



MARS HILL AUDIO

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more on

The Culture of Celebrity

Jake Halpern's *Fame Junkies: The Hidden Truths Behind America's Favorite Addiction** (2007) was published by Houghton Mifflin. During our interview, Halpern cited a study by research psychologist Jean Twenge. Her findings are summarized in her book *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable Than Ever Before** (Simon & Schuster, 2006). Books that place the pursuit of fame in a wider cultural context include Richard Schickel's *Intimate Strangers: The Culture of Celebrity in America** (Ivan R. Dee, 1985). Schickel argues that the pursuit of celebrity is an effort to satisfy two paradoxical desires: "celebrity appears to the noncelebrity to fulfill both a dream of autonomy and, at the same time, a dream of intimate, almost familial connection among figures of glamour and authority. Both are thus, at bottom, dreams of power inevitably tinged by envy and resentment." The drive to become famous may thus have connections with the pursuit of what C. S. Lewis described as "The Inner Ring" (see his essay by this name in *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses**, Eerdmans, 1949). In *Celebrity** (Reaktion, 2001), sociologist Chris Rojek suggests that the desire for celebrity is a response to the loneliness and homogenization that afflicts modern democracies, the decline in organized religion, and the commodification of everyday life. "[T]he growing significance of celebrity culture as, so to speak, the backcloth of routine existence reinforces the proposition that, as it were, 'post-God' celebrity is now one of the mainstays of organizing recognition and belonging in secular society." In the chapter "Twilight of the Heroes" in his book *Mediated: How the Media Shapes Your World and the Way You Live in It** (Bloomsbury, 2005), Thomas de Zengotita examines the relationships between media, fandom, and the maintenance of "attitude." Neal Gabler's *Life, the Movie: How Entertainment Conquered Reality** (Knopf, 1998) examines how our sense of what is real and valuable has been transformed by the cultural dominance of entertainment. See especially the chapters "The Human Entertainment" and "The Mediated Self." Finally, David Thomson's *The Whole Equation: A History of Hollywood** (Knopf, 2004) contains some brilliant insights into the way movies (especially close-ups of faces) have affected our sense of identity and relationships, contributing an essential component to the culture of celebrity.

Disc 1

1 Introduction

- 2 **Jake Halpern**, on the ecosystem of celebrity and the complicated reasons why people seek to become famous
- 3 **Stephen J. Nichols**, on how the dynamics of American culture have shaped our understanding of who Jesus is
- 4 **Richard M. Gamble**, on resources for and the outlines of a theology of education

Disc 2

- 1 **Peter J. Leithart**, on how concerns from some postmodern thinkers echo the eschatological perspective of Solomon (as presented in the book of Ecclesiastes)
- 2 **Bill Vitek**, on how wise living on the Earth requires the humble recognition of our ignorance as well as the application of knowledge
- 3 **Craig Holdrege**, on lessons from Goethe about how we understand the rest of Creation as participants, not detached and potentially omniscient observers
- 4 **Craig Holdrege**, on the "conversational" quality of our engagement with Creation

* An asterisk means that the book is in print; if you wish to purchase it from our friends at Splintered Light Books, call 1.800.979.3310.

more on

American Jesus

Stephen J. Nichols's *Jesus Made in America: A Cultural History from the Puritans to The Passion of the Christ** (2008) was published by InterVarsity Press. Some similar questions were raised (from standpoints informed by theologically different assumptions) by Stephen Prothero in *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon** (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003); by R. Laurence Moore in *Touchdown Jesus: The Mixing of Sacred and Secular in American History** (Westminster/John Knox Press, 2003); and by Richard Wightman Fox in *Jesus in America: Personal Savior, Cultural Hero, National Obsession** (HarperCollins, 2005). Jaroslav Pelikan's *Jesus through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture** (Yale, 1985) widens the scope of concern considerably.

Other Works Mentioned

Richard M. Gamble's anthology, *The Great Tradition: Classic Readings on What It Means to Be an Educated Human Being** (2007), was published by ISI Books. Peter J. Leithart's *Solomon among the Postmoderns** (2008) was published by Brazos Press. *Beyond Biotechnology: The Barren Promise of Genetic Engineering** (2008), by Craig Holdrege and Steve Talbott, was published by the University of Kentucky Press, as was *The Virtues of Ignorance: Complexity, Sustainability, and the Limits of Knowledge**, edited by Bill Vitek and Wes Jackson. Both are part of a series called "Culture of the Land," exploring themes of the "new agrarianism."



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The **MARS HILL AUDIO** Journal is produced at our studio in rural central Virginia, outside of historic Charlottesville. The Journal is one of several audio products we distribute, all of them intended to encourage greater wisdom about interaction with contemporary culture.

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