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# Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling



## Synopsis

2009 Christianity Today Book Award winner! Named one of Publishers Weekly's best books of 2008 (religion category) It is not enough to condemn culture. Nor is it sufficient merely to critique culture or to copy culture. Most of the time, we just consume culture. But the only way to change culture is to create culture. Andy Crouch unleashes a stirring manifesto calling Christians to be culture makers. For too long, Christians have had an insufficient view of culture and have waged misguided "culture wars." But we must reclaim the cultural mandate to be the creative cultivators that God designed us to be. Culture is what we make of the world, both in creating cultural artifacts as well as in making sense of the world around us. By making chairs and omelets, languages and laws, we participate in the good work of culture making. Crouch unpacks the complexities of how culture works and gives us tools for cultivating and creating culture. He navigates the dynamics of cultural change and probes the role and efficacy of our various cultural gestures and postures. Keen biblical exposition demonstrates that creating culture is central to the whole scriptural narrative, the ministry of Jesus and the call to the church. He guards against naive assumptions about "changing the world," but points us to hopeful examples from church history and contemporary society of how culture is made and shaped. Ultimately, our culture making is done in partnership with God's own making and transforming of culture. A model of his premise, this landmark book is sure to be a rallying cry for a new generation of culturally creative Christians. Discover your calling and join the culture makers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Very readable and thought-provoking." (Byron Snapp, Calvary Herald, August 29, 2009)"This book will clarify your thinking, inspire your production, and affirm your parenting." (David Balzer, Mennonite Brethren Herald, August 2009)"Simply the best book that I've read recently. Not only is it brilliant, it's accessible. I cannot gush about this book enough. It really is that good." (Margaret Feinberg, Christian Retailing, July 6, 2009)"Theologically rich and practically helpful, Culture Making is a significant contribution to the discussion of Christ and culture and a useful guide for those who want to make something of the world God has created." (Outreach, March/April 2009)"Thoughtful and engaging. . . . Crouch's book does signal a hopeful development, which is that the evangelical pursuit of culture warfare was and is a dead end." (D. G. Hart, First Principles ([www.firstprinciplesjournal.com](http://www.firstprinciplesjournal.com)), March 23, 2009)"Crouch writes as one who cares what Christians do with their time in light of God's Kingdom coming." (On Mission Today, January 14, 2009)"Culture Making is a fresh and relevant take on how Christians should relate to the wider culture. This book will serve to make us more effective interpreters of and contributors to the cultural landscape." (Eric O. Jacobsen, PRISM, January 2009)"As an academic and a culture critic, I am not given to gushing over new publications. But Culture Making brought me pretty close to doing just such a non-scholarly thing! With so much coming out these days on religion and culture, one becomes a bit jaded about the possibility of something really fresh emerging. Well, this book is fresh, compelling, and engagingly written. More important, it goes deeply into its subject." (William Edgar, Themelios ([thegospelcoalition.org](http://thegospelcoalition.org)), vol. 33, no. 3)"Crouch's voice is intriguing and fresh--offering an alternative that escapes the many 'Jesus-stamped' merchandise items as an evangelical tool and implementing a fresh vision for creativity and engaging cultural lifestyles." (Worship Leader, November/December 2008)"Good introduction to how Christians need to do more than fatalistically talk about the dangers of the world." (Marvin Olasky, WORLD Magazine, November 15/22, 2008)"Culture Making is an enjoyable and fascinating book that helps demystify the idea of culture." (John Dunham, YouthWorker Journal, November/December 2008)"This is a must-read book for those who are tired of talking and ready for action. The author sets the scene and tells the story of culture, then rapidly sweeps the reader into this story, finishing with a heart-stopping, imagination-grabbing challenge to go and make something of the world." (Alissa W., Book Bargains and Previews ([bookbargainsandpreviews.com](http://bookbargainsandpreviews.com)), September 2008)"If people tell me that something is a must-read, I tend to be a bit skeptical. That said, I was pleasantly blown-away by Crouch's book. I loved the approach of talking about 'postures' and 'gestures' toward culture. One last thing to praise was the chaste humility of the book. All to say, Culture Making probably is one of those rare must-read books that comes along every so often. A book of rare learning, helpful and accessible

