



Gods Behaving Badly: Media, Religion, and Celebrity Culture

Pete Ward

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From Britney and Brangelina to Tiger Woods and Michael Jackson, Western society is obsessed with its American idols and gods of the red carpet. We worship their triumphs, judge their sins, and maintain vigil at their deaths. Can our fixation on and devotion to celebrity culture itself be considered a religion? If not, why do we use religious terminology to describe these stars and our actions towards them?

Gods Behaving Badly examines the blurred boundary between popular culture and religion—one that has given way to an often confounding fusion of the sacred and the profane. Flipping through pages of tabloid media and looking underneath the veil of Hollywood's glamour, Pete Ward exposes how, in its consumer life, Western society elevates celebrity to the theological and, in so doing, creates a new para-religion. Inevitably, whether despised or extolled, individual celebrities evoke public moral judgment, creating fertile ground for theological innovation.

Plucked straight from the headlines, the narratives in *Gods Behaving Badly* give concrete evidence of how the religious themes of incarnation, revelation, sin, judgment, and redemption are all woven into narratives we construct about our most cherished—and most villainized—personalities.

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