Education in the Neo-Calvinist Reformed Christian Tradition: The Meaning of a Religious Worldview and Philosophy for the Practice of Education

by

David M. Taylor

A thesis
submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Education

Department of Educational Administration, Foundations and Psychology
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba

© April, 1999

Canada

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
****
COPYRIGHT PERMISSION PAGE

Education in the Neo-Calvinist Reformed Christian Tradition:
The Meaning of a Religious Worldview and Philosophy
for the Practice of Education

BY

David M. Taylor .

A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University

of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree

of

Master of Education

DAVID M. TAYLOR © 1999

Abstract

In Canada, the schools of Christian Schools International (CSI) constitute the largest affiliated group of Christian schools other than Roman Catholic ones. These schools are founded upon the Neo-Calvinist Reformed religious philosophical tradition.

The purpose of this qualitative research project was to explore the relationship between philosophy and practice in the CSI schools. The question guiding the study was: What impact does it have to consciously educate under the direction of a religious educational philosophy? How is educational practice shaped by the adherence of the participants to their religious worldview?

Eight educators from Western Canada in the CSI school movement were interviewed regarding their perceptions of the relationship between their religious philosophy and the practice of education. The themes that were identified were considered individually and against grounded theory on the philosophy and practice of religious institutions found in Don S. Browning's *A Fundamental Practical Theology*.

It was found that education under the direction of a religious educational philosophy gives rise to practices infused with distinctive meaning that sustain the vision of the educational community. There was discovered a fairly strong propensity to frame all practice in religious terms. The philosophy was found to undergo some changes in the manner of expression as the schools faced societal change and changes in constituency. The philosophy was also found to be important to the educators in providing benchmarks or reference points to locate and direct their practice.

Acknowledgments

I wish to gratefully acknowledge the work of my supervisor, Dr. Tony Riffel for the encouragement and guidance given in the writing of this thesis. Thanks also for encouraging my attempts at Christian scholarship in the University setting. Your support has been invaluable.

I also wish to thank Dr. Jon Young, the first professor I encountered in the Masters program, for showing me a vision of educational administration with a human dimension. Thank you for serving as a committee member.

Thanks to Dr. David Creamer for stepping in to fill the gap as the external examiner on the committee. Your perspective and keen editorial eye were much appreciated.

Thanks to the Greater Winnipeg Society for Christian education, my employer, and the Board of Directors for the support in my Masters work. I must also thank the respondents in this study for their willingness to take time to answer my questions and reflect with me on what it means to educate from a Christian perspective.

To my wife Karen and my children, Naomi and Graham, I owe an enormous debt of gratitude for their patience and encouragement as Dad devoted so many hours on evenings, weekends and holidays to writing "The Thesis." Your love is my joy on this earth.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1:
Education in the Neo-Calvinist Reformed Christian Tradition:
The Meaning of a Religious Worldview and Philosophy
for the Practice of Education

The purpose of this study was to examine the practical expression of a Reformed Christian philosophy of education as it appears within the affiliated schools of Christian Schools International (hereafter abbreviated as CSI). This philosophy of education has arisen out of the Protestant Reformed worldview and philosophical paradigms named Calvinism and Neo-Calvinism after the Reformation figure John Calvin. This philosophical system serves as the "foundation for the Christian Schools International parental Christian school system in Canada" (DeMoor, 1994, p. 49). In Canada, 137 affiliated schools with 24,345 students are found in six provinces, with the greatest numbers of schools and students in Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta. Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Prince Edward Island have fewer schools and students. (See Appendix A for more detailed statistics.) "In Canada, the schools presently form the largest identifiable and cohesive group of Christian schools other than [Roman] Catholic ones" (Van Brummelen, 1986, p. 1). The number of schools in each area correlates approximately with the number and concentration of Dutch Calvinist immigrants who settled in each region, although that correlation is beginning to break down since the schools now serve a broad range of church denominations other than the founding Christian Reformed denomination.

Constitutionally, the schools affiliated under the Christian Schools International umbrella are inter-denominational. They are owned and operated by parental societies that entrust the operation of the school to an elected board of directors. These societies do not typically receive funding

from churches or denominations and the parents sending children to the schools are not necessarily or primarily from the founding denomination or from any particular ethnic group. Despite the decreasing representation (proportionally) by people who would call themselves Reformed, a Reformed philosophy of education continues to be espoused within the schools.

According to Reformed philosophy, each institution in culture is sovereign in its own sphere of influence. In the life of the child, the home, the school and the church are seen as existing in separate yet overlapping spheres of responsibility, each one having a role to play but no one institution having control within the sphere of another. Accordingly, governance of the schools is carried out by the parents through an elected board of directors not by the church.

