
Pro Rege

Volume 10 | Number 3

Article 9

March 1982

100 Jaar Partij, Bezinning en Perspectief: Een Anti-Revolutionaire Bijdrage aan Christen-Democratische Politiek and Christian Political Options (Book Reviews)

McKendree R. Langley
Dordt College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege

Recommended Citation

Langley, McKendree R. (1982) "100 Jaar Partij, Bezinning en Perspectief: Een Anti-Revolutionaire Bijdrage aan Christen-Democratische Politiek and Christian Political Options (Book Reviews)," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 10: No. 3, 27 - 28.

Available at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol10/iss3/9

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the University Publications at Dordt Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pro Rege by an authorized administrator of Dordt Digital Collections. For more information, please contact ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu.

100 Jaar Partij, Bezinning en perspectief: Een anti-revolutionaire bijdrage aan christen-democratische politiek by A. Veerman and C. Bremmer, eds. Franeker, The Netherlands: T. Wever, 1979. 298 pages, \$12. *Christian Political Options* by C. den Hollander, ed. The Hague, The Netherlands, Anti-Revolutionary Party Foundation, 1979. 289 pages, \$12. Reviewed by McKendree R. Langley, Associate Professor of History.

In 1979 the Anti-Revolutionary Party in the Netherlands, begun by Dr. Abraham Kuyper, celebrated its centennial. As part of the celebration the two present volumes were published. They reflect the positions and tensions within the party which existed on the eve of its dissolution. The party dissolved in order that it might become part of a new party, the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), which also includes the Catholic People's Party and the Christian Historical Union. The Dutch-language volume, a manifesto by twenty-four authors who generally favor the CDA, is directed to the Anti-Revolutionary constituency. The English-language volume is both an explanation of and a debate on the advisability of the Protestant Anti-Revolutionaries joining with the Catholics both in the CDA and in the larger, Catholic-led Christian Democratic federation of the European People's Party. Seventeen authors from Europe, North America, and South America took part in these discussions.

I.

The first volume is an Anti-Revolutionary contribution to Christian Democratic politics. J. B. Versteeg of the Christian Reformed Seminary at Apeldoorn describes the present and the future nature of the Kingdom of God, showing that the Kingdom has social implications. He sees his view of the Kingdom as basic to a Christian Democratic view of politics. Bob Goudzwaard of the Free University of Amsterdam expresses the hope that the new Christian Democratic Appeal would continue to draw inspiration from an integrated Christian attitude toward public affairs of the politically spiritual legacy of G. Groen van Prinsterer and Abraham Kuyper. J. Klapwyk of the Free University contrasts the views of man of Liberalism, which advocates individualistic success, and Socialism, which advocates collectivist egalitarianism, with that of Christian Democracy which advocates responsible stewardship. A. Schouten, Director of the Agrarian Social Fund in The Hague, argues persuasively that Bible-believing Christians should change from idolizing unlimited progress to advocating the biblical teaching of stewardship. Schouten feels that, compared to the unsatisfactory alternatives of world-flight or technocracy, stewardship is the only suitable option. Hendrik Woldring of the Free University's social science faculty notes that the points of contact in the pluralist social philosophies of the Catholics (the subsidiarity principle) and the Calvinists (sphere sovereignty) make possible a united basis for the effective functioning of the CDA.

This Dutch-language volume then presents practical elaborations in topics such as urban planning, decentralized welfare programs, the emancipation of women, problems of racial minorities, support for conventional defensive weapons, and the motivations for helping Third World countries. Hans de Boer, the last chairman of the Anti-Revolutionary Party, suggests that the fact of human sin, the need for conversion to Christ, and the cultural mandate all require a holy dissatisfaction with the *status quo*. De Boer also says Christians in public affairs should be tolerant and willing to compromise.

II.

The second volume, *Christian Political Options*, is the most extensive Anti-Revolutionary Party publication available in English. It is a major primary source on the interaction between the Anti-Revolutionary and the Catholic Christian Democratic traditions. Its underlying purpose is to convince foreign readers that the party of Abraham Kuyper is fully justified in joining the CDA. An extra bonus in the book is the inclusion of two important CDA reports. One is "Basic Principles and Political Action," on the attempted common CDA political conviction; the other is "Differentiated Responsibility," on a reformist approach to the economic order. Both are thought-provoking.

Dick Kuiper of the Free University presents a sociological survey of the Anti-Revolutionary tradition from Kuyperian antithesis to ecumenical synthesis. Kuiper overemphasizes the pragmatic aspect of the tradition while de-emphasizing the importance of the deep politically spiritual motivations of Groen van Prinsterer, Abraham Kuyper, and later leaders.

