Open and Shut
A One Act Opera for 2 Sopranos, Mezzo Soprano, Tenor, Baritone, and Orchestra

Music and Text by

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Approximate Duration: 20-25 minutes

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

Graduate Department of Music

University of Toronto

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Abstract

“Open and Shut” is a short opera in two scenes composed with concert opera performances in mind; it could be performed with or without staging. There are five characters in this work. The protagonist is Bridget (Soprano). In the first scene Bridget encounters Martha (Soprano) and Rose (Mezzo Soprano), two fundamentalist Christians who are handing out religious pamphlets on the street. In the second scene Bridget meets her friends Frank (Tenor) and Paul (Baritone) in a café and tells them of her encounter with these two women (Martha and Rose); a heated discussion of religion ensues.

Each character is represented by a distinctive style of music that fits with their personality and ideology. Martha's music and singing style is inspired by Baroque and Classical sacred music (well suited to a coloratura voice) to represent her traditional and authoritarian viewpoint; the instrumentation for her music is similar to a Baroque orchestra (strings, oboe, bassoon, and sometimes brass). Rose's music is inspired by traditional folk hymns and spirituals to represent both her traditional ideals and her earnest simplicity: her vocal lines feature repetition and gospel-inspired inflections, she is accompanied by textures featuring piano, bass, and flute. Frank is an opinionated, cynical atheist whose music is atonal (flexibly based on 12 tone procedures) and is filled with harsher chords and jagged melodies to represent his modern but rigid view; his vocal lines are often paired with cello. Paul is a hippie who supports people exploring spirituality, but is opposed to institutions; Paul's music is based on use of non-traditional modes and aleatoric principles with an emphasis on the interaction of percussion and voice. Bridget is caught between all of these worlds so her music is an intuitively composed fusion of tonal, modal, and atonal styles; Bridget's individuality is represented by a recognizable melodic theme (introduced at measure 41 and repeated throughout the piece by alto flute, viola, clarinet, and piano). Additionally, each scene starts with music inspired by the sounds of a city.
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Instrumentation:

Flute 1
Flute 2/Alto Flute (doubling)
Oboe 1 & 2
Clarinet in B Flat 1 & 2
Bassoon 1 & 2
Horn in F 1 & 2
Trumpet in C 1 & 2
Piano (Grand Piano required for playing inside piano)
Percussion 1 (Player 1) (Glockenspiel)
Percussion 2 (Player 2) (Percussion: Wood Block, hand drum, container/bowl of small wooden/metal objects)
Drum Set (Player 2) (Drum Set (Ride Cymbal, Snare Drum, Bass Drum) and ratchet)
Soprano (Martha)
Soprano (Bridget)
Mezzo-Soprano (Rose)
Tenor (Frank) (only appears in scene 2)
Baritone (Paul) (only appears in scene 2)
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass

Score in C

Approximate Duration: 20-25 minutes
Technical Notes:

\[ \text{x noteheads in the vocal parts indicate spoken and semi-spoken passages (as indicated by text above the staff). The singer should follow} \]
\[ \text{the contour and rhythm of the notes on the staff.} \]

Notes with a scoop into or out of them scoop up/down from/to an indeterminate pitch no more than a fourth away (depending on what is possible for that given instrument/range)

Scene 1:

Measure 2 – Violin and Bass: Each player plays any of these notes in random order ad lib. to create a pointillistic texture for duration of measures in box. An example of a possible resulting texture is shown to indicate that each player in the section should play independently.

Measure 3 – Piano: Inside the piano: swipe/scrape a large pick along some low strings (cluster). Start closer to keyboard and swipe toward the back of the piano (keep same pitches)

Measure 3 – Glockenspiel: glissando up and down as indicated on diatonic "white keys" with wire brushes. Glissando should be continuous throughout the indicated measures.

Measure 8 – Percussion: scuffling noise (in a container (mixing bowl suggested) full of assorted wooden and metal items). This recurs throughout the piece and is notated with a long note with an x notehead marked with tremolo and an instruction above the staff.

