Left to myself, I always choose wrongly, seeking comfort over messiness, familiarity over being stretched, isolation rather than incarnation. The inner peace this produces is merely a respectable form of addiction.

We live in a deeply troubled world. Following Christ means walking into that trouble, and that is always troubling. Always troubling, that is, except for a quiet confidence that the safest, most ultimately fulfilling, shalom-infused place to be in this troubled world is to be in Christ.

And that is to be fully at peace, always troubled; quietly confidence, slightly on edge; in the dust of death, fully alive. It's at the intersection of fallen humanity and divine grace.

**Sources:** John 14:27; John 16:33.

# critique

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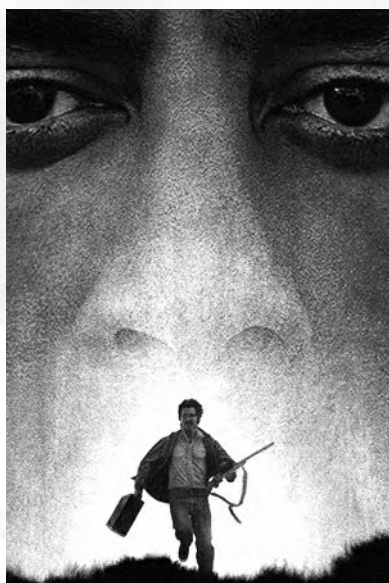
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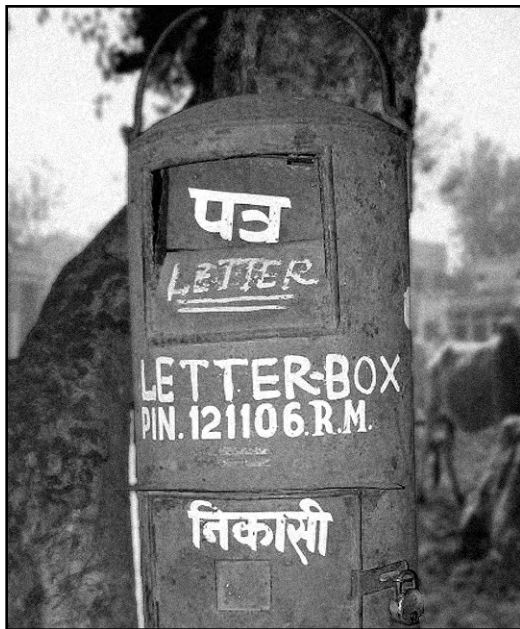
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## Rap, Reggae, Ragas...Response

### To the Editor:

In the article "Rap, Reggae, and Ragas" Matthew Hundley attempts to convince that "all this music" can be worshipful. What I find glaringly missing is any discussion on what the music itself (separate from the lyrics) is communicating. He includes a quote by Mohr that says that "music is neutral and that what counts is the message.." As a musician and composer, I am astonished that he appears to be unaware that the music contributes far more to the "message" than the lyrics. Music has the power to communicate that the lyrics are a joke, are trivial, are important, are about the gratification of our lower nature, are about something profound, are erotic, are painful, are comfortable, etc. The combination of the message of the music and the message of the lyrics is what is communicated by the song--and if it is a good song it will be more powerful than the sum of the parts. Only by considering both can we determine if the music is true, and thus appropriate for worship. A somewhat new book *This is Your Brain on Music* by Daniel Levitin makes a powerful case that, as human beings we react to music in a basic way. (They don't change the sound track when they put subtitles in a movie.) It is not subject to culture. We have thus even a greater responsibility to consider what the music is communicating than to

consider what the lyrics are communicating, even though the lyrics are important. If the music does not supplement, or at least retain, the truth of the lyrics, the song does not belong in worship.

Sincerely,  
Barbara K. Holm.

### Matthew Hundley replies:

I want to thank you for writing in regards to the "Rap, Reggae and Ragas" article. Your response prompted me to review the article, along with doctrinal statements about worship, and also to re-examine some of the key writing and scripture proofs that have influenced my position on music and worship.

I firmly believe that Christianity must be "culturally embodied." In a recent discussion on this topic, Christian apologist Jerram Barrs said that, "God calls us to speak in forms and languages accessible to our hearers." The three examples I brought up in the article are about people who are doing just that--speaking Christ through the language and forms of other cultures. I would ask why you find it difficult to embrace these three particular styles of music in the context of worship?

I agree with you that the music itself (minus the lyric) holds great emotive power. In fact it is the music,

as delivery mechanism of the message, that served as the basis for this article. From this I proposed that rap was an ideal genre for delivering the message (preaching); reggae rhythms serve as a wonderful conduit for glorification and worship (praise); and Indian ragas with their subtle complexities serve well for meditation and supplication (prayer). Lyrical content is certainly one of the main ways that we distinguish sacred from secular within each of these musical styles.

I too am a musician and composer who is very aware of the emotional and spiritual power that music conveys. I think we are in agreement that music has the power to present a full range of emotions from praise and joy, to pain and sorrow. But the Bible, while it speaks of instruments used in worship, emphasizes the psalms and poetry to be proclaimed with that instrument which God gave us all--our voices. God gives us voices and he gives us words to proclaim his glory and praise his handiwork. God's word was written to be sung.

God's children have sung praises to him in many different languages and many different musical styles for thousands of years. Christians today sing praises to God through a broad range of styles based on their specific cultures. To say that our worship music is "is not subject to culture" would be a misnomer. Music in the Christian church has long been

subject to the predominant culture in which the church resides. In Paul Westermeyer's book *Te Deum*, he speaks of how the earliest Christian churches set hymns and spiritual songs to the popular tunes of the cultures in which they dwelt. Some of the earliest Christian hymnody we have on record dates back to the 4th century in Syria and Lebanon. These tunes are highly influenced by Arabic culture with lyrics written in Aramaic. (Note: you can find modern recordings of some of these tunes by the Lebanese contralto Fadia El-Hage.) This was a time when instrumental music was actually seen as pagan (associated with sex cults, heathens and human sacrifice); thus the human voice was deemed more in accordance with piety (see the writings of John Chrysostom). There are also Hebrew worship songs which are still sung in some traditions which emerged out of Ethiopian culture hundreds of years ago. More closely related to the article, the Indian bhajan style has its roots in Christian music from the 17th century in India.



If we open our ears to the world around us we find Christian traditions in many parts of the globe which date back far before the Reformation, and far before the establishment of our Western classical tradition. Not that there is anything wrong with Western musical forms, as I find plenty of wonderful, worshipful tunes in our classical tradition and in our hymnals (much of which is stylistically borrowed from the secular culture of its day).

Finally, I wanted to address your claim that we have "a greater responsibility to consider what the music is communicating than to consider what the lyrics are communicating." As we look to the validity of any musical expression in worship we must look to the heart of those expressing their faith, whether with instrument or with voice. Are they approaching worship biblically, in the spirit of truth, and in earnest praise of the Lord our God? If this appears to be the case, then who are we to judge? For there is only one who knows our hearts.

Each day millions of people in Brazil, in Africa, in China, in Russia, in the Caribbean, in India, in the Middle



East worship Jesus Christ in a spirit of truth, with their hearts and souls pouring out gifts of praise to God in any multitude of musical expressions. Would we deny them the right to worship through their own musical expressions?

We must learn to respect worship styles of our brothers and sisters in Christ from across the globe. We have much we can learn from their unique expressions of worship through song; through their unique musical ways of conveying their love to Christ and to God through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Let us not limit His embrace.

Here are what some others have to say on the topic:

*Gospel music is any style whose lyric is: substantially based upon historically orthodox Christian truth contained in or derived from the Holy Bible; and/or an expression of worship of God or praise for His works; and/or testimony of relationship with God through Christ; and/or obviously prompted and informed by a Christian worldview.*

**- The Gospel Music Association**

*God is not truly glorified by us, unless the hearts of all agree in giving him praise, and their tongues also join in harmony ... for the unity of his servants is so much esteemed by God, that he will not have his glory sounded forth amidst discords and contentions.*

**- John Calvin**

*It is common to hear criticisms of new musical styles being introduced in churches today ...*

*Unfortunately, we often become attached to the musical style we grew up with and resist anything new. But our study of hymnody has shown that, with each new age in church history, fresh musical forms have arisen spontaneously to give expression to the reviving work of the Holy Spirit in the church. No one style has been, or ever can be, sufficient to serve effectively as the sole and permanent church style.*

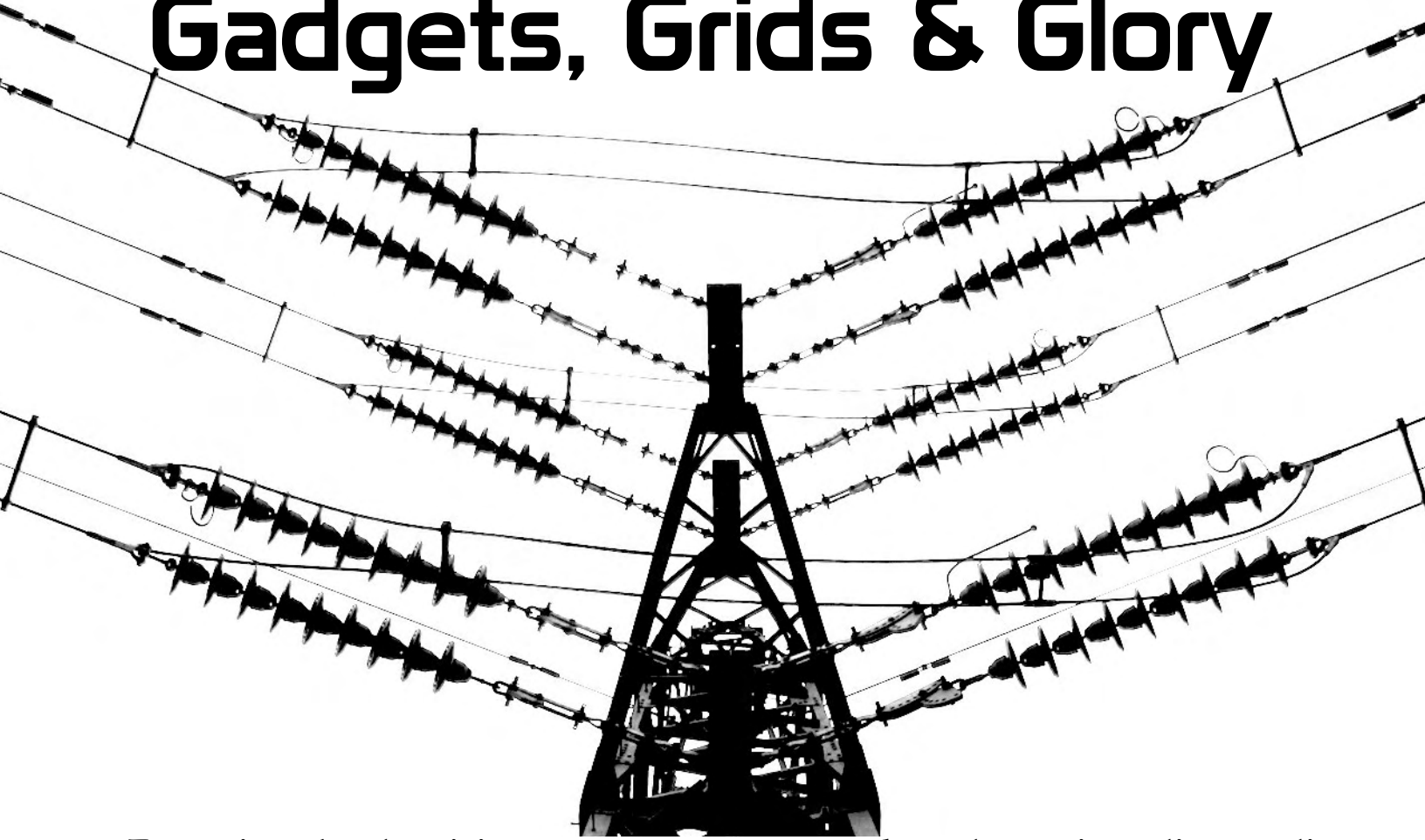
**- Lawrence Roff** (*Let us Sing*)

