



Walk on: The Spiritual Journey of U2

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This revised and expanded version of Walk On: The Spiritual Journey of U2 tackles the issues and questions everyone desires to know about the world's most popular rock band. Throughout Walk On, Steve Stockman follows the band from their early days in Dublin's Shalom Christian Fellowship all the way to their most recent album and world tour. Fortunately, Bono has never been more outspoken about his faith and the Church than he has in the past few years. From his involvement with fighting AIDS in Africa through the DATA organization to his quoting Psalms from the Superbowl stage, Bono is doing God's work in a very public and very vocal way.

Walk on: The Spiritual Journey of U2 Details

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From Reader Review Walk on: The Spiritual Journey of U2 for online ebook

Cat. says

I've been working on this book for months. It's the kind of book that I want to read fast: very fan-based. On the other hand, it's got a lot of meat to it, and it would be best read by having all of U2's CDs at hand (or tracks downloaded) to listen to as Stockman discusses each album and what was going on in the lives of the band members at the time the songs were written.

Pretty well-written and -researched if one allows some latitude for fannishness. No one who doesn't like U2 will really care about this book, but it did make me aware of just where they've been coming from for the last 20-plus years.

Spencer says

I had a few problems with this book, but I am only going to address one. I believe Steve Stockman wrote this book with a foundational misunderstanding of the Gospel and also Christianity. There were some convicting points he made, but I think by and large he missed it. I was thoroughly disappointed with this read.

Brian says

Steve Stockman, a Presbyterian minister in Belfast, is a man clearly enamored with U2. He's thought a lot about the lyrical content of the band's output and has a few interesting things to say but hagiography is what he ends up with. He does the same thing that U2 does in their own book, *U2 by U2*, and that is to try and position themselves in a middle ground politically. The problem with this, of course, is that there is no neutrality when staking positions and it is a ploy to be free to criticize your "right-wing fundamentalist" opponents while not having to identify yourselves as members of the Christian Left.

As I see it, there are three main problems with the book:

1. The author, like his subjects, does not understand the doctrine of two kingdoms.
2. He proposes that evangelicals have wholesale rejected U2 but offers no sourcing for this.
3. He conflates left-wing red letter Christianity with simply normal Christianity and attacks all other sources.

Two Kingdoms

At the risk of oversimplifying, the doctrine of two kingdoms is that Christ is preserving the secular kingdom on earth rather than redeeming it. This means that Christians are free to engage in the culture and politics of this earth but are not to confuse those aims with the aims of the heavenly kingdom that they will be part of when Jesus comes back to rule and reign. In contradistinction to that, Bono and U2 believe that it is their Christian duty to bring the kingdom to earth now and this is manifest in the social gospel. In 1998 Bono spoke of the appearance together of two opposing Irish politicians as "victory Jesus won" confusing peace on earth with the Gospel. Stockman follows that with "U2 believes that the Gospel...has an agenda for peacemaking and justice and a kingdom coming. They also believe that kingdom could come now on this

side of eternity." The reason they believe this? A misinterpretation of the Lord's Prayer, in which Bono identifies his favorite line: Thy kingdom come, they will be done on earth as it is in heaven. "Heaven on earth - now - let's have a bit of that," Bono exclaims. The Gospel (Christ's objective work on the cross to reconcile us to the Father) has nothing to do with what we do. We cannot live the Gospel. We cannot add anything to the work of Christ on our behalf. The author is cloyingly sympathetic to U2's views as he writes "[the band was] asking the Church to get out of prayer meetings and into the everyday dirt and pain of bringing the kingdom. This band believed in a kingdom coming...and they were going to run until they found what they were looking for: an earth as it is in heaven." And later he says that "Bono...longs for heaven on earth and tells his God he is tired of waiting." What I expect from a pastor is some Scriptural backing for these views but few verses are forthcoming.

Evangelical Bogeyman

On the first pages of the book it is asserted the band members' faith have been put in doubt by "the Christian press and Christians in general." The book goes on to suggest that evangelicals have caused U2 disillusionment for their concern for appearances over human suffering (pg. 5). When he writes that the band made a conscious decision to deflect allegiance to conservative evangelical Christianity he fails to see this is because they are social gospel liberals who don't like being compared to people they oppose. There is no sourcing for such claims as the right-wing Church was forcing them to shut up (pg. 60), that Jubilee 2000 proof-texts from Leviticus are not taught in evangelical churches (pg. 151), or evangelicals spend a lot of time on being born again but little time on growing up (pg. 65). Stockman saves a special amount of vitriol for an editorial in Christianity Today that dared question Bono on his own record of giving and says that they shouldn't assume he doesn't give. But he assumes throughout the book that so-called evangelicals oppose U2 with nary a reason other than his conjecture.