Measure 10 – strings: Glissando should last for the full measure whenever this figure appears. Notes in brackets are arrival pitches that indicate top and bottom notes of the glissando and should not be held before proceeding with the glissando.

Measure 25 – Trumpet and violin should start quietly and emerge out of woodwind texture to take over

Measure 151: Flute and Bass should be the only instruments to crescendo, all others keep the same dynamic throughout.

Measure 215 – Soprano (Martha): cadenza ad lib. (singer should improvise or create an impressive/elaborate cadenza in a Classical or Baroque style)

Measure 240 – Soprano (Bridget): Pronounce comfortable using the standard spoken three syllable pronunciation (IPA: ˈkʌmbəl)

Scene 2:

Measure 16 – Piano: play the strings inside piano when indicated with pizz. marking. Use enough pedal to allow sound to be heard, but not so much that the rhythm becomes obscured in a sustained texture.

Measure 22 – Piano: clusters in the low range of the piano (strike strings in the piano with palm of hand) using light pedal (resulting sound should be a dull thud).

Measures 28-41 – Oboes and Clarinets: both players independently play fragments of the notated melodies ad lib. in tempo, but in any octave in any order starting on any beat.

Measure 94 – Trumpet buzzes into mouthpiece to make a semi-voiced murmuring sound like talking.

Measure 97 – Flute glissando can be a very fast upward scale (diatonic is fine) played in the last beat of the measure.

Measure 127 – Viola and Cello: remain rhythmic and detached while others become more lyrical

Measure 158 – Tenor (Frank): Spoken following rhythm and contour (as usually done with x notes), but this should be said with an exaggerated (American) Southern accent, particularly on the word “crazy”

Measure 184 – Soprano (Bridget): sigh (actually sigh in rhythm, do not sing text)
Programme Note

Open and Shut” is a short opera in two scenes that could be performed either with staging or as a concert opera. The first scene takes place on a city/town street and includes sopranos and mezzo soprano with orchestra. The second scene takes place at a café and includes mainly soprano, tenor, and baritone with choir and orchestra with a cameo appearance of the other soprano and mezzo soprano from the first scene.

The libretto for “Open and Shut” is based on an adaptation of a short story I wrote in 2007 called “Two Scenes: Open and Shut.” The themes of the story are open-mindedness and beliefs. The title “Open and Shut” refers to the idea of open-mindedness and closed-mindedness, and the title also carries a touch of irony because the expression “open and shut” is used to indicate something with an obvious solution, but in this opera there is no clear “solution” to the argument in the second scene.

Each character is portrayed by a different style of music that represents their viewpoint and personality. In addition to using contrasting styles and instrumentation to denote characterization, I wished to compose musical ideas using different techniques and procedures within the same piece and compose a work in which I could experiment with ways to create a context for stylistic juxtaposition.
Open and Shut
A One Act Opera for Two Sopranos, Mezzo-soprano, Tenor, Baritone, and Orchestra
Scene 1
(A City Street: Bridget encounters Martha and Rose)

Andante  \( \frac{2}{2} \)  \( \text{Andante} \) \( q=82-88 \)

Score in C

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*For more detail, refer to “Performance Notes” on inside cover page.*
Hn. 1+2
Tpt. 1+2
Pno.
Glock.
Perc.
Dr.(Cym. Sn. B.D.)
Vln. I
Vc.
Db.
Bsn. 1+2
Hn. 1+2
Tpt. 1+2
Pno.
Perc.
Vln. II
Vla.
Db.

scuffling noises (move hands/object around in a container/mixing bowl full of various wooden and metal items) *

Play these notes in random order ad lib. to create a pointillistic texture for duration of measures in box (as before)

sul pont.

Play these notes in random order ad lib. to create a pointillistic texture for duration of measures in box (as before)

sul pont. Glissando full measure*

arco

moderately detached
We are here today with a very special invitation. Would you have a moment to stop and speak with us?
It's a matter of life and death!

Oh, I don't know I...

