

# Critique

Helping Christians Develop Skill in Discernment

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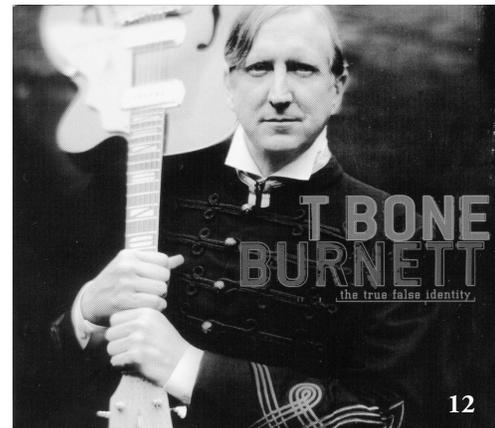
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# Editor's Note



## Social jet lag

There's a new term showing up in conversation: "social jet lag." *Wired* magazine, always a good source for such novelties, defines it as "chronic exhaustion due to persistent conflict

between your scheduling software and your body clock."

My initial response on reading that was to smile; I like clever word play. Besides, it's right on: being behind and over-committed and worn out *does* feel similar to jet lag. A low-level weariness that isn't debilitating enough to justify an actual nap, but which a normal dose of caffeine never fully erases. Neologisms can be silly, but "social jet lag" I like.

I have another reason for liking the term: it gets to the heart of something important. It's this: Contrary to popular belief, the solution most often prescribed for our busyness not only doesn't work, it's actually part of the problem. We're repeatedly told that better organization and better time management results in a more productive use of time so that we'll not only get everything done, we'll probably have time left over for ourselves. The problem is, this is simply untrue—in fact, this is exactly what the scheduling software promised in the first place and failed to deliver. Now, granted, some of us probably can and should learn to be better organized; I don't doubt that. But—and this is my point—our chronic busyness can not and will not be solved by better time management.

Better time management as the solution to busyness is usually talked about in quasi-scientific terms, so it's rarely recognized to be the falsehood it actually is. In reality, it's one of the myths spawned by the idol of Efficiency, the

worship of which is highly regarded by those for whom accomplishment, productivity, and the economic use of every minute has been elevated to the status traditionally reserved for true virtue.

I'm not against planning, for goodness sake, or schedulers (I use one myself), or learning to be efficient. But I would argue that the very best things in life are rudely disemboweled by efficiency and time management. Things like making love, and listening to music. Making and enjoying a leisurely meal celebrated with lively conversation. Spending a day with dear friends. Discerning why someone might not believe in Christianity, and giving them the safety to talk about it. Waiting on God, and nurturing community. Listening to someone, and sharing their pilgrimage. Resting and creativity, and appreciating the creation. Walking through an art gallery, and rereading a beloved novel. With all these things and so much more, what's needed is not efficiency or more productivity or better time management, but their opposite: unhurried time.

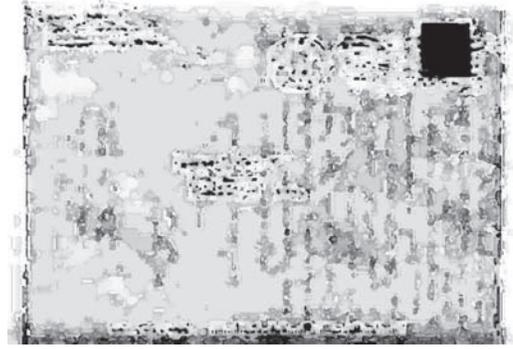
The myth is so powerful—as all deeply held idolatries are—that the socially jet lagged are usually evangelistic, trying to pull everyone else into the same condition. It's hard to resist, since more efficiency tends to increase accomplishment; the socially jet lagged can be productive. But that still doesn't make chronic busyness admirable.

I would suggest that except for rare emergencies, Christian faithfulness does not result in social jet lag. Faithfulness is a fine balance of work and rest, of an efficient, productive use of time to do what our calling entails, and an unhurried celebration to be what we've been called to be as we embrace time as God's gracious gift to finite creatures. ■

~Denis Haack

Source: "Jargon Watch" by Jonathon Keats in *Wired* (08/2006) p. 38.

# Dialogue



## Re: What's redemptive about creation?

Send e-mail to:  
[letters@ransomfellowship.org](mailto:letters@ransomfellowship.org)

You are invited to take part in *Critique's* Dialogue. Address all correspondence to:

Ransom Fellowship  
1150 West Center Street  
Rochester, MN 55902

or e-mail:  
[letters@ransomfellowship.org](mailto:letters@ransomfellowship.org)

Unfortunately, we are unable to respond personally to all correspondence received, but each one is greatly appreciated. We reserve the right to edit letters for length.

**T**o the Editor:  
What a delight to meet you this summer! When I got home and opened up the e-mountain of e-mail that had accumulated, I was pleasantly surprised by a question from someone in the congregation I serve who had already dived into *Critique* #3-2006:

“Denis Haack writes, ‘God’s word is redemptive, whether that word comes in Scripture or in creation.’ Is that really right? I have always thought of God revealing himself in part through the Book of Nature, but not redemptively. Can you clarify?”

In my reply I hope I have accurately represented what you meant:

“God’s Word is redemptive in that it always points to Christ as the One in whom we live and move and have our being. God’s Word in Scripture is more explicit about salvation in Christ, but Common Grace goodness has its redemptive end in Christ even if his name is never spoken. This is why we find no inherent deficiency in deed-only proclamation (Jesus assured us that some who see our good words will make the connection and glorify our Father in heaven). When David declares that the heavens shout the glory of God, he is affirming that General Revelation itself is an effective (albeit less extensive than Special Revelation) means by which the redemptive character of God is made known (cf Romans 1).

“There is also a kind of co-inherence between Scripture and Creation—their being is the natural stuff of this world, yet their origin is supernatural. Creation exists (as Scripture tells us) by the Word of God, and Scripture explains that the end of Creation is the redemption of both the world (created by God’s Word) and God’s people through the salvation of The One True Word (Christ is the Word of God Incarnate). Scripture is the promise and the narrative, while Creation is

the object and the arena in which the Word of God is revealed and accomplished.

“We are a part of Creation by birth and part of the New Creation by new birth. Christ is Creator (in his eternal being) and Creation (in his Incarnate being). So, Creation would include both the material stuff of the world as well as the dynamic drama of redemption being played out in space and time. Thus the Creature and Creation serve the Creator as agents which accomplish his sovereign decree.

