

**C.L. Patijn - 'Towards A Responsible Society' (with an introduction by
Nils Ehrenström) - June 1948**

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
Study Department
17 route de Malagnou, Geneva, Switzerland

CONFERENCE OF CHRISTIAN POLITICIANS

Château de Bossey, Nr. Geneva
June 2nd - 5th, 1948.

C o n t e n t s

PREFACE by the Rev. N. Ehrenström

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS by Professor E. Heimann

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS by Dr. C.L. Patijn

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS by Mr. Martin Wight
(to be published in the first number
of "The Ecumenical Review")

Report of COMMISSION I

Report of COMMISSION II

LIST of Members of the Conference

P R E F A C E

June 13th - 16th, 1947, at Château de Bossey, the Study Department of the World Council of Churches arranged a small international round-table meeting of Christians engaged in politics. It followed the pattern established at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, of bringing together Christians engaged in a particular vocation - like teachers, industrialists, doctors, - for the purpose of thinking through together the spiritual and ethical implications of their professional work, and how to make their Christian faith a vital influence in secular life. It was the first international meeting of Christian Politicians to be held under ecumenical auspices, and therefore chiefly had an experimental character.

The reasons which promoted this endeavour may be illustrated by some quotations from the letter of invitation:

"The pronounced changes in political life and in man's assumptions about the function and possibilities of government which have taken place in recent years and are still developing, have led many Christians to the conviction that the time has come for a radical re-thinking of the traditional Christian attitude to politics.

"During the war many people discovered to their great surprise that the Gospel was anything but political-ly harmless, and that the Christian Church, in spite of all its shortcomings, proved to be an outstanding champion of the claims of Right against Might. And now in the post-war period we are witnessing numerous efforts to translate this reborn consciousness of the Church's responsibility for society as a whole into the complexities and ambiguities of political action.

"These efforts, however, are scattered and unrelated. There is a growing longing among Christians holding responsible positions in the political life of their countries for greater opportunities of exchanging experiences and convictions about the objectives and strategies of the Christian approach to politics."

In accordance with its exploratory character, the Conference covered a wide field: informative reports on the relationships between Christianity and politics in different countries; the religious significance of politics; the Christian challenge to democracy and communism; the Christian

strategy and tactics, nationally and internationally; the problem of Christian political parties; the relation to Roman Catholic political activities.

The Conference proved to be a promising beginning, and its members expressed a strong desire that such meetings should be an annual feature.

The present report contains the introductory addresses and commission reports of the Second Conference of Christian Politicians, convened by the Study Department in cooperation with the Ecumenical Institute at Château de Bossey, June 2nd-5th, 1948.

Whereas last year's conference explored a great variety of questions, the programme of the present conference was focussed on the issue of "A Responsible Society". What is the responsible society, willed by God, that we Christians must stand for, both nationally and internationally? Where in the contemporary economic, political, international do we find partial approximations to, or flagrant denials of it? To give concreteness and realism to the discussion, the speakers had been asked to develop the Christian position in relation to the desperate struggle between the forces of democracy and "popular democracy", between Soviet Russia and the West, in which the social and international disorder of our time has become polarised.

The opening speeches (by the Rev. N. Ehrenström on behalf of the Study Department, and by Professor H. Kraemer on behalf of the Ecumenical Institute and as chairman of the Conference) emphasised the strategic function of such groups in re-thinking the distinctive witness of the Christian community in a society which is becoming increasingly politicalised. The Bible does not proclaim an a-political message; announcing God's will for the whole world and for the whole of man, it is saturated with political significance.

Three introductory addresses were given on "What is at stake in the present crisis of society?" (by Professor E. Heimann), "Towards a responsible society" (Dr. C.L. Patijn), "Our Christian position in face of the tension between Soviet Russia and the West" (by Mr. Martin Wight). They offered a stimulating variety of approach. As someone character-

offered stimulating variety of approach. As someone characterized it, the first speaker approached his subject chiefly at the ideological level, the second at the economic, and the third at the eschatological.

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In the common Bible Study each morning, the members meditated on some key passages of the Scriptures on "God's will for society", "God's will for the international order", and "The Church's responsibility to society". The days began and ended with morning prayers and evening prayers.

One evening Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft spoke on the significance and problems of the Amsterdam Assembly.

