

THEOLOGY | CRITIQUE | REVIEW | ESSAY | CULTURE

salt&light

Summer Edition 2015



MAD MEN

**Don Draper Seeks Love and
Meaning in a Changing America**

Jimmy Hopper

**Isolated Thoughts
To Everything There Is A Season
God Is Holy and You Are Not
Before We Leave The Table
Mrs. Peggy: A Tribute**

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Presbyterian Church
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Mad Men.

FROM THE EDITOR

You have in your hands the Summer, 2015 issue of *Salt & Light*, but it is already September, but not really Fall. Maybe it can be the Summer-Fall issue. We do want a late Fall issue. Anyway, when you read it, Summer or Fall, we hope you will enjoy and be encouraged and edified by it.

Our lead article surveys *Mad Men*, the hugely popular and successful television production about the tremendous changes in American culture during the decade of the 60's. Carolyn and I watched all 92 episodes and as I considered it, I continually thought of the poverty and sadness of their glitzy world, a world without God, and without hope. There are spoilers in it, so consider that if you have plans to watch the series.

Our pastor took off for a prayer and study week recently. In a cabin by a mountain creek, he discovered the joys, and the loneliness, of isolation. In his article, *Isolated Thoughts*, he speaks to what he learned and felt in prose and poetry. It's an interesting and very human perspective.

Our Director of Children's Ministries, Peggy Drinkard, is retiring. She speaks to this in *To Everything There is a Season*, she speaks beautifully of her time leading our children, and of the sadness, but the anticipation of leaving it. As always, it is a beautiful evocation from her very heart.

Bob Thornton reflects on what he would say if, on an airplane, he was asked by a famous person to explain his faith in a single sentence. His mediation on this, *God is Holy and You Are Not*, speaks of how he would make his confession. Grounded in scripture, we follow his thought processes.

During the summer, Pastor Pate has preached a short series on Psalms numbered in the 50s. Finding himself unable to leave them, he writes one more piece, this time focusing on using them as they were originally intended, by singing them. Jeff, in addition to being our pastor, is also a music man, and you will find this devotional both inspiring and interesting.

I couldn't let Peggy retire without telling how much she has meant to her church and to me personally. *Mrs. Peggy: A Tribute*, seeks to tell what we really can't tell; how much we all loved and appreciated her.

In our FINALE, Peggy Drinkard sent me a poem, *Breathless Tales*, that I hope you will enjoy. As always, thanks to our Associate Editor, Prathima Gilliam, who sees things I can't or don't see, and Lisa Kidder, who puts it all together and has designed the covers.



Mad Men

Don Draper Seeks Love and Meaning in a Changing America

By Jimmy Hopper

The heart's repentance
on the other hand, turns
without regret, turns not
so much *away*, as *toward*.

as if the slow pilgrim
has been surprised to find
that sin is not so *bad*
as it is a waste of time.

Scott Cairns

from *Adventures in New Testament*
Greek: Metanoia

For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole
world and forfeits his soul?

Jesus

Some months ago, my daughter brought me four DVD sets that contained the first four seasons of the AMC television series and cultural phenomenon, *Mad Men*. As she handed them to me, she said with a smile, "Dad, you're going to love this!" Why she thought this became a matter of conjecture for me. Except for sports, I'm not a big television fan. I very occasionally watch a police drama or a movie with my wife but I **never** watch situation comedies, and would have to be paid a significant sum of money to watch *any* reality show. Adding to the introspection, *Mad Men* turned out to have 92 episodes, each of which lasted approximately 40 minutes, all of which is 61 hours and 15 minutes of my life, now well advanced beyond *September Song* status. Apart from all that, one would think that *Mad Men* was not something I would or should be interested in. So how did she know I would "love it?"

She was right. I did love the show. We watched the episodes, fascinated, amused, appalled, entertained and addicted. It became a weekend night ritual to watch two or three episodes. We

purchased the next two years and finally caught up and watched the final year as the shows came on, having become more and more entangled in the series. We wondered how it was all going to end, especially if there was, or could be, any kind of redemption. I might as well say here that writing an article about *Mad Men* from a Christian perspective will ultimately come down to "spoilers" so, if you have the set and are on episode 68, save this article and read it when you finish.

If you didn't see or hear about the series, it followed the lives and careers of a middling sized advertising firm on that famous street of advertising, Madison Avenue in New York City, thus the description of "Mad" men. These men and women, their families, friends, lovers, acquaintances, competitors, and clients represented a huge group to follow with a lot going on over the seven years of the show. The series seemed to be about big business but is actually a portrait of America in the 60's, a time in which our world changed more than we perhaps realize.

The series is extremely well done. Production values were extraordinary, so realistic that the series generated retro clothing and furniture sales. The producer and main writer, Matthew Weiner, was brilliant in his characterizations and his casting. His most inspired decision, however, was made at conception when he set his saga of that very significant American decade in the advertising business, the point of contact in the materialism and class wars that defined the era and post-war American life. Money and power are the goals, and as it accumulates, we can almost see narcissism growing like mold on the characters. Many things that were done then are not done now. America was shocked to see pregnant women drinking and smoking. In fact, today's America was shocked at the drinking and

The seriesis actually a portrait of America in the 60's, a time in which our world changed....

smoking that went on with everyone. It is hard to describe how these people drink. You have to see it. Liquor is everywhere and is, I think *used* is the proper verb, at the onset of every problem, every disappointment, and every triumph they encounter.

Technically and artistically, the series had some detractions, which is inevitable given its size and scope. The writing lapsed into melodrama maybe more than occasionally and the writers were not above creating some unusual coincidences when there was a need to move the plot along. There were also characters or situations introduced for the sole purpose of representing cultural issues, issues that were subsequently dropped and never mentioned again and became distractions or simply social studies lessons.

One of the reasons we were so fascinated by *Mad Men* was because we lived through the times described, times that seem more event-filled and astonishing in retrospect. For myself, these were the years of my twenties and early thirties, a time of building a life and career while interacting with the culture in which *Mad Men* is set. We remembered the big events as they came up on the show: the Kennedy-Nixon election; the moon landing; the assassinations of John and Bobby Kennedy and of Martin Luther King; the presidency of Johnson. We remembered the civil rights movement, the race riots, the Beat Generation, both rock and folk music, the drug culture, the sexual revolution, the Cold War, the missile crises, the anti-war movement, and all the emotions we had felt then were now being shown on the screen through the lens of the day-to-day actions of the *Mad Men* characters.

Something of this scope requires a unifying element, an unforgettable character that will

fascinate viewers and cause them to tune in 92 times to see what happens to him. They succeeded brilliantly. Don Draper, as played by Jon Hamm, is an executive at Sterling-Cooper, a junior partner and the Creative Director when we first meet him. He is tall, remarkably handsome, impeccably dressed, intelligent, charismatic, and in charge. His journey through the era is ultimately about modern man, everyman, seeking meaning in a changing post-war world that would become modern America. Watching the cultural changes as a Christian is what fascinated me so, and what my daughter was thinking when she made her prediction.

