

[Document Body Page Navigation Panel](#)

[Document Outline](#)

Document Outline

- [Christ and Culture](#)
- [Christ and Culture](#)
- [Preface](#)
- [1.](#)
- [2.](#)
- [3.](#)
- [4.](#)
- [5.](#)
- [6.](#)
- [7.](#)
- [8.](#)
- [9.](#)
- [10.](#)
- [11.](#)
- [12.](#)

- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
- 16.
- 17.
- 18.
- 19.
- 20.
- 21.
- 22.
- 23.
- 24.
- 25.
- 26.
- 27.
- 28.
- 29.

Pages 1--54 from Untitled Document

Page 1 [2](#)

Christ and Culture

Klaas Schilder 1

[1](#) Page 2 [3](#)

Christ and Culture

by Klaas Schilder, 1890-1952.

Translation of *Christus en Cultuur*

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Helder, 1977

We have inserted the original page numbers in the text within brackets to indicate the pagination of the original English edition. In the original there were endnotes only. These have been changed to footnotes. 2

2 Page 3 4

Preface Almost twenty-five years ago, on March 23, 1952, the LORD took unto Himself His servant Klaas Schilder. The present translation of one of his works thus appears at a very appropriate time. *Christ and Culture* is the English translation of

Schilder's *Christus en Cultuur*. The original version of this publication was issued in 1932 under the title "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven" ; it was included in *Jezus Christus en het menschenleven*, a collection of contributions by various authors. In 1947 it was published separately as *Christus en Cultuur*; a reprint followed in 1953.

The author was born on December 19, 1890, in Kampen, The Netherlands. In his native city he later studied at the Theologische School of

De Gere-
formeerde Kerken in Nederland, from
which he gradu-
ated *cum laude* in 1914. After having
served as minister
in several congregations, he was in 1933
awarded the
doctoral degree *summa cum laude* at the
Friedrich-
Alexander University, Erlangen,
Germany. His disserta-
tion was entitled *Zur Begriffspeschichte
des "Para-doxon," mit besonderen
Berücksichtigung Calvins und
des Nach-Kierkegaardschen
"Paradoxon."* In the same
year he was appointed Professor of

Systematic Theology at the Kampen Seminary, which post he held until his death in 1952.

Dr. K. Schilder wrote numerous books and articles. His trilogy *Christus in Zijn lijden* became internationally known especially in its English version, *Christ on Trial* (1938). He regularly contributed to the weekly *De Reformatie* ever since it began publication in 1920, becoming one of its editors in 1924; from 1935 on, he was its only editor. The strong stand that he took, not only in theological and ecclesiastical

matters but also
over against the anti-christian
philosophy of National-
Socialism, led to his arrest by the Nazis
in August, 1940.

Soon after his release he was forced to
go into hiding,
for he was among those wanted by the
German occupy-
ing forces. He remained in hiding almost
until the end of
the Second World War.

Twice, in 1939 and in 1947, Schilder
visited the
United States of America. The return
voyage in 1947
provided him with the opportunity to
revise and expand

his above-mentioned 1932 essay. The preface to the new edition of *Christus en Cultuur* was signed and dated: "On board s.s. Veendam, August 24, 1947." This Dutch publication attracted attention also in the English-speaking world, particularly in the U.S.A.: for example, Schilder's ideas, together with [6] those of

Aurelius Augustine, John Calvin, and Abraham Kuyper, were thoroughly discussed by Henry R. Van Til in his *The Calvinistic Concept of Culture*

(1959; repr. 1972). A Japanese translation by Professor Y. Yamanaka of Kansai Gakuin University, Takarazuka, Japan, was published in 1974.

The present English translation was made possible by the kind permission of Mrs. A.J. Schilder-Walter and the cooperation of the original publisher, T. Wever, Franeker, The Netherlands.

May the LORD bless this publication and use it in the battle for true culture.

Grand Rapids, Michigan, U.S.A. – G.

van Rongen

Hamilton, Ontario, Canada – W. Helder

December, 1976 3

3 Page 4 5

1. [7] "Christ and culture" – this theme has occupied the minds of many as long as Christianity has had a place in this world. Rather, it did so already many centuries before. For the name "Christ" is nothing but a translation of the word "Messiah." Even during the days of the Old Testament, when the Messiah was still expected, men thought, struggled, and

prophesied about
as well as rebelled against the
"Messiah" (Christ) and
"culture." If what we are about to write
is true, then this
age-old theme will continue to strain the
attention in joy
as well as in sorrow until the end of
time. The complete
solution also of this problem will not be
reached in the
course of time but is reserved for the day
that will put an
end to time. It will not be obtained in the
way of evolu-
tion but along that of the catastrophic
parousia of Christ
Himself. Therefore the great joy and the

deep sorrow
about the final outcome of the struggle
concerning
Christ and culture can be expected at the
end of the ages.

Here one utters two heavily charged
words: heaven –
and hell.

2. The above already makes it clear that
the theme
which we are broaching here must not be
inserted in the
list of subjects that the hasty heathen
takes into his
sphere of interest *before* and the careful
Christian only *after*
the academic discussion thereof. The

problem of
the relation between Christ and culture
immediately
concerns the fundamental questions of
Christian thought
and action. Therefore a Christian must
continually con-
tend with it. The one who does not touch
it neglects his
direct calling. The definition of a
Christian's life-task as
it is given in Lord's Day 12 of the
Heidelberg Catechism
and in which a Christian is considered
as a prophet, a
priest, and a king, is so ample and
comprehensive that
the matter of the relation between Christ

(and the Christian) on the one hand, and cultural life on the other, is under discussion as soon as the question is raised how the pertinent words in this section of the Catechism must be interpreted. For this reason in particular, a confessing Christian is not allowed, before entering into the cultural struggle, to wait quietly (*ad calendas graecas*) for academic resolutions regarding the cultural problem. Neither has he permission to wait for what is more and more becoming their substitute, the

resolutions or conclusions of a conference.

For life builds up the academy, but the academy

does not build up life. At best it can think about life. The

same way the problem of [8] the right appreciation of

culture or that of the evaluation of a concrete situation

which a Christian comes across or has to help create in a

given cultural phase, must never be reduced to a so-

called merely academic matter. Life precedes the acad-

emy: *primum vivere, deinde philosophari*. Everyone has

to deal with a temporally and locally determined phase of cultural life. At his birth he is thrown into the midst of it, and no one is able to withdraw from it, not even for one single day, supposing that he would be allowed to do so. Man cannot isolate himself, though he may flee into a cloister that does not distil liqueur or anything like that, nor helps to fill the pages of a magazine. 4

4 Page 5 6

3. Why is this problem such a difficult one? Many things could be said in explanation. We

shall mention a few points only. *a.*

One of the main reasons is that the opinions so widely diverge. Not only in what we sometimes too abstractly call the world, but also in what – again we must say, often in too abstract a way – is called the church, we see the struggle between opinions that are very much each other's opposites. There is nothing unusual in this. Those who really adhere to the authentic philosophy of pure materialism will have a view of cul-

ture that completely differs from that of people who think along the lines of metaphysical universalism.

Those who think that history is linear set up a construction that is completely different from that of the man who sees history as a cycle. The theist and the pantheist are one another's opponents, also in their conception and appreciation of culture. A Lutheran's evaluation – if only he is loyal to Martin Luther – will differ from that of a Calvinist; that of a pessimist is not the same as that

of an optimist. A Platonist differs from an Aristotelian, a Spinozist from a Cartesian, a Kantian from a pupil of Fichte. Even among the Romantics Goethe does not agree with Novalis, nor Schleiermacher with the Schlegel brothers. We did not even mention Bismarck and Rosenberg, Otto and Walt Whitman, or the Buddhist of one sect or another. The differences which divide the philosophers will influence the theologians and the ordinary church members. It is only a dream if someone

believes that "the cultural idea" is a sort of master key opening the door to the conference hall that offers a peaceful reception to cultural congresses. It will be war there – that is to say, if the participants in the conference have their wits about them, which unfortunately is unusual. *b.*

A second factor, then, is that time and again the problem itself is given new solutions which – even within the same period – contradict each other. Or that it takes the shape of theoretical

foundations. All this happens in as well as outside the church. Both [9] concepts, "Christianity" as well as "culture," are thus frequently created, fixed, and used in different senses. Consequently the problem of "Christianity and culture" is in the (as we shall see later on: incorrect) opinion of many people – wittingly or unwittingly – narrowed down to a problem of "religion and culture," or of "nature" and "grace," which are then repeatedly considered as two separate territories. Indeed, the word

"territory" is easy to handle. However, it is mostly used in a too strongly geographical, not to say, mathematical sense. And mathematical concepts (such as e.g. a point, a line, a plane, a "territory") do not find their correlative equivalents in reality. Besides, one may perceive that even then many questions appear one after another.

c.

To all this must be added that the devaluation of the name Christ caused also the devaluation of the con-

cept of culture. The church started to trifle with the name Christ, and philosophy did the same. As a result they also trifle with the problem of Christ and culture.

As soon as two concepts are devaluated, the right track that must be followed by those who search for the relation between them is blotted out. *d.*

One has only to consider how those who call themselves church, broken adrift from the contents of the Confession of Faith, speak about the Christ. What is Christianity? Who is *Jesus Christ*? What

is the historical position of this Jesus in the world and His significance for historical life? Does He have any influence at all on our historical life with its continuous relations? Is He indeed the incarnate Word of God, or is He (rather: he) no more than one of the many *Gestalten* of God's Word? Is the *Gestalt* of the Word of God an adequate revelation of its *Gehalt*, or is the *Gestalt* the paradoxical opposite of the *Gehalt*? Is the historical Jesus of Nazareth the fulfilment of the Old Testament

expectation of the Christ (the Messiah), or is the messianic idea not adequately revealed in Him, or perhaps only fragmentarily?

What does the *name* Christ mean? What does God intend with the name Messiah? What does His anointing mean? Does it really include a divine *commission* (" His being ordained"), and also a real *gift* (" His being made capable"), or are these two only designated in a symbolic way? Is there a fundamental difference between those "anointed ones" whom we

consider as ordinary
men and Jesus of Nazareth as One
anointed in a com-
pletely distinct way? Or is this suggested
fundamental
difference no more than a fiction only?
To what extent
can He, as a historical person, act in
human life in a
critical, that is, judging and absolutely
decisive manner?
Does He Himself, as Jesus, as a
historical person,
together with our whole human life, lie
under a crisis,
that is, under a radical judgment of God
[10] that con-
demns the world as this, as *our* world,

or did He let us
hear on earth, in a pure and effective,
lively, judging and
sifting way, the voice of God as the
perfect Judge and
perhaps also as our Father, the voice of
the supreme and,
in fact, unique criticism, repelling or
attracting? It is
actually something to weep about, but it
is a matter of
fact that in the circles of what is called
Christianity there
is much serious dispute about all these
questions nowa- 5

5 **Page 6** 7

days. And so we stand there as a
concrete or legendary

"community" of "Christians" ; we all lay claim to this name, and get angry as soon as the one denies it to the other. But in the meantime we are very uncertain about the *fundamental questions* concerning Jesus and concerning Christ, at least among ourselves. Neither are we sure about each other. Opposing each other we stand with a series of written and especially unwritten Christologies in the midst of a multifarious world which claims that it is continuing to build up its "culture." And

although we repeat a thousand times in
tense and agi-
tated Christian protest that the culture of
this world is
not mature and not pure, that it is
deceptive, and that the
reward of (also cultural) sin is death, the
question is
urgent and hurts so deeply, especially *as
question*,
whether we ourselves are not (at least as
a group) com-
pletely unauthorized and unable to utter
even one single
word on this problem, because of our
profound differ-
ences with regard to the term "Christ" as
we find it in

the problem of "Christ and cultural life."
We are more
and more active as a group in
international, interdenom-
inational, and interconfessional,
ecumenical relations,
and in sending out all sorts of messages
concerning
world life and culture. But it all lacks
power, for as a
group we no longer know *Christ*. As
long as Jesus
Christ, for us as a group, is not the
Known One and the
Familiar One, we utter nothing but
immature statements
about the relation between Christ and
cultural life. For

the first of these two terms is already hazy. And an international, inter-academic, ecumenical haze is the worst of all. *e.*

Is the situation any better as far as the second term of our problem is concerned, namely, cultural life?

What actually is culture? The answers differ. We have already referred to that in a few words. However, it is really oppressing that in spite of this we still present all sorts of nervous, hurriedly fabricated and even, as far as our own point of view is concerned,

illegitimate constructions. The worst part is not that the culture-philosophers time and again supply widely divergent answers to the fundamental issues. The worst part is this, that while all sorts of culture-philosophers entrench themselves behind a certain – as a matter of course, subjectivistic – theory of value, Christians, even confessional ones, fail to ask themselves more and more if not the first and actually only true value is that of the [11] covenant communion with God, that of the

assurance of
faith, the value of Christian gratitude,
which in a practical syllogism assures faith from the
fruits thereof that it
is *true* faith. The worst part is the
servility with which
Christian confessors, as soon as they
touch the problem

of culture, timidly look up to the
unbelieving culture-
philosophers next-door: Would they be
so kind as to
grant us a nod of approval? The
progressive submission
of Christian thinkers and theologians to
(non-Christian)

cultural and other philosophers, is more and more becoming an obstacle to giving a unanimous and unequivocal answer of faith. The youth leaders of today and lecturers of adult education classes, as far as they have a Christian background, realize perfectly well that the drafting of a concept of culture meets multiple and searching questions. At their conferences they toil with the problem of history, that of the individual and society, of the essence of the nations and the distinct races of

men, of time and eternity, of physics and metaphysics, religion, morals and natural law, of evolution and creation. But about the fact that we as Christians have to take our startingpoint in *the prejudices of faith*, and that we have to accept upon authority, and consequently to act accordingly, that our positive and negative attitudes must merely and solely be a matter of faith, which (as we confess in our Catechism) is a sure knowledge and a firm confidence – about all this one can hear quite often

as long as certain points of systematic theology (ecclesiastical suspensions included) are at stake, but one hardly hears the same things as soon as the sphinx of cultural life comes under discussion. There is much pride in the many words that are spoken on the theme of right action, but in the meantime the speakers do not discern the oppressive fact that this whole ideogram of "culture" and "cultural life" remains very hazy, and that one can work with it only on a premature and hypothet-

ical basis. It is an artificial term that many people operate with; however, they do so without being justified philosophically, theologically, and, above all, as far as the concrete service of the living God is concerned. *f.*

When finally we act as if we really have established a connection between "Christ" and "culture," then the main question is not always put to the fore:

What is it actually all about? Are we talking about culture as such (the culture) or only about a certain kind of

culture? Is there indeed *a* permanent *culture*, which may be known by the peculiar style to which it is faithful, or do we, if we keenly discern things, find only a chaos of cultural *tendencies*? If it is not culture as such but only a particular form of culture, which is it then? *The* national culture or just *a* national one? *The* or *an* international culture? *The* or *a* temporary one? *The* or *a* future one? Is it a (or [12] the) culture which we have created or have to creat, let alone are able to establish – that is to say, we

as Christians? Or is it a sort of ideal culture that we are required to acknowledge or to hope for? Do we as 6

6 Page 7 8

Christians have to act in this world and its culture in the way of reform and revolt? Are we capable of doing this? Or have we perhaps been given only the limited task that we might somehow or other force our way through the rapid currents of this world's multifarious life, and thank God afterwards because the ship of our life just missed being wrecked in the tremendous

energy of the
breakers? Is there really a positive task
for us as Chris-
tians? Does "following after Jesus" then
really include
the tireless actualizing of a God given
creative ability
unto a peculiar (or distinct) Christian
culture with
world-conquering tendencies? Can the
"following of
God" be recognized in certain concrete
acts in conform-
ance to the material contents of divine
commandments,
and also in an accordingly concrete and
steady attitude?
Or is the following of God a formal

concept only: God did indeed create the world, but He also permanently changes it, and once will do so in a catastrophic manner, wherefore only those can follow Him who replace any "yes" spoken to the existing world by "no" and thus consider any attitude as being of the devil, the revolutionary as much as the conservative attitude, and vice versa? Is a Christian's action performed in earnest or just as a game – by virtue of a fixed ordination that does not permit us anything but the game, and

thus makes the game into the only possible "earnest" ?

4. Innumerable are the questions that have not been answered, and, indeed, that have not even been formulated yet. "Jesus Christ" and "cultural life" have alternately been called enemies and friends, or even complete strangers one to another. The one, with Tolstoy, sacrifices "culture" to (his) "Christianity" ; the other, with Nietzsche, abandons Christianity in favour of "culture" ; a third one flares up in

anger as soon as he hears that Christ and culture are considered to be connected with one another (cf. the contemporary, Barthian-inspired, criticism of a so-called neo-Calvinism). The startingpoint of the first two views – partly also of the third one – is an *antithetical* relation between Jesus Christ and cultural life, real as well as potential. On the other hand there are also those who, eagerly or with the feeling that they, too, are fortunately still allowed to participate, raise the slogan

that Jesus Christ
and "culture" can certainly be reconciled
with one
another and that the relation between the
two may ultimately
ultimately be considered an amicable one.
It may be unintentional, but the
inevitable result of
all this is, of [13] course, that among
those who swing
back and forth in this manner practice
reveals many
greatly varying aspects. According to the
one there is no
higher task for a Christian than timidly to
eat under the
table "the crumbs which fall from the
table" of unbe-

believing "culture builders," and consequently he defends this timorous eating with the thesis that in cultural affairs God has not imposed teetotalism. He, then, will never get beyond a questionable *argumentum e silentio*: What he *wants* has not expressly been forbidden; it is therefore all right. Do not ask him whether this eating of crumbs from the table of others is a meal of faith and love or a gesture of embarrassment, with a corresponding argument of embarrassment providing the necessary

rescue. The other, however, jauntily asserts himself in cultural life, puffs up his little Christian person to a certain cultural pride, and keeps himself convinced that it is nothing but an argument of embarrassment when the above-mentioned brother, sighing and apologizing a thousand times for his meals of crumbs, quotes the apostle Paul and says, that one "cannot go out of the world" (I Corinthians 5:10). He in fact brands this argument as inferior. In his opinion it must be replaced by

the proud watchword that a Christian has to promote God's honour "in all spheres of life," cultural life included. However, the crucial question, what "cultural life" actually is, and, in close relation with it, what exactly the sphere or territory of cultural life is, most

[7](#) **Page 8** [9](#)

likely remains unanswered for the time being, even by him.

We are fog-bound. Even the followers of Dr.

Abraham Kuyper are. For years and years they talked of

nothing but "God's honour in all spheres of life." The more scholarly ones among them constantly repeated Kuyper's adage concerning "sphere sovereignty." Every "sphere" of "life" had its own "sovereign." However, often they do no more than repeat this slogan. No wonder. For Abraham Kuyper himself could not clearly explain what exactly those "sovereigns" in all those "spheres" are. One single Sovereign – that we can accept and understand. But as soon as one starts to speak

about "sovereigns" in the plural, each of them in his own sphere, then things become vague. When Kuyper says that God created everything "after its kind," he only repeats a biblical datum. However, it is really a big leap from "law of nature" to "sovereign." It is also a big leap from a creature of *God* to a product of *man*. And the same must be said about a third one, the leap which he makes from the respective *kinds* of creatures to the so-called "spheres" in which they play their role either with

or without the help or hindrance of man.
Kuyper's metaphorical language is here also a *metabasis eis allo genos*, a matter of mixing up unequal and heterogeneous quantities.

[14] This is disastrous, in particular when one speaks about "spheres" each having its own sovereign.
Really, we are fog-bound.

5. Now the sky can clear up only if we quietly put ourselves under the preaching of the Scriptures. They are fundamentally nothing but a

revelation from God,
knowable and known in Jesus Christ,
His Son. There-
fore no one can derive from their
teachings anything
concerning the theme of "Christianity
and cultural life"
unless he lets them reduce the problem
to the matter (not
of "Jesus and cultural life," but
particularly) of "*Jesus Christ*
and cultural life." It is no doubt very
useful to
consider briefly why the first two
formulations of our
theme are never able to penetrate to the
foundation of
our problem, while only the last-

mentioned one really can. As soon as we have found the answer to this question, we believe that we are holding the clue to our subject as the Scriptures present it to us. 8

[8](#) **Page** [9](#) [10](#)

6. Actually, as we said, the problem should not be formulated as "Christianity and cultural life." For this formulation would not bring us to the root of the problem. As a matter of fact, by "Christianity" one can understand among other things: (1) the *community* of Christians (in the proper sense of the

word or not,
including or not including those who are
Christians in
name only), and (2) the *visible result*
which it was pos-
sible to record in the visible world
because of the Chris-
tian activities of the community of
Christians, or, rather,
which was, and time and again still is,
recorded within
the framework of a more or less fixed
communis opinio.

Of course, the word has many more
meanings. How-
ever, let us leave them for what they are
for conven-
ience' sake. For even when we restrict

ourselves to the just mentioned two meanings of the word, we have enough problems. As for the first definition, what, for example, does "community" mean? Is it just the simple fact of being together, or the possibility of gathering together for those who call themselves Christians, correctly or incorrectly (*sun-ousia*)? Or is it a spiritual unity, spiritual in the sense of produced by the Spirit of God? In other words, is it a unity that is in conformity with God's Word (*koinonia*)? Is this

koinonia the result of the efforts of man, something that *must* come into existence by his actions, or is it the product of God's efforts, something that *has* come into existence and now calls on people to act accordingly by acknowledging the communion which God has made, *de jure* as well as *de facto*?

Or, as far as the second definition is concerned, is one, for the registration of such a *result* of Christian communion, dependent on history and tradition, or can every age thrust upon us its own theory

concerning [15]
this registration and qualification?
"Christianity" is a
difficult word – if one wants to go into
the matter.

Nevertheless, in whatever sense one
may take this
word, one thing is certain: it is
impossible to take
"Christianity" as one's startingpoint
when one wants to
ask questions regarding cultural life, let
alone solve the
problem of "Christianity" and culture. *a.*
This is impossible in the first place
because
Christianity can never be the standard.
Take (in the first

of the two above-mentioned meanings)

Christians

together as a *community*, and then – if you could, by

theoretical abstraction (for you cannot get any further!)

– purge this community of all those who are Christians

in name only. Or (according to the second meaning of

the word) take Christianity in the sense of the *result* of

the Christian (in your ideas even supposedly catholic)

creed in man's and the world's life, and even be as strict

here as you can in applying the standard

and in bestow-
ing the title-of-honour "Christian."
Whichever way
you would take it, in neither of the two
cases would you
be able to derive from this "Christianity"
a *standard* for
dealing with your problem. No Christian
can be the
standard, neither can a factual datum be.
Facts do force
our hands: no one can dispose of them,
and everyone's
actions rest upon the facts. Our hands
can easily beat the
air, but this does not result in or lead to
anything. Only
when they are put into the material

produced by reality
as it has historically developed, they are
able to fashion
this material. And as for this fashioning
of the material
(our acting with responsibility), we fully
depend on the
standards which God has established.
The latter do not
force our hands, they command us. Only
the Word of
God, Holy Scripture, is the standard; not
the Christian or
Christianity, but the speaking *Christ*
Who has been
made known to us by revelation, and
Who also Himself
"explains" God to us, and as the Giver,

Keeper, and
Interpreter of the Law speaks God's
Word to us without
any restraint caused by sin or impotence,
He Who has
been sent to the people on behalf of God.
Any historical
trend, also any cultural trend or
construction, that would
be based on Christianity as a datum or
even on an ideal
Christianity, which is a product of the
mind, must nec-
essarily end in sin, violation of the Law,
and irreligion;
it would be able to establish nothing but
a Tower of
Babel. For by taking a wrong

startingpoint, it has
already started to do so. This way also
historical materi-
alism and positivism have taken the
courage to orate on
Christianity and culture. This way
(though proceeding
from different presuppositions)
idealism, too, in more
than one form, has done the same thing.
This way even
Barthianism has sometimes done so,
when it said, "*Es predigt*"
: there is the *fact* of "preaching" in
Church,
which fact is then the startingpoint [16]
for further theo-
retical development. There is a certain

quantity called "Christianity" . However, this *fact* is not the foundation of any *doctrine*, although every doctrine must take into account all facts, also this one. Facts do not form a foundation for doctrine. On the contrary, there is already a certain measure of doctrine in any description of a fact (or of what is considered as such). When there is a thunderstorm, this is a fact. But those who believe in Wodan and those who can explain it and have become acquainted with the theory of electrical

discharges

understand and describe this fact in completely different ways.