For certain periods the Conference divided into two commissions: on "A Responsible Society" (chaired by Dr. C.L. Patijn) and on "Our Christian attitude in the face of the International Disorder" (chaired by Mr. Martin Wight). The reports of the commissions were discussed and revised in plenary session the last day. As shortage of time prevented the commissions from giving adequate treatment to the immensely complex and difficult issues with which they were dealing, it was decided that the reports should not be published, but be regarded as suggestive "working propositions" to be placed at the disposal of kindred groups engaged in the study of the same problems.

In view of the nature of the subject, the list of those invited was not confined to Christian politicians in a strict sense; it included also some experts on international affairs, sociologists, theologians, etc. Unfortunately, a number of politicians who had accepted the invitation ultimately were prevented from attending owing to unforeseen professional obligations. Geographically, the Conference was almost wholly European in membership.

The introductory addresses have subsequently been revised by the speakers in the light of the discussions. A word of explanation is needed as regards the address by Mr. Wight. As the editor of "The Ecumenical Review" intended to publish this address in the first number, it was decided to append reprints of the address to the present report, in order to avoid unnecessary mimeographing work. Since, however, the technical processing of the first number is taking more time than anticipated, it has been felt advisable not to defer the circulation of the report any longer, but to issue it without the address of Mr. Wight. Those who want to read this important address

are referred to the first number of "The Ecumenical Review"

The third annual meeting of Christian Politicians is scheduled to be held at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, April 1st - 4th, 1949.

N. Ehrenström
Director of the Study Department

Study 48/7
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ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE OF CHRISTIAN POLITICIANS
Château de Bossey (near Geneva),
June 2nd to 5th, 1948.

TOWARDS A RESPONSIBLE SOCIETY*

by Dr. C.L. Patijn, The Hague.

My task this morning is to introduce you to the preparatory work of Commission III. It is my task to give you an idea of the kind of questions that have been raised during the past year. The difficulty is that though I will speak according to the schedule about "a responsible society", I am afraid that I will put before you more questions than answers, though some answers may come up during the discussions. Commission III deals with the disorder of society and the task of the Church and the preparatory work has resulted in a number of documents which have many characteristics in common. The main points of interest are the following:

1. A diagnosis of the disorder of society and its consequences for mankind.
2. Remarks about the kind of conditions which must prevail in order to make it possible for men to live in the modern world.
3. The situation of the Church, its involvement in the disorder and its unpreparedness for this modern crisis, its task and its strategy.

I believe that our approach to the problem is new and interesting. For the first time the Church faces the spiritual and cultural consequences of the industrial revolution of the 19th century. Until now the Church did not see this problem very clearly, but this time we put the question so thoroughly that it will be impossible to escape. At Oxford (1937) attention was drawn to some features of modern life in the economic sphere, and the Report pointed out the following points:

- (a) The great acquisitiveness and false standards of social success,
- (b) The inequalities of opportunity between men,
- (c) The irresponsible possession of economic power,
- (d) The lack of a sense of Christian conviction in daily life.

Oxford suggested five standards applicable to any economic

* Introductory address presented at the Round Table Conference of Christian Politicians convened by the Study Department, at the Ecumenical Institute, Château de Bossey (near Geneva) June 2nd to 5th, 1948.

situation:

- (a) A worthy means of livelihood for every member of the community.
- (b) Equal opportunity for all men.
- (c) Social security.
- (d) Labour should not be considered as a commodity.
- (e) Equal access to the natural resources of the earth.

Oxford failed, however, to indicate how these standards should be applied and how the desired circumstances should be attained. That was its weak spot. At the same time it gave strong warnings against the dangerous tendency towards State interference and control, although no equal opportunity or social security can be obtained without increasing State interference. Oxford also failed to say anything about the economic means of attaining the social ends. This time not only some undesirable features of the economic order are mentioned and not only negative warnings are given; we are digging deeper. What strikes me in the documents of Commission III is that most of the writers are very much baffled by the situation. Our new technical society appears not as a well-known form but as a sphynx-like phenomenon and is questioned in all its aspects. We are less certain of the necessary measures of improvement or of the villains than ten years ago. We are aware of the dangers in the social and political aspects of our society, but we are discussing other aspects too, spiritual and cultural aspects, the dehumanising character of our society, and the problem of the so-called "socialised man." We also say something about the economic problems involved in social measures.

