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Editorial

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Editorial

Recently I read a most interesting article about a Christian artist. He was a man whose work had been recognized far and wide. His works had hung on exhibition in several large art galleries. God had blessed him with an abundance of success. But he wasn't happy with his success, because his art wasn't being accepted by fellow Christians—by the church.

"I'll offer my paintings free to any church who will hang them in prominent places where all people can see them," he promised. "All I ask is to be able to explain their meaning. Let the poets go to the pulpit. The church is my home. Why do I have to knock?" he asked.

I don't know this artist personally. I'm not acquainted with him or with his work. There may be something about him or his work which makes it difficult for him to find acceptance in the church. This is often the case with Christian artists. In the name of artistic freedom they paint, write, or say something which proves unnecessarily abrasive to fellow Christians. Obviously, this is something the Christian artist must avoid.

At the same time, it is a tragedy that this man or others like him—painters, poets, musicians, dramatists, etc.—find themselves ignored or opposed by the Christian community. A recent article in Calvinist Contact quotes Frank Gaebelein as making the following comment concerning the typical evangelical attitude toward the arts:

They are the kind of people who look down upon good music as highbrow, who confuse worship with entertainment, who deplore serious drama as wordly yet are contentedly devoted to third-rate

television shows, whose tastes in reading run to the piously sentimental, and who cannot distinguish a kind of religious calendar art from honest art. For them better aesthetic standards are egghead and spiritually suspect. (Calvinistic Contact, February 10, 1975—No. 1492, p. 11).

But this should not be. Art, along with other aspects of man's cultural activity, must be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. The Christian artist, as a new creature in Jesus Christ, has a calling and a contribution to make in the Father's world. While he struggles in obedient response to that calling, he must feel our concern, encouragement, caring and prayers. Artists are not step-children. They are our brothers and sisters, co-workers in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

In that conviction we place before you, in addition to an offering by Economics Professor Henry De Groot, articles which relate to the arts. Fred De Jong tries his hand at literary criticism, while Alwyn Van Zee reviews the world of Christian folk and rock music. Special attention should be given to what Professor James Koldenhoven has to offer, in this and the next issue of Pro Rege, as he gives expression to and reflects upon problems which confront the Christian working in drama. We ask that you read these articles with a concern and sensitivity which arise out of a desire to encourage rather than discourage, a desire to support rather than oppose.

This is our attempt to say to Christian artists, "You don't have to knock. The door is already open."

J.B.H.