The Roots of the Calvinistic Day School Movement

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Calvin College Monograph Series, 1963

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Preface

While there is a great need for a competent, comprehensive history of what in Reformed circles is referred to simply as "The Christian School," there is little danger that this monograph will fill that need. What is attempted in the following pages is something less than a full-scale, detailed, historical treatment of the stages, movements, and developments within the Calvinistic school movement. It is rather an analysis in some depth of the main theoretical foundations of that school system. The attempt has been to examine the "roots" and the "soil" of the movement more than the details of the school system itself. It is hoped that the present theoretical framework will serve later historians in their search for meaning in the many facts about the school system.

The metaphor of the plant used in the title as well as throughout the treatment is meant to convey the idea that the school system is a growing and changing thing. It is a kind of movement, and not a fixed entity. Its origin, its roots if you will, are not only simply in the past, but also in a particular and a peculiar kind of past. It has been nourished, sustained and shaped by a number of forces, institutions, cultures, and intellectual systems. Like a plant, the school system has grown up out of and also put its roots down into these. The delineating of the relationship between these roots and the school system itself is the main objective of this monograph.

If the Calvinistic school movement is to function best on the American scene, it must keep before itself a sense of its own past. If it is to retain its own identity and if it is not to be swallowed up, it must realize that its educational practice is rooted in quite different disciplines and intellectual traditions than most of the existing school systems in America. If a proper understanding of the past is necessary for the determination of future directions, then a systematic backward look can be most valuable for making today's decisions. This is not to assume that one makes decisions today based only on the past, or that past decisions were always wise; it means only that decisions made today without a look at the past will tend to be arbitrary (lacking in principle), or aimless (lacking in direction), or, still worse, imitative (lacking in originality). In the opinion of this writer all three of these dangers face the school movement at present, and this sketch of the movement's intellectual history is offered as a corrective of these dangerous tendencies.

Both primary and secondary sources were used in this study. Primary sources included chiefly about forty years (beginning in the 1920's) of the annual publication of the National Union of Christian Schools (referred to variously as the *Christian School Annual, NUCS Yearbook,* and most recently *Christian School Directory).* Some attention was also directed to a magazine, *The Christian Home and School,* also published by the National Union; *The Banner,* official organ of the Christian Reformed Church, and the *Proceedings* of the annual principals' conference, printed in full or summary form since about 1948.

Secondary sources consisted of a half dozen books (shown throughout in the form of footnote references) and periodicals associated with the Reformed community. Special mention should be made of the extensive reliance of the writer on the yet-unpublished doctoral dissertation of George Stob entitled *The Christian Reformed Church and Her Schools* (Princeton Theological Seminary, 1955). Without the results of the painstaking research of Dr. Stob in original sources, this writer could not easily have made sense out of trends since 1900. Since the footnotes do not reveal this, my debt to him is hereby gratefully acknowledged.

A final word of caution to the reader is in order concerning interpretations of the "facts." It was Rousseau, I believe, who reminded us all that "it is inevitable that the facts described in history should not give an exact picture…; they are transformed in the brain of the historian, they are moulded by his interests and coloured by his prejudices." The reader is thus reminded of the thin line that separates editorializing from reporting facts, even though the writer has tried to do the latter. To the extent that some significant literature has escaped my attention, or that actual practice and the literature do not give the same picture, to that extent the judgments may be inadequate, or unbalanced and not truly representative of the Christian School.

It is the hope of the writer that this brief sketch of the past, which appeared originally as a series of articles in *The Reformed Journal* in 1958-1959,* will serve to illumine the present and to cause us all, parents, teachers, and scholars, alike to rededicate ourselves to the perpetuation of the best in our tradition and to a realistic facing of the problems of the future.

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January, 1963

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The Present Setting

Although the public school movement is by far the most significant educational movement in America, it does not tell the whole story of American education. And although the development of American democracy has gone hand in hand with the development of the public school system, it would be unwarranted to assume that the democratic way of life does not allow for anything but the public school system as its institutional expression.

Minority groups of one kind or another have always been precious to the democratic spirit. Whereas all authoritarian societies suppress and condemn them, it is of the essence of democracy not only to tolerate them but to encourage their continued existence. This is because in a democratic society, the presence of alternatives, and a free choice between them by the people, are necessary in order to carry on free exchange of opinion and interchange of influence. This free exchange and interchange always requires differences in order to exist; it requires, in brief, a multi-group social arrangement. Democracy has in this sense always been pluralistic, and unlike such monolithic societies as Franco's Spain or Hitler's Germany, it has regarded the minority voice as not only something to be tolerated, but as something to be protected. [1] It has recognized as necessary to the continued existence of democracy the presence of a minority group, whose function and role is to keep alive discussion and the possibility of progress by offering alternatives to the majority opinion and by acting as the vocal critic of the majority opinion.

Just as in politics this democratic spirit has fostered the multi-party system, and as in religion it has prevented the establishment of any single religion, so in education it has fostered a multi-group expression in different and differing school systems. While the public school system has for some time given institutional expression to majority opinion in the matter of education, there have always been alternative school systems on the American scene. Some were in existence before the founding of the public system, and some have arisen as protest institutions since then, but they at present exist alongside each other and in competition with each other. Just as a single party system in politics would be inconsistent with democratic procedure, a single system of schools in any society would be evidence of an authoritarian rather than a democratic society. Monolithic societies, where there is one and only one state-approved religion, or political party, or educational system, with a subsequent condemnation of all others as divisive, stand as the very antithesis of democracy. To the extent that the minority voice, and its institutional expression, exists only by sufferance and not by right, to that extent the democratic way of life stands in jeopardy.

It is tempting at this point to develop the implications of this concept of democracy, and to examine the extent to which minority group school systems in America do in fact enjoy only quasi-legal status, and are only tolerated and not respected for their contribution. Involved, of course, is the whole problem of their status as determined by their access to public funds. It is quite clear at any rate that while minority group school systems have always existed, their role and status in democratic society has not always been acknowledged as necessary and good by all. James B. Conant's charge of a decade ago that private schools are divisive and undemocratic is only one of the more publicized expressions of this spirit. Many more recent examples could be cited. However, while any recalcitrant minority is by some regarded as an obstacle to the strengthening of democracy, it can just as easily and legitimately be regarded as a prerequisite to further progress. In education, such minorities, with their alternative solutions to the various

problems of educational theory, may well hold the key to future improvement. At very least, in their role of critic, they prevent the majority from becoming complacent.

Whatever the grounds in democratic theory, minority groups do continue to have their own systems. Although the vast majority of children of elementary and high school age attend some public school, about fifteen per cent do not. If higher institutions were included in the figures, the percentage would be much higher, as almost half of those attending higher institutions go to non-public colleges and universities. This figure for the elementary and secondary level has not always remained constant, and there is evidence that the trend is again upward within the past decade, signifying that people are turning more and more to alternative means for the education of their children. Already in 1951 the opponents of non-public schools showed concern over a 24 per cent increase in enrollment in private schools over a ten year period because this was a rate nearly twice that of the public schools. Of these non-public systems the parochial schools of the Roman Catholic Church are most significant, enrolling over four million of the five and one-half million students not enrolled in public schools. About half of all children of Roman Catholic parents are in parochial schools. Next in significance are the Lutheran parochial schools. Then there are the private academies and boarding schools, some of them religious and some maintained for socio-economic and cultural reasons.

Besides these types of non-public school systems, there is still another type which is neither parochial, nor public, nor private in the usual sense of the word. Although it is religious in orientation and aim, it is not maintained and operated by any religious denomination. It is a system of parentally controlled schools now enrolling over fifty-two thousand pupils in elementary and secondary schools in the United States and Canada *(Christian School Directory, 1962-1963).* It has been in the making for approximately fifty years, and has in the past two decades gained enough momentum to be considered as a significant movement in American education. Its steady progress is clear from statistics published by the National Union of Christian Schools, the national service agency for this system. These statistics show an increase in enrollment of *5* per cent from *1955* to *1956,* of 8.7 per cent from *1956* to *1957,* and, most recently, of 6.6 per cent from *1961* to *1962.*

Its present philosophy of education, as expressed in this system, offers alternative answers to a number of important problems in educational theory. Just a few of the major issues represented in this system of schools are: (1) the aims and purposes of education, (2) the locus of educational control, and (3) the relationship between religion and education. The purpose of this paper is not so much to argue for the rightness of these answers as to trace their roots and examine their theoretical bases, so that both those within the system and those without may better understand the origins of this unique system. As has already been suggested this understanding is important, because failure on the part of those within the system to understand wherein its theoretical bases differ from those of public education can lead to an unwitting absorption into its' own practices and aims of elements that are inconsistent with its own theoretical bases. On the other band, failure to recognize wherein the aims and purposes of the system do or can coincide with those of public education can easily lead to fostering anticultural and separatistic values simply to maintain distinctiveness.