*We will despise no voice He is pleased to employ, expanding our own music palette when we can, & exercising heroic forbearance when we must.*

**- Reggie Kidd** (*Singing with the Singing Savior*)



# Gadgets, Grids & Glory



Every time the electricity goes out, we are treated to a lesson in reality: our lives, for blessing and curse, are inextricably intertwined with technology. Not too many generations ago artisans knew how their tools and machines worked because they made and maintained them, but few skilled or even unskilled workers can make that claim today. The few who try to remain relatively free of gadgets are still dependant on technology--it's just behind the scenes. There is no escape. Folk like the Amish may not be inconvenienced when a telephone line goes down in a storm, but if the electrical grid collapsed, the ripple effects would flow over them, too.

In *Beyond Paradise*, scientist Jack Swearingen argues that technology, as with all of life and culture, is best understood if viewed within the biblical perspective of Creation, Fall, and Redemption. He is clear as to his goals for writing. "My objectives are," he writes in his Prologue, "1) convince Christians that technology is shaping our culture and dominating our lives for better or worse; 2) persuade us to be proactive; to manage the impact of technology in our lives individually and to demonstrate that alternative to the general culture; 3) 'unpack' the scriptural mandate for doing these things; 4) develop a biblical foundation for technology; and 5) provide practical means for assessing and steering technology toward biblical norms."

Jack is a good friend, and I'm glad he wrote this book. He's passionate about technology, and committed to Christ's Lordship. His concern is that technology is being pushed ahead with minimal regard for its spiritual, aesthetic, and social impact. He is correct and it should concern us all. As with all good things in a fallen world, technology both gives and takes. I live in Minnesota, and even with global warming I have no desire to live without technology. I like indoor plumbing and central heating, thank you very much, and am convinced they are good gifts of grace. I have living relatives who grew up using outhouses in the winter, and I have no desire to share their experience. But even central heating comes at a cost. When blizzards rattle our windows, we can adjust the thermostat. In previous generations fathers and sons worked together to store wood or coal for the cold months, but I never had that opportunity with my son. We ate eggs and fresh vegetables but he never had to help care for the hens or much of a garden. My son's chores, thanks to the benefits of technology, were far less crucial to the family's actual welfare.

Jack argues the stakes are even higher than that, and he is correct. Christian faithfulness in a technological world means reflecting biblically on technology, and there is far too little of that being done. *Beyond Paradise* is written to turn that tide, and I hope it is widely read and discussed. The book is a bit dense, and so will be of most interest to those who are called to think about and develop technology, or those who are trying to think clearly about technology from the perspective of Christian faith. I hope another volume is forthcoming which will help ordinary Christians think through the technology that weaves its way through their lifestyle whether urban, suburban, or rural.

Jack and I differ over how to best understand the world and life view of the postmodern generation. He's the rare sort of friend for whom disagreements are not obstacles but rather opportunities to learn, to listen, and to argue vociferously over a glass of ale and conclude liking each other all the more for it, even if neither has changed their mind. So, I think some of his thinking in this area is mistaken, but it is a side issue that should not be allowed to distract from his main argument. A topic that needs more exploration (though beyond the scope of *Beyond Paradise*) is how technology is lived out in the dreams, values, expectations, and fears of the postmodern generation. Jack's call for technologists to assume more ethical responsibility for how technology develops--what he calls "Hippocratic engineering"--will not be able to proceed unless the consumers of technology are on the same page.

Christians who are already convinced from Scripture, as I am, that the Christian Story is to be lived out in all of life will find this book informative but not surprising. Those who hold the unfortunate notion, derived from pagan Greek thought, that only the "sacred" or "spiritual" aspects of life are of eternal significance will find Jack challenging their perspective in the final third of the book. I hope they find his arguments compelling.

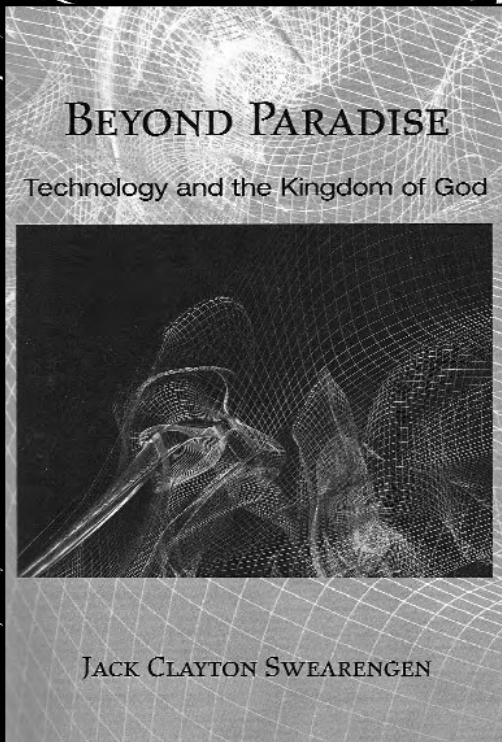
I especially appreciated the central part of *Beyond Paradise* (which makes up about half the book). This is where Jack peels back the surface veil, as it were, from daily life to let us see the massive, intertwined, web of technology that is actually the deeper reality in which we live. This is central to Jack's expertise, honed over many years of research and teaching. It made me see differently, more clearly, and for that I am deeply grateful.

Sustainable economies of scale, an escape from the ubiquitous planned obsolescence that multiplies waste and consumption, reflecting on how electronic communication transforms relationships, how yearnings for beauty and spirituality are touched by technological advances--all these and more are the issues Jack addresses in *Beyond Paradise*. The next time the electricity goes out, reflect on what progress you are making bringing this aspect of life intentionally under Christ's Lordship. This book will help you in that process of seeking to live faithfully.

One more thing: the publisher's retail price is steep (\$40) so Jack has graciously agreed to make copies available to readers of *Critique* at a reduced price: \$25 + \$3 postage (or \$20 each + \$5 postage for orders of 5 or more). Contact him online ([jcsweat@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jcsweat@sbcglobal.net)), and mention you learned of it here.

#### Book Reviewed

*Beyond Paradise: Technology and the Kingdom of God* by Jack Clayton Swearengen (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers; 2007) 312 pp. + bibliography + index.



# It's..well..super bad.

## A review of the movie *Superbad*... ...which calls for discernment.

2007's comedy mega-hit *Superbad* was exactly that. Co-written by Seth Rogen (*Knocked Up*) and Evan Goldberg, and directed by Greg Mottola (*The Daytrippers*), the movie is profanity-filled, with

each sexual reference more explicit and disgusting than the last, and the level of degradation continues to plummet through most of the film. The screenwriters summarize the plot as a couple of high school seniors "trying to get drunk and laid." In general, this is one of those films where you feel like you need to take a

steaming shower when it's over. So why would I bother writing a review of such a film? Simply because, like it or not, much of the film is true to life.

I remember being a sex-crazed, foul mouthed, 18 year old male, and unfortunately I remember all too well how I acted in those days. Remembering this, I have to say *Superbad* is a perfect snapshot of the world in which many of the young men in our culture live. In the special features director Mottola mentions that Rogen and Goldberg began writing this script when they were 13, and had a first draft finished when they were 15. Perhaps even more telling is how big a hit this film was with teen, twenty-something, and thirty-something men. After ten weeks in theatres *Superbad* brought in over \$121 million in ticket sales.

The typical conservative Christian response to this is usually something like: "Fine, that's where many young adult males are, but we don't need to expose ourselves to their filth." I do believe we need to be discerning about what we watch and how it affects us. However, why do we assume that we are automatically defiled by anything we see? Jesus said that it is not what goes into a person that defiles them but what comes out. Paul was not contaminated by the idolatry he observed in Athens, and Daniel was not polluted by the sorcery he studied at Babylon. Rather, each came away with a better understanding of the

minds of the people they were called to minister to and as a result were more effective witnesses for the living God. Christians have become so cocooned and ghettoized in the West that we have no response for unpleasant films like *Superbad* besides flipping out and/or boycotting them.

(Take the current controversy over *The Golden Compass*, for example). Movies like *Superbad* provide us with a clear picture of the hearts and minds of many

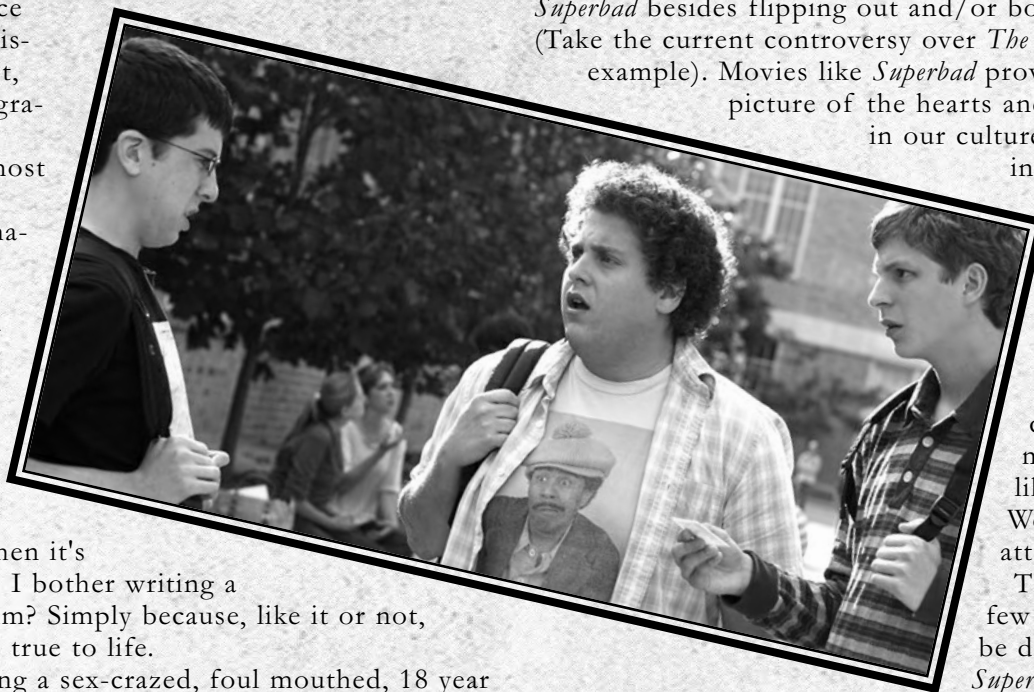
in our culture. If we aren't willing to truly and win-

somely engage the hearts and minds of our young men where they're at, should we be surprised when all signs indicate that young men are the least likely people in Western cultures to attend church?