There is even more than this.

"Christianity," as it takes shape in the midst of the world, carries the name 9

9 **Page 10** 11

of its own choice, and can be registered, is itself always

deeply involved in a current cultural process or even in a

series of cultural processes. Followers of Hegel, and

consequently also Marxists, and National-Socialists,

count Christianity itself among the

cultural phenomena:
the suppliers of the theories that were
chartered by
Anton Mussert 1 wanted to entrust the
"Department of
Culture" 2 with the interests of
Christianity (which could
be protected only in the European part of
the Kingdom
of The Netherlands). This already shows
how seriously
and inevitably "Christianity" itself –
even if it were only
to protect its name – is always involved
in the clashing
of the cultural trends that are present in
every constella-
tion of world life. Besides, it varies

according to local, national, anthropological, and even climatological types. In brief, the term "Christianity," taken in this sense, is a sphinx, and nothing else. *b.* And to the extent that it is no sphinx but can be allocated in history in a pure or (which is something different again) fixed shape, it has on its part often interfered in the cultural struggle in a high-handed and arbitrary way and with many shortcomings and sins. In every subsequent process of formation, deformation, or

reformation, it sometimes tried to become a real and direct cultural force (remember the papacy), or lived, either consciously or unconsciously, from certain principles which put on its work program a clear *cultural* commission as its essential task. Of course this was wrong. For Christianity is not a matter of culture.

Although, on the other hand, culture is certainly something that Christianity is concerned with. But according to the ever-repeated (although not biologically or evo-

lutionistically determined) action of deformation and reformation, historical Christianity has never been able in the course of the ages to lead one specific cultural idea to victory, neither has it ever fully completed any of its mandates regarding cultural life. One will find here the most extreme variations: there is a vast distance

between cultural [17] imperialism – as it was developed by the Church of Rome in certain periods – and the isolated position, separatism, and

asceticism of the "pious"
but culture-shy people and congregations
that are of the
opinion that they represent true
Christianity only in this
sort of shyness. Who would be able to
derive a cultural *standard*
from such a "Christianity?" Neither is a
majority or a minority decisive in this
respect. Justice as
well as power, health as well as healing
gifts, they can
belong to the majority, but also to the
minority, even to
the smallest minority one could imagine.

1. Anton Mussert was the "leader" of the
National-Socialists in The Netherlands

before and during the Second World War

(Translators' note).

2. The Department of Culture (*Cultuurkamer*) was one of the institutions imposed

upon the Dutch by the German occupying forces. Registration was compulsory for e.g.

artists – although many of them preferred to

cease their activities or perform in secret

(Translators' note). 10

[10](#) **Page** [11](#) [12](#)

7. In the second place: History confirms that, strictly speaking, the problem cannot be

formulated as "Jesus and cultural life" either. For, to put it strongly, if no more is added to it, "Jesus" is of no use as far as our problem is concerned. We have to consider that Jesus has explained Himself as the Christ. This Self-explanation (according and with reference to *the Scriptures*) is accepted upon authority by the one and rejected by the other. This rejection is often camouflaged under the cloak of ignorance. The complaint is: He is such a *rid-dle*; please allow *me* to pray the prayer of the

ignorant,
in order to learn how to qualify this
Jesus! Presently one
will himself construct some Jesus-image
or other. Not
God's Sent One, Jesus Himself, but a
human concept of
"Jesus" is also *made* into a sphinx by
those who do not
acknowledge Him as *the Christ*.
However, He is not a sphinx, for His
Self-expla-
nation is clear enough. But He becomes
one to those
who dispose of His Self-explanation.
Then for these
people a riddle is propounded in Him.
And this riddle is

not disclosed as long as Jesus is
acknowledged only as
"Jesus" . And old maxim used to say:
Ubi vides, non est fides;
that is wherever something can be seen,
no faith is
needed. We will not analyse this adage;
it can be well
meant, but in general terms it is not
correct. People
could see the "historical Jesus" ; but, in
order to really
know and acknowledge Him, faith was
needed. The fact
that the man Jesus was God's Christ
(Messiah), that He
was called the "son" of Joseph, though
without having

been begotten by him, and much more than this, remained a matter of faith. *Ubi vides, ibi fides. Visio quaerit fidem. Fides quaerit intellectum.*

This thought in fact preceded Christianity. For the Bible has never restricted itself to a speaking of "Jesus" only. In the Old Testament it first spoke of "Christ" (Messiah). But the fact that this *promised Christ* would later appear under the name of "Jesus" was then not yet known. However, since He did come, the Bible always

speaks, as a matter of fact, about *Jesus Christ*. Before "Jesus" as a historical person came into this world, He was announced as *Christ*. [18] That is to say, God described His office and work in its quintessence *before* His historical appearance under a human name, in a human shape, and in a particular cultural situation, was even vaguely defined. Remember only the protoevangel in paradise. When after many centuries during which God, by means of the prophets, had spoken about the

coming Christ (Messiah) and given information in advance about His office and work, this Messiah came

into the world and was registered as the son of Joseph and Mary and was called "Jesus," then everyone had to learn to consider this Jesus as the fully authorized *Christ*, unless Jesus was to remain a riddle to him with a supposed appeal to his own pretended authority to interpret. A *supposed* appeal, we said, for the real Jesus is terribly angry with those who refuse

to accept the key
to the interpretation of His person and
work from the
hands of God's anointed Prophet and
Teacher. He then
comes to such a generation – usually it is
a majority –
with visitation, or with punishment. Both
fall upon His
unwilling hearers-interpreters as often
as He in the gos-
pels, first of all to His first
"contemporaries" but to us,
too (who are also the contemporaries of
the living
Christ, Who governs us from heaven),
speaks in "para-
bles." Also concerning the subject of

serving God in cultural life, He repeatedly speaks in parables to His "contemporaries" 3 of the days of old as well as (via the Bible) of these days, and He reveals the meaning of these parables, also in cultural-theological respect, to those only who afterwards interrogate Him about all this (today via His Word) in faith. Of what benefit would "Jesus" be to us if nothing else were to follow, if no second 4 name, no second office-name, the name "*Christ*," were added to this first one? The

gospels do not give a biography of Jesus. Neither do they design their own image of Him. They already tell us that in our thinking we are not to go beyond that which is written (concerning Christ, in the Old Testament) (1 Corinthians 4:6).

They do not intend to give a *scientific*-systematic summary of His life's work from any formal and methodological point of view, not even from any cultural point of view. Any systematic treatise on Jesus' works, teachings, prophesying, building up and

breaking down, is lacking in the Scriptures. The Gospel is neither a biography nor a novel. Neither does it describe a cultural phenomenon according to cultural-philosophic or cultural-historical methods, nor does it write Church history after the method of the science of historiography.

3. In both cases we have to apply quotation marks.

For those who together with Him breathed the air of Palestine, were indeed with Him here on earth at the

same time, but His position with respect to and in time yet differed from theirs. And although we today do not see Him living among us, we are nevertheless as far as time is concerned, His contemporaries; for as the living Kurios He intervenes in our temporal existence, He Who as God and man in one person, always in advance, lives for us and sympathizes with us. 11

[11](#) **Page** [12](#) [13](#)

The Gospel is not even a systematic exposition of the history of *salvation*. Therefore every effort that wants to

learn only from a so-called *Life of Jesus*
what he meant
and still means in a particular aspect of
human life is
doomed to fail. For we have no *Life of*
Jesus. Whoever
consciously would like [19] to write it
would strain
himself in the telling and do injustice to
Him. One can
and may never separate the gospels –
which describe to
us the course that Jesus Christ followed
towards and
through human life in fulfilling God's
counsel and in
accordance with God's revealed will to
remain Himself

in evangelic redemption – from Old Testament prophecy; nor from the history of salvation and revelation, out of which He came to the fore according to plan – just as this history itself is of Him and determined by Him; nor from the epistles of Paul and the other authors of the New Testament epistles; nor even from the Apocalypse, with which the Bible completes its cycle. This Apocalypse, too, contains a description of history, not only concerning the future, but also concerning the past

(Revelation 1:12 e.g.), and even concerning what was contemporary to John, its author (e.g. regarding Rome's emperor-worship as anti-christian moment, chapters 13 and 18). Also this last Bible-book lets us hear the revealed truth regarding the background and constituent elements and trends of any kind of history, cultural history included; e.g., that there is a *satanic* urge behind the anti-christian beast (Revelation 12), and that any struggle, the cultural one included, is fundamentally the

struggle between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; it is the *old* serpent that in any *new* cultural period persecutes the *old* "church-as-woman" and her one "Seed" and intends to annihilate them.

To summarize it all, no one is able to characterize the work of "Jesus" in a faithful way, as long as it has not become clear to him from the whole of the Scriptures what Jesus came to accomplish as the Christ and what He therefore, as God's office-

bearer par excellence, has to do in, and for, and also with the cosmos.

The biblical preaching of "Christ" must in its contents absolutely determine already in what manner one is to speak about the biblical stories concerning "Jesus" .

4. "Jesus" is usually called His personal name and "Christ" the name referring to His office. Of course there are several elements of truth in this distinction. However, in His case, the name Joshua (Jesus) is on

purpose,
expressly, pleromatically, and therefore
for
this one case, exclusively interpreted on
the
basis of the phrase "He shall save His
peo-
ple" (Matthew 1). Consequently Joshua
(Jesus) is the first name-of-office, it
regards the material of His office and
com-
mission. The second one (Christ)
regards
the legitimacy, the concrete function and
analysis of, and His suitability for this
com-
mission. 12

8. Actually this is not so strange. No one has ever been great in this world without having to be explained and understood partly on the basis of the time in which he lived, but also partly with reference to his own personality, that which the Father of spirits endowed him with individually and exclusively. However, as far as "Jesus" is concerned, it is actually still different. As we have already said, in His works he is never understood in isolation from, but, definitely, also not on the basis of

the time which He spent here on earth among men. He is known also by means of, but not on the basis of, His days. For He dominates, directs, and governs all ages. For Him the "fullness" of time does not mean a casual "occasion" or, as something [20] quite fortuitous, the fertile soil into which He, "finding" the field, could sow whatever He wanted, but it was His time, the "*kairos*" – taken by Him, as created for His sake – in the "*chronos*" extending according to God's plan. Neither can He be

explained on the basis of the cultural history of "the nations" nor on the basis of Israel's history of salvation, for of both these "histories" (which are fundamentally one and of one territory) He is the foundation, the Worker, and the "Firstling," the beginning, the principle, the aim, and also the new startingpoint. The study of Hellenism cannot explain Him, even though it will be essential for the distinctive interpretation of His words and works (and vice versa). Neither does the knowledge

of Judaism "explain" Him, although –
provided that it
produces good results – it sharpens
every interpreter's
pencil. The "faithful Witness" Who
speaks continu-
ously, but Who only as far as unbelief is
concerned
sometimes speaks in riddles, is Himself
not a sphinx. Oh
no, He never is. But a "Jesus *concept*,"
formed in innum-
erable variations by people who do
not know Him as
the Christ, and an *image* of "Jesus"
arbitrarily designed
– this is what time and again vexes its
designers and

worshippers with the quiet and mocking smile of a sphinx. The latter is again and again placed near the great caravan-routes of mankind.

However, who decides which is the most important and the central one of these routes if the Bible is not permitted to decide?

This sphinx can be seen standing in the midst of time.

But who will put an end to the discussions – which are being revived also in this century – about the real nature of "*die Mitte der Zeit*"? This sphinx, which since the

beginning of this era no eye has seen nor
ear heard but
the contours of which time and again
loom up in the
hearts of many people, is passed by
many centuries. But
it is silent, completely silent – unless
"Christ" has been

found in "Jesus" throughout the
Scriptures. For Jesus
Christ used to speak and He is still
speaking: He is
"present" with His Godhead, majesty,
grace, and Spirit,
speaking in His Word. Until the moment
that one listens
to Him, one can only compose fiction

about this sphinx
but not prophecy concerning it. Jesus
must be put in His *own*
light. Rather, He has to present Himself
to us in His
own light. But in this presenting and
explaining Himself
in His own light, Jesus is already doing
the work of *Christ*.
It is precisely in this work that He is the
Christ,
God's Prophet, Priest, and King. The
light which does
indeed shine in Jesus, shines in Him
because He is the
Christ, the Servant of the LORD. He
does not allow us
to isolate "Jesus" from "Christ" – not

even in the academy, since it is not permitted "in life." Is there still any reason to be astonished because people are so strongly divided with regard to the question what the importance of [21] "Jesus" is for cultural life, and because the problem "Jesus and culture" is given almost as many "solutions" as there are minds brooding on this problem? No, it cannot be otherwise. And in the inevitability of this oppressive phenomenon His greatness is revealed and His judgment executed. For

therein we
find a proof in the negative of the
horrible seriousness
which is evident in the sanctions of His
positive com-
mandment that we are never to "see"
Him as "Jesus" but
always fully to "hear" Him as "Jesus
Christ." For other-
wise these "sanctions" come into force.
The history of
the "Jesus paragraphs" in cultural-
historical works is so
confusing that they make us think of a
cultural-histori-
cal judgment: "Because they seeing see
not; and hearing
they hear not, neither do they

understand" (Matthew 13:13). Any arbitrariness in constructing a "Jesus image" receives its own reward: it has to share the field with a multiplicity of the most individualistic views. We have already pointed out some of the bad harvests produced by this noxious soil. However, remember that it is of "Jesus" that one wants to speak; then the harvest becomes even more audacious and depressing. The Marxist places "Jesus" in cultural history as the great revolutionary. Ernst Haeckel utters his

oracles on Jesus
as despiser of culture. Constantine the
Great saw in Him
the most successful propagandist of a
most Christian
cultural struggle. Oswald Spengler
places Him – Jesus!
– among the historical pseudomorphoses
of Arabic cul-
ture. Chamberlain sees in Him the
founder of a moral
culture. Hegel connected to "Jesus" a
sort of cultural
pantheism – this was done by him who
apart from this
was yet so wise as to remember that no
one can isolate
himself here from the trinitarian motifs

of the early 13

[13](#) **Page** [14](#) [15](#)

Christian way of representing things.

Many people, for

whom the sun rose only at Stockholm or
Lambeth,

where they wanted to formulate the
"third confession" –

where is it now? – saw in "Jesus" the
great formulator of

direct "messages" to the cultural world
on the so-called

topical cultural questions, although it
must be said that

the direct character of their "messages"
can be obtained

only at the cost of a fundamental
vagueness. Again other

convention delegates present themselves
as inspired
apostles or as inspiring mahatmas and
they, too, render
"Jesus" a small place among the "wise"
who have left
behind a sufficient number of enigmatic
sayings to pro-
vide a lasting connection between "East"
and "West."

That way the traditional "Teacher" of the
West is trans-
formed in this encounter into an equally
traditional
"Patriarch" from the East. The Western
world always
had its "Teachers" *speak*, while the East
prefers to hear

(!) its "patriarchs" *keep silent*. The former express their conceptual learning in their [22] lines of writing, while the latter between their few lines make us guess at their strictly paradoxical thoughts, deriding any conceptual "clarity," which is then regarded as but a lack of clarity.

This way "Jesus" as yet becomes a cultural factor, not so much because of what the theologians have heard Him say, but because of the fact that the theosophists heard Him keep silent: the "sphinx" is here no accident but the

only suitable figure. And hardly have these people been together in conference, leaving behind a "message" also concerning Jesus, or, look: ascetics, mystics, sectarians of another kind, consider "Jesus" as entirely indifferent to culture. He only speaks of God, they say, and to "the soul," and "the heart," but for the rough and tough life of the big world, He does not, in their opinion, want to utter a single word apart from that of permanent separation: Go out from Babylon, separate yourselves! Theo-

logians belonging to the school of modern *Religionsgeschichte* put "Jesus" in one line with Mohammed, Zarathustra, and other "founders of religion" and do not wish to hear of a factual distinction between true and false (pseudo-)religion; at best they will consider a distinction between degrees of divinatory capacity. And several chiliastic sects, which all through the centuries have nibbled not only at scholastic hierarchical but also at living, reformationally sound Christianity, consider "Jesus," strictly speaking,

as the grim
prophet of their own cultural egotism
and separatism:
abruptly they dare to establish a private
community that,
in a life withdrawn from the suction of
the world, is
looking for the borderline which once
will separate the
world and the Church forever.

9. Also the "church" itself is at fault
here. Even she
often neglected to see in "Jesus" and in
all He did and
did not do the "Christ" of God. She is
guilty in so far as
she allowed theologians to lift the four

gospels out of
the whole of the list of Bible-books and
to abandon the
totality of biblical teachings if only they
could distil
from the gospel data an "objective"
"Jesus" image. As
long as one restricts one's attention to
"Jesus," one may
at best perhaps be able to say what
"Jesus" has *not* done
with respect to the cultural question;
however, one will
not arrive at a *positive* answer. For in
order to be able to
give a *positive* answer we must, apart
from the name
"Jesus" (His first name-of-office), take

into account the
(second) name "Christ." Those who only
reckon with
the "Jesus" of historiography, neglecting
the prophecy
that comes to us in the name "Christ," do
not get any
further than small wares: an exemplary
interpretation of
text-fragments, a parallel, a comparison,
a parable.

Such mere pedlary sometimes awakens
feelings of pity
when with the help of [23] some small
details of the
gospel story it distils certain
contributions to a doctrine
concerning "Jesus as cultural

theoretician." The gold, incense, and myrrh of the Nativity story then sometimes have to serve as proof that He does like riches and wealth. We are often referred to the fact that He let Himself be served by the money of some rich persons, e.g. the wife of Chusas, king Herod's steward, as a detail intended to teach us that Christ instructs "the Church" to make a *rule*, if possible, of what was once for Israel an *emergency* measure and a retaliatory measure sanctioned by special decree: spoiling "the Egyptians." The

costly ointment with which He let
Himself be anointed
in the presence of Simon, His host for
the moment, His
entering into the house of rich Scribes to
eat with them,
even the garment that was gambled away
by soldiers at
the foot of Calvary's cross and which
was "without
seam, woven from the top throughout,"
they all serve as
illustrations in object-lessons about such
problems as
"Jesus and good taste," "Jesus and
riches," "Jesus and
culture." We shall refrain from
mentioning more.

But does one not perceive how insignificant all this is? The gold and myrrh and incense are not mentioned again in the Gospels. The money was perhaps spent on a flight, the flight to Egypt. The Rabbi from Nazareth did not add to the money that He accepted but it was spent on the ministry of the Preacher of the Gospel of God's Kingdom. The costly ointment was accepted, not in order to teach the disciples anything about wealth and the use of wealth, but in order that 14

14 Page 15 16

Simon would submit himself to a preaching that put him to shame, or to teach His disciples – it was high time – concerning His imminent death. In the latter case this ointment was then presently added to the supply of funeral ingredients.

What can one do with this sort of "data" if one does not know more than this? Is this then a *cultural* image: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His

head" (Matthew 8:20)? Is this really a cultural-technical datum: "When they chase you away from one village, go to the other and shake off the dust of your feet (Matthew 10:14)? And if one does not want to hear any questions but only assertions, well, here they are. He withdrew partners from a flourishing fishing business, James and John. He made, no, not some masked culture types but unmasked fishermen, even from Galilee, follow Him, the Nazarene. One of them speaks his

own dialect when
he timidly slips into the court-room
where the great
court-case of the world is decided. He
heals lepers,
although sporadically; however, He
does not establish
leper-houses. He opens the eyes of the
blind – again,
sporadically – but He leaves others in
their blindness; at
any [24] rate, He does not establish an
organization for
the support of the blind. For such a
miracle He once uses
mud. Although He is offered a royal
crown, He does not
accept it. He makes His entry into the

capital while sitting on the young of an ass. He deals carefully with servants, and when one of His disciples injures the ear of a certain slave called Malchus, He heals the man; but it is in vain that one looks for the beginning of an Association for the Abolition of Slavery. He looks those who have been possessed by demons deep into the eyes and leads them to the light; however, He never built a clinic, and did not make any preparations for that – at least, not in any direct sense. And the authors

called by Him later
on issue books, gospels, that show a
complete lack of
any artistic style and that are written in
the common
language of the people. Again we ask:
Does one make
any progress by trying to define and
solve the problem
with the help of this sort of details? Can
one in this way
even contribute to its solution?

10. Perhaps someone is of the opinion
that we are not
completely fair, and certainly not
serious, in presenting
the above collection of curiosities from

this petty retail trade. Instead of these details, would he prefer to see the life of Jesus in broad outline?

Well, this can be arranged.

But the result will be the same, even then.

We shall mention a few points only.

When the Rabbi of Nazareth was here on earth,

Judaism – just to mention one thing – was of almost no

significance at all as far as the plastic arts were con-

cerned. The background of this frequently observed

phenomenon could not have been entirely praiseworthy

in His opinion. For more than once it is evident that He was a seer and a prophet. The seer knows what is in man, and the prophet time and again brings it into relation with the rules given in the Scriptures. Therefore His keen eye and His prophetic insight made it clear to Him – more than it would be possible with us – that this deficiency was – at any rate, was also – the result of a wrong interpretation of the second commandment which the Father of Jesus Christ had given in the Law of the Ten

Commandments to His people Israel and to all the nations. We would be utterly wrong if we were to apply Christ's complaint and accusation that the Jewish leaders had made God's commandment null and void by their human ordinances *only* to those few ethical maxims concerning which the average reader of a Church magazine asks the editor of the question column for clarification: Are we allowed to eat blood sausage, to ride our bikes on Sunday, to marry our cousin, and

things like that. The [25]
unproductiveness which, with
respect to the plastic arts, distinguished
the Jews from
almost all the civilized nations of those
days and later, *must*,
in as far as a wrong interpretation of the
second
commandment was involved, have
seemed a gap to the
true and Spirit-filled Law-interpreter
and as such must
have hurt Him. One can express this
opinion without
prejudging the question whether the
plastic arts are
included by Christ among the concrete
assignments

which he gives to His soldiers on their pilgrimage of the "last days." For suppose that He with respect to the plastic arts does not unconditionally wish to give His people a mandate; still He can never take under His protection a sort of negativistic and ascetic ethics as far as it originates in a wrong interpretation of the Law of God and intends to be a God-pleasing document of this wrong interpretation. This is the more likely because the tabernacle as well as the temple made use of the services 15

15 Page 16 17

of men who were proficient in the plastic arts, even (think of Bezaleel and Aholiab, who are given a prominent place in Dr. Abraham Kuyper's concept of common grace) by divine appointment. Nevertheless, "Jesus" has not given any direct instructions regarding, say, a theory of art, which, in whatever way one may wish to answer the question that was asked above, would at any rate have been fitting there. When one thinks of the man Jesus as the chief

Prophet and
Teacher, also for the artist, of Him Who
lived always in
the presence of God without sin, then
His "attitude" in
this respect will be the more
"disappointing," at least for
those who would like to hear from the
mouth of "Jesus"
a more or less developed system of
cultural ethics or
aesthetics. Even the (developed)
prolegomena are lack-
ing in "His" teachings. He did not teach
His "own"
ideas: He was not a lecturer but a
Prophet. How often
did He not say: "It is written" ? Speaking

this way He does not take His place behind a lectern to teach a system that carries His own name, but He takes His place among all the prophets; and even when He shows Himself to be more than these, as their "fulfilment," He can never be separated from them. This is most "disappointing" ; this "Jesus" considers it an honour that no lectures on His "own" rules are to be expected from Him. He came, as He says, not to destroy the God-given "Law" (*torah*) but to fulfil it. "To fulfil" is not the same

as "to
destroy" (by means of His "own"
system), and also not
the same as "to add unto."