This article is an attempt to follow that journey and to seek to understand something of the forces that impacted the American culture and to understand the divide between it and the culture of the Reformed Church. There is obviously no possibility of speaking to every character, every sub-plot, and all the cultural issues that arose during the 60's that was addressed on the show. I will focus on a few of the characters and incidents along the way that especially speak to Don Draper's journey and destination as he seeks to build an life of self-achievement and happiness in a glittering, high pressure business.

To put Don Draper in context, a scene in the first episode is essential. It demonstrates the man at the very top of his game. His value to the firm and his relativistic outlook is on stage in meetings with American Tobacco Co. execs and their "Lucky Strike" cigarette brand (there are no made up brand names on *Mad Men*, they use the real products.) In the meeting, there is discussion about exactly what can be said about the product since the government is beginning studies connecting cigarettes with lung cancer and other diseases. Trying to refute these claims is

Don Draper's journeyis ultimately about modern man, everyman, seeking meaning in a changing post-war world that would become modern America

impossible; it is the government, after all, and all the men at the table, even while smoking Lucky Strike cigarettes, have a pretty good idea the claims are not refutable. What to do, where to go with the advertising campaign? All the high-powered execs in their Brooks Brothers suits are perplexed.

At an impasse, Don Draper asks how Lucky Strike are made. The response: tobacco is cut, and toasted instead of being sun-dried, and.... Draper steps to the board with the picture of a pack of cigarettes on it and writes "It's Toasted." They stare. The word has connotations. "Toasted" indicates warmth, good taste, preparation, a pleasant appearance. It says nothing negative, refutes no claims, and allows no rebuttals. It says nothing yet it is perfection. "It's Toasted" becomes the new ad campaign. In this one scene, we see Don Draper professionally, his brilliance matching his looks, his self confidence, and the confidence that both clients and Sterling-Cooper have in him.

I said that here Draper was at the top of his game. From this point, we see his fall. In the series at the beginning of each episode, we see an outline of a man hurtling downward from a tall building past various brightly colored ads. This is the trajectory of Don Draper throughout the series. We soon learn more about him. He is married to Betty, a beautiful former model, and he has two children, Sally (who will become a focal point) and Bobby. We discover that Betty is repressed and unhappy and will soon seek a psychiatrist. We find out quickly that Don is an adulterer, and over time we see that he is a serial adulterer. Like advertising, women are easy for him. In fact, it is astonishing to the other men, and to the viewer, how easy they are for him but it all remains believable because of his looks, confidence and charisma. Then, in the third episode, we discover something that is not part of the picture he projects. On the commuter train, a man seems to recognize him and calls him Dick Whitman. Don looks surprised but responds as to an old acquaintance.

Eventually we find out that Don is/was Dick Whitman. In a flashback, we discover Pvt. Dick Whitman and Lt. Don Draper at a supply post during the Korean War. After an attack, Whitman demonstrates his fear and Lt. Draper comments on it. Whitman tries to light a cigarette but his hand is shaking and he drops his lighter, igniting some gasoline that had spilled during the attack. Draper is killed in the resulting fire and explosion and Whitman swaps dog tags with the unidentifiable corpse and so becomes Don Draper.

We will learn even more in flashbacks about Dick Whitman. His mother was a prostitute and he is the child of one of her encounters. His hard-scrabble upbringing had a profound effect on him. The army was his way out and he took the death of Don Draper as an opportunity to disown his past and re-invent himself. The past still haunts him, however, and occasionally touches him in the fast lane of Sterling Cooper. His brother sees his photo in the newspaper and seeks him out. Draper is appalled and seeks to buy him off and send him away. He sends Draper a package of photos and family information which is delivered to the wrong desk (I spoke of "unusual coincidences" to move the plot along) and thus gets out, but Draper is adamant on having nothing to do with him. His brother, depressed and alone, rejected by his only connection to a human he admired, commits suicide.

Don will lose his wife and family when Betty discovers this package of information. Raised in an elitist family, it overwhelms her even though Don's confession and tears seem to be a turning point to him at the time. When she hears an accusation from the husband of one of his conquests, she is not able to continue and they separate and eventually divorce. Don will marry again, this time to Megan Calvet, a receptionist who quickly becomes his secretary, then quickly becomes his wife. She is a failed actress who yearns to get back into acting, another story line playing out in California.

When she tells ...about her guilt and shame, he tells her that "This never happened. It will shock you how much it never happened."

Don Draper on love: “What you call love was invented by guys like me to sell nylons.”

In the must-mention category, we have Peggy Olsen. She shows up in the first episode as a new secretary; in fact, she becomes Don Draper's secretary. Peggy will become a “glass ceiling” character as the series goes on. Early on, she participates, as do all the female employees, in trying out women's products while the ad execs watch through a one-way window. Her comments are perceptive and she gradually is allowed to write copy, then becomes a manager. She also becomes pregnant by one of the ad execs and has the baby privately and puts it up for adoption. When she tells Don Draper, who has become something of a mentor to her, her story about her guilt and shame, he tells her to forget it. He tells her that “This never happened. It will shock you how much it never happened.”

This disavowal is characteristic. And necessary, given Don's background. Don is a man who goes on to the next thing, the next check, the next drink, the next award, the next woman. In describing his career, he speaks of his idea of Happiness: “Advertising is based on one thing, happiness. And you know what happiness is? Happiness is the smell of a new car. It's freedom from fear. It's a billboard on the side of the road that screams reassurance that whatever you are doing is okay. You are okay.” He is the post-modern man moving through a landscape he can dominate and have no regrets when he says that “it never happened.” In another scene, he makes this statement: “I hate to break it to you, but there is no big lie, there is no system, the universe is indifferent.” He is able to move on to something else, something bigger...and better. There is no structure except a tenuous social code. There is no punishment, no regrets. The indifferent universe doesn't care. There is no God.

God and religion doesn't appear often in the *Mad Men* saga but it does appear. Peggy was raised a devout Catholic, but has mostly rejected religion. She is taken with making her own way and being her own person, and she doesn't see God in the equation. Early in the series, a young priest seems interested in her, obviously something that is

against his vows, but it never passes the light flirting/friendship threshold because of him. Yet, it also seems that Peggy didn't want to do that to him, or to herself. Besides, life was very exciting at Sterling Cooper for a young woman.

Religion appears again as Don meets and interacts with the Rosens. Don has met Dr. Arnold Rosen, a heart surgeon who lives in his building with his wife and a teenaged son. Don admires him, and this is rare. No other character that Don Draper admires comes quickly to mind. Dr. Rosen keeps a pair of cross country skis in his closet so that he can get to the subway when there is a blizzard and has a medical emergency to treat. Despite his admiration, Don seduces his wife, Sylvia, who also is a devout Catholic. In an extraordinary scene, Don notices a small crucifix on a chain around her neck during one of their assignations. “Do you seek absolution afterward?” he asks her mockingly. She replies that she doesn't and that the focus of her prayers are for him to find some kind of peace in his life. Don looks at her, moves the crucifix to her back so that he won't see it as they continue.

