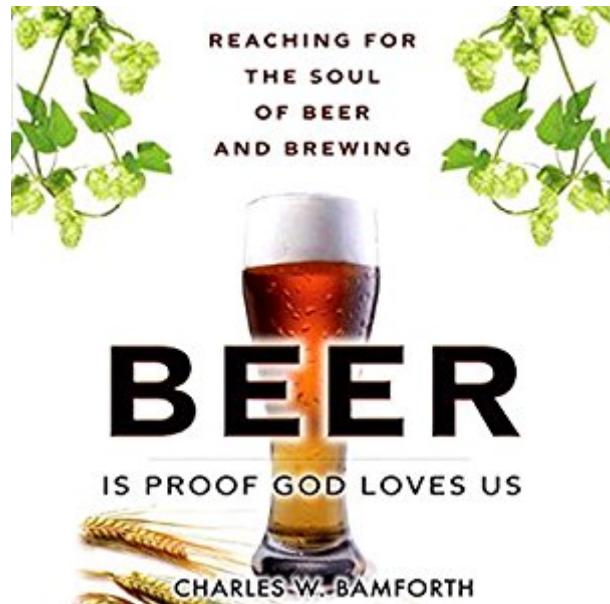


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Beer Is Proof That God Loves Us: Reaching For The Soul Of Beer And Brewing



Synopsis

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

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I'm an avowed beer and food snob, and we used to brew our own beer. We have chosen vacation destinations based on what we'll eat and drink; this stuff is important to us. As a result, choosing a book about "the soul of beer and brewing" was a no-brainer selection from my Vine options. And there is no doubt that Charles Bamforth, the UC Davis Anheuser-Busch Endowed Professor of Malting and Brewing Sciences, knows his stuff. I have strongly mixed feelings about this book. In some ways, I want to give it five stars; in others -- particularly when I disagree with the author's premises -- I have a violent urge to click hard on the two-star button. Let me be descriptive, first. Despite a title that hearkens to an emotional relationship with beer (and I dare say that most readers recognize the Ben Franklin quote in his title), the book would be better called, "The business of beer." Bamforth gives an exhaustive, educational, and entertaining overview of the state of the beer market and how we got here. Chapters are devoted to such topics as "the re-birth of a beer ethos," anti-alcohol forces, and the merger of so many beer brands under a very few companies. I am definitely smarter after reading Bamforth's book. I had lots of, "Oh, so THAT's what happened!"

realizations from his explanation of the Thatcher-era Beer Laws of the 1980s and their effect on the UK beer market, for instance. (In the UK, 52 pubs are closing their doors every week.) I learned more than I ever imagined about the chemistry of foam (that is, the head on your glass of beer). And I appreciated his thoughtful pro-and-con discussions of the health claims for beer (in which he manages to be far more balanced than you'd expect from an allegedly biased author).

Someone once posted a comment in an review that said: Review the book the author wrote, NOT the book you WISH the author had written. I found that to be very useful advice when I reviewed a pre-publication Vine program copy of Charles W. Bamforth's "Beer Is Proof God Loves Us." "Extreme" craft beers with character are where it's at for me--Imperial I.P.A.s, Imperial stouts, barleywines, funky Belgians, over-the-top strong ales made with insane quantities of malt and even more insane quantities of hops. I'm an unabashed beer snob. When I'm trying to be polite, I describe the products of today's global brewing conglomerates, some of which Dr. Bamforth has been associated with in his career, as "industrial brews" (a term he finds "reprehensible"). If I'm not trying to be polite, I use somewhat different terms. Much of "Beer Is Proof God Loves Us" is about industrial-scale brewing rather than about craft- and micro-brewing. So what did I think of it--the book he wrote, that is, not the one I WISH he had written? Well, I have to say that I enjoyed it very much. It contains a lot of esoteric information on many different aspects of beers and brewing. For example, even though I don't drink their products, I found his perspectives on the rise of the few huge international corporations that today brew most of the world's beer to be very interesting. He describes their frenetic consolidations and acquisitions in detail in Chapter 1, "Global Concerns." In Chapter 2, "The Not-So-Slow Death of a Beer Culture," he laments the near-demise of one of the world's most fascinating institutions--the British pub.

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.

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