Christian Left

One of Bono's more famous quotes is that "faith in Jesus Christ that is not aligned with social justice - that is not aligned with the poor - it's nothing." Early on the band becomes involved with Amnesty International and then later Bono starts his own advocacy group called DATA but the thread running through a lot of their work is alignment with center-left groups. Amnesty International believes that abortion is a human right and Bono himself is pro-choice, but you won't find that in this book. A stated goal of the ONE Campaign is to increase government funding for international aid programs but Bono and this author simply call this loving their neighbor. If by love you mean coercing my neighbor's government into taxing that neighbor at a higher rate so we can send his money to Africa. For a pastor to write a line of such low ecclesiology further solidifies in my mind that this book is hagiography more than anything else: "For Bono, The Edge, and Larry, the God that they met and have pilgrimaged with...is a God who is bigger than Church..." Think I'm making too much of Stockman's wagging finger? He writes "It is scandalous that in trying to switch America on to justice issues like debt relief, HIV/AIDS, and trade issues both Bono and Ali have had to prove what advantage it would be to America rather than the good idea of ridding the world of poverty, injustice, and millions of senseless deaths." He is also, apparently, on board with Bono's questionable assertion that poverty creates terrorists. In a passage of breathtaking naivete he writes "The press too have been quick to have a go at him for his do-gooding, telling him to stick to the music. Condemning someone for trying to save lives and help others is a remarkable indictment on third-millennium priorities." I haven't seen this "condemnation" he's talking about but he can't seem to understand that Bono's being criticized for being a moral scold and a public nuisance. Having millionaire rock stars hector governments into transferring more of their wealth to poor countries for the dubious notion that poor nations can achieve parity in this way is annoying to a large swath of people.

While being maddeningly biased and parroting the same insights into U2 you can find in their own book, your time is much better spent in U2 by U2.

Matt Hamilton says

I was really excited about this book, and all in all it was a great read. It went right through the discography of the band and talked about almost every song in detail and it touched on all four of them personally, as well as political and historical aspects of their career as a unit. Lots of detail and obviously a great deal of faith in what U2 is doing.

The only problem I had was with some of the analyses. While the information was well written, the sections where Stockman examined individual songs seemed to have a lot of opinion and digging- I have seen different accounts of the songs in different places. And I'm talking about historical, circumstantial stuff, not just interpretation. So that hurt the credibility a little bit for me.

Very well written and a great way to look as U2's work so far. I can't imagine what Stockman would say about their latest album and tour!

Tania says

I am not one to read books about rock bands, even ones as influential as U2. But after seeing them in concert, and reading some things about them on the Christianity Today website, I was intrigued.

This book really gave me some good insights into the band, their beliefs, and the real meaning of their music. I have a new appreciation for songs I've always liked. I want to go and read more and learn more about the band, and I want to go back and listen to CDs I've long since forgotten about, all as a result of this book. Really, that is the ultimate compliment I can give the writer.

So why only 3 stars? Well, a few things... first, the book seemed a bit shallow. Why not show me actual lyrics in detail? Why not go further into scripture and analysis of that scripture? There just wasn't quite enough insight there to make me think enough that I have to read the book again to pick up something I may have missed. It bothered me that it seemed so obvious that the author has never sat down and talked to Bono or the other band members, yet he tried to manufacture a personal familiarity that he obviously doesn't have. I'm referring to things like referring to the band as 'the guys,' like they meet at the pub for a pint once a month. I know that may seem picky, but it really pulled me out of the book at times.

Generally, the book was good... I learned a few things, and I'm inspired to research the subject more and read other, more detailed books about U2. So this is a good place to start for anyone who is interested in U2, Christianity, or both topics

Erin says

I had no idea U2 had such Christian undertones to their music. Reading this book opened my eyes - Now I can't listen to U2 without hearing all the references to God and faith.

