



Elvis and the Whole World: What Profiteth a Man?: His Ultimate Victory in the Transcendent Forgivingness of Elvis Nation

John G. Deaton

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That Elvis is the King does not mean that he was perfect. Indeed, it is his humanity that ultimately touches the heart, tenderly, and the music itself is as fresh as a first kiss. As a young man from Northeast Texas, who visited Memphis and walked Beale Street in 1954, at the Memphis Cotton Carnival as part of our high school marching band, I was an early Elvis fan and still think "Love Me Tender" is the most endearing icon in Elvis Culture. In "Elvis and the Whole World," I use my medical training to write beyond biography, a personal and professional interpretation of Elvis's life. It helps that, as a boy, I spent time picking cotton and dated Polk Salad Annie. I learned first-hand what "Factory Air" meant to a young man wishing the best in wheels, best money could buy. Pink Caddies enliven life, automobiles included! Indeed, such terms are metaphors by way of the steel-belted radials Elvis gave us long before B.F. Goodrich took note. Elvis was asked what kind of girls he liked and he said, "Female!" (Drive it off the lot, Baby!) Still, for a boy who drove a cardboard Lincoln, hitchhiking in both directions, dark strangers appeared. I determine, quite simply, that Colonel Parker was a demon and that Elvis later realized that he had made a pact with the devil. (By the way, KMAC! It's a term Private Presley learned.) Did I mention Elvis spent his life trying to recover his lost twin, Jesse Garon? Twin studies done recently portray an unusual degree of intimacy existing between twins in the womb, and these offer to us tantalizing answers as to why Elvis preferred to tinker with the newest product from the assembly line. Jesse was his shadow image, his elusive chance at a life wholly realized. Ultimately, Elvis, Jesse, and Gladys were the triumvirate that centered him; he could exist with two out of three, but when he hit a single, it was only a matter of time before he was thrown out. After his mother died, in other words, Elvis became a pilgrim in an unknown universe, fated to die of--what else?--loneliness! He took his life, all but, having bid adieu to us in that cherished, heartbreaking performance of "Unchained Melody" a few weeks before that fateful day in August of 1977. Haven't we been outside Graceland ever since, hoping for a peek at him? Hey, if life were easy and choices perfect, we wouldn't need the help Elvis goes on giving us! What profiteth a man? We profit from what he left us. In the Kingdom of Elvis, we are each zillionaires! I think comparisons with the greats can be made. Keats is with Shakespeare. Beethoven is with Mozart. Elvis? The King lives inside his music, burnishing that immortal image, awaiting our every visit. He urges us to live richly, sumptuously, to be young and beautiful forever, and that's fun, a cherished destiny. Who's Elvis with? In the final analysis, he is with you.

John G. Deaton, M.D.

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