

## Thoughts on Religion

"More and more Christians say the usual ways of "doing church" no longer resonate in a contemporary, postmodern culture. Seeking to fill the gap, a growing movement called "the emerging church" is developing new forms of worship and theological questioning for a new cultural context."

"...he wants us to find points of reference in the culture so that we can bring the gospel as good news to the culture. And our culture, like it or not, is profoundly impacted by rap....And it's reaching the hearts of others. This is the most sacred place that we have within the human person, is the heart. It's helping a young person turn towards Christ, and that is the most dignified thing that any young person can do..."

"The Jewish Museum of Baltimore has a traveling exhibit of Jewish novelties. "Tchotchkes," the Yiddish word for knickknacks, is becoming part of common American usage. These tchotchkes include a matzoh ball soup candle and a sports-themed menorah."

"They are worlds where hairy-toed creatures called hobbits set off on an epic journey to challenge the forces of darkness, where cataclysmic battles unfold. And through it all, they may also be worlds of deep spiritual meaning...Fantasy literature is by no means a new phenomenon but it's experiencing a resurgence of popularity...It is magic-filled entertainment, but some observers say the new national attention to fantasy could also have theological implications."

"Evangelicals can't ignore the culture. Their whole religious sensibility is based upon meeting the culture halfway. At the same time, American culture -- just like American religion -- is an enormously powerful force. It will change religion, just as religion will change culture."

"It occurred to me the more I attended to my own life in the popular culture as someone who would watch MTV or VH1, as someone who played in rock bands, as someone who was an avid purchaser and listener of popular music, that there were certain themes that seemed to resonate on a generational level. And it also occurred to me, through my own spiritual search, that the church was not doing a very good job responding as an institution to many of the needs of my generation that were, to me, clearly evident by way of the popular culture."

"It's the traditional gospel story -- with a definite 21st century twist: Jesus as an African-American named Hero. He was born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, grew up in a Jewish community in Brooklyn, and preaches his message on the streets of Manhattan. The government that condemns him is a Big Brother-type police state called the International Confederation of Nations, or ICON."

"Many churches wrestle with - and often despair of resolving - the dilemma of ministering to all age groups and tastes, all at once. But a church in California took a hint from shopping malls to multiplex theaters and divided itself so different people can worship in different styles, but with the same sermon."

"Religious board games are a small -- but rapidly growing -- part of the overall games market... Some of the games are just excellent tools for teaching, especially Bible characters and stories, and it's just a fun way to reinforce and to review those things that are just part of our family life."

"Appealing to young people is a challenge for congregations as well as religious publishers, and there is something going on in about 150 churches around the country that, if not a model, is at least attention-getting... Across America, in toddling towns like Chicago, hip-hop isn't just hot -- it's downright holy."

"In fact, angels have become an American pop culture phenomenon....[and] what it says about

American spirituality... Every day, Linda Rose Levemberg meditates in front of an altar she's assembled in her Bethesda, Maryland home. She conducts rituals to connect with what she calls her angel guides, named Gabriel and Sarah. Levemberg says these angels speak messages for her and for others."

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