Above we mentioned the absence of a
fully
developed and direct *thetic* theory of
culture. However,
does "Jesus" perhaps present a kind of
polemics or
apologetics regarding cultural theory?
Or principles of
stylistics? Or fragments thereof? Or
aphorisms?
Quite easily one could encourage the
notion that
there was, [26] after all, some reason for
such during the

period which He spent here below among men. We have here in mind the increasing hellenization of Israel's life in those days. Also the arts were greatly influenced by Hellenism. For example, music. Just as for the "sacred" *cult*-activities the Hebrew language obstinately maintained itself while Greek made itself felt in matters of *culture*, so Jewish music continued to be binding for the liturgist for use in the temple cult, but outside it the "free" Hellenistic music fought against the Israelite style

for predominance in profane-cultural use. Architecture showed the influence of several cultural phases but in particular of the hellenistic one and more and more lacked a character of its own. The public games, the governmental machinery, military service, fashion to some extent, they all were more or less patterned after

foreign models. This, again, must have hurt from all sides the mind of the man Jesus, a mind sharpened with precision by the knives of the Law of

God. A lack of style and in particular a loss of style must have wounded Him, Who as a man happens to be God's second and supreme composition without flaw. It must always have struck Him. To Him as Bible-reader, by day and by night a (not only *ahnend* but) Self-conscious Prophet, the levelling, the internationalization, the quasi-ecumenically interested denaturalization of (also) the cultural life of His people – a denaturalization which in fact prostituted itself to all the "gentiles" –

must have been
to Him a pressing reason for anxiety. For
partly this was
one of the consequences of the
dispersion of Abraham's
children among the nations. And was this
dispersion not
called God's *judgment*? It showed the
vestiges, the
traces or remnants, of the mastery of
foreign powers that
had successively overrun, the people of
"Jesus." In this
dispersion He saw the results of Israel's
sin; and *only in the second place*
He saw in it a preparation for His own
mission. Israel's dependence on other
countries was to

him a matter of punishment. In it He distinguished sin, loss, weakness, worldliness. And is not sin the most severe punishment of sin? This is how already the prophet Zephaniah had seen things. For this prophet, too, had fulminated against a raving about, e.g. foreign fashions or against a copying of foreign customs ("leaping on the threshold" Zephaniah 1:8 9). During King Josiah's reformation he had joined the battle against the sin of ogling demagogues and fulminated against "act-

ing the Assyrian way" – just as still today among us the "stalwart" Calvinist, at least in theory, discerns a bad odour in the fashion of Paris, and the puritan is on the alert against any possible infiltration by a cultural "fifth column." For the company of exotic drill-sergeants deserves no gentler name. The one prophet fulminates against populations the youth of which speaks "half in the [27] speech of Ashdod" (Nehemiah 13:24); the other calls for the days when there will no longer be a

"Canaanite" (such a huckster) pottering about in the temple of Yahweh. Philistine influences are broken by the one reformer in the south, Syrian ones by the other in the north. The importing of foreign religions, at least their "forms" (as if these could be abstracted from their contents) for the sake of business relations and cultural contacts, is plainly called "going awhoring" by a third one. All the prophets know quite well that Israel is first of all "the Church" and only then "a nation." It is a

nation only because it is the Church. And behold, after so many centuries there is now "Jesus," standing in the midst of His people, realizing He is the precursor-suc- 16

16 Page 17 18

cessor of Zephaniah, and of all the reformers, temple-purgers, and prophets, and still He does not produce for His "contemporaries" a detailed and fashionable system of hodogetics regarding "fashions" or their opposite; neither does He in a direct way lecture on style and cultural forms. But He preaches, leads,

prays, holding His Bible in His hand and His fishermen by His hand. Even in the matter of the marriage problem He refuses to choose between the two theories presented to Him regarding the right of divorce (the doctrine of Hillel over against that of Shammai, Matthew 19). He never looked at a woman. What is all this? Is this negativism? Or asceticism? Is this a matter of surrendering riches of life which can surely be considered wealth? Is it a hankering after a *dôme des invalides*? Please stop

asking questions.

Rather realize that with our questions-with-no-answers we are sent from pillar to post as long as the full biblical light concerning the *Christ* has not dawned upon the doings of *Jesus*.

11. Therefore the problem is none other than "*Jesus the Christ* and culture" .

For in this combination of the two names the key

to its solution has been given us. *Jesus*: the *essence* of

His office (to save, *pleromatically*) .

The Christ: the *legitimacy*

of His office (He has been "ordained" of God, definitively) and also the *guarantee* of His office (He was anointed "with the Spirit," not with some ointment only, and consequently: He always attains what He definitively wants to attain in pleromatic respect). Those two names, which have been combined this way once only, exclusively, in this one Person-having-two-distinct natures, create style in what seems to be stylelessness, and a chord out of the single tones. Now that in the light of the Scriptures we have seen

these two names
combined in *Him*, we hold the clue and
are able to read
the music of "the life of Jesus" : *Ein
wohltemperiertes Klavier*.

Rather, not "a" but "the" Well-Tempered
[28]

Clavichord. For now the *office* of this
Man of God
requires our attention. And from the
fulfilling of the *office*
which He holds when awake and when
asleep, in
going and in sitting down, in speaking
and in keeping
silent, the preaching of the counsel of
God concerning *Jesus Christ*
comes to us.

This, then, applies to the first term of our problem.

Moreover, from the fulfilling of the same office we get a clear insight also into the second term of our problem: *cultural* life, the cultural task, the concept of culture. 17

17 Page 18 19

12. In the above we have time and again emphasized the fact that Jesus Christ cannot be known without the Scriptures – which He Himself used to quote in order to prove His identity. We had to put our finger at this detail because otherwise we would still not

arrive where we would like to be. There have been hundreds of "Jesuses" (Joshuas). They are still there, in the ghettos and in the market places. Strictly speaking, there have also been millions of "christs" (anointed ones) and they are still there, in catacombs and fortunately also on the city squares. However, as for the son of Mary and Joseph (as was supposed), the fact that He would deserve to be called Jesus (Joshua) truly and exhaustively and that in Him the divine appointment would be

definitive and His
being enabled to fulfil His task adequate,
this we do not
know from the sound of the names,
neither do we read
this in His parousia, His appearance, but
we *hear* this
from the Scriptures.

And now that we know all this, we see
that,
although His *office* never separates the
Christ of the
Scriptures from the people and in so far
does not isolate
or abstract Him from them, nevertheless
His unique and
exhaustive, definitive, and pleromatic
anointing, and

this connected with His unique Person (constituted of two distinct natures), made Him as the second Adam and as a Mediator entirely different in all His work from anyone else. His work, since it was and is the work belonging to His *office*, is seeking us all. But because it was and is *His* work, it always defines Him in His unique service to God. One cannot copy Him without underrating Him. There are thousands of soldiers, but there is only one generalissimo. Whoever wants to have

this one generalissimo imitated, paralyzes the whole army. The generalissimo is closely connected with them all, and he decides for everyone what the regulation uniform will be, but he himself is "non-regulation."

However, the law of the country has been written into his heart. *Law* and *uniform* are two different things.

Let us again take up the thread of our argument:

Not to get married was a command for Him alone. His office was to suffer and [29] die. His office consisted of

a struggle against God and against Satan
at the turning-
point of the ages. His office was: to be
the second
Adam; that is, to establish a community
of men, this
time not of one blood, as a living soul,
but from one
Spirit as a quickening *pneuma*. It
commissions Him to
rule over a large nation, not because this
nation has in
common the same strongly beating blood
nor a common
struggle and triumph, but on the judicial
ground of the
unique sacrifice of the blood that flowed

forth only from *His*
broken body.

This office put Him among men, as One
Who was

never authorized to isolate Himself but
Who yet was

completely lonely in the *idion* of His
"experience" (His

peculiar experience). For "experience"
means: to expe-

rience that the Word which God spoke
concerning us

comes true. Well, then, a very peculiar
Word was spo-

ken regarding Him, a Word relevant to
His unique situ-

ation. Only by enduring this loneliness
He could

presently praise God and cause Him to be praised by a great multitude. This office engulfed Him, even bodily.

It totally obligated Him. It so completely dominated His spiritual and bodily life that all His flesh and blood devoted itself fully to the one great battle that He would wage in righteousness and strength before God (*enopion Theou, coram Deo*)

. Who does not immediately feel that with this everything has in principle been said about Jesus' status as an unmarried Person? Who does not feel

that He would even have been unable to "heal" marriage, also as a cultural monument, if He, as the Servant of the LORD, had not taken upon Himself His yoke, without co-or adoption of "the children given to Him" according to the law of flesh and blood? "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same" (Hebrews 2:14). For He is not ashamed to call Himself "the Brother of us all." This is His office. However, He

would have been ashamed indeed to call Himself the (physical) Father of some of us. FOR THIS IS NOT HIS OFFICE. His unmarried state is not a pattern for us, nor a humiliatingly "high" ideal for the man who has not the charisma of abstinence. His *office* is so different.

One who has seen this office will presently know what to think about all those other details which we have mentioned above as being all riddles. The gold of the Magi from the East, e.g., and their gifts of incense

and myrrh had only to serve the Great Commission. The costly ointment, the woven garment, the fine table in the house of prominent people – they all had to serve the fulfilling of His *office*. To be sure, He had no place to lay down His head, but this was no proof of contempt of culture, neither was it a silent protest against dwelling in ceiled houses "as such," for the prophets did not curse the [30] dwelling in ceiled houses but only the sin of those who were dwelling in them and at the same time

neglected the temple. No, it was a cause of necessary sorrow in His struggle to *give* us real culture, among other things; in this battle His God never lets Him go "on leave." He selected His fishermen, people of all kinds, not as if, sociologically speaking, only the poor 18

[18](#) **Page** [19](#) [20](#)

and unpretentious in the cultural world could please Him (besides they were not so "poor," those Galileans), but because He had to work also among the people of Galilee: and further, He did not choose

fishermen only
or Galileans exclusively. Did He take
them from among
the poor? The one says He did, the other
remembers just
in time that some of them left behind a
business: they
were, in this case, no poor devils who
squinted with
envy at the golden ornaments of the
ladies of Jerusalem,
but determined heroes who had given up
the "gold-
mine" of their business: the prophecy
concerning the
Messiah had caused their heart to burn
within them.
Christ selected those people for the

apostolate because

He wanted them to preach that the gold
may again adorn

the chair of the prominent ones if this
chair has been

built not on the foundation of what makes
one great

among men, but of that which is right
before God. In

this selection of apostles, then, He was
on His way to

the hour of revelation when He would
cast down all the

cultural philosophers with that fine and
decisive word of

revelation: "the fine linen" of the most
beautiful city "is

the righteousness of the saints"

(Revelation 19:8). The establishing of leper-houses will surely follow if only first of all justice and the concept of the office, which forbids euthanasia, are again acknowledged in accordance with the written law of God. Even the Law of Moses already knew all about social service – the isolation of lepers included. However, Moses considered this as a matter of *theocratic* service in and to the Church, on covenant territory. Thus Christ does not give leper-houses but He gives them *back*, even

when the covenant
territory is no longer geographically the
same as under
Moses, but can presently be
distinguished in *local Churches*.
He wants to have a royal crown, but
only
when the crown of thorns has obtained
it. He transforms
His fishermen into preachers, and His
preachers into
organizers of, e.g., a movement for the
abolition of
slavery, but first the world must be told
that the most
serious and most painful and most
humiliating slavery is
that of sin, and the basis of this essential

slavery must be taken out of the life of the world by *His* humbling Himself unto death, His having become a slave (Philippians 2). He, then, knows with the certainty and practicality of a seer the times and hours of His office. For this reason He, for example, sometimes on purpose leaves some sick people in their sickness. [31] While He healed others, He passes them by, but He does so because He leaves them to be healed by the charismatic power of His apostles. Therein He wants to show,

that, as often as
these apostles of His heal sick people
after Pentecost,
He Himself, with His Spirit, has in them
come back to

this world, still being alive after He has
died. But who
will ever see this leaving of sick people
in their sickness
(e.g., that drudge at the gate of the temple
called Beautiful) in *this* light, if "Jesus" has not
become to him *Christ*,
the Christ Whose "being a seer" is
accompanied
by prophecy?
Yes, indeed, He wants to be understood

as the *Christ of the Scriptures*, also in order to be able to give us insight into His positive attitude towards the problems which we touched on under number 10, above. He shall speak either directly or indirectly, and fundamentally, about architecture, the plastic arts, music, fashions, about the struggle between the tendency to level the cultural development of a nation and the urge to maintain its specific character. However, He shall do so only as *Christ*, as the One Who as the uncreate, eternal

Logos, even before the birth of "Jesus," dominated the history and culture of all the nations, and Who on the feast of Pentecost entered into His working period of "a thousand years" from Ascension Day and Pentecost until His second coming. In this final period of the everlasting, now incarnate Word of God, He shall complete and perfect His work as the Christ – in every respect, also in that of the questions and struggles regarding the "cultures" of the past, the present, and the future; and,

moreover, also by establishing a *Christian culture* in the midst of the world. 19

19 Page **20** 21

13. Further, also with respect to the second term of our problem, that is, for the development of the concept of "culture" or "cultural life" which is in full harmony with God's revelation, the Scriptural concept of the office is of direct and constituent significance. Only when we take into account the office concept, as it was grasped so well especially by John Calvin, there will be

an end to the tiresome game of the
spirits, of which the
one plays "religion" off against
"culture," the other
"culture" against "religion."

The chain of thought is here readily
handed to us.

As for the "second" Adam, we must go
back to the *beginning*
of things, when the "first one" was there,
the
first one to whom God, Who gave
revelation within the
communion of His covenant, also made
known the first *principles*
of it. For the first Adam was – at least
for
those who do not think in an

evolutionistic way – not a child, no playfully naive person. To use the language of the Belgic Confession of Faith, he did indeed, together with all other creatures, [32] have his *officium*, His task as part of the created unity of God's works. However, for him – just as for the angels – the *officium* became an *office*. He had been made by God in order to be an office-bearer, not just as part of the huge world-engine, but also as the engine-driver appointed by God, and answerable to Him, answerable not in

the first but in the second capacity.

This appointment of *adam* (man) to such a

responsible office determines his whole course of action

in all his relationships. It even determines his qualities.

For God created him just as He wanted him to be. And

God wanted him to be a purposeful office-bearer. From

this point of view the concept of the "naive" primitive

man disappears completely. Man is given the title of

"God's fellow-worker." 5 He is given His own work in

such a wide cosmic context that in the original world of paradisaal purity this work can immediately and always

be called "liturgy" ; that is, service in and to the Kingdom. To which Kingdom? To the one of which God is King; that is, the Kingdom of heaven, the subjects of which have been distributed over two sections of the cosmos: one "upper" section and one "lower" section. If this is the image of the first Adam, then the Christ can justly bear the name of the second Adam

only if He, too
– as man – falls within and wants to fall
within the
framework of these categories of office.
For it is pre-
cisely as the second Adam that the Christ
as office-
bearer in the *middle* of history must
revert to its *begin-ning*
and to the then given *principles*. By
fulfilling His
office – which is fundamentally the same
as that of all
men – before God's countenance, He
takes upon Him-
self the great reformational task of
returning to the ABC 6
of world and life order. To serve God,

in concrete
life, to obey God in any function, to fulfil
God's
expressed will with all that is in us and
to do so in the
midst of and in organic relation and
communion with all
that is around us – *this is the ABC*. Here
the problem of *culture*,
and also its definition, has been stated in
princi-
ple.

Presently we shall come back to this
point.

But when after having provisionally
looked for a
resting-point for our thoughts, we take up
the thread

again, then we see Christ in His *office* standing in the midst of world history. It is in such a way that the concept of the "midst of history" (Tillich et al.) is developed in accordance with the Scriptures. It is no "category," on the same level with the "border concept" of a so-called a-historical "beginning" or with that of an equally a-historical "*eschaton*" – again taken as a "border concept" – but it is a result of a real measuring and dividing of time into real periods of time. There is indeed a his-

torical *beginning*; then it was that man was created and that he *fell* into sin. There will also be an *end*: when everyone will receive the things done "in [33] his body" (by him in his temporal existence here below) (II Corinthians 5-10). So the "middle" of history is the period in which Christ comes to redeem this end from the curse of being exclusively determined by the fall and rupture that took place so shortly after the beginning.

5. It has no sense here to argue about the question whether at every place in the Bible

that has the Greek word for (God's) "fellow-worker" the right exegesis draws the same conclusions as the above-mentioned ones. For not one single "text" but several require our attention here. Besides, the phrase "God's fellow-worker" has been given a certain fixation in systematic theology since the synergistic struggle.

6. In can also – even better – be expressed in Greek: *stoicheia* (New Testament). 20

[20](#) **Page** [21](#) [22](#)

14. For to make it again possible for man to fulfil this

original service of God, and to give back to Him His world and His work-community, Christ comes to do two things.

In the first place He comes to reconcile God and to still His wrath. He does this in perfect alliance with God Himself, Who is the subject of the "*katallage*"

(reconciliation): "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" (II Corinthians 5:19). "In Christ"

He was the only Author of this *katallage*. For the eternally burning hatred of God against all

sin cannot keep
its postulates in harmony with those of
His eternally
flaming mercy unless during time (in the
so-called
middle of history) God's *punishing* as
well as His *demanding*
justice is satisfied. The punishing justice
requires the complete condemnation of
the guilty one;
the demanding justice still desires the
rendering of an
inviolable obedience "in the body" (that
is, during a
man's lifetime). Therefore the Christ
stands surety with
respect to this twofold justice. And He
indeed fulfils the

pledge. This way He within time brings about the judicial verdict that was known and demanded by God's wrath as well as by His love: with the ransom of His blood He purchases the right of the renewal of what is now called God's "new" mankind. It is now called His redeemed Christian congregation, which through Him and together with Him is heir to eternal life.

However, since for Him and for all people this eternal life – like eternal death – began and shall begin

already here, in this "cultural world," He does yet a second thing. All life and death is now given to Him to be administered by Him, because they remain determined in their everlasting character by the judicially-constituent ransom of Himself in the "middle of history." This way He administers eternal death as Christ's sentence-of-condemnation to those who have alienated themselves in their historical existence from His judicial verdict (" whereunto also they were appointed," 1 Peter 2:8).

Consequently through His Holy Spirit
(Who actively
propels the "middle of history" towards
the "end") He is
coming to do two things. On the one
hand, He will, in
the cultural world, cause the grapes of
the earth to ripen
in order to be trodden in the winepress
of the adminis-
tration of God's anger. On the other hand
He comes,
through the same Holy Spirit, "in" Whom
He Himself
"completes" the [34] "thousands years"
of His own
dominion of peace, to equip the work-
and-office com-

munity of God which He Himself purchased for the

work and service of God in order that all its living members may enter into the city of perfect glory.

It is a struggle of a *judicial* nature. For that reason it is also a struggle for *power*.

The *judicial* struggle which He fought before God and Satan was decided in the middle of the history of the world and that way He put it again on a firm foundation.

And the *dynamic* battle, which in principle He

won for ever, brings for God's newly-purchased work community, the *new mankind*, which is nevertheless fundamentally the same as "the old," great powers of the outpouring of the Spirit, powers of sanctification of Church conquest, of world maturation of cultural action.

This twofold fulfilling of His office renders transparent for us Christ's life as an office bearer here below and in heaven and is of predominant significance for the problem under consideration. 21

[21](#) Page [22](#) [23](#)

15. For in the fulfilling of this office, whereto He has been called and also perfectly equipped, this corrupt world experiences once again the miracle of the appearance of the whole, the beautiful, the original or, if one wants, the "ideal" man. As long as He is in the state of humiliation this wholeness and pureness is only there in concealment. Then it is the decorum of a pure, sinless human nature that always responds to God's timely speaking in faithfulness to His Law. However, then it

has not yet gained its reward, which glorifies Him also externally, rendering immortality to His human nature.

The reward that glorifies Him also publicly is given Him in the state of glorification: He has become now a King-in-His-beauties. Psalm 110:3 is always fulfilled in

Him: and many a cultural philosopher would like to have written these fine words as soon as he had understood them.

The whole man, is he presented as a gift? Yes, he is. For (a) Christ is the whole man,

standing in our
midst: wherefore He can say: The
Kingdom of God is
"in your midst." This flawless man did
not turn His back
to the others, not even for a single
moment. And not
only this, but (*b*) by the almighty power
of the Spirit
given to Him, He also creates a man
who in principle is
whole again, as a fruit of creative
regeneration.
To believe this, has its consequences. *Ad
a:*
Since cultural achievements are among
man's mandates, and since no one can act
in such a way

that his actions have no cultural significance, Christ, the sinless One, is the only One Who in [35] an entirely pure manner has acted and is still acting upon cultural life. That is to say, He is the only One among men-after-the-Fall. Who can comprehend the fulness of the thoughts, also the cultural thoughts, that are included in the dogma of the Church that sees and preaches Christ as Man-without-sin? As the sinless One He responds, in words and deeds, in a way that is always entirely to

the point in every situation into which
the Spirit thrusts
Him in order that He should prove
Himself to be the
second Adam, even in a world that in
cultural respect is
far removed from that of the first Adam.
What is a more
direct cultural act than to react to
cultural situations and
complications fully and purely, and
fundamentally, and
according to the original rule? And in all
this He is not
just "a" man, but the Son of man. That is
to say: He is
more than a bright spot or a ray of light
for a world that,

also in cultural respect, is heading for the abyss; He is the *Sun* of righteousness, also in this respect. "Sun" does not only mean a source of light but also a source of

energy. As the Logos-Mediator-Surety He is the

hypostasis, the solid foundation, the original ground, the fulfiller, redeemer, and renewer of culture – a cultural sign which shall therefore be spoken against. *Ad b:*

And because He as the Messiah, even before appearing under the name of Jesus, and

also afterwards
– that is, all through the centuries – takes
action by vir-
tue of the *right* to be obtained or already
obtained in the
middle of history, by His redeeming
power, He makes
certain people again as they were "in the
beginning" :
men of God. In the midst of a "crooked
and perverse
generation" He places the types of a
humanity that is in
principle pure. They are not perfect yet;
however, in
principle they *are* there again. They are
there from the
very moment when Adam in faith

submits himself to the
Word of the first Gospel promise. And
they continue to
appear, they increase, they become "the
great multitude
which no man could number," the
multitude of those
who in Christ have been sanctified by
the Spirit. Their
host is increasing in number and is
always to be counted,
until the last day.
In this administration of His own office,
and in the
formation of those who are anointed
together with Him
(" Christians") there comes about
nothing less than a

divine action (an action proceeding from the Father, the Son, and the Spirit) to conquer the world for God, by the Christ of God. "The earth is the LORD's, and the fullness thereof" (Psalm 24:1). This conquest is a reconquest: the property is, as far as it has been destined from eternity, brought back to and restored in its proper relation to the Owner. Christ connects the beginnings of the world with the end, the earliest history with that of the last days, the first things with the *eschata*, alpha with

omega, the [36] ABC of God's
efficacious legislative
Word of the beginning with the XYZ of
His once again
efficacious evangelical Word at the end
of time. For
God's legislative speaking in the
beginning of the world
– to undefiled Adam – was a matter of
speaking in, and
on the basis of, the *covenant*: a matter of
ordering the
mutual relation between God and man, in
promise and
in demand. This covenant together with
its ordinances
had then to govern the world from the
beginning to the

end. And now that, after the breaking of the covenant by the first Adam, the second Adam goes in the way of the covenant again, and restores the same, now the end will still be there as yet, in peace, but this is the *pax Christi* – otherwise there is no peace at all. This way Christ brings all that is in the world to its consummation: that which is secular and that which is ecclesiastical, the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, the power of angels and the brute force of demons. He went before us and 22

then, together with us, back to the origins of God's creation. He there read from the Law tables the work rules which God in the beginning had imposed upon the man of God: that in the history of the created world any labourer created by God had to trace in himself all the "talents" which God had distributed to His labourers in the morning of creation, and learn to use them in such a way that finally, by making productive the "possibilities" which had been put into the

creation and afterwards had to be discovered and respected according to their "kind," man would exploit all its potentials. All the talents which the Master had given to His servants were to have gained in the end, in the evening, as many as were distributed in the morning. And all the possibilities hidden in the cosmos had to be traced, discovered, made to function according to the revealed law, and rendered subservient to the edification of the whole of Cod's creation according to the order of the

respective creatures that had been established from the beginning. If the personal man— assisted in this respect by the other personal office-bearer created by God, the angel — were to fulfil his '*munus*' (office) this way, then, to use an expression taken from the Belgic Confession of Faith, any non-personal creature and also man — and angel — himself, would fulfil again his *officium* (office, or service) (Article 12). This is, if one wants to put it that way, the *Theo-cratic* arrangement of all things.