“Also, when God reveals himself, it is always *IN* Creation and *FOR* Creation. God is worthy to be known for who he is, and needs no reason outside himself to be known and praised. However, the action of revelation—God revealing his glory—is the declaration of both his character and his actions, and the two great actions of God are the inseparably connected works of Creation and Redemption. These ideas come together in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.”

Please keep up the fine work.

**Steve Froehlich**

New Life Presbyterian Church  
Chesterton House (at Cornell)

### **D**enis Haack responds:

Excellent answer, Steve—that’s the theological reasoning behind my statement.

Sometimes my wife and I go to a spot where we can sit under some trees overlooking the Mississippi River. We read, nap, talk, and share a lunch, all of which refreshes us body and soul. The beauty of the creation around us is part of that, essential to it. The healing we receive is redemptive—not in the sense that it makes us God’s children, but in the sense that the healing we receive is due to the grace of God, his common grace embedded in his glorious creation.

# The Darkened Room

## Preconditions of



### A Case Study of *Inherit the Wind*

by David John Seel, Jr.

*“As long as a prerequisite for that shining paradise is bigotry, ignorance, and hate, I say to hell with it.” — Henry Drummond*

#### Playing the Wrong Suit

For nearly twenty-five years, evangelicals have been politically active.

Large sums of money have been raised. Political PACs and think tanks have been formed. Elections have been won—even as far as the White House. Nonetheless, American cultural life has continued to decline over the same period. What was considered scandalous when aging Boomers were in college is now regular programming on family TV.

We have not been effective in influencing culture.

It is wise to know the trump suit when playing a game of cards. If

you think you are playing Hearts, when you are actually playing Spades, you’ll soon find that you are holding a losing hand. The game determines what is trump. Cultural change requires changing minds and hearts. It cannot be forced. It involves shaping the stories and images that powerfully influence the way we perceive reality. Scottish patriot

Andrew Fletcher wrote in 1704, “If a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation.” Most of us are unaware of how our opinions are gradually changed from what we think we believe to that of our surrounding culture. It is the stories depicted on television, film, and music videos that set the terms of this cultural matrix.

Evangelical pastor Tim Keller observes, “Culture changes when a society’s mind, heart, and imagination are captured by new ideas that are developed by thinkers, expounded in both scholarly and popular forms, depicted in innumerable works of art, and then lived out attractively by communities of people who are committed to them.”

If this is so, then the life of the mind, creativity in the arts, and winsomeness of our lives is trump. It would appear that we are holding a losing hand for these are not recognized evangelical strengths.

#### *Inherit the Wind* Credits:

##### Starring:

Spencer Tracy  
(Henry Drummond)  
Matthew Harrison Brady  
(Fredric March)  
Gene Kelly (E. K. Hornbeck)  
Donna Anderson  
(Rachel Brown)  
Harry Morgan (Judge Mel)  
Claude Akins  
(Rev. Jeremiah Brown)  
Elliott Reed  
(Prosecutor Tom Davenport)  
Paul Hartman  
(Bailiff Horace Meeker)  
Jimmy Boyd  
(Howard, biology student)  
Norman Fell  
(WGN Radio Broadcaster)

##### Director:

Stanley Kramer

##### Producers:

Stanley Kramer

##### Writers:

Jerome Lawrence &  
Robert E. Lee (play)  
Nedrick Young &  
Harold Jacob Smith (screenplay)

##### Cinematographer:

Ernest Laszlo

##### Original Music:

Ernest Gold

Runtime: 128 minutes

Release: United Artists, U.S.A.  
1960

Rated: PG

# Cultural Influence

## Perceptions Matter

**H**ow are American evangelical Christians perceived by nonbelievers? Should we care? Should we not expect pagan animosity and persecution—and thus dismiss their point of view as anticipated spiritual warfare or partisan politics?

We should care and should examine their critique closely. While nonbelievers will have to address the scandal of the cross, they should never have to assume the scandal of the Christian. For many nonbelievers, Christians are the greatest single obstacle to Christian belief. We are genuinely offensive to them—sometimes this is because of their biases, often it is because their experiences. Too often Christians are not salt and light among their non-Christian neighbors. There is little about our contact with nonbelievers that they would readily affirm as life enhancing and a beacon of goodness. Instead, we are avoided at all costs. Just tell a gay or lesbian co-worker that you are “born again” and see what kind of reaction you get. We tend to put off those who found Christ most attractive, and appeal to those who Christ most commonly criticized: somehow we have gotten it backwards. Peter asks, “Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?” (1 Peter 3:13). We need to take an honest look at our perception problem. Christians cannot expect widespread cultural influence until we change the general opinion nonbelievers have of us.

We need to pay close attention to how we are stereotyped. Of course, these stereotypes are unfair. Obviously, there are exceptions. However, the blame game gets us nowhere, and teaches no lessons. Until Christians face up to how we are perceived, and address the failures for which we alone are responsible, our neighbors will have few reason to heed our lives and little motive to listen to our words.

***We tend to put off those who found Christ most attractive, and appeal to those who Christ most commonly criticized: somehow we have gotten it backwards.***

## A Critical Case Study

**A** case study worthy of our reflection is the 1960 film, *Inherit the Wind*, the fictionalized account of the 1925 Scopes Trial. The Scopes Trial is the low point of Christian cultural influence, a Pyrrhic legal victory that marked the end of Protestant cultural hegemony. The beginnings of this decline can be traced earlier, but few historical events continue to symbolize this loss more than the epic

courtroom confrontation between the modernist lawyer Clarence Darrow and fundamentalist politician William Jennings Bryan.

