FROM THE AUTHOR OF *WALK ON: THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY OF U2*

THE ROCK CRIES OUT

DISCOVERING ETERNAL TRUTH IN UNLIKELY MUSIC

STEVE
STOCKMAN

★Spiritual Insights on the Music of★
RADIOHEAD, JONI MITCHELL, LAURYN HILL,
BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN AND MORE

☆ Spiritual Insights on the Music of ☆

BOB DYLAN, KURT COBAIN, GEORGE HARRISON
RADIOHEAD, JONI MITCHELL, JACKSON BROWNE
DAVID GRAY, BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN, ANI DiFRANCO
BOB MARLEY, LAURYN HILL and TOM WAITS

FINDING TRUTH WHERE IT DOESN'T BELONG

Steve Stockman, author of the international hit *Walk On: The Spiritual Journey of U2*, explores the music of twelve artists who haven't necessarily professed a Christian faith but whose work is undergirded with issues, questions and insights that are very much biblical. If you look closely, their music is saturated with spiritual context and redemptive messages that can teach life-changing truth to the believer and spiritual seeker alike.

Is God speaking through these unlikely prophets?
If so, are you listening?

"Steve Stockman has given us an important introduction of sorts to some of the most influential people you never knew. What do Bob Dylan, Lauryn Hill, and Bob Marley have to do with you? Read on."
—Sarah Masen, recording artist

STEVE STOCKMAN is a Presbyterian minister and works in the chaplaincy at Queen's University in Belfast. He is the author of *Walk On: The Spiritual Journey of U2*, as well as the host of his own radio show on BBC Radio Ulster. His website, Rhythms Of Redemption (*www.stocki.ni.org*), covers Christian faith in art and culture. He's married to Janice and has two children, Caitlin and Jasmine.

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INTRODUCTION

This book began on the radio. Not like Garrison Keilor's Woebegone Days (I wish!). In 1996 BBC Radio Ulster asked me to take the chair of their religious contemporary music program, *The Gospel Show*. As the History of BBC Northern Ireland put it, "Steve Stockman was given total freedom on his Sunday night music show." I often wonder if I have abused the freedom, but I am still in the chair seven years on, so that must say something.

I started out by playing mainly what I saw as the best of what was happening in contemporary Christian music as my predecessor had done, although I moved it away from Michael Card and Michael W. Smith and toward Delirious?, The Newsboys, dcTalk, Larry Norman, Charlie Peacock, and Sarah Masen. Then I got more courageous and started to add artists who were Christians but do not do their "thang" in the

Christian subculture, adding the likes of U2, Bruce Cockburn, Victoria Williams, and The Vigilantes of Love. This gave the show a little more depth and bite and opened many listeners up to new music that would get lost between mainstream playlistings and my very specialized one. Most of them seemed to have heard of U2 though!

Eventually, I started to play artists with no Christian commitment at all. I think the first such artist might have been David Gray, whose song, "Let The Truth Sting," seemed too appropriate and powerful to ignore. Radiohead, Tom Waits, Jackson Browne, and all of the artists who are featured in this book were soon added to the roster of "secular saints" or even "pagan prophets" and became regular fixtures on the show. I realized very quickly that my audience was a very wide range of ages and tastes. Some wanted to hear the best new music, but there were some who hated the music and wanted some chat. I tried to maintain that balance, almost weaving a sermon around the words of the songs. My reason or excuse to play David Gray, or Radiohead, or whoever, was to give some insight to those who were not sure what was going on in the "real world."

Last year I realized that the Christian music on my show had become a small percentage of what gets played. When I was gazing across the CD shelves on a Sunday afternoon looking for songs that would be what Guthrie called "not just good, but good for something," I regularly discovered that those without a faith had said something more spiritual than those claiming to be making "Christian" music. In the end we had to change the name of the show to *Rhythm and Soul*, as *The Gospel Show* had ceased to be an accurate description.

So this book has been playlisted the same way as my radio show. The artists are chosen because I have been using their work and bringing out spiritual truth from their songs for seven years. I have confined it to artists who have never

professed a Christian faith, with the exception of Lauryn Hill, whose faith straddles Christianity and Rastafarianism but whose message in her *MTV Unplugged 2.0* album is too essential to leave out!