Sexuality and sexism are key themes in the series. In an interview, Matthew Weiner noted two key events in 1960: the election of John F. Kennedy and the introduction of “the Pill”. In an interview, Weiner said that the importance of the Pill couldn't be overstated. Everything changed with it. It crossed my mind writing this that I don't have to say what The Pill does. There is no other “The Pill.” *Mad Men* and Don Draper's peccadilloes speak to the cultural change implicit in this new sexual freedom. There were many other factors in the so-called sexual revolution and many were prominent in *Mad Men*. The series is certainly a picture of the changes and results.

Sexism is rampant in the male-oriented offices of Madison Ave. As the men enter in the morning, a secretary takes their hat and coat and brings them coffee, or ice for the ubiquitous whisky bottles in every office. Like the smoking and drinking, this is something unbelievable to today's generation. The men make suggestive comments. Power and career



Isolated Thoughts

Meditation on a Week in the Woods

By Jeff Pate

As some of you were aware, I spent the first week of June doing something I had only heard other ministers discuss. I took a study break. Since this was a first for me and I was not provided “how-to” instructions about taking said study break, I had to make it up as I went. So, with a box of books and an assortment of paper and pens, I headed east. On the final Saturday of May, I arrived at a log cabin in Heard County, Georgia. This cabin has a winding driveway that takes you back into the woods. There is a front porch and the back of the cabin includes a series of decks connected by short sets of stairs. This succession of descending decks cascade down to overlook a wide but shallow creek. The lowest deck is perched over the bank of the creek, probably 15 feet up. The view isn’t breathtaking, like a vista of the Rocky Mountains, but it is breath-giving. You can’t help but take long, deep drafts of the fresh air of a forest bathed by an ever-running stream. There was a television in the cabin but I decided to leave it off for the first six days. I also went without internet and radio. My family would be coming out to join me on the following Saturday but until then, I was alone. Just me, books, a journal, a laptop and the ever-present Teacher of God’s children.

As the week progressed and my mind and heart rate slowed down enough to think, the reality of isolation settled in on me. And there on the deck I began doing something I hadn’t taken the

time to do in years—I attempted to express my thoughts through verse. The first words came were from a husband who was missing his wife.

Divided One

*There was a bald man, in a cabin alone.
He ambled and rambled about on his own.
He longed to get kisses
from his lovely Mrs.
But he’s in the woods, and she’s at home.*

*At night he would dream of his bride’s sweet lips.
In day he recalled the curve of her hips.
Though dreams grew much clearer,
His dear grew no nearer,
He’s afraid sanity may soon slip.*

The first book I read at the cabin was Reflections on the Psalms by C.S. Lewis. As he shared his journey of coming to find the Psalms a rich source for devotional life, Lewis reminded me of the benefit of praise. He wrote, “The most valuable thing the Psalms do for me is to express that same delight in God which made David dance.” Praise is born from a heart that delights in God. Lewis referred to the writers of Psalms as old poets and stated their “appetite for God” found expression with “all the cheerful spontaneity of a natural, even a physical, desire.” This desire made “their fingers itch for the harp.” As I read the Psalms through Lewis’s wonder-filled eyes, worship ensued. As I worshiped, I saw creation joining in, or maybe I was the one

As I worshiped....I had never noticed how much the flowing of a rocky creek sounded so much likeconstant applause to the Maker.

joining in. I had never noticed how much the flowing of a rocky creek sounded so much like applause – constant applause to the Maker. All day and all night I was reminded of how Jesus had warned, or promised, that if others kept silent “the very stones will cry out.” There, alone in the woods and perched above a noisy creek, I was revived and my fingers itched for the pen.

Mid-Week Revival

*There were no white tents or metal chairs
in the vacant lot by the Dollar General.*

*No flyers stuck under unwary windshield wipers
promising showers of blessings.*

*No radio spots or soda endorsed banners and
Sunday's announcements included no mention of
an event.*

*The men haven't discussed who will attend
to ensure the plate for green-back love gets passed.
But this week I attended a revival.*

*The canopy extended far past the limits
of city approval or the public's notice.
It was made of attendees all standing in praise
and the sun sifted through their unfolded arms.
Musicians balanced on the worshipers' shoulders to
play,
have you ever seen a flutist in air?
The songs were familiar but the amalgam unique,
as they continually leapt from their swaying
perches.
Revival music is some of the best.*

*Far below the choir loft ran the baptismal fount,
ever-pouring and moving through the congregation.*

*The assembled sipped of the life it provided
and it noisily washed Abraham's last ditch sons.
But they too, will worship and cry out with others
and their washing results in continual applause.
It's applause given by hard-hearted worshipers,
to the Maker and Giver and Sustainer of all.
This week I attended a revival.*

However, my fingers were not the only thing that itched. I had come with all I needed to study but failed to bring bug spray. Lesson learned.

Bug Bites

*There is respite in nature, a greenroom for actors
allowing us time to reflect and recite.
But our peace is in danger, for there are distracters,
our rest can fall prey to bug bites.*

*The day couldn't be better. The views? All is
splendor,
as I sit on the porch high over the creek.
Here my soul feels unfettered, and nothing could
render
this less than the respite I seek.*

*I've prepared the chair "just so", an ideal
arrangement,
the book I brought with me, I've waited to read.
Though its perfect, I must go, or I face
derangement,
I'm the buffet. They're starting to feed.*

*So to mitigate danger, and recover respite,
I've found a solution to keep calm in the green.*

*While the "nature" feels stranger, I like being less
bit,
I now read on porches with screen.*

The first two days at the cabin, I fasted and prayed. This went well for about 24 hours. After that, I started thinking about food, constantly. I dreamed about food the second night. Later in the week after my fast had ended, I began to realize how much I missed something other than food. I missed human touch. There were no children to hug or tickle. There was no other hand to hold. As I reflected on this longing, my mind began to settle on Jesus' 40 days of fasting and isolation in the wilderness following his baptism. Jesus, who had never known hunger before the Incarnation, now willingly felt the pain of an empty stomach. I barely survived a weekend without food but he went nearly six weeks. But this wasn't the only aspect of his wilderness suffering and temptation. Jesus was fully man and desired (as we all do) affection and human contact. His first contact with flesh had been the warmth of Mary's womb. As he grew in strength and stature, he had growing pains as his body developed. As the son of a carpenter, I'm sure he knew what a splinter felt like as well as the comfort of a father who gently pulled it out and covered the wound. But in the wilderness, under the heat of the sun he endured isolation which included the absence of human touch, for us.

