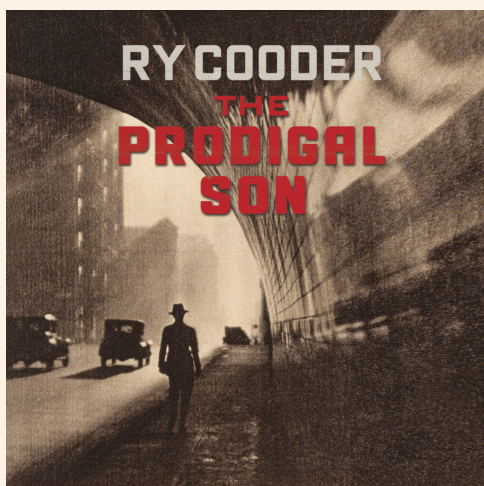




from Garth...

Welcome to the many of you who are receiving this for the first time, having signed up at concerts or on the website

Ry Cooder - "The Prodigal Son"



In my book **Against the Grain** I mention on page 6 how Gill and I listen to albums in the car as we are heading to concerts. Recently we picked up a real favourite, by Ry Cooder, called The Prodigal Son. I mention in the book on page 33 that I used to go to Ry Cooder concerts in London and found them very musically inspiring, so to discover this album is a real gem. It's really an unusual gospel album. Ry Cooder takes a series of old gospel songs from way back and adds in one or two of his own songs.

Bryn Haworth

When I hear Ry's beautiful slide guitar I think of Bryn Haworth, such a good slide guitarist himself. I know that he and Sally also listen to albums in the car as they are on tour - I had no doubt that they'd be listening to this one, but I did just write to Bryn to check that that was the case! Of course they are listening to it!and loving it!

If you look on [youtube here](#) - there's a little eight minute film about why Ry recorded the album - it's worth checking out. It's actually quite amusing - his son Joachim, an amazing drummer, was talking with his dad about doing the album, and told him to keep off the political songs as people wanted to hear the guitar! So Ry decided that he would do a gospel album because he said that when he was young he used to

be spellbound by gospel music. What makes me laugh about this album though is that tucked away is a clear-cut political agenda - both in the way that Ry has chosen songs, and in the two or three songs that he has written. It's subtle, but it's clear.

Ry is a man of many instruments, but I particularly love his slide guitar, banjo and mandolin, all of which are featured on the album.

He opens with a song called *Straight Street* originally done in the fifties by The Pilgrim Travelers. It's based on the street in Damascus where St. Paul lived briefly while he was waiting to receive his sight back after his conversion.

Then there are a couple of songs that, though they are old gospel songs, relate very much to the situation in our countries today. One is called *Everybody Ought to Treat a Stranger Right* - a song originally written by Blind Willie Johnson. Couldn't be more suitable for his country or ours at the moment, with our views on refugees and 'strangers'.

Then Ry does one called *You Must Unload* by Alfred Reid and this one, written in 1927, has to be my favourite as it is basically about simplifying our lifestyle. In the song he critiques "fashion loving Christians", "money loving Christians", and "power loving Christians" and says, "You must unload". It includes this lovely quote, **"If you'd like to get to heaven and watch eternity unfold, you must, you must unload."**

The next song is called *I'll Be Rested When the Roll is Called*, an old song by Blind Roosevelt Graves - this is a powerful song but I have to say that the version by Mavis Staples on her album *We'll Never Turn Back* is even more powerful. She pays credit to many who gave their lives in the Civil Rights Movement or were the forerunners in gospel music. Hers is a wonderful version and fascinating to see that *her producer is none other than Ry Cooder!*

There are one or two unusual theological moments on the album! One is when Jesus sings a song to Woody Guthrie! It's an extraordinary lyric where Jesus comments on Woody's challenge to fascists.

The Prodigal Son is a delightful and inspiring album, and extremely relevant to these times. **The forbidden politics are quietly there.** Check it out on youtube or spotify to see if it's your music. I find it very uplifting.

A moment of hope in dark times

Some of you may be familiar with my song *Oscar Romero* which was on the

Alien Brain album. I wrote it when Archbishop Oscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador, was assassinated in 1980 by a right wing extremist group because of his outspoken support of the poor and unjustly treated, and his determined stand against violence.

So I was delighted that last Sunday, October 14th 2018, Pope Francis made Oscar Romero a saint. **In these days when it is hard to read a newspaper, I find Pope Francis' highlighting of this man of steadfast courage in standing up for truth, justice and non-violence to be a bright moment of hope.**

Indeed a victory for justice, peace and courage.

As my tribute to Oscar Romero I put the song on [youtube here](#).



Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador

Greetings cards



Isobel and I have been getting together some greetings cards, and there will be book marks as well, which use some of my song lyrics - here's an example of one of them. I'm hoping people will find them useful both as cards to send, but also cards one might put up in certain places to bring some words of prayer, encouragement or challenge.

For now we are selling these at concerts, and in a week or two we hope to make them available on the website.

The Pope and Pink Floyd

I'm going to finish today with a thought and a prayer. These come from Pope Francis, and Roger Waters of Pink Floyd - perhaps not always known as a double

act!

Pope Francis' prayer is a beautiful rejection of violence and a commitment to peace, and Roger Waters is reflecting the same things with his commitment to love. Both speak with a lot of power.

Roger Waters:

**War isn't about ideology,
it's not about religion.
It's about money.
It's always been about money.
It's about money and power
and it is devastatingly sad to see the human race
feeling compelled to march further down the road
towards ultimate destruction.**

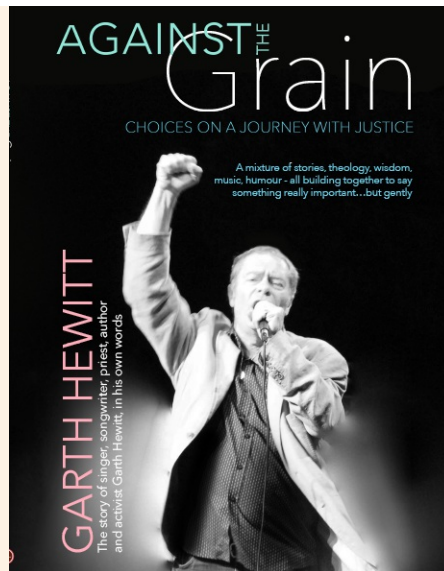
**The holy grail is love,
that is what we should be promoting and protecting
with every ounce of energy we all have. ****

Prayer - May God Change the Hearts of the Violent

**May God change the hearts of the violent.
May God change the hearts of those who seek war
May God change the hearts of those who manufacture and sell arms.
And may God strengthen the hearts and minds of peacemakers
And grant them every blessing
May God bless you all!**

Pope Francis, Address at the Latin Church, Bethany Beyond the Jordan





If you missed your chance to give Garth's memoir *Against the Grain* as a Christmas present last year, there's plenty of time to order it now for this Christmas!

For more information email info@garthhewitt.org, or go to Garth's [website here](#)

For just a taste of the reviews *Against the Grain* has been getting you can have a look on the [Amazon page here](#)



And now is definitely the time to be ordering Garth's beautiful Christmas album, released last year, **Peace at Christmas** - order it [here](#) or click on the pic

Here's one of the emails that came in: "Your Christmas album arrived today in the post – what a joy! Beautifully presented and love the music. God bless the mandolin. Silent Night – wow! Love the piano on Shine On. Lovely little message

inside as well. Christmas is such a special time and your words from your book *Occupied Territories* are so prophetic.”



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