In the Reformed Church in America, the year 1959 was a year of remembrance. The Church remembered three events in the life of Calvin: his birth in 1509; the definitive edition of his *Institutio Religionis Christianae*, 1559; and the founding of the Academy of Geneva, now the University of Geneva, also in 1559. The denomination also remembered the founding of New Brunswick Seminary 150 years ago and the first organized seminary training of young men for the Christian ministry in this country.

It is a rich tradition in which we Reformed people stand — a tradition which certainly emphasizes the importance of the cultivation of the life of the mind and thorough education. As one who gives thanks to God for the heritage that is his and who has devoted his mature life to becoming self-conscious about it, I want in this article to reflect upon the nature and importance of education, and especially of education on the "higher" level, although what I have to say will have implications for all of education, whether it is in the home, the local congregation, the seminary, or the college.

The point of view from which this is done is that of the person, be he young or old, who is being educated. The real question of education is not with courses, curricula, paraphernalia, and all the means used in education, but rather with the person who is the end or goal of education.

The implication of all education is this: a person as he is is never what he ought to be. There is a notable difference between the "here" and the "there," between the actual person as he exists here and now and the person that he might be, between present performance and hoped-for improvement. It means that there are in human life potentials, latent powers, present but as yet not realized. They are indications of something which though not actually existing now may come into existence at some future time. What is *in posse* may become *inesse*. Such potentials always point to or promise a way of existence that transcends and transfigures the
present stage of development. They are invitations to participate in a higher degree of human goodness by necessary disciplined effort. When such effort is put forth, a person becomes a better human being, he grows in human goodness. Liberal education aims at helping a person to develop the full scope of his potentialities of mind, will, and feeling with which God has endowed him.

The human goodness which is the end of liberal education has a far wider connotation than is generally given it. It has a wider connotation than "goodness" or "expertness" or "efficiency" in one's vocation or profession. Training for this kind of goodness limits or restricts the potential of human goodness to within the borders of one's job.

The man, however, is always greater than the job. He can not be equated with his vocation. Any education, therefore, which confines itself to preparing a person for his life's work fails to take the whole person into account. A person sustains many other relationships in life—to family, to neighbor, to church, to society, to the state, to the republic of letters. For this reason, education should free a person from the confining restrictions of his vocation and sweep him into the larger world of human culture, that he may become familiar with the best that has been done and said through the years, and have opened to him visions of what is possible in the human spirit. For this reason The Constitution, R.C.A., specifies that everyone before admission to a seminary for preparation as a minister of the Gospel must furnish proof of "literary attainments."

Similarly, the aim of education can not be moral in the narrower sense of the word—the training for conformity to the standard of a social group or of society as a whole. Each person, to be sure, is a social being, inescapably so. He lives in society and not in solitary singleness on an island far removed from "the maddening crowd." True as this is, the important consideration is not that but how he lives in society. The most creative spirits have not been those who have lived in conformity to the prevailing mores of their day, but those who have lived beyond them, challenged by a higher goodness, by visions of better social relationships and of a possible higher life for man. The prophets of the Old Testament are excellent examples, as were the apostles of our Lord.

Nor can the aim of education be Americanism, especially not of the variety of the American Legion or the D.A.R. Education, to be sure, is an instrument of national policy for the well-being of the nation. Our American faith in wide-spread education has given social and economic opportunity to our people and has produced a measure of equality and cohesiveness, but only a measure, for even now it has not fully reached its goal—see what a struggle we have in Arkansas and elsewhere.
Education as an instrument of national policy, however, too often means "instrument of propaganda" for a certain point of view, to which conformity is demanded. Human goodness as the aim of education must not be equated with Americanism. I grant that Americanism is a rich manifestation of it. But as soon as we identify the manifestation with its originating source, it becomes moribund and will soon die.

To keep it alive, virile, and fruitful, we need more than mass education. Our educational system in certain periods has had and always should have another aim, the aim of producing a creative "elite," what Jefferson called "an aristocracy of virtue and talent." Otherwise, democracy, as Plato saw clearly long ago, easily becomes a leveling process, reducing everyone to a lowest common denominator, a standardized uniformity which deprives the gifted of opportunity and society of new values that might be shared for the good of all.