Oh?

We are sharing the Good News.
We want to help you find salvation.

We have all been invited to share in eternal life!

Here's a free pamphlet for you.
Have you found Jesus?

well, I don’t know him PERSON-ally, but...

if you turn to page two of the pamphlet, you’ll see an

Have you found Jesus?

about how prayer can help you develop a personal relationship with Jesus.
You must develop a personal relationship with Jesus.
Who wouldn't want a personal relationship with Jesus. You can also find out more at our prayer meetings.
I'm sure this is great for some people, but... I don't think this is for me.
one of us, yes,
each of us by
I formed you in the
as the Lord said: be fore
He has
is spoken**
but... but... but...
and He has
called,
called each of us by name. As the Lord said: be fore I formed you in the
called each of us by name.
but... but... but...
womb I knew you, before you were born I set you a part; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.

womb I knew you, before you were born I set you a part; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.
A Tempo

Poco Meno Mosso \( \approx \) 68-72 (approx)

Don't worry about what will happen when you die?

Jeri's mi-ali, chapter one, verse five.
Do you think you have the power, do you think that you have the power to save your own soul from death?

umm... well, I can't really say... well...

from death.
Do you think you have the power to save your own... thanks, but I'm kind of in a rush, and I don't think...
soul from death? Do you think that you don't think I have time to stay and have this conversation. well you should keep a copy of our newsletter you should keep a copy, 

Forcefully: ignoring Bridget's protests

Bridget: I don't think I have time to stay and have this conversation.

Rose: Well you should keep a copy of our newsletter you should keep a copy.
Fl. 1

Fl. 2/A Fl.

Dr. (Cym. Sn. B.D.)

Martha have the power to save your own soul

Rose keep a copy of our newsletter to

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vc.

Db.

I don't think I have the time to stay and have this conversation on the bus. Prayer meetings and services are listed on the

Pray'r meetings and services are listed on the
I really have to go; I don't have time.
Fl. 1

Fl. 2/A Fl.

Ob. 1-2

Cl. 1-2

Bsn. 1-2

Hn. 1-2

Pno.

Glock.

Perc.

Martha

Bridget

Rose

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

That's the problem with the world, that's the problem with the world to-day:
No one thinks that they have enough time for God. People rush about...

Amen.
Fl. 1

Fl. 2/A Fl.

Ob. 1+2

Cl. 1+2

Bsn. 1+2

Hn. 1+2

Tpt. 1+2

Pno.

Dr. (Cym. B.D.)

Martha

Bridget

Rose

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P

Più Agitato

P
world is coming to.

with no thought for the fate, of their immortal souls, of their immortal souls.

for the fate, for the fate, of their immortal souls, of their immortal souls.

Martha

Rose

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.
Fl.

Fl. 2/A Fl.

Ob. 1+2

Cl. 1+2

Bsn. 1+2

Pno.

Glock.

Perc.

Dr. (Cym.
Sn.
B.D.)

Martha

Bridget

Rose

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

spoken in rhythm and contour

- WITH NO THOUGHT FOR THE FATE OF THEIR IMMORTAL SOULS -
Ob. 1+2

Bsn. 1+2

Hn. 1+2

Glock.

Dr.(Cym.

Sn.

B.D.)

Martha

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

Yes, it's too true! Look at what the world is coming to.
lost and confused, -

little girls look up to celebrities who dress like princesses. young people are so

Poco più mosso =92-96

Poco rall.

Meno mosso =82-88 (approx)

become more agitated (but keep tempo)
Flu en ces like drink, like
drink? oh dear! and drugs? oh my!

Cadenza ad lib.*

As an aside (whispering to audience)

*Improvise elaborate cadenza
in a Classical style)*

Accented attack on triple stop,
but sustain low pitch only

Poco marcato

Molto rall.

Becoming increasingly intense and agitated
abruptly glares at Bridget - looks at her for a while keeping look of horror on her face (with Rose) in tableau for some time, then, released, they shake their heads mournfully.
Poco meno mosso

q = 74-78

mp dolce cantabile

Things just aren't what they used to be. Things just aren't what they used to be. Things just aren't what they used to be.
Things just aren't what they used to be.