We have even made a few "discoveries":

- (a) What we need is not a free society, but a responsible society. I remember very well how this word was found. We had a discussion in London a few months ago about Dr. Oldham's paper on the Free Society, and Dr. Oldham himself did not agree with the title. He said what we needed was a humane society, but as that is untranslatable, after a long discussion it was decided to use the title "A Responsible Society."
- (b) The conflict between liberty and totalitarianism is not identical with the great international tension between Russia and the West, though propaganda tries to convince us that that is the case.
- (c) We should add another "discovery", namely that the differences between "free enterprise", socialism and communism in the economic sphere are diminishing.

Finally, we are introducing a new method of dealing with those problems for the Churches. In these documents you will find a tendency to avoid wishful statements and Christian philosophies. Instead we see a prophetic calling upon the main actors on the social and economic stage to see their responsibilities.

I.

I now come to the diagnosis. The most important thing we can do is to try to penetrate to the bottom of the real difficulties. When we follow the ecumenical movement in its great conferences we see a marked development in its outlook and approach to society. In 1925, in Stockholm, the Churches and the world (social problems) met for the first time after two centuries of pietism and personal Christianity. That is perhaps over-simplification, but on the whole it is true. In 1928 in Jerusalem the word "secularisation" was coined. That was a new discovery. The Churches recognised the non-Christian character of our society, and the whole crisis of society was summarised in one word. That helped us a great deal. We knew, during the following years, that the world was non-Christian and therefore had its very special problems. At Oxford in 1937 the Churches seriously discussed the State and some social aspects of our modern society, dealing with some of the most conspicuous symptoms of the sickness of our social and political world. Oxford knew the German situation in its Hitler days. It was aware of the social consequences of the great economic slump of the thirties. There was, however, no attempt to give an all-embracing diagnosis of the problems of society. In particular the economic problems were not judged on their own merits but mainly on their social and political aspect. Oxford gave the Churches something to think about and some very valuable progressive impulses. (I was more critical of the Oxford Report than my friends in the United States. Professor John Bennett told me not to under-estimate the importance of the effect of the Oxford Report on the position of the churches in the U.S.A. Oxford was far more progressive than most of the churches are even to-day.) To-day we are nearer to an attempt to see the disorder of society as a whole and we also try to penetrate into the spiritual and technical causes of the disorder. We are dealing with our society under a new aspect, as the society of technics. The new world began in the days of Napoleon, a period without precedent in history, with great new powers in the hands of men, and an unprecedented increase in the population of the world. The most important consequences of the development of technics are the following:-

(a) With the industrial revolution economic life emancipated itself from social controls and from its modest place in human life, to become completely independent and to create that vast system of financial, commercial and industrial relations which we know as the capitalist order. The social, economic and political structures of society have since diverged along independent lines, each one following its own logical course. Therefore we see our civilisation in Europe and also in Asia breaking up into anarchy, disintegrating before our eyes, because the social, political and economic forces have developed freely, without regard for one another, and because of the monstrous growth of one of them - the economic forces. The main characteristics are the following:-

1. There is a great lack of cohesion, a disintegration, a breakdown of natural forms of association in the social structure of society.

2. There is an enormous increase in the material resources and power in the hands of men to shape their own environment.

3. The third and most dangerous consequence is that there is less human substance and spiritual freedom to use that new power.

As a result of this development we witness a serious lack of balance in our world. Society is out of joint, and for the first time we see it, not as a passing phase, as a temporary minor disturbance, a crisis, but as a structural disorder with technical and spiritual causes. This is not a matter of secularisation only, it is also an immanent day of judgment on our machine-age.

(b) It soon became evident that the new development of economic life opened the way to disintegration and centrifugal forces. It was here that the first conscious attempt was made to restore unity of direction and to bring the economic order under the control of the community. This was the origin of socialism, and afterwards of the totalitarian movements. Dr. Niebuhr has characterised our dilemma in these words: "The age of free enterprise when the new vitalities of a technical civilisation were expected to regulate themselves, is over. But the age in which justice is to be achieved and yet freedom maintained by a wise regulation of the complex economic inter-dependence of modern man is powerless to be born." We are within the "age between the ages".

First a few words about the totalitarian approaches to our problem. The totalitarian movements - national socialism and communism - made formidable attempts to bind the material and spiritual forces of our communal life, and thus to effect cohesion, a new integration of society conformed to one pattern. Their very great achievement is that they have succeeded in this attempt. Consequently they brought about the two greatest concentrations of power the world has ever known. The two giants killed each other at Stalingrad, but their explosion of power disclosed not only the terrible forces of a spiritual short-circuit in our modern society, but also the weaknesses of democratic society, with its lack of unity. We in our Western world need wars to bring about integration and cohesion in our society. It was only after the declaration of war in 1941 by the United States that we saw the beginning of the great concentration of effort which made possible the victory of the Allies.