These are not biographies. If you are looking for biographies of these artists, there are really good ones out there already, apart from Jackson Browne, who seriously needs one. Biographical detail appears in some essays more than in others. The structure of each essay is different. In some we look at entire careers; Bruce Springsteen's is about the difference in his view of God at the beginning of his career and how it has changed until where it is now. On the other hand, Lauryn Hill is based solely on one performance that became a DVD and CD. The most of Ani DiFranco's is based on one song, and through it we take a long look at September 11. Kurt Cobain's is not even based so much on his work as on his death.

My attitude throughout these essays is that the glass is half full. There may be the occasional criticism of the artist, but that is not the point. There is probably an entirely different book where someone simply interrogates the work and lives of these artists and finds all the things in their lives that collide with the Christian faith. I had no desire to write such a book. For me it was how these artists caressed with my faith. These artists have been friends I have never met, who in my car, my front room, my office, and the radio studio have whispered truth to me from on and between the lines of their magnificent songs.

I hope in my subjective engagement of the work of these twelve great artists there will be helpful, objective truth. The greatest danger in something so subjective is that I would abuse the work of the artists in order to say what I wanted them to say. In my subjectivity, I have tried hard to maintain the integrity of the original work.

The Church and America are on the harsh end of much criticism in this book. Where my political perspective screams through, forgive me, but never dismiss the critique until you are absolutely sure that there is no truth in there that needs to be dealt with. The prophets were always quite scathing of their nation and believing community. It is with harsh truth that God sometimes breaks into our apathy and lethargy. In many ways these artists have said prophetic things that need to be heard and discussed. These are not the definitive answers to the issues in our nation or the Church, but I hope they will add something to the conversation.

There are a few conversations, to which I hope this will contribute. I received a telephone call from a journalist in Florida recently who was researching an article on why a young church had replaced the worship songs in its services with secular music. I shared with him that I sensed that our Christian art was too narrow and not touching many areas of people's spiritual experience. I was involved on the fringes of a more raging conversation in a Christian college where they had started to invite artists without a Christian profession to play on campus. The alumni were up in arms at such a suggestion. What good would it be to have such concerts? Indeed, would it not be detrimental to the spiritual development of the students?

It is a wonderfully refreshing thing that there are fewer books about how demonic the arts are than there were twenty years ago. Writers such as Steve Turner and Bill Romanowski have contributed a more positive approach in cultural criticism than the dualistic tendencies of the recent past, and writers such as Philip Yancey, Ken Gire, and Eugene Peterson among others, have used literature, art, and music references in their writing. This book is a humble contribution, but I hope it is a useful addition to that canon as we seek to understand how followers of Jesus can engage with the modern world, rather than hide away from it.

THE CARESS OF GOD'S GRACE: AM I LOOKING[1]

Am I looking for warmth in the drunkard's eye
Am I looking for the bright in the night time sky
Am I looking down alleys for some kind of epiphany
Am I looking for magic in the everyday ordinary
Am I looking for misunderstanding in an angry fist
Am I looking for the beauty behind the mist
Am I looking in the puddle for the colors incandescent
Am I looking in the mirror for a trace of the transcendent

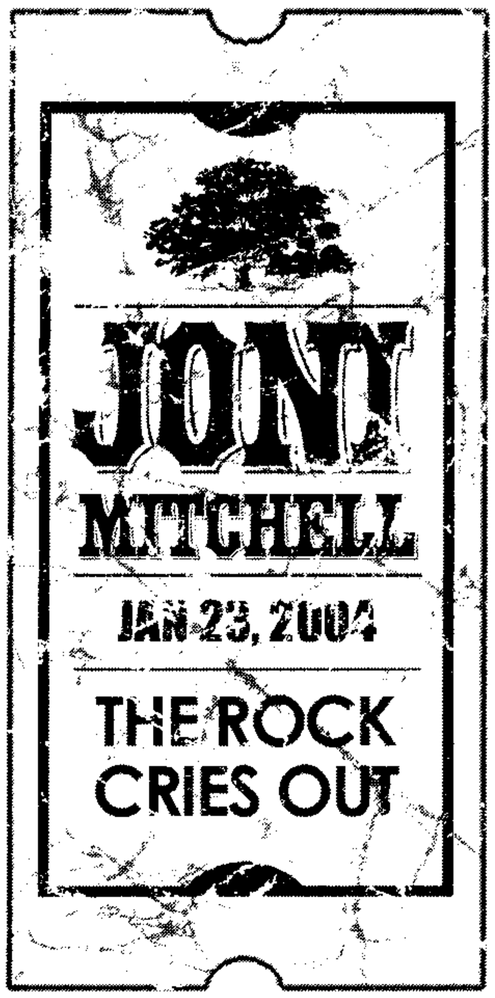
Am I looking always looking
Eyes open, open wide
Am I looking always looking
At beyond and at the inside

