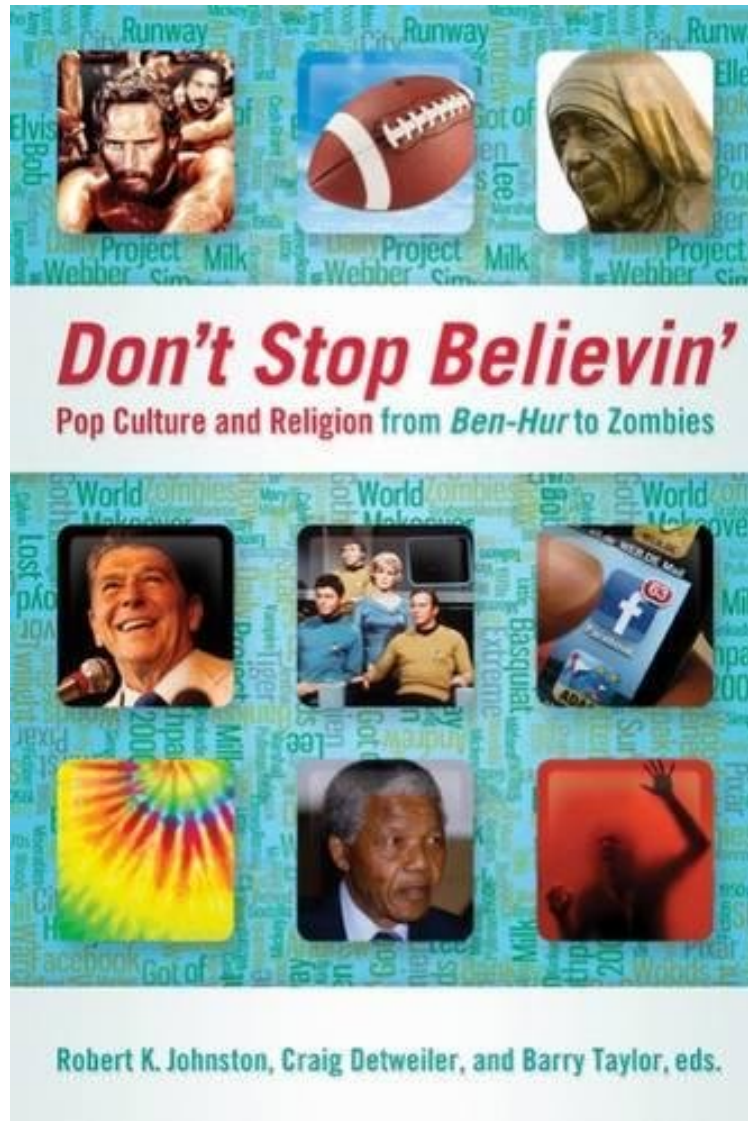


(Ebook free) Don't Stop Believin': Pop Culture and Religion from Ben-Hur to Zombies

Don't Stop Believin': Pop Culture and Religion from Ben-Hur to Zombies

From Robert K Johnston
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#2206132 in Books Robert K Johnston 2012-10-13 2012-10-13 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.00 x .51 x 6.00l, .72 #File Name: 0664235050176 pages Don't Stop Believin' | File size: 15.Mb

From Robert K Johnston : Don't Stop Believin': Pop Culture and Religion from Ben-Hur to Zombies before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Don't Stop Believin': Pop Culture and Religion from Ben-Hur to Zombies:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A quirky, playful book. By B. Marold I find it difficult to imagine you would want to read this book from cover to cover, or even cherry pick from its many articles. I read the book because