We will now examine each of the major roots of this system as well as the general soil in which they grew and which still sustains them. Some of these roots go deeper into the past than others, and, as we shall see, some of them even reach to other countries and cultures. These roots

reach not only into other countries and cultures, but also into specific intellectual disciplines. Each of these will be examined in turn for its effect in shaping the present school movement.

The School System and Calvinism: Its Religio-Philosophical Soil

While the roots of the Calvinistic day school movement reach into specific cultures and disciplines, their common soil is that of the religio-philosophical system called Calvinism. Founded by John Calvin in the sixteenth century and given earliest cultural expression in Geneva, Switzerland, it has since then played a crucial role in the spread of the Reformation to France, The Netherlands, England, and America. In each of these countries it has affected not only specifically religious life and practices, but social and political life as well. Although it has assumed different shapes and different roles in each of these countries, in none of them has it operated simply as a set of specifically doctrinal or liturgical beliefs; it has always found cultural expression and produced an effect upon economics, politics, and education, although not to the same degree in all countries, R. H. Tawney's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism,* Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capital ism,* and Ralph Barton Perry's *Puritanism and Democracy* are just a few of the standard works which have dealt with Calvinism in its social and economic forms. In The Netherlands the rise to power of the Anti-Revolutionary Party under Abraham Kuyper is another instance of this tendency of Calvinism to seek expression in various cultural spheres.

It is not surprising therefore to find that in some countries Calvinism has also found institutional expression in the field of education. That the term *Calvinism* should imply an educational theory, more than Methodism for example, seems strange except to those who know Calvinism as more than just another Protestant sect. The field of education has also given recognition to Calvinism as a world and life view with implications for education. As one of the general works on education has it.

> One of the fairest and most permanent influences of Calvinists in Geneva, France, Holland, Scotland, England, and America was their contribution to education *(Monroe's Cyclopedia of Education, Vol.* 1, p. 491).

There is here in this same volume also the recognition that the interest of Calvinists in education has been more than simply that of church extension, or of specifically religious and doctrinal instruction. Whereas it is characteristic of Protestant sects to view day school education as a means of evangelism or of giving religious instruction in the beliefs of that sect, Calvinism has conceived of education much more broadly. The following quotation is an indication that the writer was aware of this difference between Calvinism and much of Protestantism.

> The remarkable development of colleges and free schools among Calvinists was not entirely due to any single theological tenet. . . . Calvin and all these Calvinists had a common program of broad scope - not merely doctrinal, but also political, economic, social - and similar ideas and institutions. Their common program and their social insight demanded education for all as instruments of Providence for church and commonwealth.

The last sentence in particular bears upon the direct problem of the conception of the purpose of education, and the whole quotation is a remarkable commentary upon what Calvinists have called the "Kingdom of God" concept. Broader than the "Church of Christ" concept, it includes not only the institutionalized church within its scope but all of man's relations with one another, social, economic, and political. [2] None of these areas is neutral, and all come under the sovereignty of God. In education this means that commitment to the Christian idea of God and commitment to a Biblical anthropology demands a type of education not required by those not so committed. Since specific implications for the role of the school in society, the locus of control of education, and the role of religion in education will be detailed in later sections, it needs only to be pointed out here that some rather specific type of education is called for by the system of thought called Calvinism.

ROOTS IN THIS SOIL

There are at least four major roots, all growing in this soil of Calvinism, which have produced the present school system, and which have contributed to a greater or lesser degree to making it what it is today. It is important to note these, for there is no Calvinism pure and simple; there is only Calvinism as it has expressed itself in various cultures and disciplines. Therefore we must examine these rather than Calvinism in the abstract, for it is these that have given concrete and specific shape to the school system.

One important root is that which reaches back to The Netherlands of the nineteenth century. Without understanding something of the political, religious, and educational situation there, certain values and attitudes embodied in the present system become unintelligible. The second root of the school system reaches into the Christian Reformed Church, a denomination of some 200,000 members which celebrated its centennial in 1957. Here again, the connections and the relationships between the school and this denomination are intricate, and their lives are inextricably woven through each other. How the school system became non-parochial, and to what extent it remains this, is involved in the ecclesiology of the church, and no one can understand the school without understanding its ecclesiastical roots in the church. The third root of this system is in the Bible. While claiming to be non-parochial, it nevertheless desires to be rooted.in the Scriptures of the Christian religion. Education in the nature and destiny of man as expressed in Biblical concepts has always been of concern to supporters of this movement, and its desire for a close relationship between religion and education has been one of the main motivating factors behind its establishment. The fourth root of the school system is not as securely imbedded as some of the others. It has grown up in American culture and has been conditioned in part by American ideas. Although these roots are growing, their growth has in the past been uncertain and their direction unsure. How it can build further roots in American democracy while retaining its other roots is one of the major questions facing the school system today. How it makes the educational implications of Calvinism come to expression in American democracy without either cultural separation and irrelevance on the one hand, or absorption and loss of distinctiveness on the other band, will determine the future role of the Calvinistic school system in America.

This brief sketch of the four major roots of the school system is preliminary to a more detailed survey and critique of each of these in a separate section. The important point to note here is that each of these grew in, and thus was shaped by, the intellectual system of Calvinism.

While racial, cultural, and ecclesiastical factors have modified that Calvinism, it has provided the central and unifying philosophy.

The School System and the Netherlands: Its Cultural Roots

Much of the uniqueness of the Calvinistic day school movement in America is the direct result of taking ideas about education which were formed in one culture, uprooting them from the place and forces which shaped them, and then transplanting them in America. This is a rough approximation of what a group of Dutch immigrants to America did in the middle of the last century. This displacement of ideas about education from one cultural context to another by an immigrant group largely unsophisticated in the ways in which cultures affected educational theory and practice led to some unfortunate consequences for both the group and for American education. It has sometimes resulted in representatives of this group firing off salvos at non-existent enemies, while allowing others to infiltrate unnoticed. It has also resulted sometimes in criticisms of the movement by those who misinterpreted its motives because they misread the minds of its supporters.

Since the movement in America has its roots in the educational and religious situation in The Netherlands, some analysis of this situation is therefore necessary. Calvinism played a more influential role in the culture of The Netherlands than it has in almost any other country. This profound impact upon Dutch religion and life has been recognized by a recent historian of Calvinism in the following words:

> Calvinism, by common consent, was a powerful formative influence in the national existence of The Netherlands and has continued to be of a distinctive factor in the life of the Dutch nation.[3]

The influence of Calvinism was in fact so strong that the Reformed Church became the established religion and was connected to such political movements as the struggle for independence from Spain and the establishment of a centralized monarchy. Although the Calvinists did not succeed politically in either of these attempts, the brand of Calvinism as represented in the Dutch Reformed Church nevertheless remained the dominant religion of The Netherlands for several centuries after the Reformation. Internal religious quarrels and a general decline of interest in doctrinal purity in the state church led to the Secession of 1834 called the *Aftcheiding.* These dissenters withdrew from the established church because they felt that it was losing its faithfulness to the Calvinistic beliefs codified at the great Synod of Dort (1618-19). They also felt that the schools under the supervision of the state church were becoming neutral in matters of religion. This Secession was thus important for educational theory, for involved in it was not simply church polity and doctrine but a way of life that had found expression in an educational system. The educational objection was not so much to the principle of state control as such, but rather to the attempt by liberals to make the state school "neutral." (The objection to state control of education in principle came later as part of the outlook associated with the secession headed by Abraham Kuyper and referred to as the *Doleantie.)* It was this passionate concern for doctrinal purity intermingled with an opposition to state control of education that was carried over into America when these seceders emigrated as a group in. 1847. Although this one

movement does not tell the whole story of the influence of The Netherlands on the Calvinistic school movement in America, its impact was felt in later controversies within the school system in America.