Touch

*The first sensation must have been odd,
after being so long without nerves.
Floating, twisting, finding
Yourself, from whom no one can be hidden.
Then passing through a still-locked gate,
to be enwrapped in a bride's embrace.*

*Did you need her touch, her voice, her warmth?
Did she offer it though you only wanted to feel
the sensation of vibration and sound as you
screamed?*

*When you stood did you have a sense of your
weight?*

*Gravity's law was somehow outwitted.
If not, then surely the new bones in your legs
would have splintered under the stress of glory.
But those legs and feet were intended for travel
for carrying burdens not your own.*

*You felt the heaviness of life and death.
So, as Atlas, you stood and somehow moved under
the mass of your being and heft of the world.*

*Your trade undoubtedly heightened you senses
of feeling the rough and fashioning smooth.
But after decades, I'm sure, you had the requisite
callouses
requiring more pressure and heat to feel.
Those hands were made delicate and strengthened
and leathered
to hold children and nails, cups of wine and of
wrath.*

*Did you miss it at all, in your long isolation?
The warmth of a hand? The compression of arms
around your back?*

*Were you tempted to embrace your enemy just to
touch once again?*

The time at the cabin was filled with prayer, reading, long walks, reflection, confession and peace. A few people have asked me if I was got a lot accomplished while I was there. My answer has been that though I spent time studying and preparing material for preaching, the week wasn't really about preparing sermons. It was really a week in which God prepared the preacher. While there, he reminded me

The time.....was filled with prayer, reading, long walks, reflection, confession and peace.... the week wasn't really about preparing sermons. It was.....a week in which God prepared the preacher.

that the work I am doing is not the work I am doing. He is doing it. He reminded me that not only am I called to proclaim the good news of salvation in Christ but that I am also a recipient of that same salvation. He reminded me of the overflow of his grace in my life. The Riverwood family is an expression of that grace. And I am so grateful. My wife and family are expressions of God's love. I don't deserve his love but I am so thankful for it and I was ready to wrap my arms around them and celebrate God's goodness with them. So that next Saturday night, as I sat waiting for a white van to make its way down the dirt and gravel driveway to a log cabin tucked away in Heard County, Georgia, I had a few more lines to write.

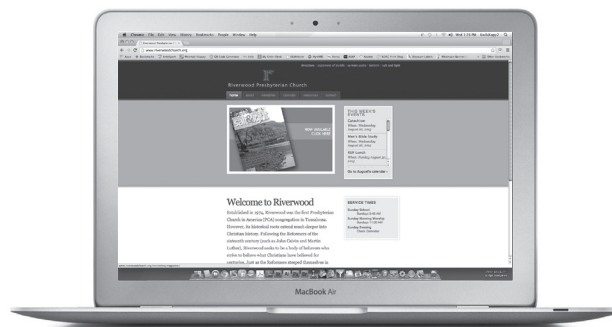
Almost

*You're somewhere between seclusion and fellowship,
Just where I don't know, the distance is long.
I imagine you driving, listening to Elton,
Rocket men travel as you sing along.*

*My cellphone's now dumb, like a Calormene pony,
no talking or singing or ringing this night.
In stillness, I wait, looking out windows
of isolation and longing for lights.*

*My hope rides on asphalt and rubber. Metal,
bearings and pistons now bring you to me.
As the minutes inch by, you move ever nearer.
Solitude's companion soon will be free.*

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To Everything There is a Season On Doing the Next Right Thing

By Peggy Drinkard

I love the changing of the seasons. I'm thankful God's providence has placed me in a location where each season is distinct and observable. The wise King Solomon said, "To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven." Only years of experience can teach us this truth deep down in our bones. Over time, we witness seasons, fashions, and trends come and go in regular rhythms. This feature of life lived under the sun is a gift. God placed the sun and the moon and the stars in the sky as "time-markers" for man (Genesis 1:14). We need predictability.

Recently a sewer pipe broke in our basement and deluged a little corner of things I was hoarding with a mixture of wet, sticky, greasy water. Thankfully, it was kitchen sewage. My husband was straining a watermelon for its juice, concocting a summer drink, when the pipe burst. The pulp left a sweet, soured smell on everything. There is a silver lining to this domestic catastrophe, however. Among the soaked and ruined things were many years' worth of my children's home school papers. Workbooks, essays, math papers, handwriting exercises...things that meant nothing to anyone except for me. Cleaning all that out was a job I haven't had the heart for and postponed too long. Each neatly labeled box held a little pile of family history. As I muddled through the cleanup, I remembered every text, every year of curriculum planning and where we lived each year as I made all the revisions and re-revisions to our courses of study. I put a lot of effort into fashioning a thorough education for each boy while considering his unique needs, strengths and bent. I made plenty of mistakes,

too. It was moving remembering all those years. The homeschooling adventure, like most educational endeavors, is not glamorous on a day-to-day basis. Like most things worth doing, it is mostly a process of getting up each day, making decisions, then putting one foot in front of the other "doing the next right thing" (I am indebted to Elisabeth Elliot and George Grant for introducing me to this useful little phrase). The sweet moments of sharing and discovering wonderful things with my children were a bonus. After the sewer disaster, I had no choice but to dump the evidence.

Society today looks on growing old as its greatest bane, but this is not God's view. Proverbs 16:31 says, "The hoary head is a crown of glory," with the qualifier, "if it be found in the way of righteousness." Nothing quite compares to repetitious experience over time for gaining wisdom and insight. Time teaches us that things come, and things go, and things reappear again. The companion truth, "nothing is new under the sun" becomes more evident when you've lived a while. Following our season of homeschooling, I was blessed to stay in the field of education when I took the job of directing our church's children's ministry. Once again I found myself pondering what was needed and the best way to convey it to our precious covenant children with all their particular bents and personalities and levels of understanding. I must be called to teach because nothing is more exciting to me than seeing people learn. It is always thrilling to witness the moment "the light comes on" in someone's understanding, whether it's a math problem or a deep, spiritual truth.

Despite my love for teaching, I now find this season of my life changing. For the last couple of years I've noticed God beginning to stir up my comfortable nest. Health problems and a sense that I might be getting too old to continue my teaching efforts in this particular setting began to unsettle me. I've found it physically difficult to consistently keep up the pace one needs to be effective with large numbers of little folks. I've noticed, too, that when I'm not feeling well, my patience isn't what it should be. Needless to say, this saddens me. The truth is that I find the companionship of children generally more pleasant and rewarding than that of adults. I like their lack of sophisticated guile, their sense of wonder, and their honesty among other things, but after extended times of prayer and seeking counsel, I believe I recognize the waning of this phase of my career. I have learned that once God's voice of direction becomes clear, it's best to humbly, even gratefully, give one's assent. Still, facing this has not been easy. I could not have asked for a job more suited to my skills and desires than this one is, not to mention the abundance of patience, grace and mercy that has been shown me while performing it. I was pondering all this sitting on a friend's porch overlooking beautiful Lake Martin recently. As two of my companions set out on a long walk, they asked if I'd like to accompany them. I said I didn't think so, mostly because I didn't want to slow them down, and I didn't want to find myself unable to get back if we went too far. My countenance must have given me away, because one of the friends came over and said, "It's okay. This is your year of jubilee."

