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Attempted Better Creeds

Don't look for your favorite department, feature column, or section in these pages. This "Bonus" issue comes in addition to the usual four issues per year, and is devoted to a single dimension of the professional educator's concern, that of written formulations undergirding and directing our practice of Christian education. This single dimension can be given a number of names, some of which are: formulating philosophy, creed constructing, foundations formulating, manifesto making, or just theorizing. It is what these terms have in common that is the focus of attention, and not commitment to any one of these terms or the approaches that they seem to imply.

Thus, this issue contains several types of essays, all concentrating on what traditionally might be called formulating a philosophy of Christian education, or, if you prefer, a Christian philosophy of education. It is offered not first of all as light weekend reading, but as a continuing source book for those individuals or groups who wish to do some fundamental thinking about Christian schools with a view to sharpening and improving both the theory and practice of Christian education. If standing committees, whether of faculty or school board, who deal with policy making in any way find this issue useful in grounding their thinking more firmly, then the efforts of the writers and of the Journal staff will be more than rewarded.

All of the following essays, some reprinted from elsewhere, are relatively recent and critically constructive efforts to improve both the clarity and practicality of our written formulations about the Christian day school, and within relatively brief compass.

These ABC's of Christian education are what all of us must return to in order to give our many decisions some perceived pattern and consistency.

I believe that all of the following essays agree that our philosophizing of the recent past has not been as helpful as it could be in shaping educational policy. There is further agreement that in some way the heavy hand of the ecclesiastical establishment has been a hindrance in clearly defining the role of the school, even while it has been an immense help to the school movement in other respects. Beyond these two areas, there is widespread disagreement as to both the cause and the cure.

Therefore, perhaps the most constructive efforts of this issue are reflected in those parts of the essays which proffer either better ways to go about theorizing, or offer better summary statements of theoretical foundations for Christian education.

The observant reader will note that there are at least two divergent proposals which use "educational creed" and creed-making as the key to both the method and content of philosophy of education. A third approach, using the key term of "firstorder questions" offers what it takes to be a corrective to both traditional philosophizing efforts by individuals and to present efforts to redefine philosophy of education into educational creed.

This issue is the Journal's contribution to the ongoing dialogue among Reformed Christians on basic questions in Christian education.

-D.O.

Confessing Christ In Education

by J. Olthuis and B. Zylstra

According to the Scriptures, profession that leads to salvation is upon the lips and faith that leads to righteousness is in the heart. (Rom. 10:9f) This does not in the least mean that profession is a matter of lip-service. Profession of Christ is a matter of the heart; it is an act of faith in obedient response to the Word of God. Having acknowledged Christ as the only point of certainty in life, as the foundation upon which to stand, the Christ-believer develops a life-view from that vantage point and on the basis of that foundation. He begins to view himself, his fellows, and the world in the perspective of Christ's redeeming reign and thus begins to walk in the Way of the Lord.

On the Nature of Confession

Since individuals do not exist in themselves nor walk by themselves, because they are members of a body, their profession and walk of life are of a communal character. Profession must be confession: a saying along with others of the same thing. (cf Eph. 3: 18, Rom. 12:5, 1 Cor. 12:25) The basic unity of the act of confessing is found in the Word of God written as the norm for all confession. Because of this commonly held confession, because of this common response to the Word, the members are knit together into a body.

The members of the Body of Christ are united in that most fundamental and totally encompassing confession which can be expressed in the words: "Christ is Lord." (cf. John 20:28, Rom. 10: 12, 10:36, Eph. 4:5, 1 Tim. 6:15) Every confession of Christ-believers is an elaboration of this confessing act of self-surrender. But this root-confession calls for an ever growing richness of confessing response in tune with the rich diversity in the Lord's creation. The confession of the Master's servants is never isolated from the context in which it occurs. For this reason there is a need to confess in diverse ways, geared to and relevant to the diverse life-situations in creation. With the unfolding of creation in history and with the appearance of ever new situations and new social contexts, the followers of the Lord will strive for a more specific confession as an elaboration of their first submission: Christ is Lord. With respect to the many-sided society of our day the confession of Christ as Lord ought to take place within the particular societal spheres or zones, e.g. the institutional church, the family, the school, the body politic and the industrial sector.

Such a confession need not of course assume a written form in every instance. But as affairs develop and become more complex this may be necessary for the sake of clarity in direction. A written confession, too, is a response to the Word and specifies the demands of the Word in a certain time for a certain situation. As such, written confessions have all the strengths and weaknesses of being time-conditioned documents drawn up by believers with a certain level of spiritual insight into the Scriptures in a particular stage of cultural development. The confession of Christ-believers cannot be bound and limited by the specific response to the Word of a specific period of history. If there is an alive Biblical faith among believers, their confessions should continually be amplified and revised in order to make use of new insights into the Scriptures and in order to make the act of confessing a living and fresh response to the inexhaustible Word for each generation.

Confessions are authoritative in that and insofar as they are specifications of the Word. At the same time it should not be forgotten that confessions are open to critique in that they are human and fallible reiterations of the Word. What the Lord demands of us in the church, the state, the school, and industry is completely trustworthy and has infallible authority. This divine appeal ought to be heard in the fallible confessions. The confessions and creeds are normative. But, since they are the words of men, they are

never self-sufficient or final and must thus always be under the test of Scripture. Confessions serve always as secondary norms, and it is blasphemy to identify them with the primary norm, the Word. This is readily admitted, for instance, in the Belgic Confession: "Neither may we consider any writings of men, however holy these men may have been, of equal value with those divine Scriptures, nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God, since the truth is above all." (Art. VII) Believing and confessing in their roots are *one*. But, as we noted above, the working-out of the heart-confession takes on the form and shape of the diverse contexts of Kingdom service. The result of the Christian community's confession of Christ in all of the zones or 'rooms' of the creation is a *multiformity* of confessions all having their basic unity in the Word. First comes the unity of our confession, then the pluriformity of its forms.

The institutional church has composed a series of very significant ecclesiastical creeds as a response to the Word of God and often in battle with heresy. The act of confessing within the institutional church is defined and shaped by the confession of the church. Since the non-church areas of life are also subject to the Word of the Lord, it is our conviction that there too the Christian community ought to confess the Lordship of Christ as it pertains to these areas. When the time is ripe and the need is there we feel that for the non-church areas of life written confessions or 'creeds' can also be formulated. For example - and that is our concern in this article - a school confession or an educational creed should indeed be drawn up which specifies the main Scriptural guidelines for education in our time. Such an educational creed ought to be a link between the Scriptures and the educational process: it norms, defines and shapes the direction of activities in the school.

Until today most of the creed-writing energies in the history of the Christian Church have been devoted to the life and confession of the institutional church. Since Christ is Lord over the whole of human life His servants must confess Him in the major areas of human culture. In the complexity of contemporary civilization that confession ought to be given a measure of clarity in terms of written statements of principle - which in this context we will call 'creeds' - so that Christians may reflect and act together in the non-church areas of life and so that the world may know the direction and goal of our Christian walk of life. In saying this we do not want to minimize the importance of ecclesiastical confessions. But we do want to articulate more clearly the nature of our confession in areas beyond the institutional church. Since in this essay we are interested in making a contribution to the development of an 'educational creed' it is necessary in view of the historical situation to examine for a moment the relation between church creeds and educational creeds.

Educational and Ecclesiastical Creeds

The confessions of a (denominational) institutional church should not take the place of a Christian educational confession since a school is a school and an institutional church is an institutional church. Each of these structures requires a confession relevant to that structure, though in each instance a response to the Scriptures. We would suggest the following considerations for this position.

The creeds of the institutional church were not intended to be and should not be looked upon as school creeds. They were written at a time when schools as we envision them today were largely absent. They do not *specifically* express the directives of the Word of God for an educational enterprise and thus do not deal with modern educational problems and current anti-Christian views of the schooling process.

Reliance upon ecclesiastical confessions as a sufficient basis for Christian education may readily lead to spiritual sterility and even principal bankruptcy in the educational setting since the educational relevance of the Word of God is not brought explicitly to the fore. This narrowing of the basis of Christian education to the ecclesiastical creeds may occasion great confusion. This is present, for example, in the frequent practice of appointing teachers and professors who are members of a church confessing these creeds when in effect the appointees cannot clearly articulate the fundamentals of Christian *education*.

Adherence to church creeds may even serve to hide the absence of a Scripturally directed educational curriculum. In addition, it should be noted that many denominations adhering to identical creeds have not found it imperative to draw from these a set of principles relevant to Christian education.

To act as if a church creed can be a school creed is to confuse and mislead. For one is then readily given the false idea that schools can't only be of a Christian character in an indirect manner, namely through the institutional church and its creeds. In this way the church as institute is somehow identified with the entire range of the Kingdom of God so that all non-ecclesiastical organizations must to a smaller or greater degree be subject to and dependent on the church if they are to maintain a Christian character. The result of this approach in effect is the establishment of church schools. It is an expression of ecclesiastical imperialism against which the Reformation fought and which today even many Roman Catholics are beginning to question. The issue in this context is plain: how can ecclesiastical imperialism be avoided if Christian education must be based on the church's creeds?