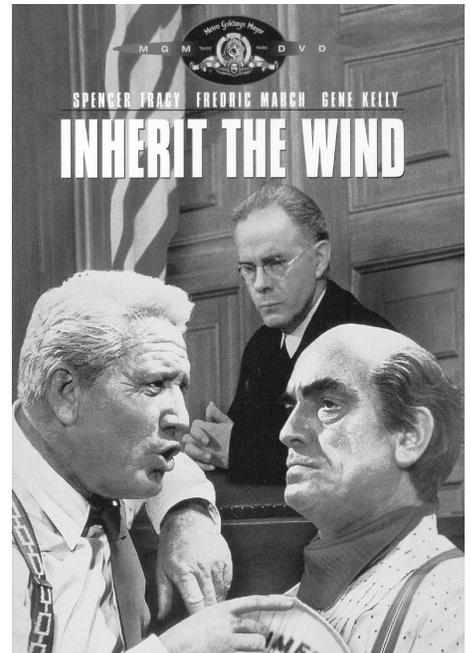
The original play, *Inherit the Wind*, and subsequent film, is not an accurate depiction of the actual Scopes Trial. This was intended. The play was actually written to address the 1950s Mc-Carthy Hearings held by the House UnAmerican

Activities Committee. This film was one of a number of plays and films produced in the 1950s as social commentary on these hearings—Fred Zinnemann’s *High Noon* (1952), Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* (1953), Elia Kazan’s *On The Waterfront* (1954), and Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee’s *Inherit the Wind* (1955). Since its original film release in 1960, *Inherit the Wind* has been shown again on Broadway and on television numerous times. It is great theater and powerful cinema.

Our concern is not the film’s historical accuracy, but its negative depiction of Christians. Perceptions become reality—and there is enough truth to these perceptions for reflective Christians to take them seriously. Seeing them depicted dramatically gives them a sobering immediacy. To be culturally relevant, we must identify these perceptions and then seek to live lives that counter them. With the evolution-creation debate back in the news, it is a good time to reflect on some of the lessons of the film.

## Lesson #1: We must find common ground without polarizing.

**M**atthew Harrison Brady: “I have come here because what has happened in your schoolroom has unleashed an evil from the big cities of the north. We did not seek this struggle. We are simple folk who seek only to live in brotherhood and peace, to cherish our loved ones, to teach our children the ways of righteousness and of the Lord.”



# Darkened Room cont.

If we are ever to convince another person about the rightness of our position, we must first seek common ground. This was Paul's strategy in his address on Mars Hill. We share a common humanity with every other person. The Manichean impulse to see reality in black and white terms fails to reflect either the depth of sin or the extent of grace. The media prefers polarities—stark contrasts, simplistically positioned against one another. We do well to avoid situations where the nature of the medium makes finding common ground unlikely. It is far better to share a cup of coffee with a person with whom we disagree, than to put ourselves into a public debate with him before a live audience.

After C. S. Lewis' failed debate with Elizabeth Anscombe in 1948, Lewis abandoned this form of apologetic contest and turned his attention instead to the intuitive argument of the well-told story and to what common experience and Scripture reveal. In his poem, "The Apologist's Evening Prayer," he writes,

*From all my lame defeats and oh!  
much more  
From all my victories that I seem to  
score;  
From cleverness shot forth on Thy  
behalf  
At which while angels weep, the  
audience laugh;  
From all my proofs of Thy divinity,  
Though who wouldst give no sign,  
deliver me...  
Lord of the narrow gate and the  
needle's eye,  
Take from me all my trumpery lest I  
die.*

The effectiveness of Francis Schaeffer, and the ongoing ministry of L'Abri, is less his intellectual prowess or apologetic acumen, than truth lived out in the midst of a prayerful community. Truth is embodied in the context of love. We will never reach those most in need of the gospel if we position ourselves as their intellectual foil or political enemy. Our methods must be incarnational as well as our theology. We must be "with" and "along side," instead of "against" or "opposed to," if we are to model Jesus to others.

*Inherit the Wind* posits big cities against small towns, the North against the South, atheists against Christians, elitists against populists, old against young, father against child, learning against ignorance, science against religion, and intellectual freedom against governmental control. In such a setting, winning may actually turn out to be losing. This is less an historical accident than a rhetorical fact.

## Lesson #2: We must seek truth without defensiveness.

**M**atthew Harrison Brady: "*The people of this state have made it very clear that they don't want this zoological hogwash slopping around the schoolrooms. I refuse to allow these agnostic scientists to employ this courtroom as a sounding board, as a platform, from which they can shout their heresies into the headlines.*"

If we are ever to convince another person about the rightness of our position, we must first see ourselves as seekers of truth. If we come across as hav-

ing all the answers, and we don't, the nonbeliever will not listen. Especially in our day, when the idea of truth itself is in question, to claim to know truth demands far greater tact than in the past.

Moreover, if we exclude careful consideration of alternative positions, we will have not earned the right to be heard or be fully convinced about the truth of one's own position. We must not be afraid to explore alternative worldviews or challenges to belief. There is no argument against belief in God that does not warrant our careful consideration. The recent debate about Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* is a

good case in point. Isn't this Solomon's pattern in Ecclesiastes? He asks the ques-

tion is meaning possible in a world without God? Can it be found via pleasure, power, altruism, spirituality, or education? His conclusion after a careful exploration is that each turns out to be a wild goose chase—"vanity"—ultimate meaning is found elsewhere.

God is truth and if we honestly seek truth, we will be eventually brought to him. We must always hold even our deepest convictions, open to re-examination. Pascal wrote that there are only three kinds of people in the end: those who seek and find, those who are still seeking, and those who do not seek at all. The Scriptural promise is this: "Seekers find." To influence another, we must put ourselves alongside them as honest seekers of truth. It is humility, not arrogance, which creates the possibility for dialogue and the

***We must not be afraid to explore alternative worldviews or challenges to belief.***

openness to change.

*Inherit the Wind* depicts classrooms and courtrooms unwilling to even think about alternative viewpoints, and thus shuts off debate and inquiry at its inception. Such anti-intellectualism honors neither truth nor its Author.

### **Lesson #3: We must attempt persuasion without coercion.**

**H**enry Drummond: “*Can’t you understand that if you take a law like evolution and you make it a crime to teach it in public schools, tomorrow you can make it a crime to teach it in private schools, and tomorrow you make it a crime to read about it, and soon you may ban books and newspapers. And then you may turn Catholic against Protestant, and Protestant against Protestant, and try to foist your own religion upon the mind of man.*”

If we are ever to convince another person about the rightness of our position, we must rely on persuasion rather than coercion. There is always the temptation to force one’s thinking on another, to pass laws where there is no intellectual consent. This is why politics tends to mirror accepted attitudes and why passing laws does little to change minds. Tocqueville warned early in our national history of the potential danger of the “tyranny of the majority.” Television has reduced thoughtful political debate to adversarial sound bites. Trust is increasingly undermined. Rhetoric is steadily inflamed. We have forgotten the first principles on which our nation was founded. The greatest political advancement in the U.S. Constitution’s Bill of Rights is the First Amendment, which protects freedom of conscience for citizens of all faiths or none. When the ends of truth are pursued by means of politics, coercion is inevitable. It is just as wrong to eliminate religion from public life (the naked public square), as it is to impose religion on public life (the sacred

public square). Neither response is in the best interest of society. The semi-establishment of secularism in our day is no better than the semi-establishment of Protestantism a generation earlier. Freedom of conscience for the believer as well as the nonbeliever must be vigorously protected by both. As stated in *The Williamsburg Charter*, “A right for one is a right for another and a responsibility for all.” What has become characteristic of political life has become true of our personal life to the point that people no longer want to talk about differences because the potential cost is too high. Sociologist Christian Smith writes in his book, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teens*, that while there is a lot of talk about difference, the strategy for dealing with moral disagreement is you just don’t go there, you just don’t get into it. We are losing the ability to engage in civil debate and honest discussion of differences.

