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“Perfect teeth. Nice smell. A class act all the way.”
—Homer Simpson describing God after a divine visit

New Edition of Bestselling *The Gospel According to The Simpsons*™ Offers Expanded Look at Cartoon Spirituality

A Bigger (and Possibly Even) Better! second edition of *The Gospel According to The Simpsons*™ by Mark Pinsky (Westminster John Knox Press, \$16.95, June 2007) brings readers up to date on the spiritual lives of Homer Simpson and his family. Adding a wealth of new material, the longtime *Orlando Sentinel* religion reporter expands his analysis of how the show reflects the role of faith in American life. The iconic series remains “as trenchant, as life-affirming, as socially critical a prime-time sitcom as we can expect on commercial TV,” Pinsky says.

The book’s first edition sold 150,000 copies and spawned a Sunday School leader’s guide. In the seasons since (2001-2006), *The Simpsons* continued to grapple with many of the same religious and moral issues facing non-cartoon society. New chapters cover episodes dealing with gay marriage and Lisa Simpson’s conversion to Buddhism.

Once denounced for its irreverence, the series is safely ensconced in American popular culture as it heads into its twentieth season. This year brings two landmarks for the show: its 400th episode will air in May, and its first full-length feature film, *The Simpsons Movie*, hits theaters in July. Next year, *The Simpsons* ride will open at Universal Studios theme parks in Orlando and Los Angeles

The Simpsons paved the way for other envelope-pushing animated sitcoms, which also address religious topics from time to time, though not with the same depth and subtlety, Pinsky says. Five “mini-gospels” in the new edition explore how religion is treated on *South Park*, *Family Guy*, *Futurama*, *American Dad* and *King of the Hill*.

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“Over the years since the first edition, I noticed that—if anything—the amount and the depth of faith, spirituality and religion in *The Simpsons* has increased,” Pinsky says. “And, prodded by my teenaged children, I saw how other animated comedies, like *South Park* and *Family Guy*, had taken advantage of the door opened (or kicked in) by *The Simpsons*. Some material, especially on cable networks like Comedy Central and Cartoon Channel’s Adult Swim, has been quite savage.”

South Park’s “scatology meets eschatology” treatment of religion has yet to warrant a Sunday school leaders guide. But theologians from across the denominational spectrum agree that *The Simpsons* is “the most consistent and intelligent treatment of religion on TV,” Pinsky shows. Complex theological issues, such as the nature of the soul, and moral dilemmas such as adultery, are regularly addressed on the series. God himself appears in several episodes, and Jesus, heaven and hell, the Bible, and prayer also figure into the lives of the Simpsons and their neighbors. Residents of Springfield are mainline Protestant (like the Simpson family, except for daughter Lisa, who is Buddhist), evangelical Christian (like neighbor Ned Flanders), Catholic, Jewish, and Hindu.

The Simpsons only seems to question conventional wisdom and values, Pinsky says. It’s supportive of God, faith, and family, with a consistent message that family and faith are the only reliable defenses against the vagaries of modern life. For the characters on the show, as for many of its viewers, “faith is a bulwark, a highly meaningful and relevant refuge.”

Pinsky distills, interprets, and analyzes material about God, faith and religion contained in close to 400 episodes of the show. “*The Simpsons* is a situation comedy about modern life that includes a significant spiritual dimension; because of that, it more accurately reflects the faith lives of Americans than any other show in the medium.”

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*The Gospel According to The Simpsons*TM
Bigger (and Possibly Even) Better! Edition
by Mark I. Pinsky

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About Mark Pinsky

Mark Pinsky covers religion for the *Orlando Sentinel*. He is the author of *A Jew Among the Evangelicals* (Westminster John Knox Press); the bestselling first edition of *The Gospel According to The Simpsons: The Spiritual Life of the World's Most Animated Family*, and *The Gospel According to Disney: Faith, Trust and Pixie Dust*. He is coauthor of *The Gospel According to the Simpsons: Leader's Guide for Group Study*.

His writing on faith, media and popular culture appears in such publications as *USA Today*, *Christianity Today*, *Moment*, *The Columbia Journalism Review*, *Quill*, and *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*; his reporting has also appeared in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post*.

A graduate of Duke University and the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, Pinsky was a Sloan Fellow in Economics Journalism at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public Affairs. He is a sought-after speaker at colleges, universities and churches on the topic of religion and popular culture.

Pinsky lives in Maitland, Florida, with his wife, photographer Sarah M. Brown, and their children, Asher and Liza. The family worships at the Congregation of Reform Judaism in Orlando.

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