The church must Preach the Word, nurture the faith of its members and their children, establish a place of communal worship and the celebration of the sacraments, and stretch out a helping hand the needy. But the institutional church does not embrace the totality of Christian life as it is restored in Jesus Christ. (cf. Eph. 5, 6; Col. 3, 4) For this reason we regard it as unbiblical to maintain that all Christian activity and witness must be channeled directly or indirectly through the institutional church. To think and act in this manner is to confuse the Body of Christ as the New Humanity (cf. Eph. 1:22f and 2:15) with the ecclesiastical institution, which is one of the ways of the Body of Christ in the world. To think and to act in this manner is also to deny the office of all believers which is part and parcel of the tradition of the Reformation.¹

Moreover, to employ church creeds as school creeds is to take the easy way in a difficult situation - as if our spiritual fathers had worked it all out correctly and in detail for later centuries and for later developments. It is to take the way of fear - as if the Spirit no longer leads His people so that they grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ attuned to His Word. Actually, it may be the way of little faith - refusing to heed the admonition to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is the Lord Who is working in us. (Phil. 2:12f)

Finally, to place church confessions in a school constitution in a North American setting - where the institutional church is tragically fragmented in hundreds of denominational pieces - is to obstruct the desired development toward an (inter)national system of Christian schools in accordance with the Biblical injunction to be of one mind and of one spirit. If Christ-believers are willing to come together in allegiance to the one Lord in a new dimension of Christian witness then it is not imperative to maintain the present fragmentation in that new dimension.

All this is not to suggest that there is no connection between the various confessions within the Biblically attuned Christian community. The multiformity of confessions must not result in the disintegration of our confession. On the basis of our position we believe that the opposite is the case. There is indeed a unity to our confession, but it is not to be sought for in the confessions of any one area of our life, not even in an area as central as the institutional church. The unity is found in the Word of God as the norm for all confessional activity. The point is that the required unity should not be sought in the subordination of all non-ecclesiastical witness and action to the one ecclesiastical confession, but at a deeper level. When one seeks the unity in the church institute, he is forgetting the deeper religious root of life, the Covenant renewed in the Second Adam which embraces *all* of life.

¹. For a more detailed discussion of this entire matter see J.H.Olthuis, "Must the Church Become Secular?" *International Reformed Bulletin* (January 1967). Reprinted in a revised edition in *Out of Concern for the Church*. (Toronto: Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1970); and J.H.Olthuis, "The Word of God and Science," in *Christian Scientific Symposium*, published by Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa, 1970.

Toward a Christian Educational Creed

An educational confession which purports to be Scriptural should be most explicit in regard to a number of fundamental matters. And since such a confession must be a living document, it should speak out especially on the key issues of the day. To begin with, over against the encroachments of the overwhelming humanist context of education, an educational confession must emphatically state that the foundation of all nurture and training is to be found in the revealed Word of God.²

The supreme standard for all matters of education shall be the written Word of God, known as the Old and New Testament Scriptures, as it opens our eyes to know the Word of God as the structuring and upholding principle of creation and as it leads us to confess Jesus Christ as the Word Incarnate.

Confessing that the Scriptures are profitable for instruction (II Tim. 3:16) we must go to the Scriptures to be instructed as to the nature of the Word of God. The first thing we discover is that the current debates about the nature of the Word of God are misplaced and indeed out of order. Today 'liberals' are concerned to maintain that only Christ is the Word, - if they are even willing to grant that - and 'conservatives' are convinced that the Holy Scripture as well as Christ is the Word. Both groups are beside the point on an important issue. For the Scriptures emphatically testify that "by His Word the heavens were made, by the breath of His mouth all the stars... He spoke; and it came to be. He commanded; it sprang into being." (Ps. 33:6-9) The Psalmist further testifies that "the waters are frozen at his touch; He sends forth his word and it melts them." (Ps. 147:17f) "Fire and hail, snow and mist, stormy winds fulfilling His Word." (Ps. 148:8) "By the Word of God heavens existed long ago." (11 Peter 3:5f)

The Word of God is the very law-order of creation by which everything was created and by which everything is upheld to this day. When liberals and conservatives alike ignore this plain testimony of the Scriptures, they emasculate their confession that Christ and the Scriptures are the Word. For without the Biblical view that the Word of God structures and directs creation, it is impossible to understand the meaning and purpose of the Scriptures as the Lamp by which mankind is to walk in creation. Further, without the Biblical view of the Word as the Law-Word for creation, it is impossible to do justice to the Word Incarnate as He in whom all things exist and cohere. (*cf* Eph. I and Col. 1) Isolating Christ from that Law-Word one cannot begin to understand properly the confession of John I that all things were made through the Word and that without Him nothing was made. One cannot grasp the meaning of Hebrews I that the Son of God sustains the universe by His Word of power.

The Christian Church must recover the fullness and unity of the Word of God. The Word of God is one. But since man's fall, that Word comes to us in a three-fold form. When mankind fell in Adam, it no longer heard and understood the Word in creation. To make it possible again for man to hear and do the Word, and thus live, God gave the Scriptures to enlighten man as to, his place, his nature and his task. Finally, in the "last days He has spoken to us in His Son." (Heb. 1: 1) The Word in its unity and in its forms is the Power of God to life. That Word is "alive and active. It cuts more deeply than any two-edged sword." (Heb. 4:12)

Since the Word is one, it is as illegitimate to play off its forms against each other (*e.g.*, 'Do you go by the Law-Word or the Scriptures?') as it is to deny that all the forms are the Word of God. In order to obey the Word of God Written it is necessary to confess that the Word is not exhausted in the Scriptures. The Word of God is every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. And since the Lord is faithful and His words trustworthy, the words of God are the one Word.

After the basis article concerning the Word of God as the foundation of education, an educational creed should contain a statement of fundamental principles relevant to education. The range of such a list

²² It should be noted here that the position we defend is not a new one. Dr. Donald Oppewal, in *The Roots of the Calvinistic Day School Movement* (Grand Rapids: Calvin College Monograph Series, 1963), has shown that especially the adherents of Abraham Kuyper's position defended a non-ecclesiastical basis for the Christian school

depends upon a variety of factors, notably depth of insight into educational issues normed by the Scriptures. During recent years two North American educational institutions have been engaged in the formulation of a coherent and up-to-date educational creed. Already in the early sixties the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship accepted such a creed as the heart of its constitution. The results of this effort have been widely distributed in the reformed community.³ More recently the staff of Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights near Chicago also proposed a provisional statement (if educational principles.⁴ And the Association which is responsible for the Free University of Amsterdam recently accepted a new formulation of the basis article in its constitution.⁵ Finally, Calvin College has published the excellent study *Christian Liberal Arts Education: Report of the Calvin College Curriculum Committee*⁶ and a Statement of Principles drafted by the Calvin Graduate Studies Committee.⁷

The newly accepted basis article of the Free University is brief. It reads as follows: "The Association (for scientific education) in the Holy Scriptures, calls man in his entire life to the service and glory of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and in this to the service of one's neighbor."

The educational creed of the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship and the provisional statement of the staff of Trinity Christian College are more elaborate. In the following paragraphs we will rely heavily on these statements in describing some of the elements that we think should be part of an educational creed.

1. *Life.* Human life in its entirety is religion; it is service of God or of an idol. Education is therefore never neutral but unfolds in obedience or disobedience to the Lord.

2. *Creation.* God created the world in all its ways by His Word and upholds it by His Word. The meaning of creation is focused in the covenantal communion of God with man in Christ. In the fall of Adam mankind chose not to have this communion with Jehovah God. This root disobedience is sin.

3. *Scripture.* The Scriptures, the Word of God Written, teach us of God, of His Word which structures creation, of man as God's servant, and of Christ as the Redeemer.

4. *Christ.* Christ, the Word Incarnate, redeems and renews all of life, including education, from the power of sin.

5. *Knowledge.* Knowledge of God, of His Word, and of creation, is the work of the Holy Spirit in man's heart. He sets us in the truth and directs us to educate in accordance with the Word.

6. *Teaching office.* The body of Christ is called upon to subdue and develop the earth by, among other things, guiding students into a deeper understanding of God's world and its history. Through the execution of this teaching office in the school pupils and students are attain cultural maturity grounded in the Biblical faith so that they can take up their specific responsibilities and vocations in life in a manner pleasing to the Lord.

³ See the *Bulletin 1970-1971* of the Institute for Christian Studies (141 Lyndhurst Avenue, Toronto, Canada), p. 4f.

⁴ Available at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Illinois 60463, USA.

⁵ Obtainable from The Free University of Amsterdam, Office of the Directors, Box 7161, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

⁶ Published by Win. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids; for an analysis of this noteworthy document, see the article by Ronald H. Nash, "Christian Liberal Arts Education," in the January 1971 issue of *Christian Educators Journal*

⁷ See the 1970 Christian Reformed *Acts of Synod*, pp. 432 -437.

7. *Scholarship.* The communal pursuit of theoretic thought is also a matter of obedience to the Lord. Research must be initiated in order to develop a systematic account of the structure of creation. In this way man's knowledge can be deepened and his life's activities more meaningfully ordered.