No less than this did Christ find written
in the
order of the day which God inscribed in
the heart of the
cultural man of the beginning, the
flawless man in the
beautiful garden without a gate called
"The Beautiful,"
for the garden was open then.
What He read there so laid hold of and
dominated
Him that – just to give an example – as
appears from the
synoptic Gospels, He [37] told the
parable of the *talents*,
wherein this ABC is taught again – for
reforming
means: to teach the people the ABC

again – as the last one before He, in accordance with His office, went the way of His sufferings and resurrection. It was the last one He told before His "Millennium" broke through. It so laid hold of Him that in His last great prayer for the Church, "sent up" in the days of His humiliation, He told the Father: "I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil" (John 17:15), that Thou shouldst keep them there, not in their cloister,

which becomes a
refuge of self-willed religion, a
refectory of fatigue, at
least if it has no window and no door
open to the world.

16. This last point, the ABC of the first
days of the
world, is the turning point in our
argument. At this very
moment the door is put on its hinges, and
it must fit.

And – here alone *can* it fit.

For here alone we come to the
possibility of
working out the above-given, still only
provisional,
concept of culture. For culture is a word

that can be found on the first page of the Bible: "Dress the garden, replenish the earth, be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 2:15; 1:28). These first Bible-pages, they are the pages of "the ABC." They contain these three brief commandments in the description of the phase of the so-called "covenant of works." They already fit in the virgin world *which has not yet been completed*; that is, which is still in the process of being developed – according to the plan of creation – in order to reach

the end, the *telei-osis*,
the entering into the state of being
fullgrown.

Therefore this first page of the Bible,
replete as it is with
covenant regulations, is directly of
cultural interest. For
the Creator Himself is culturally
interested. "Culture,"
after all, is a word that has been derived
from the Latin
verb *colere*. *Colere* means "to
cultivate," "to care for."

The farmer who plows his field is
engaged in this *colere*.

There is a field, which is a promise.

And there is

seed, which is also a promise. But there

is also a farmer,
which means: "a *commandment* with a
promise." As a
creature of God he has been put in a
cosmic unity
together with the field and the seed. He
himself is also a
"field" of the everlasting Spirit, and at
the same time he
is seed. He, too, is in his entire bodily
existence a crea-
ture of God's hand, his "conscience," his
consciousness,
included. As a creature of God he, too,
is included when
the Belgic Confession of Faith states that
all creatures
are as so many characters in a most

elegant book (Article 2). But God placed him as a personal creature not only *in* but also *over* all other created life. That is to say, man is, with his conscience, not only a *character* in the book of creation but also a *reader* of this "book" : he must read and understand also [38] himself as a character, although never isolating himself from other creatures. *Deum scire cupio, et animam*: I desire to know God *and* the soul. This well-known saying means, as far as this "soul," known through God, is

concerned,
that it – or let us say: the conscience,
conscious life – is
a character in but also a reader of God's
book. So man as
a personal-spiritual being, as a called
labourer of God,
and as the crowned vice-regent, by the
finding and
sowing of all seed is to take from the
field what is in it.

It is *agri-culture*. 23

[23](#) Page [24](#) [25](#)

However, in order to fulfil this task, as a
lord of
this field, and also, though as a personal
being, to con-
fess that he (he consciously) is one with

this field, under
God, he must undertake self-cultivation.
This self-cul-
tivation immediately finds its limits
here. It may not be
or even be called "personalism." As
soon as the "per-
son" is considered as "divine," or
(which is fundamen-
tally the same thing) as an end in itself,
as a reader who
no longer wants to be a character in the
book of God, he
has fallen to the share of idolatry, the
idolatry of "person
cultivation." He then forgets that in "the
book" of crea-
tion *God's* name is to be read, and that

the God Who
may be known from this book as the
Creator and Re-
creator is transcendent, to an infinite
degree qualita-
tively distinct from all creatures. Self-
cultivation, self-
development, this *positive (!) askesis*,
that is, the train-
ing of the creaturely aspect in us, in
order that what is
human and creaturely may find its
officium herein that
man as a creature may see his *munus* and
fulfil it – this
is good and even commanded. His hand
shall sow and
deposit the seed in the field of the

world. He shall be the medium by which, in faith and faithfulness to the promises which God spoke to His fellow-workers, the silent promises that God put into His creatures, each in its own context, shall find their appropriate fulfilment. In such a self-development, such a self-cultivation, he prepares himself for the growing task, and he lets his God take pleasure also in himself as active field. This was God's wise intent when He created the world. It did not please Him to create the world ready to

hand. He only created it good. The world, then, as it came forth from God's hands, was a world-in-the-promise, a world-in-hope; and as long as it was good this hope could not be called "idle." Neither will the ordinances of creation, those fixed "laws," ever be invalid, "powerless" (unto our perfection) "unless through the flesh." That is to say, when sin makes its entrance. Not that sin can push aside the ordinances of creation. Definitely not. Their continuity is the first

condition for the blessing as well as for the curse – both of which were already announced in paradise. However, the ordinances of creation, which in an obedient world always make the blessing concrete and multiply it, will do the [39] same in a fallen world as far as the curse is concerned. Then they are "powerless" unto blessing, but not unto cursing. This is how God immediately spoke in the sanctions of His "covenant of works," and in so doing He put the whole world, man in particular,

under high pressure,
under "tension." For man, called as a
fellow-worker of
(and also under) God, the world was not
a world of the

"omega" but of the "alpha." The
paradisal world was a
beginning. And in this beginning was
given, in princi-
ple, everything that had to be there
potentially to let it
grow out to a completed world of
perfect order, the *polis*,
the *civitas*, the "city" (state) of God,
paradisally
designed and presently built. If one day
it is to be full-

grown, it needs a historical process of many centuries.

We are indeed in an "interim" ; but it lies not between a primitive and an eschatological "history," both of which would be *a-historical*, but between the "first" and the "last" things, which are as *historical* as the things in "the middle of history." Otherwise it would be nonsense to speak of a "middle." The paradisaical reality, then, is definitely not a so-called "higher" reality; neither is Adam. It is only a *virginal* reality; but for the rest it is, very

concretely, included in time, sober, real, historical; there is flesh in it, and blood, just as there are soul and spirit.

And Spirit.

And now, in this sober, flat reality of historical paradisaical life, God announced that He would work *evo-lution* on the foundation of *creation*. This evolution, according to the nature of created life, cannot take place without the energy which flows out from God, not even for one moment. But, according to God's own commanding Word, which creates order and

allots to every-
thing is own place, it should not happen,
not even for
one single moment, without man as man-
of-God acting
therein as God's fellow-worker. "You
are labourers
together with God" (I Corinthians 3:9);
this is not a
posthumous *quietive* that was
proclaimed by Paul for a
seceded Church somewhere in an
isolated corner. No,
this is a matter of leading back in an
imperative way to
the "first *principles* of the world." This
is not only a
suitable text for a minister's inaugural

sermon, but it is also the day-text for any cultural worker, for the professor as well as the street-sweeper, for the kitchen-worker and for the composer of a Moonlight Sonata.

Therefore the first commandment with a rich

promise reads: "Dress the garden." No castles in the air

are promised in these words; neither do they suggest a

so-called "higher reality." Dress the garden – here first

of all the spade, a cultural instrument, and later on rub-

ber boots, are not put into our hands, but

man's created
spirit has to *invent* them according to
time and place and
to design and adapt them to the dressing
hand and the
foot that breaks up and tramples [40]
down the soil. For
the hand and the spirit, they work
together: *man* has to
"dress." Dress the garden – here no
introspective moral-
izing sermons are delivered, but here
there is a concrete
work-and life-commandment, a highly-
spiritual and,
consequently, everyday commandment.
Biblical interim 24

ethics can only operate with a *lex* that can be grasped. A "commandment" that one cannot lay hold of, a Word of God that one cannot work with, would not enable it to fulfil its pedagogic calling of prescription. For the garden may be called "paradise," and our lyrical rhetoric unfortunately may have changed it, as if by magic, into an isolated, solidly fenced-in spot, where zephyrs blow and which, it seems, only a popularly-misunderstood romanticism can write about. But actually it is some-

thing completely different. The garden is the beginning of *adama*, of the inhabited world. Hence it is also the beginning of the cultural world. The garden lies open.

Therefore we earlier spoke about the beautiful garden but one without a gate called "The Beautiful." All that which issues from the world issues from there, including that which issues from cultural life and all its processes.

For CULTURE becomes HERE (!) THE SYSTEM-
ATIC ENDEAVOR TOWARDS THE
PROCESS-

WISE ACQUISITION OF THE
AGGREGATE OF
LABOUR BY THE SUM-TOTAL OF
HUMAN
BEINGS AS THEY BELONG TO GOD,
EVOLVE
THEMSELVES UNTO GOD IN
HISTORY WITH
AND FOR THE COSMOS, AND ARE
PRESENT AT
ANY HISTORICAL MOMENT,
HAVING ASSUMED
THE TASK OF DISCLOSING THE
POTENCIES
LYING DORMANT IN CREATION
AND SUCCESS-
SIVELY COMING WITHIN REACH IN
THE

COURSE OF THE HISTORY OF THE
WORLD, OF
DEVELOPING THEM IN
COMPLIANCE WITH
THEIR INDIVIDUAL NATURES, OF
MAKING
THEM SUBSERVIENT TO THEIR
ENVIRONMENT,
BOTH FAR AND NEAR,
ACCORDING TO THEIR
COSMIC RELATIONSHIPS AND IN
SUBMISSION
TO THE NORMS OF GOD'S
REVEALED TRUTH;
AND ALL THIS IN ORDER TO MAKE
THE
TREASURES THUS ACQUIRED
USABLE BY MAN

AS LITURGICAL CREATURE, AND,
SUBSE-
QUENTLY, TO BRING THEM,
TOGETHER WITH
THE NOW MORE THOROUGHLY
EQUIPPED MAN
HIMSELF, BEFORE GOD AND PUT
THEM AT HIS
FEET, IN ORDER THAT HE MAY BE
ALL IN ALL,
AND EVERY WORK MAY PRAISE
ITS MASTER.

In this definition the fundamental moments of the biblical creation story have, in our opinion, been rendered. *Dress the garden*: the concrete cultural mandate

to exploit the world's potentials. *Be fruitful and multi-ply:*

a growing sum-total of human beings to be [41]

subjected to the cultural mandate, the obligation to

engage in culture, time and again in every temporal

phase and in all provinces of geographic space. *Subdue the earth, and have dominion:*

the cultural man as a

product of God's creation work, facing his own position:

that of God's vice-regent. *Man created in God's own image:*

cultural work must be spontaneous

(man's qualities have been created in him in view of his *munus*); it is a matter of serving God as a representative of His supreme authority and consequently a matter of discovering God and causing Him to be found in the discovering of the future. God speaks *unto man and with him*, because of his appointment as the chosen representative of God's dominion over all other creatures; and within the communion of the covenant that God made with him, God speaks unto him and with him

about the rest of
the cosmos in spite of the fact that he
himself is part
thereof – which means that self-
distinction is thus
awakened in him, and that self-
cultivation, self-devel-
opment is made clear to him as his duty,
not as an end in
itself but as a matter of mandate. And
finally, he is given
a *moral* commandment: together with all
that belongs to
him he is in his cultural labour subject to
his Creator: in
the determining of his own goals with
regard to created
things he is bound to what he has heard

from God's
mouth by Word-revelation concerning
God's own pur-
pose with respect to the cosmos. He is
summoned to
kneel down, now and presently, before
his Maker in and
together with a cosmos prepared by his
own hand under
God's providence, culturally engaged as
he is in view of
his own, but especially of God's
sabbath, into which he,
man, has to enter.
Under the influence of thinking that has
been cor-
rupted by sin and is hostile to God, in a
world that dis-

rupts all relationships, culture is usually separated from "religion," or at least sharply distinguished from it. *But from the beginning it was not so* (Matthew 19:8). For religion is not a province of life, not a separate function of or for the "heart," not an isolated activity of a devout conventicle of people during certain elevated fragments of man's lifetime. No, religion, or rather the service of God, is to be distinguished from religiosity. Schleiermacher, the pantheistic philosopher-in-the-guise-of-

a-theologian of Romanticism, wrote a book entitled *On Religion*.

However, he dealt only with religiosity and at

bottom – by virtue of his pantheism – this religiosity

was self-worship, in so far as "God" and "universe" are

intertwined in his thinking. He of necessity had to reject

as moralism any action having an objective. "Religion"

was to him neither a matter of "doing" nor of "know-

ing." In our interpretation it is no mere "doing" either. It

is *service*; however, not that of an all-nature particle

oscillating together with the universe, a
[42] particle
called *homunculus*, but the service of
the man who loves
his Father, knows Him as being *above*
the world, 25

[25](#) Page [26](#) [27](#)

believes Him *in* the world, and wants to
turn again *to Him*
with the world, in order that he may
consciously –
not by deriving all sorts of "formulas"
from the "uni-
verse" but by listening to
commandments-of-instruc-
tion from the mouth of his Father-
Legislator –
formulate his maxims in the believing

"knowledge" of
the Church, and so fulfil the will of his
Father. For this
reason cultural work is in paradise
service of God. There
one cultivates everything, the ground on
which one
walks and the heart in its full depth,
plants as well as the
meditative spirit. There one washes his
undefiled hands
as well as his soul in righteousness – the
one thing can-
not be separated from the other.
And culture will take its God-appointed
place
again only there where one reaches back
to this original

situation and its order.

17. We said, *reaches back*. This expression already includes the confession that there was a disruption.

This disruption was caused by sin; man fell away from God.

Then there was disintegration. His life crumbled.

The same happened to the world: the whole of it and its respective parts did no longer work towards each other.

The human mind, confused, erring, sinful, conceited, itself disintegrated in principle, began to

practice disintegration, that is, to abstract, to tear asunder, to set apart and separate. Man ceased to think in a general and widely-cosmic way, keeping the "parts" in a proper relation to "the whole" and putting all this under God's feet, but he changed his "catholicizing" interest to a "specializing," that is, detailing interest. Details, which one can become enamoured of, were severed from the "whole," in which one must love God. He stopped his ears to the truth revealed to him in God's

Law and confirmed by the tragic failures of his existence, the truth that he, once he had fallen into sin, could or would no longer survey any single theme in the great context of the whole of God's compositions, let alone that he could or would work it out in his own. This is how religion and culture were separated from one another: the vanguard of the generation of Cain chose "culture" and discarded "religion" as something unrelated; and the rear guard of the generation of

Seth quite agreed with this distinction. And that was the worst thing. *For from the beginning it was not so.*

Sin worked still further destruction. For the process of disintegration cannot stop. Not only the abstracting severance of the whole into "parts," "spheres," "sectors," "territories," "groups with common interests," is by itself the result of sin, but even within these "spheres," "territories," "communities" themselves (existing as a [43] result of abstraction) the factor of

dissolution becomes further active to increase the effect of the de-catholicizing principle. For while God lets the *distinctions* which He has put into His creation combine unto and in a "pluriform" *7 unity*, Satan makes use of these distinctions to *separate* things. God binds the respective races together and shows in their coalescence

7. We take over the word "pluriform" although not without inverted commas – for we do not share its philosophical background,

which allows the use of this term to be understood in more than one way. 26

26 Page 27 28

mankind's "pluriformity." Satan makes them principles of division, and so forces a racial struggle. It goes the same way as far as the different classes, sexes, characters, nationalities, and trade organizations are concerned. To use Pauline imagery again: eye cultivates eye, ear cultivates ear, hand cultivates hand, foot cultivates foot, and this rage of specialization eats its way so deeply that the question whether these

respective parts
of the body need each other, is reserved
only for the
moments when the world has a
hangover, for example in
what is called a post-war mentality.
Even in these
moments, asking the question is no more
than a token
vote. Personal aptitude is deformed into
one-sidedness.
One "type" will presently be the
opposite of the other, of
which it originally was to be only a
complement. Eve-
rywhere differences become antitheses.
Culture, as the
systematic endeavour of the developing

sum-total of human beings towards the acquisition of the aggregate of labour, is hereby already formally dissolving itself.

For by acting this way people attack the system: the confusion of tongues is a matter of punishment, but it is then promptly presented as a good thing.

This formal dissolution is the fruit of a material falling away from God. *Fai t h* in His covenant word was forsaken. The idea of man's office was thereby abandoned.

Earnestness gave way to play, and to play-culture

(sport-infatuation, four columns of sport reviews to half a column of Church news; big capitals for the winner of a match, but not a single letter for the cause of spiritual struggle, even in "Christian" newspapers). The *hope*, which in the regeneration of all things sees every part again in its proper place in the whole, has been forsaken; every day the world becomes more nervous and "culture" more and more a casemate business: everyone creeps into his own casemate at the command of "his"

trade organiza-
tion. *Love for God*, Who must be shown
in His full glory
in that which is His own, yields and
gives way to infat-
uation with a creature that has broken
away from its
Maker. There is no unity any more. It is
no longer even
sought, because unity is found only
through God, and
God is considered an enemy. No longer
the original
style of the "commandment of life" (in
paradise) is fol-
lowed. And the reason which is given –
if a reason is
still given – is this: Well, we are in the

desert now, and there one cannot do much with paradisaical commandments. But this argument betrays the hypocrisy of those who use it: the law of life is [44] held in contempt because God, Who by and in His Law gave life, is Himself denied. On his part, man broken away from God no longer has a cultural style that is determined by the moral law. Only in so far as God (as He presently will appear to be doing), for His own sake, yet keeps the

created world within the natural context of the cosmos, man will feel himself to be bound by this fixed arrangement of God, also in his cultural achievements. Even though the *moral* law of God no longer determines man's cultural style, the *natural law* continues to bind the producer of culture with strong bonds. In the meantime the bonds of this natural coercion differ from the cords of God's love. The strong grip of God's *natural* ordinances enclasps God's friend as well as His enemy.

But as far as this enemy is concerned, if it were up to him he would in his battle against the *moral* law try to avail himself of that which is *natural* and functions as such. If only he could, he would precisely in his immoral culture like to attain the proper "style" of Satan, who also has been unable to destroy the fundamental structure of God's original creation, but who yet desires to corrupt morally, with all his strength, the world given by God. There have already been some

"cultural styles" of "Satanism" . 27

27 Page 28 29

18. As the foregoing implies, the mere fact that there is culture and that man performs cultural labour, cannot be classified under so called "common grace."

This has indeed repeatedly been claimed. Taking the point of view of experience and at the same time making a "guided" effort to take biblical data into account, one then reasoned as follows: Because of the dreadful character of sin and guilt we, men, would have

deserved to descend into hell immediately after the Fall. Such a descent, cutting off all development, would have served us right. Yet we see before our eyes that the world has continued to exist after the Fall for thousands of years, and that the potentialities given in the cosmos are being developed as yet. Is this not "grace" ? The answer is then implied: It is indeed grace; it is God's goodness, which He does not owe to us. True, this grace does not redeem unto eternal salvation. Therefore it is

called "common" . Yet, it is indeed "grace." It gives us the benefit of the *restraining* of sin. If sin were not restrained it would break out in the most flagrant, directly satanic outpouring of wickedness. However, God stems this wickedness by the "common" operation of His Spirit, even by the common "testimony" of the Spirit, which testimony provides man with certainty, the immediate assuredness concerning some clusters of central truths, this assuredness being pre-reflexive. In

this way there falls upon the desert of
this world the
continually self-renewing dew of
common grace, which
[45] makes life yet tolerable and even –
by virtue of the
"progressive" operation which is
peculiar to it – creates
oases in the midst of the desert, cultural
oases also.

However, in this train of thought there
are several
twists which weaken the conclusion that
the term "com-
mon grace" is applicable here.
Certainly, it is true that sin is being
"restrained"
and that the curse has not been fully

poured out upon the world. However, the same thing can be said about the obedience which in Christ Jesus was again permitted to become a gift of God's free grace and which by the power of Christ's Spirit also was able to become a gift of this favour. Whoever calls the restraining of the curse "grace" should at least call the "restraining" of the blessing "judgment." But neither of these terms would have a scientific basis. As best they could be used in a non-scientific description of concrete

reality, but then
next to one another. However, this
casual usage in
speaking about "common grace" as well
as "common
judgment" means in itself already a
correction of the
preference for the term "common grace."

Certainly, there is a *withholding* (II
Thessalonians
2 6). However, withholding is a feature
peculiar to time.
Where nothing is "withheld" , there is a
possessio 8 tota simul
(a possession of life so that one always
has the
fullness of this possession

simultaneously in his hands
in *full* measure) OR a *privatio tota simul* (a matter of
having been robbed, a deprivation, and
then again in
such a way that the fullness of this
depravation is there *totally*,
at every "moment" in *full* measure). That
is to
say: wherever there is no withholding,
there is no tem-
poral existence any longer; there
"eternity" is found. For
even in paradise there was a
"withholding." If the Spirit
of God had been given to Adam without
a withholding,
then he would have been excluded from

the possibility
of falling into sin. "Development" – or
otherwise "cor-
ruption" – is a feature peculiar to time.
Development
and corruption belong to time. The *state*
of being devel-
oped and being corrupted (both
pleromatically, accord-
ing to the subject's nature and capacity)
belong to
eternity. Consequently the fact that the
gifts of creation
show development is not grace, but
nature. There is a
stirring "within them," within things,
within people. It is
something "in" man: the boisterous urge

of one who,
since he is himself "developing," seeks
to wrest corn
and wine from the "developing" earth;
that is the urge to "*colere*,"
to *cultivate* the garden. However, that
which
before the Fall was a religious work of
love, directed
towards God as the Covenant God,
becomes after the
Fall a deed of selfishness, of self-
preservation, of zest
for living (a la *Pallierter*), 9 not service
to God but self-
service. One so often hears about
"nature" [46] that one

8. We are here alluding to the well-known

Boethian definition of God as the eternal One. According to this, God has a perfect

and *tota simul possessio*, i.e., the possession

of an interminable life (a life that cannot be

limited). This always remains something reserved for God only. *Tota simul* – at the

same time in full measure (cf. *perfectum praesens*).