I will not discuss national socialism, and will only draw attention to one aspect of communism in its attempt to bring about a new order and to bring the economic world under its control. Communism may have a function in our world, that is, to bring an end to social backwardness and feudalism in Eastern Europe. In this respect it may be a successful experiment. I remember how we, in a country like Holland, laughed at the words of Lenin, when he proclaimed "electrification" as a new gospel, but we laugh no longer when we see what he did with his electrification, what has been developed in a few years in a country like Russia, when we see what it might mean in countries like India or China, when we see the strange hunger for industrialisation in undeveloped parts of the world. Communism has opened a new era for

great parts of the world. At the same time we see in the west governments struggling with great difficulties in the social and economic sphere, discussing their problems most of the time in the phrases of fifty years ago and not always finding reasonable solutions. Then we must not be astonished that there is Communism in the west also.

We know, however, that the totalitarian movements succeed only at the expense of liberty, and we all know the consequences of sacrificing liberty to order. I think the Church will always be in the forefront of those who are fighting for liberty and freedom, as she lives by freedom herself. As attempts to restore unity of direction and to bring the technical world under the control of the community, the totalitarian movements were short-circuits, and though they succeeded they killed the human substance in society. Therefore they did not bring a real solution of the problem.

The way to a new integration of society must combine justice and freedom, as Niebuhr said, "by a wise regulation of the economic inter-dependence of man." That is the way of democratic society, but what have the democracies done so far to solve the problem?

In the background material of our Commission, special attention is given to the differences of opinion between the representatives of the liberal capitalist society of "free enterprise", and the democratic socialists and other groups of the "troisième force."

The first group, the liberal capitalists, still pretend to believe in a natural harmony of interests and refuse to bring the economic order under the control of the community. The socialists still advocate this as a necessity, but I believe they are no longer very certain as to the means. They still proclaim a policy of State control and nationalisation, but they are aware that these measures are sometimes only politically or socially, but not always economically, helpful. One of the best periodicals in the world is, in my opinion, the British "Economist", in which from time to time very interesting articles appear. I quote from the "Economist":

"Freedom and order are still conflicting principles and synthesis is not yet within our reach." "We see only compromises of limited order and limited freedom." "In many countries we can see the danger of a society in which the State, recognising the necessity of intervention in economic affairs, seeks to control virtually all activities while taking responsible initiative in none."

I believe therefore that it is not very important any longer what the "free enterprise" or the troisième-force-people profess. Their ideologies and programmes are becoming somewhat out of date in the light of the problems before us. This is an important new feature of the situation of which the churches must be aware. America is no longer a country of completely "free enterprise." Socialists in Britain like Herbert Morrison, or Spaak in Belgium,

are no longer socialists in the classical sense, and Stalin in his way is the greatest capitalist of our days, putting a much larger proportion of the annual income of Russia into new capital equipment than the democratic countries, at the expense of the rate of consumption of the Russian people.

This implies that all the old political beliefs are in the balance nowadays. The old fight between capitalists and socialists is still going on, but at the same time the capitalists cease to believe in the merits of free enterprise, and the socialists cease to advocate nationalisation as a cure for everything. "There are too many issues which cannot be advanced an inch by any comparative arguments of free enterprise and socialism" (Economist, May 15, e.g. capital-creation).

We must be aware that the structural disorder of our society which calls out for a new integration, transcends all the known solutions. In a way this is very hopeful. It will dim somewhat the ardour of our political struggles. On the other hand it proves that we are still only at the beginning of bringing the economic order under the control of the community, and we must recognise that our political attempts so far have failed. Freedom and order are still conflicting principles, and we have a long way to go into unknown territory.

This diagnosis of frustrated attempts would be too abstract and unjust if I did not mention a few examples of initiative which arouse expectations. I will mention only three:-

1. The Tennessee Valley Authority, a valuable example of co-operation of State and private enterprise in the capitalist society.

2. The Marshall Plan. This is not only a political plan to oppose Russia, it is also economic wisdom and the only possible thing to do to break through a number of vicious circles of the post-war years. It might have great consequences, because it compels the countries of Western Europe to work together on a real basis, with economic forces behind them.