For roughly seventy-five per cent of American young people, education has stopped before they come to college. They have become immersed in the responsibilities of a job, a family, a community. The only educational influences operative in their life are what the community, the home, or the employer provides, or, what is worse, what Hollywood, TV, or cheap literature provides. The common man, the democratic man, lives in an age of confusion, and where will he find direction if not from a "saving remnant" of the twenty-five per cent who are going on with higher education and who are given the opportunity of catching glimpses of human goodness that transcends present achievement and existence.

Such an educational "elite" will develop for themselves standards of judgment for every aspect of our common life—physical, aesthetic, intellectual, social, moral, to be applied to personal, professional, and national life. They will do so because they are motivated by a desire for the first-rate, the excellent, the superior, for what is not but may be. Americanism at its best is not possessions but promises and prospects, a richer, a fuller, a better life for all Americans and for all peoples everywhere. What America and the world needs, desperately needs, is an "elite" who have faith in the possible greatness of man, who have a vision of the good life, who already participate in it, and who, under its demands, strive with all their powers for an ever greater embodiment of it in their personal and public existence.

So far I have purposely avoided the usual Christian categories in talking about higher education. Too often the Christian faith is little more than a pious fluff with little meaning or relevance to higher education. I am seeking to avoid that. I honestly believe that Christian education is a lifelong process of transmuting the stuff of personal life and existence
into a degree of human goodness which it is possible for man to have if
he is willing to pay the price and which, if realized, would radically
change not only personal but also public life. The basic question here,
however, is one concerning the nature of human goodness at which educa-
tion aims. That is the question of our day.

The center of the Christian faith is a conviction that the human good-
ness in terms of which education seeks to transmute human existence is
not merely an ideal, something to be pursued and realized, a beautiful
"ought" which as yet has not come into existence; but, rather, a fact which
already is, something real and touchable. It is not merely some far-off
event, a mere possibility, which someday may come into being. The Chris-
tian faith holds that the ideal is an actual, real object to which we can
direct our attention, because it has been embodied in a flesh-and-blood
Person in history, in an actual instance of what all human life is destined
to be.

The journey of education for Christians is, therefore, not a search for
a messianic ideal that they hope they will find someday, but rather a
surrender to him who has taken the journey before them and who is al-
ways and everywhere present. Christian education is a process of trans-
forming human lives who are in him into his likeness, into the likeness
of this one Life, the Life that is life indeed. As Christians we no longer
desire the good life as though it were lacking and needed to be discovered
by arduous pursuit. The Good Life has visited mankind in a time and
place in history. Hence, the Christian does not live by some prophetic
vision of what may be, but by a living faith in Jesus Christ the Lord,
"who is and was and is to come." He is "the way, the truth, and the life."
Our journey, therefore, is a process of discovering ever more fully what
he means, that we may become more like him: like him in knowledge in
its full scope, like him in our commitment of will to live in harmony
with that knowledge, and like him in appreciation of all that is known
and willed. That is what it means to be a liberally educated Christian.

To realize this aim means journeying by faith, by believing with every
fiber of our being that beyond present achievement and possession, "new
and stronger stuff" is available, a goodness not yet possessed, an inex-
haustible abundance ready to be given to each one who is willing to dis-
cipline himself to receive it (See Philippians 3:12).

Such faith is synonymous with humility, with an open and receptive
mind, with teachableness. If a person maintains that his ideas are final,
his virtue perfect, his affections the last word in appreciation, in short, if
he insists that he is always right in all he thinks, wills, and feels, he will
not be teachable, for he has prematurely identified present performance with the highest good, he has foreshortened the journey into Christ.¹

Education should awaken a consciousness of inadequacy, of ignorance, of a poverty of spirit. A sense of inadequacy in itself, however, is not desirable, but it ought to be taken with absolute seriousness. If a person were more thoroughly convinced that he has not progressed very far on the journey, there would be far greater motivation than there is now. We all suffer from too much pride in the little progress we have made. Bernard Shaw once said: "The more ignorant men are, the more convinced they are that their little chapel is an apex to which civilization and philosophy have painfully struggled up."