We live in an increasingly pluralistic society. The demands of pluralism involve more than generalized tolerance, as if deep differences can be ultimately set aside, they demand instead respectful debate and robust persuasion. The alternative leads directly to sectarian violence or studied silence. The benefits of pluralism for the Christian is that it allows for the saliency of good arguments and compelling lives to carry the day. It is little men and little ideas that resort to playing the bully on the playground.

Christians have not fared well under the cultural conditions of pluralism. We have not often recognized the requirements of cultural persuasion resorting instead to an almost knee jerk reaction to political majoritarianism. Victory, when earned in this manner, is actually defeat. It was in the

***Without visible love for one’s enemies, there will be no influence possible.***

Scopes Trial and it continues to be so today. Until Christians are known for the depth of their thinking, the breadth of their creativity, and the compelling nature of their lives, we will not have the tools necessary for lasting cultural influence.

John Washington Butler was a wealthy Tennessee farmer who heard about a girl returning from college believing in evolution instead of the Bible’s account of creation. This was alarming to him, particularly when he found out that it was taught in the public high school where his three boys attended. In 1921, he successfully ran

for the Tennessee state legislature on the promise to remove these offending books from the classroom. The Scopes Trial was the result of the ACLU’s challenge to the Butler Act, which read in part, “that it shall be unlawful for any teacher in any of the universities... and all other public schools of the state, which are supported in whole or in part by the public school funds of the state, to teach any theory that denies the story of Divine creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals.” The Butler Act was repealed in 1965—forty years after the trial.

### **Lesson #4: We must accept disagreement without judgment.**

**M**atthew Harrison Brady: “*We in Hillsborough have the opportunity not only to slay the Devil’s disciple, but the Devil himself.*”

If we are ever to convince another person about the rightness of our position, we must first accept disagreement without a judgmental attitude. As soon as we resort to judgment in tone, words, or deeds, we close the opportunity for influence. As Jesus clearly outlined, judgment reaps only judg-

# Darkened Room cont.

ment (Matthew 7:1-5). It is the principle of reciprocity, we will be judged in the same manner that we judge. If we demonize, we will be demonized, if we seek understanding, others will be more open to understand. We would do far better to always speak of those with whom we disagree as if he or she were in our immediate presence. When we speak in the abstract or to our own constituency, we do little to further mutual understanding.

Those who speak harshly about persons who are involved in homosexual behavior, for example, would do well to befriend such a person. Having a name and a face in mind does much to moderate one's rhetoric. Christians have much to learn from Christ about how to love the sinner and hate the sin. Particularly where nonbelievers emotionally identify with their behavior, as in the situation of homosexuality, this distinction takes special effort and aggressive kindness to overcome the woeful politicization conservative Christians have been party to for so long. We must learn to disagree agreeably, to differ while maintaining respect and compassion. We fail both in and outside of our churches, finding a self-righteous Pharisaical attitude much easier than nonjudgmental presence, constant prayer, and merciful tears. Jesus makes it clear: the test of the genuineness of our faith is the love we show toward our enemies. "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly father is perfect," is a verse to be understood in this context. Without visible love for one's enemies, there will be no influ-

***Until Christians are known for the depth of their thinking, the breadth of their creativity, and the compelling nature of their lives, we will not have the tools necessary for lasting cultural influence.***

ence possible. "Mercy triumphs over judgment" (James 2:13). "God did not send his son into the world to condemn it, but to save it" (John 3:17). The same must be true of our ministry of reconciliation (1 Corinthians 5:20).

*Inherit the Wind* depicts many scenes where judgment dominates. The towns-people are put in a terrible light in the film. In actuality, the citizens of Dayton were very kind to Clarence Darrow during the trial. He wrote later, "No one displayed the least sign of discour-

tesy, except perhaps Mr. and Mrs. Bryan... they glanced the other way any time we were at all near each other." If there is one assumption most nonbelievers make about Christians, it is this: Christians are judgmental. Perhaps the most painful depiction of judgment is the relationship of Rev. Jeremiah Brown toward his daughter Rachel. Ironically, Matthew Brady stops the minister's public condemnation of his child, quoting the Scripture from which the film is titled, "He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind" (Proverbs 11:29). There are parallels worth nothing between how we parent our children and how we engage others in public life.

***There is always the temptation to force one's thinking on another, to pass laws where there is no intellectual consent.***

## **Lesson #5: We must use reasons without using people.**

**R**achel Brown: "I want the whole world to know that Matthew Harrison Brady is a fake."

If we are ever to convince another person about the rightness of our position, we must see people as ends and never means. Rachel Brown's outrage at Matthew Brady is because she felt betrayed and used. Winning became more important to him than caring. Whenever the means we use are not consistent with the ends we seek, we have betrayed both the means and ends. The Lord's work must be done in the Lord's way, or it is neither. If we are to influence culture, we need to start living and acting as if people matter—and this begins at home.

## **A Seeker's Description**

In the second half of the second century a pagan seeker wanted to know what made Christians so different. He wrote,

*The differences between Christians and the rest of mankind is not a matter of nationality, or language, or custom. Christians do not live apart in separate cities of their own, speak any special dialect, nor practice any eccentric way of life. The doctrine they profess is not the invention of busy human minds and brains, nor are they, like some, adherents of this or that school of human thought. They pass their lives in whatever township—Greek or foreign—each man's lot has determined; and conform to ordinary local usage in their clothing, diet, and other habits. Nevertheless, the organization of their*

community does exhibit some features that are remarkable, and even surprising.... They obey the pre-scribed laws, but in their own private lives

**We can thank our sharpest critics for encouraging us to become more like Jesus.**

they transcend the laws. They show love to all men—and all men persecute them. They are misunderstood, and condemned; yet by suffering death they are quickened to life. They are poor, yet making many rich; lacking all things, yet having all things in abundance. They are dishonored, yet made glorious in their very dishonor; slandered, yet vindicated. They replay calumny with blessings, and abuse with courtesy. For the good they do, they suffer stripes as

evildoers; and under the strokes, they rejoice like men given new life. Jews assail them as heretics, and Greeks harass them with persecutions; and yet of all their ill-wishers, there is not one who can produce good grounds for his hostility.

