

2008 COMMENT MANIFESTO

Comment is a journal of public opinion bringing Christian voices to the dialogue in the public sphere, seeking the common good.

We live in an age that continues to be shaped profoundly by the modern, simultaneous impulses toward both absolute personal autonomy and complete scientific-technological control over nature. Around the world these modern impulses co-exist in tension with diverse other ways of life—ways of life usually inspired by ancient faith traditions.

Engaging with—not withdrawing from—this age, *Comment* is inspired by the belief that God is at work in the world for good:

- that God created the world, that creation is good, and that the goodness of creation evokes human wonder;
- that God stands in judgment over the evil in the world, and that the evil in the world and in our own hearts brings about human heartbreak;
- that God rescues the world from evil in the death and resurrection of Jesus, making human hope possible;
- that the Spirit of God by saving grace draws together communities of faith for the public celebration and proclamation of this hope; and
- that the Spirit of God by common grace enables all people to contribute to the common good, whether or not we recognize God as the enabling power for our efforts.

Comment is committed to honest, humble thought; clear, simple writing; and courteous, civil dialogue—inclined toward identifying and affirming what is good rather than courting controversy.

A. *Comment* critically celebrates imaginative, skilful art work—literature and poetry, song and music, theatre and film, drawing, painting, photography, sculpture, and other forms—that expresses “with simple majesty the mixture of sorrow under sin in the world and joy at the presence of the Comforter,” as Calvin

Seerveld writes in *A Christian Critique of Art and Literature*: art that will show “the hurt and the laughter, the thoroughgoing chiaroscuro to flowers and desires and prayers alike,” that “will let a childlike gladness of hope well up through the total groaning of all creation for the Great Day still to come.” *Comment* seeks in particular to recommend emerging artists to its readers, and to encourage and honour under-appreciated mid-career artists.

Comment respectfully encourages world-loving, wisdom-seeking academic work that revels with delight in God’s glorious ordering of creation, reels with horror over the human evil that vandalizes the good creation, and searches for ways of following Jesus’ repair of the broken world.

B. *Comment* is glad to profile prudent businesses that steward the wealth of the world with enterprising innovation, patient investment, frugal management, skilful collaboration, and fair exchange. *Comment* hopes to contribute to the cultivation of human societies in which economic markets flourish without overwhelming other spheres of human life.

Comment endorses responsible technical invention and cultivation that delights in the materials and forms of things, discloses and conserves the possibilities embedded in creation, and enables a rich diversity of human ways of life, while carefully questioning human neglect and exploitation of creation.

C. *Comment* affirms that politics is only one dimension of our multi-faceted, common, public life and culture that is most deeply defined by religious beliefs, and informed

and enriched by civil mores, intellectual opinion, artistic products and popular culture. Yet political life does possess power to define and to influence—for better and for worse—our common public life and culture.

Comment esteems statecraft, the defence of peace, and the rule of law, and denounces anarchy, brigandage, and tyranny. Against both individualism and collectivism, *Comment* resolutely campaigns for an accurate recognition and protection of different spheres of human life, with the application and limitation of political power to the administration of justice (known as the principle of sphere sovereignty or differentiated authority), and the appropriate assignment of political authority, with a preference for the more local authority where possible (known as the principle of subsidiarity).

D. *Comment* cherishes the enjoyment of the playful delights and everyday comforts that offer solace in solitude and enliven our common life: simple food grown and prepared with care and imagination, well-designed clothes worn with élan, streets and boulevards that invite walking and cycling, board games and ball games that test the players and amuse the onlookers, and table conversation that is on occasion witty, rich, deep, and lively—all to celebrate what it is to be human, with gratitude for the good gifts of a loving Creator who delights in his creatures.