Although far too lengthy to be shown here, there is definite evidence from original records and correspondence that one of the main causes of the emigration to America was indeed the dissatisfaction with the schools in The Netherlands. This centrality of education in the reasons for emigrating to America has been generally recognized. The editor of *The Banner*, the official organ of the Christian Reformed Church (which was later to nurse this school system through its infancy) summed up the situation this way:

> The inability of the persecuted seceders of the Netherlands to give their children Christian education was one of the principal reasons why they resolved to leave the land of their birth and make a home for themselves and their posterity in this new world. The hostile government of The Netherlands refused to let those sorepressed men and women educate their children as their conscience dictated *(The Banner,* March *28, 1947).*

Thus the roots of the present Calvinistic school system extended to a group in The Netherlands in 1834 who risked both religious persecution and governmental opposition to defend what they held to be the pure Calvinism of Dort. However, the impact of The Netherlands on this movement does not end with this one group. Had there been no other influence the school would have developed quite differently, for this secession took place largely among the lower classes, and the members were fully as much affected by German pietism, which was sweeping Holland at the time, as by Genevan Calvinism. They were congenitally separatistic (which their later actions were to confirm) and anticultural, suspicious of all thought and belief except both the letter and spirit of Dort. Such a movement alone would not have provided the impetus necessary to establish a non-parochial school system. In fact the extreme concern for doctrinal purity and church traditions would definitely favor parochial education.

CALVINISTIC REVIVAL OF 1870

The other movement which must be taken into account was of considerably more power and had more intellectual leadership. It came to expression in the Calvinistic revival of *1870-80* under the leadship of Dr. Abraham Kuyper. The movement for the free Christian school, free from both state and church domination and therefore linked more closely to the family, gained momentum and found expression in The Netherlands not only in distinctive elementary and secondary schools but also in the establishment of the Free University of Amsterdam, owned by neither the state nor the church. This university, with Abraham Kuyper at its head, was the center of theological and educational thinking which had as a central concept the principle of "sphere sovereignty." According to this view each area of human endeavor and investigation, i.e., science, theology, art, business, education, has an inner structure and rationale of its own. It operates according to laws and has a structure created by God, but each is in its own sphere sovereign to itself. While there is inter-relationship between spheres, there is no one sphere which has sovereignty over all the others. According to this view, the science of education was such a separate sphere, and while related to theology and the church and government and the state, it was subject to control by neither. Since this view can easily be interpreted as a denial that theology is the queen of the sciences and that all other sciences bow in their conclusions to its

findings, this principle of "sphere sovereignty" has not found wide acceptance among ecclesiastics.

Proponents of this view fanned out from the Free University and influenced education not only in The Netherlands but in America as well. Numbers of professional educators, ministers, and energetic laymen carried these Kuyperian-Calvinistic ideas with them when they emigrated to America. Their presence here resulted not only in more interest and enthusiasm for education itself, but also it led eventually to the administrative break between the Christian Reformed Church and the school system around the turn of the century. The schools became officially parental rather than parochial, and this was directly attributable to the educational ideas and ideals of this Calvinist revival in The Netherlands.

A historian has noted and summarized Kuyper's influence on the school system in America thus:

> Kuyper's influence was powerful in the Reformed Church in America and especially in the Christian Reformed Church there. His beliefs gave to people who wanted for their children a Christian education based on Reformed principles a theoretical foundation.... The Dutch immigrant's schools (primary and high), especially his "Christian schools" as they are called in the Dutch communities, may be regarded as his most striking contribution to the field of education.[4]

A contemporary of Abraham Kuyper, and one who was also an effective spokesman for the Calvinistic conception of the school on the political scene in The Netherlands, was a man by the name of Groen Van Prinsterer. In the struggles with the liberals over whether or not The Netherlands should have a single system of state schools which were to be neutral as regards religion, he sided with Kuyper. He emphasized the importance of having the parent retain direct control of the school. He thus favored private schools which fused religion and education, and opposed laws designed to make support of the single state school compulsory.

Parenthetically it might be noted here that the multiple educational systems of The Netherlands of the present show the effect of this movement under Kuyper and Van Prinsterer. These people fought for the right of parents to have a school system reflecting their view of life. They opposed the principle of a state church and a single system of schools based upon it because of two main reasons. One was the principle of "sphere sovereignty" which held that the school should be free of both the church and the state. The other was that education could not be neutral and was inescapably religious. Their conclusion was that the school should be parentally controlled and openly oriented to religion. Since the time of Kuyper and Van Prinsterer their followers have even won for themselves and their schools the right to equal status and support with respect to tax funds. In a recent educational journal a government official in The Netherlands, in the context of a discussion of freedom, revealed the present policy on this matter:

> School policy in The Netherlands stems from the idea that parents are beyond others most responsible for the education of their children, and for that reason they must in principle have the opportunity of sending their children to the schools where education accords with their view of life without the necessity to pay more for it.[5]

Still speaking parenthetically, it is interesting to note that the Calvinistic school in America has never made a sustained and systematic endeavor to win such rights for itself. The Calvinistic school has never publicly framed the issue so as to avoid the church-state issue, and thus one of the greatest triumphs of the Calvinistic school in The Netherlands was never imitated in America. This failure is due in part to the changing cultural conditions under which the school functions in America, but it is also due in part to failure to work for the Kuyperian ideal of religious freedom.

In surveying the further effect which The Netherlands exerted on the Calvinistic school movement here in America, mention should be made of one more individual. Following Abraham Kuyper, who had directed his attention more to specifically political matters, came Herman Bavinck. This man wrote extensively, and some of his writing was on specifically educational matters. Although more of a theologian than an educator by profession, he nevertheless gave evidence in his writings of being aware of trends in educational theory, and of the implications of a Christian view of man for theory and practice in education. Yet, although he helped the Calvinistic school in The Netherlands to attain stature, his direct influence on the school system in America has been less than it might have been had his works been translated into English. Only one major work interpreting his views, and a few references to him scattered in periodicals, remain to show precisely what his views were and what effect they had on the system in America.[6] Undoubtedly his chief influence lay in his impact upon those who emigrated around the turn of the century, and perhaps upon those of the first and second generation who could read him in the original. His main interest seems to have been in the pedagogical principles as they relate to classroom methodology. Since such educational psychology has less to do with shaping the main outlines of a movement than other factors, there is little in the present-day movement that could be directly traceable to his influence. His main contribution was to undergird educational practice with a Biblical anthropology, and this mainly in the early beginnings of the school system here in America.

In this section I have tried to show that one of the roots of the Calvinistic day school movement lay in The Netherlands, and that it has shaped the movement in significant ways in the past. A passionate concern for an intimate relationship between religion and education, and a conviction that neither the church nor the state rightfully controls education: these are the two major ideas to come from The Netherlands. They came from the Secession of 1834 and the Calvinistic revival of 1876, but not in any clear and unequivocal sense. In many ways these two movements had opposing views on education and this can be seen most clearly in the shifting and ambiguous relationship which has existed for years between the Christian Reformed Church and the Calvinistic school system. Although the story of the forces at work to separate the two and the forces at work to bring them closer together will be told in the following section, it should be pointed out here that these differences are in the church because they were brought over from The Netherlands by those who stood in and represented different movements in The Netherlands itself. It now remains to examine that church and its views on education.

The School System and the Christian Reformed Church: Its Ecclesiastical Roots

The Calvinistic day school in America did not spring full blown upon the American scene. It came as a transplant from The Netherlands and for many years remained a tender plant. It grew

very slowly and made very little progress for almost forty years. The American version of the Calvinistic school began in the mind and heart of Albertus Van Raalte, who led the seceders of 1834 to American soil in 1847 and established a colony in what is now Holland, Michigan. Van Raalte stood in a broader intellectual tradition than did most of the seceders, and he saw in education the means by which the immigrant group could develop a cultural outlook and, as he said, "deliver this people and their confession from irrelevance." He thus labored long and hard but with little success to get these early colonists to build and support schools. Concern with getting established in a new world, combined with the belief that the public schools in America were Christian enough, defeated him.

When the Christian Reformed Church was born in 1857, she inherited one little school in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The long and involved story behind the birth of the Christian Reformed Church by secession from the Dutch Reformed Church in America is significant for education only in limited ways, and thus need not be told here. The educational significance of this secession is that it was made in the same tradition and spirit as the Secession of 1834 in The Netherlands. Concern for purity of doctrine and suspicion of the world in general made this group conceive of education in purely religious and doctrinal terms. The first school in Grand Rapids was parochial in intent and administration, and until the influence of the Calvinistic Revival in The Netherlands was felt after 1880, there was no thought for any education except that which was strictly and specifically for the perpetuation of the denomination and the Dutch heritage in which it was rooted.