In recent years some CSI schools have rewritten their constitutional documents to remove references to specific church creeds that tended to limit enrollment and hiring practices on a denominational basis. This was done to adjust the constitutions to changes in practice that had, in some cases, happened decades earlier. The constitutional documents have been rewritten to maintain a Reformed philosophical character without depending upon specific Christian Reformed denominational creeds. The transition has been described as a transition from capital "R" Reformed to small "r" reformed.

At the same time that the constitutions of some of the schools in the CSI tradition are being changed to reflect practice, there is a concern that some changes in practice have pulled the schools *too* far away from their Reformed roots. As Douglas Wilson put it, the practice of these schools is in danger of becoming a "baptized secularism" (cited in VanderArk, 1995, p. 1), a practice in which some religion is tacked on to secular academic studies rather than a practice in which a living faith and a way of life is *integral* to all areas of life

and learning. The educators interviewed for this study concern themselves very much with making their Christian practice more than an "icing on the cake" practice. They are very reflective and intentional about applying Reformed educational philosophy to classroom practice.

The question that came to mind as I considered this affiliated group of schools and their espoused philosophy, was, "What difference does it really make?" or better, "What impact does it have?" to consciously educate under the direction of a religious educational philosophy. How is educational practice shaped by the adherence of the participants to their religious worldview?

The Methodology

To study the practice of these schools I interviewed eight people from CSI Reformed Christian schools. Each participant was provided with the same questions to begin the dialogue. Where practical and in coincidence with my travels, I interviewed participants in person. The two education coordinators in the study were interviewed face-to-face. Several participants felt inclined to respond to the interview questions in writing. I distributed the questions and a floppy disk to four participants and they returned their responses in a word-processor file. I corresponded by e-mail with one participant and by fax with another. The telephone was used for questions of clarification when necessary.

Each district of Christian Schools International appoints education coordinators to act as consultants in educational matters such as curricula and philosophy. These coordinators have a special understanding of the relationship between philosophy and practice since much of their work is related to the implementation of Christian curricula in the schools. I

interviewed two Western Canadian education coordinators—one from the prairie provinces and one from British Columbia.

In addition to the horizontal sample of education coordinators, a vertical sample from education coordinator, to principal, to classroom teacher, within regions, shed further light on the practice of the schools. Principals and teachers were randomly selected from staff listings. One teacher was randomly selected from schools in the western provinces and asked if (s)he would be willing to participate in such a study. One administrator from each school was selected in the same fashion. All four curriculum coordinators were asked if they would be willing to participate. The affirmative response was greater than anticipated so some narrowing of the field was done to ensure gender representation and balanced representation between the prairie province district and the B. C. district.

Table 1: Representation of Participants

	British Columbia	Prairie
Coordinator	1	1
Principal	2	2
Teacher	1	1

I thought that most teachers in the classroom would be more practically and not as philosophically oriented as the principals or education coordinators. However, the teachers were quite able to articulate their philosophy and its relationship to their practice. In hindsight, it is now apparent that some sifting of participants probably occurred since willingness to participate in the study was likely dependent upon familiarity with the topic of Reformed Christian educational philosophy and practice. It is quite probable that those who did not have a high degree of comfort commenting on the type of questions I posed, declined to participate in the study. Consequently, all but one of the respondents were from the Reformed

denominational background and all had considerable experience as teachers, administrators, or curriculum coordinators within CSI schools. This was, however, consistent with my goal to find informed participants.

The Interview Questions

1. Theme: How does worldview affect practice?

   a. To what extent does Reformed Christian educational philosophy typically influence practice in the CSI schools with which you are familiar? Can you give a sense of the degree to which the practice in "your" schools is:

      i. similar to the practice in other schools and carried out for many of the same reasons?

      ii. similar to the practice in other schools but done for different reasons? (different meaning is attached to similar practice)

      iii. different from the practice in other schools and done for different reasons?

   b. What are some of the things done in your schools that reflect a *Reformed* Christian educational philosophy?

   c. By what standard do you measure the "Reformedness" of the practice you observe or your own practice? In your opinion, are their particular expressions of Reformed educational philosophy that ought to guide the practice of CSI schools?

2. Theme: In what ways does the contemporary situation influence the practice of education in Christian schools?

   a. Are there areas in which you have difficulty working out the Reformed Christian educational philosophy in the contemporary situation and, if so, what are the factors that hinder you?

b. What changes or accommodations in practice have you made in light of those factors?