Bree says

I am a self avowed U2 fan so the rating could be a bit biased. I also enjoyed this book much more than I thought I would, which affects the rating. As I continue to question the role of organized religion in my own personal spirituality I tend to read Christian literature with a bit of skepticism. I am always pleasantly surprised when I read that I'm not the only one questioning how to navigate contradictions I find with the confluence of public and private spirituality. I enjoyed reading about the band's own religious journey. It's not something that is usually addressed when talking about such an iconic band.

Becky says

Really like it. Interesting info, good theology. Would be interesting to see an update, in light of all the stuff happening recently. A definite recommend.

Karen says

I was truly blown away by this book. I've been a casual U2 fan for years but never really knew much about them. I find myself fascinated and challenged about my faith and how changing the world is more than just idealistic. It's possible. And in fact, it's already happening. U2 is far more than a mere rock band. They are a group of men who struggle to make sense of this world and their lives and bring us along for the ride. Their discoveries/insights on not only "big" issues like terrorism, war, consumerism, poverty and fair trade but also personal issues of longing, lament, joy, love, hate, hope, and faith challenge us all to re-evaluate our priorities and take action.

Kim says

very detailed, but interesting... lots of 'background info' on Bono & U2 that I didn't know. The author is a Presbyterian minister (and clearly a HUGE U2 fan) & has some interesting takes on faith, religion, spirituality, & the arts. I especially liked learning about how Bono's "leather & shades" persona is just that -- a sort of character he invented... and his struggles sometimes to remember that & stay true to who he really is. Seems his wife Ali helps a lot with that -- she sounds awesome! I'd have liked the book a bit more if it had included the U2 'discography' and also the full lyrics of the songs the author mentions... but I guess he's figuring anyone who'll finish this rather dense book must already know all the songs?

Lynda says

"This is essential reading for anyone who ever wondered exactly how many U2 lyrics are nicked from the Bible— lots, it turns out." —Irish Times

Stockman, a Presbyterian Chaplain in Belfast, analyses the lyrics and history of U2 from both an Irish and Biblical perspective. Although a bit sermon-like at times, there is enough solid reference material here to give a concrete perspective on the inner and outer workings of the band and its unique mark on the Christian landscape and in the world of rock and roll.

I came away with a deeper respect for how Larry, Bono and the Edge have overcome forces from the rock world and church dogma to walk the narrow way, out of a deep inner conviction to walk as Jesus walked, and bringing Adam with them all the way, until he too became an advocate for radical faith.

Neil Coulter says

I've been reading a lot about U2 lately, in preparation to write my own chapter about an aspect of the band. What I'm finding is that it doesn't take too much reading before you start reading in circles--the same stories, the same bits of interviews, the same song lyrics being explained in basically the same way. Certainly there is *something* to say about U2--and I hope what I'm planning to write will be a useful, new contribution--but it doesn't seem that there's a *lot* to write about U2. Once you kind of understand them--and reading *U2 by U2* is the best way to acquire this understanding--there's not much left to say.

Unfortunately, *Walk On* doesn't add a lot of new content to the conversation. Part of the book's problem is that it was written "way back" in 2001, and so its analysis of U2's career ends with the Elevation tour. Several more recent books take the same themes another decade forward. These are the difficulties of writing about popular music.

But the other disappointment with *Walk On* is author Steve Stockman's over-the-top praise of the band. Too many points in the book are "the greatest," "the best ever," and so forth. It's a little comical when *The Joshua Tree* is hailed as "U2's finest moment" (71), then *Achtung Baby* "may be the band's best work" (98), but *Zooropa* "deserves serious consideration" (129), and then *All That You Can't Leave Behind* includes "just the most gorgeous melodies, dashes of great playing and Bono's voice giving its best performance ever" (164). You get the idea. The tone is difficult for me to take seriously--and I'm a U2 fan!

Stockman's tone also bothered me when he criticized Christianity or the Church in general. It's as though it's not enough to praise U2's greatness, but he also has to pull down everything else that's not U2. Referring to Christian music as "the ghetto" lacks any nuance. And averring that "the problem with Christians is the Church has for many years taught people *what* to think and not *how* to think" (124) is a rather unhelpfully dismissive way of looking at the history of Christianity.

However, I found Stockman's suggestions about U2's reasons for backing away from the institutional Church (pp. 67-70) really convincing and thoughtful. So there was some good in amongst the more irksome passages.