8. *Reformation.* Teaching and scholarship not Biblically normed is still teaching and scholarship because the structure of creation is one and holds for all men. Thus, even though their findings and overall perspectives are distorted and fragmented, teachers and scholars who are not committed to faith in Christ can provide a valuable contribution toward understanding creation. However, since unbelief expresses a total spiritual vision, it deeply affects and distorts the direction of education. For this reason, the Biblical way in Christian education is to reform the scholarship of those who are not in Christ rather than to annex it in the way of accommodation.

9. *Freedom and responsibility.* Teaching and research, executed in harmony with relevant norms, are free and responsible activities of men called to these tasks. The teaching staff of an educational institution, under the care and supervision of the proper governing bodies, is directly and communally responsible to the Lord for the execution of the educational task. The responsible freedom of the educator and scholar must be protected against any constraint or domination of the state, the industrial complex, the church, or other societal structure.

10. *Curriculum.* The educational curriculum is the unifying framework which ties the teaching staff, the students, and the subject matter together in the setting of the school. While parents have the responsibility for determining the spiritual direction of their children's education, the body of educators in the Christian community has the office of articulating the content of the educational curriculum.

11. *The child in the school.* The student as an image-bearer of the Lord is a whole person to be guided in the educational process toward responsible maturity in preparing for his calling in the unfolding of creation and the coming of the Kingdom of God. A Christian view of the child in the educational setting rejects the classical curriculum-centered approach since it tends to reduce students to the status of intellectual absorbers of information without paying heed to the individuality of the child. At the same time ' since education takes place within the structures of creation, a Christian view of education rejects the child-centered approach in which creation is considered as a chaos without order and in which man is heralded as the creator rather than unfold of order and meaning. In the curriculum-centered view the teacher's authority becomes an end in itself; in the child-centered view the pupil's freedom is uncurtailed; in a Biblical view the authority of the teaching office, given by God, is for the sake of the freedom and responsible nurture of the pupil. The basic focus in education is not on the teacher-curriculum - the 'subject matter' in the traditional sense - nor on the student. The teaching team of a school, through the unifying curriculum, must guide and lead the pupils so that they come to learn about creation in the context of the all-inclusive nature of the Kingdom of God. In this light the students in the school are not to be taught adjustment to the morality or the prevailing attitudes of our society; instead they should be led to understand the norms which hold for the various sectors of life as normed dimensions of the Lord's Kingdom and Reign in human history. In this way the school takes its place in leading the child to the understanding that life is meaningful if that child assumes his place in society as one of God's representatives.

Conclusion

These statements are sufficient to indicate the direction which we think the Christian community should follow in the formulation of an educational creed. Our suggestions here are tentative and not at all complete. For instance, we have not dealt with the relationship between the family, the state, and education. We hope to do this in another context at a later time. In this article it was our intent to place

the matter of confessing Christ as Lord in education in a somewhat different perspective. Since confession is a communal endeavor on the part of Christ-believers we hope that many readers will respond with constructive comments.

The School System and The Bible

by Donald Oppewal

The Bible and Church Creeds

Although the Calvinistic school in America has tried to live up to its Kuyperian tradition as a school free to seek its own ends and not those of any denomination, it has nevertheless always pledged allegiance to the Bible. It has always unashamedly declared that its educational program and policies are rooted in and justified by Biblical concepts concerning man and society. The specific interpretation of these concepts has, of course, been given from the point of view of Calvinism, and more specifically the Calvinism of the Netherlands, sometimes called neo-Calvinism. It is the Bible as interpreted by this religious and intellectual tradition that shapes the contours and provides the intellectual roots for the Calvinistic school system.

This rootage in the Bible through a given tradition is clearly expressed in the constitution of the National Union of Christian Schools. Article 11 states:

The basis of the National Union of Christian Schools is the Word of God as interpreted by Reformed [i.e., Calvinistic] standards.... [The Union] is committed to the Reformed world and life view. Its educational principles must therefore be distinctively Reformed in emphasis and character.

To some these "Reformed standards" are simply the doctrinal statements expressed in the great Reformed church creeds: The Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. These are taken to be an adequate and relevant basis for educational theory and practice.

Others have held that these creeds are neither adequate nor automatically relevant. An early expression of this view was cited earlier. A similar view has been more recently suggested by the Public Relations Secretary of the National Union. At the convention of 1951, he noted that some schools still used the Canons of Dort as one of the creedal statements basic to the school. He wondered what this document had to do with educational theory and practice, since it deals exclusively with such matters as total depravity, limited atonement, etc. He acknowledged that these were certainly proper subjects for catechisms and confession of faith, but doubted that they could furnish a dynamic for the field of education. (See *NUCS Yearbook*, 1951, pp. 131 ff.)

If it is true that "Reformed standards" or "Reformed principles" do not mean the creeds of any one church or group of churches, what then can these expressions refer to in education? A possible answer and one only hinted at in the literature on the school movement, is that concepts of man, God, and society are taken from the Bible and translated into educational terminology expressive of a position taken on educational issues. Whereas the church creeds embody doctrinal questions, the school "creeds" embody educational questions. For example, just as a given Calvinistic church might in its creed speak against Arminianism on the issue of the role of man in salvation, so a Calvinistic school might speak against progressive education on the issue of the proper organization of subject matter. Both institutions would have creeds rooted in the Bible, and neither would necessarily rest its case on the creeds of the other. In sum, both institutions would be rooted in and based upon the Bible, but the school and the church would have different creeds because they are meeting different issues and speaking on different controversies.

The tendency to identify the creeds of the church with the creeds of the school is perhaps understandable. The creeds of the church have been codified and are easily accessible to all. They are stated in specific documents, and a body of literature that interprets them is part of the tradition. There are no such authoritative documents and no such body of literature for the school. Even most school constitutions fail to state the position of the school on the major issues in educational theory. However, the absence of school creeds in some codified form does not necessarily indicate that no positions on educational issues have been taken by the school system. School creeds are not imbedded in documents as much as they are imbedded in practices pursued and principles applied. The actual school system with its concrete embodiment in a given curriculum and supported by a given organizational structure is expressive of beliefs about education and of sides taken on educational issues.

The Calvinistic school system may be said to have spoken on educational issues fully as much as any church synod has spoken on specifically theological and soteriological issues. Its rootage in the Bible as interpreted by the Reformed standards has led the school to take a position on such theoretical questions as (1) the proper locus of control of education and the school, (2) the proper relation between religion and education, (3) the proper sources for and the nature of truth, (4) the source of a principle of integration for education, and (5) the source of authority in the discipline of the learner. 1 An adequate statement of these, let alone an adequate defense of them, would require a book, and therefore cannot be given here. The areas are listed here simply to indicate that the school system does have a creed, but that it is the creed of no church, and that although the creed of a school system may not be drawn up and stated in any set of documents, it nevertheless has one in the form of practices and procedures which come to expression in that system.

The confusion and partial contradiction in the Calvinistic school system on the matter of the proper basis for its theory and the proper source of educational authority is natural. Both the church and the school do eventually find a common root, the Bible. While it is an easy step it is still a step of dubious logic to move from acknowledging a common source to declaring that therefore the creeds of the church are identical with the creeds of the school.

It must be admitted that this alternative position is not so much a completed and definitive one as it is an emerging one. The literature connected with the school movement is singularly weak in developing this interpretation of the meaning of Reformed standards for education. The scarcity of literature which addresses itself to this problem is an indication that the implications of this approach have not really captured the loyalties of all those who support these schools. The presence of the alternative position (i.e., that the church creeds are the theoretical basis for education in the day school) has discouraged the attempt to look deeply into the problem.

The Bible and Other Disciplines

There is another question within the school movement concerning the role of the Bible in the formulation of educational theory. It is the question of whether or not the Bible and theology are the only source upon which an educator can draw for the determination of theory and practice in the school. In the literature much tribute is paid to the Bible as the single source of authority and the sole ground of educational theory. In this view specific texts from the Bible are used to justify the Christian school, and certain aims of the school are established by reference to specific passages.

There are more perceptive and analytical statements that appear in the literature, and these indicate that often in the mind of the educator himself the Bible is seen as providing a general scheme of values about man and society, but that for the rest other sources of human knowledge are utilized.

A very early acknowledgment of the role of child psychology in education is indicated in a book translated from the Dutch. In the context of a discussion about methodology in teaching, the author says that the proper basis for method is the investigation and study of the child with a view to "discovery of the divine laws that control the development of the soul of the child." A more recent and careful

statement of the role of the Bible in the determination of educational principles is contained in the following statement:

Calvinism can provide for educational theory and practice a sound anthropology, Scripturally oriented, and because of a Scriptural orientation, a coherent appraisal of insights in human development accruing to us from psychology, sociology, and psychotherapy.

Thus, the Bible gives a definition of man in the light of which discoveries in other fields can be utilized in education to solve the problems of method, of curriculum organization, of the role of the school in a given society, and others. This use of intellectual disciplines other than theology in the formulation of theory in education is regarded by some as a departure from a strict reliance on the Bible as the only infallible rule for faith and practice. However, it apparently has a solid defender in the person of Herman Bavinck, the Dutch theologian-educator, who said:

Religion and ethics, philosophy, and psychology
contain the principles from which the theory of
education is inferred.

He is also quoted as saying that psychology and sociology constitute the chief determiners of method. Thus, the Calvinistic school system is basically rooted in the Bible, but it utilizes insights from other disciplines which are either established by fact or which seem to be consistent with Biblical insights.

