

## Affluenza

Oliver James



Vermillion; 2007; £8.99; Pb; 592pp  
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'Never have I read a book that so precisely captures the way we are being emotionally snookered by the demands of 21st century living...' Jeremy Vine

How often do we consume more than we need?  
Is sincerity the same as authenticity?  
Why isn't parenthood as valuable to society as a job?

Oliver James, a clinical psychologist, travelled all over the world to compile this book. The title of the book refers to a set of values and behaviours that he models on a virus which infects the heart and the soul. James looks at what we prize, how we achieve our goals, and how this affects our wellbeing. Important issues for Christians today include biblical interpretation and homosexuality - of course. But what about politics and economics? Is it important to live holy and different lives in terms of how we treat our children and partners, and to act in a way towards the poor and towards climate change which sets us apart, and puts us at the forefront of change for the better?

Oliver James isn't known as a Christian, but in a way this makes for a bigger challenge. His findings and suggestions brush so close at times to Jesus that a call to a life more real whispers to you. Many of us like to think that our goals are simple; we are working towards loving God and each other more. This book makes uncomfortable but essential reading. Even as Christians, we can be 'snookered' by society into damaging ourselves and others, often without even realising.

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## www.bethinking.org

From the plurality of culture and worldviews to understanding who we are as individuals, this website offers topics relevant for the thinking Christian - even the Christian medic. There are resources for understanding, defending and communicating the Christian faith.

There is a variety of stimulating articles like 'Am I significant in the universe, or just an accident?' and reviews of films like 'The Bourne Ultimatum'. Whatever your interest, *bethinking.org* includes something likely to engage, equip and challenge you on practical aspects of life rooted in Christian doctrine. The website has a clear layout divided into several colour coded categories such as 'Bible & Jesus', 'Who am I?' or 'Truth & Tolerance'. What's more exciting is that if you're bored of reading articles, you can listen to audio or podcasts on some topics. With today's generation of mobile phones, you can listen to it before sleeping or whilst on the go!

I enjoyed *bethinking.org* and have been spiritually challenged and encouraged further in my Christian journey. I listened to Andrew Fellows' talk in which he argued that today's modern self is characterised by narcissism. This got me thinking: do I see others as individuals with their own subjective sense of self, needs, hopes and worries? Or do I simply see other people as a reflection to augment my own feelings and sense of wellbeing? I would encourage you to have a look at the website and get thinking...

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