A conscious awareness of inadequacy means that we live not so much by achieving as by believing, not by works but by faith, by the prospect of what is possible. The first sign that education is taking place, as Socrates was always emphasizing, is awareness of our own ignorance, our own poverty of spirit, of the distance we still have to go.

A Christian's life will always be characterized by a tension between what he is and what he may become, between what he knows and what is knowable, between present commitment and greater consecration, between what he appreciates as valuable and what he may learn to appreciate. The human being is a citizen of two worlds, the one that is and the one that is to be, and he lives in the tension between the two. He lives by the Christ who came and also into the Christ who will come again, i.e., in the tension between the first and second coming of his Lord.

This tension cannot be resolved, but we can play fair with it. We must not resolve it by taking short cuts, nor deny its relevance or give up in despair. It is inescapable. It is evidence of the pressure of God upon our lives, that gives meaning to and motivation for our journey of self-education. This pressure is a fact which every person who honestly searches discovers for himself. For a Christian who is a student, God is in this tension and nowhere else. He will seek him in vain if he does not find him here. "Ask, and it shall be given you, seek, and ye shall

¹For further elucidation, I quote a paragraph from a paper of mine on Christian Education which was distributed by the Board of Education to ministers in the Reformed Church. Scripture references are from Ephesians.

"The phrase in Christ for Paul, however, is only part of the Christological factor in education. Not only is the process in, but also into Christ. Christ is its beginning and its end. He both creates a new station and sets a new destiny. The Christian is not only in Christ, he must also grow up into Him. Being in the true sphere (aletheiotes) he is "to grow up into Him in all things" (4:15). The Greek proposition used is εἰς, which always implies motion towards a goal. To be in Christ indicates the station but not the destiny of the Christian, the sphere but not the fulness of his life. There is to be a process of growing up, of maturing, of realizing the full promise of his being in Christ. The new life must yield a harvest of fruit not merely in some future state but in the here and now of present existence (5:9)."
find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh, receiveth, and he that seeketh, findeth; to him that knocketh, it shall be opened’ (Jesus in Luke 11:9-10).

What he will find and receive, however, is not a final system of thought and conduct valid for all times, everywhere, for all people. To hold that the results of a student’s efforts are final is idolatry. All that he can hope for as the reward of his journey is an inner satisfaction that he is on the right way, going in the right direction to his right destination, which is to live in the tension believingly.

We are living in a day in which the enormous world power of communism continues to grow belligerently. In forty years it has revolutionized Russia, changed the face of China, and infected scores of people in Asia, Africa, and the islands of the seas. In a short forty years, it has captivated the minds and hearts of a third of the world’s people, an event that has no parallel in history. Economically, politically, socially, philosophically, it is a movement that must be reckoned with. We can not afford to ignore or be neutral to it. It does not give us that choice. It is an aggressive, militant, new type of “evangelism” that is out to win converts and that pressures people to make up their mind whom or what they will serve.

The heart of communism is a burning faith in the possible transformation of man and of humanity. For this faith a convinced communist is willing to sacrifice everything: his own security, possessions, wife, children, life itself. One of them has said: we are but fertilization of the field for a better harvest tomorrow. Here once more, we meet people who have found the strength to subordinate their own personal needs, desires, and concerns to the well-being of a public movement. Moreover, these people know how to bear momentary defeat, misfortunes, and even persecution without losing faith—a characteristic that we in the West in our scepticism often lack.

Communism is a great faith which continues to inspire people by the millions. Its adherents are conscious of living in a decisive turning point of history in which man is called upon to make a choice. In this they are right. But are they also right in the alternatives they offer—communism or doom and destruction? The question is not whether their political, social, and economic organization is right, but whether their view of man and of the good life is right. Organizations are but expressions of prior faith regarding man, the purpose of his existence, and the meaning of history.

