

Is It Well with Your Soul? In Troubling Times Everyone Needs a Way to Comfort Their Soul

Bill Peters

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The sermons collected in Is it Well with Your Soul? are designed to set America's spirituality right.

Bill Peters's sermon collection *Is it Well with Your Soul?* declares that the US needs to restore its soul, one person at a time.

Made up of a dozen sermons that reflect conservative and evangelical perspectives, this book is centered on American social plights. It sees evil as active in the world: "virtually every commandment of God is violated here in America," it claims. The sermons pay particular attention to what they call the lies of mainstream media. From this perspective: Christianity is under fire in the US, attacked by the liberal wing of the government. But in addition to its frustration, the book expresses hope that true faith is seeing a resurgence. Its entries praise the police, make arguments about people's gender roles, and dream that people will achieve salvation.

This work is blistering in naming social problems, including national moral deficiencies and abortion. Against such topics it leverages biblical quotations, drawing parallels between the Bible's accounts, as of Amos's accusations against Judah, and contemporary moral malaise. Personal examples also factor in, as with a reference to a trip to Hungary, where statues honor national heroes; this ties in a collection of heirloom plates proudly displayed in Peters's home, and to the essay's ultimate assertion: "so does God with his divine design."

The book also incorporates many political and cultural references, nodding to figures from Benjamin Franklin to Rick Warren, and pointing to Hollywood films, including *Crocodile Dundee*. At times, these translate theological points into easy-to-understand images, as of the light-infused art of Thomas Kinkade. But while some such references make the sermons approachable, many are dated. Most relevant are the book's frequent references to current events, including the Las Vegas mass shooting and how Melania Trump is portrayed by media.

The book is organized in the style of an altar call; its entries become like tracts that encourage their audiences to embrace Jesus. This sensibility is supported by its opening, impassioned assertion that "death comes unexpectedly," so that people should be mindful of where they might spend eternity. The text ends by focusing on the redemptive power of Jesus. Still, despite its ferocity, the text's arguments are predictable and heavy on their political commentary; most hew close to traditional, familiar ideas.

The sermons collected in *Is it Well with Your Soul?* are designed to set America's spirituality right, and to draw US citizens back to God.

JEREMIAH ROOD (March 10, 2021)

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