Instead of *Walk On*, I would recommend *We Get to Carry Each Other: The Gospel According to U2*, by Greg Garrett. It's more recent, has a fairer tone, and covers much of the same ground.

Amie says

I love U2. That goes without saying (except that I just said it). So, I was predisposed to love this book... but I ended up getting a little annoyed with the way it was written. I am from the American South, the Bible Belt, where Conservative Evangelical Christianity is strong. I know both its strengths and weaknesses, and I have been known to be critical of it myself--but I found myself getting angry with Stockman's heavy-handed portrayal of all Evangelical Americans as ignorant, hypocritical and always un-Christian. He spent almost as much time bashing the Church and Her members as he did talking about U2 and their spiritual journey, which really annoyed me. Yes, there are issues in the Church, and no, the Church doesn't always get it right... but not every member of a given denomination or theological bent is like every other. I know plenty of EC's who love U2, and have from the beginning; who are educated and open to others' points of view, even if they don't agree; who are good people and strive to be Christ-like. Stockman didn't seem to allow for that in anyone who was EC, or who wasn't as perfectly enlightened as him. It got really annoying me, although it did show up less and less as the chapters rolled on.

Other than that, I loved the book. I always love reading more about 'the boys' from Dublin, and even though it was (in my case) largely preaching to the choir, I enjoyed hearing again about their own journeys and how their music has been influence by their faith as well as challenging and critiquing the world around them (and particularly us Christians, if we'll listen). I am often convicted by U2, both their music and their own lifestyles--and I am alternately just as often encouraged in my own life and faith by them. God bless 'em!

All together, the good with the bad, I still liked the book--and I would recommend it both to U2 fans and those who have yet to fully discover all they have to offer; I would just preface it with the reservation that Stockman's bile be overlooked as regards the American Church.

Wendy says

A worthwhile read. Written by an Irish Theologian who has a very unique view and respect for the band. He stands by U2 when others in the Christian community challenge their faith as genuine based on drinking habits and use of certain four letter words. A great explanation of U2 in context of their native culture. One of the best points he makes is describing the music business in Ireland at the time the band was first being noticed. He says this, "There are no Christian venues for budding Christians trying to do something in rock. If you don't make it in the real world, you don't make."

Dan Glover says

This book is not bad, but if I could I'd rate it 1 1/2 stars, between "I didn't care for it" and "it was passable". Now before I go any further, let me admit, as does the author, that I am a U2 fan. However, we are not the same kind of fan and that became clearer with every page. The author is a largely uncritical fan of the band's music and of front man, Bono, in particular, and his causes. In fact, in many places of several pages at a stretch, the reader could be forgiven for forgetting this is supposed to be a book about the whole band and not just Bono. Other than the last four or so pages, Adam Clayton gets a small mention every two chapters or so, saying that he enjoyed living the typical rock star life style as opposed to the three Christian members of

the band. Other than that the poor guy is hardly mentioned.

The format is basically a walk through the catalogue with an eye to the spiritual undertones and overtones, depending on the album being discussed. And the author extends all manner of leeway to the songs if they just might have something that could be construed as spiritual. As to quality of writing, it is fair. There are some occasional poetic turns of phrase but they seem to me to be trying too hard and sometimes the prose, like the sentiments it is conveying, is too gushy. Also, I found the fact that the text wasn't justified at the right margin a tad annoying and just plain odd.

This book does have some interesting insights and comments on U2's underlying Christian ethos and influences but the fact that the author has never actually spoken directly to the band leaves one wondering if the quotes he does use (which he borrows from other sources) really bolster the point he is trying to make or if at least some of them were wrenched from their original context and shoe-horned in. In fairness, the author admits early on that he is an unabashed fan of the band and their music but that borders on gross understatement. Steve Stockman can't seem to entertain even the hint of a critical thought against the band, especially Bono. Bono is constantly and consistently elevated as almost a small "s" saviour who genuinely enters into the suffering of his various audiences and the subjects of many of his lyrics, whether it be the victims of "the Troubles" in Ireland, those dying of AIDS and starvation in Africa, or the families of the victims of 9/11. I'll grant that Bono does much more than the average celebrity to raise awareness and use his public profile and popularity to try to influence and persuade those in power and that is a commendable use of his position. In fact, if half of what Stockman says is accurate, it seems Bono's intentions and motivations are genuine. However, when speaking of Bono, Stockman variously describes him as a prophet, priest and pastor to the world. Really? I'd say that's probably going considerably further than Bono himself would be comfortable with (at least I would hope so, but he is a rock star after all).