The year of jubilee... what a helpful thought that has been in getting perspective on this new unfolding. In the Old Testament year of jubilee, you left the land fallow for the year

so that it could be replenished. Debts were cancelled. Slaves were freed. Land was returned to its original owners. Lots of good things came with that time of rest. That is what I am hoping for in the coming year; a time to rest, get fresh perspective and most of all, listen for His voice. I'd like to spend some time more meditatively, reading more, praying more, and tending to some things on the home front I've neglected for a while. I have to battle guilt over this. In the home I grew up in, the worst of sins was laziness, and it's hard for me to distinguish laziness and needed rest. Thankfully, I have a guide who helps me steer my course and who nudges me when I start to veer too far left or right.

Since I'm not planning on dying or moving, this is not a farewell in any sense except to the particular position I've occupied these past 14 years. I love the covenant children and the congregation of Riverwood, and I love the Gospel in all its multi-faceted glories and applications. I hope to continue living it out here with this good group of folks for a long time to come. A few verses from Psalm 90 sum up my prayers and hopes for us all just now:

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish Thou the work of our hands, yea, the work of our hands, establish Thou it. Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children. Oh satisfy us early with Thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

Peggy Drinkard is newly retired from the position of Children's Director at Riverwood Presbyterian Church. You may contact her at pdrinkard@riverwoodchurch.org.

The year of jubilee... what a helpful thought that has been....a time to rest, get fresh perspective and most of all, listen for His voice.

God Is Holy...

... and You Are Not

By Robert Thornton

And the four living creatures,
each of them with six wings,
are full of eyes all around and within,
and day and night they never cease to say,
“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!”

Revelation 4:8

In our Session meetings we have assigned reading from various books. A recent one, *The Trellis and The Vine* by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, contained an interesting quote. It was from the comedic illusionist and avowed atheist Penn Jillette, the large, talking half of the famous duo Penn and Teller. Speaking specifically of Christians, he essentially said that he didn't respect anyone who didn't proselytize, that anyone who didn't proselytize had to hate the person he faced.

I thought about what he said and wondered. What if I were on a long plane ride and sat next to Mr. Jillette? What if, in our conversations we got around to talking about Christianity, and I told him I was a Christian? What if he said to me, “OK, Bob, tell me what you believe in one sentence”?

I wracked my brain for an answer to my fantasy encounter. There is Bill Bright's “Four Spiritual Laws” opening: “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” Then there are the posters and graffiti proclaiming that, “Jesus died for your sins.” There is even the almost universally-quoted verse, John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.” All of these are laudable (John 3:16 being, I think,

the most commendable) but are somehow incomplete. Finally, it came to me, the single sentence that summed up our belief, concise and to the point. My discovery was short-lived: after further reading I found that R. C. Sproul had thought of it long before I did.

So, what is this great statement of faith? It's simple really: “God is holy and you are not.” It's a bit terse, isn't it? On first blush, it even sounds a little mean-spirited. But, on thinking about it, “God is holy and you are not” really does summarize what we believe.

First things first...what does holy mean? After all, the main action word in the sentence is *holy*. I guess one definition is to be set apart from common usage. Put another way, we could say, it means different or unique compared to the world.

God is holy. I wouldn't dispute that and I don't think anyone else would either. In Exodus 33:12-34:35 there is an account of what happens when a man encounters God. Moses is on Mount Sinai after breaking the two tablets containing the Ten Commandments. He asks God to show him His glory. But God tells him, “...you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live” (Exodus 33:20). And later, after coming down with the new tablets his face, “shone because he had been talking with God” (Exodus 34:29).

Another example comes from Isaiah 6:1-7. Isaiah, just before God calls him to his ministry, sees a vision of God. Like Moses, he doesn't see God face-to-face, but rather, “sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up...” (Isaiah 6:1). Even the seraphim are not able to see God and cover

The short and succinct answer is: God is holy and you are not. We are separated from God by our sin. And sin is nonnegotiable.

their faces with two of their six wings. They are also compelled to cry out:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!”

The commonality between these two accounts is the inability of Moses and Isaiah to see God’s face. I suppose this begs the question, “why?” Why couldn’t these great men of God see His face? And why can’t we?

The short and succinct answer is: God is holy and you are not. We are separated from God by our sin. And sin is nonnegotiable. As an example of what that means, I’ll refer back to my college days. I was an engineering student at a military academy. After a particularly grueling exam in a difficult course (*Heat Transfer*, I think) I received my grade. It was something like a 55 – an “F.” I was depressed. Likely, I would have to repeat the course. Then came the rumors. Only a whisper at first. But, it began to build, and lo and behold, it was true. The following day the instructor told us that due to the universally low scores on the exam, we would be graded on a curve. My failing “F” became a respectable “C+”. If it hadn’t been for our military discipline, I would have broken out into my happy dance.

Yet, God doesn’t grade on a curve. My personal efforts at holiness are useless. Isaiah described all our righteous deeds, the things associated with holiness, as like “polluted garments” (from Isaiah 64:6). That’s a hard one to take. Apple CEO, Tim Cook, has donated \$65 million to charity. Even that is far short.

R. C. Sproul said the following: Alone among the religions of the world, Christianity teaches that God does not grade on a curve. If we think that He will let us into Heaven if our good deeds outweigh our bad, we are sadly mistaken.

There is a dilemma that I see regarding holiness. As Christians we are called to be holy. In Leviticus and echoed in 1 Peter, God says, “You shall be holy, for I am holy,” (1 Peter 1:15).

How can I be holy if I’m a sinner? Perhaps another definition of holiness helps. We can also define holiness as this: “something or someone is made holy when the Almighty, who is Himself set apart from all creation, sets it apart for a special use or purpose.”

So, it is God that makes me holy and not myself. In a Ligonier Ministries devotional, “Be Holy”, the author describes it as follows: It is God that first marks us as holy, and we demonstrate that He is actively and continually sanctifying us only as we renounce the evil of this world and endeavor to live in holiness before Him. People called by God are described in 1 Peter 2:9 as: “...a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9). I come to be holy when I become a member of God’s family. And that occurs by the grace of God through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross on my behalf.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:9 it says, “For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ...” (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

Or, put another way, God is holy and, on my own, I am not.

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Before We Leave the Table

A Meditation on Singing the Psalms

By Jeff Pate

I have a habit that has become a bit of a joke in my house. Whenever we are eating out, after polishing off my meal, paying the bill, and getting up to leave, I always reach back and grab one more thing from the table. Often it is just my glass for one more swallow and another piece of ice to chomp on, but sometimes it is that last French fry drowning in ketchup on one of the kids' plates. Ok, so there are two habits. I have never gotten over chewing ice. But the joke is about my habit of reaching back for just a little more of something from the table. For me, it feels like I'm draining every drop of my dining experience. For the kids, it is "Dad's cheap and doesn't want to leave anything behind, not even the ice in his glass!" As the summer preaching series of Psalms 51-57 comes to an end, I just can't help but reach back for one more morsel.