It is not enough just to learn to be “agin” communism or any “ism” for that matter. Any fool can be “agin” something. Our negation must spring from a might affirmation of our own. Our answer to communism
must lie in out-performing them. Our faith should lead us to go beyond them—in our view of man and what constitutes his highest good, in our understanding of history as the record and scene of man's destiny, in our sense of responsibility and dedication, in our concern that the economic system fulfill its purpose to provide bread and the necessaries of daily life not only for the few but for all people, in our passion for social renewal, in our striving for a political solidarity that will mean more freedom and opportunity and greater well-being for all men everywhere, and in our consciousness of being divinely called to be the agents, channels, servants of the abundant life God gives in and through Jesus Christ.

What is needed in this time of armed co-existence is a creative, Christian leadership equipped not with pious platitudes or political propaganda but with insight, know-how, and zeal based on knowledge that actively seeks to resolve hostility into the pursuit of peace and the cultivation and sharing of the good life for all men everywhere in the name of God's manifestation of goodness in Jesus Christ.

In him God is fulfilling his purpose and calls people to be its humble servants. We Christians, too, have our Gospel; we, too, should be evangelists; we, too, live by faith; we, too, must match our faith by our works. But faith must be more than pious talk, more than assent to simple propositions memorized in childhood, more than perpetuating a tradition we do not understand. It must be faith informed with knowledge, brisk with intelligent and courageous action, and animated with genuine feeling and conviction, conscious of participating and growing in the realization of a divine purpose manifested in Jesus Christ and coming to fruition in people who acknowledge him Lord and Savior.

The mission of the Church is often inadequately interpreted, especially when we use the plural, missions. The Church has but one mission. The mission of the Church is to proclaim the reality of God in Jesus Christ as prophet, priest, and king. The Church has a mission because God has a purpose, a purpose of establishing a kingdom in and through Jesus Christ and calls his Church to be its servants. He uses men and women whom he calls to be his agents and co-laborers. Some of these are in places far from our home base, among races and colors different from our own. Some, however, are here at home: ourselves, our children, our young people, all of us in the Reformed Church in America. If these people are to be intelligent as well as dedicated servants, education must prepare them for their specific "ministry."

Only as we see our colleges and their Christian liberal arts training in this light of God's purpose will we understand the strategic importance of our colleges as centers for the implementation of the mission of the Church. The colleges are called to be institutions for the training of
"ministers" who are sent on the mission of the Church for realizing God's purpose.

I have put the word ministers in quotation marks to indicate a meaning which is broader than the usual professionalized meaning. We have in the Reformed churches continued, unfortunately, a medieval or Roman Catholic professionalized use of the word minister, as though he were God's servant, *par excellence*, in a sense "ordinary" people are not. The consequence is that we recognize seminary training as preparation for a Christian vocation, but not college training, which is a dispensable luxury for the few. By taking this position we rob God of resources we might place at his disposal for the realization of his glorious purpose in Jesus Christ.

The kingdoms of this world are not yet the kingdom of our God and his Christ. All of culture has not been transformed by the Spirit of Christ. States, industry, business, recreation, family life, organized education, *belles-lettres*, art, music, scholarships, science—we could go on and on referring to organized and unorganized aspects of our life in the world—all of them are areas of life which are not yet transformed by and informed with the Spirit of Jesus Christ. In all of life, in every area of it, God would be recognized as sovereign Lord. The first step, of course, is evangelization—"Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations"; but the second is education—"teaching them all things whatsoever I have commanded you"; first, in our homes and in our churches, but also in our colleges. They are, therefore, a vital part of the mission of the church.

In the tradition which stems from Calvin's interpretation of the Christian faith, education, also higher education, has played a very significant role. The establishing of our colleges and seminaries is an indication that our forefathers recognized that an ignorant people cannot be the most effective "ministers of God." Livingston, Van Raalte, Scholte, and their associates stood in a kind of prophetic academic succession that led them to the founding of institutions of higher learning. It is well once more to recall that our Reformed academic tradition is continuous from Calvin through the Netherlands to these shores and to our educational institutions, including the colleges.

In conclusion, let me then define a Christian college as a community of people confessing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, associated together in a serious and studious search for a knowledge of God, of his world, his purpose, his demands, and in learning to live life in the commitment and high seriousness of those who are called to the divine task of being God's ministers.