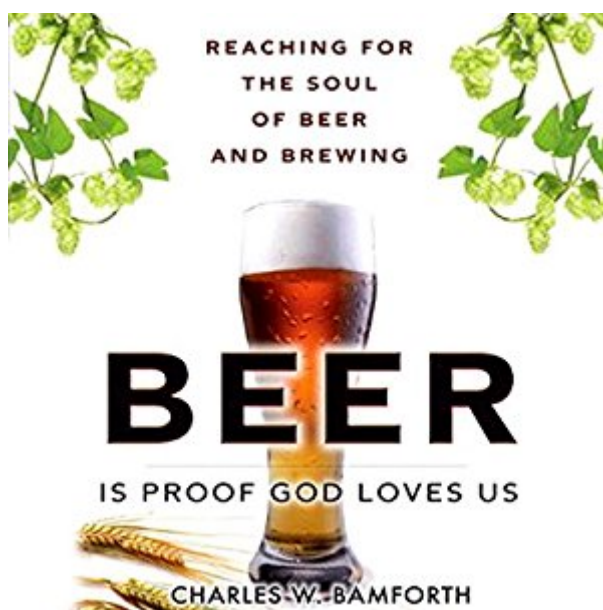


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Beer Is Proof That God Loves Us: Reaching For The Soul Of Beer And Brewing



Synopsis

Legendary beer expert Charlie Bamforth presents the most compelling social history of beer ever written: where it comes from, and where it's headed. From centuries-old cultural values to radical new approaches, craft brewing to globalization, it's an amazing story. Bamforth tells it all with humor, behind-the-scenes insight, and sheer joy!

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book popped up as free for Kindle one day in 2010 and I downloaded it because it reminded me of this Keith Walters post on alcohol and Scripture. I hadn't thought about it much until we were in Turkey, where we befriended a Lutheran family via our church, the husband of which is an avid home brewer (as is apparently a requirement of Lutheran males). He hosted beer-brewing & NFL-watching nights attended by many expat Christians and curious Turks, good times had by all. Bamforth is a PhD chemist from the U.K. who holds a chair endowed by Anheuser-Busch at UC Davis. He has worked in research and development in the beer industry and has chronicled its development over the last few decades. To my surprise, the book was nothing about God at all, it's simply a treatise on the art and economics of beer brewing. Bamforth chronicles the merger/buy-outs of the beer industry as centuries-old companies swallow other centuries-old companies. He discusses the economies of scale and what they mean for brewing. He explains some of the history, the quality control, and health benefits of beer. (Beer has many more potential benefits for you than your Coke, Dr. Pepper, etc.) He also provides some anecdotes from his international travels about

the various types of beer being produced abroad. Beer has been brewed for thousands of years (Bamforth claims the Sumerians were first, but this NY Times article last month put forth even earlier dates) and anthropologists consider it to be important to the development of civilization. Bamforth laments that such a sophisticated drink is now marketed as a juvenile product to college-aged delinquents: "It certainly has been an uphill battle for me endeavoring to spread messages of moderation and that beer ought to be a beneficial, welcome, and wholesome aspect of an adult's lifestyle when I am confronted by imagery of flatulent horses and soccer ball juggling turtles as an aide to selling beer." (Loc. 1260) Bamforth has been annoyed by the neo-prohibitionist culture in the U.S., and does spend a chapter or so defending beer consumption from its critics. He points out the irony that the original colonists migrating from England believed that alcohol consumption was essential for their survival (the title of the book is from a Benjamin Franklin quote). Beer was actually not in the crosshairs of early prohibitionists, seen as not a problem compared to stronger alcohol. (The author would find Kentucky's free-smoking but anti-alcohol laws quite annoying, I'm sure). Bamforth is Episcopalian by upbringing. He offers a quote from C.S. Lewis, who was known to enjoy a pint in his day: "An individual Christian may see fit to give up all sorts of things for special reasons—marriage, or meat, or beer, or cinema; but the moment he starts saying the things are bad in themselves, or looking down his nose at other people who do use them, he has taken the wrong turning." (Loc. 1741) But for Dr. Bamforth, beer isn't his passion-- it's his job. I appreciated his candidness that although he is a renowned expert on the subject, he could take it or leave it: "I work with beer as I do the thing that fills me with joy: teach. In truth, it would not matter what I was teaching. My joy is in the performing, the transfer of information." I give this book 3.5 stars out of 5. If you want to know a lot more about beer than you currently do, check it out. Alas, it appears it's no longer free for Kindle.

I got this for free for Kindle so I don't feel too cheated. The title is misleading. The book is less about the soul of beer and more about the business of brewing. It is mildly interesting as a book about the beer industry. 45% of the book is the actual book. 34% is endnotes which should have been eliminated or incorporated into the text. I did not read them since there were so many that reading them would have completely destroyed the flow of reading the text. There are two very short appendixes, and the rest is an index. A good editor could have made this much more entertaining and enlightening.

Bamforth has captured it! In "Beer Is Proof God Loves Us: Reaching for the Soul of Beer and

Brewing", Professor Bamforth takes the reader for a ride unlike that offered in any of his previous works. I had to set the book down for a few days after reading the first chapter. Being reminded of the current climate in the brewing industry required that I reach for that which keeps me professionally passionate and motivated.....a healthy and delicious glass of beer. Acquisition and consolidation are initially described which inevitably mean fewer jobs and the possibility of squeezing some talented and passionate brewers out of the industry as the Professor points out. However, just as it would seem all is lost, Dr. Bamforth reminds and informs us of the new culture of beer and brewing ushered in by craft brewing pioneers such as Ken Grossman, Fritz Maytag and Jim Koch. Charlie defines many of the principle quality attributes of beer for the reader which further aid to justify its rightful place on the highest of beverage pedestals. The book takes a turn to describe many of the challenges the beer industry has faced and is currently facing with dealing with anti-alcohol forces as it also addresses the stigma associated with extreme beer and drinking events such as the great Oktoberfest celebration in Munich. Bamforth enlightens the reader as to the numerous health benefits associated with the moderate consumption of beer. In closing, the author speaks of tolerance, tolerance of people, people of one another, people's choices. The reader must indulge in the footnotes. They offer insight into the mind of the author. More importantly, and perhaps as a first in a Bamforth writing, they offer insight into the heart of the author. At times, the book reads as if it is the final chapter in the career of a brewing scholar, researcher and teacher.....let us hope this is not the case. Regardless of one's level of intimacy with beer and/or the brewing process as a home brewer, professional brewer or beer enthusiast, "Beer Is Proof God Loves Us: Reaching for the Soul of Beer and Brewing" deserves a place on the library shelf.

I do not read books often enough. However read the title, I found an opportunity to bridge the gap between my beverage of choice and the need to read more. Growing up in an Italian household where my father made his own table wine, I always felt a sense of disappointment in myself. Not anymore!! Don't get me wrong, I enjoy my wine too! I just don't feel as guilty. Thank you Mr. Bamforth! I feel better about enjoying my pint of IPA or my glass of Sierra Nevada. If you ever find yourself in Yeovil area in Somerset, go to the Lord Nelson and have yourself a bitter. Ask for Andy and tell him I sent you! Cheers! Marco

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