The two most important and controversial contributions in this second book are by Evan Runner of Calvin College ("On Being Anti-Revolutionary and Christian Historical at the Cutting-Edge of History, 1979-1980") and Roberto Papini of the University of Trieste, Italy ("On a Number of Theoretical Problems Regarding the Identity on Christian Democracy in Presentday Society"). Runner is very gracious and appreciative of the reasons for the creation of a united Christian Democratic party in the CDA but he gives a final warning concerning the great gap between the Reformed and Catholic views of Scripture, tradition, and the nature of man. He urges the Protestants in the CDA to cherish the legacy of the antithesis as espoused by the Anti-Revolutionary Party. Papini, with grace and tact, defends the Catholic synthesis which denies a

clear distinction between Christians and humanists. In his view Christian Democratic parties must seek a cultural unity, not a common religious basis. While admitting that Christian Democratic parties are losing their sense of identity, Papini hopes they will regain their distinctiveness by studying their own history.

III.

Both books demonstrate that, at the end of its existence, the Anti-Revolutionary Party favored an ecumenical synthesis which is the basis of the CDA. Runner's essay is the most important contribution in either book because he raises the fundamental question of whether one who holds to the biblical antithesis can accommodate himself to ecumenical synthesis. Raising this question makes *Christian Political Options* somewhat controversial, since the debate is still alive internationally. On the other hand, the Dutch-language volume has no tension within its covers because the

Analysis of the Institutes of the Christian Religion of John Calvin, by Ford Lewis Battles, assisted by John Walchenbach. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1980. 421 pp. Reviewed by John Van Dyk, Professor of Philosophy.

In the foreword to this book John Walchenbach tells us: "One of Ford Lewis Battles' favorite expressions, and indeed admonitions to all of us, was, 'Ad Fontes,' Back to the Sources!" If there was any one single feature that characterized the scholarship of Ford Lewis Battles, it was his astounding familiarity with patristic, medieval, and Reformation literature. I vividly recall the first time I visited Professor Battles. He was still in Pittsburgh. I had gone to see him to arrange for collaboration on a translation of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, a key theological textbook of the High Middle Ages. Battles took me into his study and showed me his work: numerous editing and translation projects, detailed catalogs of references and cross-references, outlines and analyses of dozens of writings existing only in Latin and spanning a period of more than 1500 years—the entire place was literally filled with work on source materials. Already at that time I noticed Battles' predilection for outlines, analyses, and study guides. He was, after all, not only a painstaking scholar, but also a superb teacher.

Happily for us, his love for the outline has now provided us with a remarkably helpful guide to the *Institutes* of John Calvin. The *Analysis of the Institutes* appeared within a year after Battles' untimely death. The book is essentially a point-for-point outline and summary of the *Institutes*. Battles himself instructs us concerning its use. He tells us on page 24 of the introduction:

[D]o not hesitate to place this *Analysis* beside you as you read [the *Institutes*]. For some of you who prefer to grasp the structure of the book as a whole before you plunge into it, the

decision for the CDA had been made several years earlier within Christian Democratic circles in Holland. But *Christian Political Options* is important because it encourages serious discussion about the relationship between Christian faith and public affairs in Christian colleges and seminaries in America.

Both books provide many good insights for applying one's world-view to such matters as economic stewardship and political responsibility. The progressive stance taken by the authors can help us re-evaluate our own political views in the context of the larger debate. Both books demonstrate high levels of discussion of often controversial matters by many distinguished authors. The ecumenical synthesis at the heart of the Christian Democratic Appeal is a most controversial matter with worthy defenders on both sides of the discussion. Can this synthesis be justified? Opinion is divided. Runner's gracious yet clear warning of the chasm between antithesis and synthesis must be taken seriously.

Analysis can be a help, for it faithfully sets forth the tripartite book, chapter, and section organization of the work. Each section is concisely analyzed into its salient points. The user can, of course, read the book and chapter headings for a quick survey. For a deeper perusal he can scrutinize the sectional topics; at the most detailed level he can study the subordinate categories within each section. . . . Others who wish to approach the book directly without being "briefed" by the *Analysis* may still find the *Analysis* of help. When you seem to lose your way (and we all do in a work of such length and complexity), glance at the analytical outline of what you have just read. It may highlight the points to be kept in mind. And months or years later, as you search your memory for Calvinian insights only partially remembered, this little summary may lead you painlessly to what you are seeking.

A number of features add to the value of the book. The chart on page 15 gives us a bird's-eye view of the shifts and additions in the content of the five chief editions of the *Institutes*. Additional charts and diagrams appear at various points in the book. These are designed to help us understand some of the more complex concepts and relationships in Calvin's theology. The introduction also contains an outline depicting the antithetical structure of the *Institutes*. It illustrates Calvin's technique of contrasting his own views with those he considered to be false. And finally, Battles provides us with a number of helpful hints for reading the *Institutes*.