The schoolmasters in these early days were usually appointed by and responsible to a church consistory. Although ministers rarely taught in the schools, they were expected to supervise the teaching that went on. These early schools sometimes were simply summer schools; sometimes they were full day schools but carried the child only until he was nine or ten years old. Until 1890, only the Dutch language was spoken in the schools, and this practice was justified, even after the supporters of the school had lived several decades in America, on the ground that the church, doctrine, and hymns were in the Dutch and that to perpetuate the heritage it was necessary to use the language in which it was couched. These details are mentioned only to show the degree to which the Christian Reformed Church early regarded the school as the arm of the church, and to contrast this outlook with later movements.

For its theoretical justification for such schools, the church referred back to the church order of the Synod of Dort, which said in Article 21:

> Consistories shall see to it everywhere that there are good schoolmasters who shall not only teach the children reading, writing, languages and free art, but also instruct them in godliness and in Catechism.

The Christian Reformed Church early adopted this church order for her own government, and used this article to convince her members of the necessity of supporting these parochial schools. In using the church order to justify parochial schools the church was making use of an article of faith which was forged in a different country and in a different cultural context. In the context of the Synod of Dort, Calvinism was the official religion of the state, and the church was thus acting in conjunction with and as the agent of the state. The church was in fact acting upon a specific mandate by the government of The Netherlands to establish schools. In such a cultural

context, where the church and state were one, the school had a broad function of enhancing learning in general as well as teaching church doctrine that was state-approved.

For our purposes here it is important to note that such a cultural context and political arrangement called for active administration and control of the schools by the church. In America rather than in The Netherlands, and in a social context where church and state were separate, the Christian Reformed Church could not possibly mean by Article 21 what was meant in The Netherlands at the Synod of Dort. The article was nevertheless interpreted to mean that the church had a warrant in the historic creeds to establish and maintain day schools to insure her continued existence and vitality. Although this view of the relationship between the school and the church is no longer the dominant and most influential one in determining policy, there have always been those who have spoken in the spirit of this ideal. Their voices have always cried out for a closer relationship between the school and the church, with the church supervising the school and not just cooperating with it. The plea that the church should control the school has sometimes been made in the name of cultural separation and sometimes in the name of the need for continued doctrinal purity. Had these voices continued to reflect majority opinion in the Christian Reformed Church, there would today be no Calvinistic school. There would be only Christian Reformed parochial schools. Although more will be said later concerning the arguments for the parochial school, we should first take a look at another tradition and another view of the school.

KUYPERIAN CALVINISM

There were other voices in the church, and they, too, influenced policy and practice in the Calvinistic school movement. These voices were first heard coming from the ministers and professional educators who came from the Netherlands after the Calvinistic Revival there under Abraham Kuyper. On fire for the Christian school idea, these people nevertheless saw the school as much more than an instrument for the preservation of denominational purity. They saw it as a working out of the Christian idea of man and society through the study of all areas of human knowledge. It was to be a school that exhibited a world and life view. For this they required a school which was subject to no authority other than the Bible and the convictions of those who believed in it. As they saw it, this then required a school not dominated by either church or state. Since church and state were so closely united in the Netherlands, freedom from one meant freedom from the other as well. There is some reason to believe that these men never seriously considered whether or not state control was a live option for Christians here in America. They were opposed to the parochial school idea, but seem not to have seriously considered the public school idea. While it is hardly true that the public school of the late nineteenth century was dominated by and shaped by non-Christian forces, these Kuyperian Calvinists did not need a thorough understanding of the social situation here in America before making a choice in favor of the parentally controlled school. The principle of sphere sovereignty already established that government and education were separate spheres, and that one should not be dominated by the other. Unlike those who represented the outlook of the Secessions, these men had neither to assume nor to prove that the public schools were "godless" in order to justify the private school. Their general theory of sphere sovereignty and their specific belief that Calvinism had implications for educational theory and practice gave them all they needed.

These Kuyperian Calvinists spoke out loudly against the parochial school idea, and were so persuasive in the Christian Reformed Church that she was convinced that she should give up the

parochial schools which she had begun and turn them over to societies of parents. In the denominational paper of the time, *De Wachter,* there appeared an article by a certain P. R. Holtman, a spokesman for the Kuyperian view, which shows the strong feeling which existed against the parochial school idea. He said:

> The Christian school must not be a child of the churches, or live by the grace of the churches, so that it would flourish or decline in the measure that spiritual life of the church rose and declined. The unprofitableness of the system which lowered education to the status of preparation for catechism, the highest ideal of which was that with the use of ruler and whip the Formulas of Unity were implanted, has long since been evident. The Christian school requires a life-sphere of its own, with its own rationale, not as concerns principles but as concerns administration (June 22, 1892).

Evidently convinced by this type of argumentation, the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in 1892 adopted a resolution favoring the organization of a society for the promotion of Christian Reformed education and promised such a society its moral support. Although the name of the denomination was included in the resolution, the name of the society suggested by the Synod indicated a less narrow intent; it was suggested that the society be called the "Society for the Promotion of Christian Education on a Reformed Basis."

Apparently the movement for parental schools was already underway, for such a society was organized that very year. Thus the administrative break between the school and the church was made, and the Kuyperian ideal was achieved in theory at least. The break directly affected only some twelve or fourteen schools then in existence, but all schools thereafter established were begun by societies of parents and not by the consistories of churches.

Although this was a decided shift in theory, and one with far-reaching implications for practice, in actuality the school has endured a highly ambiguous relationship with the Christian Reformed Church. The parochial idea - and spirit did not die out with this official act of Synod, and the spirit of both Secessions and the spirit of Kuyperian Calvinism have existed side by side in the church. It has recently been observed that "the Dutch type of Calvinism can be divided into the *pro*- and the *anti*-Kuvperian schools,"[7] and this is doubly true of the educational system which grew out of this tradition.

Almost immediately after the administrative break took place there was a renewed expression of the view that the Christian school still required ecclesiastical supervision. It was feared that the judgment of individuals in matters of religion and education would not be as valid as that of the lawful church assembly.

A number of reforms were attempted by the leaders of this new Kuyperian educational movement, and each of them found opposition from segments of the church. This opposition was, and continues to be, strong enough to frustrate some of the necessary implications of the parental rather than the parochial idea of education. One reform advocated by these leaders was that no specific denominational doctrines and creeds should be taught in the day school; loyalty was to be to Reformed principles as applied to educational theory, but not to any denominational forms and usages. Another was that the student body should not be limited to those of Dutch Reformed persuasion: Presbyterians and Methodists were mentioned specifically as being welcome in the schools. Another reform advocated by this group, again resisted by some for

many years, was that the English language should be used in the schools. The church resisted this latter reform because her doctrine and heritage were both in the Dutch language, and it seemed to her that the preservation of the doctrine and heritage required the preservation of the language in which they were written. If the youth were to be able to absorb the church heritage they must learn the Dutch language.

It is largely because of this concern for the immediate welfare of the denomination that these reforms have never been fully practiced out of educational principle. To this day, the first two reforms are not deeply imbedded in the practice of all the schools because of the church's direct influence on it through the use of ministers as principals, as Bible teachers, and as members of school boards. The use of English as the language of instruction came about slowly and was demanded by many other non-theoretical considerations.

CONTINUING AMBIGUITY

Although the Christian Reformed Church has never changed its official decision concerning abandonment of the control of the school, her actual practice has ranged all the way from careful supervision, even to the point of getting her creeds stated as the creedal basis of the school in the constitution, to simple moral and financial support and cooperation. However, although actual practice would not always indicate it, there is ample evidence that the change of mind concerning her role in Christian education was deep and enduring. Whereas the original church order of the Christian Reformed Church directly implied administrative supervision in the sentence, "Consistories shall see to it everywhere that there are good schoolmasters…," this wording was changed by a later Synod to express the idea of moral support rather than control. In 1914, twenty-two years after the first official step in separating the church from the school, the church officially revised Article 21 to read, "The Consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools . . . ." Whereas the original reading definitely committed the consistory to hiring the teacher, the revision did not.

The most recent official actions on the part of Synod indicate that the ambiguity is not yet removed from the situation of the rightful relationship between the church and school. In 1955 the Synod accepted a statement of "Principles of Christian Education," drawn up by a Committee on Education of the Synod. In this statement there is equal stress on the responsibility of the parents and of the church in education. While Basic Commitment No. 8 reads: "The responsibility for education rests upon the parents," of the church as an agency engaged in Christian education it is said that the church is in duty bound to encourage and assist in the establishment and maintenance of Christian schools." The same report again diplomatically straddles the fence by saying in the same breath that "none of these organizations [referring to Bible conferences, Boys' Clubs, etc.], no more than the school, are Church-sponsored," and that "if functioning within the organized church, they naturally are encouraged by the church and come under the supervision of constituted church authorities." Such statements and declarations do perform at least this service, that they can be read and agreed to by those holding different views on the role of the church in general education. While they are confusing for educational theory they do accurately reflect the general feeling that the church and the school are closely related even when the exact nature of the relationship is unclear.

