The Calvin College project in Christian higher education

To think
- Critically
- Consistently
- Comprehensively
as a Citizen of the kingdom of God

Who can and who cannot follow “What Jesus Would Do”?

YES
- the minister
- the newspaper editor
- the heiress
- the department store owner

NO
- the aspiring novelist
- the regional railroad manager

MAYBE SO
- big-city minister has to give up theology for simple, heartfelt messages
- aspiring singer has to quit opera for rescue-mission solos
- local college president has to leave academia for political action

Charles Sheldon, *In His Steps* (1896)

“What would Jesus do?”

Abraham Kuyper, 1837-1920

“Not a square inch but Christ claims it for his own”
**Kuyper: building a movement through institutions**

- Two newspapers
- Antirevolutionary political party
- Free University of Amsterdam
- Patrimonium labor union
- Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

**Two Kuyperian lessons**

- Reformed grasp on “all of life”: any vocation can be good
- Importance of strategic thinking: some vocations are more equal than others

**HOW DID KUYPER DISCOVER HIS PROJECT?**

Leiden University

1854-1862

**Charge of the Light Brigade**

Crimean War, 1854
Sunken Road, Battle of Antietam
17 September 1862
Total casualties: 22,000

Steel Industry, Pittsburgh

The Krupp Guns
US Centennial Exhibition, Philadelphia, 1876

The New Research University
- Will generate technology that will master nature – and society
- Will provide upward mobility for middle class
- Will increase the nation’s power, wealth, and security
The Model of Objective Scientific Knowledge

- Nature and human nature follow innate laws
- Discoverable by observation and rational reflection upon the material world
- Ideally expressed in the new universal language: mathematics
- “Knowledge is power”: use knowledge to control nature—and humanity.
- This spells progress

The Science of Bloody Progress

Battle of the Somme, July-December 1916

- British casualties on 1 July 1916: 58,000
- Total casualties for the battle: over 1,000,000
- Allies’ net gain: 12 kilometers

Abraham Kuyper 1880

Learning within the framework of Christian conviction
Christian worldview according to Kuyper

“A complex of ruling ideas and conceptions”

Tracing our core convictions throughout all our studies, and following them out consistently in all our life.

Challenge #2
Temptation of the worldview shortcut

A worldview is NOT:

- Cut and dried
- Allowing unambiguous deductions from first principles
- Yielding a fixed and final set of answers

Challenge #3
Salvation is no guarantee of smarts

- Sin mars the thinking of Christians
- People of other convictions often excel

“… in Plato and Aristotle, Kant and Darwin, shone stars of the first magnitude, geniuses of the highest degree …”

--Kuyper 1905

Christian Learning is Hard Work
Good News along the way

- Learning is a collaborative enterprise
- The learner is at the center of the enterprise
- Others are asking the same questions

Worldview as framing questions

Paul Gauguin, 1897-98
"Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?"

HOW SHOULD YOU BUY THIS PROJECT?

TRIPLEX KNOWLEDGE

- Whose We Are: Knowledge of God
- Who We Are: Knowledge of self
- Where We Are Going: Priorities & Strategy

William James
1841-1910
Founder of American Pragmatic Philosophy

‘Knowledge is the intersection of our desires with the world around us.’
REFORMING WORLDVIEW

- Recognizing the whole person: adding sensibility
- Worldview as a tool of Christian self-criticism
- Recognizing flow: adding story

Creation & Innovation for our Times

“Let us not copy the past … but go back to the living root, clean and water it, and so cause it to bud and to blossom fully in accordance with our life in these modern times, and with the demands of the times to come.”

--Kuyper, 1898

Rephrasing Sheldon's question:

Whom would Jesus choose?