The Psalms we looked at are inspired expressions written by a man who had faced a tremendous range of human emotions. From humiliation to exultation, from despair to delight, David experienced it all. Taking quill in hand, he wrote down his emotions. The pages of these Psalms are filled with the deluge that flowed from David's heart and pen.

But David didn't write these Psalms just to be read and studied; they were intended to

be sung. Years ago, I heard a pastor state that many of the great revivals in the history of the church were preceded by a commitment to the singing of psalms. Having no reason to doubt the accuracy of this claim, I often wondered why psalm singing would have such an effect. I have heard some say that, similar to praying through the Psalms, God is especially pleased for us to recite his eternal Word back to him. God's Word is active, living, sharp, powerful, and true. In corporate worship, we should feel privileged to have the occasion for singing texts that were divinely inspired. Like David in the cave of Adullam, who pleaded with the sun to rise so he could praise its Maker, the Psalms turn our minds to the transcendent God who is above the heavens and who deserves our worship.

These Psalms had sprung from a soul enraptured with God's glory and line after line flows out acknowledging and proclaiming the power of the Almighty, calling for him to bring justice to the wicked and grace to the humble. Only the all-powerful One can show the strength and mercy for which David pleads. It would serve us well to cry out in song using these inspired texts for that same grace and mercy David sought. However, I am increasingly convinced that the effectiveness of the Psalms to elicit revival through the Spirit's work may not be

These Psalms had sprung from a soul enraptured with God's glory and line after line flows out acknowledging and proclaiming the power of the Almighty

There is no room here for romanticized, sugar-coated clichés (or) highbrow vagueness. This is life and death.

only because they are inspired and divine words. Perhaps it is also because they are so genuinely human.

The doors that lead into the church fellowship hall are wooden and face west. This means that they get the full afternoon sun and the ultraviolet rays have begun to cause them to fade. The sun is slowly destroying them. To properly repair them and protect them from further damage, they need to be sanded down to the raw wood before being refinished. That is how I have begun to view the Psalms. Instead of David being content with brushing over his problems with a few strokes of varnish to hide the damage done by his and others' sin, he lets the Spirit begin His work of sanding him down, exposing the raw wood underneath. Sentimentality and mere propositional expressions can't go deep enough. Instead, the Psalms honestly portray what it feels like to be a Christian living in a fallen world, facing west in the heat of the afternoon sun. These are the same texts that reveal the God who could then apply the healing balm of his unmerited and yet extravagant grace. Singing the Psalms connects us with the same God whose Spirit comforted David as he mourned the slaughter of the priests of Nob, as he fled from Absalom, his own rebellious son, of one who served a king that repeatedly sought to kill him. These are the songs of a man who had committed horrific sins and then pleaded for mercy.

So as we sing and pray these texts, crying out for grace and mercy as David did, we pray that the Holy Spirit will use them to help us recognize the nature and work of the One True God and also to enable us to state what we truly are and what we honestly feel. Facing the full sun of a

fallen world, we are vulnerable and powerless, weathered and faded. As Jesus hung on a Roman cross, he cried out using the text of a psalm to convey the depth of his suffering and despair. It was a Psalm that is an honest and inspired human expression of pain.

So should we sing the Psalms more often? I think so. But we need to keep a few things in mind. The prescription for worship that pleases God includes doing so in spirit and truth (John 4:24). Sincere worship requires both words that convey an understanding of theological content and recognition of our personal need. There is no room here for romanticized, sugar-coated clichés. Nor is there a place for highbrow vagueness. This is life and death. David lived straddling the threshold between this world and the next. There was no time for abstraction or mushiness. The songs were inspired in the middle of desperation so we shouldn't be surprised if the Spirit teaches us to sing them in similar circumstances. The first effect the Psalms may have is to reveal to us how desperate our condition really is. Then, perhaps we will begin to see God rightly and worship him with fervor and with loud singing and delight. The book of Psalms is a banquet for the worshiper to feast upon. Nowhere else do we find this same juxtaposition of expression stating man's extraordinary need and God's extravagant provision. So yes, we should sing the Psalms. Enjoy the banquet. However, you'd better be careful if you reach back to the table for another bite, revival may break out!

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Mrs. Peggy: A Tribute

By Jimmy Hopper

Peggy Drinkard came to Riverwood Presbyterian Church in November of 2001. She stood with her husband, David, before the Session in an upstairs classroom in what is now the Fellowship Hall/Education building. She was there as part of seven families, if I remember correctly, fourteen adults and some children, who were all joining Riverwood on transfer of letter. I remember thinking that God was good and was always richly blessing his church.

I remember Peggy was smiling. I smiled back (I was quite happy that day anyway) but I was to discover that Peggy's smile is one of those that always elicits a smile. As time went on, I found that Peggy not only makes you smile but you kind of just generally felt better after being around her.

As I gradually got to know her, I came to appreciate other things about her. One of these was that she was gracious to a fault. Peggy defined a certain graciousness that had to do, in the Southern style, with manners and mien. Peggy was that, very much so, but she was also gracious in a much deeper way. Her graciousness was of grace in the Biblical form. She was gentle. She was merciful. She was compassionate. These qualities were woven into her very being. We are constantly told as Christians to be this way in imitation of Christ but we don't remember them as quickly as we do the more familiar passages regarding forgiveness. I have thought several times that Peggy reflects the grace that she has received as a child of God and this is a wondrous thing.

Soon after the Drinkards came, Riverwood had need of a Director of Children's Ministries. I'm not sure I've ever seen a Session agree on

anything any quicker than ours did when we gave the job to Peggy Drinkard. When she took over that mantle, I found out something else about her. She has a literal genius for loving, handling and teaching children. She speaks to this beautifully in her article in this issue, *To Everything There is a Season*. Watching her tenderness, patience and again, graciousness, with, by now, generations of the littlest members of Riverwood has been a great pleasure and an inspiration. In her work, she demonstrated much energy and imagination. Things were well done. Events were planned and carried out. Reformation was celebrated. Vacation Bible School was fun and successful. The Kid's Club was started and prospered. Easter eggs were hunted. The Kid's Choir was begun and palm fronds were waved on Palm Sunday. Catechism was taught and graduated from. Sunday School was planned and staffed and Nurseries were staffed and were overseen. The ministry of the Angel Tree was started and overseen. Everything was done with an eye toward the spiritual development of the children and most importantly, for the glory of the Lord.

If this wasn't enough, Clay and Kimberly Staggs, Blake Johnson and Peggy founded the Riverwood Classical School. Peggy taught, prayed, met, advised and loved another group of children. RCS is a ministry that has had a far reaching effect on another group of children, teaching them that everything was made by God and that everything that exists is under the sovereignty of God. It also has Peggy's name on it in indelible ink.