Am I looking for forever in the gembok's dance
Am I looking for some meaning in this lucky chance
Am I looking the trash for some hope of resurrection
Am I looking 'neath the scars for some object of affection
Am I looking for now in the old man's song
Am I looking for the truth where it shouldn't belong
Am I looking in my pride for some reason for confession
Am I looking in my sins for the spirit's helpful lessons

Am I looking always looking
Eyes open, open wide
Am I looking always looking
At beyond and at the inside

Do I see the caress of God's grace
In the kiss blown by a little child
Do I see the caress of God's grace
In the stranger's passing smile
Do I see the caress of God's grace
In a loved one's gentle hand
Do I see the caress of God's grace
In the melody of a rock 'n' roll band

SIX



WE'VE GOT TO GET OURSELVES BACK TO THE GARDEN

It is the hottest of Canadian afternoons. As the guests gather for a wedding on the water's edge of the Lake Of Bays, I am aware of the shadow cast by the boat house that will give the guests some relief from the heat. The shadow misses where I will stand with the bride and groom. It is the first wedding a scruffy cleric like myself will have to think about what to wear; will my sunblock be SPF 20 or 30?! I am even more acutely aware of the beauty of this place. For twenty-four hours we have partied and celebrated and enjoyed the refreshment of the water. The trees are just pre-fall green; the lake glistens, and a few motor boats cut across its surface.

Not so much distracted by the surroundings as inspired by them, I think about what to say to Ewan and Miriam as they set out from this prettiest of places and head down the aisle

made between their family and friends to begin a new life together. They are activists. Their friends who have gathered literally from all over the world are activists. There are those working with AIDS charities, development charities, and human rights campaigns, as well as those who work or volunteer with the mentally and physically challenged. Not all would claim that they do it for any Christian motivation. Some would reject the very idea of God, but others would have had Christian faith as an influence in their formative years even if they are unsure of where Jesus fits into their worldview now or they into His.

Add to all this the parents and friends all being from very different geographical and spiritual homes, and the preacher's job is never an easy one. There is a lead though. Ewan and Miriam have a thing with songs about gardens, and the two songs in their minds as they prepared invitations and all that wedding paraphernalia were Van Morrison's "In The Garden" and Joni Mitchell's "Woodstock." A Belfast man where I am from and a Canadian woman where I was now preparing. The more I considered and pondered, the more sure I was that the text for the service should be from the canon of Canada's finest songwriter: *We are stardust, we are golden/ And we've got to get ourselves back to the garden.* Perfect!

When Joni Mitchell wrote those words, the hippy children of the '60s thought they were and believed they could be! The gates of Eden had never looked so close. If you examine the fingernails of the '60s hippy children, you might find traces of the gold of heaven's streets where they touched it and then were mercilessly dragged away again. Whatever led to it, Woodstock was the pinnacle of the hippy dream. It was the highest point, and the falling back down was quick and painful.

Rock music had been the catalyst. The entire play was acted

out on the stage of pop and rock. The Beatles and Bob Dylan had opened doors, and drugs had fueled the journey. By the summer of love in 1967, Eastern religion had given a spiritual dimension, and the free love peace train and the uninhibited sex that came with it reached Woodstock on a weekend in August 1969.