There are actually a few excellent things to be drawn out of *Superbad*. One is the unintended misogyny.

Most men I know would admit that women should not be objectified in the raunchy ways that the film's poor humor does.

However, at the same time many of these same men have never been taught to identify such humor as objectification, and so they live in a state of moral and sexual confusion. The film also touches on the emotionally stunted nature of young men and their inability to truly express their feelings for one another as friends. With "experts" now claiming that adolescence is a period lasting into the late twenties and even early thirties, this is a timely subject and *Superbad* provides an excellent case study of the phenomenon. Lastly, the character of Evan (played by *Arrested Development's* Michael Cera) provides the picture of a young man trying to treat women with dignity and respect while facing the pressure of his peers and the turmoil of his own hormones. How many Christian men can not identify with the struggle to act in an upright manner towards women, treating them with respect and honor, while battling against our own lustful hearts and the pornographic culture we live in?



Travis Scott is a Contributing Editor for *Critique* and is currently serving as the Associate Director of the Francis Schaeffer Institute at Covenant Seminary in St. Louis, MO. Travis and his wife Brooke are in the process of raising support to do church planting in Auckland, New Zealand.



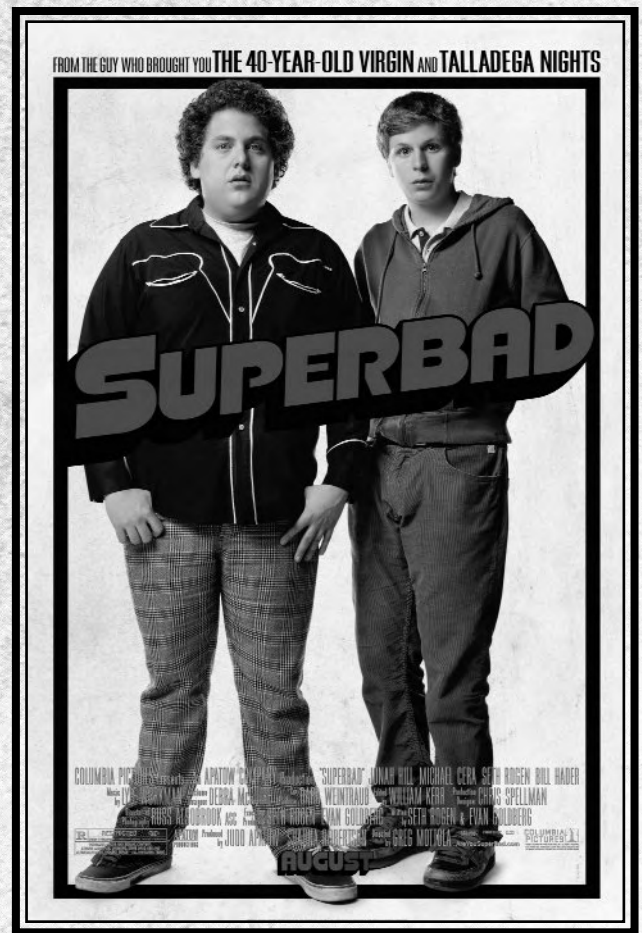
I'm not trying to be an advocate for *Superbad*. It truly is deplorable and should be avoided by most people. However, it seems to me that there are certain groups of people who should see it. Church leaders who are curious as to why no young men are stepping into leadership roles in their churches should watch and discuss this film to better understand why they are failing to reach this demographic. (I am not suggesting we degrade our worship services or Bible studies by sinking to the level of this type of crude adolescent male humor. However, we might learn a few lessons about what topics young men in our culture are interested in, and the questions for which they need answers.)

Youth workers should be aware of films like *Superbad*, because they give a picture of the environments that many of our children are exposed to and part of on a daily basis. How can we effectively minister to teens if we don't understand the temptations they are facing and the idols that are controlling their lives? I would also suggest that *Superbad* might be beneficial for many parents to watch. Not to freak them out, but to give them a better understanding of what their children and their children's friends face outside of (and, unfortunately, sometimes inside of) the Christian cocoon.

If you watch *Superbad* you will be disgusted, you will feel dirty, you will be offended. And you should be--it is a disgusting, dirty, offensive film. However, in the midst of your offense and indignation I would hope that you also find yourself deeply broken. Maybe we need a film like *Superbad* to teach us once again to weep for the young men and women in our culture. May our sorrow drive us to compassionate engagement.

### Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Have you seen *Superbad*? Why did you initially choose to see or not to see this movie?
2. Do you agree with Travis that there may be value for certain groups of people in seeing a movie like this? Why do you agree or disagree?
3. With so many films like *Superbad* coming out how should you determine which ones to see, if any at all? What are some factors that might indicate that a film needs to be seen?
4. What are your thoughts on the Christian tendency to avoid or boycott those things in culture that they find troubling? Is this ever the right response?
5. Does Paul's admonition in Philippians 4:8-9 have any bearing on this discussion? If so what?



### Director

Greg Mottola

### Writers

Seth Rogen & Evan Goldberg

### Release Date

August 17, 2007 (Columbia Pictures)

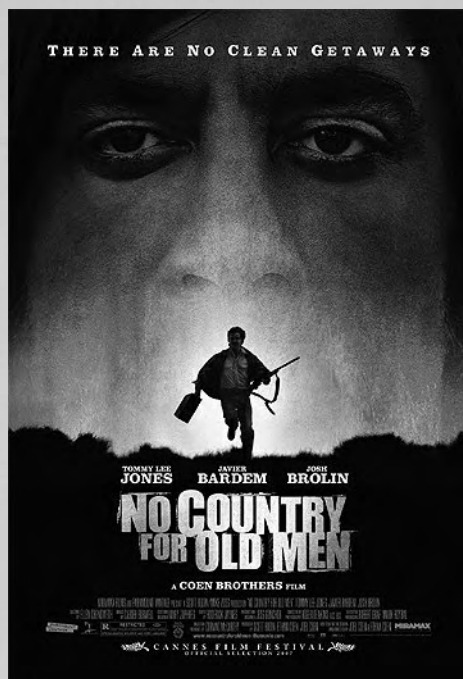
### Starring

Jonah Hill (Seth)  
 Michael Cera (Evan)  
 Christopher Mintz-Plasse (Fogell)  
 Bill Hader (Officer Slater)  
 Seth Rogen (Officer Michaels)  
 Martha MacIsaac (Becca)  
 Emma Stone (Jules)  
 Aviva (Nicola)

**Runtime** - 114 min

### MPAA Rating - R

For pervasive crude and sexual content, strong language, drinking, some drug use and a fantasy/comic violent image--all involving teens.



# SHOUTING ABOUT NOTHING

## A review of the film *No Country For Old Men*

In 1957 Flannery O'Connor discussed the problems of communicating her message to an audience that didn't share her worldview in her essay "The Fiction Writer and His World:"

*The novelist with Christian concerns will find in modern life distortions which are repugnant to him, and his problem will be to make these appear as distortions to an audience which is used to seeing them as natural; and he may well be forced to take ever more violent means to get his vision across to this hostile audience. When you can assume that your audience holds the same beliefs you do, you can relax a little and use more normal means of talking to it; when you have to assume that it does not, then you have to make your vision apparent by shock; to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost-blind you draw large and startling figures.*

O'Connor practiced what she preached; her novels and short stories are exquisitely-crafted examples of the art of communicating an unwelcome message to the hard-of-hearing.

Writer Cormac McCarthy is a contemporary practitioner of the same art. In ten novels over forty years, he's told violent stories peopled with large, startling characters. In all it's evident that there are distortions in modern life which are most repugnant to him. What's not quite so evident is what his concerns are. Is he, like O'Connor, a Christian voice, crying in the wilderness? Or is he a frustrated nihilist, shouting about nothing?

In *No Country for Old Men* directors Ethan and Joel Coen bring McCarthy's ninth novel to the screen in the best film adaptation of a book since *To Kill A Mockingbird*. The Coen brothers have made many fine films over the years, but this is their finest. Students in film schools will be studying *No Country for Old Men* for years to come; it's that well-made. Best of all in an era in which film-makers often feel the need to put their own spin on a classic story (e.g., Peter Jackson's adaptation of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy) the Coens were content simply to tell McCarthy's tale for him. It's a tale of three men.

Llewellyn Moss (Josh Brolin) is a good old boy from south Texas, who while hunting stumbles into the scene of a drug deal gone bad and makes off with \$2 million in cash. Llewellyn's a little greedy, but he isn't a bad guy. After all, what gets him into trouble isn't stealing the money, but returning to the scene of the crime with water for a dying man. He's a man we like to like.

### **Starring:**

Tommy Lee Jones (Ed Tom Bell)  
Javier Bardem (Anton Chigurh)  
Josh Brolin (Llewellyn Moss)  
Woody Harrelson (Carson Wells)  
Kelly Macdonald (Carla Jean Moss)  
Garret Dillahunt (Wendell)  
Tess Harper (Loretta Bell)  
Barry Corbin (Ellis)  
Stephen Root (Man who hires Wells)  
Rodger Boyce (El Paso Sheriff)  
Beth Grant (Carla Jean's Mother)  
Ana Reeder (Poolside Woman)  
Kit Gwin (Sheriff Bell's Secretary)

### **Directors:**

Ethan Coen  
Joel Coen

### **Writers:**

Ethan Coen  
Joel Coen

### **Runtime:**

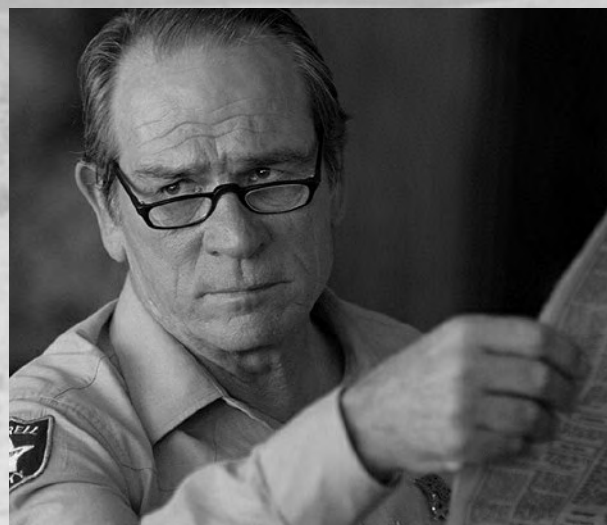
122 min

### **Release:**

USA; 2007

### **MPAA Rating:**

R



Greg and Mary Jane Grooms are co-directors of Hill House, a ministry to students and faculty at the University of Texas at Austin. Greg also serves as assistant pastor at All Saints Church (PCA) in Austin. Some of the happiest years of their lives were spent living just around the corner from Toad Hall. To them Minnesota will always mean good wine, good food, good hunting and fishing, and above all good company.

