Steve Turner unwraps pop culture for Christians while offering incredibly mature, fresh, and simple angles. He supplies the Christian, intent on the transformation of culture (see Niebuhr, Christ and Culture), with insight and clear, practical encouragement. Echoing sentiments found in David Platt’s Follow Me (2013), Turner suggests that Christians are too satisfied with the little of God’s goodness that they’ve tasted. He believes more of God’s depth can be found in culture. “Rather than thinking of popular culture in terms of what we should avoid, maybe we should start thinking in terms of what we absolutely should consume” (p.226). Turner emphasizes this theme and supplies examples throughout the text, “if Christ is Lord of all of our lives, then there must be a Christian way to enjoy and make popular culture” (p.18). According to Turner, the problem with pop-culture is not that Christians consume, but in what and how they consume. Joining various other evangelical voices, Turner warns that Christians must imbibe more critically.

More distinctively, however, he also suggests that they must be willing to make culture, carefully crafting a compelling life vision, while also gratefully considering others’ creative expressions illuminating God. Taylor claims God speaks to and through Christians via culture. In the last pages of Popcultured, Turner defines wisdom as “an insight into living (that) speaks from well-earned experiences…that touch of genius that turns the ordinary into the extraordinary” (p.233). He closes the text by stating, “people have a right to expect it (wisdom) of us” (p.234). Turner meets his own demand; expect to find God’s wisdom regarding art, technology, fashion, movies, leisure, etc…unveiled in an extraordinary book on pop-culture.

In Popcultured Turner targets Christians interested in popular arts. Thus, he believes that mostly young, evangelical Christians, seeking to grow Christlike, will find this text interesting and helpful. He is right, although all Christians (young and old, conservative and progressive) and anyone interested in
scrutinizing culture carefully, will find his perspectives relieving, refreshing, and motivational. Young Christians need not fear sweeping generalizations such as “all Rock music (… or every television program, movie, and any form of communication technology (snapchat, pinterest, vine, instagram, facebook, and/or twitter) is Satanic”… or that young women should not be caught up in fashion…etc. In fact, those who read this text will find that Turner advocates to the contrary, without abandoning a deep reliance on the Word of God for guidance. Turner supports most positions with appropriately considered scriptures and communicates God’s desire for more Christian influence on the mediums and fields identified.

The style of the text provides straightforward easy reading. While Turner applies the elements of theological, cultural, aesthetic, thematic, and auteur criticism, one never feels like he or she is sitting in an Understanding Culture and Media 101 class. Readers will discover more anti-Christian, atheistic bias than most imagine exists. Demonstrating his studied and, sometimes fascinating, experiential insight, Turner fills the text with stories and quotes. Broad anecdotal references include those from or about Mel Gibson, George Clooney, Marilynne Robinson, the Beatles, C. H. Dodd, Alexander McQueen, Picasso, David Bowie, George Carlin, Winston Churchill, The Who, Bono, Jarvis Cocker, Pascal, Max Weber, Francis Bacon, among others.

There are fourteen chapters in the book, each representing a unique arena (i.e. Leisure Pursuits, Popular Culture, Cinematic Art, Journalism, Comedy, Journalism, Photography, Advertising, etc.). The first chapter compellingly explains why Christians should consider the world of popular culture. In the rest of the chapters, Turner usually succinctly identifies the historical evolution of and present complications related to the topic. While there is little apparent repetitive pattern from chapter to chapter, every chapter does finish uniformly with reflection questions, recommended resources, and suggestions for action. These sections help readers to consider this text both personally and communally,
thus making this text an ideal supplementary text in undergraduate classrooms in multiple fields (i.e. Youth Ministry, Anthropology, and Sociology).

Turner’s text provides more than summary, reflection and challenge. Turner reviews and dissects some concepts critical to accomplishing a discerning approach when interacting with culture. One such example would be the idea of “assumptions” that people hold. In the chapter on Journalism (and less explicitly throughout the text) Turner helps the reader to recognize them and their dangerous influences in the work of editors and writers. Many more related issues or concepts discussed include zeitgeist, celebrity, laughter, wisdom, vision, truth and atheism.

In addition to his key claims, Turner makes multitudes of assertions, some of which might cause many Christians intellectual pause. “Truth is truth, whoever may say it” (p.24). “The Bible unhesitatingly approves of culture” (p.46). “The goal of a film should be enrichment or enlightenment, not conversion...Films are best when they deal with our humanity, not our Christianity” (p.77). “Christians (are) perhaps better qualified than most to produce comedy” (p.150). Typically, Turner competently defends his positions.

Academically, while reading this text, one feels the blurring of the concepts of culture and pop-culture....or possibly, with the technological revolution, even the absorption of culture by pop-culture. Though never stating this specifically, Taylor’s perceptive chapters, “Popular Culture and Working it Out”, facilitate consideration of such a notion. The beauty of the text is that Taylor considers the broad world of the arts; it is not limited to a discussion of television, movies, and technology alone, but also reviews areas like advertising, fashion, and photography. No book for a Christian audience will educate its audience more, to both the realities of today’s culture, and the need for the Christian engagement of culture. Turner succeeds as well in holding the attention of his readers. Each chapter elicits contemplation as well as the last. The only disappointment was the surprising lack of a chapter on music.
Readers enjoying this text would also enjoy Harold Brown’s book *Sensate Culture* (2007) which covers some of the same content with equal concern to Turner’s, but not with as much optimism as Turner. Platt’s *Follow Me* (2013), alluded to earlier, challenges Christian readers as Turner does, but with less tolerance for culture and with more concern for helping the destitute. A text written a couple of years ago, *Engaging the Culture, Changing the World* (Eaton, 2011), would assist those feeling compelled by Turner to make more effort in influencing culture in the ways that Turner encourages.

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