As for man, however, his life is always terminable (limited because he is a creature). Temporally he does not "possess" life

in a perfect sense. His possession is not *tota simul*. In eternity (according to the character of the terminable) he possesses life (in his own way) "perfectly" and also (in his own way again) *tota simul*: there is no longer any growth "in" it. 28

[28](#) **Page** [29](#) [30](#)

is left with the impression: this is dead capital lying there to be used or not to be used by man (and the world). Then one jumps to the conclusion: this world of

man deserved to die, namely, to die an eternal death,

which as such takes away from all its objects the possi-

bility of any use of capital; yet man is able to "use"

"nature," that is, to cause this dead capital still to yield

interest; *ergo*, this is "grace."

But this reasoning is altogether faulty as long as

"nature" is understood as temporal nature. As long as

time exists, mobility, pregnancy and birth, begetting and

conceiving, belong to nature. "Dead" capital – this is

here too playful a terminology because it

is not relevant
to *nature-in-time* and because it only
serves naively to
distort the problem in order to be able to
conclude that
the term "common grace" is indeed
applicable.

The problem under consideration, then,
is funda-
mentally a matter of evaluating "time."
It is wrong to think that the prolongation
of time
after the Fall is a matter of "grace." One
then refers us to
the seriousness of sin, arguing that "we"
deserved,
immediately after the Fall, to be cast into
the "lake of

fire." This did not happen; *ergo*, it is grace. However, one forgets that the first sentence of this argument offers no more than a fable. If fallen man had been cast into the "lake of fire" immediately after the Fall, then "we" would not be there. Then only two people would have been condemned, and no more, no mankind, the subject of the just-mentioned hypothetical judgment.

Consequently a great mystery has been revealed precisely in the prolongation of time after the Fall. This

prolongation is no grace. It is simple enough to "prove" this: Suppose God had intended to punish only as many people as he will indeed punish eternally, should these people then not have been born first, even successively, the one from the other? So God would have had to prolong time already for the purpose of casting into hell as many objects of His wrath as there will one day be. And not only this. During this time marriages would have had to be contracted; at any rate, the copulation of men

and women would have had to occur.
Therefore, e.g., an

economic equilibrium would have been essential. Culture would have been necessary. Culture is the presupposition of all the works of God, even with respect to hell.

Praise be to God because we know more than only that there will be a hell. A heaven, too, is on the program of divine action. In order to populate it with as many as God shall call thereunto, prolongation of time is needed,

the bearing of children is essential, and consequently labour, in an economic as well as climatological equilibrium, is necessary. But precisely for that reason it is a serious [47] error to designate the prolongation of time and the cultural development of the cosmos as (common) grace.

This prolongation and development are no grace.

Nor are they curse or condemnation.

That is to say, if one wants to use these terms in a serious way.

They are the *conditio sine qua non* of

both, the
substratum of both.

In so far as the urge to develop creation
is natural,

and in so far as the opening of any
womb, even of that of
mother earth, is natural, culture is a
natural thing. It is

the substratum of two extremes: the
acquittal of as many
as have been predestinated unto this
acquittal, or the
banishment of those who have been
foreordained to this
banishment.

Grace is not inherent in culture (*colere*)
as such.

Nor is grace inherent in eating and

drinking as such, or
in breathing, or in the begetting of
children. Grace, if
there is grace, would be inherent only in
God fearing *colere*,
eating and drinking, and begetting of
children –
not as dead but as living people.

And the curse does not lie in culture
(*colere*) as
such. Nor does it lie in eating and
drinking as such, or in
breathing, or in the begetting of children.
The curse, if
there is a curse, would lie only in
ungodly *colere*,
ungodly eating, drinking, and begetting
of children – not

as living but as dead people.

Within the framework of time after the Fall, the

antithesis was inevitable not in nature but in the use of

nature, and hence in culture. This is the antithesis

between cultural activity in faith and in unbelief.

There is indeed "common" grace in culture (grace

for more than one person). But there is no universal (or

general) grace for all men. Therefore Abraham Kuyper's

construction was wrong.

There is indeed also a "common" curse in cultural

life (a curse shared by more than one person). But there is no universal (or general) curse. "Common" can sometimes be the same as universal, but it is not necessarily always so. Something can be

9. *Pallieter*, by Felix Timmerman, published in Amsterdam, is a novel "in which the main character embodies the pagan glorification of the body and its lusts for life by running out naked in the spring rains and kissing the

grounds" (quoted from Henry R. Van Till,
The Calvinistic Concept of Culture,
page
140, note 4). 29

[29](#) **Page 30** [31](#)

common to all people, but it can also be
common to
more than one person, not to all.
In the present scheme "common" is
intended to
mean: shared by many, not by all people.
There is a common (not: universal)
grace in cul-
ture, as far as the redeeming work of
Christ is shared by
all those who are His – which grace has
an effect upon

their cultural achievements. But all the others lie under the common curse. It has been given to the Man of Acts 17:31 to pronounce judgment over them.

19. [48] Immediately after the Fall the Son of God took action, not yet as Jesus but as the Messiah, known to God alone, being the *Logos asarkos incarnandus*, the Word not yet incarnate which yet had to come into the flesh. He took action in order to begin the work and the ministry of grace in this world, and to

mark as being determined by *His* work the ground (not of election and reprobation, for their ground is only God's good pleasure, but) of salvation and of condemnation. The ground of salvation would be: Christ's merits. The ground of condemnation would be: man's guilt, which after the Fall appeared to be determined by the presence of Christ's work. Man's guilt is his rejection of Christ. Thus Christ took action as the Saviour-Redeemer, and as the Saviour-Avenger. The constitutive

element in
both functions is: His evangelical work
of redemption,
which is never satisfied with being a
negligible quantity.

Because in this spirit and with this
double inten-
tion, Christ, before the countenance of
God, took upon
Himself the burden of the world, He
became the
Redeemer of the world, culture
included. He also gave –
from now on Christologically
determined – meaning to
all cultural activity. This
Christologically determined
sense is universal, general. The grace

therein is not uni-
versal, but common. It is the one and
only grace unto
salvation, redemptive and re-creating
grace. For Christ
now guarantees that the world, which in
God's eternal
counsel was "foreordained," will return
to God, its Cre-
ator.

Accordingly a complete history of many
centuries
is for His sake "inserted" between the
first sin ever
committed and the final curse. We
repeat: for His sake.

After what we have said, this cannot
mean: only for the

sake of His redemption work (or only for the sake of the elect). It must mean: for the sake of His double function as the Saviour-Redeemer and the Saviour-Judge. He makes room for history in order that all that happens may be Christologically determined: pro as well as con.

And of course the verb "insert" is no more than metaphorical language. History only *seems* to be "inserted."

But in reality it was determined from eternity. In history God makes room for Christ's all-dominating work of

redemption, and for His appearing, presently as Jesus, in order to die here on earth, rise again from the dead, and change the course of the world by shifting its helm with hands of flesh and blood through the power of God's Spirit.

In this history even of a fallen world, a history created by God's will so that this world might hold its

10. See further: K. Schilder, *Is de term 'algemeene genade' wetenschappelijk verant-*

woord? (Kampen: Ph. Zalsman, 1947).

30

30 Page 31 32

own, Christ must be considered as the One Who carries all the burdens of the world, while He transfers all the world's delights to God the Father, that God may be all in all – see the concluding verses of I Corinthians 15. So God directs all [49] that happens in this world towards Christ. He directs all cultures towards Christ, Who shall determine the fullness of time: the culture of the ancient nations before the Flood, that of Egypt,

Persia, Rome,
Greece, and Babylon. Such prophets of
Christ's advent
as Isaiah and Daniel are the instructors
of every true
cultural philosopher. Because of Him
and also by Him
every process is led to this *pleroma* of
time. And there-
fore every culture has to serve in order
to make room for
a seemingly a-cultural manger, and for
an also seem-
ingly culturally indifferent cross, and in
order to have a
hole hewn out presently, somewhere in a
garden
belonging to Joseph of Arimathea. But

on the Easter
morning the body of this Son of Man then
rises again
from this grave, being whole and sound
and flawless.

Then He returns to God's world in the
Spirit, this Christ
Jesus, and puts the world in its own
place. He puts
sound – that is to say: reborn – people in
the place that is
fitting for them and He heals life, in so
far as life
acknowledges Him as the mystical (i.e.,
hidden) Head of
His community. 11
Hereby the respective relations are
brought back,

in principle, to their ethically normal origin (as we have seen, the original norms are the natural ordinances for created life). Flesh and blood do not proclaim any ethical norms, but only the Spirit, through God's Word – even concerning the governing, stimulating, and Eschatological subservience of flesh and blood.

Hence, when the world was top heavy with an effete and violently disruptive pseudo-culture which did not acknowledge God as the Owner of the cosmos, a

handful of simple guild artisans in some small towns in Asia Minor – workers, who by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ had learned to serve God in their daily labour – as often as they had dutifully, with God in mind, tanned a piece of leather or made a tent or completed a certain guild task, meant more, precisely for culture, than the entire imperial train of the Caesar of Rome with his palaces, his dancers, his laurels, his maecenasess, and his metropolis. Hence,

when on a certain day an escort of prisoners was led into the city of Rome, among whom there was a certain Paul, this man was of greater significance, particularly for cultural life, than all of culture-drunk Rome; he signified a radical change, over against all those prominent ones who were running the show – he who called himself a "miscarriage."

Yes, indeed, this is true, says someone, for later on Paul would create culture through his followers. But no,

say the angels, he created culture right then, at that very moment. A man who was sound, a man of God, entered into the wilted and corrupt city of Rome, a maker of tents and a philosopher, a theologian and [50] missionary; someone who would have the courage to look the emperor in the eye, even when the latter did not have the courage any more to do the same to him. A man who showed his fellow prisoners a great light, and made a rented house in Rome the forecourt of an academy of

philosophy. There is a little poem by a Latin poet that says. *Occurri nuper, visa est mihi digna relatu*

pompa: senem potum pota trahebat anus.

That is, in the street I met a strange procession: a drunken old hag was dragging a drunken old fellow.

Pardon this crude translation, but it is fitting here. This little song in its realism as well its cultural-historical outspokenness is as typical of the days in which the apostle Paul entered the culture-drunk

city of Rome as
that other little song in which a Roman
emperor pitied
his "soul" because of its poverty, and,
blasé, wished it
goodnight. Yes, indeed, this was typical
of the big city
of those days: drunkenness, which is
then considered to
be a joke. The relationships were turned
completely
upside down: the woman drags the man
behind her, grey
hair is no longer an elegant crown, and
the poet, chuck-
ling over it, makes capital out of it. Here
we see the
downfall of that entire world. But then

the apostle Paul entered the city, in chains, for the servant is not higher than his Master. However, this Paul – although he had a thorn in the flesh and, according to his own statement in 1 Corinthians 15:8, had been brought into the Church as a "miscarriage," and although he knew himself incorporated into the procession of the not many rich, the not many noble, the weak ones, and those who are nothing in this world, I Corinthians 1 – this man Paul was, by the grace given to him, an example of

soundness, also of cultural soundness. In the same way the seven epistles, hidden somewhere in the beginning of an Apocalypse, the book of Revelation, are, by the grace that speaks in them, monuments of culture. Such is what they are as

11. "Mystical" is an adjective (cf. mystical union). The substantive "mysticism," however, designates something objectionable: the doctrine and methods of an (alleged) immediate knowledge of God – for

which

the Scriptures allow no room. 31

[31](#) **Page** [32](#) [33](#)

truly as the Sermon on the Mount is a monument not

only of the history of revelation but also of cultural his-

tory. For in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ

teaches us here on earth, and in these seven epistles the

same Jesus Christ teaches from heaven, how at the

trough, at the office, in the temple, in the factory, at the

academy, and in the artist's studio, one has to realize

again that one's startingpoint, purpose,

and direction are determined by God, that he has to fill his "yes" and "no" with the strength of an oath, and to do his work under the tension of living between the beginning and the end of history as a *kohen*, i.e. as one who "stands and serves" before God. In the Sermon on the Mount and in those seven epistles the world turns the other way round, just as it had to do, in order to prepare a cradle and to set up a workshop, [51] even if it were only for one single man of God. Herein Christ in principle

condemns for everyone the fragmentation of life and conquers it in the life of His own people. He fundamentally connects the respective faculties until they have grown into a complete "university." He again links "religion" together with "culture," making cultural activity into a concrete service of God, and, when it comes to the point, denies anything that is not out of God the name and honour of "positive cultural activity." For, strictly speaking, all is sin that is not out of faith. The cultural

urge *per se* is, as we have seen, one of the "natural" gifts, the "gifts of creation." Therefore we can also speak of *colere* in the animal kingdom. Who knows if there some progress is made in matters of organization? Who knows if even the ants and the bees have shown a certain "progress" in the building of their nests and in the way of gathering and preserving honey? But the purposeful use of these gifts of creation, positive cultural activity in accordance with the commandment given by God with

respect to purpose
and eschatologically determined
direction, is possible
only in an obedience regained through
the Spirit of
Christ. Sin, wherever it may appear,
also in cultural life,
is unable to be persistently moral in its
cultural thinking,
nor can it build or create in a culturally
positive way. For *colere*
means "to build," but sin breaks down.
In God's
original dictionary of revelation
"culture" is always
constructive, but sin is destructive. We
shall come back
to this point later on.

As it was in the days when Paul
stumbled into the
city of Rome, so has it always been in
the world since
then. Every reformation that, driven by
the Spirit of
Christ, returns to the Scriptures, the
Word of God, is at
the same time a healing of culture. When
round-headed
Martin Luther at last got married and
could laugh again
in a healthy way, he was worth a
hundred ducats as a

healing and direction-giving producer of
culture, while
the complete papal and imperial train

was worth hardly more than one single ducat, even considered from the cultural point of view. This is evident when one compares the spheres of activity of Lutheran and Roman-Catholic countries. However, while Luther made certain errors in the foundation principles, or, let us put it this way, in the fundamentals of the relation between nature and grace – which errors were overcome by John Calvin – the Calvinistic countries later exhibited a cultural development that thetically and

antithetically was far stronger and produced far greater strength than was the case in Lutheran countries. The cultural chaos that Adolf Hitler left behind because he first brought it with him, could arise in Lutheran countries also with the support of "orthodox" Lutherans, but met positive and unbreakable resistance among the Calvinistic groups. This resistance [52] did not weigh off "values" which can be directly grasped and which possess a tangible usefulness against other "values" ("

Americanism,"
communism versus Nazism, real
democracy versus a
mythical *gesundes Volksempfinden!*),
but it continuously
kept in mind the far reaching
protological and Eschato-
logical history projects of the
Apocalypse, which
encompass all of history, and
consequently connected its
cultural activities with the fundamental
principles of the
Calvinistic Reformation. John Calvin in
Geneva and
Strasbourg shows us what the service of
God is con-
cretely able to do also for cultural life.

He created a Christian culture, which had been freed from the secularist-imperialist aspirations that still render Rome's imagination effete since they are inspired by the same false distinction between "nature" and "grace" that played Martin Luther a trick. As often as we think about these things it strikes us that the name which the book of Revelation applies to the Roman Empire and which is so meaningful precisely for cultural evaluation and examination is that of the

anti-christian prototype, the name "harlot." When the Bible calls the Roman Empire a harlot, all depends on the right exegesis. The same is true when Martin Luther gives the philosophical *Seminare* a hard nut to crack when speaking about *die Hure Vernunft* (the harlot Reason). This was no condemnation of "reason" (for a harlot does not stand condemned because of her womanly nature) but of the proud and sinful reason which has emancipated itself from God (just as in a harlot only the

use of her womanly nature contrary to the divine ordinance for womanhood is to be accursed). One single false interpretation of the word "harlot" that does no longer distinguish between the one thing and the other, 32

[32](#) **Page 33** [34](#)

is all that is needed to throw Martin Luther – wrongly, of course – on the despised heap of the despisers of God's great gift of reason. In the same way, one indiscriminate interpretation of the term "harlot" in the Apocalypse, and the Church of Rome no longer

knows in what particular respect the Roman Empire was a harlot. Was it a harlot in its persecution of Christians? Oh no, that was only the consequence. It was a harlot when it refused to put the created gifts at the disposal of God, Who wants to be the Bridegroom of His faithful work-community. Then, as a consequence of such a false exegesis, a worldwide Church can become enamoured of what ultimately is the harlotry of the Roman Empire. Then a church presents itself that acts as "the

state," idealizing
the state as a cultural *power*, and
imitating it even at the
cost of mutilating the prophetic cultural
testimony, and
this way forgetting that the *prophecy*
concerning the
relation between nature and grace (and
also between
nature and sin) which is faithful to God's
Word is a
greater cultural force than the most [53]
astonishing
Pyrrhic victory of a culturally expansive
church. Over
against such a Pyrrhic victory of Rome,
John Calvin
meant a restoration. He built up a

Christian, Protestant,
Reformed culture, precisely by making a
distinction –
which does not mean a separation –
between church and
state. He came to God's recruits with an
order-of-the-
day that was also a matter of culture. He
saw again that
in the Old Testament the "shepherds"
had a wider task
than only that of caring for souls, for they
were com-
missioned with cultural care as well. He
again taught a
living love for the divine calling, went
out into all the
nooks and crannies of the world, and had

learned to
understand that precious word of grace
and hence also
of culture: "All things are yours ... and
ye are Christ's;
and Christ is God's" 1 Corinthians 3:21,
23).

And this is the law that shall remain in
force in
this world.

A church magazine that, wherever
necessary, does
its weeding and keeps principles pure
means more for
culture than a gilded stage. Over against
a minister who
in a "Reformed weekly" exclaimed that
sometimes one

single drama means more than seven
study outlines, the
Reformed distinction of nature-grace-sin
maintains
that one good outline means more than
seven, even
good, dramas in as much as the power of
God's Word is
stronger than that of the image, and
doctrine is more
than sign. A Christian family, living in a
distinctively
Christian style, is for cultural life, in
whatever compli-
cations it may be placed, another
revelation of the
wholesome power for which one looks
in vain in Holly-

wood, of which a culturally sorry
portrayal – sorry

especially from a cultural point of view
– is given in

Vicky Baum's book, *Leben ohne
Geheimnis*. A Chris-

tian labourer who dares to be himself as
Christian, again

represents wholesomeness in an
unhistorical, business-

like-Americanized world; he is worth
more in potential

force than a complete college of science
that has not
seen God.

Thus Christ continuously works in all
His people

until the end of time. In this world,
which has to complete its course according to His operative Easter rights,
He time and again brings to the fore new forces for cultural life in its widest sense, performing in the republic of the communion of saints a *creative* miracle: for every *regeneration*, acknowledged in Calvinistic fashion as a new *creation*, is a matter of His transcendent and merciful intervention in cultural life also. He continues and He will presently open new fountains as often as in the

life of an individual, or subsequently in a community, efforts are undertaken and work is done in His power and in accordance with His revealed Word.

Therefore the book of Revelation draws a picture of the pure [54] cultural-city-at-rest of the future, the new Jerusalem, with its perfect style, a style truly satisfying its inhabitants. No, this new cultural city – new because of its having come into existence by renewal and its being elevated above the level of struggle – does

not come into being gradually.
The "catastrophe" of the last day is essential for its appearance – just as "catastrophes" played a prominent role in the creation. 12 However, let us not forget that at the moment when this catastrophe takes place, whether "in heaven above" or "in the earth beneath" or "in the water under the earth," all spiritual and material potentials are already present that are necessary to build or restore this cultural city and, then, according to His commandment, continuously to fashion

the material
made available by God's providence to
His community
of men, to fashion it in a "logical" way –
which means
here, through the Logos Who became
flesh and has
declared God to us. This catastrophe
itself will not cre-
ate chaos, nor destroy or trample upon
any seed. On the
contrary, it will purge and purify this
cosmos of every
culture destroying element or "producer"
of cultural
disintegration. For when God opens the
new heaven,
then this new heaven will not be, so to

speak, a *donum super additum* that has been obtained by a new act of creation and has done away with the old creation or

12.Cf. K. Schilder, *Wat is de Hemel?* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1935). 33

[33](#) Page [34](#) [35](#)

covers and encloses it. This new Jerusalem will overshadow the old dwelling-place of man but not cover it like a dome. The never-ending story of the wonder of this dwelling-place of God among men will not be mechanically added and imposed as a

completely new chapter that is to follow the narrative of the history of our world as a sort of appendix, but it shall only be an undiluted and unrestrained Gospel report concerning the unhindered development – given by God in Christ – of all those forces that were put by Christ in the new (that is, renewed) mankind, the community of the servants of God, and were already initially developed therein.

20. Here we briefly have to return to a point that has

been touched on in the above. We said there that, strictly speaking, the granting of a licence for positive cultural activity can occur only when people build and labour *according to God's will*.

This may be too strong a statement, in many people's opinion.

We immediately admit that it needs some further amplification, even though we have already referred to the fact that the act of *colere* is natural to all people, in so far as they as a result of their innate

urge to work and
move participate in the cultivation and
development of
the cosmos according to their being
involved as crea-
tures in the never idle field of the world.
[55] Yet there is a possibility of
misunderstanding
which must be avoided.

For after the Fall God did not split up
the world
into two halves, one of which would
perform cultural
service according to God's
commandment, the other
being a desert or a chaos containing only
ruins and cari-
catures. The mere thought is already

foolish. This idea does not only clash with the obvious facts but it also trifles with every presupposition of cultural activity.

No real *koinonia* exists among men unless it has been brought about by God's Spirit.

Koinonia means communion. It does not owe its existence to the simple fact that various people have the same nature or the same interests. For if this in itself would establish a community, then there would be a covenant communion everywhere. Then there could not be a

hell. Those who are of the opinion that communion is already established by the sharing of the same nature and interests, forget that the same thing is essential also for quarrelling and fighting with one another in such a way that the one really touches the other. No, real communion is something else. It can only be achieved wherever the same nature is directed towards a common goal through love for the same basic principles and wherever the same interests are promoted in common faith

and hope and love. Cultural *koinonia*, then, is basically a matter of the fellowship of faith. Here our remarks concerning the antithesis to be found also in cultural life are applicable.

However, while *koinonia* joins only part of mankind together, there exists a *sunousia*, a being-together, among all men.

Now God has imposed *sunousia* upon all men.

Wheat and chaff have not been finally separated from one another. One day even this *sunousia* will be taken

away from them. However, things have not yet reached 34

34 **Page** **35** 36

that point. Towards all those people placed next to each other in *sunousia* comes the command to engage in cultural labour (which mandate is general because God has not abolished any command that is original and permanent in character) just as also the urge to cultural labour is an inborn one.

Besides, the given material to be fashioned is the world inhabited by us (and who can say if even the

world not yet inhabited by us will not become part of our area of endeavour?). For that reason there cannot be the cultural performance of the one without that of the other. The *koinonia* is given us by Christ, the *sunousia* comes from God the Creator. There is only one nature, but a twofold use of nature; one material, but a twofold fashioning of it; one territory, but a twofold development of it; one cultural urge, but a twofold cultural striving. [56] And since all fashioning of the material, the

good as well as the bad, is bound to the nature, the structure, and the laws of that particular material, the products of the labour of the unbeliever and those of the labour of the believer are very much alike. This similarity is not caused by the similarity of their diverging minds but by that of the stiff, recalcitrant material. There is a great difference between the one potter and the other, between the one sculptor and the other. The one builds a temple, the other builds a dancing hall, but both

of them go for their clay to the same pit
and for their
marble to the same quarry.

This is the first aspect.

There is also a second one.

We touch here the problem of the
"common tem-

pering." For God has arrested the course
of human sin.

Now the stiffness of the material to be
fashioned still

remains and shall remain to the last day.

But also the

will to free oneself from the material –

Fichte in his phi-

losophy at least dreamt of such

"freedom" – is checked

in its advance of satanic pride in this

world of general
tempering. Christ (for this checking or
unresisting is an
act of God's providence and,
consequently, determined
by the history of revelation and
salvation) has bound
Satan so that he can no longer devour the
nations during
the period of time indicated in
Revelation 20, except in
the last period of the "thousand years"
that comprise the
progress from Ascension Day and
Pentecost until the
Parousia. He has tempered the process
of sin and curse;
the "withholding" of Antichrist is a

matter of fact.