In contrast, Anton Chigurh (Xavier Bardem) rivals Anthony Hopkins' Hannibal Lecter as the most chilling psychopath in the history of modern cinema.

Chigurh is determined to recover the money, and as the cliché goes, will stop at nothing to do so. The tools of his trade are a cattle-gun and a quarter. Flipping the coin is his prelude to murder and to the most important conversations in the story.

The old man of the title is Sheriff Ed Tom Bell (Tommy Lee Jones), who tries in vain to protect Moss and arrest Chigurh. But in the end he serves only as a sort of Greek chorus, observing the tragedy as it unfolds and commenting on it. It's tempting to see Sheriff Bell as nothing more than an angry old man, unhappy with the world and his place in it, but that would be a serious mistake, unless the angry old man is Cormac McCarthy himself.

"There was this boy I sent to the gas chamber at Huntsville here a while back. My arrest and my testimony. He killed a fourteen-year-old girl. Papers said it was a crime of passion but he told me there wasn't any passion to it. Told me that he'd been planning to kill somebody for about as long as he could remember. Said that if they turned him out he'd do it again. Said he knew he was going to hell. Be there in about fifteen minutes. I don't know what to make of that. I surely don't. The crime you see now, it's hard to even take its measure. It's not that I'm afraid of it. I always knew you had to be willing to die to even do this job--not to be glorious. But I don't want to push my chips forward and go out and meet something I don't understand. To go into something you don't understand you would have to be crazy or become part of it."

Is this the despair of the nihilist, who doesn't understand what's happening and doesn't care to? Or is it a writer shouting to his audience about distortions they've come to see as normal? McCarthy's not writing books just to make noise. He has something to say, something that's important to him. Ed Tom gives us one more clue about what his concerns really are at the end of the film.

Angry at the world and frustrated by his inability to do anything about it, he retires. On the first morning of his retirement he tells his wife of a dream about his father the night before.

"...it was like we was both back in older times and I was on horseback goin' through the mountains of a night. Goin' through this pass in the mountains. It was cold and snowin', hard ridin'. Hard country. He rode past me and kept on goin'. Never said nothin' goin' by. He just rode on past and he had his blanket wrapped around him and his head down and when he rode past I seen he was carryin' fire in a horn the way people used to do and I could see the horn from the light inside of it. About the color of

the moon. And in the dream I knew that he was goin' on ahead and that he was fixin' to make a fire somewhere out there in all that dark and all that cold, and I knew that whenever I got there he would be there. Out there up ahead. And then I woke up."

For McCarthy "carrying fire" isn't a casually chosen metaphor. It shows up again in his latest novel *The Road* for which he won the Pulitzer Prize earlier this year. In both stories it functions as a reason for hope in the face of nothingness. What the content of that hope is for him remains a mystery. Might it be the Christian gospel? Take a look at his play *The Sunset Limited*, and make up your own mind. Or better yet, watch *No Country for Old Men* with some friends, and discuss it with them. It'll be well worth your while.



#### Questions for Reflection and Discussion | by Denis Haack

1. What was your initial or immediate response to *No Country for Old Men*? Why do you think you reacted that way?
2. Some people might complain that the film uses violence gratuitously, and should not be defended. How would you respond? Do you agree with Grooms' comparison of O'Connor and McCarthy?
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?
5. Are there any clear heroes in the film? What makes them heroic?
6. Are there any clear villains in the film? What makes them so? Did you sympathize with any of these characters? If so, how was the director able to arouse your sympathy? How is evil defined or characterized?
7. Stories are only as captivating as they are plausible. To what extent did you find the film plausible? Why?
8. Read aloud and discuss each of the quotations included in the review.
9. What specific scenes in the film stand out as particularly impressive? What makes them so?
10. What does the film say about our world-or do you think it is meant to be a commentary of society at all?
11. In the story of the film choices have real consequences, yet characters are caught up in a flow of events that is greater than their choices, sweeping them along towards consequences that matter. How well does this reflect our experience of daily life?
12. As the dark underbelly of society grows, the cry for greater law and order also tends to grow. To what extent is this the answer-or a dead end? What more might be needed?



# INDIAN WORSHIP IN CONTEXT: MUSIC, FAITH, ARADHNA

What is the best way to communicate Christ to people of other cultures? We must first find ways to respect people who are different than ourselves yet, like us, are made in the image of the one true God. It is not our job to obliterate other cultures in the process of evangelism. Rather, we must seek to recover elements of their culture for the glory of God. Our challenge is to speak Christ in ways that people of other cultures, classes and traditions will understand and embrace. This task must not be taken lightly, but rather born out of a great sense of responsibility and Christ-centeredness. Aradhna is a musical group who uses bhajan-style music of Northern India as a form of worship which they have contextualized for delivery of the Christian message. Through this discussion of music and faith with Chris Hale and Pete Hicks one quickly recognizes how seriously they take this endeavor to express a Christ-centered message using indigenous forms. This interview gives great insight into how music becomes a bridge for speaking faith to others. It also speaks to the degree of study and devotion necessary in order to understand the social, cultural and spiritual aspects of a given people group; and, how one uses existing forms to communicate a new message—the message of the Gospel.



Pete Hicks & Chris Hale

**MH:** Chris, are you fluent in Nepali and Hindi?

**Chris:** I was fluent in Nepali up to the age of 12 when my family lived in a Nepali village. Nepali and English were first languages for me. My vocabulary has diminished somewhat since then, and Nepali friends complain that I now speak it with an Indian accent. Learning Hindi was more of a struggle and I took my time doing so over the 10 years I lived in Lucknow, North India, playing guitar in a rock band and learning sitar at a music school in the 90's. I am fluent now but still working on some embarrassing gaps in vocabulary.

**MH:** How have you managed to keep fluent while living in the United States--and now Canada?

**Chris:** Strangely my confidence increased in the West and my language skills seemed to magically improve here. I cannot explain this.

**MH:** When native Hindi speakers hear you sing do they detect a bit of a Canadian accent?

**Chris:** No, there is no trace of accent in my Hindi, only my Nepali, and that's a Hindi accent!

**MH:** How about you Pete, do you speak or understand any of the languages?

**Pete:** I actually only speak a horribly broken

Hindi--get around town sort of Hindi. The few times I ventured out to speak Hindi, I was asked why I couldn't speak it like Chris. After the initial attempts and rebuffs I decided that I would let Chris do the talking. I can usually follow a conversation loosely by picking up certain words here and there.

**MH:** So how did Chris Hale and Peter Hicks come to know each other?

**Pete:** I was born in India and all through my childhood I hoped to have the chance to go back and experience it for myself. My father knew of Chris and his rock band, Olio, in India and had him over to dinner when I was a freshman in high school and had just learned to play the guitar. Chris told me to come out to India when I finished school to join his band. I don't think that he really thought it would happen, but four years later I sent him a letter and a few months after that I joined Olio in North India.

**MH:** Chris, you're a Berklee College of Music grad. What did you study there?

**Chris:** Western Composition.

**Matthew Hundley** studied recording production and jazz guitar at Berklee College of Music in Boston; he holds degrees in Critical Film Studies and Broadcast Production from the University of Colorado. He worked in television and marketing in Ohio and Iowa; and taught at Wartburg College. Hundley continues to be involved in music, faith and the arts. He is currently working on his Masters in Theological Studies at Covenant Seminary in Saint Louis where he lives with his wife and their four children.

**MH:** Kevin Twit, of Indelible Grace, mentioned he knew you from Berklee College of Music. What was your relationship with him back in the day?

**Chris:** He was actually leaving Berklee when I was arriving. He was one of the leaders of a fledgling community of Christ-following musicians on campus that I soon joined.

**MH:** Have you heard any of the work he's been doing in realm of hymnody and with the Indelible Grace project?

Asia. She finished school in England and then attended university in Birmingham, England majoring in music. By the time she finished with her degree, she realized that she didn't connect well with the western classical world and stopped playing her violin. The death of music in her life was hard to bear. When we married, she began to bring out the violin again, and occasionally she would play with Aradhna. When she was introduced to Indian classical violin, she found the music connected with her heart. She is now a student of North Indian classical violinist Kala Ramnath and enjoying digging into ragas.

**MH:** And Miranda? She has a great web site and I love her music as well. Does she have plans to record another CD? I know she has been involved with various artistic endeavorl.

**Chris:** One of the reasons Miranda has not yet put out another album, since *7 deadly sins*, is because she is as good at carpentry, photography, painting, illustration, and digging into the life and culture of India, as she is putting out incredible records. She is also finding that community life and letting music flow as part of community is very important to her. So at a festival called Nidus outside

Toronto ([nidusfestival.ca](http://nidusfestival.ca)) we packed our van full of all the furniture in our house that she had built and set up a Japanese tea tent on the grounds and served free cups of tea, and a huge Indian vegetarian meal to hundreds of people over the weekend. She has a number of amazing new songs that are waiting to get recorded, so when she finishes building all the floor to ceiling furniture in all the rooms in our new home in "Little India," Toronto, she may begin to devote time to them. Until then, check out her huge website ([mirandastone.com](http://mirandastone.com)) if you want a glimpse of the music, photography, furniture, paintings, and blogs on trips to India.

**MH:** Could the two of you speak to your faith backgrounds past and present.

**Pete:** I was raised in a fairly traditional evangelical home. We attended church on Sundays and sometimes Wednesdays, but beyond that my parents modeled for me a life of true devotion and commitment to Christ. They stressed the grace and forgiveness of Christ's life and teachings. The vitality of their faith has been a huge influence in my life. Now, Fiona and I are a part of



Fiona Hicks, Travis McAfee, Chris Hale, Pete Hicks

**Chris:** I have their CD's and enjoy them very much, and also had the opportunity of meeting him and some of his friends at one of our concerts in an Indian neighborhood in London, England a few years ago.