I appreciate your zeal, but I am not interested in joining your church. I have my own beliefs already, and I'm not comfortable with this evangelical viewpoint. Here's your newsletter back.

Thanks.

Almost spoken legato

Almost spoken legato

Thanks. You can recycle it...
aren't what they used to be. Things just aren't what they used to be.

Brief pause (2-3 seconds)
then continue to Scene 2
Scene 2 (in a café)
Fl. 1
Fl. 2/A Fl.
Cl. 1+2
Bsn. 1+2
Hn. 1+2
Pno.
Vln. I
Vc.
Db.

slight pedal to allow notes to resonate

pizz. (inside piano)*
circular pedal (resulting sound should be a dull thud)
both players ad lib. (separately) Play fragments of these melodies in tempo, but in any octave in any order starting on any beat during the time from mm. 28–41. *
scuffling noises (move hands/object around in a container/mixing bowl full of various wooden and metal items)
You mean hip pie - Paul?

Of course I do!

You mean hip pie Paul?

Of course I do!

Hi, Paul, right?

mm-mmm

Yeah, [uh!] but don’t call HIM that!

Bridget

Hi, how’s it going?

Oh, as good as
right! [laughter]

[laughter] An y - way, he's in town a gain. He just got back from that Rain for - est - con ser - va - tion - trip he did tra-v'ling a-round
That's no problem — Central America. He might come by here in a little while. I didn't think you'd mind if he stopped by.
I'm gonna go or she a coffee.

noted except as notated

somewhat detached

that's a feasible activity in any octave at any time during the time from m. 60-65

Play the melodies/fragments of these melodies
at any time during the time from m. 60-65

Play the melodies/fragments of these melodies
in any octave at any time during the time from m. 60-65

Andante – 84-90

somewhat detached

except as notated
Fl. 1

Fl. 2/A Fl.

Ob. stfls.

Cl.

Bsn. 1+2

Pno.

Bridget

Frank

Paul

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.
Bridget: what about the rainforest?

Frank: huh?

Paul: the rainforest trip was in -for-ma-tive, I'll tell you... but first, what's new here?

Vc.: 

Db.:
Oh, I ran into these two women who were trying to get me to...

Oh! That's terrible! Two women? How so?

How so?
Fl. 1

Fl. 2/A Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Hn. 1+2

Tpt. 1+2

Pno.

Glock.

Perc.

Martha

Bridget

Rose

Paul

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Db.

come to their church and lecturing on "salvation." -

"salvation." mmm

"salvation." mmm

1 don't get those people! Why do they want to force their religion on others?
This morning was the closest I ever came.

This morning was the closest I ever came.

You! Did you ever get into an argument with those types? It's pretty fun-ny! I got into an
argument with these two guys once who were trying to get me to believe the stuff they were handing out, and I was trying to explain how religion is obsolete! These people just don't listen to reason... or scientific FACT! All they wanted to do was 'con-
There he goes again!

How can someone believe the earth is five thousand years old? Especially when there's so much evidence clearly showing that it's all to get her.

There he goes again!

More lyrical

remain rhythmic and detached while others become more lyrical

more lyrical
Fl. 2/A Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn. 1+2

Hn. 1+2

Tpt. 1+2

Glock.

Bridget

Frank

Paul

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

Yeah, I still do, but that's different...

garbage to believe anything other than what we know...

but didn't you sing in a church choir?

mp

mf
That's why I told them I already have my own beliefs.

No, that doesn't mean anything!

Speaking of which, I've been meaning to ask you how you can say what you say.
say politically, and be a reasonable person, with a decent education and still buy into all that... church stuff.

I mean, it's just so black and white... "We're right, and you're wrong. Convert, -"
vert, convert and save your soul, or...