The Data Collected

The eight interviews, once transcribed, generated about eighty pages of data. Much of it was full of life and passion for the work of Reformed Christian education. A tremendous amount of information emerged from the data, sometimes in spite of the questions asked. I allowed the respondents considerable latitude in responding to the questions when I presented them. For example, those who responded in writing had this preface to the questions, "These questions are designed to get you started and focus your writing around the theme of the study. They are not necessarily meant to be answered one-at-a-time. Respond to the overall gist of the questions as a block." Allowing this degree of latitude generated responses that were quite wide ranging. This was initially problematic because I could not say, for example, that five out of eight respondents answered question 2b affirmatively. Ultimately this gave rise to a second set of questions sent to the respondents by fax (see Appendix 2). Each of those questions were used to clarify whether the general themes that came from the spontaneous responses of a minority could, in fact, be safely regarded as a general consensus.

On the positive side, the wide range of responses uncovered data that became critical to the study—material that I would not have thought to ask about and perspectives that might not have been seen, had the respondents been restricted closely to the original questions. Some of the experienced educators came at the topic from a historical perspective giving a sense of the origins, the growing pains, the arrival at the current place and their hopes and fears for where this educational movement is headed. Some respondents

were quite philosophically oriented; others struggled with practical implementation on a day to day basis.

Some of the most valuable responses were the ones in which the respondents disclosed the degree to which authentic application of philosophy was a struggle. For some the struggle seemed to be a defensive one—to hold on to what they had as the world and the constituency changed. For others the challenge was to be responsive in the midst of the change they were experiencing.

The Conceptual Framework

My examination of the practice of schools within the Reformed Christian tradition was guided by the kind of analysis suggested by Don S. Browning in *A Fundamental Practical Theology*. Browning provides a model for performing qualitative studies within religious communities. In a very real sense his framework lays out grounded theory for the study of religious organizations. It is Browning's emphasis on the *practical* dimensions of theology that makes his theory particularly helpful for understanding the practice of Christian schooling in the Reformed tradition because schools are much more about "doing education" than they are about studying theology. However, Christian schools do their work within a religious framework and against a theological and philosophical background. His essential questions are, In what ways do religious communities make sense? How do they exhibit reason? He challenges the skeptics in his readership to consider that religious communities make more sense than might be thought at first. He encourages a bit of philosophical skepticism for believers so they might step back from their practice far enough to gain a little "interpretive and critical distance" (Browning, 1991, p. 2, 135).

Browning's most important contribution in terms of conceptual framework is in his suggestion to examine the practice of religious organizations at different *levels* or in different *dimensions* of moral thinking or practical reason. To begin that process, Browning requires a deep foundation of descriptive narrative. He calls it making a description that is "rich, thick and dense" (Browning, 1991, p. 135). He characterizes the process of analyzing the narrative as "practical theology,"

> The exercises of dissection in this book are like stopping a moving picture to examine the frames one at time. Such exercises are important to clarify what goes into a good movie, but they are no substitute for assembling with artistic flourish the entire reel, coordinating it with sound and light, and letting it play. Learning to do live and moving practical theology is something like this. But even then it does not start with bits and pieces. It starts with the whole—a description of some practices and their meanings. It then gains interpretive and critical distance and gradually returns to reconstruct the whole. It does this time and time again. (Browning, 1991, p. 135)

That is the framework and the model of analysis adopted for this study—description, analysis at different levels and reconstruction. In the chapters to come that structure is an underlying organizing principle.

The descriptive portions will come from the data that has been gathered and the literature within the CSI tradition. The levels of analysis are borrowed from Browning and they need some preliminary discussion here. The three levels of greatest relevance to this study are the *tendency-need* level, the *obligational* level and the *visional* level which Browning captures succinctly when he says, "Action is... motivated by needs and tendencies; ...

ordered by principles of obligation; and given meaning by visions, narratives, and metaphors" (Browning, 1991, p. 111).

Browning typically deals with these levels of analysis in the opposite order, the first then being the "visional level." It involves looking at organizations as they present themselves at face value in the richness of their traditions. Examination at this level is done without second guessing motives. It is done with a benefit-of-the-doubt disposition because Browning maintains there *is* an embedded wisdom and reason within the traditions as they have evolved. He calls the tradition a "narrative envelope" surrounding a core of practical reason. One might say there is a particular worldview that finds expression in, and is shaped by, actions that make sense for the community. The narrative envelope carries the practical reason and the practical reason shapes the envelope by influencing the way the historic texts are interpreted (Browning, 1991, pp. 11, 49). This face-value expression of the religious community's vision is what Browning calls the "visional level."