Is the same said by seekers about evangelicals today? Is this how we are perceived by the media? Strikingly absent in this description of early Christians are comments about their judgmentalism or hypocrisy. We know that they had their problems. The book of *Corinthians* reminds us that they were not perfect. However, the public perception of their lives was remarkable and so was their influence. It has and can be done. If we learn these lessons, then

we can begin to demonstrate ways other than bigotry, ignorance, and hate. To do so we must learn from our mistakes. Then we can thank our sharpest critics for encouraging us to become more like Jesus. ■

~David John Seel, Jr.

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## **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION**

1. What is the relationship of politics to cultural change?
2. What are the three things Keller suggests are important to cultural influence? How might these be expressed in your context? Are there others?
3. Is it inevitable that nonbelievers will despise Christian believers?
4. What is the danger of politicizing the gospel?
5. What are the stereotypes nonbelievers have of Christians? Christians of nonbelievers? Are these stereotypes helpful?
6. What are ways to find common ground with nonbelievers?
7. How seriously do Christians seek after truth? How many Christian believers actually believe because it is true, rather than some other reason?
8. List three factors necessary if you are to be persuaded to change your mind about something important. What is the most important factor?
9. Mario Bergner, who has written and ministered extensively to persons involved in *homosexual* behavior, refuses to use the term homosexual as a noun or the compound noun *homosexual orientation*, because it is not true to a biblical anthropology. Why is it wrong to use words that identify a person with their sin?
10. In a relationship, who gets to decide whether my remarks are seen as judgmental? What do we learn from this point?
11. Why must means be consistent with ends?
12. What are the similarities and contrast between the perceptions nonbelievers have of second century Christians and twenty-first century Christians? What has created this difference? Is it better or worse today?

## An extraordinarily ordinary life

I am grateful that I was raised in a home that was committed to the conviction that the Bible is God's word. I hold that conviction today. Yet, for all the emphasis on the Bible, for many years my Christianity seemed to address only a very tiny slice of life. It was about spiritual disciplines, salvation, evangelism, and morality, and everything that didn't fall into those categories—in other words, most of life—was either of secondary importance or downright sinful. It wasn't exactly an irrelevant world, mind you—spiritual disciplines, salvation, evangelism, and morality are never irrelevant, after all—but it was certainly small.

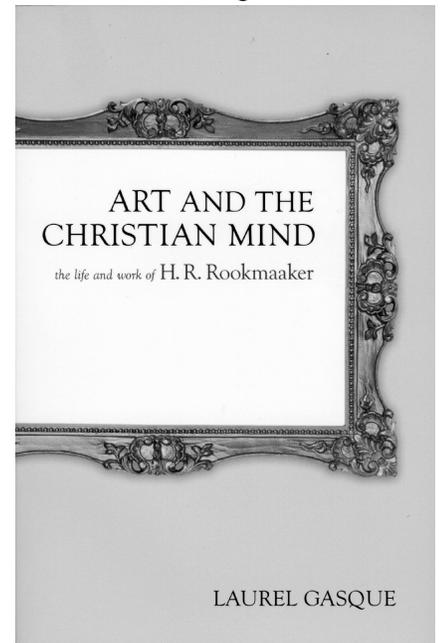
Then I was introduced to the books of an art historian named Hans Rookmaaker. He too was passionately committed to the Scriptures, but by his reading of God's word, our lives and imaginations were to be as expansive as God's creation, as broad as reality itself, and as free and rich as the grace of God. I had believed that Christ was Lord; Rookmaaker insisted that Christ was Lord of all. He was even Lord of art and creativity.

*Art is not a religion, nor an activity relegated to a chosen few, nor a mere worldly, superfluous affair. None of these views of art does justice to the creativity with which God has endowed man. It is the ability to make something beautiful (as well as useful), just as God made the world beautiful and said, 'It is*

*good.'* Art as such needs no justification; rather, it demands a response, like that of the twenty-four elders in Revelation who worship God for the very act of creation itself: 'You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.' (Revelation 4:11)

*The supreme justification for all creation is that God has willed it to be. And so there is no need to justify, let us say, a tree. A tree is there and is meaningful because God made it. Of course a tree has many functions: birds sit on its branches, cattle rest in its shadow, and men use its wood for building houses or making fires. What would the world be without trees? Yet even if the tree is indispensable to many ecological cycles and useful to mankind, none of these functions alone, nor even their sum total, can provide the justification for and the meaning of the tree. The tree has meaning simply because God made it; that meaning surpasses all its functions. If we do not see this, we are not far from accepting naturalist evolutionary theories, which are all based on functionalist assumptions.*

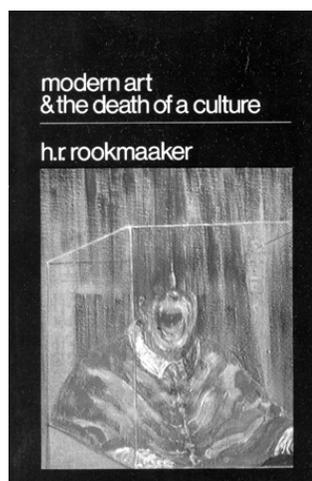
*God's creatures require no justification. God has given them their value by including them in the totality of his creation. In the same way, our personal human qualities and activities need no justification. To love is indeed a command of God, but a justification for it is not given. To marry, to praise the Lord, to till the ground, to prepare meals, to talk, to feel, to think—all need no apology*



*within the context of 'Hallowed be thy name, thy will be done.'*

*In the same way, art needs no justification. It is meaningful in itself, not only as an evangelistic tool, or to serve a practical purpose, or to be didactic. Art must be free: free from politics (including church politics); free from traditions of the past, free from modes of the present, free from the judgment of the future; and free from our economic and social needs. Art cannot be turned into a mere function of any of these without losing its indispensable place in human life. After all, Christ died for us in order to restore our humanity, and to give meaning back to God's creation. Not only is evangelism Christian, but all of life is Christian, unless we would make Christ very small.*

"We need a complete renovation of our imaginations," Eugene Peterson says. "We are accustomed to thinking

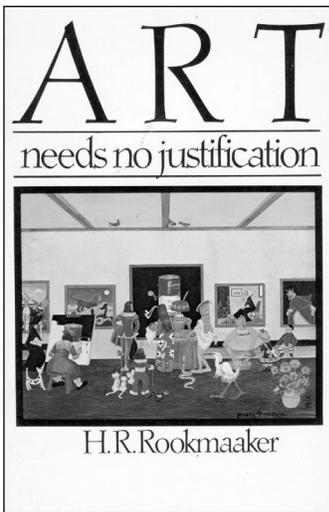


of the biblical world as smaller than the secular world.” He is correct.