**MH:** Pete, can you speak to your own musical training and upbringing?

**Pete:** I am a self-taught guitarist, or rather I gleaned what I know from the better musicians I met along the way. Within the first month of picking up a guitar, my brother and I formed a band and started writing songs, albeit rather painful compositions. I learned by playing and listening. I think my lack of formal training allows me some freedom from proper musical rules and some fun experiments, but often I feel the constrictions of learning on my own.

**MH:** Can you speak about your talented/musical wives--Miranda Stone (Chris' Wife) and Fiona Hicks (Pete's Wife).

**Pete:** Until she was ten years old, Fiona grew up in Bangladesh, Nepal, and India. Those early years implanted a deep love in her for South

small group who meet in homes for worship. Our hope is to be living as the body of Christ with each other and in our community. We seek to know each other and push our often reluctant selves to be known. It is really helpful for us as we travel so much to be supported by our church family so personally.

**Chris:** As for me, I grew up attending a Nepali church on Saturdays and then later a boarding school chapel in India. My first deeper experience of the love, grace, and unconditional acceptance of Christ was in Amsterdam, Holland while volunteering at a shelter there in 1986-87. That experience altered the course of my life and set me on a mission to live in India when I finished college. Since then I have been on a steady diet of feeling distant from God, but probably being closer to him than I was when I was 18. This sense of distance is caused, I think, by the intensity of my interaction with people who do not believe the same things that I do about faith, salvation, and eternal life. When the people around your Thanksgiving table are no longer your family or church friends who all believe roughly the same thing you do--but are rather atheists, agnostics, Hindus and friends into Wicca--you end up spending the times you are alone with God, asking questions and expressing doubts, instead of just enjoying his love. Aradhna concerts have helped me immensely to just let go and worship. Believe it or not, I find the still points just before the first notes of a performance to be among the most intimate experiences I have of the presence and love of God.

**MH:** Have either of you undergone any formal theological training? What fuels the spiritual side for each of you?

**Pete:** Nothing formal. Fiona and I often laugh that much of our belief system and theology comes from C.S. Lewis. When I finish reading *Perelandra* (the 2nd book in Lewis' space trilogy) or *The Great Divorce*, for the thousandth time, I put the book down with a sense of wonder at the unimaginable magnificence of God and His ultimate creativity and insane plan of redemption through Christ. C.S. Lewis somehow captures a bit of the unknowable in his writing. Beyond that, a mainstay in my spiritual journey is community. I tend to go through phases of being reclusive and anti-social. When that happens, I spiritually begin to fade, but when I am engaged with my community, both at home and around the world, when I open my ears to hear the song of salvation through my friends and family and I allow my fellow journeymen to hold open my eyelids to see the beautiful tapestry that God weaves around us, that is when my spirit is alive. Each day I realize more how badly I need support.

**Chris:** I did get a masters degree from an Indian seminary--the Asian College of Cultural Studies. It took me five years to complete while playing in the rock band in India, called Olio. The reading I had to do has enabled me to talk the talk in church, and at seminars that we lead on the interface between Hindu and Christian worlds. Spiritual fuel is low right now, so it would be unfair to rattle off a bunch of books that I am reading, but Miranda is

reading one right now called, *The Word is Very Near You: A Guide to Praying with Scripture* by Martin L Smith, which is causing a visible change in her whole manner and being, and she is excited about reading some of it to me. I did spend the last two years reading my New Testament in Hindi exclusively, and it was hard but has begun to give me insights into what it would have been like if Christ had walked the streets of Varanasi instead of Jerusalem 2000 years ago. It also inspired a few of the songs on *Amrit Vani*, like "Khat Khataao" and "Prabhu Hamare."



**MH:** Do you consider yourself a Christian band? A band of Christians? A Christ-influenced band?

**Pete:** That's a tricky question. I think the best way to describe us is as a Christ-centered band. Of course, we were born into the Christian culture, but around the world the word Christian carries with it connotations that have nothing to do with Christ. There are the obvious ones, like the Crusades, the Inquisition, Imperialism and then the more contemporary things like, free-sex, divorce, lawsuits, Hollywood, swimming pools, war and Capitalism. Though in our Christian world we do not claim most of these, the rest of the world has a hard time seeing the difference. It is easy to get into semantics with this, or to sound prudish or just trivially reactionary, but we believe that there is a difference between being Christian and following Christ. We want to be, and to be known as, disciples who long to sit at his feet.

**MH:** How do you see your music being used?

**Pete:** We hope that it will find its way into many diverse groups and help to break down barriers between communities that feel that there is little in common between them. That it can be a starting point for a conversation, or a friendship. Just as Christ came to earth to speak our language, walk with us, to make the Father known to us, we hope that this music will resonate in the hearts of Indians and Westerners around the world and draw them closer to Christ. We hope people just put on their earphones and get lost in the music and in adoration of God.



**MH:** The music of Aradhna is definitely reverent and worshipful. Is this the kind of music that would be used in a worship service in India? If not, what style of music is used in church worship in India?

**Chris:** In India there is a difference between churches in the major cities and churches in villages. In the cities you often find the use of English in the service, even to the point where

the Indian pastor preaches the sermon in English, while another translates into the local language. Needless to say, the worship is also heavily influenced by the West with guitar, drum set and even organ winning over tabla and sitar by a long shot. Moving into the poorer urban and village congregations you still find the use of small two-octave casio keyboards more common than Indian instruments with the exception of folk rhythm instruments like the dholak. But attend a Pentecostal church, the fastest growing by far in India, and whether you are in the village or in the city, you will hear all kinds of songs from "This is the day that the Lord has made" rocked out with the dholak drum and sung in Hindi, to traditional Indian devotional songs accompanied by disco rhythms on the Casio. Anything goes, as long as it's anointed.

**MH:** Traditional Hindi worship music seems so removed--in a western sense--from what is typified as worship or praise music in the United States. People have a preconceived notion of how Psalms and Scriptures should be adapted musically. Certainly some have been able to break the mold and break through to western audiences. How do we get Western ears acclimated to these "new" sounds?

**Pete:** Our experience, as well as my own personal experience as a non-Hindi speaking westerner, is that many are hungry for a new sound. I have to say that I am often very surprised at the positive response among the different age groups and demographics that we play in. A couple of years ago we were in Oxford, Mississippi doing some concerts on the campus of Ole Miss. On Sunday morning we were taken to the oldest church building in Oxford. There was still a ladder to the upper balcony where slaves used to sit for the services. As we sang the opening hymns, I looked around the room and guessed that the median age of the congregation must have been around 60 and thought, "there is no way we will connect here." However, the conversations I had at the end of the service, the encouragement, and the clear enjoyment we

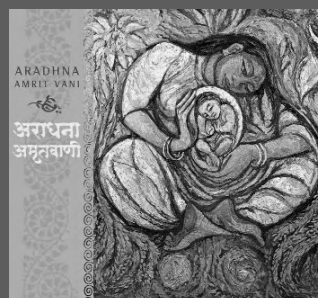
found in their eyes blew me away. On the other end of the spectrum, recently we were at the University of

Arkansas, invited by the campus Christian fraternity to play their big yearly event. About 500, mainly American, college students came out to the concert. Again, the response was fantastic. It is happening all around us, and it is not only with Aradhna, but the world is becoming a smaller place and music from all around the world is reaching westerners.

**MH:** Your new release, *Amrit Vani*, seems very accessible musically. As far as musical style...are all the tracks on the new album bhajan (devotional songs sung in Hindi)? Or are

there other song styles present as well? Definitely on *Amrit Vani* you have broadened the range of instruments used as well as expanded vocals to include choirs and some singing in English. What music are you listening to or drawing from for inspiration? Do you listen to other Indian artists who perform bhajan style?

**Pete:** The way Chris and I have worked over the years is that he brings the Indian element while I rely mainly on my western roots for compositions. Chris would sing a melody to me and I would interpret in the way my western musical experience allowed. Often this led to him saying something like, "you can't use that chord, it is completely outside the raga." And I would reply, "but just listen to it...you really can't argue with how good it sounds." And that is really what makes what we do work, the two completely different approaches. I am a big fan of artists like Paul Simon, Bruce Cockburn, Springsteen, and M Ward, all very folk artists. I find that their styles and lyrics are a great help to me in my spiritual life.



**Aradhna  
Amrit Vani (2007)**

Chris Hale - vocals, sitar  
Pete Hicks - guitar  
Fiona Hicks - violin  
Travis McAfee - bass  
Toronto Volunteer Choir,  
Albion Road Behta Darya Choir,  
Nahari Choir  
Plus many other guest musicians

Aradhna's latest CD holds true to their Christian faith while capturing the beauty of Northern Indian music forms. Influences of Hindi culture weigh heavy into this release from Chris Hale's study of the Hindi New Testament, to the cover artwork by Jyoti Sahi (the "Salit Madonna") to the writings of Christian monks, poets, theologians, and musicians of India. On this, their fourth release, Aradhna expands the instrumentation and brings in choirs on many of the numbers. Songs vary from very meditative tracks like "Yeshu Raja" to praise and worship tracks like title track "Amrit Vani" to borderline rock tracks like "Man Mera."

# "This" is really about "That"

a review of Rob Bell's book **SEX GOD**



**Book Reviewed:** *Sex God: Exploring the Endless Connections Between Sexuality and Spirituality* by Rob Bell (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing; 2007) 201 pp.

In 2005 Pastor Rob Bell of Mars Hill Church (Grand Rapids, MI) published his first book, *Velvet Elvis*. While Bell had some influence in Emerging Church circles prior to writing it, the publication of *Velvet Elvis* guaranteed him an unquestioned and permanent seat at the Emerging table. *Elvis* was met by mixed reviews ranging from accolades to condemnations--the book deserved a bit of both. In *Elvis* Bell raised some excellent questions about the role and practice of Christian faith in a postmodern world. Many of them elicited deep thought and freed the reader to think outside of the typical evangelical box. Unfortunately, Bell raised several issues that he chose to answer vaguely or not at all. Putting question marks around the Virgin Birth, the exclusivity of Christ, and the nature of hell, for example, provided an excuse for some to call Bell a heretic or worse, a liberal. These reactions are unhelpful and probably untrue. However, I think it's safe to say that with *Velvet Elvis* Bell treads on some shaky ground. By raising such important questions and leaving them unanswered he engages in what I would call pastoral irresponsibility. I say all that to say this: where Bell failed with *Velvet Elvis* he succeeded with his new book *Sex God*.

Released in 2007, *Sex God* is (maybe unintentionally) a companion book to *Velvet Elvis*. Written with the same provocative chapter titles and broken prose this book looks nearly identical to its predecessor. Nearly identical in form and style, it is different in content and purpose--as well as accomplishment. Unlike his previous work, Bell succeeds in what he sets out to do in *Sex God*.