Browning then suggests going beyond the face value presentation and examining the organization at other levels to understand it, analyze it and critique the practice. The *obligational* dimension examines the religious tradition in terms of underlying principles of obligation—principles that are not necessarily unique to religious organizations and not necessarily arising out of the tradition. Browning reminds us that noble principles guide many institutions, secular and religious. He has found that those common principles are at the heart of many religious practices but are often surrounded by visional language and framed in religious terms. When religious practice is analyzed from this perspective, the social scientist can uncover common ground for dialogue between traditions. The challenge, as

we shall see, is for the participants within the tradition to recognize the shared principles. In Chapter 4 these ideas will be more thoroughly examined.

At the next level, Browning strips away a little more of the narrative envelope and examines the practice of the schools at an even more basic level. In his conception of organizations he proposes that some motivations behind practice are not visional, not obligational, but are even more fundamental and simple. The motivation may be as straight-forward as people doing what people *tend* to do and what people *need* to do for themselves or for their communities. He calls this dimension of practice the *tendency-need* level. The religious community ought to examine it's practice to ensure that it is not inordinately seeking to meet its own needs at the expense of others. Chapter 5 deals with that dimension of practice.

Browning associates these dimensions or levels with companion social sciences to lend varying perspectives on the practice being studied. For example, he pairs psychology with his so-called *tendency-need* dimension and cultural anthropology with his *visional* dimension. Browning sets out examples for the analysis by suggesting the types of questions that each of the social sciences would bring to the study. Guided by his example, I hoped to minimize the bias that I brought to the study and to conduct a thorough examination of key practices in CSI schools.

Beyond the "levels" discussed here, Browning also contributes other key concepts by which the practice of religious organizations may be understood. In particular, he challenges the notion that the narrative envelope or worldview is a static, monolithic entity arising from a once-and-for-all and final interpretation of historic and inspired texts. Rather it is clear that religious worldviews evolve in the tension between the contemporary situation and tradition. The tension between the two is mediated in the

changing practice of the community. Through taking a new stand or by accommodating change through practice, the religious community is forced to re-examine traditional interpretations of the historic Biblical texts. In so doing, the worldview changes little by little. Browning describes this, in opposition to outmoded "theory to practice" models, as an ongoing dialectic—"practice to theory to theory-laden practice." We will see this work itself out in a fairly dramatic way in chapter 6.

The Analysis

To analyze the data, I transposed all of it into word processing documents and organized each section of each response into themes by grouping and regrouping. The larger themes that I identified were: the foundational nature of religion in education; Christian cultural transformation; the concept of a "transformational vision;" the challenge of increasing denominational diversity within the school communities; the importance of decreasing the use of "insider" clichés and jargon; fears regarding the loss of Reformed distinctiveness; the belief that what is done within CSI schools is, in some measure, different from what is done in other schools; and a propensity to frame all educational practice in religious terms.

After organizing the data thematically, I looked for the ways it intersected with Browning's work, and I looked for the story that it told. As I began to relate the story chapter by chapter, I located background literature to help set the themes within educational, sociological, historical, and religious contexts. I am thankful to the participants in the study, to my thesis committee, and to colleagues who directed me to related literature sources which I may not have discovered otherwise.

Chapter 2 aims to locate this Reformed educational tradition within the range of Christian cultural responses described by H. Richard Niebuhr in

Christ and Culture (Niebuhr, 1951). This proved to be an invaluable starting point for my understanding of where the Reformed community fits in relation to other religious and philosophical traditions.

Chapter 3 concerns itself with the philosophical description of this religious educational tradition as it is described by the participants in the study and as it appears within the literature of the tradition. It asks: How have these educators interpreted historic texts and traditions to support their endeavors? What philosophical constructs do they draw from or have they created surrounding their practice? What are the metaphors and stories they use to describe what they are doing and why they do it?

Chapters 4 and 5 cover other important aspects of the analysis which are described by Browning as the "obligational" and "tendency-need" dimensions. It is in these chapters that I attempt to gain the critical distance that Browning suggests is needed to fully understand the motivations of religious communities. Chapter 4 looks at the practice of the CSI Reformed Christian school movement and asks: What are the moral principles of *obligation* that can be identified in the practice and philosophy of the Reformed tradition and other traditions (Browning, 1991, p. 104)? Chapter 5 looks at the practice of the CSI schools and asks: Which dimensions of practice can be explained as a group of people doing what people *tend* to do? What basic human *needs* does this educational community attempt to meet with its practice?

Through these analyses, I was able to get inside the "practical reason" or "embedded wisdom" that Browning suggests is carried within religious traditions. In chapter 6 I propose an answer to the questions, Why? For what reasons does this tradition endure? What is the embedded wisdom that is carried by this religious educational tradition? Chapter 6 also explores the

practices that make Reformed schooling what it is and some of the challenges to maintaining a distinctive educational practice.