The Christian Reformed Church is presently faced with a further proposed revision of the articles of its Church order bearing on education. The committee revising the Church Order by 1957 had proposed that Article 34 (old Article 21) read:

> Consistories shall diligently encourage the members of their churches to establish and maintain good Christian schools, and shall urge believing parents to have their children instructed in these schools. (*Acts of Synod*, 1957, p. 406).

During the following year the committee added at the end of the above statement the phrase "according to the demands of the covenant" (*Acts of Synod, 1958, p.* 393). This indicates that there was some dissatisfaction with the previous suggested meaning. One can only speculate as to whether or not the addition changes the basic thrust of the statement concerning the role of the church in general education. If it does, it would be just one more example of difference of opinion in the Christian Reformed Church on the matter.[8]

As of 1962, the Synod has not yet officially accepted or rejected the wording of the article under examination here. The most recent version exhibits clearly a continuation of the shift from administrative control to encouragement and moral support of the school. Showing only minor word changes over the 1958 version, Article 74 of the proposed revision now reads:

> The consistory shall diligently encourage the members of the congregation to establish and maintain good Christian schools, and shall urge parents to have their children instructed in these schools according to the demands of the covenant *(Acts of Synod,* 1962, p. 423).

While the church officially has continued to move away from control and supervision of the school, influential people within the Christian Reformed Church continue to feel that the church must give more than simple cooperation in the way of moral and financial support. While to the observer it might seem strangely inconsistent to have the church reject the responsibility for administrative supervision on the one hand, and cling to responsibility for moral supervision on the other hand, this is not so much inconsistency as it is evidence of the crosscurrents of thought in the church concerning the school.

A former editor of the official organ of the Christian Reformed Church, *The Banner,* for many years and on numerous occasions represented one side of the issue on the proper relation between the school and the church. The continued presence of the parochial school idea in the mind of the church is due in no small part to his influence and the influence of those who are like minded. In this view the chief interest in the schools becomes that of maintaining denominational loyalty through specific instruction in the church creeds and in the church heritage. It regards the school as one of the main bulwarks against religious indifference and doctrinal laxness. It holds that the church needs the day school as its nursery, and that the church could not long retain its vitality without the reinforcement of the school.[9] The futures of both are inexorably linked and thus supervision of the school becomes an absolute necessity. In this view the church's very existence is at stake.

The justification for the view that the church should still control the school has been summarized in the following three reasons: (1) the church is the pillar and ground of truth and is therefore the only competent judge of Christian education; (2) the church gives financial support

and has the right to protect her investment; and (3) there is a great need for keeping children loyal to the Reformed faith.[10]

This supervision and control has been accomplished to a greater or lesser degree in the following ways: (1) through direct cooperation between consistories and school boards; (2) through use of ministers as Bible teachers and principals in the schools and as members of school. boards; and (3) through getting a sound "Reformed and not merely Christian" basis for education written into the school constitutions.[11]

Those holding to this view have never given up the principle that the church should direct and control the school, and the actual administration and management has been regarded as only incidental. Should absence of administration and management ever stand in the way of achieving and maintaining control, those holding this view are quite ready to take up the parochial school idea in practice as well as in principle. The clearest expression of this view is found in these words in another *Banner* article. The writer first asks: "Shall we disclose a secret?" and then continues:

> It may be known to some but we are certain it is not generally known. It is this, that not a few of our ministers and some of our prominent laymen would be ready at once to support a movement to make our Christian schools parochial. Their reason is that they are worried about the future soundness of these schools.[12]

It is in this view of the school that the doctrine of the covenant as the theoretical justification for separate non-public schools come to be most strongly emphasized. Those holding this view tend to call the schools "covenantal" rather than either Christian or Calvinistic; and rather than seeking theoretical justification in the Kuvperian conception of sphere sovereignty, it is held that the need for the Christian school rests upon the doctrine of the covenant. But it does not seem clear to everyone that separate schools follow as a logical necessity from this doctrine. However often this position is *stated,* it is rarely *argued;* this position is often asserted, but the assertion rarely occurs in the context of a reasoned argument leading to the conclusion that this doctrine always and everywhere necessitates separate schools.[13] The doctrine, however, has been very effectively used to gain support for the school movement. Failure to send children to the Christian school has been commonly identified with failure to fulfill the covenantal vows taken by the parents at the time of the baptism of their children.[14]

It has been difficult for many others, not in the Christian Reformed Church but in the Calvinistic tradition, to see how this doctrine of the covenant automatically eliminates the possibility of fulfilling baptismal vows through public education that is congenial to the Christian view. For example, the Reformed Church of America, from which the Christian Reformed Church split in 1857, to this day calls into question the validity of this argument.[15]

However vocal the holders of the "parochial" view have been, it would be inaccurate to say that this view is the dominant one in the Christian Reformed Church and in the Calvinistic school system. Official ecclesiastical pronouncements and editorial comment in church papers do not necessarily give a true picture of actual conditions. The teachers, principals, and board members of the school are the ones who really determine what function the school will in fact serve. Many voices have been raised against the narrower conception of the function of the school, and they have come from ministers and educators alike. Although opposition to this narrower view was

more blunt, vehement, and frequent in earlier days wben the issue was fresh, there is still considerable resistance to limiting the school to being the arm of the church.

IMPACT OF THE NUCS

In recent years the National Union of Christian Schools, the national service agency for the Calvinistic system of schools, in its publications and through conferences has done the most to keep alive and operative the alternate view of the function of the school. This organization was called into being by the Chicago Alliance of Christian Schools, and since its inception it has given unity and strength to the Calvinistic day school movement by holding annual conventions, by publishing monthly the *Christian Home and* School magazine, and by publishing textbooks and courses of study. Although its convention speakers have often been clergymen and theologians who advocated the narrow function of the school, the National Union has in its practices and programs broadened its scope. It has not done this vigorously or consistently because its periodical and its conventions are a sounding board for all opinion, but it has nevertheless provided a non-ecclesiastical voice and has moved toward defining the function of the school in non-ecclesiastical terms.

In one of its early conventions opposition to the continuing spirit of parochialism was evidenced by a member of the clergy itself. In the 1926 convention Rev. E. J. Tuuk is reported as saying:

> There are those who are in their religious life one-sidedly ecclesiastical so that in cooperating in the Christian school movement they are motivated by the consideration of the maintenance of the ecclesiastical institution to which they belong. Their own church must be established and its continued existence as an institution assured. The school then becomes largely an auxiliary to the church and the education given is liable to bemarked by denominational distinctiveness. This too has been and still is the motivation in some quarters to the detriment of the school and the future of the children. This *ecclesiastical* motive ought to lose its force entirely and we ought to rid ourselves of separatistic aloofness where it may still be the motive (NUCS *Yearbook, 1926, p. 9).*

A similar note had been struck by Dr. Clarence Bouma in a convention address the previous year. In this speech be argued that a church and a school need a different theoretical basis. He said:

> The three Forms of Unity are not an adequate platform for our Christian school movement. They are ecclesiastical standards and as such I prize them highly, but they are not intended to be and should not be looked upon as an adequate platform for the Christian school movement.... For church life and theology a confessional basis is unavoidable and essential. Not so for the Christian School movement. Such a basis is in our Reformed principles (NUCS *Yearbook,* 1925, p. 121*).*

The more precise meaning of these "Reformed principles" and their bearing on educational theory will be told in a later section. The important point here is the insistence that these "Reformed principles" are not identical with the church creeds, and that a school can be Christian without being a church school.

The seriousness of the National Union in attempting to establish a Christian school system free of the church is indicated by its early plans to set up a Normal School for the training of teachers. Although the Christian Reformed Church had a college for training of ministers at the time, the attempt was made to set up a separate school under the auspices of the National Union. The failure to realize this goal was a failure in establishing independence from the Christian Reformed Church. Now the majority of the teachers in the Calvinistic school system are trained at Calvin College, which is owned and operated by the church. This fact has in many subtle ways made loyalty to the school and loyalty to the Christian Reformed Church synonymous, and has lent a definite denominational coloring to a school system that is not in principle intended to be limited to that denomination.