The beauty and the power of *Sex God* is that it's a book about sex that isn't really about sex. In Bell's words, the book really isn't about "This" (sexuality) but about how "This" is really about "That" (spirituality). If you thought that sentence was confusing, read the first chapter of the book and it will make complete sense. In *Sex God*, Bell helpfully lays a foundation for looking at sex as a whole body/whole person activity with deep spiritual significance.

His approach and explanation are timely and prophetic. Timely, in the fact that we live in a culture that has come to believe in a disembodied form of spirituality,

while attempting to act out a "disemspirited" sexuality. (Saying we've "come to believe" in this is probably not the best way of expressing the current situation since this is an approach to spirituality that has persisted like a cancer at least since the time of the Greeks.) The result has been tension, fracture, pain, loss and confusion. Bell's work is prophetic in the sense that he offers a winsome diagnosis of the problem as well as a call to repentance that is livable, counter-cultural, and subversive. He correctly surmises that a sexual revolution is necessary. This new revolution cannot be brought about by political process but rather by the power that "This" is pointing to. Only a personal, loving God of healing and integration can bring the integral healing needed in our so-called "lovemaking." This healing comes through the reintegration of body and soul in the sexual act that only the transforming power of Christ's gospel can bring. "It's not about getting rid of desire," Bell writes. "It's about giving ourselves to bigger and better and more powerful desires."

Bell masterfully explains the pervasive use of marital language throughout the Scriptures and how this language is used to reveal the relationship between God and his people. In *Sex God* we find one of the clearest and most helpful explanations of what the Christian hope is regarding our ultimate relationship with God and with one another. Also found here is a clear description of why we call that ultimate hope the *consummation* of Christ's kingdom.

The one major weakness of this book is its strength. Bell devotes so much time speaking about the relationship of "This" to "That," that he ends up saying very little about "This." You can't really fault a guy for writing about what he explicitly tells you he's going to write about. On the other hand, in a culture as sexually broken as ours it would be helpful to have a companion piece which applies the principles explored in *Sex God* to the practical questions of the act(s) of sex.

*Sex God* is well worth the read it will prove helpful to young and old, single and married, Christian and non.

# Far As The Curse Is Found

## Editors Introduction | Denis Haack

Error comes in all sorts of shapes and sizes. Some are more deadly than others; some aren't deadly at all. Mistaking the time to meet a friend for lunch is embarrassing, or should be, but it's hardly the end of the world--unless you're so late so regularly that nobody believes you take anyone seriously, which naturally ratchets things up a bit.

Some errors are even hard to see as errors, because in a broken world they seem to make sense. Some even feel natural, as if they aren't really something that should be questioned. We may have been taught the error by people we trust and like--so what's to question? Or we may have picked it up, like a virus from wherever; since we didn't think about it then, it isn't surprising we don't think about it at all. And however we acquired them, identifying them for what they are--actual errors, wrong ideas, non-truths--and replacing them with the truth can be rather difficult.

Especially if so much opinion around us seems to reinforce the error.

I was reminded of this at the last Rochester L'Abri conference from some of the conversations that unfolded from Dick Keyes' lecture, "The Breadth of God's Lordship." Dick had presented an

overview of the Christian world and life view, showing how Christ's Kingship is over all of life and culture, not just over a truncated "spiritual" slice of life. He had also pointed out the common error, held by many Christians, that the "spiritual" parts of life are somehow superior to the merely "physical"--that there is a divide between secular and sacred, and that the second category always trumps the first. And he quite correctly insisted that this was not an insignificant error, but deadly, because at stake is not just how we live and think, but the very content of the gospel we profess.

Good questions followed Dick's lecture. Good questions from thoughtful people trying to make sense of life and the teaching of the Scriptures. It was interesting, however, to notice that the questions often took the shape of "Yes, but..." There was agreement that this sacred/secular division comes not

from Scripture but from pagan philosophy. Agreement that reading Scripture with this division of reality as part of our hermeneutic, our method of interpreting the text, causes us to twist the meaning of God's word. Agreement that though this dichotomy can be made to sound spiritual, it is in reality a pernicious error that amounts to a practical denial of the biblical gospel. Yes, to all that, but... What about a person who is skilled in both medicine and in evangelism--wouldn't it be better to pursue the second rather than the first? At least a little better--especially if the surgery only prolongs life a short time and is so demanding the surgeon ends up with little time and energy to use their gifts in evangelism?

And so it went. Good questions, needing good answers, because the answers matter. And because the error at the root of them needs to be seen for what it is: as something deadly, and wrong.

**Christ's  
Kingship is over  
all of life and  
culture, not just  
over a truncated  
"spiritual" slice  
of life.**

As we all do, the hypothetical surgeon in the question should consider, within a community of trusted and godly friends, the shape of their life and vocation, given God's providential leading in their pilgrimage and calling. But going into that process, this much must be clear: neither evangelism nor surgery has an ontological advantage. Neither is more valuable than the other, nor

more eternally significant, nor more intrinsically more pleasing to God, nor less secular and more spiritual.

The biblical gospel is that Christ died not simply to save souls, but to bring the hope of redemption to all that the fall has ruined, as the Christmas carol puts it, "far as the curse is found." Christ's Lordship is over all, and it is that great truth which must be the foundation for our understanding of--and pursuit of--faithfulness.

But the error persists, rather like a plague, infecting so many of God's people. So, it's wise to reflect on what the gospel means, and how the error is antithetical to the gospel. In the two pieces that follow, Mike Metzger of the Clapham Institute provocatively helps us think about some of the issues involved. And I've appended some discussion questions that we hope will help prompt thoughtful conversation.



## Imagine this...

Here's an easy way to see the disconnect between Sunday and Monday. Ask a friend to draw the first five images that come to mind when he or she hears these words: *worship, work, ministry, the arts* and *service*. If a picture's worth a thousand words, we now have five thousand words depicting the disconnect. We also have a clearer picture as to why efforts to "integrate faith and work" generally fail.

From my experience, people draw five different pictures--something like hands raised for worship, a computer for work, people with other people for ministry, musical notes or paint brushes for the arts and people helping people for service. Yet the reality is that throughout the Old Testament, one word--*avodah*--is translated as worship, work, ministry, the arts and service. This doesn't mean God is tongue-tied or a milennial with a limited vocabulary. The truth is, God sees all five as threads in a seamless fabric labeled *avodah*. They were all created on the same loom, not cut from different bolts of cloth.

The fabric of *avodah* has a thread labeled "work" that is found in our human job description: "The Lord God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it."<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew word "work" is *avodah*.<sup>2</sup> Yet *avodah* is also rendered "worship" in Exodus 3:12, making a second thread: "And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."<sup>3</sup> The third and fourth threads are wound tightly together. *Avodah* is translated as "service" or "ministry" in verses like Numbers 8:11: "The Lord speaks to Moses and Aaron about how the Levites, the priestly class, will do the service of the Lord."<sup>4</sup> Great Britain still recognizes service and ministry as threaded together, since the chief civil servant is the Prime Minister.

The fifth thread of *avodah* is "craftsmanship" or "the arts." King David, for example, said to his son, Solomon: "The divisions of the priests and Levites are ready for all the work on the temple of God, and every willing man skilled in any craft will help you in all the work."<sup>5</sup> Feel the fabric? In one verse alone *avodah* is rendered two different ways--as "work" and "craftsmanship"--because *avodah* is a seamless fabric.

A great many Christians don't have this

cloth in their word wardrobe. They imagine worship, service and ministry as confined to Sunday (and an evening Bible study). Work is Monday through Friday. The arts, as one friend put it, "are for people with orange hair." It's religious people who have unraveled this fabric into three different bolts of cloth. As Pogo put it, we have met the enemy and he is us.

God didn't use different looms for the different days of creation. He didn't cut three fabrics--one for religious people, one for business professionals and one for wierdos with orange hair. The fabric of *avodah* means there is no such thing as "full time Christian work"--unless we include the butcher, baker and candlestick maker along with monks, missionaries and clergy. All work is worship when done as it ought to be ("worship" comes from the old English word "worth-ship"). All work, paid and unpaid, can be service by loving our neighbor and helping them flourish as human beings made in the image of God. All work can be craftsmanship if it incorporates truth and beauty.

Albert Einstein reminded us that we cannot solve a problem in the framework that created it. This is why efforts to "integrate faith and work" generally fail. "Integration" assumes work and faith are cut from two bolts of cloth. This gives away the game before it has even begun. "Integral" on the other hand comes from the Hebrew word *tôm*, meaning to see all of life as part of a seamless fabric. Jesus himself said, "No one sews a patch of new cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse."<sup>6</sup> "Integrating" faith into work is like sewing new cloth on an old garment. It won't work.

This is tough for some Christians to embrace. Yet coming to faith is only the beginning of being undeceived. In other words, believing also requires unlearning what we previously assumed was right. God created all of life from one loom, so there is an integral and seamless nature to life. There is nothing to integrate. The difference between integral and integrate is not semantics. It's substantive. Of course, we can't help others if we don't see it ourselves. So rather than ask a friend to draw the images that come to mind, maybe we ought to first hone our own pictures. Otherwise, friends might imagine faith and work differently than God does.

# Seamless Fabric

## Part One | Michael Metzger



# X-Rated Evangelism

## Part Two | Michael Metzger

### *Evangelism as sex.*

The best sex is the fruit of a marriage, not the focus. It's a thermometer not a thermostat. In fact, we have words to describe those who make sex their primary focus or solicit it outside of marriage, but they're X-rated. All of this isn't breaking news. Yet it does explain why so few Christians today share their faith.

Let's start with the "sad, sad truth--the dirty lowdown," as Boz Scaggs put it. Other than a few paid professionals, the average American evangelical will never lead another person to faith in Jesus Christ according to pollster George Barna. How did this come about? It's sadly simple. We forgot that evangelism is like sex--it's the fruit of a larger story but never the focus.

For thousands of years, evangelism was only a sub-plot in the story of human flourishing. Beginning in Genesis, our focus (our "human job description") was to collectively rule over all living things on earth so that we flourished.<sup>1</sup> It was known as the Cultural Mandate and has never been rescinded--even after sin entered the story.<sup>2</sup> It's still supposed to be our focus today.

Evangelism was added as a sub-plot in light of "chapter two"--the fall. If we had never fallen, evangelism wouldn't exist. Nor will we evangelize in "chapter four"--the final restoration. Evangelism is a hiccup because we mucked up. Please don't misunderstand--hiccups are a necessary aberration in an otherwise consistent pattern of breathing. But we don't live to hiccup and breathe. We breathe to live. This is why human flourishing is our focus, not sharing our faith. Just look at how Christ shared the gospel with a woman at a well.