The concluding and summarizing chapter is entitled "Sustaining the Transformational Vision." It retraces the understanding reached throughout the study and answers the question, provisionally at least, what is the impact of consciously educating under the direction of a religious educational philosophy? The final chapter ponders the implications for educational practice as it discusses the significance and importance of the school movement to its participants. Recommendations are made regarding the use of the findings of the study and suggestions for further research are explored. The chapter concludes with some reflection on the processes at work in this educational community as it wrestles with change and strives to remain faithful to its religious roots.

Personal Bias

Before embarking on these aspects of the study, I believe a declaration of my bias is in order. My objectivity is somewhat compromised because I am a long-time employee of a CSI school and I have enrolled my children in a CSI school as well. I have come to identify with the aims of CSI schools and a Reformed world and life view. Consequently, I come to this study sharing the belief system of the other participants although I am not a member of a Reformed church denomination and have not been educated in CSI affiliated schools and colleges. Browning addresses this issue when he says, "our prejudices in the sense of fore-concepts should not dominate our understanding totally but should be used positively for the contrasting light they can throw on what we study... The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias" (Browning, 1991, p. 38).

While I believe that I ought to use Browning's guidelines to create the interpretive and critical distance needed for a study of this type, I confess some discomfort with Browning's dimensions of practical reason. Taken individually, they tend to dissect religious practice and reduce it to psychological and social phenomena. Furthermore, there is an implication that religious people lend meaning to their practice by surrounding it with "visions, narratives and metaphors" (Browning, 1991, p. 38) and this is true to an extent. However, from the perspective of belief, it can be argued that the reverse is true—religious practice arises from transcendent meaning. On the one hand, religious people may attempt to sanction practice by surrounding it with religious idiom and on the other hand the practice may be a befitting response to revelation. Both of these perspectives ought to be considered. Because I am inclined to believe first and ask questions later when it comes to the practice of Reformed schools, I will apply the tests suggested by Browning.

Chapter 2
Locating the Reformed Tradition:
Where Does It Fit Within the Spectrum of Christian Thought?

As I analyzed the data it became clear that the educators in this tradition identify themselves as Reformed, as Calvinists, and as Neo-Calvinists in particular. They tended to spend considerable time defining their views and comparing and contrasting them to others. I came to see that as a tendency arising out of a fairly high degree of philosophical self-awareness and reflectivity. As the data will show, they characterize their ideas and their practice as "different." There was a remarkable sense that education, as carried out within the Reformed tradition, is distinctive from what goes on in other educational traditions, religious or otherwise.

Regardless of the degree to which it is actually distinctive, Reformed educators genuinely believe there is a difference, philosophically and in practice. That belief compels them to perpetuate their schools and the umbrella organization, CSI, rather that merge with other Christian educational movements. The educators I interviewed often remarked that other Christian educational movements had a different worldview or that they saw the child differently, or they saw the relationship between the home, the school and the church differently. 'That is not who we are,' they seemed to say, 'that's not the way we see it.' For example, an education coordinator interviewed on this topic took care to distinguish CSI schools from the schools like the "Bob Jones schools" (a group of Christian schools using curricular materials produced by Bob Jones University Press). In his opinion, the "Bob Jones approach" emphasized a view in which the child is regarded as an object to be trained and in which there is an emphasis on enforcement of appropriate behaviours for all children. He contrasted the view espoused

by the Reformed tradition in which the child is seen as a unique image-bearer of God and that all children ought *not* to be treated alike. To explain why, he used another Biblical image, the image of each Christian as a member of one body, the body of Christ, each with a unique role to play, each dependent upon and depended upon by the other members of the body.

Later, we will hear a curriculum coordinator who volunteered that the practice of Christian curriculum development, as it is carried out within the Reformed tradition, distinguishes CSI from another Christian educational tradition, ACSI (Association of Christian Schools International, a separate association not originating out of the Reformed tradition). We will hear a teacher distinguish her experience in a CSI school from Mennonite schools as she perceives them, and from her experience within a Roman Catholic school. As this chapter proceeds you will see quotations from these educators in which they attempt to locate themselves within the range of responses that Christians have to culture and education.

A different view, a different *world*-view, was characteristic of many of the responses provided by educators in the Reformed tradition. 'We see it *this* way and here is why. These are the Biblical texts to support our view and this is the philosophical line that has emerged from our interpretation of the texts.' Who then are these educators? How *do* they see it?

What is meant by "Reformed" in this context?