I never met Dr Rookmaaker, but I owe him a great debt. Not just because he taught me to enjoy art and human creativity, though he certainly did that. Not because he taught me how to read a piece of art and understand the flow of art through the centuries, though he did that, too. I owe him a great debt because he helped me love and worship God in a fuller and richer way, and by showing me that the gospel speaks to all of life and culture.

In *Art and the Christian Mind*, Laurel Gasque introduces us to Rookmaaker’s work and life. Gasque knew Rookmaaker well, so her biography is balanced, revealing the Dutchman’s clay feet while showing how God used him far beyond his classroom at the Free University of Amsterdam. “The aim of this biography,” Gasque writes, “has been simply to say that an ‘ordinary’ life can make an extraordinary difference.”

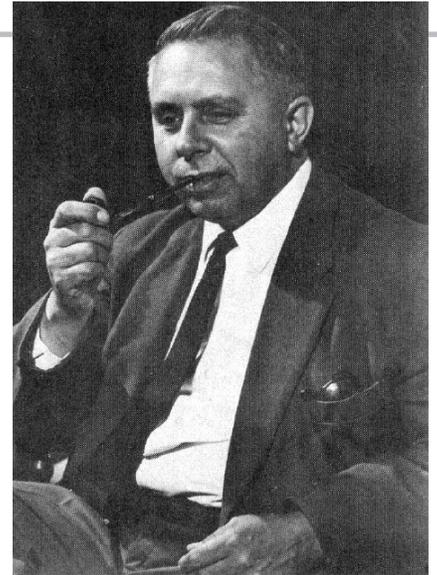
*How does one sum up the influence of Hans Rookmaaker’s life? Several impressions of the man and his work stand out. First and strikingly, there was his refreshing modesty, lack of pretension, and willingness to be a servant of the arts and artists, and in this, a servant of Christ and his church. This set him apart from many of his academic peers who were sequestered in their professional work. Secondly, there was his love of life—all of life: music, art, good food and drink, good conversation, new experiences, new friends. Thirdly, he had the ability to discern the gifts that young men and women whom he met along the way possessed and to encourage them to move in the*



*direction that would best develop their God-given gifts, giving them freedom to be themselves. Fourthly, he was a willing mentor to many young adults, both scholars and artists, in a wide variety of vocations. It is especially noteworthy that he mentored a remarkable number of women as well as men. This was unusual for his time, as it is perhaps even today. Fifthly, he was a bridge builder, linking the scholarship of art to the work of artists, celebrating all of the arts and developing a broad mastery of different eras and disciplines, communicating effectively with both scholars and the general public. Sixthly, he sought to reclaim the arts for the Reformed Christian faith. Although there is still much land to be possessed, the contributions of Rookmaaker’s intellectual and spiritual children and grandchildren bear witness to the progress that has been made in the past half century and give much hope for the next. Seventhly, he was committed to living and thinking as a Christian in the midst of the world rather than in a cloistered sectarian shelter. And he challenged all who came under his influence to do likewise.*

Though his work on art may seem dated because he died in 1977,

if you haven’t read Hans Rookmaaker’s books—especially *Art Needs no Justification* and *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture*—please do so. The fact that he isn’t specifically addressing contemporary art doesn’t mean he can’t show us how to see and love art Christianly. His thinking will stretch your mind, his love of art and cre-

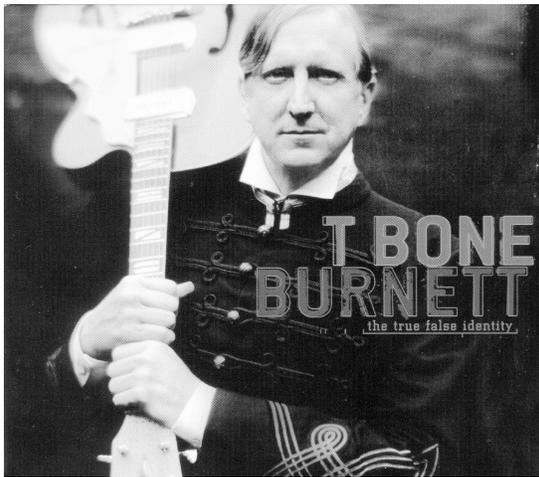


ativity is infectious, and his approach to art and culture is deeply Christian. And then read Gasque’s biography. We may not have Rookmaaker’s expertise because we have different callings, but by grace, our ordinary lives can be used of God, too. ■

**Book recommended:** *Art and the Christian Mind: the life and work of H. R. Rookmaaker* by Laurel Gasque (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books: 2003, 2005) 178 pp. + appendices.

**Source:** *The Creative Gift: Essays on art and the Christian Life* by H. R. Rookmaaker (Westchester, IL: Cornerstone Books) pp. 113-114; *Eat This Book: a conversation in the art of spiritual reading* by Eugene H. Peterson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; 2006) p. 67.

## A moment



### The sharply demanding music of T Bone Burnett's *The True False Identity*

produced the superb soundtracks of *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, *Walk the Line*, and *Cold Mountain*. And he has produced numerous albums for some of the best musicians, including Los Lobos, Bruce Cockburn, Gillian Welch, Elvis Costello, Tony Bennett, and Counting Crows. He has done exquisite work for which we can be grateful. And now we can be grateful he has released an album of his own, *The True False Identity*.