Thus in many ways the Christian Reformed Church as an ecclesiastical institution continues to dominate the school many years after she officially renounced control of it and even changed her church order to conform to this renunciation. At its best the present school movement exhibits both the spirit and purpose of the Kuyperian tradition, and at its worst it still represents a training school for the maintenance of loyalty to the Christian Reformed Church on the part of the Christian Reformed children who make up the vast majority of its students.

There are indications that the school movement itself is still not clearly unified in belief concerning its legitimate connection with this one denomination. At the NUCS convention of 1957 the problem was again raised for discussion. There was in evidence a real desire on the part of both the school and the church (a number of ministers were participants) for some kind of mutual support. There was a very real desire to clarify the relationship between the two, but no definite answer appeared out of the discussion. One convention speaker struck a parochial note by suggesting that there was nothing wrong in principle with church control of the school, and that if the financial or moral need were great enough, the schools should again become parochial. This note was not again publicly sounded, and in the report of the sectional meetings to the convention, the generalization was made that the church has a redemptive function while the school has a cultural function. The relationship was then defined in terms of cooperation rather than in terms of control.

A member of the Reformed Church who has written a doctoral dissertation on the Christian School has noted recently that the issue is still in doubt:

> I note the current trend to bind the Christian schools closer to the churches. Also the suggestion has been made that teachers sign the Forms of Unity. The value of this movement in the light of the historic principle of the separation of the Christian school society from the church is questionable. Should not the separation of the two be kept, rather than narrowed? I believe in many cases the accusation of parochialism in some of the Christian schools is justifiable.[16]

In concluding this section on the relationship between the school and the church one might say that although the school had its historical and theoretical roots in the church as an institution, its future lies in avoiding any greater dependence upon denominational creeds for its theory. To the extent that the parochial spirit still persists in the minds of the people who support the school, the school is in danger of becoming -- or remaining -- an instrument for five-days-a-week church extension work. In this capacity it has little to say to the American educational world that has not been said better by the Roman Catholic parochial system. As a parochial

system, whether in name or only in spirit, it will also have difficulty leading the way for other Protestant groups. It will continue to have difficulty in getting other Protestants to join with and strengthen the Christian School. In order to bring a distinctive witness the Calvinistic school system must be free to fulfill its own calling, free from any church, free from the state, free to be a school first, last, and always.

I now turn to a consideration of the second most influential factor in the shaping of the school, the root that has sustained it in the past and promises to become the main taproot.

The School System and the Bible: Its Religious Roots

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. 131ff.)

THE BIBLE AND SCHOOL "CREEDS"

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 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 leamer.[17] 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 reader need not be reminded that this failure to root the school consistently in either church creeds or "educational creeds" based on the Bible is just another instance of the ambiguous relationship between the Christian Reformed Church and the Calvinistic school movement which was described previously. It can also be easily seen that this difference of opinion concerning the proper source of theory for the Christian school reaches back to the conflicting movements of another culture and country which were discussed earlier. This

particular instance of confusion over the way in which the Bible affects educational theory is but one instance of the broader confusion within the system in regard to its theoretical foundations.

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.[18] Since many of these tributes to the Bible as the sole source of educational principles occur in the context of inspirational speeches and hortatory articles about Christian education, they perhaps cannot be considered to be the best and most accurate statement on the matter of the role of the Bible in determining theory.

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."[19] 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.[20]

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 .[21]

He is also quoted as saying that psychology and sociology constitute the chief determiners of method.[22] 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.

THE BIBLE AS ACADEMIC SUBJECT

There are also other ways in which this school system has shown that it is rooted in the Bible. The curriculum of the typical school in this system has in it systematic training in Bible knowledge and the implications of Scriptural teachings for life. The precise way in which the Bible should be treated in the day school has not always been clearly enough defined to distinguish the day school from the Sunday school or from the catechism class. This is not surprising, because it is simply another illustration of the larger unsettled question of the relation of the school to the church.

There is in the tradition a serious attempt to deal with the problem of the proper content and approach for the teaching of the Bible as an academic subject in the day school. just a few years after the formal organization of the NUCS, a yearly convention was devoted to the theme of "The Bible and Christian Education." An article prepared by the Executive Committee of the Board of the Union set forth a suggested plan for correlating the activities of the various agencies in the teaching of the Bible. Deploring the tendency to duplicate activity and content in the Sunday school, the catechism class, and the Christian day school, the committee suggested a "proper division of labor." Basing its contention on the "diversified characters of the institutions themselves," it held that insofar as the Bible narrative is used in catechetical instruction, those Biblical passages should be selected which "lend themselves for indoctrinating the youth and which tend to prepare them for intelligent church membership" (NUCS *Yearbook, 1925, p. 16).*

They continued by suggesting "that the Sunday School . . . seek to develop the devotional phase of life." Thus "those passages of the Bible should be selected which particularly bring out this phase of life." In distinction from Sunday school and the catechism class the day school "finds its chief objective in preparing the pupils for Christian participation in life in its most general aspects ... ; it should be the task of the Christian day school to cover the Bible in a systematic way with special emphasis upon its application to the practical phases of life."[23]

At the same convention a minister held that chief use of the Bible in the day school was simply inspirational. After giving an extensive survey of all the great writers, painters, artists, and statesmen who had been inspired to do great things by the Bible, he advocated that this aspect of the Bible be what the day school emphasize.[24]

Since that time no clearcut position on the matter of the nature and content of Bible as an academic subject has been expressed. Actual practices vary considerably. Materials published by the National Union suggest something of the following pattern of content: single Bible stories in the early grades; Bible history, perhaps including the life of Christ, in the middle grades; and church history and Reformed doctrine courses in the upper grades. There is little written evidence that recent supporters of the school have been greatly concerned over the "proper division of labor" between the home, the school, and the church on this matter. The failure of the school system to make clear how it differs from the church in its objectives in teaching Bible is but a further instance of the school's dependence upon the churches for its theory. While there have been in the traditions of the school lines of demarcation laid down, they have not been followed with any consistency.

THE BIBLE AND OTHER SUBJECTS

Much more could be said about the role of the Bible in the curriculum of this school, as well as about its role in the construction of educational theory, but in a limited paper such as this,

space permits discussion of only one more concept. In any school system which attempts to incorporate the Bible into its curriculum, there arise at least two dangers, and each of these is a real threat to the distinctiveness of the Calvinistic school movement. One danger is that when Bible is included as a course in the curriculum, it remains solely an *addition* without being integrated with any of the rest of the curriculum. This results in a dualism between religion and the rest of life, between Bible and the rest of the curriculum. Such a dualism may be said to obtain in the public school, where religion must be taken up as a separate social phenomenon which affects only the personal emotional life of the student. There has been a fear that this could be the fate of Bible studies in the Calvinistic school. One Christian educator pointed up the problem of integration when he said:

> I can conceive of a school being not a Christian school at all with a strong Bible Department in it, and I can conceive of a Christian school, being a very good one, too, without a Bible Department in it . . . So my suggestion is that we try the program of integration, but that we integrate not around the Bible department or a Bible course, but around a philosophy that is thoroughly God-like, God-permeated in character."[25]

This emphasizes the point that it is not simply Bible study alongside study of other areas, but Bible study integrated with study of other areas that makes education Christian.

The second danger, fully as great, is that the Bible will dominate the curriculum in the sense that study in all areas of human knowledge is engaged in primarily for the purpose of illustrating and reinforcing the validity of Biblical truths rather than for seeking out new truths. This may be said to be the case in some Fundamentalist schools. Then literature become a series of illustrations of God's love, or man's sin, or the disastrous consequences of man's rejection of religion, and so forth. Scientific findings then are utilized for their ability to exhibit that the Bible after all does have accurate facts about the physical universe. In its extreme form this view of education holds that the Bible alone contains all the truth that man needs to know, and that the Christian engages in study only to reinforce this conviction.

The Calvinistic school system can succumb to neither of these temptations without losing its distinctiveness. It is firmly rooted in the Bible, but the kind of educational theory derived from the Bible and the kind of integration achieved between it and other areas of study will determine whether or not the school system remains consistent with its desire to be different not only from public education and parochial education, but also from Fundamentalist education. The proper integration of the Bible with the curriculum is not an easy matter, but the Calvinistic tradition of a general and special revelation as exemplified in the writings of Herman Bavinck offers a theoretical basis for such integration.[26] In this dual conception of revelation God is said to speak not only through His Word but also through the world, and each of these is a legitimate and valid source of truth about God and man.[27] The single voice with which both are held to speak prevents the dualism between religion and other areas of study so typical of public education, and the distinction between them prevents the complete domination of the one over the other so typical of some Fundamentalist education. This view holds with John Henry Newman, the British educator of the last century, that "religious truth is not only a portion, but a condition of general knowledge," and that science and religion in fruitful interaction produce that truth.