Joni Mitchell was not at the festival, held back from going in order to appear on television on the Monday night. Yet, it was her who encapsulated the moment and the era in the song that would weave its way onto the soundtrack of the movie sung by Crosby Stills and Nash. Returning from the biggest festival in rock history, Stephen Stills—the middle name in that super group—had been trying to write a song of his experience of the day but his ideas were made redundant when Mitchell pulled up a chair and played maybe her most poetic and prophetic song. It is a song for the specific that can be rendered useful in the universal. It is a song that can be sung at any gathering where people meet with any kind of hope about the present and future. It was written about one event of the '60s, but could be seen as the definitive commentary on the entire hippy movement. It not only captures that moment in time, but it lives beyond the event or the era. It is a song about humankind, about who humankind is and what humankind should be setting out to achieve.

Within three verses Mitchell deals with the resentments of that hippy people. There is the smog. There is the alienation of being just a cog that spins around and around monotonously. There is the anti-war dream of bombers turning into butterflies. It is about getting back to the land. Then there is the spiritual dimension. In *Goldmine* magazine in 1995, Mitchell revealed that she was going through quite a spiritual experience at the time. "At the time I was going through a kind of born again Christian trip, not that I went to any church, I'd given up on Christianity at an early age at Sunday School. But suddenly, as performers we were in a

position of having so many people look to us for leadership, and for some unknown reason I took it seriously and decided I needed a guide and leaned on God. So I was a little 'God-mad' at the time, for a lack of a better term, and had been saying to myself, 'Where are the modern miracles?' Woodstock, for some reason impressed upon me as being a modern miracle."[1] In the end she thought she had found eternal truth in this free love, naked kick against the values of the modern world. So the spiritual dimension is not coincidental. This is an attempt to get the soul free. There is the idea that we have all got into this mess by getting "caught up in the devil's bargain."

If you study her lyrics a little deeper from that time, it's easy to see things of a spiritual nature that are creeping into her poetry. On the most beautiful and accurate attack on the male sexual psyche, decades ahead of the Alanis Morrisettes, "Woman of Heart and Mind," she talks of holiness being the latest craze. Then there is "A Case Of You." Some of the sharper heads in music would suggest that if you have a weak track on an album, you should hide it away on side two and track four. On *Blue*, that is exactly where Mitchell places maybe her best song of all. And there again we hear references to "holy wine" and "touching souls."

All the best of human causes are about striving toward a better day of peace or community or justice or whatever, and Joni says, journeying forward is actually a journey back—to the Garden where it all began, where it was not like it is today. Can we not get back there again? The Judeao-Christian perspective on Eden is of God having a close connection with His creations, particularly the one made in His image—humanity. Human beings had a unique relationship with God; they were co-workers with Him in His world, and they had an inheritance of beauty and goodness to live within. This they squandered for a moment of pleasure and the desire to be God themselves. All relationships were fractured—with God,

with the land, and with each other. Ever since mankind has lived east of Eden, living something less than the harmony originally intended. Woodstock was for Mitchell some kind of image of a restoration of the creation peacefulness.

In 1994, Mitchell wrote another song about the fulfilment of human history. Well, actually, she paraphrased Irish poet W.B. Yeats' vision of apocalypse. In his poem, "Second Coming," he sees not a return to the garden, but history's fate "slouching towards Bethlehem to be born." It is an intriguing link. Woodstock directs us back to where the Old Testament began, and "Slouching Towards Bethlehem" points to where the New Testament story of redemption entered the world in the form of Christ.

The two songs could not be more contrasting. Yeats is not hopeful of peace descending, but instead he sees a rising doom, the antichrist smashing to pieces the misguided illusion that humanity was evolving in some kind of enlightened way. Yeats wrote "Second Coming" in 1919. For two centuries humanity had believed in her progress. Science and technology was bringing man into a new day when the troubles of the world could be put to right. Then came the First World War. Man's inhumanity to man had never been so fierce. This was no sign of a better day. This was no clue to some twentieth century paradise.

For Mitchell to choose such a poem to adapt to her own art should not be a surprise. From Woodstock on, her work has not been so much about the Garden or how to get back to the garden, but about the hell we are living in outside of the garden. Stephen Holden for *The New York Times* recalls a story of a young man approaching a table that Sting, Bruce Springsteen, and Don Henley were sharing with Mitchell. As the young man went on about the '60s, she burst his bubble saying, "Don't be romantic about it—we failed."