it was assigned for a course, and we had to pick two entries from it, twice, and report on the entries in class. Some of the entries had the virtue of often being so obscure that I was totally unaware of the subject, such as "Banksy", a London graffiti artist. Unfortunately, the information provided was minimal. There were neither pictures nor references to where one may find more information. For me, the other end of the spectrum was The Lord of the Rings and J. R. R. Tolkien, about which I knew volumes. But there were only two such entries, and dozens on which I know far more than what was in the book. Most were like "Goth" and "Left Behind". I never read any of the "Left Behind" books, but I have heard enough about them that I could write a paragraph about them. Aside from the use of this in my course, its best use might be for either kids, or as the source of trivia questions, or some other party game.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Don't Stop...lowering your expectations for this book
By Mary Lavers (in Canada)
I'm not sure I quite get the point of this book. I was expecting a little insight into the ways religious images are used (or interpreted) in various ways in popular culture, like how The Simpsons is one of the few TV families that regularly goes to church or how many of Leonard Cohen's songs reference the Torah. But there was only a little bit of that. Mostly it seemed like a group of people from Fuller School of Theology and other religious colleges were simply asked to write a brief article about their favourite movies, actors or pop stars. Occasionally the connections were made to religion. But many times the connection seemed to extend no further than "I'm a fan of this person and I'm a Christian. Therefore this person is pertinent to Christianity." Micky Mantle and Marilyn Monroe are gushed over for being "idols" of the 1950's, but the religiosity of that "idolatry" isn't very well articulated. Miles Davis is praised for his "cool jazz" while the author laments that Christianity can't be more "cool." As a fan of pop culture and a student of religious studies (I have an undergraduate degree in Religious Studies from McGill University), I can honestly say there wasn't anything in this book that I didn't already know. I didn't learn anything new or gain new insights or perspective. I don't think that's as much an endorsement of my body of knowledge as it is an indictment of the lack of depth presented in this book. If I were grading it, I would check the box that says, "Fails to meet expectations." Such a shame.

Disclaimer: I received a digital galley of this book free from Edelweiss (Above the Tree Line). I was asked to write an honest review, though not necessarily a favourable one. The opinions expressed are strictly my own.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Don't Stop Engaging
By Dr Conrade Yap
This book is a collection of commentaries on pop icons and various well-known symbols in the cultures from the 50s to the present. The title of the book is very similar to the pop group Journey who released this hit in 1981. Perhaps, it is chosen because 1981 is somewhere near the midpoint from the 50s to now. Probably, its very title represents a kind of an intersection of faith, pop culture, religion, and people. Maybe, the name of the pop group that produced the song is reflective of where culture is going. It is a journey of belief. Comprising articles written by an assortment of people from many different walks of life. It asks questions about what are the stories, the songs, and the symbols, and the messages they carry that remain valid or has evolved over time. Are there deep theological truths beneath them? What is the gospel according to Peanuts, or Twilight? Through 101 "theologically significant figures," the contributors in this book seek to make some sense out of them. They notice the trends pertaining to gender, sexuality, and religious views that have changed over time. There are lesser of traditional boundaries especially in an electronic age. There are also increasing limitations that we are only beginning to understand. Here is why.

The first 15 articles sketch out what the 50s are about. It is a time where families are more closely knitted, coming together to watch TV sitcoms like "I Love Lucy" and "Father Knows Best." It is time of growing awareness of a need for greater equality, especially race and gender. This gives rise to rebellious symbols such as JD Salinger's counter-cultural "Catcher in the Rye" or Elvis Presley's Rock and Roll against a culture of uptight, prim-and-proper Pleasantville atmosphere. In spite of his popularity, Johnny Cash succumbs to drugs, and fights a losing battle against addictions which led to his eventual suicide. Then, there is Walt Disney's whose vision of an entertainment empire for kids requires a storytelling style that is not linked explicitly to any church or religion. Yet, there is a message that things eventually will be made right. Godzilla the monster is also a chance "to show" the dangers of environmental carelessness, and "to warn" the consequences of nuclear bombs. Christians like Billy Graham and CS Lewis are also described. So are novelists like Alfred Hitchcock, and JRR Tolkien, and artists like Pablo Picasso and Marilyn Monroe.