Con vert, save your soul, turn to God.

convert, convert or burn in hell!

x noteheads—unpitched sounds (buzz without enough wind to create pitch)*
I just don’t get how you still go bush... I mean... I didn’t THINK you were one of those crazy religious people... Dude! Don’t you think that was a little harsh?
I thought about it and I... you! I...

How could it do me any harm to spend an hour a week with a group of people... con-lun-plat-...
Bridget: I mean... it shouldn't be a big deal if you think about it. (sigh)

Bridget: Oh never mind. I don't know why I ever started this conversation... let's just drop it.

Frank: Ugh! You're always trying to be too nice, that's your problem: Backing away from
Frank

fights, fol-losing or-ders, still go-ing to church cause mom-my and dadd-y said

Paul

No, Frank, she's de-finitely got a point about the spirit-ual stuff, like I to-tally a-gree, I

Vln. I

soul point.

Vln. II

harshly mf

Vc.

mf

Db.

pizz. muted (not pitched)

Pno.

slight pedal to allow notes to resonate

Glock.

woodblock

Perc.

Piu dolce

Frank

mf

Paul

to-tally a-gree with all that stuff... But, Bird-get, would it make more sense for you to work on spirit-ual de-vel-op-ment as an in-di
clusters (strike low strings in the piano with palms of hand)

minimal pedal (chill thud sound)

Hand Drum

keep tempo but sound more agitated

subito

keep tempo but sound more agitated

subito dolce

vid-eral through al-ter na-tive means, in stead of in an ar-chi-cture so many rules and rit-u-als? It just doesn't seem like

vid-eral through al-ter na-tive means, in stead of in an ar-chi-

I know you guys don't get it, well, I'm just full of sur-

Frank

Paul

Vln. II

Vln. I

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

Ob.

Fsn. 1+2

Pno.

Perc.

Bridget

docle

I? Thanks.

I know you guys don't get it, well, I'm just full of sur-

Frank

Paul

Vln. II

Vln. I

Vla.

Vc.

Db.
but it's like this: I grew up going to church, and I don't think I'm better than anyone else because of it (though SOME people)
“...but I just didn’t want to give up that easily. It’s like...”

Bridget: “...but I just didn’t want to give up that easily. It’s like...”
Piu Mosso Lyrical waltz style, ~160-170

Fl. 1

Fl. 2/A Fl.

Cl.

Bsn. 1+2

Tpt. 1+2

Pno.

Glock.

Perc.

Bridget

don't move out of the coun-try ev'ry time I don't like the new Primo Min-is-ter, so why would I, why would I quit a re-

Frank

Paul

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Db.
It just seems like

It's just seem like

It just seems like

It just seems like

It just seems like
Well, I do! I wish something you can't do half-way like that.
you’d do the sensible thing and leave it all behind. It’s not so bad on the outside, you know!

I don’t think I’m about to go to hell just because I don’t go to church or something... I can still have fun, and I
Frank

don't have to go around feeling guilty, confused, or sexually repressed all the time... snap out of this backward, met-a-

mf

pp p p

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf
phy - si - cal dream world you're liv - ing in, and come join the
Ob.
Cl.
Hn. 1+2
Bsn. 1+2
Tpt. 1+2
Dr.(Cym.
Sn.
B.D.)
Frank
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

rest of us in the REAL WORLD!

Sudden silence.
Pause is broken by Bridget sighing

Sudden silence.
Pause is broken by Bridget sighing
Fl. 1

Fl. 2/A Fl.

Cl.

Hn. 1+2

Pno.

Glock.

Bridget

Frank

Vla.

Vc.

wish ev'ry one would stop trying to convert me.
Appendix 1: Libretto

Open and Shut

Scene 1 "Things Just Aren't What They Used to Be"

[Bridget enters, singing to herself as she walks down the street. Martha and Rose are already on stage. Rose approaches Bridget and attempts to start a conversation]

Rose: Excuse me miss, we are here today with a very special invitation. Would you have a moment to stop and speak with us?

Bridget: Oh, I don't know, I...

Martha: It's a matter of life and death!