*Excerpted from *Roots of the Calvinistic Day School Movement* (pp. 27-31) Calvin College Monograph Series, 1963.

Needed: An Educational Creed

by Donald Oppewal

Unless my ear to the ground is full of wax, it would seem that most Christian school teachers and principals agree that we do not have in writing a well-developed philosophy of education for the Christian school. By it they seem to mean that there is not a body of literature to which they can turn with the expectation of receiving substantial help in the making of the thousand and one educational decisions that are thrust upon them by the events of the day and week. While the literature contains scores of hortatory moral preachments,⁸ and a number of theological treatises,⁹ and even several exploratory documents on general aims and purposes,¹⁰ these have not appreciably helped the practicing educator to make explicit to himself or others the *connections* between his religious commitment and the specific decisions he makes on content, methodology, or general school policy.

All this is not to say that he receives no help from the literature on the Christian school. The moral preachments have often inspired him to greater effort, the theological treatises have often given him the assurance that there is sound theology behind his efforts, and the exploratory statements have for some expressed our common aims and assumptions about the child and the school.

Our Present Need

However, granted the usefulness of all these efforts, what is thus far lacking in the literature is a serious and systematic attempt to relate theology to specific school practices, or religious aims to specific positions taken on controversial educational issues. And yet, unless I am thoroughly mistaken in reading the mind of the Christian school educator, what he wants most desperately to know better is the *connections* between specific items in his theology or world-view and one or more of the alternatives that face him at every turn in his school day. What textbook should he choose out of what is perhaps a bewildering array? Should he practice or prevent corporal punishment? Should he favor or fight movements to seek government support of private schools? Should he agitate for or against a student council with real decision-making powers in his school? Should he choose Huckleberry Finn or The Red Badge of Courage as a novel to be taught in the ninth grade? Should he support, teach against, or ignore racial apartheid at home or abroad? These are but illustrative of the choices that constitute the warp and woof of the educator's working day, and often his nights. If he reads one or more professional education journals or books on curriculum he sharpens considerably his grasp of the alternatives, and sometimes simply heightens his confusion about what he believes. Thus, both his day-to-day experience and his reading in education serve to sharpen his awareness of both the range and depth of the choices that shape any educational enterprise. They jar him loose from any complacency into which he may have fallen. On the one hand his experience and his reading in education present him with alternatives. On the other hand the literature on the Christian school gives him mainly theological beliefs and broad generalizations. The literature does not help him *relate* these two influences in his thinking. He perhaps could be content with this state of affairs were it not that from pulpit and platform he is constantly told and taught that his religion is relevant to all areas of life, as well as that the Christian school is distinctive because it is a

⁸ See the NUCS convention speeches of any ten years as published in the *NUCS Annual*, in recent years called *Directory*.

⁹ See, for example, Sections 1 and 11 of *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, C. Jaarsma (ed.) (William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1953)

¹⁰ See "Toward a Philosophy of Christian Education," containing statements by Drs C. Jaarsma and by J. L. De Beer, and published by NUCS, 1958

concrete manifestation of a religious commitment. It is this third influence on his thinking that makes him uncomfortable in the presence of the other two.

Attempts so far have assumed that what educators need most is more 'philosophy' from philosopher-theologians, that is, more comprehensive or more eloquent (or both) statements about the goals and purposes of the Christian life, with only tangential references to implications for the conduct of the institution called the school.

The alternative proposed here is that each item in the "creed" be a statement not of some abstract general principle relevant to all of life, but a position taken on a live educational issue. Some examples of what is meant follow shortly, but it should be noted that our forefathers in the ecclesiastical arena did just this when formulating their creeds. They concentrated on those areas in which they felt their witness was needed and where they combatted specific errors in Christology, soteriology, eschatology, church government, etc. They sometimes adopted their positions on live issues as a result of a convocation of scholars (e.g. Synod of Dordrecht) which discussed a specific heresy or distortion (e.g. Arminianism) and produced from it the Canons of Dort. They sometimes adopted the eloquent statement of a single spokesman (e.g. Guido De Bres) because he strongly protested some specific historical happening (e.g. persecution by a Roman Catholic government) and thus adopted the Belgic Confession.

What these documents have in common is that they speak directly to choices that men and churches had to make, and made no pretense to completeness, thoroughness, or comprehensiveness. That is one reason why Reformed churches have at least *three* major creeds.

What our forefathers did then in the ecclesiastical arena we must do now in the educational arena: create ringing documents which show concretely the *differences* between our schools and other schools, both public and parochial. This will not be readily accomplished by general statements about God, man, sin, Scripture, creation, etc., no matter how eloquently or succinctly put, but by stating our educational beliefs and supporting them with selected Biblical concepts and principles. It will not be as readily accomplished by specialists in theology or philosophy as by the practicing career educator who is trained to support his educational choices with adequate theory.

The question of whether such positions stated should be called articles of confession, sections of a manifesto, or an educational creed is not as important as its content. Whether this is finally organized into a document by a contemporary educational Guido De Bres, or formulated by an educational council at a contemporary Dort is less important than that each of us contribute insights in writing. This *Journal* can become the place where such a "creed" is hammered out on the anvil of debate,

The following definition and samples of an educational creed are offered for your emulation, revision, addition, or rejection. The concluding section of this essay provides space for you to try your own hand at writing an item, article, plank, or canon.

An Educational Creed Defined

An educational creed is a series of propositions which exhibit positions taken on live issues on educational policy and program. The *defense* of the position, in distinction from the *statement* of it, draws on selected aspects of theology and Biblical evidence, as well as whatever factual or scientific data is available. The creed should contain a reasonably extended statement of the details of the position, including the rejected alternatives. Then should follow a relating of the specific educational position to some theological concept or Biblical principle.

1. Sample Item on Content Commitment

Educational policy: In the treatment of the past and present actions of men, whether in classes that are labeled geography, history, literature or social studies, intellectual and moral forces in the shaping of social and cultural events shall be given fully as much prominence in the content of the course as economic and physical forces. The economic interpretation of history and of culture will be rejected in favor of one that acknowledges the spiritual and ideational aspects of man's life. The study of the actions of men will be used to demonstrate that ideas and ideals have a dynamic of their own, and therefore a potent role in the shaping of political and social situations and human behavior in general.

Some illustrative instances of where this belief would make a difference:

1. Religious and moral beliefs, and not simply economic hardship and political oppression, caused the movement of Puritans to America.
2. The moral ideal of revenge, and not simply sexual jealousy, led Hamlet to wish to kill his uncle Claudius
3. Cheating on a test is not simply the result of poor supervision, but also a result of faulty operation of ideals.

Defense of the policy: The Bible teaches that man is the crown of creation, created only a little lower than angels. Created in the image of God, he is, unlike animals, the master and not simply the servant of impersonal or economic forces: he is ultimately the victor over and not the victim of his physical and economic environment. He furthermore has the God-given and God-like power to formulate ideas and ideals which are guides to his action, so that he is not at the mercy of either simply his instincts, his irrational drives, or economic necessities. This Biblical truth concerning man's freedom and moral responsibility is in opposition to those mechanistic and deterministic conceptions of man and society that make him, individually or collectively the victim of historical, physical, or economic forces beyond his control.

2. Sample Item on Discipline Procedure

I propose that teachers in the schools should not use corporal punishment as a means of discipline or punishment. This injunction forbidding corporal punishment is meant to include public as well as Christian schools, and the primary grade school student as well as the high school student.

But what does corporal punishment in the school mean? It can be defined as the teacher laying hands on the pupil by way of punishment. And usually we think of the teacher spanking the pupil or hitting the pupil's hands with a stick.

When I say that I am against corporal punishment does it mean that I do not believe in "Spare the rod and spoil the child?" Not exactly. I would be the last one to say that a child should never be hit or spanked. But I believe this is the duty of the parents, not the teachers. Also, it is the very young child who has the greatest need to be disciplined by "licking", because he does not know how to reason yet, and trying to instruct him in the "what and why he did it" will mean absolutely nothing to him. The parents, not the teacher, care for the child during this period.

In my statement of position I want to add that teachers must be permitted to use corporal punishment in cases when it is necessary for the preservation of life. Generally, discipline can be administered effectively without corporal punishment, but when a student does something to threaten the life of another student or of the teacher, the teacher should have the authority to use immediate force on the threatening pupil.

Personal Experience Arguments

I have not really had too much experience in school with teachers who used corporal punishment. Maybe this very fact contributes to my position against bodily punishment. Perhaps I subconsciously noticed that discipline could be had in the classroom without corporal punishment. However, I distinctly remember one incident that happened in sixth grade. One boy in the class had done something which the teacher did not like. The teacher immediately strode over to the boy, grabbed him, pulled him out of his seat, shook him, said some angry words to him, slapped him, and jerked him out of the room. I cannot remember the exact details anymore, but I do know that I was really scared.

Looking back on what happened, I see some arguments which make me revolt against such a corporal punishment. This extreme instance of my teacher using bodily force made me actually scared of the teacher. It made me as a pupil feel miles away from my teacher. This kind of feeling does not aid learning. I could not talk or communicate with him because I was afraid, of him. He was not interested in me as a person, only as an object which is expected to do everything correctly. As a result of the whole thing, I lost some respect for the teacher. As a person and as a teacher I thought he had done something wrong and inconsiderate, and consequently I could not look up to him as much. Even now I do not consider him to have been a capable teacher at that time.