"At least you tried," retorted the man.

"But we didn't try hard enough. We didn't learn from history. If any progress is to be made, we must show how we failed."[2]

When asked by Phil Sutcliffe in an interview for *Q* magazine whether she was aware of being the spokesperson for a generation she replied, "You mean via the song 'Woodstock?' If I was a spokesperson, nobody heard me, so big deal."[3]

In the '80s and '90s, Mitchell made sure she didn't fail in the exposing of the failure and her not being heard. *Dog Eat Dog* is Mitchell's harshest and most intensely political album. Produced by the weird whim of the day, electro pop boy Thomas Dolby, during his fifteen minutes of fame, it is a raging torrent of judgment on modern ills. As she spells out very clearly in "Fiction," these are songs about deluded dreams and the empty desires of hedonism that advertisers create for the rich big business empires. The imbalances of capitalism are a recurring theme on an album filled to overflowing with racketeers, big-wig financiers, thieves, and sycophants selling short-lived products, shiny toys, and even power and the justice system. On the title track, she gives her apocalyptic warning that every culture is on its last legs and that those who are taking any notice know that everything worthwhile will be thrown away.

On another song Mitchell names the powers, the three great stimulants, that have us cursed—avarice, brutality, and innocence. Avarice must point to the deceptive trickery of the men in suits who can sell snow to Eskimos; the brutality must be a hint at Reaganism in Central America, as well as violence on the streets and in the family home. How, you might ask, could innocence be a stimulant to a disintegrating culture? She explained to Iain Blair of the *Los Angeles Herald*, "Innocence has always been a stimulant especially when a culture is entering a decadent period. You get kiddie porn,

the cult of the youth, an obsession with youth in fact, and stuff like face-lifts—yech!"[4]

Another power that is named and blamed on *Dog Eat Dog* are the snakebite evangelists that get completely exposed in "Tax Free." The rise in influence of the fundamentalist conservative right wing churches was most clearly in evidence from the television pulpits of the likes of Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and Jimmy Swaggert. Mitchell's musical collaborator and husband of the time Larry Klein told Joni biographer Kate O'Brien about watching Swaggert on television. "We were amazed at the whole spectacle of this thing, this guy who was claiming to represent Jesus Christ and who was advocating all kinds of wild things, including bombing Cuba."[5]

"Tax Free" is a powerful indictment of Swaggert and his kind. Rod Steiger becomes the preacher from hell who recalls the worn out theme of rock 'n' roll being of the devil, but then to a much more sinister effect suggests attacking Cuba with a surety of divine approval that Dylan had so ably challenged in "God On Our Side" two decades before. Mitchell's problem here is not only the marriage of church and state, particularly in the right wing conservative nature of that marriage in the USA, but her inability to understand the contradictions in the preaching. The judgmentalism and seeming hate that pervades the attitude with which the so-called love of Christ is preached is no conduit for the Good News of the Gospel to travel through to the soul. Politically, the contradiction is similar in its dichotomy; how can they speak of a Prince of Peace when there is war mongering militancy at work?

If her political commentary was in your face on *Dog Eat Dog*, the albums that followed all touched on similar themes. Her vehemence might have been a little more gently produced and a little more scattered through the record, but they probably stand out more as a result. On *Chalk Mark In The*

Rain, there is "Number 1," that again looks at the rat race and the need for success, and "The Beat Of Black Wings," again about violence, this time specifically about a paratrooper medic who served in Vietnam. "Lakota" is a poignant look at the theft of the native Indian land. Here again there is a link between injustice and those who came in the name of their white God to do it. She would later talk about how she was introduced to prejudice and bigotry by the treatment of her schoolmate Mary, an adopted American Indian girl about whom she wrote "Cherokee Louise" on *Night Ride Home*.

