Intro Part III: The Plan of this Book

III. The Plan of this Book

This book is not primarily intended for scholars of apologetics or cultural studies, though there may be much here that would interest them. Rather, I wrote this for thoughtful, everyday Christians who believe that these issues are worthy of serious reflection. This book was written as a resource for Christians who want to reach people where they live, who want to be able to talk about popular culture with their friends, spouses, and children in a way that has spiritual depth, but that won't scare folks off, either. In short, this book is for those who want to be able to give an intelligent, warm-hearted, biblical answer back to the worldviews presented in popular culture. This book is for all who are interested in considering popular culture from a Christian perspective.

Here is the territory we are going to explore together: The first part of the book is called "Grounding." As the title suggests, it concerns getting our feet settled firmly on the ground. That really is the best place for them, especially when dealing with something in the air, like flug. In chapter one, we will try to define the two terms that are crucial for understanding the rest of the book: popular culture and worldview. In chapter two, we will look at how these two interact. How does popular culture influence worldview, especially in postmodern times? Chapter three asks the questions: How do we meet the worldview challenges that we face? What sort of apologetics is most fit for the task? In chapter four, we will deal with a subject I think is too often ignored when Christians discuss popular culture: What is the significance of popular culture when viewed from a biblical, Christian worldview perspective? Answering that question will give us clues about how best to engage popular culture in a biblically faithful way.

Part II of the book, "Some Not-So-Helpful Approaches to Popular Culture," surveys some of the ways that Christians have responded to popular culture. While there are there are lessons to be learned from these Christian approaches, they all go astray in one way or another. Typically, they minimize the messy complexity that lies at the heart of popular culture, a complexity that a sound biblical theology of popular culture should prepare us for (see chapter four). Part II comprises chapters five through nine, each of which deals with a different Christian approach and how each goes astray in different ways.

In part III, "Engaging Popular Culture," I will present a more balanced approach to popular culture. In chapter ten, I will lay out a method of how to watch (or play or listen or read) popular culture, and how to respond apologetically. I call this approach "popologetics." In other words, we will explore how we ought to relate our faith to popular culture as cultural consumers, and how to respond thoughtfully to the worldview challenges presented in popular culture. In chapter eleven, I unpack the ideas presented in chapter ten by giving several concrete examples of popologetics in practice.

Then I will close the book with some thoughts on how to use this approach practically. The conclusion should give the whole book a sense of closure, like any good Hollywood movie would.

Feel free to browse and dip in and out of this book as you need to, but one small cautionary note: the whole thing will make a lot more sense if you proceed straight through from the first chapter to the last. I know that linear thinking is somewhat out of fashion in these postmodern times, what with the MTV-ization of our cerebral cortexes and all. But I still prefer it when a book builds up its perspective gradually, brick by brick. So that's how I write, unless I have too much caffeine in my bloodstream. I think you will get the most out of the book if you plow straight through, and then come back and dip in where you need to. Also, keep thinking about how what you are reading here measures up against what the Bible says, for that's our flug-microscope lens. It is the standard against which anything I say in this book ought to be judged. Finally, think about how you could use what you read, or better, how God would have you use it. It doesn't do anyone any good if it simply lies on a page, flat and inert. This book was written to be useful to Christians interested in popular culture. If you are one of

those, enjoy! And if you're not (Christian or interested in popular culture), it may turn out that this book has something for you as well. At the very least, you may go away with a better understanding the flug in the air.

Before we embark upon this journey together, however, it is important to understand what engaging popular culture can and cannot do. Engaging popular culture will not save the world. It will not feed the starving in Africa, or bring peace to the Middle East. It won't heal broken marriages, or turn the hearts of fathers to their children and vice-versa (Mal. 4:6). It won't bring spiritual revival that will sweep across the land, bringing thousands to Christ. It may strike some of you practically-minded people as a waste of time. Let me assure you that it is not. What engaging popular culture will do is allow you to enter into the broader cultural conversation that involves you, your family, your friends, the folks you work with, and the folks you relax with. It will allow you to enter into dialogue with them and speak truth into their lives with sensitivity, insight and grace. And maybe, just maybe, it will help you love these people and be salt and light in the lives of those around you. And then, who knows how far the ripples of such conversations can go?

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