Also, the author is willing to read between any number of lines to assume Bono is a genuine committed Christian. He does not extend that same grace to the evangelical Christian community who he often berates for their inconsistency of doctrine and life. I agree with the author, that evangelicals have often been hypocritical in their claim to follow Jesus while at the same time ignoring the hungry, sick, marginalized, etc. That said, the author very lightly dismisses the bands lack of participation in a fellowship and worship community as if that were not as essential to the faith as feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. The Jesus I follow manages to teach and do both. Again, the author applauds Bono's emphasis on the unity of the three faiths that claim Abraham as their spiritual father and blasts Christians for not seeking unity with Muslims, for example. Jesus teaching on other faiths, however, couldn't be clearer: "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." This leaves no room for those who flat out reject the messianic claims of Jesus. We may not agree with Jesus but we certainly can't pretend he didn't mean what he said.

I kept waiting for a frank and fair discussion of issues like the wealth of the band members in light of their message or something resembling an honest look at the arguments of their detractors. None was forthcoming. There were occasional and brief admissions that the band is not perfect or that not everyone believes them to be the global knights in shining armour that Stockman clearly does, but these were typically dismissed out of hand or with minimal critical reflection. Now again, I'm not trying to bash U2 - I did admit to being a fan (remember)- but this goes something beyond admiration and wanders into shades of adoration. If I learned tomorrow that the author had a tattoo of Bono on his chest I wouldn't bat an eyelash.

All that said, this was the first book I've ever read on U2 and as such, a bit more biography would have provided some helpful context for folks like me who primarily know the band through their music and don't track their every move. However, the author gave fair warning in declaring that this was not his purpose.

While somewhat informative about the band's spiritual ethos, I always found myself asking if the band would say "amen" to this assessment of them or if in places they'd say, "no, you're wrong there...you're reading into it...that song actually was just about a woman, not God". Subtitled "the Spiritual Journey of U2", I was hoping to hear more about the lives of the band and not just their songs, tours and public causes. Are these men of integrity and honesty? Do they care for their families? They love Africa...do they love their actual next door neighbours?

Upon finishing, I was left wondering if the author gave a credible representation of the band's spiritual life or if he wrote what he hopes to be the case. I would say the book was not that bad. But due to the lack of balance and first hand interview, I'd have to say that it wasn't that good either.

Carolyn Appleton says

I learned about the existence of this book on Facebook, and I thought lightly, "how interesting, I think I will read it."

I have always felt close to the music of U2. I have enjoyed listening to U2 since the band began some 35 years ago. I have never attended a U2 concert in person, but I have listened to U2 endlessly on the radio in my car, on television, online, on iTunes ... singing along loudly to my favorites (when no one else can hear, lucky for them, smiles). U2 has been interwoven into the fabric of daily life, but mostly through the charismatic sound of the band's music.

Imagine my surprise at discovering the Christian roots of much of the band's lyrics, and the sophisticated dialogue and discussion underway therein. I agree with author Steve Stockman there is a "depth of soul" beneath U2 songs. "They are never about just entertainment or display." But until I read this book, I was unaware of the true nature of that "depth of soul."

Not new to me are the good works of the band and its individual members. I have been a volunteer for ONE and (RED). I have inherently trusted Bono and the band when it comes to critical issues - and the proper course of action - regarding poverty, debt relief, AIDS, corruption and more. Bono, who once remarked wryly, "... me that most awful of inventions, a Rock Star with a Cause," is nonetheless someone I have come to trust.

"Walk On" is an intense book. It is exceptionally well-documented and covers a wide range of topics, from the band's roots, the times in which we have both lived (and survived), and Ireland to musical influences, scripture and the lyrics (and deeper meanings) behind many of U2's songs. "While most bands set out to get famous, get laid, and get rich, these were not the goals of the Christian-hearted U2." Yet I find it refreshing that U2 is not hypocritical. They respect those with different opinions. Stockman remarks, "Bono's respect for the atheist is refreshing. Many believers distance themselves from those with differing views on God, sometimes even within different churches. Bono makes them his friends and then makes himself accountable to them."

"U2 may have often had their heads in the sky, but their feet were always very much in the mud." I love that about U2.