"This is a crime record," T Bone says on the music video on side two of the album, "a criminal record. It is a comedy record. In the theater you can hear laughter and gasps at the same moment. Some people are amused by the same thing other people are appalled by. It is the aim of this record to erase the nonexistent line between comedy and tragedy. So this is a record of tragedy, the tragedy of reality having been devoured by image management."

*The True False Identity* is music with a conscience, songs wrung from the soul of an artist who believes too much has been undermined. He wants us to pay attention, and is wise enough to the ways of the world to know that this itself is a tall order. So he crafts songs designed to wake us up: scorching intros, layered percussion, hauntingly beautiful melodies, and thoughtful lyrics that provide a clearer vision of reality. T Bone jars us into reflect-

In the fourteen years since his last album, *The Criminal Under My Own Hat*, T Bone Burnett has been in the background, neither touring nor recording.

Instead, he has lent his finely tuned musical gifts to other artists. He pro-

duced the superb soundtracks of *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, *Walk the Line*, and *Cold Mountain*. And he has produced numerous albums for some of the best musicians, including Los Lobos, Bruce Cockburn, Gillian Welch, Elvis Costello, Tony Bennett, and Counting Crows. He has done exquisite work for which we can be grateful. And now we can be grateful he has released an album of his own, *The True False Identity*.

*Accentuate the positive  
Destroy all the negatives  
Before the black mass media  
Get a hold of them*

*Look at that boy  
He can't see nothing  
He can't bear nothing  
All the tides in Zombieland  
Are to oblivion*

*We're gonna stomp in Zombieland  
Devil beat in Zombieland  
We're gonna stomp that devil beat in  
Zombieland*

[From "Zombieland"]

One reviewer says this "is no mere comeback album," but "a powerful, modern epic for the twenty-



# of truth

first century.” Like his fellow believers U2 and Bob Dylan, T Bone Burnett is not willing to let postmodern cynicism flow into apathy. Nor is he willing to be silent when his faith is hijacked by politicians seeking easy legal solutions to the problems of the heart.

*Do we want to inject the concept of sin  
Into the Constitution  
Is this really necessary  
Does this not make you somewhat wary*

*And shall we trust sin to the wisdom  
Of the criminal justice system  
Which can't handle the criminals we have now*

*If sin were dealt with by the laws of man  
Everybody would be in jail for life.*  
[From “Blinded by the Darkness”]

Critic Thomas Kintner characterizes *The True False Identity* as “an insistently rhythmic, perspective-rich assortment of roots-rock tunes that brim with equal parts tuneful passion and biting dissatisfaction.” Not quite. There is dissatisfaction, to be sure, but T Bone is not content to stop there, and too mature to have to. With subtle humor, word play, biblical allusions, and lines of poetry that lodge in memory, he insists that what’s wrong with the world goes far deeper than personal dissatisfaction. Something is truly wrong—whether we are dissatisfied or not, and we certainly need to be.

*If we were to pass an Eleventh Commandment  
In twenty years people would be shocked to learn  
That there had been only ten  
And wouldn't care if there had been*

*It all comes down to a moment of truth  
Clock ticking in a soundproof booth*

*If I could only see through glass  
I would know what has come to pass  
I wouldn't hurry but I'd get there fast  
What's last is first what's first is last*

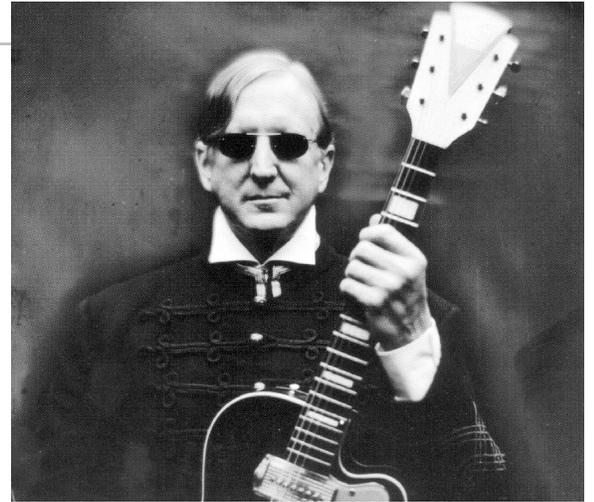
*When you're out for revenge dig  
two graves  
When you run from the truth it  
comes in waves*

*We're marching up to Zion  
That beautiful city of God*  
[From “Every Time I  
Feel the Shift”]

Besides the “wisdom, the acidic humor, the blistering commentary,” Jeffrey Overstreet says, “there’s something more... a weight, a weariness, echoes of violence still resonating in the hollows of a broken heart. T Bone’s lamenting everything he sees here, from the burden of a lost love to the culture of fear cultivated by a devious government, to his own private failures.”

Back in the Seventies my spiritual mentor Francis Schaeffer warned that the greatest threat to living well would be the siren call of “personal peace and affluence.” In busyness, proliferating distractions, and the ability to erect walled communities (both real and virtual), we withdraw from the more vulgar demonstrations of the brokenness that haunts reality. Things, and things to do, so much of both that we may have ears but don’t hear, and eyes, but we rarely see. T Bone is a man who intends to issue a wake-up call, who wants to interrupt our cheap comfort, who like the watchman who has remained alert in the darkness can cry out warning. And that, in a noisy world, is a very rich grace. Especially when the wake-up call is crafted with such musical genius. ■

**Recommended CD:** *The True False Identity* by T Bone Burnett (DMZ/Columbia).



**by  
Denis  
Haack**

## A Fear of Falling

I know a young man who falls a lot. He has a disability that makes walking almost impossible, but he walks anyway. When I see him I say short prayers—usually just something like “Dear Lord, please be with R.”

I wonder why R. doesn't use a cane or something else that would help him walk. Maybe he could get around better in a wheelchair. But he just walks, sometimes pretty great distances. And he falls.

I don't see R. very often, but it seems that he falls about one in three times that I do see him. I have seen him fall in a gym. I have seen him fall in a cafeteria. I have seen him fall as he walked across a university campus. Each time I felt bad for him. But perhaps I have felt worse for myself—for the embarrassment I feel for him. So I pray for him, but I wonder if, really, I'm praying that I could be relieved of embarrassment.

I don't think R. gets embarrassed. He probably falls every day, and often others are around to see it. And they wonder, as I do, if they should help him up (which would be an acknowledgment of his disability), or if they should let him fend for himself (which would be a way of recognizing his courage).

