Jon Michael Spencer, Visiting Assistant Professor in the Duke University Divinity School, and a small cadre of young colleagues from other seminaries about the country have boldly launched a new discipline—theomusicology—in the face of the rather formalized notions of what theology is properly about. Most of this new school of theological expressionism are sociologists of religion—Alton B. Pollard, III, Harold Dean Trulear, Michael Eric Dyson, etc. Spencer, whose earlier researches are in ethnomusicology, is trained in theology as well. And Princeton philosopher Cornel West ranks high as a theoretician whose published works on popular music and musicians complement the movement.

"Theomusicology" seems to be to secular music what "collateral theology" is to fiction—a way of relating human beings to God in all of their artistic expressions. It is a new discipline as old in its implications as the Song of Solomon.—C. Eric Lincoln

Jon Spencer has made an enormously important contribution to the theological reflection on American popular music. This collection of essays represents a sensitive balance and illuminating approach to the religious implications of popular music, especially black popular music. It's an absolutely first-rate job.—Andrew M. Greeley

The study of theological themes and symbols in popular music—newly christened “theomusicology”—is an extension of the research on popular culture that attempts to interpret the political and social meanings of “lowlowbrow” forms of art, literature, and entertainment.

The small group of scholars in the fledgling discipline insists that theomusicology offers a window onto a subject little studied from the perspective of popular culture—the spiritual undercurrents of secular life.

Most of the scholars doing such work are ministers, faculty members at divinity schools or seminaries, divinity students, or some combination of those things, and that seems to give their research into popular music a certain urgency.—Chronicle of Higher Education

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