The story starts around dinnertime with Jesus taking a seat by a well while his disciples went into town for take-out. A Samaritan woman approaches, and yet Jesus did not ask her about "spiritual things" or where she'd go if she died that night. He listened to her story, which included her faltering ideas about worship. Jesus described to her how worship can flourish. "Believe me, woman... a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."<sup>3</sup>

We get our word worship from the old

English word "worth-ship," meaning to embrace how things ought to be in God's world so that humans flourish. This woman came to faith because her life fit inside a larger story about how she was worshipping the wrong things in the wrong way--including her relationships with men--and could begin worshipping the right things in the right way.<sup>4</sup> When the focus is human flourishing, everyone's story connects with the good news--whether we're talking about worship, work or working out. Is it any wonder that this Samaritan woman scurries back to town to share her new story with friends? Hmmmm... this smells like enthusiastic evangelism.

So where has our enthusiasm gone? For hundreds of years, plenty of Christians evangelized. Yet it was part of the larger story of human flourishing. Evangelism became disconnected from this story in the 19th century with the introduction of a "two-chapter" gospel. It cut out creation and the final restoration, leaving us with two chapters--the fall and redemption. The Cultural Mandate was edited out. The Great Commission became the focus--but not as it was originally understood. In the "four-chapter" gospel, the Great Commission was a reiteration of the Cultural Mandate--humans made to flourish in the image of God. With creation edited out, the focus shifted to sinners being solicited for salvation. It's X-rated evangelism. And that's why so few Christians today evangelize.

The Apostle Paul describes marriage as part of a greater story: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church."<sup>5</sup> Paul said marriage fits into a larger picture of Christ and the church. In the same way, sex also fits into a bigger picture of marriage, not as the focus but as the fruit of love. Evangelism is like sex. It's part of human flourishing by introducing new life or being "born again."<sup>6</sup>

Evangelism is important. It's a part of my life's fabric. Returning evangelism to health and attractiveness only requires reframing it inside a larger story. My marriage to Kathy doesn't flourish because we focus on sex but because we focus on love. If the sad, sad truth is that the average American evangelical will never lead anyone to faith in Christ, maybe it's time we stopped soliciting salvation and instead fostered human flourishing.

## Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Why does a division between sacred and secular seem so attractive? In what ways does it seem to make life easier or simpler or charged with more significance?

2. How is a sacred/secular dichotomy reinforced (inadvertently or not) in the evangelical Christian community? In what ways does our postmodern society reinforce the same view of things?

3. What was your initial reaction to "Seamless Fabric"? To "X-Rated Evangelism"? Why do you think you responded as you did?

4. What is your reaction to Metzger's study of the Hebrew word *avodah*? What questions came to mind as a result?

5. If Christians really believed that the fabric of life and faithfulness are seamless, how would their lives change? How would the language they use to express their faith change? How might non-Christians view us differently? Why?

6. Near the end of "Seamless Fabric," Metzger writes: "This is tough for some Christians to embrace. Yet coming to faith is only the beginning of being undeceived. In other words, believing also requires unlearning what we previously assumed was right. God created all of life from one loom, so there is an integral and seamless nature to life. There is nothing to integrate. The difference between integral and integrate is not semantics. It's substantive." To what extent would you define yourself as someone eager to be "undeceived"? Would your closest friends agree? Since we often sense a need to "integrate faith with life," does Metzger's argument here seem compelling? What would we substitute for efforts to accomplish this integration?

7. Some Christians might object that nurturing human flourishing, though not a bad thing, might simply allow Christians to ignore the need for evangelism. That given our weaknesses, the Cultural Mandate will trump the Great Commission so that the end result will merely be more Christians feeling less guilt about evangelizing less. How would you respond?

8. How is evangelism a natural part of human flourishing? What has been lost by the exclusion of creation and restoration in our understanding of the gospel? Some Christians might argue that this exclusion is simply a case of "cutting to the chase," of zeroing in on what's most urgent. People need to hear about the fall and redemption, and once that's settled, issues of creation and restoration can be filled in later. How would you respond?

9. What would fostering human flourishing consist of, or look like? Where should you begin?

10. What questions or issues have been raised in your mind as a result of this study? What plans should you make?

## Footnotes for "Seamless Fabric"

1 Genesis 2:15

2 Other examples include Genesis 2:15--"The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." Genesis 29--Jacob working for Laban to win his wives Leah and Rachel. Exodus 34:21--Moses renewing the covenant with God says, "Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even in plowing time and in harvest time you shall rest." Psalm 104:23--(A psalm about God as Creator and Provider) "Then man goes out to his work, to his labor until evening."

3 C.f. Exodus 8:1--Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me.'"

4 C.f. Deuteronomy 10:12--Moses tells his people what the essence of the Law is: "So now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? Only to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul..." Joshua 24:15--Joshua asks all the tribes to renew the covenant, saying, "Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

5 1 Chronicles 28:21

6 Matthew 9:16

## Footnotes for "X-Rated Evangelism"

1 Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God*, (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998), p. 22.

2 The Cultural Mandate of Genesis 1:26-30 is repeated in Genesis 2:23 and 9:1 (after Adam and Eve had sinned) along with being reiterated in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

3 John 4:21-24.

4 The "four chapter" gospel of worship goes like this:  
1) Creation--How worship ought to be.  
2) Fall--What worship is really like (often messed up as a result of our shortcomings).  
3) Redemption--How we can worship better.  
4) Restoration--What worship will be like some day, when the world is fully restored.

5 Ephesians 5:31-32

6 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..." (1 Peter 1:3).

"Seamless Fabric" and "X-Rated Evangelism" were first published as Clapham Commentaries (October 8, 2007 and November 5, 2007, respectively).

For more information or to sign up to receive *Commentaries* (free via email) visit them online ([www.claphaminstitute.org](http://www.claphaminstitute.org)).

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**The Clapham Institute.** Based in Annapolis, Maryland, the Institute mentors leaders, helping people and organizations connect Sunday to Monday, to advance faith-centered cultural reform. They emphasize reframing conversations as the first step, assuming we live in a post-Christian age.





# Cynicism & Sentimentality

When I'm at home (where I prefer to be), I begin each day at my desk. My desk is rarely cluttered, unless I'm in the middle of a project,

and even then I usually clear the piles away each evening. I feel comfortable in my office, books off to the side, a painting by Jim Disney on one wall, a picture of Francis and Edith Schaeffer, my spiritual mentors on another, and paintings by my grandchildren on a third. Some of these paintings have price tags affixed to them--my oldest granddaughter has watched her father make a living from his art and learned well. (She did give us one as a Christmas gift, but told me that would be an exception. "If you don't want to buy them," she commented breezily, "that's OK. Someone else will.") Best of all, a large window above my desk looks out into the spreading branches of a pine tree that towers over our house.

I bring a cup of tea (PG Tips) to my desk, and begin my day with the news, reading it online: *The New York Times* and *Al-Jazeera*. Occasionally I have wondered about changing my morning routine--skipping the news, that is, not the tea--because the stories of brokenness and loss are so often so overwhelming. This week I read of bloody slaughter in a continent far away and of financial plunder in my own. In both cases the perpetrators stoutly maintained they had done nothing illegal. Both had lawyers who expressed moral outrage over the victimization of their clients, and the political motivation of the indictments filed against them. Both appeared to be wearing finely tailored suits.

On my right, as I sit at my desk, is my Bible. I am a Christian living in an increasingly pluralistic American culture. Twelve blocks from my home is an Islamic mosque; across town is a Buddhist temple; and a few miles to the north is a Hindu temple set in the midst of corn fields that stretch to the horizon. In between there are folks carving out various forms of spirituality for themselves without regard to any religious tradition. Which makes me aware, day by day, of this: being a Christian means living in community (of sorts) with other believers in a society where unbelief seems, to many, more compelling. Or if not unbelief, at least a tendency towards some form of disbelief since the faith I hold is seen to be merely one option among many.

In *A Secular Age*, Charles Taylor calls this "a titanic change in our western civilization." Those of you who have grown up in our age of skepticism may be so used to

things as they are that it seems strange to hear it hasn't always been this way. Taylor explains that we have "changed from a condition in which belief was the default option, not just for the naïve but also for those who knew, considered, talked about atheism; to a condition in which for more and more people unbelieving construals seem at first blush the only plausible ones." In other words, not too many generations ago belief (primarily Christian but not always) seemed rather obvious, and it was unbelief that was on the defensive. Now that has reversed. It is believers that feel that they are swimming against the tide of the culture, and often feel on the defensive. "Our modern civilization," Taylor goes on, "is made up of a host of societies, sub-societies, and milieux, all rather different from each other. But the presumption of unbelief has become dominant in more and more of these milieux; and has achieved hegemony in certain crucial ones, in the academic and intellectual life, for instance; whence it can more easily extend itself to others."

All of this--the unceasing flood of media images and news of desperation and horror, the unseen yet almost palpable blanket of unbelief which seems to deaden the vitality of belief--all of it may make up what we call "normal," but it produces a subtle tension within us. A tension that is not always conscious but always present, if we have time to pause and consider.

I've been reflecting on how this cultural tension works on me. I've concluded it tends to pull me in two directions, or more accurately, to seduce me to give in to one of two alternatives to Christian faithfulness.

Identifying such things can be helpful, because naming them allows us to see more clearly and, hopefully, live more wisely. If we don't know we are subconsciously being pulled in a certain direction we'll probably slide there whether we intend to or not. Naming allows some reflection, and choice. Here they are: the two directions I feel pulling at me are *sentimentality* and *cynicism*. As you read how I define them, see them as tendencies, as broad categories that can be expressed in as many ways as there are people who tend towards them.



*Sentimentality* constructs a gated world, real or metaphorical, in which to live. In the busyness of our comfortable lives, we keep aloof from the hard things, be it doubt or the latest horror in the headlines. It's a spirit of nostalgia, yearning for the times when streets were safer, manners were better, and porn more hidden. It's an attitude of withdrawal, the belief that if we stay apart with people like us we'll be safe. It pines for a time when people didn't have so many problems, holding the conviction that if people are told a clear answer their problem is solved. Sentimentality can be spotted in the art it produces and celebrates. Sentimental art depicts doubts as easily resolved; suggests that correct beliefs always produce comfortable lives; acts as if truth spoken is truth heard; and actually believes that good rules produce good behavior.

Christian sentimentalists justify all this with religious sounding phrases and a series of proof texts on "being separate from the world." They care deeply about holiness, and insist that movies full of truth and deep with insight are "unedifying" if the dialogue shows someone, true to character, using bad words. Since Christian sentimentalists tend not to truly befriend and engage people unlike themselves, their evangelism can be more like an assault than a conversation. They take the richness of God's revelation and reduce it to a series of Hallmark sound bites: just pray this prayer and you'll be saved; just trust and your problem will be solved.