Theoretical Arguments

What are some theoretical arguments that would support a belief in non-corporal punishment in school? First of all, the rod should be spared because its use goes contrary to the general aim of education. Children are educated for the purpose of becoming better citizens of either an earthly kingdom or a spiritual kingdom. The former is characteristic of public schools, the latter is added in Christian schools. A better citizen is one who acts positively, one who can choose between right and wrong, and one who can solve practical problems. Corporal punishment does not help the pupil develop any of these marks of a good citizen. Corporal punishment makes the child blindly accept and obey the teacher's standards. On the contrary, if the teacher uses reasoning instead of the rod, he can show the pupil why what he did was wrong and he can offer alternative ways of acting. The enlightened pupil can then choose the way he wants to behave. Thus the child is acting positively and is getting practice in choosing right from wrong and in knowing how to solve practical problems of human conduct. In short, he is being prepared to live as an informed, contributing citizen, not as an uninformed, docile citizen.

Another argument for refraining from corporal punishment is that the teacher who uses corporal punishment does not investigate the causes of misbehavior. Psychologists tell us that all behavior is caused and that there must be a reason why a child acts as he does and why he misbehaves. Therefore, the way to correct the child's actions is to help him understand his own behavior. Such an understanding will often make the child more willing to learn new ways of solving conflicts. In contrast, corporal punishment does not encourage studying and acting upon the underlying causes of misbehavior.

Corporal punishment accomplishes little. It is seldom an effective deterrent. For a time it may seem to be a good deterrent, but really it is not effective until the child accepts in his own heart the conviction that he must behave differently. If corporal punishment makes the child scared of the teacher, the child may refrain from that particular action for a time. But we have already seen this to be a poor answer to the problem.

Corporal punishment, instead of accomplishing something, actually pulls the pupil away from the teacher. The indignity of physical force stirs dislike and erects a barrier between the pupil and the teacher. The child may feel very embarrassed at being spanked in front of his classmates, and therefore, he resents his teacher. Such an attitude, of course, is not conducive to the teacher teaching anything or the child learning anything.

Philosophical - Theological Argument

We could say that the ethical principle of being kind to each other is being violated by the practice of corporal punishment. It is generally agreed that we should be kind to and help our neighbor. We should not do something which will harm him. Thus it follows that if corporal punishment is not thought to be the way to effectively solve disciplinary problems in school, a practice of corporal punishment would be thought to harm the individual. Corporal punishment is not a good deterrent. It does not give better alternative ways to act. It does not help the teacher-pupil relationship. Therefore, it is for the "good" of the individual that physical force not be used.

That the child has a worth of his own is a Biblical notion of the child. This same thought is reflected in our idea of a democracy. We believe in the worth and value of every individual, and this includes children. The Bible teaches that children, too, are important in the sight of God. And our whole Christian religion is not one which takes the group as a whole, but one which emphasizes the individual and his active part in salvation. Keeping the idea of the value and worth of the individual in mind, I find it difficult to reconcile corporal punishment with it.

Making Your Own Contribution

You can test both your understanding of-the creed concept here presented and defended by writing on an issue in educational practice or policy which you believe is distinctly Christian education

Specific educational policy / practice urged:

Specific educational policy practice negated or rejected:

Empirical Psychological Evidence to support the above:

Theological Biblical Evidence to support the above:

First-Order Issues In Christian Philosophy Of Education

by N. H. Beversluis

The stimulus this issue of the *Journal* will provide for getting on with some public consensus on Christian educational philosophy should be welcomed by all thoughtful readers. It is time not only to draw some special dividends from the best of past writing on educational philosophy, but also to build upon them in exploratory forays of our own. Having this goal, our big question is, How do we proceed?

Because not merely discussion of educational philosophy but discussion focused on clear and present needs is required, we must ask, What are those needs? They are, of course, many and diverse, and we may even disagree about them.

Throughout this article I assume, and toward the end I briefly enlarge on, some of the needs to which I believe my recommendations speak. One of these worth noting here is the present crisis of commitment to Christian education. People are today asking as never before, I believe, one or both of these questions: Are Christian schools as good as they can be? and, What are Christian schools all about, anyway? Because that crisis is a serious one, new discussion of Christian educational philosophy must, it seems to me, above all help us come to a better understanding of Christian schooling, in-the hope that this will not only improve such schooling, but also shore up conviction about its importance.

To meet this and other needs, I suggest we proceed by identifying and facing what I will call first-order issues in Christian education. Certainly, Christian philosophy of education will as soon as possible need to deal with other matters too: with institutional practices and policies, with classroom procedures and methodologies, and above all with the intricacies of the teaching and learning process—all having to do with decision-making at the frontier of daily schooling. But for the moment, in the short run, to meet our clear and present crisis of understanding and commitment, and to get well-started toward some new progress in our time, I suggest we back off to an examination of more basic questions, and try above all else to construct a platform of agreement out of answers to those questions. I suggest, in other words, a *radical simplification* of educational philosophy—not only to draw as many non-experts as possible into the dialogue but also to face together what I judge to be first-order issues. Far from being simplistic, or far from retreating into theological obscurantism, what I have in mind entails hard conceptual thinking, controlled on the one hand by religious commitment and on the other by requirements of educational relevance. What I suggest is that we sort out, classify, and order the great variety of educational issues, and then concentrate on those we see as first-order questions and answers.

Priority of What and Why Questions

Mainly, I suggest we separate out questions about the *what* and *why* and major strategies of education from questions about the *how* and *when* and implementing tactics of education, and that we try together to reach some solid public consensus on answers to the first kind. While the day is past when the second kind of questions about implementation, procedure, method, and practices in education can be ignored in

Christian philosophy of education, those questions are nevertheless subordinate to the others; in fact their good resolution waits in all sorts of ways upon a prior asking and answering of the first-order questions.

Failure to separate out the major questions of Christian education has hindered us all in educational decision-making. I for one, after a quarter of a century of wandering with fellow teachers, and watching others wander, in and out of the same doors of educational philosophy; of searching for the main corridors and of poking into this room or that; of finding all sorts of good things along the way but always feeling that things didn't hang together, that somehow we came in by the wrong door or missed the central corridor; after a long time of observing myself and others, when we engaged in educational philosophy, acting as if we had entered a movie somewhere in the middle, without orientation and never really being on top of things—after all this, it seems clear to me that in order to get good answers in education we have to sort out the questions, especially the order in which we ask and answer them.

Surely, differences exist among educational questions, and the order in which one faces them is all-important. The decision, for example, *that* Johnny ought to learn to read, ought to become a participator in his education, ought to behave in what we call an accepted social way, ought to study poems and science surely precedes decisions about *how* he should be taught or *when* he should learn these things. So with the whole range of school aims and program and procedures. Some issues are first, others second; some non-negotiable, others experimental; some central, others peripheral. Some are germinal and generative, others derivative. Some are concerned with goal, with aim, with vision, with perspective; others are concerned with method, procedure, organization, structure. Some get to the heart of the *what* and *why* of education, others deal with the *when* and *how*.

It should be equally clear, of course, that unless the whole class of complex questions about teaching and learning, about methods, procedures, and implementing tactics are also squarely faced, Christian education will fail. If such matters are nevertheless here judged to follow logically *after* the first-order concerns, it is so that the *how* and *when* questions may be more wisely and productively answered.

I suggest in passing, therefore, that in my view the two kinds of creed-writing featured elsewhere in this issue of the *Journal* can be a supplement to but not a substitute for the sort of basic educational philosophy we need most of all. The first kind of creed-writing aims at theological statements that are more *educationally* relevant than the familiar church creeds ever were. This is surely a needed improvement, and should be welcomed. But at best this sort of creed-writing is but a *preamble* to what I believe we need. The second kind of creed-writing aims to face up to the "thousand and one" decisions teachers must make. It aims to help teachers with such decisions by means of a series of theses or articles on the "practices and policies" of Christian education, each article supported in turn with biblical and theological justifications. Such a creed would certainly get theology to the frontier of educational decision-making and would, if we could get it, be welcome. But this sort of creed, as I understand it, would need to *follow* what I believe we need first of all.

To reach some solid public consensus about both the theory and practice of Christian education, I propose that we take the route I have suggested. I propose that as educators and community we try together to identify those *questions* in Christian education that are most basic, most central, and most generative, in distinction from those that are procedural, secondary, or derivative; that we try together to reach *answers* to those first-order questions; and that with those answers we try to put together a basic *platform* of commitments about Christian education.

First-Order Questions Summarized

What are those first-order questions? To make clearer what I mean by them and to stimulate some new dialogue on these matters, I will briefly indicate my perception of what they ought to be, and the direction in which I think answers to them should be sought. The questions and answers I propose have to do with 1) the religious vision, 2) the major learning goals, and 3) the core curriculum of a Christian

school. I see those three concerns closely interrelated in a continuum, encompassing a Christian school's fundamental aims as well as its basic strategies.

