



WELCOME TO A MOVEMENT

Comment promotes a “wide angle” understanding of the Gospel’s impact. Join the movement now.

By James. K.A. Smith, Editor

When I became editor of *Comment* magazine, I wasn’t just interested in editing a journal; I wanted to shepherd a movement. *Comment* has always been the face of a much wider coalition of Christians animated by a core conviction: that every square inch of creation is a piece of terrain invested with eternal significance, that *all* things—church and school, work and play, business and family, politics and poetry—hold together in Christ. And *all* of those aspects of our creaturely lives have been reconciled by the work of the cross (Col. 1:15-20).

We are cheered that this sort of “wide angle” understanding of the Gospel’s impact has found wider appreciation in North American evangelicalism over the past generation. More and more churches and Christian communities have come to realize that Christ has not redeemed a merely “spiritual” component of who we are; his resurrection takes up *all* of who we are—our bodies and communities, our prayer and our work—into heavenly places. We see this in new discussions of vocation and a new desire to think intentionally about the intersection of our faith and our work, whatever that work

might be. We are not redeemed *from* work; we are redeemed *for* good work. This, too, is a sign of the Spirit on the move.

The “movement” here is not *our* doing, as if it were merely an activist impulse that depends on our initiative and willpower. The movement is *God’s*—the move of the Spirit in the world, whose renewing power blows, not just in churches and mission outposts, but also across the fields of business and education, homemaking and urban planning. Our calling isn’t to huff and puff and try to make things happen through our own power. We’re not called to be the wind; we’re called to be windmills, catching the Spirit’s renewing power to then faithfully make and re-make culture.

In that sense, every issue of *Comment* magazine is like a windmill tune-up, helping you in your vocation to think carefully about how to position your work in the economy of the Spirit. Or, if you prefer a nautical metaphor, *Comment* magazine is like an ongoing curriculum that helps you trim your sails and tack a course according to what the Spirit is doing today. So we’re not trying to

start a movement; we're inviting people to get caught up in the moves of a gracious Creator who continues to be at work in his world, and who—incredibly—invites us to join him in that work.

We believe that Christ's call to love God and neighbour is a propulsion toward the *common* good—that our work, when taken up according to the grain of the universe, contributes to the flourishing of “the commons,” the spaces of social life that we share with our neighbours. We believe that good commerce and good homemaking and good schools are all launching pads that form, shape, and equip people to be invested in our shared life together. It's why we try to capture the essence of *Comment* in our tagline: “public theology for the common good.” We're not just trying to build a smart, faithful tribe defending some some fortress or huddling in some antiseptic bubble. We want to equip readers with the courage and insight and conviction needed to contribute to the public square with confidence and compassion.

In sum, I firmly believe that *Comment* magazine is *the* resource for the future of a North American Christianity that desires to be faithful in its work, winsome in its witness, and prophetic in its cultural engagement. I'll admit: we are not a magazine of low-hanging fruit. We're not a curator of warm fuzzies and heartfelt stories that make you go, “Ahhhh . . .” We don't specialize in the poignant and sentimental, though we do care deeply about meaning and significance. We are not a magazine that talks about the latest trends and fads, nor do we jump on

bandwagons. We're not talking about what everyone is talking about because we are trying to *change* what everyone else is talking about. We ask a lot of our readers: we're looking for a community of readers who want to be stretched and challenged, who are exhilarated in the spaces *between* theology and business, philosophy and politics. We think a *Comment* subscription is a sign that you've moved to the next level of seriousness about your calling.

Comment magazine has a long heritage of thinking about these matters. Our legacy stretches back to the nineteenth century, particularly in the work of “Neocalvinists” like Abraham Kuyper whose work and example has been a catalyst for North American Christians over the past generations in a range of vocations like higher education, politics, the arts, and the “faith & work” movement. At the risk of bragadocio, while we are encouraged by so much recent work on public theology and cultural renewal, our tradition has been doing this for over a hundred years. We've drilled deep wells that have nourished a century of reflection and refinement. So *Comment* is a regular invitation into a mature conversation. When you read *Comment* magazine, you're getting wisdom that has been “aged,” like good Scotch. You can taste the difference.

More immediately, *Comment* magazine has grown out of a community of Christians who have thought long and carefully about the nature of *work* from a Christian perspective. First growing out of the Christian Labour Association of Canada, *Comment*

was launched as the publication of the Work Research Foundation. The original focus on work and economics has never been lost, but only expanded to now include “public theology” in a broader sense. So the Work Research Foundation became *Cardus*, a think tank devoted to “the renewal of North American social architecture drawing on 2000 years of Christian social thought.” Behind *Comment* is the research, network, and vision of *Cardus*—and behind *that* is an entire legacy of Christian thought that includes Augustine and Calvin, Kuyper and Pope Leo XIII.

In other words, we’ve been at this for a while, and we sort of hang around people who’ve been at it even longer. We are a magazine with a deep sense of being indebted to the communion of the saints. We look to ancient wisdom for contemporary insight. Malcolm Gladwell is great, but we’ll look to Augustine first.

This primer is an extended invitation into the ongoing conversation that is *Comment*. If you’ve just found us, this anthology is a way for you to get caught up on the conversation. If you’ve been a longtime reader, this primer is an ideal way to invite people to join the movement. We’ve selected some favourite, exemplary essays that will both orient you to our vision and give you a taste of how Christian faith makes a difference across an array of cultural endeavours. In that sense, we also hope the primer serves as an introductory curriculum for those who are new to conversations about faith, work, vocation, and the common good.

So this anthology is a teaser, an invitation, an appetizer for what is the ongoing nourishment you’ll get in a *Comment* subscription.

Are you hungry? 



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