

Social Action, Hundred Nineteen

FREDERICK NYMEYER



Blind voor de uitkomst, maar ziende op't gebod.
Blind to consequences, but focusing on the Commandments.

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"How I Love Thy Law"
Obedience 100
Aims 10
Proclamation 9+
PSALM 119

. . . Dedicated to "LIBERTY under LAW," with Law meaning Natural Law, or Moral Law, or Law of Nations, but most succinctly: The Decalogue, especially no violence, no theft, no fraud, no envy.

. . . Denounces the pious sanctimony and hypocrisy inherent in Altruist ethics, including the Social Gospel, Socialism and Communism, and the "fraternity" and "equality" ideas of the French Revolution.

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I A DIAGNOSIS (pp. i-viii)
January 1971 (revised June 1972)

II THE SOCIAL GOSPEL MALADY (pp. 1-24)
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III OVERTURES TOWARD RECONCILIATION
IN ETHICS (pp. 25-56) October 1971

IV INDIVIDUALISM AND ALTRUISM
(pp. 57-88) June 1972

[Subsequent Mailings Planned]

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Mailing

A Diagnosis*

FREDERICK NYMEYER

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A D I A G N O S I S

There appear to be many discontented church members presently. Some indicate that they are confused. Then there are others who appear to be inert.

An observer may think of asking: What denomination is there that does not have trouble; or which already has the solution for various modern problems; or which has a conscious and published method on how to find solutions?

Discontented church members might think in terms of any of the following:

1. Resignation, in order to form a "new" congregation.
2. Movements out into other established denominations (evaluated rightly or wrong as being better).
3. Internal discussions in a mood of optimism, to re-establish harmony in doctrines and policies in the existing denomination.
4. Less optimistic discussions, with awareness on the part of fellow members that the wisest policy may be to go (eventually) separate ways, as others have done in the past. The corollary to this is to plan to divide existing properties.

Leadership in the Christian Reformed Church, which is the denomination in which this writer resorts, rests in reality (as about everywhere) in a combination of college and seminary faculties, denominational Boards, editors of established publications, and similarly situated people.

A segment of the aforementioned are (1) aggressive Social Gospel advocates; or (2) are nonresistant to the Social Gospel because of unawareness of its dangers; or (3) are natural middle-of-the-roaders whose vote goes, eventually to:

- (a) the minority which grows to a majority by soundness of ideas; or
- (b) the minority which grows by better political organization, albeit with less intellectual merit.

No denomination appears to have prospered greatly, in ideas or in peace, under the Social Gospel. There is reason to believe that the consequences of the irrationalisms (heterodoxy) of the Social Gospel may turn out to be as unfavorable in the Christian Reformed Church as they have been elsewhere.

Real denomination growth can hardly be founded on negatives. Therefore, conservatives (as well as liberals) must develop a "positive" program. Else the conservatives are lost; or if they win temporarily, they will still lose eventually.

It is submitted for a positive program, whether by liberals or conservatives, that there are needed:

1. Amendments to the Creeds by purging them of defective dogma, such as infralapsarianism (an erroneous fifth-century cosmology). Existing permission to tolerate (irreconcilable) supralapsarianism is proof that infralapsarianism is adiaphorous or erroneous. (Calvin used the term, adiaphorous, to designate what is not an essential principle of religion.) Creeds should contain nothing that is adiaphorous.
2. Modernization of the Creeds by an improved formulation of the dogma of original sin; and especially the derivative dogmas on the origin and inheritance of sin and damnation.
3. Formulation of new Creeds to have positive dogma:
 - a. Against the Social Gospel; and its socially and ethically damaging principles.
 - b. Against thinkers since 1600; such as Descartes, Hobbes, Hume, Comte, Kant, Kierkegaard, Marx, Barth, the Existentialists, etc. Explicit affirmations against the ideas of these men are desirable to make Christian dogma intellectually respectable in this age.
 - c. Against the ethics of Communism; which (inescapably) entails wickedness, sanctimony and hypocrisy.
 - d. Against the hypothesis of evolution. Consideration should be given to the limitations of the presuppositions of evolution as a theory regarding origins, involving (to wit) a purposeless development; no teleology. There should be an acceptable solution, if the problem is approached correctly.

- e. Against ecumenism, of a type promoted by the World Council of Churches.

Whoever is discontented should help formulate answers to such modern problems, just as the Reformation churches in the sixteenth century formulated their propositions against the Roman Catholic Church. Sixteenth-century ideas in the Catholic Church which were warred against by the Protestants can be appraised as relatively unimportant compared to the new heresies undermining the late twentieth-century Protestant churches.

If churchmen cannot formulate both defensive and positive ideas cogently, they will not be able to resist and frustrate modern heresies; or unite with natural allies; and they will continue to be disorganized. Any new denomination will similarly be affected unfavorably, unless they clearly and definitively can provide the answers.

Such creedal elaborations are urgently needed; they are even overdue.

It may be difficult for some ecclesiastics to formulate such documents because of the "narrowness" of the courses hitherto included in the education of (some) clergymen. The same applies to personnel in denominational colleges.

Maybe there should be informal special-purpose discussion groups, involving in some cases only intradenominational personnel, and in other cases interdenominational personnel.

Official action groups can become woodenish, and might be dominated by a politically organized minority, which would confuse people and be divisive.

Sometimes the men in present faculties and independent organizations do not evidence requisite qualifications to lead in difficult times. They may not be vigorous thinkers, but "intellectuals," that is, dealers in "second-hand" ideas, to wit, they follow the current waves in religious and ethical fads. That type of mind will not accomplish the task. These men may have lived too long in an intellectual hothouse (isolement!); they may be inadequately oriented, especially in the social sciences; also in the physical sciences.

Obviously, what is properly known by the invidious term of Historicism handicaps many present religious leaders, and even whole denominations.

On the largest problems the participants should be prepared to cross national and even some denominational lines. (The Synod of Dort was international.)

Leadership seized and held by key men in "an establishment" is not a "right" for them, nor is it an "office." They can take no proper offense about others undertaking to perform the same activities differently from what they have been doing themselves; and in that process outline different solutions from what they have thus far developed themselves.

The tradition in the denomination of which the writer is a member has been that there should be "no thought control." The eschewing of "thought control" involves the acceptance of the principle that there should be no denial of the freedom to think exploratively and analytically on new problems.

The program outlined in the foregoing can be developed only with some difficulty under official leadership, because nonofficials may find it difficult to cooperate with "officials," who have control of powerful communication media denied to those of whom a Publication Committee may disapprove. Leadership should probably initially come from individuals rather than from officials.

In the end, public opinion will be decisive. Public opinion is the ultimate arbiter, anyway. Inadequate clarity on the part of the public is eventually to be feared mostly from those who read only the versions supplied by official, that is, censored sources. Open your mind to the full range of sources of information! Bigotry has never been commendable; nor profitable.

Problems affecting denominations appear universal; they go beyond this writer's denomination; in this instance, the home church is merely used illustratively. SOCIAL ACTION, HUNDRED NINETEEN is not addressed to any particular denomination. The problems are ubiquitous.

If action against the nonBiblical Social Gospel cannot be successful in a denomination in which a man presently resorts, why should he be optimistic about being able permanently to keep the Social Gospel out of any other denomination to which he might turn, or might help organize?

What is most urgently needed is triumph over the Social Gospel and other errors by men where they are presently located.

Men should ask themselves, can we by both secular and Biblical arguments definitively substantiate that the Social Gospel is unmitigated evil? or a great good? If not, such men should consider addressing themselves urgently to finding the answers.

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