synthesis, and godly humility, it might actually change the evangelical culture on how to make and engage culture. If so, all I can say is thanks be to God." (Sean Michael Lucas, seanmichaellucas.blogspot.com, September 18, 2008)"With all the books on the market about the intersection of faith and culture, you have to wonder why we need another one. The answer is simple: it's unlikely that any other book out there accomplishes what Culture Making does, and certainly not in the way that Andy Crouch does. Substantial content, beautifully expressed. Highly recommended." (Marcia Ford, FaithfulReader.com, September 2008)"Andy Crouch, long a culture influence through film, writing, music and service, points Christians to a new, deeper understanding of their calling in culture. Readers will be profoundly impacted by this book written by one of today's top voices on the subject." (Ann Byler, Grand Rapids Press, August 16, 2008)"Those who have struggled with the sacred-secular dichotomy will find this book life-giving; every Christian interested in changing culture should read it." (Publishers Weekly starred review, May 26, 2008)"Crouch works through the Bible's narrative arc to show the hand of God in the development of culture and makes the case that Christians must be producers, not just critics, of culture in order to create societal good." (Relevant, July/August 2008)"Culture Making is one of the few books taking the discussion about Christianity and culture to a new level. It is a rare mix of the theoretical and the practical, its definitions are nuanced but not abstract, and it strikes all kinds of fine balances. I highly recommend it." (Tim Keller, pastor, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, author, The Reason for God)"Good books are either brilliant or helpful, but the best books are both--and Andy Crouch has attained that rare combination of virtues in Culture Making. As a Christian, as a parent and as an organizational leader, I would like to make a difference in the world. Crouch not only helps me understand where that yearning comes from, but how to pursue it with passion, commitment, power and spiritual health. Culture Making is a joyful gift of intelligence and practical provocation for thoughtful Christians." (Gary Haugen, president, International Justice Mission, author of Good News About Injustice and Just Courage)"A deep and thoughtful reminder that the resurrection of Jesus empowers us to cultivate the garden, to build in the ruins of our world, and to create within and around us cultures of life." (Kelly Monroe Kullberg, author of Finding God Beyond Harvard: The Quest for Veritas, and founder and director of Project Development, The Veritas Forum)"Andy Crouch's book is thoughtful, stimulating and challenging." (Steve Turner, writer, poet and author of Conversations with Eric Clapton, U2: Rattle and Hum and Imagine: A Vision for Christians in the Arts)"In this marvelous book Andy Crouch makes the case for cultural discipleship by giving us an exciting overview of the drama of creation, fallenness and renewal. And along the way he offers much wisdom about the very real cultural realities that we face as twenty-first-century Christians."

(Richard J. Mouw, president and professor of Christian philosophy, Fuller Theological Seminary)"This is not a good book, because it provokes and prods, incites and inspires. It takes you on an uncomfortable journey, defying the status quo and questioning accepted perspectives. It offers a fresh voice with trenchant thinking, forcing you to blow the dust off the mantle of your own settled proclivities. It resonates deeply within you, even on those points you may question. It addresses the heart of the challenge of our day. No, this is not a good book. It is a great one."