It is important to clarify at the outset that the educators in the schools being studied describe themselves as Reformed, but that description is their short-hand for the Neo-Calvinism to which they subscribe—a relatively small branch of the larger Reformed tradition. The Reformed tradition emerged "as one of the major strands of the 16th century Protestant Reformation (the others being the Lutheran and the Anglican, with a minor

series of strands making up the so-called Radical Reformation, with the Mennonites being the largest group in this last category)" (Stackhouse, 1997).

One of the sub-groups of the Reformed strand is the Dutch Reformed denomination from the Netherlands, a descendent of which became known, in North America, as the Christian Reformed Church. From within the Dutch/Christian Reformed tradition there emerged a group of philosophers and educators who carried and developed the Neo-Calvinist thought that became expressed educationally in CSI schools. Consequently the Neo-Calvinist education tradition has had a strong ethnic dimension; the vast majority of the schools' founders were of Dutch extraction and the Dutch people of the Christian Reformed Church are typically well represented within the school population. For example, in Winnipeg's Calvin Christian School, 35% to 40% of the constituents are from the Christian Reformed Church, the largest representation by one denomination. An informal poll of other schools revealed some in Alberta with a Christian Reformed Church representation as high as 70% and others, like a few in British Columbia, with a representation as low as 10%.

One characteristic that defines the Dutch/Christian Reformed group, and distinguishes it from some other Reformed denominations, is its historic and deep commitment to Christian education from elementary school to the post-secondary level. In contrast, other Reformed groups have typically emphasized the importance of Christian scholarship at the post-secondary level.

More needs to be said in order to locate this educational movement within Christendom but, for the moment, let us say that it is a Christian, Protestant, Reformed, Neo-Calvinist educational tradition. There continues to be a significant ethnic and denominational connections since the founding

members were of Dutch heritage and were members of the Christian Reformed Church. Unless otherwise indicated, the term Reformed will be used, from this point, to stand for the Neo-Calvinist philosophical and educational tradition which is now expressed in CSI schools.

Locating the Reformed Tradition Within the Range of Christian Responses to Culture

The way in which a particular institution such as a church or a school sees itself in relation to society and culture has a significant bearing on the type of institution it will be. To characterize an institution as *Christian* is not enough because we have different ways of understanding what that means due to our experiences with institutional Christianity. When people meet a representative of a Christian institution, they are inclined to ask about the nature of the Christianity represented. It is remarkable to observe the frequency with which they ask questions that help them position the institution and its representative within their understanding. They know from experience, that there are different faces of Christianity, different ways in which Christian churches relate to the society of which they are a part. If we provisionally define Christian as "Professing or following the religion of Christ; especially, affirming the divinity of Christ," (Funk & Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary, 1978) we are still left with a wide range of possibilities, some of which strain the definition considerably.

Just as people have these questions to ask, "Christian" people have answers to provide. They have a narrative that says, 'this is the kind of Christian I am' or 'this is the kind of organization I represent.' This kind of description is, as Browning would call it, a description of the narrative envelope—the "narratives and metaphors that a community tells to state and justify its identity" (Browning, 1991, p. 121).

Each of the educators I interviewed had their own sense of what it meant to be Reformed in education and were careful to express it early in our discussions. For example, a teacher framed it this way:

> Our worldview permeates our curriculum. This [teaching in a CSI school] was a new experience for me. In the Catholic school (and I hear the Mennonite school here is the same) I did not need to concern myself with teaching "French from a Biblical perspective." This was done in the "religion" class. I have come to understand the sacramentality of all of life, and to try and apply it in daily practice.

A curriculum coordinator said:

> Anyone who takes all of scripture seriously and tries to make "scriptural norms take cultural forms," I guess I would call Reformed.

A principal articulated it this way:

> Every Christian worldview has its strengths and weaknesses. I think that a strength of the Reformed worldview is its applicability to education. This is particularly true of those versions of the Reformed worldview which emphasize Christian cultural transformation (e.g. the Dutch Kuyperian and Neo-Calvinist movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries). Reformed educators in the transformational tradition have emphasized the foundational nature of religion in human life. In place of sacred/secular dualism, they opened all of life to Christian response. They pointed to a narrative of history which gave depth and resonance to the Christian life: God created the world, man fell into sin, and Christ came to redeem the world. They exposed the extent

of sin's effects, including its effects in institutions, but also proclaimed a high view of creation. According to it, the whole world, both natural and cultural, is God's creation, is rich in meaning, and is held together in Christ. These themes—and others, I'm sure—provided a rich visionary context for the development of an educational movement. It offers a way of seeing our task as educators and as Christians which has integrity and depth.

Through the second round of questions, I asked the respondents if these definitions, taken together, captured the essence of their understanding of what it meant to be Reformed in education. The second round respondents all answered affirmatively.