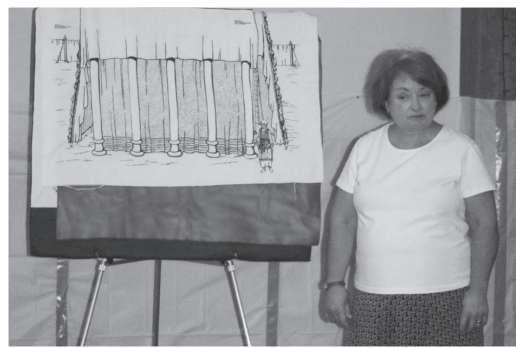
Peggy is a reader, a writer, a thinker, with an unerring ability to see essential truths with an eye trained by her immersion in the Reformed Faith and in the Gospel. She has been a faithful,

Everything was done with an eye toward the spiritual development of the children and most importantly, for the glory of the Lord...

one of the most faithful, contributors to *Salt & Light*. She generally writes about her life and her faith, the one leading to the other. Some examples: Her article, "Learning to Float," contrasted swimming lessons as a child and trusting the Gulf to hold her up with her attempts to trust her husband and submit to him in their marriage. In another memorable article, Peggy recalls a time when they lived in Europe while David was an Air Force officer and they decided to visit Dachau, the infamous Nazi concentration camp. In "Sometimes We Must Interfere," her feelings about eating and sleeping close to the camp where such horrors took place led to a meditation on corporate sin and the Christian's responsibility. There were many more. There is one on her retirement but also on the times of our lives just a few pages back. They are all insightful and discerning and most of all they show us a portrait, the beauty of a woman's

life lived before the face of God.

Now Peggy is retiring, and resting, and enjoying books and family and worship. A friend called it her "Year of Jubilee", the Biblical year when the fields were fallow and things were restored. She isn't leaving. We will see her at worship and the events of the Church. She still wants to write so the *Salt & Light* and its readers will still be blessed by her insight and style. Personally she has promised to continue to send me the occasional article, quotation, book recommendation, and poems (the *Finale* poem that follows, *Breathless Tales*, was sent to me by Peggy) and I am grateful because I would miss this very much. So I'll close this very heartfelt tribute to her with a wish for good days, much peace and calm, and grace and peace. God's blessings to you, Peggy, and the thanks of a grateful church.



Continued from page 4

advancement flows through the men to a large degree. Peggy Olson complains that every time someone takes her to lunch, “I’m supposed to be the dessert.”

A particular incident in the series demonstrates these attitudes vividly. There is a drunken Christmas party and Don Draper, when he gets home, discovers he left his key at the office. He calls his secretary to pick it up and bring it. After she arrives and he takes aspirin and water, sex ensues. She is a young girl. She is dazzled. *Don Draper is in love with me*, she thinks. She goes back to work and can’t wait to see him. Draper comes in, casually thanks her for bringing the keys and gives her a \$100 “Christmas bonus.” He then pays absolutely no attention to her. She can’t believe it. It was love. It was powerful, like in the movies. Except it wasn’t. She tells him that she is leaving to find other work and asks for a letter of recommendation. His response: write what she wants said and he will sign it. She realizes that he can’t even be bothered to write it himself, that she was only

a commodity and it was only sex, nothing else. She throws the check at him and leaves in tears. Draper makes a comment at another point in the series about ideas of love. He says, “what you call love was invented by guys like me to sell nylons.”

The children of the characters play an important part in the series. In fact, a reprisal by the New York Times Review of Books after the series ended states that the series is actually an attempt by boomer children to understand and even to forgive their “greatest generation” parents. In the show, there is plenty to forgive. Roger Sterling, son of one of the advertising agency founders, trades his daughter’s mother in for a trophy wife and the daughter refuses to invite her to her wedding since

she is “as young as I am.” The daughter eventually leaves 5th Avenue to escape him and his formless life, and joins a hippie commune. Roger tries to “rescue” her; to take her back to the luxury that he had given her, but she refuses to return with him.

There are other examples, but Don and Betty Draper’s children, especially Sally, their daughter, are a special case. Kiernan Shipka is the girl who plays Sally and over the course of the series, literally grows up from a child of six to a fourteen year old teenager. Her mother is neurotic and her father is, well, Don Draper. Sally and her mother have a tenuous relationship. Her father is more forgiving, mostly because of his difficult boyhood. Sally suffers through the break up, and suffers through the usual one-upmanship antics of her

mother after the divorce. She has a difficult time dealing with the new stepfather and stepmother when her parents remarry. On two occasions, she walks in on adults in *flagrante delicto*, the second of which is her father and Sylvia Rosen, and it is shockingly traumatic to

a thirteen-year-old. Sally grows up quickly and painfully.

Television is a big player in the series and that means it was significant, and perhaps supreme as a cultural influence. Everyone in the series is fascinated by it. I was particularly surprised at the ways in which parents, children, and television intermingled in the series. “Can I watch TV?” was a common request by children. Responses to children ranged from “turn off the TV” (it’s bad for you) to “go watch TV” (leave me alone) to “no, you can’t watch TV” (punishment). Another persistent interaction between parents and children had to do with food. A consistent “punishment” by the children of their parents was



“You weren’t raised for Jesus. You don’t know what belief can do to you.”. She answers , “I’m not sure you’re right about that.”

their refusal or acceptance of food as the case may be. The parent-child relationship was generally one of conflict.

The fall of Don Draper nears its end. We see his two marriages break up. We see two suicides that he was in large part, responsible for. We see damage to his children. There is a bout with alcoholism. Their company, Sterling-Cooper, is bought, sold, restarted, absorbed, and each time there are advantages, but people are damaged and control is lost, and with it whatever creative satisfaction Draper found in his work.

His breakdown finally comes after the company has been absorbed by a much larger corporation. Draper finds himself at a conference table with some twenty other “suits” all with identical packages of research material about the product and about the public who will buy it before them on the table. He is dismayed, looks out the window, and sees the New York skyline and an airplane in the sunshine high in the sky. He gets up and leaves the meeting without taking the research notebook he had been given and without saying a word.

We next see him in his Cadillac, once a source of pride for him. He picks up a hitchhiker, goes out of his way to take him to another state that is far off his path. His car breaks down in the Midwest and he is stranded at a motel while it is repaired. He becomes acquainted with a young bellboy who walks into town to buy him whiskey (for a price). He attends an American Legion meeting that the motel owner invited him to when he mentioned that he was a veteran. They are taking donations and the money is stolen. The men who attended accost him in his room and accuse him of stealing it and beat him. The bellboy was serving at the Legion hall and Draper knows he stole the money.

He tells the boy that he has to return it, that he would never be able to return if he didn’t. The boy reluctantly gives the money to Draper. He returns it and picks up his car keys but makes no effort to clear his name. Draper then gives him a ride to the bus stop and there he gives him his car. He is stripping himself of everything. He catches the bus the boy was going to catch.