First, What should be the *religious vision* of a Christian school? This question goes beyond asking what the school thinks of the Reformed creeds, or even of the new "basis" article of the NUCS constitution, although the latter gets closer. It rather asks about world and life view, about cultural obedience as religious obligation. It asks about religion centered in, but going far beyond, its creedal, ceremonial, private, and institutional expressions. It asks whether the religious vision and commitment the school seeks to promote extends to more than personal piety and private morality; whether its religious vision is in *fact*, and not merely in word, a comprehensive life orientation; whether, although the school is Calvinist in doctrine, it is fundamentalist, pietist, and other-worldly in its basic stance and spirit and expression.

This question faces the issue of differences among religious outlooks, even among Reformed Christians. It asks about Jesus Christ as Savior, of course, and about the private and personal implications of this for life and learning. But it asks about this in relation to a school. It asks whether a school has a unique obligation as a school to get on with the almost endless implications of personal faith for Christian discipleship in the *world*. It asks what it is that a school must do, grade after grade, to get on with the disturbing, prodding, expanding education of young persons into what it means that Christ *is Lord*. It asks what Christ's Lordship means for the concrete, daily, unavoidable, challenging life young persons must live, now and in the future-within nature, society, culture, and history. The religious question asks about what we used to call Calvinism, for the expression of which we say Christian schools were founded and have their chief reason for existence.

The religious question is, I judge, foremost among the first-order questions of Christian education. It bursts out with all sorts of satellite questions about the range and variety of Christian life in the world. It bears directly on a school's spirit and style-and, of course, upon its aim and strategy and program. It is the old question of Christ and culture, of world and life view, of living the Christian life in contemporary society. By whatever slogan we express the school's religious vision, it is the substance behind the slogan that teachers and principals must face up to, for themselves and for the school's program. It is surely a question that Christian educational philosophy can ignore or merely take for granted only at the risk of failing at the very outset. Without answering the religious question well, we may have a school, even a "Christian" school of sorts, but not a school in the best tradition of Calvinist Christianity.

Second, What should be the major *learning goals* of a Christian school? Given its religious vision, reaffirmed and fleshed-out beyond the older or newer slogans; given also the desire to get beyond mere theology, beyond mere theory, beyond mere exhortation and inspiration; and given the clear and present need to embody its religious vision in its *educational program*, at what learnings, what changes in young persons, should the school mainly aim? This second question asks directly about educational matters, about the relation of a school's religious vision to what goes on in the classrooms. It asks: What changed actions, attitudes, understandings, insights, awareness, commitments, and the like should a school designate as its central and ongoing learning goals for the young persons in those classrooms?

This question faces the issue of differences among learning goals. After agreeing that the promotion of normal social, psychological, physical, and spiritual growth is a shared obligation of teachers and parents, and is, in fact, supportive of any other learning, teachers must still ask whether the school as school has a unique obligation to set certain priority learning goals. It asks the school to identify those goals, and asks whether, having identified them, it will pursue them as the chief means of religious growth, not only for the bright and able pupils, but for the slower pupils as well. And so this question asks especially what the school's convictions are about such basic matters as (a) growth in intellectual

understanding and insight; (b) growth in moral awareness and choice; and (c) growth in creative self-expression and participation.

The issue of learning goals prods teachers and principals to sort out and declare their priority learning goals, to do so mainly by asking about the kinds of growth which most directly and most productively promote understanding and acceptance in young persons of the school's religious vision. This question, too, a school's philosophy of education can ignore or just take for granted only at the risk of failure in a basic strategy of Christian education.

Third, what should be the priority *curriculum* of a Christian school? Given the school's articulated and fleshed-out religious vision; given also a commitment to learning goals controlled by that religious vision; and given the desire to embody that vision and to promote those goals concretely and specifically in its educational program, what curriculum pattern will best meet those commitments? What core curriculum will the school select? What subjects, what sorts of studies, will this core be composed of?

This third question gets us into the somewhat abstract but nevertheless crucial relationship of curriculum to what we call the objective "givens" of creation, of nature, of society, of culture, and of man's long history in the world—all of these raising questions about man's worldly obedience and disobedience to God. It asks whether "objective reality," as philosophers call it, comes with special claims upon a Christian school, and, if so, which curriculum pattern will, on the one hand, most directly present the great range and variety of this reality and, on the other hand, will most directly promote the young person's intellectual, moral, and creative growth—all of it as essential religious growth.

Given first-rate teaching procedures as well as appropriate adjustments for grade level, ability, readiness, and the like; and given the ideal of educational *closure* between the pupil's vital learning and the school's disciplining subject matter, this question asks whether the school should require a core of preferred studies of all normal young persons; require it, that is, of slow as well as of fast learners, of the unmotivated as well as of the self-propelled. It asks especially at the high school level whether what is sometimes described as aristocratic education in terms of learning goals and curriculum pattern shall be for only the most able and the college-bound, or also for the slower or so-called practically-minded student.

The curriculum question faces the issue of differences among school subjects. After agreeing that, at whatever level it is possible, a variety of elective subjects will be provided to meet special interests, aptitudes, or needs (including manual arts and even perhaps automotive repair as well as cooking and sewing), teachers must still ask whether the school, as *school* has a unique obligation, for Christian reasons, to struggle with this problem of a required core. It asks whether, in fact, some studies are more directly productive than others for promoting in normal young persons the school's priority learning goals and its all-controlling religious vision; and it asks which studies these should be.

Specifically, the curriculum question requires that the school decide about three issues that are often only half-decided in some Christian schools: (1) whether as long as possible through their high school years all students, not just the ablest and most talented, should follow significant studies in the curriculum groups we call mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, history studies, studies in literature and the arts, and religious studies; (2) whether as long as possible through their high school years all your students, not just the ablest and most talented, should have continuing education also in what may be called general *developmental* studies in the all-important three R's, as well as in music, art, speech, writing, physical education—these being "developmental" in the sense that all of them have in common the aim of freeing young persons, from kindergarten on, to become responders and participators both in their day-to-day schooling and in their adult life one day; and (3) what, above all, should go on in such core studies: whether, wherever needed, suitable fusion and integration of curriculum areas are arranged; whether the best methods and procedures appropriate to grade, ability, interest, and aptitude are followed; and, as its supreme concern, whether the school's religious vision is given shape and meaning

in these studies, not through vague religious "applications" in those studies but through the learner's growth by means of them in intellectual insight and understanding, in moral awareness and choice, and in creative self-acceptance and participation.

The curriculum question is clearly the pay-off point in Christian education. A school with good religious commitments and good learning goals will still short-circuit its program if it ignores or just gives half-hearted attention to this question.

These three questions about religious outlook, about learning goals, and about curriculum are, I suggest, first-order questions for a basic Christian philosophy of education. Certainly all along the way of thinking about them, the implementing, procedural, tactical questions call out for attention. They cannot really be delayed, not even when the *what* and *why* issues are on the table. This is so not only because school-keeping requires day-to-day decisions, but especially because the big questions must constantly be discussed realistically, with a view to practicality and implementation. Even so, logically, as the way into the main doorway and into the main corridors of Christian education, as the way through the maze of problems we face, those first-order issues are always there, needing prior attention all along the line.

Some Advantages of This Approach

Can discussion of and eventual consensus on these major issues really help us in our present situation? The following observations suggest that perhaps they can.

Need for consensus. For a long time nearly everyone concerned about Christian education has been saying that we greatly need some consensus, written or unwritten, on the theory and practice of Christian education. When this is said, what is mainly desired, I believe, is a sort of platform on which those who debate procedures and practices and policies in education may find each other, and may be expected to stand together. I suggest that while this consensus must never be the sort that forecloses on the rich diversity and productiveness of opposed viewpoints on all sorts of derivative questions, it must nevertheless be a consensus, surely, on the religious vision, the major learning goals, and the priority curriculum pattern of Christian education. Although we have inherited a great legacy of educational guidance from outstanding leaders of the past, we did not inherit such consensus. (Consider, for example, the major differences between those two foremost Christian educational writers, Professors W. H. Jellema and C. Jaarsma.) Failure in our time to seek and find consensus on first-order issues has not only kept major questions open and unresolved; it has blocked important advances in education all along the way. Discussion of the matters I have proposed could eventually lead, I believe, to such consensus.

The present crisis. Such agreement could help us meet, I think, the present crisis of commitment to Christian education. Although this crisis has surfaced with education's rising cost, it is not first of all a financial crisis but, as suggested earlier, a crisis of confidence (*Are our schools as good as they can be?*) and of understanding (*What are Christian schools really all about?*). Greater clarity and unanimity about the school's religious vision, its major learning goals, and its priority curriculum could, I believe, not only improve Christian education, but also help almost everyone's understanding of it and commitment to it.

Educational progress. Consensus on first-order questions will not answer all sorts of questions, especially all those procedural and tactical questions which lie at the frontier of Christian education, but it could free us for handling many of them. Psychologically, those of us who work on committees would gain security from the assurance that we meet on a platform of common commitments, a security that could free us from both the fears and the inertia that merely situational decision-making often produces. Substantively, such freedom could provide new impetus for solving old problems and for exploring new opportunities. Whereas uncertainty about major aims and strategy has often left second-order issues only

half-accepted and half-solved, agreement on those aims and strategy could, I suspect, double our motivation and productivity as we face day-to-day decisions.