(James Emery White, pastor, professor and author of *Serious Times*)"Grappling with 'the culture' has become an obsession for contemporary Christians, but a misunderstanding of what cultures are and how they behave results in a great deal of frustration. Andy Crouch's *Culture Making* draws on both his broad experience and originality of insight to offer a bracing and clear-eyed view of the way forward." (Frederica Mathewes-Green, author and columnist, [www.frederica.com](http://www.frederica.com))"Culture Making is a book that's been needed for decades, but it arrives at just the right moment. People of faith--now poised to use their influence--have much to contribute to the common good as creators and advocates, not just as critics and judges. But that requires careful thought and clear insight, both of which are abundantly found in this profound and practical book. Andy Crouch has long had a knack for observing the culture around us and then showing us how we can make it better. With *Culture Making*, Crouch offers all that and more. Anyone who cares for the renewal of our culture must read this book!" (D. Michael Lindsay, author of *Faith in the Halls of Power* and assistant professor of sociology, Rice University)"In *Culture Making*, Andy Crouch has given us a vision for creativity that is not reserved for the practitioners of high art, but that reveals the dignity of the most ordinary sorts of cultural creation. It is a transformative vision that inspires to action and--in the face of the almost inevitable failures--perseverance. In the end, cultural creativity is not a gift we own, exercise and grow anxious over, but one that we receive and nurture--and through which we come to know grace." (David Neff, editor-in-chief and vice president, Christianity Today Media Group)"In this graceful, articulate volume Crouch challenges Christian common wisdom about creation and challenges as well our traditional understandings about the Revelation to John and how it articulates with the rest of Holy Writ. As refreshing as it is smart, *Culture Making* is a significant addition to contemporary Christian thought." (Phyllis Tickle, compiler of *The Divine Hours* and former religion editor, *Publishers Weekly*)"As an artist and an advocate for artists, I am grateful for this book. Andy Crouch's edifying analysis of culture and the church and his timely call for us to be culture makers make this work invaluable in today's faith journey. This is a groundbreaking guidebook for all who are concerned about cultural issues and the church." (Makoto Fujimura, artist and founder, International Arts Movement)"Andy Crouch's *Culture Making* models what it argues: that a kingdom

imagination that takes our richly enculturated lives seriously shows grace to be real, immanent and compelling. Surely this vocation must be central to God's call!" (Mark Labberton, pastor, First Presbyterian Church of Berkeley, and author of *The Dangerous Act of Worship*) "American evangelicals in the last hundred years have found it easy to condemn culture, critique culture, copy culture and consume culture. It has been much harder for them to actively and imaginatively create culture. Andy Crouch is out to change that. I confess I doubt whether they can rise to the challenge. But I am persuaded by Crouch's case that the Christian calling requires it. Here is a voice worth taking very seriously." (Christian Smith, professor of sociology, University of Notre Dame) "Are Christians to be countercultural? Or protect ourselves from 'the culture'? Or be 'in' culture but not 'of' it? In this bracing, super-smart book, Andy Crouch changes the terms of the conversation, calling Christians to make culture. I am hard-pressed to think of something that twenty-first-century American Christians need to read more." (Lauren F. Winner, assistant professor of Christian spirituality, Duke Divinity School, and author of *Girl Meets God*) "A masterpiece!" (Byron Borger, owner, Hearts & Minds Bookstore [from the 2015 Jubilee program guide])

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--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Andy Crouch has written an extremely accessible and engaging book in his *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*. He strategically divided it into three different parts, the first working through what this concept of 'culture' is and how being able to impact the "horizons of possibility" is what it means to create 'cultural goods'. His analysis and insight in this first third of the book clearly lays out his conception of what culture is and what it means to interact with as well as impact (for good or bad) what culture is. He also begins to point towards the Christian's role as a cultivator. The second part of the book is where he dives into the biblical narrative and takes a 'cultural' view. While I suspect that many theologians (Biblical and Systematic) may be made uncomfortable with some of his approach, his 'cultural analysis' of what is happening in the Bible, what God is revealing about himself and what he's doing, is fascinating and (at least for me) made the biblical story come alive in a new different light. [As a side note, I would never agree that this should be the primary way to interpret or perceive God's revelation of himself through his Word, but that does not negate the validity of the perspective Crouch is bringing to bear on it] It is in the last part where the rubber meets the road for Crouch, that is where he builds his practical theology of culture making (a "theology of culture transformation"? or maybe, better put, a "theology of cultural engagement").