However, this withholding of Antichrist corresponds with the holding-Himself-in of Christ Triumphant. He too, does not let Himself go. He, too, does not yet allow this world, which is still tempered and held in check in

all its life's movements, the view of the full expansion of His exalted power. All the carts are still held in check, all the horses are bridled. Judgment is held back, but so is grace, in *this* world. Therefore nothing is fully developed and

con-

summated, nothing is mature as yet.

Nowhere has the

power of Christ's mercy revealed itself
in its full

strength, not even in heaven. Neither has
Satan's

destructive power, according to his own
scheme, made

its influence felt in full strength

anywhere in the world,

not even in hell. Any kind of music, of
angels as well as

of demons, is *wohltemperiert*, and the

One Who con-

trols it is God.

This is the mystery of the common
tempering in

the problem of culture (the substratum of the above-mentioned common grace and common judgment). Life has not yet split up into the forms of hell and heaven.

The godless are still prevented in their cultural [57] labour from ecstatically raging against God in the paroxysm of satanism, although this is in a direct line with their hidden desire: and the communion of God's saints, partly by the sin that dwells in them but also by the governing of their king Himself, Who is pursuing the goals

of the history of salvation and revelation, is still prevented from doing adequately what is their line. Thus by the rule of Christ, who restrains everything until the last day, there is, for those who serve God as well as for those who do not serve Him, the possibility of being simultaneously engaged in work on one and the same cultural fragment now here, then there — work that takes place in *sunousia* and is bound by the structure of the material of the cosmos. 13 Those who serve God and

those who do not serve Him have not been geographically separated in the world. Christ Himself keeps them still together. In this mixed and restrained world it is still possible to do constructive work even though the constructors are not men of God. No ark was ever built by only Noah's family. The candidates for death are always contributing their part. However, we must also observe a third aspect; namely, that *temperantia* is always constant, but the restraint or tempering is not. Until now

we have mentioned these two in the same breath. That was permissible, for God tempers (i e., controls, guides, keeps in check) by means of restraint (by withholding). But *tem-perantia* is a matter of *governing* (something which remains for ever, also in heaven and hell, and in all ages), and restraint is a special *manner* of governing (which manner may change). Revelation, chapter 20, and also II Thessalonians, chapter 2, tell us that Satan will be loosed, which will happen

within the duration of 35

35 Page **36** 37

time, and that the "withholder" of Antichrist one day (also within time) will "be taken out of the way." This restraint will never completely be lacking in this world.

For completely absent it will be in heaven and in hell.

However, within the duration of time it will not be of a constant measure. The one day it is stronger than the other. In certain periods, God hands the people over to their delusive ideas, and sends (!) them an "energy" of

error (with horrible cultural effects), and in other periods He awakens in His Church the Spirit of repentance and conversion, Who sometimes causes the impact of the preaching of God's Word to penetrate very deeply even into the circles of the unbelievers. This restraint, then, will decrease to a minimum at the end of time.

Then any *status quo* existing between the Church and the world will be denounced – from both sides – also in cultural life, even precisely there. Then the whole world

– except God's elect – will crowd together around the Antichrist. Then his (cultural) miracles – which God allows him to perform by His active permission, that is, [58] by making cosmic material (with its inherent possibilities, as discovered with astonishing speed) freely accessible – will, as so many signs and wonders of falsehood, brush aside the Church with its proclamation of the truth and push it into the distant corner of antiques and of separatist, rectilinear-minded fanatics. Then the

flames of the cultural struggle will flare up as never before: the propaganda of falsehood will appear to be "supported" by some dazzling facts, while the propagation of the truth will be solely dependent on the faithful Word that under those circumstances shows its confes-

sors the meaning of the "hard" saying: "Blessed are they that *have not seen* and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

We are living in an interim to be so understood, in the interim-of-the-interim.

We have already discussed the former:
the interim
between the first and the last things of ("
ordinary") his-
tory.

The latter has been indicated in the
above: it is the
interim between the not yet anti-christian
era and the
presently indeed anti-christian parousia
of the one man
of sin, the great cultural hero though hero
in sin,
escorted by the propaganda department
of the false
prophet: the beast from the earth
(Revelation, chapter
13).

May the knowledge thereof make the believers careful as never before. Even when the cultural forms are the same, he should distinguish the differences in cultural *direction*.

For when under the impact of the law of tempering and the restraint by God there is "still" a possibility of a wide scope of development of science and art, of trade and industry, of national and international communication, of technology or whatever else, then this is indeed "still" "culture" to a certain

degree. But this
"still" is determined by the fact that
Satan has "not yet"
been loosed. Who does not feel the drift
towards the end
of the interim-of-the-interim when he has
heard Bach
and ... jazz? In so far as cultural
activities are not driven
by faith, not done according to the Law
of God and to
His honour, they operate with corrupt
"remnants," and
are in fact a mere residue. The material
(of Genesis 1,
cosmic nature) has remained. And there
are still rem-
nants, residues, of the original gifts.

The word "residues" is, of course, not meant only in a quantitative sense, for although there are still some quantitatively measurable "remnants" of the original gifts left, the quantitative can shrivel up and will indeed do so. Therefore these remnants are also called *vestigia*, or vestiges, i.e. footprints. "*Vestigia*" is not a quantitative concept, for the footprints left by a dog's paw or a man's shoe are not remnants thereof. Acknowledging the double fact that there will always be remnants of the

original gifts – the tempering is [59]
constant – but that
they will become smaller and smaller
and the "light of
nature" more and more suppressed
(Canons of Dort),
and that (for the believer, according to
the strength of his
faith's understanding) there will always
be clear *vestigia*
in this drunken world, vestiges of the
paradisaal gifts
(even in anti-christian cultural
infatuation), we never-
theless speak, in this sense and with
these reservations,
of remnants and *vestigia*. Our conclusion
then is that

13. The well-known aria from the opera *The Magic Flute*, *In diesen heiligen Hallen*, could other than in the "lodge," where it actually belongs, also be sung in Church, without offending too many ears. Why? Because the composer's mind, though drunk with Buddhist motifs, was unable to express its own pagan-teutonic cycle of thoughts in adequate style-forms: the style of the Church, this product of many centuries, was still bothering him because he could not let his paganism (Isis and Osiris) speak (cf.

the above-mentioned "silence"). In my opinion, we cannot in this reasoning take our startingpoint in common grace but in common impotence, which is the result of the tempering that allows no one to transcend creation. 36

[36](#) **Page** [37](#) [38](#)

culture is never more than a mere attempt and that, since it is restricted to remnants only, it is a matter of tragedy. God has indeed left something behind in fallen man. But these are only "small remnants" of man's

original gifts,
concerning which the Calvinistic
confession speaks in
such a brilliant-dangerous way. 14 Even
when they have
been reduced to their minimum or
defiled to their maxi-
mum (Canons of Dort), they are still
vestiges. In the
imminent pandemonium of the cultural
revolution
against God and His Anointed, the
believer shall dis-
cover the *vestigia* of the riches of
paradise life – but he
alone. The anti-christian cohorts shall
not see therein
the vestiges of "yesterday," but only the

primitiae, the firstlings of "tomorrow," for which tomorrow they hope (in vain), and which is cut off by the heavenly Judge.

Until then we Christians shall continue to build, in hope against hope – just as Noah built the ark, in his "last days." We know it: these remnants, taking effect in a world that is "withheld" by God according to the measure of all His times and wherein not a single volcano of sin, not a single hearth of grace, can empty itself in an absolute and adequate way, a world that

day after day is preserved against the *summum* of its own destruction, and is continuously protected against the unlimited success of its own destructive tendencies – these residues of such a world are still able, according to the scheme of development and restraint that Christ's Sender maintains in the Christological progress of all history, to instigate new cultural contributions, as long as it pleases Him. This is an instigation the possibility of which was already given in the paradisaal world,

and which has its *kairos*
only because Christ has His own aim
and inten-
tion with the world and has reserved it
unto the fires of
judgment day. However, the residues in
question can
never force a break-through, or, what is
even worse,
they can never produce any work that is
sound, accu-
rately directed to meet its objective, and
true to its style,
not even work that is true to nature. For
bound to nature
is entirely different from due to nature.
In one's acting
(in a responsible way and intervening in

history) one is only true to nature when one is ethically faithful to its Maker. A culture that wants to maintain itself apart from God cannot reach consummation if it constantly continues to follow the course it has chosen. It never can come

to unity. It [60] will never mature. All through the centuries it consumes and scatters itself. The unregenerate detains what he retains (he holds it in unrighteousness, Romans 1:18; Canons of Dort III/IV, Article 4). A single

continuing style has never been born
wherever Christ
was not acknowledged as the Legislator.
Time and again
the monster of immanent cultural
paralysis appears
alongside the cultural tendencies that
have made them-
selves felt in nations, races and
societies: the architects
may be building, but the original design
has been lost.
They are building fragmentarily. Every
century has its
own *fin-de-siècle*. All that which is
heavy becomes top-
heavy. With the help of cultural
instruments – take. e.g.

the cinema, which was the result of cultural building but which, once it was there, should have been a cultural instrument and then could have kept its place in the pedagogic whole – people are not going to build but to destroy: they will rob God. Every builder will become bankrupt as soon as his employees fall in love with their tools, refine and "cultivate" them for their own sake but in the meantime show no love for the activity of building. Those who remember this know: our Chief Builder

(God) will never go bankrupt, but yet He has a multitude of that contemptible sort of bricklayers and labourers, also among His Christian people. For even among them there are fools who concerning any cultural instrument cry out: the cultivation of it is real culture! They feel ashamed not to join in with others. But this is foolishness. The cultivation of a cultural instrument in itself and for its own sake is nothing but idolatry – it falls under the same heading as the worship of idols, which

also includes the personalism that we rejected earlier. A film for the sake of the film, sports for the sake of sports, fine arts for the sake of fine arts, all have had something to do with culture; but the technique of cultivating these so-called "territories" (oh dear!), apart from the goal and from the whole of the one universal territory of operation of the world that must be brought back to God, is as an activity not a matter of building but of breaking down: *agape* for the cultural goal then

yields to *eros* with respect to the cultural means. With the help of a hammer one can build but also destroy. So this world is destroyed not by sports, the cinema, etc., but by their being isolated as goods-in-themselves. The movies in our days are being technically perfected more and more. However, the cinema is not a constructive but a destructive thing. Instead of being a medium of education it has become a means of blinding the people's eyes. Whoever calls this activity culture because the

cinema originates in cultural power, forgets that *colere* still means "to build or cultivate," not "to break down."

14. Franciscus Junius, a theologian of the "flowering" of the Reformation, made a similar statement: *de Deo etiam verum dicere periculosum est* (even to speak the truth concerning God is dangerous). 37

[37](#) **Page** [38](#) [39](#)

Even Satan can only fight against us with the help of the material that is available to him in the world of our *sunousia*.

Concerning the [61] Antichrist the same thing

can be said. The beast of Revelation 13 does not enter into our world as through a funnel but has been with us in our *sunousia* from our very birth.

21. It is true that in the last days, when God abolishes the interim-law of His restraint and in an acute dramatic tension will rapidly bring upon the world the catastrophe of the great judgment, the Antichrist will set up a plan of action in order quickly to put over against any aspect of culture that is still slightly reminiscent of

Christian influence an anti-culture of sin before the eyes of the world, and that he will try to complete an anti-program. But in order that we may be able to understand what this means for our subject, we have to pay attention to two things: *First*, the Antichrist is a dictator. *Second*, he will be thrown from the battlements, on which he is glorifying himself, "halfway through his days."

In the first place he is, as we said, a dictator. This means that the origins of his activities,

also of his
demonic anti-culture plans, do not
proceed along the
normal ways of development from what
already exists,
but are by force thrust upon a world that
is divided
against itself. According to the strict
rules of the logic of
God's judgment of hardening the hearts
as it is passed
on the world, God Himself will enable
him thereto. The
"democratic" world shall undergo its
punishment when
it ends up with the Guilt Dictator. How
and whereby
will God enable him to do this evil

work? By His above-mentioned "active permission," which grants to the Antichrist the making of as many discoveries as are needed for the "miracles of Antichrist" (11 Thessalonians 2, Revelation 13). He will show off with them: the materials of the cosmos will presently be used in the grandiose game of the ultimate, organized immorality. The infatuation with cultural fragments, cultural flashes, and cultural instruments – barely registered, because they were miraculously invented – will

then push its way through and develop into the most frivolous exhibitionism, a carnival of immorality, unashamed and respecting neither God nor man. "*Colere*" will come to an end, the setting of long-term goals will cease, and, because of the mere infatuation with cultural *things*, the cultural *commission* as God gave it will be rejected. But we must add: this hard reality will not be acknowledged unless among the greatly reduced number of the last, persecuted Christians. This infatuation

with cultural *things*
will identify as the cultural *mandate* the
praise of
man for man. Those who do not join in
the singing of
this praise will be sentenced as
spoilsports: dictators
know no mercy.

And the fact which we mentioned in the
second
place, that in [62] God's judgment the
Antichrist will be 38

[38](#) **Page** [39](#) [40](#)

thrown from the high battlements
"halfway through his
days," proves that the development of
his own style can
not be finished and his program not

completed. Any culture of infatuation excludes real love and must disappear as smoke is driven away, for it is the final convulsive twitch of "the wicked" of Psalm 68. This will mean punishment for the Antichrist, his judgment. Yes, indeed. But it will at the same time mean the revelation of his impotence: every judgment corresponds with the immanent condition of the person concerned.

Therefore it is so appropriate that the last book of the Bible tells us that the figure 7 fits the

work of *God*,
as also the number 1000, the number of
perfect comple-
tion, but that the Antichrist can get no
further than the
figure $3\frac{1}{2}$. That is to say, halfway (for
 $3\frac{1}{2}$ is half of 7)
his work will be broken, together with
himself. The
"culture" of the Antichrist will presently
leave in its
wake only torsos, when the horizon
bursts aflame with
the fire that will be seen even at the
shore of the sea of
glass, the fire of God's judgment. The
anti-christian
cultural fun-fair of the Serious Game, in

honour of *Homo Ludens*,
that idol, shall be the last spasmodic
effort of man, who was created with the
natural ability
of a schematic mind, schematically (that
is, in satanic
and even satanistic style) to put over
against God's *coe-tus*
an anti-congregation. But the Bible, by
writing the
number 3½ upon the glossy cultural
products of this
final "cultural struggle" and convulsion
of sin, shows
that the cultural structure of the last days
is only a trun-
cated pyramid.
Hereby shall be confirmed for the eye of

faith

what we have already stated; namely, that no one is able to build ecumenically, to *colere* homogeneously and continuously in the actual eschatologically determined sense of the word, unless he lives and works "from" God. Neither can any kind of community.

22. Over against the dismal picture of such a truncated pyramid stands the initially true-to-norm structure of the Church and the Kingdom of heaven, as far as the Word of God rules and prevails

there.

This Kingdom prepared itself for the pain to be endured at the sight of this truncated pyramid. As often as the people of Israel or their kings forgot that the nation was also Church and that the Church in every struggle, including the cultural one, can only conquer through faith – that is, by joyfully accepting the contents of the revelation with which it has been entrusted – this nation alone with its royal house stood in tears at the sight of the stump of a once stately tree.

David's house,
Israel's national building, became such a
[63] stump. It
became such particularly in cultural
respect: the Baby-
lonian exile, Jerusalem's destruction.
Then the people,
who had looked up to the culture of the
"civilized
nations" (the heathen), who had been
eager to compete
with them and to outbid them in the
market of culture,
said: Alas, no rod shall come forth out
of the stem of
Jesse! Who has ever seen anything so
impossible? But
then the prophets said: "Refrain thy

voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears" (Jeremiah 31:16). And Ezekiel had to become a sign unto the people who saw the destruction of the desire of their eyes – the desire of eyes that see cultural quantities only. He himself also lost the desire of his eyes (his wife) but was not allowed to mourn (Ezekiel 24:16, 25). Why not? Because for the faithful covenant congregation, which would take the Word of the covenant seriously again (Jeremiah 31), a rod would presently sprout forth out of

the truncated
stem, a "Branch," which would be the
Christ, the Good
Shepherd. He is a Shepherd because He
provides in
every need, also in cultural needs: Thy
bread and thy
waters shall be sure (Isaiah 33:16).
There we have the cultural activity of the
faithful
Church members: it is according to
God's *promise*. This
promise is of a cultural nature also; it
has been given
through grace and through the Gospel.
This gift-of-
grace will be "sufficient" : "My grace is
sufficient for

thee" (11 Corinthians 12:9). Sufficient to what end?

Sufficient to reach the end of time in faithfulness to

one's office and not to lose sight of *colere* or of the God

Who always wants to be worshipped by His creatures.

We just said: it is sufficient. Is it not cultural pride

to say that grace is sufficient? This is what "Neo-Calvinism" is reproached with.

No, we do not encourage any Christian cultural

pride. For we said no more than that *grace* is sufficient. 39

[39](#) Page [40](#) [41](#)

Besides, we acknowledged that also the Church and the Kingdom of God are living under the universal pressure of the law of restraint, this Sharp Resolution of Mitigation issued by Christ the King. Even the believers never finish their cultural endeavours. They, too, have their truncated pyramids. There is much patchwork in what they are doing. No, this is no reason for pride. For as a matter of fact the numbers 7 and 1000 fit God's Kingdom and Church not because they involve or include

human labour but only because in both numbers Christ is effectively active with His Spirit. But – by this Christ has this great reality at least been proved: that sound and purposeful structure, norm-fast style, harmonious culture are present, truly present, only there where God by special grace again creates living people from the dead and where "men of God" are "furnished unto all good works" (11 Timothy 3:17); there, moreover, wherever He mutually binds them and their works [64] together.

For teleologically-directed cultural construction is not an affair of individuals but of a strong communion.

Therefore the article of our faith concerning "the communion of saints" (the *koinonia*) is also of direct significance for culture. And a schism in the Church – a true schism, not what hierarchy makes of it – always means cultural destruction. On the other hand, Church reformation, even though the number of confessors may dwindle, is always cultural restoration also. And when

those true confessors are boycotted and
with violence
removed from the workshops and funds
of culture, they
will still be evangelists, signposts of
culture, even
though they have been thrown aside. For
the only one
who may truly be called a source of
culture is Jesus
Christ.

We realize that this standpoint has been
called
"impertinent." However, those who
made such state-
ments do not share our "creed." They do
not know a
Word of God that effectually enters into

history in a his-
torical way; that is, continuously
producing fruits from
its own seed. The "Word of God" as
they consider it is
no "seed of regeneration." In their view,
no "chain of
salvation" is forged here, under the
clouds of heaven.

What produces fruits, thirty-, sixty-, and
even hun-
dred-fold, here below, can in their
opinion never have
been seed from above.

We shall not further deal with this
theory. We
would be able seriously to oppose
Barthianism only if

we had been given more space than is available here.

However, let no one delude himself with the idea

that this would be a clash of arguments only. For at bot-

tom we have to make here a decision of faith. Either one

acknowledges the Scriptures as the Word of God, or one

does not acknowledge them as such. We very well real-

ize that, as soon as we are deprived of the Scriptures,

our standpoint cannot produce any proof for its being

correct – just as the other standpoint

cannot do so. But we do not want to make anything but a statement of faith, also this time. Not only matters concerning the Church and the forgiveness of sins are matters of faith, but of all things it must be said that they are only known through faith and not by "experience." Even questions regarding the "substance" and "appearance" of culture are answered by faith only. Concepts such as a "communion" and "to build" are matters of faith: if the confession had nothing to say concerning

them, it would not deserve its name.

But because we accept this standpoint as the Bib-

lical one, we do not shrink from its consequences.

Let us mention a few of them. 40

[40](#) **Page** [41](#) [42](#)

23. [65] The *first* one is that, strictly speaking, it is

incorrect to speak of "the" culture, of culture as such.

This way of speaking uses an imaginary quantity: that is

to say, in so far as it might suggest that there is unity of

cultural endeavour. This unity is lacking even "tran-

scendentally." Just as there is no "*reine*"
Vernunft
(" pure" reason), no *reine Verstand*
überhaupt (" pure"
intellect in general), there is no such
thing as *reine Kul-tur*
(pure culture). Although nature is one,
there is more
than one use and cultivation of nature.
To will is inher-
ent in man, also culturally; it belongs to
his nature. But
cultural striving is more than to will: it
includes long-
term and long-distance objectives.
Having arrived at this point, we again
meet with
the antithesis and with the curse that is

the result of sin,
the curse of disintegration and scattering.
The world still
dreams of a tower of Babel, and still its
language is con-
founded wherever this great project is
undertaken. It no
longer occurs in the same striking way
as at the first
Tower of Babel. It happens more
gradually now. The
punishment is never so severe nor the
curse so immense
as when things go this gradual way. In
principle there is
again some *einheitlich* (unified) cultural
producing,
born from the Spirit of God. But because

the unbeliever,
that great sectarian, turns away from it –
while never-
theless at the approaches to the cultural
material to be
fashioned he more and more posts his
sentries, who turn
back everyone that is unable or
unwilling to produce the
password of sin (presently this will be
the name of the
beast) – therefore the culture that is built
through faith
will cover smaller and smaller areas.
This culture is *ein-heitlich*,
but of the material that affords
"opportunities"
for the cultural impulse it uses no more

than fragments
only. The world of unbelieving
schismatics – sin is
schismatic – does not want it any other
way. Over
against this stands the fact that this
schismatic "world"
itself, even though it conquers all the
approaches
towards the natural sources, the material
to be fashioned
and cultivated and the already
discovered cultural
means, because of its sinful character
and the inherent
destruction of communion, produces no
more than mere
cultural fragments in its presently almost

universal cul-
tural territory. With the believers there
is unity in labour
but only fragmentation of work areas.
With the unbe-
lievers there is a unified work area but
fragmentation of
the work: fragments, torsos, exponents of
the diverging
aspirations and endeavours which are
not out of God,
contradict each other, cancel each other
out, and are
never able to consolidate themselves
into a unity. For

the imposed unity of the totalitarian anti-
christian state

will not last long: if it were not imposed, this sham unity would fall to pieces.

[66] We have already seen it, partly with a feeling of shame: even culture that is in accordance with the will of God shall not reach completion before judgment day. As far as this is a matter of the universal law of the already discussed retardation of powers, the "restraint," it makes us humble; our life is but short and we are dependent on the "climate" in which we are born. As far as this is a matter of being plundered by

"the world" that
ousts us from the "territory" still to be
cultivated, we
have to carry Christ's cross. As far as it
is a matter of the
sin of us all, which (we now follow the
infralapsarian
line) has from alpha to omega disturbed
the gradual
development of the first-given (cultural)
world, and
now makes unavoidable the sharply
rising and falling
line in the curve of the retardation of
beast and Spirit,
we have to profess our sin in Adam
before God. And as
far as the fact that we cannot finish our

task is more a matter of our directly individual sin and of our slothfulness and unwisdom, we have to do penance for that and the more exert ourselves in working towards a sound, rich, and broad cultural life as long as this is still possible. For Christ puts before us *the duty of cultural activity*.

Not to join in cultural labour means wilful disobedience on the part of God's labourers. It means not to serve God in *what belongs to Him*.