R. is courageous. When he fell in the cafeteria, food and Gatorade went flying. Some of it landed on me. But R. pulled himself up, grabbing onto the counter the Gatorade dispenser was on. He filled another glass, and he hobbled off to his table. “Dear Jesus, be with him,” I whispered under my breath. But I was probably praying for myself, who had stood there paralyzed as he struggled for Gatorade.

I am thinking of R. because he was at my church this morning. He came in late, and worked his way to a half-empty pew. When the time came to pray, and everyone else knelt, he tried to as well. But the kneelers aren't attached to the pews, and they can slip away. As his knee struck the kneeler, it slipped out from under him, and for a few moments he and those around him were in suspended animation. His knees weren't quite touching the floor; he was trying to pull himself back up into his pew, but he couldn't do it. A guy behind him grabbed R. by the armpits and helped him into his pew. Then R. just settled in with a stoic, almost bemused look on his face.

Part of my mind focused on the fact that the guy who helped R. was the same idiot I had written about in my journal a week before. Ten minutes before a funeral for a seven-month old girl began, he and his dorky friend were swapping

laughs. Now he got to pose as a hero, helping R. back into his pew.

The other part of my mind whispered, “Dear Jesus, please be with R.”

And then, as the service moved toward the celebration of the Eucharist, I drifted. I thought about R.'s courage, his refusal to use anything to help him walk. I thought about the psychological stress falling in front of other people all the time must cause him. I thought about how painful falling must be, since his disability prevents him from being able to break the falls by putting out his arms or via other bodily maneuvers. I wondered if my prayers were for him or for me. I thought that, even if they really were for me, God would honor them because he knows how messed up I am.

And then this came to me: The difference between R. and me is that the truth about him is there for everyone to see, and he doesn't use a crutch to try and cover it up. But the truths about my own daily falls—my own daily failings—are hidden. I use the crutch of Middle-Class Guy Who Keeps His Lawn Reasonably Well-Manicured. I rely on the cane of Suave Professor Who Reads Multiple Languages. I ride the wheelchair of Average American Who Has Mastered the Art of Telling Conventional Lies to Keep the Peace. I hobble along, but it's not so obvious. I don't embarrass others very often, but *if they only knew*.

R.'s falls are obvious and distressing, and they happen in cafeterias and gyms. Mine are spiritual. They happen in my soul, so they seem less real. They don't seem damaging. But who am I trying to kid?

Who are you trying to kid? ■

Preston Jones

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Preston Jones teaches at John Brown University. His book, *Is Religion Good, Bad or Irrelevant?* is published by InterVarsity Press. His co-author is Greg Graffin, front man for the punk band Bad Religion.

## **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION**

1. When is hiding our problems and failures from view a part of wisdom? When does hiding them become problematic? How do you know?
2. What embarrasses you most when you see it in other people? Why do you think that is true? What do you do in response to your feelings of embarrassment?
3. Many non-Christian young adults claim that Christians, by and large, are not authentic. Instead of portraying an authentic faith, they write Christmas letters, to mention merely one example, that give nicer-than-reality summaries of the year, they give testimonies which suggest Jesus has solved their problems, they profess no doubts about what they believe, and rarely if ever give confess failure in a meaningful way. If more Christians were like Johnny Cash, they say, who believed but never covered up his struggles, the Christian faith would be more attractive. To what extent do you think this criticism is correct?
4. To what extent are you more embarrassed by someone's social gaffe or disability than by your own inner, spiritual failures? What does this suggest about your true convictions about reality? About others being made in God's image? About the nature of the fall and the depravity of sin or extent of evil?
5. What crutches do you tend to use? What would it look like if you decided to set them aside?
6. What social crutches do you most easily identify—and dislike—in others?
7. How would you define authenticity? Describe the most authentic person you have ever known.
8. To what extent is authenticity a Christian virtue? How authentic are you? What keeps you from being more deeply authentic? What plans should you make?

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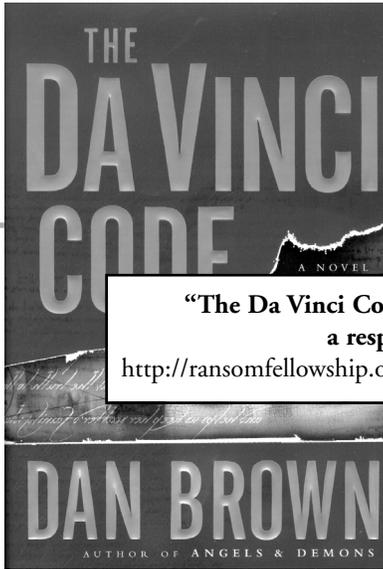
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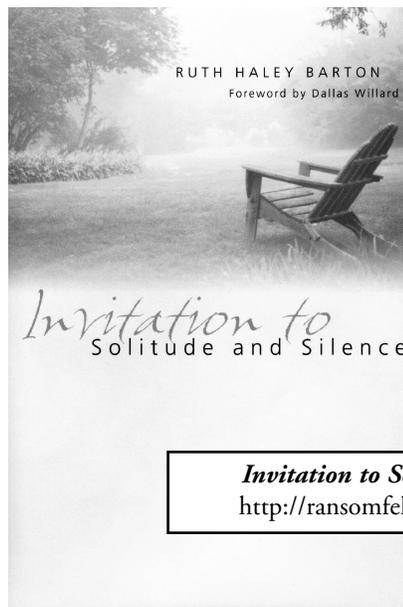
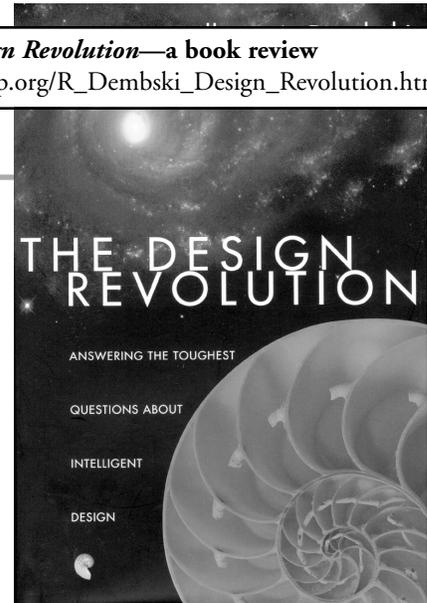
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1. To call attention to resources of interest to thinking Christians.
2. To model Christian discernment.
3. To stimulate believers to think biblically about all of life.

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