Bridget: [genuinely a bit concerned] Oh?

Rose: We are sharing the Good News. We have all been invited to share in eternal life!

Martha: We want to help you find salvation.

Rose: Here's a free pamphlet for you.

Bridget: Ah.

Martha: Have you found Jesus?

Bridget: [wryly] well... I don't know him personally, but...

Rose: [earnestly] If you turn to page two, you'll see an article about how prayer can help you develop a personal relationship with Jesus.

Martha: Yes! You must develop a personal relationship with Jesus.

Bridget: Well...

Rose: Who wouldn't want a personal relationship with Jesus? You can also find out more at our prayer meetings.

Bridget: Well, I'm sure this is great for some people, but... I don't think this is for me.

Rose: Oh... but...

Martha: [With authority] Jesus came to save every one of us and He has called each of us by name... as the Lord said “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

Rose: Jeremiah, Chapter one, verse five.

Martha: [Addressing Bridget] Don't you worry about what will happen when you die?

Bridget: umm... well, I can't really say

Martha: [Interrupting/overlapping with Bridget] Do you think you have the power to save your own soul from death?

Bridget: Well... thanks, but I'm kind of in a rush, and I don't think I have time to stay and have this conversation right now.

Rose: Well you should keep a copy of our newsletter to read on the bus. Prayer meetings and services are listed on the back, and there's a wonderful, wonderful article about making time for the Divine in your life.

Bridget: I really have to go, I don't have time.

Rose: That's the problem with the world, That's the problem with the world today.

Martha: So it is!

Rose: No one thinks that they have enough time for God.

Martha: Amen!

Bridget: I... [Bridget is interrupted] oh dear.

Rose: People rush about seeking earthly pleasures with no thought for the fate of their immortal souls.

Martha: [overlapping] Look at what the world is coming to.

Bridget: [overlapping] I should be... well... I really have to get back to... oh.

Rose and Martha: No one thinks that they have enough time for God.
Rose:  No time, no thought for the fate of their immortal souls.
Martha:  Yes, it's too true! Look at what the world is coming to: little girls look up to celebrities who dress like prostitutes, young people are so lost and confused, so confused that they fall prey to the temptations of unnatural influences like drink
Rose:  Like drink?
Martha:  Like drink.
Bridget:  [Aside] Fair.
Martha:  And drugs,
Rose:  And drugs?
Bridget:  [Aside] Well, sometimes...
Martha:  And drugs...
Rose:  Oh my!
Martha:  Like drugs and fornication!

[Bridget stifles a laugh. Martha abruptly glares at Bridget - looks at her for a while keeping look of horror on her face (with Rose) in tableau for some time, then, released, they shake their heads mournfully]

Martha and Rose:  Things just aren't what they used to be, things just aren't what they used to be...
Bridget:  I appreciate your... zeal... but I am not interested in joining your church. I have my own beliefs already, and I'm not comfortable with this evangelical viewpoint. Here's your newsletter back. Thanks. You can recycle it. Goodbye.

[Scene ends with Bridget leaving while Martha and Rose continue to shake their heads and lament that "Things just aren't what they used to be"]

Scene 2 "Buying in"

[Bridget meets her friend Frank at a café]

Bridget:  Hello!
Frank:  Hey, how's it going?
Bridget:  Not bad, and you?
Frank:  Oh, as good as ever... Hey, you remember Paul, right?
Bridget:  You mean Hippie Paul? Of course I do!
Frank:  [chuckles] but don't call him that!
Anyway, he’s in town again. He just got back from that rainforest conservation trip he did travelling around Central America. I think he might come by here in a little while. I didn’t think you’d mind if he stopped by. I hope it’s alright with you.
Bridget:  That's no problem. I'm going to go order a coffee.
Frank:  I hear that's a very fashionable activity in cafés.