The 60s is a continuation of the tensions that began in the 50s. With the Cuban missile crisis on the background, and the constant desire for happiness and contentment, John F. Kennedy brings needed leadership to America, and musicians like Bob Dylan and Aretha Franklin is a cry to belong, and a growing discernment of a need for people to connect with one another. Such as Franklin's rendition of the hit song, "Respect." Of course, there are efforts to help people perform some escape, like the Star Trek movies, Stan Lee's Marvel Comics heroes, and of course the dizzying popularity of the Beatles.

The 70s is a longing for "Happy Days." Sometimes dubbed the "Me" era, it is a time where narcissistic pursuits begin its climb. Clint Eastwood becomes the icon for challenging people to "Make my day." The Godfather movies brings together a complex combination of faith, family, and filmmaking. Billy Jean King's success in the tennis world gives her tremendous impetus in the championing of women's rights. Bruce Lee's fame and tragedy becomes another reminder of how the most successful martial arts exponent during that time can feel lonely and needy. Of course, there is Mother Teresa who provides a needed corrective to the world of success, by seeking to help the rest of the world through lowly and humble service. Star Wars provide a bridge to the 80s. With the American hostage situation in Iran, the 80s

is marked by social unrest and a deep longing for security. Star Wars provide a feel good ending to a seemingly hopeless war. Ronald Reagan's rise to Presidency gives many Americans hope and a feel good disposition. Calvin Klein's fashion ideas challenge conventional thinking and causes breakthrough in sexual freedom. The runaway success of the musical Les Miserables, is due to the clever and effective themes of hope/despair, legalism/grace, condemnation/redemption, etc. The Apple MacIntosh marks the beginning of computers gaining a foothold in popular culture. The 90s is a time where spiritualism becomes more prominent. With Deepak Chopra, Dalai Lama, and other spiritualists entering the scene, people become more open to Eastern religion. This is made easier with these Eastern gurus speaking and teaching widely in the West, using language and symbols to meet the hunger and thirst of many frustrated people living in the West. Goth represents anti-religious establishment. Ellen DeGeneres stands for pro-lesbian. Secularism is championed by Philip Pullman. Reacting to these, the Left Behind series of novels try to warn the culture at large that there is an impending judgment if people do not correct their steps. The Matrix movies attempt to marry all of these religious and social sentiments by combining all kinds of religion, postmodern thinking, and others into an entertainment vehicle. Games like SimCity empowers a young generation to take control of their own destiny through virtual gaming. There are also many interesting thoughts on Twilight and Stephanie Meyer, Survivor reality shows, Harry Potter books and movies, sports icons like David Beckham and Tiger Woods, and the rising social media icons like Facebook. The editors finally ask some questions about what these all means. Are the cultural icons merely trying to communicate something to us? How should Christians respond? The first approach is to adopt a "traditional approach" where some either boycott the pop culture. The second is to plunder them so that we can extract the good, like what Os Guinness is advocating. The first approach tends to be overly dismissive and may commit the error of throwing away the baby with the bathwater. The second approach makes Christians guilty of superiority thinking. A third approach is suggested, that participates in the culture, and advocates for the gospel without being overly dismissive or carelessly embracing. My Thoughts=====Like it or not, the world that we live in are full of cultural symbols. This book of a mini-who's who enables a group of Christians to come together to reflect, to ponder, and to suggest steps in which we can be engaging and not enveloped by the culture at large. This calls for wise discerning of the underlying messages of these cultural icons. It calls for biblical perspectives and how Christians are to live counter-cultural when they is a need to, to support humanitarian, ecological, social reforms, or things common to the well-being of people. There are many crying out for help or for understanding. Are Christians hearing them? There are many seeking out some semblance of direction in life. Are Christians looking out for them? There are also many trying to make sense of what is life all about. Are Christians equipped to help them out? The editors of this book has been carefully chosen for their expertise. Robert K. Johnston is well-known for his work in the integration of theology and film. Craig Detweiler, with Barry Taylor do the same for the music scene, as well as celebrities, art, and cultural fashion. Instead of having a book where theology or biblical insights inform the shape of the book, it takes on a two way interaction, where one observes, then reflects, and then pauses to make some sense of what the Bible is speaking and what the culture is saying. In doing so, one is careful not to dismiss all cultural icons are mere entertainment. Neither is one overly simplistic in trying to "baptize" everything with holy things. The latter attitude will reflect more of a secular/sacred divide, instead of a holistic view of things where all truth is God's truth. One's theological insight can be sharpened, regardless of whether the object has a "Christian label" on it or not. There is a slightly heavier Californian influence among the contributors in the book. Many of them are associated with Fuller Theological Seminary, as well as churches and organizations in California, the land of Hollywood. I enjoy this book. In fact, there needs to be an expanded dictionary version, maybe online, so that the wider Christian community can benefit from this serious and yet fun engagement of culture from a Christian perspective. Don't stop believing, and don't stop engaging too. Rating: 5 stars of 5. conrade This book is provided to me free by Westminster John Knox Press and NetGalley without any obligation for a positive review. All opinions offered above are mine unless otherwise stated or implied.