3. The Havana Trade Agreement. A few months ago a general trade agreement was reached at Havana between a great number of states, giving a new charter for the future of the trade of the world. It is an attempt for the first time to bring about general rules to regulate trade relations in the international sphere. The charter, as it stands now, has so many escape clauses that it may be possible for most countries to continue all the bad practices of the past, but an interesting point is the establishment of an international organ that can see to the fulfilment of the agreement.

These are examples of "wise regulation of economic interdependencies". I should mention here also the marked improvement in the social conditions in several countries of Western Europe.

(c) The disorder of our society, however, is not only economic and social; it is not only a disorder of the life of the community but has deeply influenced man himself. Our new technical society has deeply disturbed the substance of human life, and in this

respect Professor Ellul and Dr. Oldham have contributed important remarks. They pointed out that the position of man has been changed by the advances of science and technics. Material forces dominate our world as never before. We see an extreme primacy of things in our days, obliging us to rethink the necessary foundations of a responsible society.

Dr. Oldham states that in the process of gaining control of physical nature men have called into existence a vast network of forces which they are not able effectively to control. This "second nature", which has come into existence by human decision, is in many respects far more alien and unfriendly to man than the original nature. Professor Ellul, in an extremely pessimistic review of the situation in Western Europe, but with which I agree to a great extent, enumerates four great material forces out of human control, dominating the world and terrorising mankind, like the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: the State, production, technics and war.

Ellul says that the State is no longer God's servant only, but an extremely dangerous new type of state, with a continuously expanding sphere of action. In our days, just because of the social and economic troubles, so much must be done by the State that with the work has grown the danger that the State no longer sees its own boundaries. We have experienced these dangers in their full extent in the totalitarian State, that typical exponent of the technical age.

Production: All of us are haunted by the idea of production, and everything is subordinated to it. On the other hand, production is important, and we in Europe are painfully aware of how important it will be in the coming years, in order to regain our economic independence. We must create new capital to build up, in a poor world, the big populations of our day, and the only way is to produce more than before the war. It is quite true, but of course the danger is that everything is subordinated to this technical aspect.

Technics are imposing themselves upon us and are invading the whole field of human activity. The unifying power of technics is tending more and more rapidly to standardise social, political and economic conditions even in our non-conformist Europe, killing the spiritual structure of life. This is true far more than we are aware of it, and Europe is on its way to become a second America.

Finally war. War has become one of the permanent elements in our society. European society is built on a war basis and every government is thinking about what it should do to prepare for the situation if war should break out again. War is in our background and in our minds.

In this way man has been subordinated to things. Life is losing its meaning. We witness a general impoverishment of the human spirit and a progressive decay of human substance in society. "The ethical is in danger of being ousted by the expedient and the opportunist." "The heritage of past generations is beginning

the days
promote

to melt away in our hands" leaving us in the desert of "a popular hedonistic mass civilisation."

II.

I now come to the tasks. Dr. Oldham, in his document on "A Responsible Society" drew attention to the fact that the dangerous disorder of our society as reproduced in the diagnosis, confronts the Church with four major tasks, to which we must direct all our attention and energies. These are:-

1. We must find democratic ways of living for little men in big societies. It is an essential Christian concern that as wide a sphere as possible will be kept open in which men can have direct and responsible relations with other persons and not with things only. There is a vital necessity for a rich variety of associations subsidiary to the state. Quadragesimo Anno proclaimed: "It is a grave disturbance of order for a larger and higher association to arrogate to itself functions which can be performed efficiently by smaller and lower societies." Our trouble is that to attain reasonable justice to-day in social and economic life the lower societies can often do so little. Professor Ellul believes that the state is already a danger. But our states are in many respects too small, far too small, and they have no solution for the manifold international aspects of our problems.

Nevertheless, Oldham is quite right in saying that we must look for a policy of encouraging and fostering smaller groupings. In this connection he tells us that it is possible to have more local production instead of huge centralised factories. Mass distribution methods are technologically justified in only about one-third of the total production of goods. There are several kinds of production which can have a more or less local character. We need no longer concentrate textile industries in Lancashire, but iron and steel production requires centralisation and implies mass-distribution.

2. We must have a new Christian doctrine of work, giving meaning to life. For most people work has lost its meaning in the way in which they are bound to work now. I am afraid, however, that in our time we must give for many years to come a high priority to economic necessities at the expense of the character of our work and even part of our social security.

