

Greg Garrett. *We Get to Carry Each Other: The Gospel According to U2*. Foreword by Brian D. McLaren. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009. 142 pages. \$16.95.

Pulsating beneath the signature sound of the rock group U2, Garrett highlights the group's mission, which is to mingle rock, politics, and spirituality," (58) despite the popular belief among many that the three are incompatible. According to Garrett, the message that "the whole world is our neighbor" (104) faces threats due to social polarization by the extremes of libertarianism and egalitarianism, which leave social justice marginalized. U2 lived through turbulence in Ireland and continues to encounter it in a global context on their travel throughout the world. In the midst of it all, they remain witnesses to the commonalities we all share when it comes to basic human needs.

Garrett wrote this book as a wake-up call against self-righteousness, using the rock group as an illustration. Rock groups are often associated with hedonistic debauchery. U2 defies both rock music and Christian stereotypes. Rather than following the trends of the various popular music discourses, U2 took the less conventional route of "theology that is set to music" (22). The multi-generational appeal of U2 assists the author as he tries to reach those with interest in the biblical message. The book highlights faith as relational and extols community over solitary experience. It invites people who have experienced betrayal, grief, and institutional disapproval from the Christian community back into Christianity. The author uses U2 as an example of the relational aspect of the Christian faith. The book serves as a reminder of the reality of evil and human suffering and the active and passive roles that organized religion has played in igniting such flames. It also reminds the church of its role and mission in working against such forces.

The author dismisses the narrow and socially-constructed view of the meaning of Christian life that has permeated various sectors of society and become intertwined with the fabric of human discourse on a global level. He argues that the cost of human suffering due to such ideologies is a form of apostasy. Imputing value to all of creation serves as the theme of U2's message. Active faith opposes sterile belief and impotent piety while favoring self-sacrifice for the transformation of society: "The ultimate outcome of belief lived out in community should be a changed world" (84).

The book under-represents the risk involved in countering political and social forces that exist contrary to the Christian life. If not read with caution, the book potentially conveys the impression that charity can only come from elite and charismatic figures such as U2, while downplaying the possibilities for social change residing in common people who do not have a platform and monetary resources. The author risks producing the unintended impression of charity as exclusive to the lifestyle of the leisure class. The book also gives a disproportionate amount of attention to exposing church's surface divisions regarding doctrines, polity, and denominations.

Garrett addresses a postmodern audience lacking basic knowledge of Christianity and the Bible. This book makes theology more accessible to laity both church and un-church alike, while refraining from the use of overly technical jargon found in many books on theology. The author targets U2 fans while inviting a broader popular music audience along as well. Social theorist Stjepan Mestrovic argues that large segments of society have experienced "post-emotional" conditioning, making it probable that many U2 fans may overlook the socio-political content of music of this sort, which is laced with biblical undertones and a Christian perspective.

The book is organized into three chapters, accompanied by an account of U2's religious orientation in modified biographical form. The biographical material displays a lesser-known

side of U2 regarding their faith-journey, as well as their relationship to each other and their views regarding the human condition. Whether a U2 fan or not, the reader will be informed and challenged by Garrett's theological exposition of U2.

Michael D. Royster
Houston Graduate School of Theology
Houston, TX