"Sex Kills," on the Grammy winning *Turbulent Indigo*, began on the last night of the L.A. riots when Joni pulled up behind a car with personal license plates. She introduced the song explaining, "this guy had the licence plate JUST ICE ... and I never really thought about that word quite in that manner ... justice JUST ICE ... so in the weeks that followed and especially in the uproar we were there ... I asked everybody I knew about justice, what is it ... everybody wants it, nobody knows what it is ... I even read Plato's *Republic* which was based on the premise if you build a just society you could have justice ... so Plato describes the Socratic just society but it would be unjust to the likes of me because it was a society of specialists. You had to be a painter, a poet, or a musician, but you couldn't tackle all three so I would already be pinched in this society so I don't know to this day what a just society, or what justice is but this is kind of what went down."

The song itself jam packs as much social commentary into less than four minutes as was on the entire *Dog Eat Dog* treatise. Underneath the recurring riff of "sex kills," there are dodgy doctors prescribing all kinds of pills, rapists, gun-toting children, and a world being rent asunder with oil spills and gas leaks. In the end, she asks if justice is at the mercy of the greedy and the lustful, and if the world is simply a place where the weak are sacrificed for the good of the strong. Again, we are a long way from the visions of "Woodstock."

Another song on *Turbulent Indigo*, "Magdalene Laundries," is the other side of the "Tax Free" coin. Across the world geographically and spiritually, another Christian orthodoxy shuns Mitchell's sense of believing. With a cheerier tune at her disposal, Mitchell, it seems, picked up the *Toronto Star* at the grocery store and read about an Irish scandal of how the selling of a property of the Sisters Of Charity in north Dublin unearthed 133 bodies of the "fallen women" who were sent to convent laundries for sexual misdemeanors. With the bodies the horror of the treatment of these young girls who might have been prostitutes or unmarried mothers was uncovered, the Roman Catholic Church had another scandal to deal with, as well as the child abuse cases that would pour out over the next decade. To give the song an Irish context, Mitchell first recorded it with the Irish traditional band The Chieftains on their 1999 release *Tears Of Stone*.

The song points out the same fundamental flaw "Tax Free" did for the television evangelists. She is naming the unbelievable hypocrisy of such a heartless place being called Our Lady of Charity and a painful shrugged chortle proceeds a repeat of the ironic "charity." That Mitchell is not dismissing Jesus with the abhorrence carried out in His name is evident as she suggests that if these people had any idea of who Jesus was or what He was about, they would not be so damning and cruel, but would drop their stones of judge and jury just as Jesus told those religious leaders who had caught a woman in adultery and were waiting for His verdict so that they could stone her.

Years later a movie about the laundries, *Magdalene Sisters*, would be released. In an interview with director Peter Mullan for BBC Northern Ireland, Ralph McLean asked Mullan how such things could have happened. Mullan had asked a nun involved in the laundries the very same question, and she answered "absence of doubt." For many believers doubt is treated with suspicion, but the Sister had put her finger on

a great truth. When humans take the strength of their belief and ease it across the thin line to absolute knowledge, then arrogance can lead to all kinds of things being done in the name of God. Mystery is what saves us from such abuses as Mitchell is highlighting. As the apostle Paul reminds us in a chapter that Mitchell had used in her song "Love," "we see but through a glass darkly." The mistake of believing that we can see any clearer can have repugnant results. Nations can invade nations, churches can exclude those who do not think like them, and individuals can treat their neighbors in the most dismissive, judgmental, and damaging ways. A look back at "Slouching Towards Bethlehem" finds Mitchell summing it up as she concludes, sadly, that those who are good have no conviction, but even worse, those who have a passion lack the mercy to use it compassionately.

So has Joni Mitchell's repugnance with things carried out by the orthodox churches masquerading as being done in the name of God completely unraveled that conversion experience that she talked about three decades ago? Has she lost all faith and hope that her Christian obsession in the late '60s gave her? Not at all. Though Mitchell herself would never in any way articulate in terms of being a Christian, she has never given up on God. In a *Mojo* interview with Barney Hoskins in 1994, she talks about the difficult life she has had. It is easy to overlook a life that was struck down early by polio, that had to give up a daughter for adoption, and that experienced a miscarriage, as well as the usual romantic heartache. She is not looking for special attention. She says, "I have had a difficult life as most people have ... a life of very good luck and very bad luck ... but I don't think I've ever become faithless; I've never been an atheist, although I can't say what orthodoxy I belong to."[6]