3. We are in need of a new morality of group action. One of the dangerous consequences of our mass society is the phenomenon of the "socialised man" (Middleton Murray), the man doing what society as a whole does. He may think what he pleases and say what is contrary to the ideas prevailing in society, but in the realm of action he is more than ever compelled to do what society as a whole does. Therefore it is of the greatest importance that the Church provides ethical guidance for the collective decisions. We cannot go on with an only personal ethic. Oldham stresses here the point of the necessity for the Church to learn from specialists from society working in the Church. I think such ethical guidance on collective decisions is indispensable from time to time. In

the days of the war, in occupied countries, sometimes official pronouncements were made on problems of society. Such definitions of attitude, often made under great stress, were milestones on the road to decisions by the subjected peoples, in their resistance against national socialism. Especially the Federal Council of Churches in the U.S.A. gives from time to time valuable comment and admonitions to collective decisions. Here is a point Amsterdam should also follow, if possible.

4. When dealing with the political task, Dr. Oldham notices that even in our so-called free societies, whether capitalist or socialist, man is less free than before the machine-age, and has smaller possibilities of living his own life in a responsible way. At the same time, in the economic system vast structures of political influence and power have grown up outside the recognised democratic processes (such as employers' and workers' organisations). Therefore we are badly in need of a new world of a more human and a more responsible character.

Dr. Oldham gives us then a blueprint, not of an ideal society, but of a number of conditions which should prevail in order to make it possible for man to live in our modern world. There must be:-

(a) Freedom of religion and conscience. We can all agree on this.

(b) Freedom of speech and writing. This is most important. The lack of truth in publicity is one of the great dangers of the political situation.

(c) Respect for man.

We must recognise the necessity for individualism and individual rights. Habeas corpus is one of the deep foundations of society.

(d) Personal relations must be restored.

Dr. Oldham quotes Buber, who introduced into our philosophical world the difference between "ich - du" and "ich - es" relations. This is just the way of a philosopher trying to get side-lights on our modern world, but it is true that we must try to go back to the smaller groupings of society where it is possible to see man as a man and not as a being who can only produce, vote or fight. Buber himself made some interesting remarks in this respect when he visited my country about two years ago, on the problem of Palestine. He tried to explain what was behind the extremist Jewish organisations, with their terrorism. In the life of this people we witness an extreme primacy of the political element in life. All else was considered negligible. We are in a world where there is indeed a dangerous primacy of the political element. We see this especially in Asia, where the peoples are only thinking about political freedom. They expect everything will be all right as soon as they are politically free. When this happens, however, new troubles arise and it becomes evident that not much is gained in the real problems of society

by a purely political approach.

(e) There must be no irresponsible power.

Dr. Oldham points out here that restraints must be set on irresponsible power in society.

(f) The varied activities of man must be independent of one another, in order to check the all-embracing claims of the omniscient state. I think this sounds very rational but in practice it is very difficult to apply. The tendency is for higher societies to arrogate to themselves functions which can no longer be performed by lower and smaller societies.

(g) There must be an equitable distribution of the material resources of the world. This was also stressed already at Oxford, and we are making headway in this direction.

(h) Finally, there must be political freedom, and this is one of the most important conditions for human life in society.

I still have some misgivings about these conditions, for in a way this is wishful thinking. Oxford gave a few standards of this kind for the social and economic life of society, but did not indicate how these conditions could be reached. Our standards for a responsible society cover also the cultural and political field. They will give us new impulses to think about. This is very important and necessary, but here also the difficulty begins with their application and how to translate them into practice in this world.

III.

The final part of my introduction is concerned with the tasks and the position of the Church in this matter. I must say something about how this appears in the background material of Commission III. It needs no explanation to say that the Church is not prepared at all to meet the challenge of this situation of fundamental disorder. I think that it is for the first time that, in the preparation for Amsterdam, the Churches see the problem as a whole. In the past only partial challenges have forced the Churches to take a stand. Only when some spearheads of our social or political disturbances penetrated into the life of the Church have they provoked a reaction. In my paper on "Strategy" I pointed out that the Churches reacted well in the cases of nationalism and the totalitarian state, that in the social problem they gave a wrong reaction and that the economic problem and the international problem did not lead to any reaction at all.