Stockman notes at the book's conclusion, "This is why the Church needs Bono. This is why everybody needs Bono. He is willing to take what he believes and the world around him, and wrestle with them and not let

them go."

Go n-eírí an bóthar leat.

AJ says

Great premise, although I feel like the author was at pains to find a spiritual dimension to the iconic U2 songs.

G. Salter says

Stockman's a very opinionated writer, and at times his praise of U2 is a bit gushing. This is also very much a book about U2's music, so you have to like books that analyze metaphors and symbolism in music to get through it.

That being said, Stockman has some spot-on insights about how legalistic evangelical Christians are sometimes, and how creating an entertainment subculture has done just as much as harm as good. He also puts forward some excellent defenses of why it's okay to be a Christian artist and work in the mainstream world.

David says

Walk On was an absolutely fascinating read! In fact, it was so good I think I might just read it again (it's been a few years now). I have been a distant fan of U2 since my early teens (I'm 40+ now). By "distant" I just mean that I haven't followed their life and music as closely as some fans have (at least not too far beyond their earlier albums). I did purchase a copy of "All That You Can't Leave Behind" and it quickly became one of my favorites (along with October, The Unforgettable Fire and The Joshua Tree)!

I have always found some inspiration in the life and music of U2. Such a statement bothers some Christians and that is precisely why they need to read this book. One of the things I have always most admired about these guys is that they are real and they often wear their hearts right out on their sleeves... There are some very deep, inspiring, contemplative, introspective and sometimes questioning themes that flow consistently through the lyrics of U2's songs. In fact, I don't know of one album that U2 has released that didn't express some facet of spirituality in one way or another.

"Walk On: The Spiritual Journey of U2" presents an intimate look into the lives of a group of true believers who are not playing games with anyone. They don't make excuses for their imperfections or try to cover up their frustration with the condition of the world and how few, especially ...Most Christians who can't get past the sight of a cigarette, a beer or the sound of a cuss word, will have trouble seeing the honest heart of a guy like Bono who is as sincere and devout as they come!...Bono once made the statement in an interview that the reason he is attracted to the Scriptures and figures like Christ is because he is not like them and wants to be; he is drawn to that power greater than himself that can change a man's heart and actions. He admits his weakness but knows the source of this power; God. He is also very inspired by the grace of God. This is wonderfully illustrated in the song by the same name on U2's release "All That You Can't Leave Behind".

However unorthodox the bros in U2 seem to the rest of Christendom (and my praise of the band is not meant to justify any bad behavior some might be concerned about), these guys are very sincere and very plugged in to God (in fact, I would dare say they are seeking harder and desiring that intimate connection with the Lord than probably a lot of Christians who attend churches today are). This book will be a refreshing eye opener to people who have had questions about these guys and whether or not their faith is real. It will answer some questions for fans as well as give those unfamiliar with the band a proper introduction to who these guys are. I think that especially those believers who have expressed criticism towards U2 need to read this great book. I found it very inspiring and challenging to my faith.

I think Bono (lead singer) would be the first to admit (however ironic it might seem) that he doesn't belong on a pedestal and I certainly don't idolize these guys, but I have found a lot of inspiration through their music and some of the testimony the guys have shared.

In consideration of the song "Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For," I believe these guys are still searching, but not for God. They have found Him. What they are searching for is an honest expression of truth by those who profess to know Him. An expression of truth that is more than merely words professed, but actions demonstrated. One might also consider this song in respect to 1 Corinthians 13 (the line, "I have spoken with the tongues of angels..."), where love is the only thing that really matters. Bono seems to be expressing that he has experienced the "things" of God, but desires more; to be captivated and completely motivated by love. These guys have not walked away, they are determined to "Walk On!"

I highly recommend this book! It will be most meaningful to those who are at least remotely familiar with U2's music, but I think even someone who doesn't know much about them at all will find a number of insightful gems in this great title.