Religious and educational relevance. But to get such consensus, to meet our crises, and to provide a basis for educational progress, we need more than the soft language of the old slogans, of familiar exhortation and inspiration, of remote theological doctrines; and more also, surely, than the brittle language of cultural separatism and militancy. We need, rather, the solid language of Christian educational strategy and program; this language must be rooted, to be sure, in relevant theological and religious commitment, but focused directly on such strategy and program. The first-order questions I have proposed seem to me to move in that direction.

Enlarging the dialogue. Finally, the crisis of understanding and conviction we face today requires, I think, discussion about the basis and strategy Christian education by all sorts of people, in a widening circle. The matters I propose can be discussed that way; they could, in fact, cause many to be less afraid of "philosophy of education." In an expanding dialogue, these matters must be discussed, not just in the manner of experts speaking to experts, but in such a manner that the average house-holder as well as the newest home missionary can take part-and feels impelled to do so. My perception of the way things are in the Christian school community is that we shall continue in a losing battle if this dialogue does not come off. Those of us who initiate it should therefore ask: What is it about the ends and means, about the aims and processes of Christian education that we need to talk about together? What is it that our teachers need, our parents need, our clergymen need? that our board members and our National Union Committee members need? that the enquirer across the back fence or the new church member with the Irish name needs? The issues I have highlighted here are the sort that all of us can discuss, and the kind, I suspect, that can help all of us get clearer about Christian education.

Both to meet our immediate need, therefore, and to ensure continued dialogue and progress in the future, I suggest we give prominent attention to what I have called first-order issues of Christian education. Facing these issues squarely could surely get us moving again in Christian educational philosophy, and could also generate some religiously virile and educationally relevant first-order conviction about Christian education. Such conviction, in turn, could make it more possible than it now is for many of us to give good answers when we are asked: What mean these bricks, these slogans, these exhortations, these rising costs? Let us get on with searching for those good answers-beginning, as I have been urging here, with agreeing on what the major questions ought to be.

This We Believe

By John A. Vander Ark

The basis article of any constitution, whether of a corporation or non-profit organization, comes closest to an official statement of its purpose for existence. In the case of an educational organization, the Basis article comes closest to its philosophy of education, and defines by means of such a statement who qualifies for membership in the body. In this essay NUCS director John Vander Ark describes both why and how the national Union altered its Basis article to make it both less ecclesiastical and more focused on education.

-- Editor

Seldom can one ascribe to a period of historical significance to an exact starting date. This applies to the efforts of a decade or more to elaborate on "basis" articles.

After a few years of self-persuasion, the NUCS officialdom in 1965 decide to rewrite its constitution, a part of which is the article called basis. In 1968 a first draft of this article was submitted, bandied about for a year, and after minor revision presented in 1969 to the voting (school) membership where it was provisionally adopted. Then a period of critiquing, discussion, and rewriting was cycled. Now, four years and nine drafts later, the NUCS Board of Directors has adopted a version which hopefully will be approved at the forthcoming Annual Meeting on August 4, 1971.

One of the contentions of the NUCS official family was that a basis article must reflect insights into Christian philosophy of education which were not previously possessed. An earlier rendering was just not explicit on what the Scriptures had to say about education. Earlier versions, moreover, made appeals to church creeds but they did not indicate what these creeds had to do with an educational enterprise except that it must be made clear to emphasize the authenticity of the Scriptures.

The NUCS submits the following statement of principles as its studied attempt not only to clarify its own basis but also to give schools a model. The emphasis is that this is what we believe concerning Christian education.

The issue whether this kind of statement should be called a creed is moot. Actually the NUCS has viewed that more of a semantic problem than a vital issue. To what does one appeal for an answer? The dictionary is not a final court of appeal in this instance because one can find a definition to suit his argument. I am inclined to this – and this is the mind of the board in general – that there are more problems than defenses to call a "summary of principles professed or adhered to in education" a creed even though it is essentially affirmational.

No one claims that this statement is faultless. A sharp student of language, for example, may challenge the word "inscripturated" in the first paragraph. True, it is not in the dictionary, and although it is a theological coinage, it's meaning is clear. This summary of principles may not settle for all time some of the controversies which are raging among Christian school patrons, but we trust it does much to illuminate discussions.

And now some acknowledgements. It is simply impossible to give credit to everyone who made a worthwhile contribution to the framing of these principles. There is a hazard in revealing some names; someone who contributed even one significant phrase – and several did – will be omitted. Running that

risk we must acknowledge Dr. Henry Beversluis, Dr. Gordon Spykman, and the Reverend Henry Van Andel as the principal writers. Copy editing was done by Miss Beth Merizon and the writer of these lines.

ARTICLE II – BASIS AND PRINCIPLES

The basis of the National Union of Christian Schools is the Word of God manifest in creation, incarnate in Jesus Christ and inscripturated in the Bible as it is confessed to be God's Word in the Reformed creedal standards. On this basis we affirm the following principles for Christian education:

The Bible

That God by His Word in the Scriptures renews man's understanding of God, of man himself, of his fellowman, and of the world; directs man in all his relationships and activities; and therefore guides His people also in the education of their children.

Creation

That in their education children must come to learn that the world and man's calling in it can be rightly understood only in their relation to the Triune God who by His creation, restoration, and governance directs all things to the coming of His kingdom and the glorification of His name.

Sin

That because man's sin alienates him from God, his neighbor, and the world; distorts his view of the true meaning and purpose of life; and misdirects human culture, then man's sin also disrupts the education of children.

Jesus Christ

That through Jesus Christ there is a renewal of our educational enterprise, because He is the Redeemer of, and the Light and the Way for, our human life in all its range and variety. Only through Him and the work of His Spirit are we guided in the truth and recommitted to our original calling.

Schools

That the purpose of Christian schools is to educate children for a life of obedience to their calling in this world as image-bearers of God; that this calling is to know God's Word and His creation, to consecrate the whole of human life to God, to love their fellow man, and to be stewards in their God-given cultural task.

Parents

That the primary responsibility for education rests upon parents to whom children are entrusted by God, and that Christian parents should accept this obligation in view of the covenantal relationship which God established with believers and their children. They should seek to discharge this obligation through school associations and school boards which engage services of Christian teachers in Christian schools.

Teachers

That Christian teachers, who thus cooperate with parents, in obedience to God, have a unique pedagogical responsibility while educating the child in school.

Pupils

That Christian schools must take into account the variety of abilities, needs, and responsibilities of young persons; that the endowments and calling of young persons as God's image-bearers and their defects and inadequacies as sinners require that such learning goals and such curricula be selected as will best

prepare them to live as obedient Christians; and that only with constant attention to such pedagogical concerns will education be truly Christian.

Community

That because God's covenant embraces not only parents and their children but also the whole Christian community to which they belong, and because Christian education contributes directly to the advancement of God's kingdom, it is the obligation not only of parents but also of this Christian community to establish and maintain Christian schools, to pray for, work for, and give generously in their support.

Educational Freedom

That Christian schools, organized and administered in accordance with legitimate standards and provisions for day schools, should be fully recognized in society as free to function according to these principles.

Principles of Christian Education

Preamble¹¹

Education in the schools is under fire today. Criticism is being leveled against it from several sources. Especially two weaknesses are found in education by its critics, namely, failure to achieve mastery of the fundamentals of human knowledge, and the absence of biblical truth as normative for thinking and acting, generally known as secularism. It is especially the latter of these weaknesses which concerns the church as organization, though she cannot be indifferent to the former to fulfill her task in this world. The growing secularism of life as a whole as well as in education, the Christian church views with alarm, well aware that it represents a threat to the church herself as well as to the state and to society. Inadequate mastery of the fundamentals of human knowledge poses a problem to the church in its teaching ministry.

The apparent weaknesses of current education have a deeper source than mere neglect. They are the result of an impasse which modern educational theory and practice has reached. Modern educational philosophy has abandoned the belief in truth as the forming power of the individual and of the group. For the unchanging norm of truth it has substituted the process of adjustment to a changing social order. And-adjustment, it is claimed, is achieved by successful experiences which in themselves contain the all-sufficient ideals, norms, and ends of life. The result is that biblical, transcendent standards of thought and action are obscured, distorted, or even rigidly excluded, and that educational theory and practice are thrown into a flux that is nothing short of chaos.

The situation becomes even more desperate when we consider the crying need for the light of truth in an educational program that has become universal for all citizens of a democratic society. More children attend school than ever before, and they remain in school longer. We readily recognize that universal educational opportunity is needed in a democracy where individual initiative and private enterprise within the framework of law are rightly promoted. Democracy needs an enlightened citizenry if it is to function as a free society. Universal education is charged with the responsibility of giving light that the citizens of a democratic society may judge and act wisely. But while modern education seeks to give light, it has no light within itself to give. It has its face turned from the light, which is the Word of God. It must be said that teachers schooled in and committed to current educational theory and practice are by virtue of their personal views incapable of helping children in a learning and teaching situation to lay hold upon a biblical interpretation of ideals, attitudes, knowledges, habits, and skills generally and of the subjects of study specifically.