If space permitted, evidence could be gathered from the literature to show that both these dangers exist in the Calvinistic school system. Here I have given only what seemed to be the

middle course demanded by at least one aspect of the tradition. While illustration of other ideas about the role of the Bible in the curriculum, as well as its general role in the formulation of educational theory, would be interesting, it would only serve to re-illustrate those cross-currents of thought in the school system which have been outlined in previous sections.

In summarizing this section it might be said that over the years there has been no lessening of the desire that the school be firmly rooted in the Bible. Although the influence of the church has fluctuated, and although the influence of the Netherlands has decreased, there is every indication that the Word remains as strong as ever in its influence on the movement. In spite of differing interpretations as to its best shape and form, this root of the school has remained sturdy and strong. The real job remaining here, it seems to this writer, is the translation of biblical principles into positions taken on educational questions. This series of positions, along with their biblical support, would then be the "creed" of the Calvinistic school.

* * * *

I have pointed out that the Calvinistic school system of today cannot be rightly understood except in terms of its unique religious and intellectual tradition. I have attempted to give a brief sketch of each of the major influences that have played upon and affected the school system. I have suggested that it has its roots in an intellectual tradition, namely Calvinism, a cultural tradition, namely, that of the Netherlands, an ecclesiastical tradition, namely, the Christian Reformed Church, and a religious tradition, namely, the Bible. It is important to remember that these traditions have not operated independently of each other, but have interacted with each other and blended their influences on the school. While the most underlying and all-pervasive influence on its theory has probably been that of Calvinism, this has been filtered through other traditions and movements, producing a system built on a composite of both complementary and conflicting foundations.

In these articles the emphasis has been placed upon the conflicts and confusions in the theoretical undergirding of the school. The reasons for this emphasis are twofold. One reason is that space forbids a treatment of all facets of the educational thought of this school; one must always be selective in discussing any movement such as this. The other, and more important, reason is that it is the confusion and conflicts in the realm of theory that keep the school from being as effective, and from being as strong a witness as it could be. It is this area that now calls for the closest attention of parents and educators if the school is to grow and mature.

A discussion of the theoretical foundations of this school movement would not be complete without some attention to still another influence in the life and thought of the school. I turn to a consideration of the final root to be examined.

The School System and American Democracy: Its New Cultural Roots

The Calvinistic school system in America has now existed for over a century. It was begun and maintained by people who were essentially immigrants, newcomers to America with its democratic social patterns. The first generation of supporters of this school resisted Americanization and looked to the Netherlands for guidance and leadership in education. Since then, the Netherlands influence has inevitably waned and has been lost on the second and third

generation now supporting school system. This shriveling of one of the roots of the school system naturally would cause some uneasiness and lack of direction. However, even the most nostalgic have realized that here in America there are relationships existing between the church and state, and the state and the school, that do not exist in the Netherlands. This realization of cultural differences has caused the school systems of the two countries to drift apart, and there is now very little interchange of ideas between the two.

This shriveling.of one root was temporarily compensated for by a strengthening of another root: the one reaching into the Christian Reformed Church. For many years the school drew - to some extent it still draws - on the church for its theoretical justification. We have already noted the forces that prevented this root from becoming permanently attached to the school system.

The weakening of these two influences on theory of the school naturally produced a feeling for the need of new roots, roots that were suitable for the climate and situation here in America. Even in the early days of the movement there was a realization that the Calvinistic school needed to adapt itself to the American social and educational scene if it was to survive. A convention speaker of over thirty years ago put it well in these words:

> Our schools must become thoroughly American. Unless we strip our schools of that which smacks of foreign soil, our schools will have no appeal for the rising American generations. To interest Americans our schools must be American. The school must be organized along American lines; its work must be conducted in the American spirit; its methods must be those of America *(NUCS Yearbook,* 1923-24, p. 152).

This early expression - others could be cited - shows that the desire for cultural relevance was sincere and deeply seated. The leaders and educators, if not all of the people, wanted the schools to be busy striking roots in America.

THE AGE OF INDIFFERENCE

After the initial concern for the strengthening of roots in American soil, there is a strange silence on this matter in the literature. For almost two decades (roughly *1925-45)* there was little talk about cultural relevance. There was little concern and discussion about what the school must do in American democracy that it bad not done in the Netherlands. While the public school literature of this period is full of discussions of the implications for education of democracy and the democratic spirit, the Calvinistic school seems not to have been much concerned about these theoretical matters.

If space permitted, one might speculate about the causes for this indifference to cultural relevance. One might speculate about the extent to which parochialism, or fear of worldliness, or the immigrant spirit, or concern with the more practical matters of building and staffing schools was the chief reason for this lack of concern. An adequate defense of any of these judgments about why there was no attempt in these years to build a philosophy of education oriented to the American social scene would call for analysis and documentation that would go beyond the scope of this essay.

Without offering the evidence to support the judgment, I would say that the initial enthusiasm for relating the school to American democracy was tempered by the realization that loss of

distinctiveness is often the price for cultural adaptation. There was a fear that the distinctiveness of the school system would be swallowed up in the process. There was a realization that whereas there was danger in isolationism and separatism, there was also danger in cultural absorption. The leaders realized that time and acclimatization have a way of emptying content from old slogans and passwords; they knew that the intellectual vacuum thus created was perfect for the unwitting absorption into the school of values antithetical to those in the school's tradition. For these reasons the school's roots in American democracy grew not at all for twenty years, and even now they are small and growth is tentative.

It is important to note that this slowness in adjusting to a new cultural context is not due to absence in the theory of the need for cultural relevance. While the separatistic theory behind the movement does favor a continued isolation of the student from cultural forces in American life, and therefore favors education that is purged of all opposing opinions and points of view, there is stronger and more powerful theory to support an education that is committed to a searching analysis of all points of view. This latter point of view is in evidence in much of the textbook program of the National Union. A textbook program undertaken by a small group who are protesting against the texts in common use in other schools might easily operate on the principle of exclusion; the textbooks could try to make a given subject area Christian by excluding from their pages all beliefs, arguments, evidence, or literature that do not support the views regarded as desirable. The representatives of the National Union have always insisted that the idea behind separate textbooks is not that of closing out from the student's mind everything with which Calvinists do not agree. The idea is simply to provide criticism and analysis of those opposing views.[28] In the same vein a supporter of this school system argued that in order for the choice for Christianity on the part of the student to be meaningful, he must be thoroughly acquainted with the alternatives to Christianity as a way of life. The Christian school he regarded as the proper place for the presentation of such alternatives.[29]

Even though there is some evidence that the theory behind the school movement opposes cultural separatism and withdrawal, there is not even today any body of literature which attempts to deal with the influence of democratic ideas on education. There is next to nothing in the way of a sociology of education for the Calvinistic school, even though the literature on this matter for the public school is voluminous. The distinctive role the Calvinistic school can play in American democracy, and what democratic values are consistent with the intellectual and religious tradition of this school: these are relatively unexplored areas and undeveloped roots.

THE AGE OF CONCERN

Within the last decade the literature of the movement has contained signs of an increasing awareness that the school needs more roots, needs more theoretical foundation than it has had in the past. While need for cultural relevance is not prominent in this growing awareness, any assessment of theory should lead to an examination of the present cultural roots of the school. Recent active interest in theory is evident from the regularity with which calls for statements of philosophy of education have come from various sources.[30] This interest led the NUSC in 1950 to appoint a committee to produce a statement of a philosophy of education for the school system. Two different statements by Calvin College professors of education have since then been distributed by the National Union, but neither of them has thus far captured the attention and loyalties of the typical teacher or parent. Neither of them has been discussed to any extent in

the literature, nor has the typical principal or teacher made much use of them in setting up or altering major educational policies in the schools.

The failure of these statements of the philosophy of education of the Calvinistic school is not due so much to any defect in the statements as it is due to a lack of underlying agreement in the system as to what is involved in making this school distinctive. An adequate statement of this kind can be made only when there is underlying community of belief and persuasion in terms of which the statement can be made. At this point, this unified outlook on Christian education is not so much a given to be set down in writing as it is a goal to be achieved.