Scottnshana says

I have personally found that bringing up Bono in a conversation with other Christians is a pretty good litmus test for whether you're talking to a fan or a follower of the Gospel. I know that's a pretty inflammatory statement--but bear with me, because I think this encompasses a fundamental question of deeds over words in faith. I find that most of the folks who get riled over Bono either don't know that much about him, or represent that personality that can quickly switch from rapturously describing his close personal relationship with Christ to venomous quotation of Scripture to support a complete lack of empathy for those outside their Church. I think Stockman's book drills down to this phenomenon in his evaluation of the band's faith evolution over the years and the consistent derision it has received from professed followers of Christ. In chapter 2, for example, the author describes how evangelical musicians are usually warned off playing secular venues and instead "steered into a gospel band scenario... [in which] audience members are almost exclusively Christian, and... already have assented to the beliefs being preached from the stage..." Three of the four members, he argues, were firmly rooted in their faith, and decided to get out of their comfort zone and into bars and clubs--the rationale being that when Jesus took his message to hookers, lepers, and tax collectors he was not likely to find those most in need of it in the pews on Sunday morning. This contributes to a common thread in the book--religion (which Bono describes as having divided Ireland violently in half) versus spirituality. The aforementioned fourth member of the band--Adam Clayton--could be viewed as a hindrance to the others Christian journey, but having "a skeptic so close to their sense of vocation," Stockman argues, "forced the band members to apply their faith to wider issues than if they had been a naive, homogeneous bunch of believers". Here I found myself paraphrasing I Peter 1:6-7 in the margin: "Untested faith aint worth much." Another consistent thread in "Walk On" is the importance of deeds over words (as

my grandmother often says, even Satan can quote Scripture). Putting their Christianity in the hot laboratory of secular venues and discussing it each day with a close friend outside the faith only served to strengthen it. The author cites the Edge: "The central faith and spirit of the band is the same. But I have less and less time for legalism now. I just see that you live a life of faith." Stockman, a Presbyterian minister and radio host, does not let up on the controversy in this examination of Christianity and celebrity. He argues that both Luther and Puritanism have retarded the gift of the arts in Church, and explores the idea that David was one of the first Blues singers. I liked his examination of some of my favorite U2 songs, i.e., the revelation that "Until the End of the World" is about Judas ("I reached out for the One I tried to destroy") and "Stuck in a Moment" is also about another well-known suicide--INXS's Michael Hutchence. I had to stop and think hard about Stockman's evaluation of the Zoo TV tour (which I saw at Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City--and I still regard as the best concert I ever attended--right after the Berlin Wall coming down and the stunning victory in Gulf War I) as U2's message that "in the early nineties... we were trivializing life" with TV and computers. Closing out the nineties, the band's "Pop" tour "was exposing the absurdity of fame and the deception that big is always better... [and] many churches were being sucked into its absurdity... seduced by the success of numbers and the spectacular event." There is a certain kind of evolution and intellectual heavy lifting evident here, in which the band moved from examining instant satellite-enabled media gratification to the implicit attack on "Healing extravaganzas and sell-out worship concerts where the worship leader became a new kind of pop star..." Do I need to bring up Jimmy Swaggart and Scott Stapp here? I also keyed into the fact that while the band consistently returned to the Bible, it was reading other great works--C.S. Lewis and Flannery O'Connor, for example--to explore the bounds of morality and Christian thought. I dug the examination of the fact that there are songs that imply that the band has lost its faith (i.e., "Acrobat" or "Wake Up Dead Man"); when you delve into the lyrics, though, these are revealed as ruminations on the struggle to hold onto it while necessarily testing it. The rub of this book may be Bono's statement that "Faith and instinct, you can't just rely on them. You have to beat them up. You have to pummel them to make sure they can withstand it, to make sure they can be trusted." To be fair, maybe that's what Msrs. Stapp and Swaggart are doing--coping with the recognition that humanity is fallible and that's why we need to constantly revisit the ideal through prayer and meditation on Scripture; ultimately to surrender--"...this secret of spiritual living, bowing down to a higher power and losing self to gain eternity." To tie the sack shut on this excellent book, what I have always liked about U2 is what lies beneath the surface. A rock band that is humbly but firmly rooted in Christian faith. It is not overt, but it is there in their actions and song lyrics if you look for it. It follows Christ's example in getting out amongst those who don't embrace it—even avowed atheists. "Many believers," writes Stockman, "distance themselves from those with differing views on God, sometimes even within different churches. Bono makes them his friends and then makes himself accountable to them. He has fellowship and sharpens his faith against those with whom he doesn't agree because they are discussing the same issues." Christianity is, in my opinion, a journey and not a destination. You have to earn its rewards every day and once in a while you're going to fall down, and I think Bono and company acknowledge that. I dig U2 and their faith a lot more having read this book.