[Paul enters and all three singers parts overlap chaotically]
Frank:  Hey! Paul! How've you been? Any good stories? Just fine.
Bridget:  Oh Hello! How was Central America? Oh alright, I suppose...
Paul:  Hi! Hi! How's it going? Oh... not bad... you know... but...
Frank and Bridget:  But what about the rainforest?
Paul:  The rainforest trip was informative. I'll tell you... but first, what's new here?
Frank:  Same old, same old
Bridget:  The same... but I had an unnerving morning.
Paul:  How so?
Bridget:  Oh, I ran into these two women...
Frank:  [Sarcastically] Oh that's terrible! Two women?
Bridget: Who were trying to get me to come to their church and lecturing me on “salvation”.

Paul: I don’t get those people! Why do they want to force their religion on others?

Frank: Have you ever got into an argument with these types? It's pretty funny!

Bridget: This morning was the closest I ever came.

Frank: I got into an argument with these two guys once, who were trying to get me to go to some prayer meeting, and I was trying to explain modern science to them, and they totally wouldn’t listen to reason. I mean... really... how can someone believe the Earth is 5000 years old? [continues to rant in this manner while Bridget and Paul have a conversation]

Paul and Bridget: There he goes again!

Paul: [Addressing Bridget] Hey, but didn’t you sing in a Church choir?

Bridget: Yeah, I still do, but that’s different… that’s why I told the women I already have my own beliefs.

Frank: [Addressing Bridget] Speaking of which, I’ve been meaning to ask you how you can say what you say politically, and be a reasonable person with a decent education and still buy into all that… church stuff… I mean, it's just so black and white ‘We’re right, and you’re wrong… convert or burn in hell!’… I just don’t get how you still go to church… I mean I didn't THINK you were one of those crazy religious people...

Frank: [Addressing Paul] Dude, don’t you think that was a little harsh?

Bridget: Thank you!

Frank: Fine.

Bridget: I...

Frank: But...

Bridget: I thought about it and I don't really like any of the other options any better.

Frank: Then why go at all?

Bridget: Well …

Frank: Well?

Bridget: Well, how could it do me any harm to spend an hour a week with a group of people contemplating spiritual issues… I mean, it shouldn't be a big deal when you think about it [Bridget looks at Frank and Paul seem unconvinced and sighs]. Oh never mind, I don’t know why I ever started this conversation… let’s just drop it.

Frank: Ugh! You’re always trying to be too nice, that’s your problem; Backing away from fights,

Paul: No Frank,

Frank: [Continuing in spite of Paul's interruption] following orders,

Paul: She's definitely got a point about the spiritual stuff,

Frank: [Continuing in spite of Paul's interruption] still going to church cause mommy and daddy said so.

Paul: Like, I totally agree, I totally agree with all that spiritual stuff... [addressing Bridget] But, Bridget, wouldn't it make more sense for you to work on spiritual development as an individual through alternative means, instead of in an archaic, Eurocentric institutions with so many rules and rituals? It just doesn't seem like you.

Frank: Indeed!

Bridget: [Abruptly] Well, I’m just full of surprises aren’t I?

Frank: I didn't mean to upset you. Sorry.

Bridget: Thanks, I know you guys don’t get it, but it’s like this: I grew up going to church and I don't think I'm better than anyone else because of it (though some people seem to think I do) Yes, Christian leaders say things I don't always agree with... but I just didn't want to give up that easily. It's like... well... like I don't move out of the country every time I don't like the new Prime Minister.

Paul: Well you don't!

Frank: Ha!

Bridget: So why would I quit a religion every time one person in it says something I don't agree with?
Paul: [calmly] It just seems like something you can't do halfway like that.


Frank: [Becoming increasingly agitated] I just wish you’d do the sensible thing and leave it all behind, it’s not so bad on the outside you know! I don’t think I’m about to go to hell just because I don’t go to church or something… I can still have morals, and I don’t have to go around feeling guilty, confined, or sexually repressed all the time… Seriously, snap out of this backward metaphysical dream you're living in and come join the rest of us in the REAL WORLD!

[Long, tense pause]

Bridget: I just wish everyone would stop trying to convert me.

Frank: Touché.