There is some further evidence within the last decade that those within the school system are concerned about theory and about the distinctiveness of their school system. The publication of textbooks, class manuals, and curriculum guides by the National Union indicates that they see that their point of view needs concrete expression in terms of curriculum content and practices. They see their school as both related to and distinct from the public school and its cultural emphases and values. Discussion and evaluation of these publications is carried on in both the *Christian Home and School* magazine and in various teacher's institutes and conventions. Such discussions give evidence of continuing and even increasing concern about the theory underlying the Calvinistic school movement.

Most significant of recent attempts in this area are the *Pilot Series in Literature* (Book 1, 1957; Book 11, 1959) and *Under God* (1962), a civics text by William Hendricks, both published by the NUCS. In both of these there is evidence that the instructional raw materials of the areas of literature and government for the junior high have been reorganized with a view to achieving objectives that are explicitly Christian.

Serious attempts have also been made to use Biblical concepts in an appraisal of intellectual disciplines such as psychology and philosophy.[31] Although much needs to be done, there is a start toward recognizing the role of these disciplines in formulating theory for the Calvinistic school.

Examination of the role of the school in a democracy in editorials of the *Christian Home and School* magazine (e.g., January, 1959), as well as analysis of its relation to the state as an institution, are valuable contributions to the literature.[32] Consistent with this awakened concern for our cultural relevance is the decision of the NUCS at its 1962 convention to go on record as declaring that the Christian school has a right to government aid.

Such are the few but heartening signs that the school is coming of age, that it is looking to its foundations. It is just beginning to size up both itself and the culture in which it exists. If this activity and concern continues for the next decade, those years might well become the "Age of Cultural Relevance."

SUMMING UP

It has not been my intention to give the impression that the Calvinistic school movement is adrift or that it is without theoretical rootage. To say that the theoretical foundations of this school system are undergoing changes because of the shrinkage of old roots is not to say that there is not a constant element. There has been such a constant element, which has given and can

continue to give stability to the educational system. Both the Bible and the world and life view of Calvinism remain to guide the school in its development of new roots in a new culture and in new intellectual disciplines.

Although evidence could be given to show that in the present-day movement there are both forces which tend to encourage the development of new roots, and forces which tend to make the school cling to and strengthen old roots, such evidence would be simply repetitions of what has been written above. It should be sufficient to summarize here by repeating that an all-pervasive dual influence has played upon the school system since its birth in the Christian Reformed Church over a hundred years ago. This dual emphasis, stemming from two different interpretations of Calvinism, has blurred the outlines of the theory behind the system. This blurring of principles governing school policies has made the school susceptible to misunderstanding by those outside the system. On the one hand, it has often appeared to be the product of a narrow and exclusivistic sectarian and separatistic spirit, and thus identified with the lunatic fringe of Protestantism. The school is then regarded as being divisive in a culture that places a premium upon cooperation and cultural interaction. On the other hand, more serious investigation into the roots of the movement indicates that the school need not be this at all. The school system can be seen as a reflection of a religio-pbilosophical way of life which, far from being anticultural, is eager to influence society at large and to play an active role in the molding of the sociopolitical system known as American democracy. Viewed from this perspective, this educational system could be called divisive only in the sense that every minority group which speaks with conviction on any issue prevents society from achieving complete uniformity of thought and opinion. It is only when democracy is equated with uniformity of thought that such a school could be considered to be divisive and undemocratic.

Given the former view of the school system, there is no desperate need for cultural roots, no real need for determining what democratic social and political theory has to say about educational theory and practice. In this view of the school its function is served best if it remains apart from the mainstream of American culture; if it isolates its children from both the temptations and ideas of present-day America. In the latter view of the school its cultural function is not to exist in isolation and separation from American society in general and American education in particular, but to give concrete expression to alternative views of the proper and adequate theoretical foundations for education in American democracy. This the school can do effectively only if it develops deeper roots in the culture which it wishes to influence.

The Calvinistic school system cannot be said to have really decided in which direction it wishes to go on this matter. Almost three decades ago the history and the future prospects of this school system were summed up in the following judgment and question:

> Our Christian school has reached a crisis in its history. As the movement ceases to be fed by forces hailing directly from across the seas, and as many a potent watchword of the past has lost its meaning and its power, the grave question which we face today is this: Whether we can resell the idea and ideal of specifically Christian education to our people, and especially to our younger generation that has become thoroughly Americanized *(NUCS Yearbook,* 1929-30, p. 73).

That judgment still could be made today, and that question is as grave today as it was then.

End Notes

[1] See on this point particularly T. V. Smith & Edward Lindeman, *The Democratic Way of Life*, New York: Mentor Books, 1955, p.112.

[2] See H.H. Meeter's reference to this in *American Calvinism: A Survey*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1956, p.6.

[3] John T. McNeill. *History and Character of Calvinism.* New York: Oxford Univ. 1954, p. 255.

[4] Henry S. Lucas, *Netherlanders in America.* Ann Arbor: Univ. of Mich. Press, 1955, p. 602.

[5] J. A. Verlinden, "Public and Private Education in the Netherlands," *Educational Forurn, (Nov., 1957) p. 51.*

[6] See Cornelius Jaarsma's *The Educational Philosophy of Herman Barvinck*. Grand Rapids: Eerdman's, 1935.

[7] Jacob T. Hoogstra, in *American Calvinism: A Survey*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1957, p.96.

[8] See also *Acts of Synod*, 1957, pp. 455-507, for a summary of the pro and con arguments concerning the church's responsibility for general education on the college level.

[9] See, for example, the January, 1957 issue of *Torch and Trumpet,* in which an article on the Christian School is included in a series on the "Pillars of the Church."

[10] See *The Banner* editorial, "Rethinking the Relation Between Our Schools and Our Churches," Jan. 15, 1937, p. 52.

[11]For an intricate justification of this third method, see *The Banner* editorial, April 25, 1947.

[12]*Ibid*, p. 516.

[13]See "Covenant of Grace and Christian Education" by Louis Berkhof in *Fundamentals of Christian Education,* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953, for one of the better arguments for this position. See also Arnold Brink, "The Foundations of Christian Education," *Chirstian School Annual,* 1958, pp. 132-137.

[14]Berkhof*, op cit.,* p. 30.

[15]For a criticism of the separatistic view by those professing to be Calvinists see, for example, the statement of the Board of Education of the Reformed Church submitted to the General Synod of 1957, pp. 25-28, and "The Church and the Public Schools," a thirty-page statement approved by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1957, pp. 11ff.

[16]Jerome De Jong, in *American Calvinism: A Survey*, p. 85.

[17]See NUCS *Yearbook,* 1951, pp. 134ff*,* for a brief elaboration of some of these.

[18]See Jan Waterink, *Basic Concepts in Christian Pedagogy,* Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1954, pp. 37ff. for a trenchant criticism of the attempt to base education on a specific text in the Bible.

[19]T. Van Der Kooy, *The Distinctive Features* of *the Christian School,* Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1925, p. 55.

[20]C. Jaarsma, in *American Calvinism: A Survey,* Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957, p. 115.

[21]Quoted from Bayinck's *Paedagogische Beginselen, p.* 18, in C. Jaarsma, *The Educational Philosophy of Herman Bavinck,* Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1935, p. 128.

[22]*Ibid*, p. 130.

[23]NUCS *Yearbook*, 1925, p. 16.

[24]Rev. J. Althuis, "The Bible - A Source of Inspiration," NUCS *Yearbook,* 1925, p. 28.

[25] H. Schultz in *Record of Proceeding of Conference for Christian School Principals*, 1949, p. 3.

[26]For a brief exposition of this see C. Jaarsma, *Educational Philosophy* of *Herman Bavinck*, p. 62. For fuller treatment see Bavinck's *Philosophy of Revelation,* Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdnians Co., 1953.

[27]For an analysis of the educational applications of the doctrine of revelation, see Donald Oppewal, "Toward a Distinctive Curriculum," *The Reformed Journal*, VII (September, 1957).

[28] See comments of Dr. John VanBruggen, *Proceedings of Christian High School Principals' Conference,* 1949, p. 67, for an example.

[29]See speech of Dr. W. H. Jellema at the Principals' Conference of 1948, *Proceedings of Christian High School Principals' Conference,* 1948, pp. 104ff.

[30]*Ibid.* pp. 129ff. See also Henry Schultze, "Desperately Needed - A Philosophy of Education," Calvin *Forum,* (June-July, 1950), p. 238.

[31]See, for example *Basic Concepts in Christian Pedagogy* by Jan Waterink, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954; and also parts of *Fundamentals of Christian Education,* ed. by C. Jaarsma, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953.

[32]M. Snapper, "The State and the Christian Schools," *The Reformed Journal*, XI (April, 1961).