But we also have to distinguish God's

governing
hand in the fact that "culture as such,"
that of the
believers no less than that of the
unbelievers, cannot be
finished, for God does not let any power
fully develop
itself, not even the power of Christ and
His Spirit,
before the great catastrophe of the last
judgment. Retar-
dation, we said, is the will of Christ, and
the law set for
the Antichrist, until the hour of Christ's
parousia has
come. Against a "law," a fixed
ordinance, man's power
can do nothing. We cannot so challenge

the bull that he
will enter the arena before the set time.
We cannot avert
God's restraining hand. Heavy as well as
lightening,
oppressive but with the unbreakable
intention of God to
grant us as yet "times of refreshing," it
hangs over the
world and its bustle, but let us not
forget: this law works
also in an evangelical way. It is of a
Christological
nature. God does not permit the
thermometers of culture
to be broken by premature heat, also for
this reason: that
He is waiting for the last one of the

elect, as well as for
the latter's opposite, the last reprobate.
Both have yet to
be born in this world. They will yet have
to be sur-
rounded by the earth's protecting
atmosphere that grants
them a place and without which no one
can ever do any 41

[41](#) **Page** [42](#) [43](#)

work. They must be immersed into the
temperance-
atmosphere that still tempers the hot
glow of the heavy
wrath of redemption, in order that at the
very end of the
lengthy course of time they may fulfil the
counsel of

God with regard to [67] themselves,
contending with
each other in a life-and-death struggle,
the one armed,
the other unarmed, each of them obeying
a different
command. Is there not in this retardation,
in the atmos-
phere's not being rent apart, an awful
kind of wrath,
apart from astonishing grace? The
retarding power lies
upon world life as an atmospheric
pressure. The balance
will not be broken and the atmosphere
not be rent before
those last two will have completed their
course. Then all

those who are out of the second Adam will be allowed to take with them for ever the fruits of the cultural struggle as far as God's new world will make room for them. Then they will enter into the world of full satisfaction, which precisely as such does enjoy fruits of culture but has passed beyond all cultural striving. Then, but not before.

24. A *second* consequence of the standpoint we have taken is that in our discussion concerning the Christian

and culture we must also not proceed from the fiction of "culture as such." There is not one single "cultural substance," certain "forms" of which we meet with or ourselves might "be." There is no universal soul or spirit or reason or logos. All these terms are mere abstractions.

They would be more or less harmless if they were not always related to the pantheistic idea that the moral law accompanies universal culture itself because in culture "God" becomes "Self-conscious" and therein deter-

mines Himself. Over against this the Christian professes that God does not come into existence but that He is there, that He has made His counsel from eternity and still makes it, and that He imposes His moral law *from above*.

To *this* law we are bound in our actions.

They are actions either of the new man that has been created by God or of the old man that has been dislocated by Satan.

Therefore we are not trying to find a practical counter-balance in a Christian adaptation (supposing that such

were possible) of a novel about *la peur de vivre*, over against the crypto-vitalistic designs of a "Christianized" touched up version of *Pallieter*, for example. We must serve God, everyone in his own way, wearing either a leather apron or an academic gown – it does not make any difference. Everyone has to serve God, wearing rubber boots or carrying a gasoline can, having as emblem a hammer and sickle (these belong to *us*) or a painter's palette, rather than a censer as such. We have

to serve God, everyone in his own place
in the new

God-created community. "In his own
place" means

here: according to his own calling. For
calling, not aspi-
ration without inspiration, determines
what is "ours."

We have to detest thoroughly the forming
of any group

that fixes its limits and its criteria for
membership while

leaving the matter of divine calling
beyond considera-

tion. Everyone's individual character or
disposition

must be on [68] its guard against the
danger of selfishly

growing beyond its limits and must try to fit into the structure of the communion for which divine calling (to be known from the Scriptures and from the course of our life) books us a place. To establish *koinonia* in the *sunousia*, as members of the mystical union of Jesus

Christ, *that* is Christian culture. 42

[42](#) **Page** [43](#) [44](#)

25. A *third* consequence of our standpoint regards the matter of *abstention* from cultural endeavour. Is there room for that? And if so, how far, why, and to what end?

This problem has many aspects, too many to sum up here. A few remarks may here suffice.

First of all, we must emphasize that, since there is a cultural mandate that existed even prior to sin, abstention from cultural labour is always sin: those who abstain from it are on strike. And now that Christ has comprised in Himself all the real treasures of "culture" – that is, of "grace" – abstention for the sake of abstention is nothing but a renunciation of Christ, self-imposed

poverty, and sin before God. In this sense a Christian's abstention in cultural affairs should never be preached.

"Every creature of God is good ... if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer" (I Timothy 4:4, 5). It says: every *creature*.

The products of God's hands are not the same as ours: His "corn and wine" differ from our malt products or our distilled liquor And precisely because every creature of God is sanctified by "the Word of God" (God's

speaking to us) and by "prayer" (our speaking to Him), that is to say, in real covenant fellowship, abstention from cultural labour, or, in other words, the refusal to let God's creature appear in the covenant communion with God, is nothing but a matter of narrowing this communion. And what do we usually say about love that narrows its fellowship arbitrarily? There is also a type of abstinence in which the faithful avoids certain areas of culture because he finds it too difficult to pursue God's command

in those areas,
deems himself incapable, considers the
high pressure of
being subject to God's Law too
burdensome, and for this
reason avoids that particular area. It
should be clear that
such abstinence is sinful. He avoids the
cultural zone
concerned because he does not want a
conflict with
God's Law. However, this abstinence is
in reality an
avoidance of God Himself. The person
in question does
not wish to get into trouble with Him, the
Legislator, but
at the same time he fails to let God show

him His will.

Renunciation of cultural participation may never be desired for its own sake. It can be justified and imperative only when it is imposed on us as an emergency measure.

[69] For there will indeed be an emergency situation until the end of time. And this emergency situation will gradually grow even worse, for it is war-time.

Because of the war which God still wages against sin, and which sin wages against God, there is nowhere

a possibility for a simultaneous,
harmonious and centrally
guided development of all cultural
forces. Just as
the normal development of the forces
inherent in the life
of a nation that is involved in a war is
only possible as
soon as the weapons are put down, so
the community of
the new mankind can find its "rest" only
in normal
labour on the new earth. Then the war
will be over.

This war-motif shows us still another
aspect of
the matter of abstinence. God has
millions of people in

His creation, but only a part of those millions even begins to fulfil its duties. Therefore the communion of God's faithful children is much more heavily burdened than they ever would be if all people feared and served God. In our days frequent complaints are heard from the side of the unbelievers about the unequal distribution of goods. But those who complain about this apart from God are basically doing the very thing which they reproach society with. Go and take an evening walk past

the movie theatres, have a look at the flashing signs and see how even the paupers in large numbers pay their two quarters. Think about the huge organization behind this powerless "cultural labour," which unfortunately is usually done in an unchristian way, and in this single example you will see proof of a God-less distribution of goods. The Christian labourer who toils to save a quarter and on Sunday puts it into the collection bag for mission work, is also engaged in "culture," be it indirectly. Half

of this amount would have been enough for him to give if the idlers who spend their two quarters in the theatre had been able to find the dividing line between entertainment and labour, creative effort and recreation. The sums of money that are offered for one single bad film have been taken from, e.g., mission work, which is also cultural labour, although not exclusively. These few examples may illustrate the fact that Christians as a community are heavily burdened with respect to educa-

tion, mission, Church life, charity, etc.
At every step
they are accompanied by abnormality,
for the son who
works in his Father's vineyard is
overburdened because
his brother who does not work is
unfaithful to the
Father.

Therefore, cultural abstinence, in
whatever form
and regarding whatever detail, as far as
it originates in
resentment, laziness, diffidence,
slackness, or narrow-
mindedness, is sin before God.
Unfortunately we must
admit that in this regard the unbelieving

world often
rightly criticizes us. For quite apart from
the resentment
that [70] makes even Christians run
down things they
never can accomplish themselves, a
quasi-edifying Pie-
tism has all too often forgotten – and
even branded as
heresy – that the work of redemption
leading us back to 43

[43](#) **Page 44** [45](#)

the "original" things imposes on the new
man the duty
of cultural labour. But on the other hand,
in as far as the
criticizing unbelievers, by neglecting
their calling, are in

fact on strike themselves and in cultural matters always decline a normal division of labour, Christians who consciously abstain are heroes when they resort to their negative "asceticism" to preserve the positive, their training for the forthcoming performance of their duties, putting first and foremost that whereto they are in particular called. A Christian people maintaining their colleges, supporting missionaries, and caring for the needy who were left them by Christ, thus saving them from the

clutches of state-absolutism (that pioneer of the Anti-christ!), doing a thousand other works of divine obligation, and primarily because of all this not able, for example, to set up an imposing Christian stage, supposing that such were possible, or to establish an extensive Christian organization of aesthetic and artistic character, such a people is indeed a heroic communion. When it voluntarily abstains for this reason, such abstention is, among other things, self-control and also self-denial,

self-development of the man of God who wants to remain engaged in that whereto he has been called. Others may mock him, but he is herein dominated by a broad cultural insight. For his abstention because of the emergency situation places time under the arch of the history of the beginning as well as of the end. This sort of abstention should not be typified with the word "resentment," but finds its limits and legitimation in, e.g., Matthew 19:12, where Christ speaks about those

"that make themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of heaven's sake" and not in order to avoid this Kingdom.

It recognizes itself in the scene presented in Revelation

12. There the woman (the Church) goes into the desert.

Yet she – for she goes into the desert after Christ's ascension into heaven, at the beginning of the "thousand years" of His glorious reign – yet she has been liberated by the Son of man. She has the rights of Sarah, the free woman. But she suffers hunger in the desert together

with Hagar, the bond woman. Her voluntary abstinence is definitely no negation of her hereditary rights, but the maintaining of her own style and a matter of taking in hand a cultural task which the majority of people never take into consideration: the service of God in the full extent of human life, *hic et nunc*, according to the occasion (*kairos*) of Christ's time (*chronos*). It is war-time, even in our own heart. Also for this reason abstention may time and again be a duty for the individual person in [71] very distinct

respects that are individually to be more closely determined at every turn: hence the eye that is plucked out, the hand or the

foot that is cut off, the field or the family that is left

behind, the maimed body, the lonely soul, and all this

for the sake of God's Kingdom. But this is again no

abstention for the sake of abstention. It is a powerful

effort to prevent an onerous distemperance from letting

the lower lord it over the higher. In other words, it is not

a matter of indifference to style, or hostility to culture, but, on the contrary, of culture-in-style, training and activation, self-temperance of the man of God in and unto service in the broadest sense. 44

[44](#) **Page** [45](#) [46](#)

26. A *fourth* consequence is that even within the framework of an inexact, non-scientific, popular parlance it is definitely incorrect to characterize the problem of "Christ and culture" as that of "common *grace*."

We have already expressed as our opinion that in

an exact, conceptual description of our belief there is no room for the term "common grace," at least not in the Kuyperian sense, in which "common grace" is identified with "universal grace." We shall not elaborate further on this.

However, one could ask: Who is always prepared to produce an exact concept? Who is able to use a par-
lance that is fully adequate? Who is able to write one single page without using figurative language? In a certain definition, be it inexact but joyfully

showing thanks
for what is still left to us, could a
cumulation of the ves-
tiges of the creation gifts, and "natural
light" and its use,
not be called "grace" ? Are we not
permitted to take one
single step together with the
Remonstrants or Armini-
ans, who (according to the Canons of
Dort) designated
"natural light" as "common grace" ?
Our answer to this good-natured
question is this
time not so good-natured. This time we
say no, and we
believe that experience has taught a
lesson here.

For in the first place there is some difference between "the glimmerings of natural light" that "remained" in man and the use of this light. The epic recitals in which Abraham Kuyper is presented as extolling common grace in the arts and sciences have more than once neglected the distinction between light and its use. But as soon as one raises the question what "grace" actually is, this distinction is of the greatest significance.

But apart from what we have said

before, we have still another objection against the one-sided use of the word "grace." Nowadays we quite often hear people speak slightingly of "rectilinear" thought and of "single-track theology." Usually we then have some difficulty [72] in keeping ourselves composed. It causes some extra difficulty when we hear this from certain authors who function as apologists of the Reformed Synods in The Netherlands in the years 1942-1944 (and even after 1946) and therefore march

against those who
really could not (to the exclusion of any
differing view)
hold the children of the covenant to be
regenerated. 15

Sometimes we hear those apologists
fulminate against
the "rectilinear" and "single-track"
thinking of their
opponents. But they themselves had to
promise (and
with respect to *this* promise nothing
changed) that they

would not teach anything which was not
in full agree-
ment also with the synodical declaration
of the year

1942 that took the trouble to assure us that "among us" (meant were those of Reformed confession) such residues in man as the "light of nature" were really called by the same name which also the Remonstrants used: common grace.

Well, this is too rectilinear to suit us. This reminds us of a single-track railway line. For "grace," being undeserved, forfeited "favour," is, then, a word related to the *idea of what is permissible*.

Therefore many Christians have come to look upon the

cultural problem

as a question of what is and what is not permissible.

Hence the numerous accidents.

For in our opinion – and our whole argumentation

confirms it – our cultural mandate must be primarily

seen as a matter of a "common

command," a "common *calling*,"

a "common *mandate*." Here our may is our

must. Our above-explained standpoint shows the cul-

tural question to be, even before the Fall, a question of

duty, a mandate from the very beginning, a creature's

service to God. And when the Heidelberg Catechism correctly and with full emphasis states that God does not wrong man when He requires of him that which had already been imposed on him in paradise, *even though he cannot do it any more*, then this answer turns its sharp edge against those who let their theory of "common grace" teach only and exclusively about that which by God's charter has been left to us as being *permissi-ble*. *Dress the garden* – God does not wrong any man when He still requires the same thing of

him, even
though he cannot do it.

All this is closely connected with more
than one

important theorem, also of
methodological structure.

The doctrine of common grace that takes
"grace" as its

startingpoint, has chosen as the
startingpoint for its

problematic the things that after the Fall
have been left to us.

But here it makes more than one mistake.

Without

neglecting what happened after the Fall,
it has to go

back to what happened before the Fall in
order to

understand God's intentions. Further,
time and again it
speaks about that which has yet been left
to *us*, us men,

15. The author here refers to the
declarations
made by the above-mentioned Synods
on, e.g., pre-
sumptive regeneration and common
grace and their
decision that "nothing should be taught
which is not in
full agreement with" these declarations
which caused a
schism in De Gereformeerde Kerken in
Nederland
(Translators' note). 45

[73] as if men were the more important here, rather than God. This theory is more anthropocentric than theological. And by making this mistake it necessarily makes a third one: it starts to broadcast culturally optimistic sounds in a culpable way. For "nature" (as the material to be fashioned or developed by man) has never been given to us, but it has been put at our disposal – just as a shipping line puts a ship at a captain's disposal in order that he may work for the company in the

shipping business; the ship is not a gift. When God lets us remain as part of His creation and when nature continues to co-exist with us, then the man who feels rich because of what he once possessed will say: Many permissible things have yet been left to me. The other, who would never deny that he loves his work and enjoys life as a feast, says in his turn: Be on your guard against single-track theology. For the man who realizes he has been appointed by God as a captain of the

ship of the eternal
Ship-owner has to admit: I have
received firm *man-dates*:
there is still work to be done. As for
nature – of
which I am part, together with my
cultural urge – many
things must still happen to it before the
world will per-
ish; or, rather, will be transferred (into a
different mode
of existence). The mandate to develop it
in and outside
myself as God's office-bearer has never
been with-
drawn – which is a serious warning
against Pallieter-
axiology.

Culture is a question of *must*. It, too, fell under the original "command of life," of life in its broadest sense.

This expression does not mean that there is a command:

Live! Nor is it: Man, dare to live! But it means that there is a command that does itself impart life to everyone who obeys it.

Therefore the contents of our cultural calling are never determined by our aptitudes or tastes, as if these could determine the norms, for the primary calling is for everyone: to be sound and whole,

teleios in the sense of Christ's saying to us: be ye therefore perfect, fully grown, human but never humanistic. Everyone, together with all that belongs to him and with what belongs to the community, has to present himself before God. Not everyone has the aptitudes required for participation in every cultural phenomenon. Variety of natural abilities is not culpable. However, not to possess the ability to engage *directly* in one cultural field or another (e.g., music) is not the same as wilfully to

exclude oneself
from it. To look upon the cultural
struggle as a whole
without showing any interest is the
opposite of striving
for service-conscious training.
Therefore we cannot agree with those
who, with
Abraham Kuyper, state that Christianity
or Calvinism

cannot and should not design its own
artistic style.

Someone has said that Calvinism has
failed to develop
its own artistic style because its concern
is religion [74]
and it was forced to leave the "lower"

things in favour of the "higher" ones, or at least was not able to develop the former. In our opinion the danger of once again separating religion and culture is imminent here. Besides, the impression is then created that it would be possible to design a style for the one "area of life" and not for the other. "Style" is always first a matter of the whole building, and only then of its respective parts. If a Calvinist can speak of a life-style, he can also speak of an artistic style. We are afraid that the

founder of the Free
University has limited its task too much.
The service of
God is above all creative, shaping, and
also stylizing. In
so far as Calvinism – to mention no
more – did *not*
develop its own style in any field, this
shortcoming is *partly*
(for the above-made reservation is still
in force) a
sign of weakness If culture is a matter of
the everyday
service of God, this calling is and
remains inexorable,
within the limits of each period of the
history of salva-
tion as these limits are set by Christ's

governing, and everyone has to strive to be a whole and complete man, proportionally and in cooperative relationships set up according to norms that correspond with their purposes.

For this calling is never without social effect. 46

[46](#) **Page** [47](#) [48](#)

27. Because the balloting norms of these cooperative communities are their peculiar norms, derived from the Law, the preaching and administration of which has been entrusted to the communion of saints, therefore the *fifth*

consequence of our standpoint has to be the deep reverence which, also from the cultural viewpoint, may be demanded for the Church.

As the King of the Church, Christ is the King of the whole world also, the One Who completes nature in its history (for Rickert 16 rightly reminds us of the fact that nature, too, has a history), God's Ambassador, who wants to lay down at God's feet all the results of the cosmic process of development and recruitment, and consequently He is also the Governor of

culture, and the
Judge and Redeemer of its organs. In
Him God will
"recapitulate" all things (Ephesians
1:10).

We just mentioned Ephesians 1:10 and
spoke of a
"universal recapitulation." In order to be
able to answer
the question what particular place Christ
has been given
with respect to the also culturally to be
determined
"summary of history," Paul's statement
briefly deserves
our attention. It says: "... that in the
dispensation of the
fullness of times He might gather

together in one all things in Christ." We have derived the phrase "universal recapitulation" from, among others, a translation of Paul's statement as it was quoted by Irenaeus, one of the "Church fathers" (this questionable term is still used to [75] designate children-of-the-Church of a not always harmless kind). Irenaeus (c. 140-c. 202 A.D.) once discussed Christ's ascension into heaven and His sitting at God's right hand with reference to Ephesians 1:10. Where Paul says that Christ will return

in order to
"gather together in one" all things,
Irenaeus' Greek text
uses the word *anakephalaiosasthai*,
which in the excel-
lent Latin text of Rouet de Journal is
rendered as the
Latin verb "to recapitulate."
Ascension Day, seen in this light, means
the
beginning of this universal
recapitulation.
Does this word help us at all? That
depends on the
question whether in the rendering of
Paul's own word in
Ephesians 1:10 it accurately conveys the
kernel of the

matter. The Vulgate (the official Bible version of the Church of Rome) makes use of a different term in Eph-

esians 1:10 (instauration) – all the more a reason why the word "recapitulation" calls for our attention.

Many 17 have made use of it. We shall give here just a few examples, which at the same time show us what Paul intended to say.

John Owen (*Works*, 1,147) refers to Ephesians

1:10 when he expresses the opinion that the angels are

included in the "recovery" and *recapitulation* of all things which God has given in Christ. Subsequently, he devotes a lengthy treatise to this subject, entitled *The Glory of Christ in the Recapitulation of All Things in*

Him (pp. 357f). Referring to Colossians 1:20, 1 Corinthians 11:3, Ephesians 1:22 and 23, he extols the power of the redemption whereby that which in God's world had been scattered and broken asunder is re-collected under one Head as one family-of-God, as one body.

Are these interpretations correct?

The Greek word used in Ephesians 1:10 does

indeed allow other translations; e.g.

"gather together"

(KJV), "to unite" (RSV).

It is all a matter of the "atmosphere" from which

one thinks this particular word derives, or of the

"sphere" to which it points in its imagery.

According to one opinion, this word had its origin

in a military setting. When there are soldiers who have

lost contact with their troops and are wandering about

here and there, one has to try, if possible, to bring them back to their own detachment. This, then, is taken to be

the meaning of the word concerned. 18

However, others offer a different interpretation.

They have in mind not so much military operations as

arithmetical ones. Adding certain numbers, one gets the

16. Heinrich Rickert (1863-1936)

belonged to

the "Neo Kantians" of the early twentieth century (Translators' note).

17. E.g., à Lapide, who refers to Jerome as a

supporter of the translation
"recapitulation,"
and also to Irenaeus, *Bibl. Cr.* i.1., 92,
refers
to Desiderius Erasmus, and draws the
con-
clusion that the correct translation is: *ad
caput revocare*; which is accepted by
Vat-
ablus, who, however, adds: *vel, in
summam
et compendium redigere* (op. cit. 95).
Cf
Clarius (op. cit., 98): *recapitulare, h.e.
summatim comprehendere et
compendiose
instaurare*; and also Zegerus (op. cit.,
99):

*brevi recapitulatione implere et
summatim*

*complecti universa mysteria longo
tempore*

praenunciata. The translation

"recapitula-

tion" occurs frequently, but its
interpretation

nevertheless varies. On Augustine, see
Menochius and others. 47

[47](#) **Page** [48](#) [49](#)

"sum," the "result." "Sum" is in Latin
summa. The idea

is that of con-summation. The final sum
is made up and

underlined, and everyone knows now the
result. 19 Christ

could [76] then be considered as the one

who makes up
the final sum, the sum total, showing us:
here is every-
thing together. Others have had in mind
bookkeepers,
who add up amounts of money 20 and
give us the result
in the final amount. 21

In the Greek language such a sum-mary,
such a
summing-up, may be called *kephalaion*
(something
like: head, principal), and the verb that
is used by the
apostle Paul is derived from it.

According to this train of
thought, Christ Himself is the Head, the
principal, the

sum total. But at the same time (!) "all things" are gathered together, summed up, in this sum (the sum is then included "in" the sum; all things are the sum, including Christ, according to this peculiar train of thought which operates in a somewhat strange way with the words "in Christ")

However, the number of proposed interpretations has still not been exhausted. Others refer to a certain word that was used among the Jews in the days of the apostle Paul. It means so much as

"agreement' or "harmony" and is derived from a root that can be translated as "head," or "result of the sum." This technical term would then be in harmony with the Greek word *kepha-laion*, and consequently its meaning would be "being brought together (added up)," as well as "being in harmony with each other" ; *ergo*: "being gathered together in peace." 22

We should like to mention a last opinion, one that points back to the schools of the rhetoricians. There an

act such as meant Paul was a brief summary, in a few main points, of what was earlier explained in a more elaborate way. 23 Usually such a summary was not a "neutral," dispassionate summing up, but it was accom-

panied by a sort of "application:" an admonition, a castigation, a word of consolation, or a conclusion stating a demand, as in a court case. 24 One also encounters various combinations of these etymologies and interpretations. For instance,

someone has the boldness to teach that man is a micro-cosm, a world-in-miniature, comprising the elements of the created world as in a summary; that Christ, as the second Adam, is God and man in one Person, and that man (that compendium of "all things," that microcosm) will finally be reunited with the eternal Word, the Logos. 25 Or: just as sometimes in civil affairs a "member" that has been separated from its "head" (e.g., a woman separated from her husband, the head) is

brought back to her "head" and so returns "home," the community to which it belongs (e.g., a woman is brought back to her family), so the whole creation, now separated from God, will return to Christ its Head, and be "home" again. 26 The creation is in that case the reconciled party. 27

As one can see, the opinions vary greatly.