Whatever you want to call it, Crouch is dealing with the best 'posture' to adopt when engaging culture and how to do so as a Christian. He raises up a concept of concentric circles of relationships, what he calls the 3, the 12, the 120. Fascinatingly, these relational levels, which for Crouch enable cultural impact at a local and small level but which hold the capacity to have effects across culture world-wide, actually reflect some common themes in small group literature when they talk about group size and accountability and community building. Crouch does ultimately affirm the absolute necessity of community for the cultivation of cultural 'goods' which transform the horizons of possibility for a people, rather at a small, local level, or at a much larger national or multi-national level. While Crouch's writing delves into some pretty deep stuff, he has (in my opinion) a very intuitive knack for illustration, for excellently drawing the reader into the concepts he's outlining in a way which is natural and accessible all the while keeping the depths and richness of the subject matter at hand accessible for him to engage. I would not have a problem recommending this to the average church goer (or average adult, for that matter), for I think most would find it accessible and would be able to grasp the concepts because of how he explains them. With that note of accessibility, I want to make this review a little less accessible and compare it to a few works I've read recently. Jacques Ellul's *The Presence of the Kingdom* engages the issue of culture from a different angle. I think many of Crouch's concepts and ideas compliment Ellul's work. Ellul's emphasis upon the preservation of the world, the need for truly 'genuine revolution,' and the church's prophetic role in the world resound rather harmoniously with Crouch's. I do think Crouch's concepts and thrust stands largely at odds with Rod Dreher's *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*, but that conflict lies in a fundamentally different approach to culture and its function for the church. I suspect that Dreher's approach to culture largely resembles one which Crouch cautions against. Lastly, it was fascinating to read this book by Crouch after having read *How to Survive the Apocalypse: Zombies, Cylons, Faith, and Politics at the End of the World* by Robert Joustera and Alissa Wilkinson, because their book analyzes cultural goods (specifically ones of entertainment) which have resonated with the modern culture at large. Charles Taylor's seminal tome *A Secular Age* is what I want to compare this to, yet it still lies in my to-read pile for the time being. I think Crouch's work would make an interesting companion to that book. All in all, I loved the book and would very highly recommend it to any pastor, elder, deacon, small group leader, etc., in a church. Just grab yourself a copy, it's not a hard read, but it is definitely worth the time it will take to get through it (which is not actually that long).

I love this book!!!!I read many things (usually Christian works such as Theology/apologetics/christian

living books), but this was completely different than anything I usually read, or have possibly ever read. I heard the artist Lecrae mention this book and speak about culture, and with everything going on in this country I wasn't sure how to engage with the culture or approach certain things (especially as a believer), so I thought I would try this book out. I read the first chapter.. literally couldn't stay awake and was so bored that I didn't pick the book up for a week! Then I decided to try again and I couldn't put it down! It's so interesting, so insightful, and very relevant. (I don't know if the first chapter was boring cause he was setting it up or if I was really tired and out of it.. but the rest of the book is great!!) Being a college student, I can use a lot from what I learned on campus to connect with people and understand our culture. I've never thought about or cared much about culture, but I'm now intrigued by and feel like I truly understand culture and people in general. I definitely recommend to everyone interested in Christianity's role in culture and just engaging with people in general. Fun read, solid theology throughout, and just immense insight and relevance to myself as a 20 something college student.

We all live within the confines of culture - our work, our family structures, the artifacts that surround us. Culture is inescapable. Crouch argues that culture can only be changed by making new culture. In this thoughtful and thought-provoking work, Crouch carefully examines the meaning of culture, the truth of culture and our role in culture-making. Overall, this is a wonderful book that would be helpful to anyone who is thinking about the meaning of their work and vocational calling. Crouch argues for the Cultural Mandate of Scripture, indicating that humanity even charged by God with the responsibility of creating culture. Some of the best parts of the book are in the chapter called The Garden and the City. Crouch explains that man was created in a garden (Genesis) but ends up in the city (Revelation). He further explains that the city represents the culmination of man's cultural creativity. Crouch shares a lot of ideas with Tim Keller (author of *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*) on this point. Individually, most of us will never change culture on a grand scale. We may influence our family lives and workplaces but, he argues, this does not constitute culture in the fullest sense. On this point, Crouch steps in the direction of James Davison Hunter (author of *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*) who argues that so few people can actually change culture that we should, rather than trying to change culture, instead focus on a personal ministry of "faithful presence". While these two authors seem to agree on this point, I prefer Crouch because he is more encouraging to real people wondering about their place in the world.

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