"Woodstock"-like visions and dreams are far from lost in Mitchell's later work. "Passion Play" from the same album, *Night Ride Home*, that gave us "Slouching Towards

Bethlehem," is a song of Gospel story and Gospel truth. Mary Magdalene is getting better press than she would an album later in "Magdalene Laundries" and Zaccheus is almost at the top of the tree of sinners (excuse the pun!). To those in need come redemption and a heart healer, strays in the wilderness now with someone who has met them in their wanderings. The Messiah arrives into a world that is "divinely barren" but "wickedly wise." In the extensive liner notes to *The Complete Geffen Recordings*, she writes, "This song is basically my telling of the Easter story but it morphs into contemporary ecological and sociological disasters. It is about crisis in the heart and healing of the heart."[7] She is looking for *Thy kingdom come/ Thy will be done,* and in looking hard for the kingdom, Mitchell is taking another look back to the Garden. The kingdom that Jesus came to bring is a future day, but it will take us back to our original intentions in that garden, where we were stardust and golden.

In 2002, Mitchell released an intriguing record of orchestrated covers of her own songs. Having produced an album of the pre-rock 'n' roll classics two years previous, on which she had dropped in her own "Both Sides Now" and "A Case Of You," Mitchell took twenty-two songs that covered her entire career and put them into the very same musical setting. It was a revelation. Musical director Larry Klein brought together an orchestra and jazz players and gave his ex-wife's work new resonance and drama in the most tasteful and subtle of ways. His ex-wife's voice gives the tunes a new slant too, seemingly deeper than her Baez-like wail, probably resulting somewhere between the abuse of cigarettes and the wisdom of maturity.

The packaging is immaculate. Mitchell's paintings have graced her work since the beginning, and portraits have been very regular in recent releases, but inside the outer box, there is a book between the CDs in the digipack where we get an independent piece of Mitchell's art, her paintings

complimented by quotations from her songs. Getting the opportunity to read her visual images alongside her poetic ones is a highly intoxicating mix.

The booklet is all wrapped in quotes from "Love," "Slouching Towards Bethlehem," "Amelia," "The Circle Game," and a few other snippets of "Woodstock," along with "Refuge From The Roads," where the album gets its title. If the booklet gives a hint of the spiritual life still in Mitchell's palette, guitar case, heart, and soul, then the sequencing of the tracks on the CD itself offers up another little illumination. The center of the first CD sees "Love" followed by "Woodstock," neatly placed alongside the yang of their yin in "Slouching Towards Bethlehem." Two songs later we find "The Sire Of Sorrow (Job's Sad Song)" where Mitchell, in the alias of the Old Testament character Job, asks what he has done to deserve all that has befallen him. It is a lament of epic proportions, as indeed is the Old Testament book. But in some ways, it is the reality of our place between the Garden and the kingdom; justice is impossible to find, and yet it does not negate a faith in God, but asks questions of Him—and indeed us—in the meantime.

Back to that wedding. In the sweat-inducing temperatures of North Ontario, I got a little heated under the collar. It was not the infantile shouting from the loudest speedboat ever launched that cut rudely through the tranquillity of the place and the atmosphere of the romantic meeting the sacred. During my talk, for some reason, I was drawn to John Lennon's most famous secular hymn, "Imagine." Quoting, *Imagine there's no heaven,* I got a little wound up at the late great Beatle and raged that it was too easy to imagine that there is not a heaven. What I was going to do was more difficult. I was going to imagine that there was one, then have a vision of what it was like, and then go even further and attempt to bring that heaven down to earth. I wanted to commit to getting us back to the Garden. I invited our

newlyweds and their family and friends to join me on that pilgrimage.

For Joni Mitchell, her vision of paradise was not the end of her journey. It was the beginning. Traveling west back toward Eden (interestingly the wise men in the Gospel account of Jesus birth came from the East), has been full of confrontation with the trials and tribulations of living outside the Garden. She is an artist without doubt disappointed that paradise was not as close in 1969 as she and so many others hoped it was. Her work is now filled with the reality of humanity's failure to achieve the prophetic dream of her song, but never without the hope that that day will come.