*Cynicism*, on the other hand, uses cutting humor and a knowing smirk to remain above the tension. It looks engaged, and is often in the center of the action, but is kept aloof by a spirit of suspicion, an easy dismissal of what life and reality actually consist of. It doubts that much can be done--most things are beyond our ability to change. Friends and relationships are very important, even central to meaning in life, but full commitment is dangerous in a world where alienation seems the norm and most families fragment. Look past the surface and you'll see what's really happening. Like sentimentality, cynicism is perhaps most easily identified by its art. Cynical art makes goodness look boring; belittles characters of virtue arguing they are good to compensate for a bad childhood; acts as if we have little say in our frantic busyness; and actually believes that every problem can be solved by a specialist.

Christian cynics often don't see the need to justify their cynicism, since it feels natural, like realism. They are often so disillusioned about the church that their commitment always remains at least a bit tenuous. To the cynic,

distinctiveness from sentimentalists is essential, even if that means, as it usually does, that the sentimentalists consider them "worldly." They see that some classic Christian doctrines don't play well today, so are simply downplayed. In the end their posture in a fallen world is tainted with compromise.

Remember, I am not trying to define anyone; I'm trying to identify tendencies. No cynic or sentimentalist, Christian or non, is precisely like I just described, but that isn't my point. I feel the pull of these two directions in my life. I sense the division pulling at my friends. I see members of the wider church and society tending to slide in one direction or the other. The actual reality is probably more like a continuum than extremes, but that doesn't alter the seduction we feel to slide in one direction or the other.

What's clear about Christian sentimentality and Christian cynicism, it seems to me, is that they both refuse to face the world in its brokenness. Sentimentality is fearful of what it might see and hear, and defensive in the face of challenge. Cynicism is sure it knows what it'll see and so remains detached, the better not to be disappointed.

Although at various times I feel the seduction of both, it's not an equal contest. Cynicism clearly has the edge; I've always loved sarcasm, so it's rather an easy slide. Truth be told, I'd rather be mistaken for an unbeliever than identified as a Christian sentimentalist. It's when I'm with my grandchildren that I feel the desire to withdraw, the pull of sentimentality. Though they are little sinners in their own clever,

crafty ways, they have an innocence I would like to guard and protect--from both the horrors of machetes slashing through flesh, and of disdainful unbelief corroding souls.

It's been tempting to imagine the solution as some centrist spot perched half way between cynicism and sentimentality. And there is some truth to that. The only adequate response to human folly is laughter, which is why humor can be so redemptive. And there is no reason my little grandchildren need to be introduced to genocide; they should play and let the sorry burdens of a broken world be carried on other shoulders for now. Still, the true alternative to cynicism and sentimentality is faithfulness, and that's really a third way altogether. The grace of laughter does not have the sharp, cutting edge of cynicism, and sheltering little ones as they grow is not withdrawal but intentional engagement.



I started this reflection at my desk, and need to end there as well. Not with my books, or with some formula for facing the tension I've described, but for something that is simultaneously simple and profound. Each day, as the weight of a horribly broken world and a culture of skepticism reassert themselves, the rest of what I see from my desk becomes essential. In the pine tree outside my office window is a bird feeder, carefully positioned in the branches so I can see it as I work. It is stocked with thistle seed and flocks of goldfinches flutter around it, jockeying for perches where they can sit and eat. In a nearby tree, also within my gaze out my window, a cardinal appears regularly, one of three spots around our house where he comes several times each day to sing. Cardinals are territorial; the males mark the boundaries with song. There is a delicious irony here: the lovely serenade I hear is a screaming death-threat to one of his own



kind. (Imagine the kind of Creator who would think of that!) In any case, in the flashes of yellow and red as they fly back and forth by my office window--I swear this is true--I catch glimpses of something more than mere nature, I catch glimpses of glory. And it's precisely what I need for the spell to be broken, the seduction ended.

*God's glory is on tour in the skies,  
God-craft on exhibit across the horizon.  
Madame Day holds classes every morning,  
Professor Night lectures each evening.*

*Their words aren't heard,  
their voices aren't recorded,  
But their silence fills the earth:  
unspoken truth is spoken everywhere.*

*God makes a huge dome  
for the sun--a superdome!  
The morning sun's a new husband  
leaping from his honeymoon bed,  
The daybreaking sun an athlete  
racing to the tape.*

*That's how God's Word vaults across the skies.  
from sunrise to sunset,  
Melting ice, scorching deserts,  
warming hearts to faith.  
(Psalm 19:1-6)*

Sentimentalists have forgotten grace; cynics have lost hope. So, today with the help of God's Spirit I will reject both afresh and seek instead to be faithful. To embody the Story of Scripture, to witness to the kingdom that both is, and is yet coming. Always praying that somehow by God's grace the world might see God's glory--in birds and in me--and come to believe.

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. How do the images and stories in the news affect you? One option is to try to maintain an objective distance, to cultivate a way to know the facts but be relatively unmoved by them. To what extent is this a viable option for a Christian? What practical steps have you put in place to deal with the burden of knowing so much bad news about which you can do nothing?
2. Do you agree that living in the west now means living in a world marked by skepticism, where unbelief tends to be more plausible than belief? Where do you see this manifested? Where do you sense it most keenly? How does it affect you?
3. Discuss the definitions of sentimentality and cynicism. With what would you agree or disagree? Where do you see them manifested? Do you sense them as seductions? Why or why not? Which of the two do you tend to naturally gravitate towards? Why do you think that is?
4. What biblical justifications do Christian sentimentalists give to support their choice? What biblical justifications do Christian cynics give? How would you respond to them?
5. How does biblical faithfulness differ from sentimentality? How is it similar? How does biblical faithfulness differ from cynicism? How is it similar?
6. Some Christians would argue that the conclusion of this piece is weak--it shouldn't end with watching birds but with the sure promises of God in his written Word, the Scriptures. How would you respond?
7. What primary idea do you take from this reflection?

### Sources

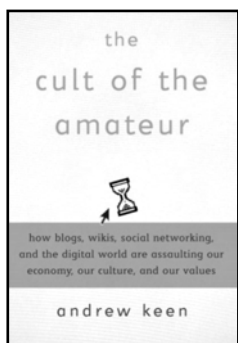
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A shorter version of this article was originally published in *Comment*, a publication of the Work Research Foundation ([www.wrf.ca](http://www.wrf.ca)).

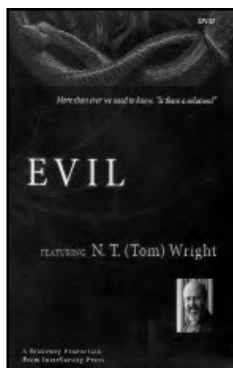




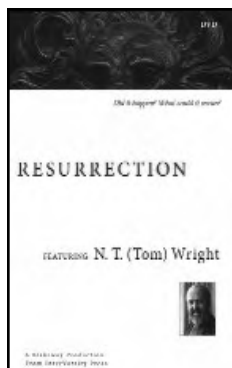
This is one of those documentary films where you ask, "Is this for real?" Daniel Johnston is not your average manic-depressive song-writer, artist, filmmaker. Emerging from his garage in Cumberland, Virginia he escapes via moped, joins a carnival and lands smack in the middle of the Austin indie rock scene armed with cassette tapes of his songs and his super 8 film camera. Johnston befriends musicians and producers and ultimately garners a loyal following which ultimately puts him at the center of a bidding war between two major record labels. Johnston's friends and fans include Beck, David Bowie, Tom Waits, Sonic Youth, and The Flaming Lips. Check out the film then go to: [www.hihowareyou.com](http://www.hihowareyou.com)



In the beginning Andrew Keen had great plans to strike it rich in the internet explosion of the mid-90's. Over time his views on the web and its benefits for man began to shift. With his book: *The Cult of the Amateur: How Today's Internet is Killing Our Culture* we get his "polemic about the destructive impact of the digital revolution on our culture, economy and values." Keen comes down hardest on Web 2.0's impact on the reliability of news and information we receive. "Wittingly or not," he writes, "we seek out the information that mirrors back our own biases and opinions and conforms with our distorted versions of reality... we perpetuate one another's biases." A very informative read. (Publisher: Currency Doubleday)



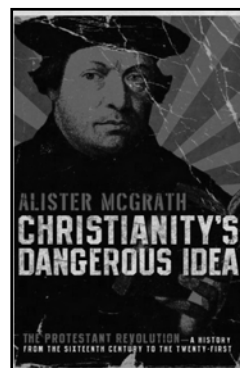
N.T. Wright takes a very Schaeffer-esque approach to his walk-and-talk appearances in these two Channel 4 productions, distributed by IVP. "EVIL" confronts major issues such as AIDS, 9/11 and the Iraqi War. The program's four segments discuss: What is Evil? OT & NT perspectives on Evil. And what can we do about Evil? "RESURRECTION" defends this pivotal Gospel event to all who deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Wright discusses: the concept of afterlife in the ancient world; the concept of resurrection in Jesus' time; the gospel presentation of the resurrection; and the significance of the resurrection in Christian life. DVD inserts contain questions for study and discussion.



The first track I heard of Idan Raichel was "Bo'ee" (*Come With Me*). This song tears into your heart and mind; it is all-at-once spiritual and memorable. Much of *The Idan Raichel Project* CD is like this. More than 70 musicians from Israel's diverse music scene participated in this recording which is influenced by cultures and traditions of people of Middle Eastern, Mediterranean, Latin American and Eastern European roots. The CD alternates between emotional and spiritual musical journeys (*Out of the Depths, Thou Art Beautiful*) and upbeat tunes (*The Handsome Hero, Sing Out For Love*). A very accessible entrée into the world music sphere for all ages: [www.idanraichelproject.com](http://www.idanraichelproject.com), [www.cumbancha.com/albums/idan\\_raichel\\_project](http://www.cumbancha.com/albums/idan_raichel_project)



This North Carolina trio make their home in an airstream and sing about their connections to creation. Phil Moore, Mark Paulson and Beth Tacular are garnering the praises of all who hear with their very down home Americana sound filled with guitars, harmonicas, tambourines, and accordians. Their latest CD of authentic, rootsy, Americana is entitled "Hymns for a Dark Horse." You can check out the Bowerbirds music at: [www.bowerbirds.org](http://www.bowerbirds.org)



McGrath's book provides a concise and very readable history of the Christian Church from the reformation to the present. He then discusses unique aspects of Protestantism. And finally he examines new horizons of the Christian faith and Protestantism on a global scale. McGrath demonstrates how Protestant history has shaped the now; and how our actions today are impacting the wider sphere of Christian faith around the globe. (Publisher: Harper Collins)



**Hitchens/ McGrath Debate**  
Many good points emerge in this bout between atheist and Christian. Christopher Hitchens is a rising contender in atheist circles behind Sam Harris and Richard Dawkins. Alister McGrath offers thoughtful Christian response on issues of personal responsibility, integrity, science and faith in his Oxfordian, slightly stuffy, yet poignant manner.



[http://fora.tv/2007/10/11/Christopher\\_Hitchens\\_Debates\\_Alister\\_McGrath](http://fora.tv/2007/10/11/Christopher_Hitchens_Debates_Alister_McGrath)