The responses indicate a view of education and culture that is not anti-cultural as some Christian conservative responses might be characterized. Neither would it likely be characterized as a "liberal" view because of the fairly literal treatment of religious ideas. As I reflected on this, it became increasingly important for me to understand the range of ways in which Christians relate to culture and to position this Reformed Christian educational community within that range.

To describe the variety of Christian responses to culture, the work of H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* came highly recommended. Niebuhr identifies five general historical Christian understandings of the relationship between Christianity and culture. As Niebuhr explains, there is some overlap between his broad categories but there are, nevertheless, identifiable and different Christian responses to culture. In this context, it is fitting to characterize the different Christian groups on their response to culture, since education is such a "cultural" enterprise. So, rather than characterizing along

theological lines, Niebuhr will help to position the Reformed Neo-Calvinist thinkers within the range of Christian cultural response.

Christ Against Culture

The first group identified by Niebuhr is one that understands the relationship between Christianity and culture as an antagonistic one. (Niebuhr, 1951, p. 40). In Niebuhr's analysis, Tertullian[1] and Tolstoy represent this "Christ Against Culture" point of view. They, and various groups following this pattern, see the Christian position in opposition to human society because, in their view, it is in culture that sin chiefly resides and through society that sin is transmitted (Niebuhr, 1951, p. 52). Christians with this view are often characterized by withdrawal from society, its arts, politics, the military establishment and especially its philosophy. Niebuhr writes of Tertullian:

> He has no sympathy with the efforts of some Christians of his time to point out positive connections between their faith and the ideas of the Greek philosophers. "Away," he exclaims, "with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic and dialectic composition. We want not curious disputation after possessing Jesus Christ... With our faith we desire no further belief." (Niebuhr, 1951, p. 54)

In looking for more contemporary examples of groups which practice withdrawal from society, certain segments of the Anabaptist community come to mind, segments which actually or effectively isolated themselves

---

[1] Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus was born in Carthage around 155 and died after 220. He was one of the greatest Western theologians and writers of Christian antiquity. Through his writings a witness to the doctrine and discipline of the early church in belief and worship is preserved. An advocate in the law courts in Rome, Tertullian converted to Christianity around 193. About 207 he broke with the church and joined the Montanists in Africa. Soon after, however, he broke with them and formed his own party, known as the Tertullianists. (http://listserv.american.edu/catholic/church/fathers/tertullian/tertullian.html)

from the evils of the world. The separate educational system of the Amish and the Hutterites reflects their view of the corrupting influence of culture and society.[2]

How does the CSI educational movement compare to the "Christ Against Culture" type of Christianity? By simply noting the existence of these "private" schools one might be inclined to categorize the CSI schools as separate for the purpose of withdrawal or segregation. Examples of this type of critique of religious schools are not hard to find (Miller, 1988; Shapiro, 1986). In practice, it is apparent that some of the parents enrolling their children are motivated by a desire to segregate them from perceived evils in the world. However, in my interviews with teachers, administrators and education coordinators in CSI schools, there was a consistent rejection of that motivation as either a primary or a legitimate reason for the existence of the schools. In fact, CSI educators have been known to lament that some parents enroll their children for the "wrong" reasons—reasons like segregation. Here are some representative excerpts to illustrate the point. One principal said:

> I'm afraid that the school, in the long run, will become a protective hot
> house from the world rather than a preparatory institution teaching the
> students *how* to live in the world.

Another principal put it this way:

> Schools in the conservative evangelical tradition sometimes use language
> similar to transformational schools ("Christianity in all areas of life") but
> the meaning they give to those words is not so much a call to evaluate

---

[2] It should be added that other segments of the Anabaptist community have evolved a worldview and educational practice that is almost a polar opposite. Some schools within the Mennonite tradition reflect a model of education emphasizing high academic standards and competitive preparation for participation in society through higher education.

and transform as it is a call to protect children from worldly influences and to inculcate a high standard of personal morality in all situations.

In the second round of questioning, these two quotations were presented to all the respondents. Those replying to the second round of questions indicated that they shared the perspectives presented in the quotations. (Some respondents did qualify their answers with additional comments that are relevant to other parts of this study.) From the perspective of the respondents and philosophically speaking, the CSI educational community cannot be identified with the "Christ Against Culture" stance. As we shall see later, the Reformed orientation toward culture inspires an educational philosophy in which culture is to be engaged on different terms.

