

Andy Crouch on Culture Making

There is no such thing as “the Culture” and any attempt to talk about “the Culture” especially in terms of “transforming the Culture” is misleading. Real culture making, not to mention cultural transformation, begins with a decision about which cultural world—worlds—we will attempt to make something of.

What we most need are Christians who are serious about cultivating and creating, but who wear that seriousness lightly—who are not desperately trying to change the world but who also wake up every morning eager to create.

Creation begins with cultivation—taking care of the good things that culture has already handed on to us. Before we can be culture makers, we must be culture keepers.

The Bible is a manifold collection of cultural artifacts—poetry, history, proverbs, letters and songs—written and compiled over one thousand years, and like all the most influential cultural goods it has in turn spurred endless human creativity.

Jesus of Nazareth turns out to be the most significant culture maker of all. The belief of Christians that he had been raised from the dead made them culture makers, and the culture they created was so attractive that by the fourth century A.D. an entire empire was on the verge of faith.

The attacks of September 11, 2001 did not change the world as much as we thought they would. At the largest scale of culture, even horrific evolutionary events cannot easily destroy. All the more so, the most beneficial events possible have little positive effect in the short run.

Do you want to make culture? Find a community, a small group who can lovingly fuel your dreams and puncture your illusions. Find friends and form a family who are willing to see grace at work in one another’s lives, who can discern together which gifts and which crosses each has been called to bear. Find people who have a holy respect for power and a holy willingness to spend their power alongside the powerless. Find some partners in the wild and wonderful world beyond church doors.

The way forward for Christians is to recover the biblical postures: cultivation and creation. And that recovery will involve revisiting the biblical story itself, where we discover that God is more intimately and eternally concerned with culture than we have yet come to believe.

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