Now what must and what can the Church do? I think that the main task of the Church is not to evolve a system of ideal conditions. I am even somewhat afraid of general pronouncements on Christian ethics. I remember one evening at a conference of the British Student Christian Movement last winter the speaker was Mr. Edwards, the Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Health, an old friend of the Student Christian Movement. He said "In my

life as a Minister there has not been one moment when there was a clear link between my Christian ethical convictions and the practical work I was doing." So there is no easy way from the Christian ethic, as we know it, to the life we are leading day by day and week by week. That is one of the great problems of our situation. Those in positions of responsibility are so much absorbed in the technical aspects of matters that we must be careful in making ethical pronouncements of this kind. It is impossible to help anyone in a responsible position by systems of ideal conditions or natural orders. I am also afraid of the Roman Catholic approach in this matter, because it is adaptable to practically every economic or social policy.

First of all the churches must know what they are talking about. They must have full knowledge of the facts before they make any statements, for no-one in a responsible position can be impressed by ungrounded statements, even if well-meant. On the other hand the Church must not be over-awed by the argument that it cannot judge the institutional problems of society because they are purely technical, since in the most important institutional problems of our day ethical issues are interwoven with the technical aspect. Around every great problem of society of our days a furious political battle is being fought, in which the destiny of millions of human beings is in the balance. It is the duty of the Church and its members to examine the ethical aspects of these problems and to judge them in the light of the Biblical testimony and of Christian experience. It is useless in such cases to proclaim theories about the true natural order for economic and international life, since no one in real difficulty will get help from mere abstractions. The Church will only be effective if the full weight of prophetic judgment is thrown into the balance at the heart of the real difficulties at the right moment and with the greatest possible knowledge of the facts.

I think it furthermore very important that the Church should not develop ideologies and should not conform to existing ideologies. The Church should be the Church. That means that it should be aware of its priestly and prophetic functions.

1. Its priestly function: The Church must be aware that in a society sick with materialism there must be one institution which is different. People become spiritually atrophied in the struggle for existence. What would be the use to them of a Church which, as soon as they enter it, continues with them discussions at the point where they left them at their work? The Church must not fight for the preservation of spiritual values only, or take up defensive positions against the world which threatens it on all sides. A man turns to the Church as to his mother, expecting and hoping for rest, understanding, wisdom, a place to bring his troubles and gain a glimpse of other things than the daily round. Of course the Church must take counsel with those who have knowledge of the facts. It must not be of this world, but it must know this world. It must be wise, but it must not surrender uncritically to the wisdom of the world.

2. Its prophetic function: We must be aware of the quite

extraordinary position of the prophets in the Old Testament, a function almost unknown in church life to-day. The prophets were a link between the people and God in concrete sections of human life. We must learn to get to the real situation at the bottom of our troubles as seriously as the prophets did, and then to call upon the people to carry out God's will for them.

I think the Church's method for the coming years must be to call upon the main responsible groups of our days, the three main actors on our modern stage: the "free enterprise" people, the Third Force and the communists. Now we are back in the political world, but I think the problems of our days are being fought in the channels of these three groups and by these three groups. This is again over-simplification, but we are trying to find the points of approach to the tasks before us. It will still be necessary to point out to the "free enterprise" people not only that their philosophy of economic life is absolutely wrong, but that the wilful harshness and lack of social imagination of many leaders of industry and finance has given the capitalist system its bad name in the eyes of millions of people. The Church must not, however, only appeal to their personal responsibility; she must point out also that in no circumstances irresponsible power is acceptable. I quite agree that no society will work without individual initiative, but equally no society will work well where irresponsible power cannot be brought under control and called to account.

I will not say much about the communists. We can accept their point of view that in special circumstances and in special parts of the world great historical processes are going on and that they are just the means by which the historical process is brought about, but we must never accept the way in which they use men. In my opinion there is no doubt that the Church will stand in the way of communism.

Finally the Third Force. I think this is the most important part of our political world to-day because only those groups are aware of the duty of combining justice with freedom. One of the most distressing things is that the component groups of the third force are still fighting out with one another the quarrels of twenty-five years ago, but the real problems we are facing are on the whole quite different. The Church would help the situation very much if it could transcend the old political and spiritual differences in this world in its approach to the problems of to-day.

I am aware that I have raised more questions than I can give answers. I think that is like our situation to-day and it shows how dangerous Amsterdam could be for the churches. In a way I am afraid more of Amsterdam giving too easy answers than of giving no answers at all. If Amsterdam could just raise some questions in the right way, even that would be of great value in these troubled years.