We then see him in California, on the beautiful Pacific coast. He is at a retreat with Stephanie, the real Don Draper’s niece (long story, no time). She is damaged also. They have a last conversation before she leaves him and the retreat in the middle of the night. In it, she speaks of belief, and he tells her that “You weren’t raised for Jesus. You don’t know what belief can do to you.” He continues with the “It will shock you how much it never happened” philosophy. She tells him, “I’m not sure you’re right about that.”

Don is shaken by Stephanie leaving. I think it is because she seems to be his last human link. He calls Peggy. She wants to know why he left as he did. He seeks to explain. “I broke all my vows. I scandalized my child. I took another man’s name and made nothing of it.” There is actually much more unmentioned: two suicides, marriages ruined, both his and others, and alcohol addiction. He has to find something; find himself; find some sort of redemption. Peggy tells him to come back. “You can get your job back,” she says. “They wouldn’t let you go. You can work on anything with this company, even Coca-Cola.” Don isn’t ready. He hangs up.

A breakthrough of sorts happens in a group therapy session. A middle-aged, balding man named Leonard breaks down as he describes his life. He is lonely. Even with a wife and family he feels unloved. He dreams that he is on a cold

Hippie love and rebellion has moved to Madison Ave. and become mainstream...

Don is still guilty. Forgiving yourself isn't being forgiven.

refrigerator shelf and when the door is opened, he is looked at, but now really seen. He breaks down in tears. Don, listening to him, stripped and alone, relates to his story. Don, who is always seen, even has always been the center of attention, breaks down also and crosses the room. The two men embrace, both in tears.

Don Draper's last scene in *Mad Men* has him sitting with the group at the retreat at sunrise overlooking the Pacific. He is in a yoga position and as the leader intones that the wonderful sun has risen on a great, perfect, new day and "you are a new person in that day." They begin the "ohm" chant and the camera comes in for a close up of Don's face and the barest trace of a smile is seen.

From this we cut to a famous Coca-Cola commercial. Many people, young, beautiful, diverse, are on a hillside reminiscent of the California retreat. They are singing. "I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony, I'd like to buy the world a Coke...it's the real thing." The End.

So Don Draper has returned. He has taken back his place. Peggy was right. She even named the company that would be his comeback vehicle. He has created the famous commercial that, in a very real sense, signified the change in America in the 60's. Hippie love and rebellion has moved to Madison Ave. and become mainstream. No more panhandling on street corners. Don has learned to love Leonard, the real version of himself. Thus, Don has learned to love everyone.

But what has he really done? There was sympathy and forgiveness for the bellboy. There was sympathy and a sort of oneness with Leonard. There was his attempted sympathy with Stephanie that she saw through and rejected him. There was the feel good New Age Mother Sun worship, share your problems and that makes them okay. After that, he returns to "it didn't happen" land and armed with the new "everything is love" mantra that is now what causes America to buy, he steps back into his brilliant career.

What about guilt? A sense of futility, not guilt, drove him to leave New York but on the way to California, he dreamed that a policeman pulled him over and asked for his papers. When he looked at them, he began lecturing Draper. "We've been looking for you. You knew we'd catch up with you eventually." He awoke in a sweat in another motel room. He is still guilty. Forgiving yourself isn't being forgiven. He has simply stepped back into the abyss of emptiness, of a life without a defining structure, ultimately without meaning except for sensual satisfactions, power over others and a fleeting fame. Don Draper was free-floating in an indifferent universe. He himself had once proclaimed this triumphantly to justify his actions.

When I was a young man, a Don Draper was what young men wanted to be. We wanted money, sex, power, individuality, and recognition. The creativity was an added fillip. We saw him in the movies, even in a primitive form – in the old cowboy westerns as children. We saw him in real life. Perhaps to young men, and young women of the day, Jack Kennedy was Don Draper squared, with the additional public service element added. They were both, in a sense, ideals.

That ideal obviously has changed for me, and it was not just my inability to be Don Draper but the Don Draper ideal that changed. As I watched *Mad Men*, I caught myself many, many times thinking, how totally and abjectly empty his world was. I found myself contemplating a character living in a world without God and thinking again and again, that no matter what he had, he had nothing true or real. There was no form. No structure. No future. No hope. Each time I considered this, I found myself blessedly grateful for the richness of a life totally given to me, a life grounded in knowing God, a life rich and beautiful with the wonder of knowing Christ, a life with true forgiveness and redemption.

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FINALE

Breathless Tales

I would rather
clutch my invitation
and wait my turn in party clothes
Prim and proper
Safe and clean.

But...
a pulsing hand keeps driving me over
peaks, ravines and spidered brambles...
so I will pant up to the pearled knocker
tattered
breathless
and full of tales.

Janet Chester Bly

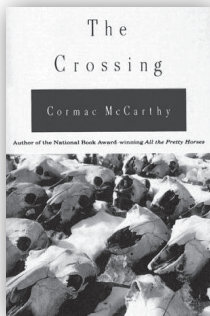
When we become aware of our Christianity – that we are chosen by God, we immediately believe that we will be in control. We believe that we will live as we should, own our emotions and even our circumstances, and that when we live our lives and appear at the gates of Heaven, we will be dressed as someone should for the party. We want this desperately because we are captured by the beauty of God’s Law and want to live to it so badly.

However, life happens. Life with its beauty, its strangeness, its disappointments, its emotions, its dangers. And when these catch us, they cause us to struggle and even wonder if we will make it. Then, God’s hand through the Holy Spirit, through His Church, and through an endless dependence on the Gospel, brings us through the “peaks, ravines and brambles” to the place God has promised. Our tattered clothes will be changed, and we will be dressed in spotless beauty, more than “party clothes.” We will be breathless from the journey, and we will be “full of tales,” tales of the faithfulness of God and the power of the Gospel to sustain us and cause us to overcome.

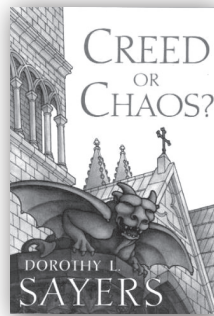


INTERACT WITH CULTURE

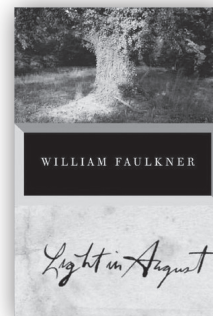
RIVERWOOD BOOK GROUP



The Crossing
Cormac McCarthy



Creed or Chaos
Dorothy Sayers



Light in August
William Faulkner

The Riverwood Book Group meets each Monday evening at 7:30 PM in the home of Kay Kirkley, at 1745 Ridgemont Drive. We select the books we will read together, an eclectic combination of fiction, history, theology, biography, commentary and drama, then we meet to look at them through the lens of the Gospel, "sharpening each other" through discussion. If you enjoy books, ideas, fellowship, and coffee, join us. Everyone is welcome.

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