In the face of an educational situation that is becoming daily more desperate, the church's testimony must be unmistakably clear. The Christian church, true to the God who has revealed Himself both in His general and special revelation, is called upon to interpret all of human endeavor in terms of this revelation. Only education founded on the Word of God can overcome the impasse in educational theory

¹¹¹¹ These principles of Christian Education were accepted as given in the report to the 1955 Synod by the Committee on Education composed of the following: Dr. J. A. VanBruggen, Chairman; Dr. C. Jaarsma, Secretary; Prof. Herman Kuiper, and Prof. Henry J. Van Zyl.

and practice associated with the concept -modern education. Christian education has the true goal, the true standard, and the true motivation. The true goal is the forming of personality as image of God. The true standard is the truth of God's Word. The true motivation is the "new obedience" which is the obedience of faith.

The Christian Reformed Church stands committed to the Christian school as the agency that can make Christian education effective in the totality of life. Meanwhile the Christian Reformed Church considers the family the foundation of all educational effort and charges the parents, on the basis of the covenant promise and mandate, with full educational responsibility. And she employs catechesis to instruct the youth of the church in the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

In view of her great interest in education it is well that the Christian Reformed Church periodically reaffirm her position concerning education and express herself in a way which is relevant to the problems and issues of the day. In keeping with its mandate, therefore, your committee submits the following declaration of principles, based on Holy Writ in its normative, directive, and mandatory character as summarized for us in the three forms of Unity of the Reformed Churches.

Basic Commitments in Christian Education

1. Christian education has its foundation in the Creator-creature relationship taught in the Scriptures. God is the sovereign Creator of the universe who in His divine providence upholds and directs all things according to His will and purpose. Man is created in God's image and can use, manipulate, and rule God's creation, and make it subservient to His praise. Because of the Creator-creature relationship, man can know the truth and communicate it. He can explore the world about him meaningfully because God has spoken to him.

2. The Creator-creature relationship continued though man fell in sin, but man lost true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. The natural man now holds down the true knowledge of God in unrighteousness. (Rom. 1:18-23) In the midst of the darkness of sin, the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ sounds forth, that whosoever believes in Christ shall not perish, but receive the light by faith. (John 3:16; Rom. 1:16-17; Is. 5:20). Christian education is education in Christ.

3. God gathers from a ruined human race, groping in the darkness of sin, a chosen people (Eph. 1:4) that they as sons by adoption (Eph.

1:5) may show forth "the praise of the glory of His grace." (Eph. 1:6) The sovereign God works in His children to will and to do according to His good pleasure (Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:13). The restored son of God works out his own salvation (Phil. 2:12) according to the truth as God makes it known to him in His Word. Christian education is education of the man in Christ.

4. Man is a religious being (Gen. 1:27; 2:7). His deepest needs are spiritual in character. As religious being he attains his God-appointed ideal in heart commitment to the truth (John 8:31-32). Secular education divorced from the truth cultivates heart commitment of the religious being to substitutes which are man-made, and therefore idolatrous. Christian education is education of the religious being in the truth in order that he may commit himself to the truth, and the truth may make him free.

5. True education has its inception in the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom. (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; Prov. 9:10). The Bible holds before us the attainment of understanding, wisdom, and righteousness as the goal of life. (II Chron. 2:12; Neh. 10:28; Ps. 119:34, 73, 125, 144, 169; Prov. 3:13; 1 Cor. 1:30). A dualistic view of education which calls some education religious and other secular fails to grasp that all understanding, wisdom, and righteousness are the fruit of faith. In all our ways we are called upon to acknowledge God, and He will direct our paths. (Prov. 3:6).

6. Education is the nurture or bringing up of the whole man, (Rom. 12:1) and comprises all of life. (Ps. 24:1; 1 Cor. 10:31). Man is an organic whole in whom the physiological and soul-life are one. Thinking, feeling, and willing as functions of the soul-life of man can be distinguished, but not divorced from each other, nor from the body as physical structure in and through which the soul-life functions.

The whole person, body as well as soul, is said to be the temple of God. (I Cor. 3:17; 1 Cor. 6:19). The human intellect cannot be parceled out for instruction independently of the emotional life or the life of the body. Human volitions cannot be educated apart from the intellect and the emotions. To bring all faculties into spiritual service (Rom. 12: 1) and to bring all of life's activities under the discipline of God's will, education should be of one piece in which a person's earthly relations and functions, as well as his relations to heaven are centered in and directed by the norm or standard of God's Word.

7. Children born of Christian parents are members of the Church of Christ. They are children of the promise. God calls them His own. (Gen. 17:7; Mark 10: 16; Acts 2:39). In the providence of God they have been placed in covenantal relationship to Christ and their education must be in keeping with this relationship. It must be education in Christ. Secular education divorces an area of life of the child in Christ from Christ Himself. Christian education is education in Christ for those who are in God's providence placed in relationship to Christ. A covenantal relationship demands a covenantal education.

8. The responsibility for education rests upon the parents. (Deut. 6:6-9). In parents has been vested the authority and upon them rests the responsibility to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and to do this in wisdom (Eph. 6:14; Col. 3:20-21). The parents are to instruct their children and cause them to be instructed in the "new obedience." Parents have the right and duty to avail themselves of assistance in the education of their children by means of social institutions which are able and willing to carry forward their God-given task. To entrust their children's education to agencies which violate their divinely-ordained task represents, on the part of parents, a flagrant violation of their stewardship.

Agencies Engaged in Christian Education

Since Holy Writ is normative for all of life and directive for all of conduct, the commitments enumerated apply particularly to the following institutions: home, church, and school, and their affiliated educational agencies.

1. The Family

It follows from the basic commitments stated above that the family unit is to be considered foundational in the educational program. God instituted the family as the mother of human society. Children are to be born of the wedlock of one man and one woman who have joined their lives together in love. God gives children to parents and charges them with the responsibility of nurturing them to maturity according to His commandments. The natural ties of the family unit provide the atmosphere most conducive to normal development of child life. Parents are obligated before God and man to make the family unit productive of good in the lives of their children. They are to instruct their children in the first rudiments of obedient living. Both society and the state have a right to look to parents for the exercise of their parental prerogative pertaining to the upbringing of their children.

To parents professing the Christian faith, God gives the covenant promise that He will be a God to them and their children. To the children of the covenant home He says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right." (Eph. 6: 1). To the parents of the covenant home He says,

nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6:4). Upon Christian parents rests the obligation of the second part of the covenant, namely, to nurture their children in the fear of the Lord and thus to do their part in making the covenant promise effective in the lives of their children. Parents of Reformed homes make this sacred pledge before the church of God in response to the question, "Do you promise and intend to instruct these children, when come to years of discretion, in the aforesaid doctrine, and cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of your power?" (Form for the Baptism of Infants).

2. The Church

Children of Christian parents are members of the church of the living God. God calls them His own. He includes them among the saints. (Eph. 1: 1, 2; Col. 1: 1, 2.) Together with the saints they are to be instructed and admonished by the church. The teaching function of the church extends to children as well as adults. Among the saints are those in need of the milk of the Word. (Heb. 5:12)

The church, therefore, likewise serves as an agency in the education of youth. Her instruction is moral-spiritual in character. The church through her teaching ministry brings the oracles of God, the living Word, to the understanding of youth that they may grow up in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and learn to be well pleasing to Him. The church seeks through her instruction to develop covenant youth in the living faith in the hope that, when come to years of discretion, they may voluntarily profess their faith before the church and enter into the full communion of Christ and the saints.

3. The School

The family and the church are institutions called into being by divine mandate. This cannot be said of the modern school. It is a product of human civilization, and therefore a social institution. Formal schooling as we know it today has become a necessity in the complex society of the modern day. Parents cannot fulfill their God-given mandate in our culture and civilization without calling upon others to assist them in their task. This is recognized in the Form for the Baptism of Infants in these words, "...and cause them to be instructed therein."

But to say that the school is a social institution, a product of the social order, is not to say that it should be secular in character. For covenant youth all education is education in Christ. The subject matter of the elementary and secondary schools must present a medium, a milieu, in which the covenant child's life in Christ can develop to its fullness in all areas of living. No area of thinking and living may be divorced from God and His Christ for the covenant child. It is for this reason that the Christian Reformed Church stands committed to the Christian school as the agency to make the Christ-like life effective in the totality of life for every covenant child.

The church is obligated to see to it that parents as members of the church fulfill their promise made at the baptism of their children. Since the Christian school is the only agency that can provide a Christian education for the youth of the church, the church is duty bound to encourage and assist in the establishment and maintenance of Christian schools.

4. Other Agencies Engaged in More Informal Education Activities

Besides the school, parents can avail themselves of other agencies engaged less formally in the education of youth. These are boys' and girls' clubs, summer camping activities, youth Bible conferences, and the like. Some are sponsored by organizations within the church, as the Young Calvinist organization. Some are of a broader community character. With reference to each of these it should be said that in order to fulfill their responsibility to parents they should be educationally significant for covenant youth and provide activities in keeping with the covenant of grace. Parents are obligated to appraise with care the youth organizations in which their children participate. The same holds true for the church. The officers of the church are obliged to check on the educational character of organizations in which the youth of the church take part.

None of these organizations, no more than the school, are church-sponsored. If functioning within the organized church, they naturally are encouraged by the church and come under the supervision of constituted church authorities.

When they function on a broader scale socially, the church is obligated to help parents appraise them in their educational and spiritual significance for their children.