[77] Whoever wants to come to his own decision has to consider that the Greek word used here does not go back to *kephale* (head), but to

kephalaion. The latter has clearly the meaning of "summary," as e.g. in Romans 13:9 and Hebrews 8:1. In Romans 13:9, Paul says that the commandments of the second table can be summarized in the sentence, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This is in all these commandments the ever-recurring main point. It is the summary of the Law. In Hebrews 8:1 the author states: "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest" as has been

introduced to us in
the New Testament. This is the sum of
the whole argu-
ment. But whoever announces a sum or
summary, closes
his books at the same time. This is how
God in the full-
ness of time will give the sum of history,
of the history
of "all *things*." He will give the *sum*, not
its summary in
a sort of "microcosm," a "compendium"
of all cosmic
elements, an "extract" of all that lives
and moves. No,
He will give the sum *of* and *in* the
history of all things.
He will give them for Himself

(medium). He will for

18. Hugo Grotius, Hammondus, quoted in J.C.

Wolfii, *Curae Phil. et Cr.*, 1734, p. 23; for

Grotius, cf. his *Ann. in NT.*, and *Bibl. Cr.*

VIII, i.l. col 106, 113/4. Grotius is not defi-

nite: *quae significatio huic loco maxime*

convenit. Bibl. Cr., 106.

19. Dinant, on Ephesians: cf. Wolfii, 23; Cam-

eron *Bibl. Cr.*, VIII, 101.

20. Cf. H. Grotii, *Ann.*, i.l. 884, b.

21. Leidsche Vertaling (Leyden

Translation):

in Christus saamvatten.

22. Cf. Cameron, in *Bibl. Cr.*, 1.1.101.

23. Cameron, 1.1., cf. à Lapede, i.v.
475,b.

24. Aretius, *Comm. in N.T.*, 1612, i.l.
249.

25. Irenaeus, quoted in à Lapede, i.l.
475/6. Cf.

Photius, quoted in Zanchius. *Opera*, t.
VI.
19,b.

26. Aretius, op. cit.

27. Aretius, op. cit. 48

[48](#) **Page** [49](#) [50](#)

Himself bring all things to and in their
sum, 28 as one

could translate freely.

Is this not a *universal recapitulation*,
the complet-

ing and drawing up of the sum of
history? It is *univer-sal*:

for "all things" will be involved in it and
brought to

their con-sum-mation.

However, these "all things" were no
stationary

quantities; they were permanently in
motion. In them

the one history was enacted. The sense
thereof we

understand not from those things nor
from their move-

ment itself. For, as we said elsewhere
also, the enig-

matic aspect does not lie in the spoken or written Word of God, but in the facts, in history itself. We understand the things and their movements only in and from God's Word.

As a matter of fact, no one among men is able, in the manner of a rhetor, to comprise the sum of the history of all things in any formula, not even if he were to stand on his rhetor's toes. For we see only piece-work, and we ourselves are only piece-work. Even the Messiah confesses His inability in this

respect: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man... but My Father only" (Matthew 24:36).

But *God* is the great Rhetor-Speaker, and also the great Poet-Creator. So *He* is revealed as the *only* Recapitulator-Counter. His counting or adding is not the act of a child that does its sums, but that of the *administra-tor of time*: He is really *doing* something. He forces things to the end, to the decision. He speaks in Word and fact. In His Word He gives us revelation; in the facts He Himself is revealed. It is for that reason

that *He* can
make our sums and indeed does make
them; our sums
are His sums. He had them already in
mind even [78]
before our life began. He is like the
orator who grips his
audience and keeps their attention: *what
will he say next?*
But then suddenly he says: "Thank you,"
or
"Amen." The speaker himself knows full
well when he
has come to his conclusion, his epilogue,
in which he
summarizes all that he has said and so
brings his oration
to a close, to the sum-in-words. But

because we have to do here with God, Who is not only the Speaker but also the Maker, the epilogue to His speaking is at the same time the end of His acting. Because His doing is also speaking and His speaking also doing, therefore, as soon as He has arrived at the sum-of-revelation, He at the

same time has arrived at the sum-of-action. He completes His historical speaking, and also His historical acting and labouring and moving of all things. "The

prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended," it says in the book of Psalms (Psalm 72:20). The Greek translation has they are brought to *anakephalaiose* – the same word as in our text. The reflexive summary given by the rhetor and the closing act of the worker are the same – *but with Him only*.

And all this is done by God "in Christ." Not only in Him as the Son (Logos) Who from eternity is closely related with the Father and the Spirit as their Equal (as in Colossians 1), but also in Him as the

glorified Sav-iour,

Who is seated and has been placed at the right

hand of God. In this glorified Christ, God reigns over all

things, for good and evil, in blessing and judgment. In

Him He brings all things to their end their consumma-

tion, as He has thought it out in His counsel and as He in

His speaking and acting has revealed and realized it.

For this is the great significance of Christ's glori-

fication: the Son of man as God's fully authorized Agent

has taken all things in hand. God's

Oration has passed its half-way mark. History has been brought to a decision. In the great drama the third – and decisive – act has been completed. And now all things must come to their denouement.

The latter, as Paul says, is dominated by Him.

There is one single history only, and this is of a "Christian" character, that is, dominated by Jesus Christ. History is also Pneumatic, that is, dominated by the Spirit

Who takes it all from Christ. We read our newspaper

and listen to the radio, and we grope for the background of what the democrats-in-name in this era of quasi-democracy systematically withhold from us in their deceptive press and their secret diplomacy. We cannot find the sum. No rhetor says exactly what he means. He himself does not even know his own sums, for the historical developments carry him along and the programs are things belonging to certain periods, and these periods are becoming [79] shorter and shorter. But our God

in Christ has the sum in His mind, and when He presently will end all that happens, then we at once will see the sum of His policy. And blessed is he who then will not be overcome by it. For the sum of "all things" is dominated by Christ, but He has been given as "Head" to the "congregation," and to her alone. He has been put, not in the centre of all things, as their compendium or microcosm, but has been set above and over all things, as their absolute Regent. *In the Head of the Church the sum of all things is*

drawn up. This statement destroys the theory according

28. Medium; and further: "the causative idea... is not due to the voice, but to the verb itself" (-0-00), Robertson,

Grammar

N.T., 2nd ed., 809. 49

[49](#) **Page 50** [51](#)

to which the Church itself is a cultural state or is

allowed to become one. No

encouragement is here given

to any suggestion that the Church –

which always, as

institute, is to be instituted and therefore never gives

away the name of Church to whatever

else, in order to characterize the Christian communion in school, family, social life, political life, etc., is falsely called "*the Church as organism*" – is *directly* a practical cultural business, let alone an exponent of culture. This sort of concept concerning the Church would murder her, violate her. In a service in which the Word is preached, the Church does not present a direct lecture on culture that goes into all sorts of technical details, a thinly disguised university for the people. But, on the other hand, the

administration of God's Word does put the whole of life under promises and norms And God has closely connected great promises with the official ministry of the Word, which is the administration of "the seed of regeneration" (Romans 10:17). Faith regenerates, says Article 24 of the Belgic Confession. And this regeneration then takes place in the Church, which brings forth children through the Word of God. It is in this way that the Church can, must, and is allowed to be a hearth where

the man of God is from on high
"charged" with strength
from on high. *From the Church*, where
the Spirit of
Christ distributes the treasures of grace
obtained by
Him, the people of God have to pour out
over the earth
in all directions and unto all human
activities, in order to
proclaim over all this, and also to show
in their own
actions, the dominion of God, the
Kingdom of heaven.
From the Church the fire of obedience,
the pure cultural
glow included, must blaze forth all over
the world. Take

the Church away and the Kingdom of God becomes a nebulous affair. Put the Kingdom of God in the mist and the Christ is renounced, also in matters of culture. It is in the *Church* that Christ lets the Spirit procreate children of God. Only the *Church*, as the mother of believers, brings forth the "new" men, who, also as far as cultural life is concerned, bear the burdens of the whole world. Only the *Church* joins them together into [80] an unbreakable communion and teaches the norms for all

the relationships of life, even outside the Church. The Church alone (not a so-called clergy!) is the bearer of God's Word, and can in a national community proclaim the norms of God in the language of the time and place concerned and so make known to that community what riches can, according to its own nature, be developed in its life, and how this can and should be done. In the days when the Christian Church was strong, Christian art flourished, and culture was a matter of turning the peo-

ple's faces heavenward. Today we have sunk to the low

level of screaming films and of a theatre that can maintain itself only if inferior items are not dropped from its programmes, of newspapers that depend on a lay-out of sensational headlines, of radio-plays in which a novel is compressed into dialogue form with claptrap as *method*, even of a Church-porch that lacks the courage to keep the announcements of all those busy activities from its notice-board. And a community of men

that no longer reads articles but only devours their headlines, presently allows *itself* to be devoured. It is an easy prey for the day-texts and ephemeral slogans that make the universal and impertinent corruption by wilfulness and self-worship in business and trade, in press and politics, into one wholesale outpouring of sin, which has been organized so well and so rapidly that it hits the individual with a feeling of impotence that is no longer even given the time to shudder at itself.

Therefore, for the benefit of a Christian culture,
that is, a culture that is faithful to its own sense and purpose, all must work with might and main for the upbuilding of the *Church*, of the body of Christ. Take the Church away and what is really human is gone, while humanism, boasting about its own ruins, returns. Take the Church and its confession away and the cultural *hubris* (though in the shape of humbleness) will return which in the heyday of philosophical Romanti-

cism mesmerized the whole German nation, and others, by its immanentistic pantheistic creed of an autonomous and autarkic oscillation of all individually *Gebildete* 29 along with the divine spirit that blows throughout the whole universe. For it is true that in its last period the Romantic school of the day, by the mouth of the Schlegel brothers, simultaneously contradicted just about all its own slogans as derived from Fichte, but its deepest root, the doctrine of man as growing up together with

God, has not been rooted out: National Socialism with its cultural projects is proof of that. Take away the Church – which, starting from the local fellowship of the believers, will presently establish national and even international connections – and what is then left will be only an oscillation of "cultural struggles" that put the *strongest* on the throne. The pantheistic slogan [81]

29. *Gebildete* means literally: people who have been "formed," "fashioned." Within the

context of Romanticism, however, this term means: people who have risen to a level at which they are well aware of their own historicity and individuality (Translators' note). 50

[50](#) Page [51](#) [52](#)

concerning "the" right that is inherent *in* things may establish tribunals which sentence people not in the name of the divine Legislator Who by the grace of God made kings cultural shepherds, but in the name of "justice" (Seyss Inquart). 30 Then "the right

of the strongest"
is the most simple judicial formula.
Formulas of justice
and of power merge at last. And so, by
deterioration in
the Church and over the dead bodies of
the Church
members, a platform is built for the
dictator of the last
days, Antichrist. He will drill them all
according to his
system, which is the most horrible of
systems. The
Church should not be even the smallest
direct centre of
culture, but she *must* be the greatest
indirect cultural *force*.
She is the Bride of Christ, that is, the

Bride of
such a Bridegroom Who, unto Himself
and unto His
God, brings together all the glory of the
nations, and
Who is building a city of the finest
symmetry. Hence the
cubical form of the New Jerusalem.

28. The *sixth* consequence is that only
through fol-
lowing Christ the individual can become
of value for
cultural life. Culture is always a
communal act. But
every communion that has not been
bound together by
God's Spirit lets the multitude vegetate

on the individual
and usurp his rightful position.
Sometimes – a dictator
hailed as a saviour is proof thereof – it
leaves itself (and
the individual leaves this communion)
under the
impression that this service of the
individual to the mul-
titude is his divine and unfading
ornament, and conse-
quently they make him the object of their
adoration and
worship. A national movement that is
based on such a
foundation may stir and carry along the
masses but it
kills the individual personality. What is

introduced as *involvement*
is nothing but *conformity*. But when in
the
Old Testament the Law of Sinai
addresses itself, not to
the Church in general but to the
individual Israelite, and
when in the New Testament the Sermon
on the Mount,
that great Canon also of culture, does the
same thing,
then even in cultural life the individual
is in any com-
munal struggle always the one directly
concerned, the
one addressed by God. Only he who has
wittingly and
willingly become an office-bearer in

following Christ
and through Christ, preserves, in the
suction of often
whirling cultural currents, his personal
idion in the
midst of the ondriving force of the
massive formations
of "man power" that drag along the
individual or tread
him under foot. "Manpower" – it is the
querulous term
usually reserved for the description of
an army that has
been mobilized: kings and dictators are
said to make use
of such "manpower." As if the boards of
"trade unions"
do not act in the same way.

But one that has been hewn out of the Rock which is Christ, [82] will – as far as it is up to him – never separate but always distinguish himself (I Corinthians 2).

Just as the Decalogue addressed the individual Israelite, the sermon on the Mount addresses the Christian individually, as well as others, and the Spirit, joining Himself with the whole of God's Word as it issues forth, by acts of re-creation, establishes a *politeuma* (Phillippians 3:20), of which we are the citizens and which has its

centre and royal residence in the heavens, and so on earth works mighty things, in particular in creating a communion. The *politeuma*, or state, which is in heaven will on its part never revolt against a *politeuma* here below. But as soon as the earthly *politeuma* on its part commands the citizens of the heavenly one to deny the latter (and the arena of the struggle that then follows is always a cultural-religious one), yes indeed, then there

30. Seyss Inquart was the

Reichscommissar

during the German occupation of The Netherlands in the forties (Translators' note).

51

[51](#) **Page** [52](#) [53](#)

is that painful inability to stem the tide. But even then, in every period of cultural decadence, the great Steward and Custodian of God preserves "the salt of the earth," so that it is sound and wholesome. Whoever has been subjected to the Sermon on the Mount will perhaps be astonished when confronted with that strange biblical word that says to

him: Do this and that, for otherwise "must ye needs go out of the world"

(I Corinthians 5:10). This seemingly accommodating word may make him wonder because, after having heard the Sermon on the Mount, he actually thought he could never again remain quiet and composed when listening to moralizing sermons of accommodation. Is it not a matter of chafing and pinching on all sides? To give and take – does such a system not stand accursed in the Sermon on the Mount? Is not the apocalyptic

call, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins" (Revelation 18:4), a much more direct and much clearer motif?

The answer is: Not at all To come out of Babylon is not the same thing as to go out of the world. In biblical language "the world" is often, but not always, identical with "Babylon." To leave the harlot" (see above) and to pluck her does not mean to condemn womanhood, to renounce nature (Ezekiel 16). Not to be partak-

ers of her sins does not mean: along with her creaturehood to deny or abdicate the *sunousia*. Paul's word in I Corinthians 5:10 therefore does not contradict the style and the complex of thought found in the Sermon on the Mount, but has been organically included therein. For the Sermon on the Mount was addressed to the Christians, also in their capacity as missionaries of God in *this* world and as builders of the *new* world. For this reason a Christian is never allowed to go out of this

world. In this distorted world he simply has to fulfil his duty before God. The tension that arises from our continuous conflict with "this" world and the command never to go out of "the" world is [83] ultimately the tension between our lot of being in contact with men (*sunousia*) and our daily duty to fellowship (*koinonia*).

The latter, just as God wants it, belongs in this sinful world to the antilegomena, the things and signs that will always be spoken against.

Take away from the Sermon on the

Mount the
element of the instruction of office-
bearers, and that
word about not going out of the world
will be misused
in a horrible way by "the flesh" as if it
were a general
pardon and a *carte blanche* to do all that
pleases "the
flesh." But it is quite the opposite.
Someone has said
(Prof. B. Holwerda, *De reformatie van
onzen "omgang,"*
[Utrecht, 1947], p. 15):

If you wish to use this word, you should
take it
exactly as it is written there.

It does not mean: when you are in contact with the world you can patter with your principles and not be so punctilious. For Paul said just before: you have been redeemed by the cross of Christ and now you must celebrate the feast of nothing but purity and truth... . Everything here stands in the climate of absolute seriousness: it has to do with the cross of Calvary, and therefore you cannot take things easy as far as the Church is concerned,

in particular with respect to Church discipline. Do you think that Paul would add now: however, in the world it does not matter so much? On the contrary, he stays in the high climate of perfect seriousness. Because of the cross of Calvary the matter of your social intercourse with the world should be taken with perfect seriousness... . Is social intercourse with godless people in the Church allowed? No, it is not, for God gave you

the keys of the Kingdom of heaven Is social intercourse with godless people in the world permitted? Yes, it is, for if you were to refuse it, you would go out of the "world." 52

[52](#) Page [53](#) [54](#)

29. Our *seventh* and final conclusion, then, is that, proceeding from this concept of calling, the concept of office, our Christian cultural philosophy will have to begin reasoning more consistently. As Christian cultural theoretician one should no longer take "common grace" in the above

rejected sense
as startingpoint. The startingpoint must
be: the original
calling, the task given at creation, the
original office –
lest we be drugged by cultural optimism
or cultural
contempt.

[84] As soon as this idea is dropped,
even the best
among us begin to make mistakes.

Dr. Abraham Kuyper, e.g., in his *De
Gemeene Gratie in Wetenschap en
Kunst*

(1904). p. 44 concedes to

Von Hartmann that "religion" in its
highest form *divests itself of its artistic
garment*.

We are afraid that this reasoning about "religion" is pantheistic rather than theistic. We are further of the opinion that "religion" does not dress "itself" but that it makes its prophets liturgists (and not only them) and dresses them all in the robes of office. Even the artist may participate in weaving these garments. No, not the artist exclusively, but the artist, too – no more than anyone else has exclusive use of the loom. "Religion" has never been dressed in artistic apparel, but has provided many an

artistic garment with
the signature of the office and distributed
them as robes
of office, on the understanding that this
signature would
be left on and be tolerated by its bearer.
A garment of
office should never be put off; rather, its
distinctiveness
should be renewed time and again. This
is why we said
that in Calvinism the service of God
should come to its
own peculiar style in all areas of life, to
the extent that
the above-discussed "restraint" and
"abstinence" do not
stand in the way.

Neither do we, with regard to the above men-
tioned problem, seek our standpoint in an "inborn reli-
gious consciousness," which would then try to express
and realize itself in religious culture. For man, also
pious man, should not live his life to the full, but he
should fulfil his *office*. One's awareness of his office will
always urge him to turn to the revelation of God's
Word, in order to learn again what the norms are.
"Nature," enigmatically, does not teach us anything unless it is put

in the light of
Scripture. His permanent awareness of
his office, also
with regard to his cultural task, makes
the Christian as *prophet*
reach always for God's Word. It teaches
him as *priest*
never to confuse the office-tempered
love of life
and joy in culture as *agape* with the
purely natural func-

tion of his *eros*, as if by means of the
latter God's calling
were complied with – Pallieter is a
pagan! And as *king* it
never lets him reach out for life-for-he-
sake-of-life

but for his Creator, Whose servant and representative he is.

Thus the core of this problem lies in the second

answer of Lord's Day 12 of the Heidelberg Catechism.

There John Calvin, through his disciples Ursinus and

Olevianus, becomes, by the grace of God, a cultural

prophet. He preached and gave depth to the concept of

man's office and taught us to understand again how the

struggle of sin and grace, of obedience and disobedi-

ence, is of paramount importance in

culture. Those who have passed through [85] John Calvin's school will never utter exclamations like those of the people who – with a shudder which, incidentally, we can understand – see how, e.g., technical science is developing in gigantic proportions and then with full emphasis cry out that in technology man has triumphed, but he has triumphed to *death*: *Er hat gesiegt aber er hat sich tot gesiegt* (H.

Lilje). This cannot be correct. When someone meets his death in any cultural field, it is never the

consequence of
any cultural act but only of his own
disobedience and
unfaithfulness in fulfilling his office.

"Every creature of
God is good, and nothing to be refused,
if it be received
with thanksgiving" (I Timothy 4:4). John
Calvin's con-
cept of autarky is anti-gnostic. *JESUS
CHRIST AND CULTURE*,
now for the last
time.

Now the hearts may be opened, and the
mouths;
now the hands may set themselves to
work, and the feet
bestir themselves unto service. The man

who follows
Jesus Christ is splendid and sound in so
far as he does
so. Apart from that, he professes
precisely on his day of
assembly and festivity (at the table of the
Lord's Sup-
per) that he lies in the midst of death.
*Homo est, humani nihil a se alienum
putat.*

He has also become very con-
crete in all he does and says. Novalis,
the poet of
Romanticism, once said:

Wherever darkness intensifies,
New life springs, fresh blood courses;
In order to establish eternal peace for us

He dives into the flood of life;
With His hands filled He is standing in
our midst,
Lovingly listening to everyone's prayer.

Yes, indeed, He listens to everyone's
prayer, but
also to everyone's actions, to the
purposeful actions of
the sober ones, for "they that be drunken
are drunken in
the night, but let us, who are of the day,
be sober," says a
voice from the midst of the choir of
Bible-authors (I 53

53 Page 54

Thessalonians 5:7). Novalis, a
Romanticist on principle,

and consequently a pantheist and
panchristist, sees life
rise up again where darkness intensifies;
that is, where
contrasts can no longer be distinguished,
where the
unity of opposites is "experienced," and,
consequently,
where purposeful action, action that is
mindful of the
fundamental antithesis, is lacking. But
our Christ does
not know any soldiers but those who
belong to the day
(which causes things to be
distinguished). We do not
have a Christ Who merely listens (to
prayers of senti-

ment) but One Who looks on to see how we handle the spade, the hammer, the book, the needle, the brush, and any other instrument, in order *to draw out of the world* – ourselves included – *all that God has put into it.*

[86] "Eschatological sermons please!" is the cry of many. But let another then cry out that we should sow, and saw, and fly, and telegraph in an Eschatological way. Eschatological "theology" is demanded somewhere. But it is better to speak of eschatological culture

everywhere.

Therefore when Novalis says:

Let us in God's garden full of blessing
Faithfully tend the buds and flowers

then we answer that this world is no
longer a Garden of
God that is a "Garden of Eden." The
latter will return.

But at this moment the world is a
workshop, an arena, a
building-site. And the place where one
meets God,
unlike what Novalis apparently had in
mind, is not a
secluded corner where the romantically
disposed soul
practises "religion," in a province set

apart for the soul.

Neither is it a "universe" placed in twilight, not drawing any boundaries between God and nature.

For God's

forum is today *His* workshop which is as wide as the

world, and it is there that we find *our* workshop, *our*

factory, the smoking oven, the study, the studio; in a

word, any province, any non-mathematical plane,

where "the man of God thoroughly furnished unto all

good works" (II Timothy 3:17),

"faithfully tends the

buds and flowers," wherever there may

be any, but also
has his rubberboots on, or pulls out
weeds, or develops a
desert region.

Is it an "endless task?" Yes, indeed. He
knows of

nothing but such endless tasks, "fool"
that he is – "in

Christ." It is the others who are
foolhardy, in his opin-
ion. And he is right.

Our cultural task in following Jesus
Christ is

indeed an "endless task." Blessed is my
wise ward-elder

who does his home visiting in the right
way. He is a *cul-tural*

force, although he may not be aware of

it. Let them

mock him: they do not know what they
are doing, those
cultural gadabouts of the other side! 54

Page Navigation Panel

[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [9](#)

[10](#) [11](#) [12](#) [13](#) [14](#) [15](#) [16](#) [17](#) [18](#) [19](#)

[20](#) [21](#) [22](#) [23](#) [24](#) [25](#) [26](#) [27](#) [28](#) [29](#)

[30](#) [31](#) [32](#) [33](#) [34](#) [35](#) [36](#) [37](#) [38](#) [39](#)

[40](#) [41](#) [42](#) [43](#) [44](#) [45](#) [46](#) [47](#) [48](#) [49](#)

[50](#) [51](#) [52](#) [53](#) [54](#)