Elvis Presley. Andy Warhol. Nike. Stephen King. Ellen DeGeneres. Sim City. Facebook. These American pop culture icons are just a few examples of entries you will find in this fascinating guide to religion and popular culture. Arranged chronologically from 1950 to the present, this accessible work explores the theological themes in 101 well-established figures and trends from film, television, video games, music, sports, art, fashion, and literature. This book is ideal for anyone who has an interest in popular culture and its impact on our spiritual lives. Contributors include such experts in the field as David Dark, Mark I. Pinsky, Lisa Swain, Steve Turner, Lauren Winner, and more.

"A captivating, idiosyncratic, journey through the icons of popular culture from the 1950s to today. This book will inspire and inform anyone who seeks to find a deeper meaning in the ever-changing world around us." George Nolfi, writer-director of The Adjustment Bureau and co-writer of The Bourne Ultimatum "Rejecting the tendency to see the spiritual as made of a different quality than the popular, Robert Johnston, Craig Detweiler, and Barry Taylor invite us in fact, usher us into spiritual themes that have shaped American, and world, culture over the last half century. Don't Stop Believin' is a fast-paced, timely dictionary of popular, meaningful spiritual vitality. Doug Pagitt, pastor, radio

host, and author of *A Christianity Worth Believing* "Ranging widely and wisely across the panoply of people, places and events that defined the heart and soul of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, this is a spiritual tour de force about the things that have shaped our histories and defined our context of culture and meaning." J. Walker Smith, Executive Chairman, The Futures Company; author of *Generation Ageless* "This fantastic collection of essays (more like conversation starters, really) encourages us to take a deeper look at the popular entertainment that our world enjoys because we just might find God there. If a contemporary apostle Paul had to defend the faith on a modern-day Mars Hill, I'd recommend he refer to this book for a quick update about how our culture reflects what we believe." Dean Batali, Writer/Producer, *That '70s Show* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* About the Author Robert K. Johnston is Professor of Theology and Culture at Fuller Theological Seminary. He is the author of *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue* and *Finding God in the Movies: 33 Films of Reel Faith*, and editor of *Reframing Theology Film: New Focus for an Emerging Discipline*. Craig Detweiler is Associate Professor of Communication at Pepperdine University. He is the editor of *Halos and Avatars: Playing Video Games with God*; the author of *Into the Dark: Seeing the Sacred in the Top Films of the 21st Century*; and coauthor (with Barry Taylor) of *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture*. Barry Taylor is Adjunct Professor of Popular Culture and Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary and coauthor (with Craig Detweiler) of *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture*. He is a professional musician, painter, and the leader of *New Ground*, an alternative worship gathering in Los Angeles.