The Christ of Culture

The second group of Christians identified by Niebuhr, at the opposite extreme from the "Christ Against Culture" group, is characterized by a stance in which a "fundamental *agreement* between Christ and culture" (Niebuhr, 1951, p. 41) is promoted. Niebuhr summarizes this approach thus:

In them Jesus often appears as a great hero of human cultural history; his

life and teachings are regarded as the greatest human achievement; in him,

it is believed, the aspirations of men toward their values are brought to

the point of culmination; he confirms what is best in the past, and guides

the process of civilization to its proper goal. Moreover, he is a part of

culture in the sense that he himself is part of the social heritage that must

be transmitted and conserved. (Niebuhr, 1951, p. 41)

In modern history this type is well-known, since for generations it has

been dominant in a large section of Protestantism. Inadequately defined

by the use of such terms as "liberal" and "liberalism," it is more aptly named Culture-Protestantism; but appearances of the type have not been confined to the modern world nor to the churches of the Reformation. (Niebuhr, 1951, p. 84)

John Locke, Immanuel Kant, and Thomas Jefferson are categorized within this group—philosophers who emphasized *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (a work by John Locke who also had much to say about the way in which education should be conducted) and thinkers who elevated reason far above revelation in their synthesis of Christ and culture (Niebuhr, 1951, p. 91). An earlier representative of this group is Peter Abélard:[3]

> Jesus Christ has become for Abélard the great moral teacher who "in all that he did in the flesh... had the intention of our instruction," doing in a higher degree what Socrates and Plato had done before him. Of [these] philosophers he says that "in their care for the state and its citizens, ... in life and doctrine, they give evidence of an evangelic and apostolic perfection and come little or nothing short of the Christian religion. They are, in fact, joined to us by this common zeal for moral achievement." Such a remark is revelatory not only of a broad and charitable spirit toward non-Christians, but, more significantly, of a peculiar understanding of the gospel, markedly different surely from that of the radical [Christ Against Culture] Christians. (Niebuhr, 1951, p. 90)

---

[3] Abelard, Peter (1079-1142?), French philosopher and theologian, whose fame as a teacher made him one of the most celebrated figures of the 12th century. Abelard's teachings emphasized dialectical discussion, foreshadowing Italian philosopher Saint Thomas Aquinas. In Sic et Non (1123?) he asserted that truth must be attained by carefully weighing all sides of any issue. He also foreshadowed the later theological reliance on the works of Aristotle. (http://encarta.msn.com/)

What Abélard is saying is also significantly different from an Augustine's appropriation of the philosophy of Socrates and Plato for the use of Christianity (Augustine of Hippo, n.d., Book 2 Ch. 40). Niebuhr analyses the "Christ of Culture" approach as an accommodation of "Christ to culture while selecting from culture what conforms most readily to Christ" (Niebuhr, 1951, p. 94). "This position often typifies schools with roots in Anglicanism" (Van Brummelen, 1998, p. 12).

The Reformed philosophy underpinning CSI schools is much closer to Augustine than Locke or Abélard. There is, however, at least one significant point of intersection between the philosophy underlying CSI schools and the "Christ of Culture" viewpoint. From the Neo-Calvinist heritage of the CSI schools comes the notion that one dimension of living obediently as Christians is "to do the world's work in cultural affirmation and transformation" (Beversluis, 1982, p. 4).

One respondent, an education coordinator, felt that, among Christian schools, the schools of the Reformed tradition were unique in being more "culturally engaging" than many other Protestant Christian schools. He also pointed out that Reformed education places emphasis on the reflective use of resources as a Biblically mandated obligation to be caretakers of creation. In the second round of interviews I checked the perceptions of the other respondents and they agreed that they would characterize CSI schools as unique among Protestant Christian schools for those reasons. We have already heard a principal describe CSI schools as schools "which emphasize Christian cultural transformation." We have also heard another curriculum coordinator say that Reformed people, take all of scripture seriously and try to make "scriptural norms take cultural forms."

These Reformed educators consistently distinguished themselves from those who tended to be "other-worldly" and disconnected from the cultural and ecological concerns of society. This clearly places the CSI schools outside the "Christ Against Culture" point of view but not necessarily at the polar extreme as expressed in the "Christ of Culture" perspective.

If the CSI schools are not to be found near the extremes, is there a definable middle ground in which they can be situated? Niebuhr identifies three more groups that seek "to maintain the great differences between [Christ and culture and undertake] to hold them together in some unity" (Niebuhr, 1951, p. 41).

Christ Above Culture

This group understands Christ's relation to culture somewhat as the Christians of the "Christ of Culture" group do:

> He is the fulfillment of cultural aspirations and the restorer of institutions of true society. Yet there is in him something that neither arises out of culture nor contributes directly to it. He is discontinuous as well as continuous with the social life and its culture. The latter, indeed, leads men to Christ, yet only in so preliminary a fashion that a great leap is necessary if men are to reach him or, better, true culture is not possible unless beyond all human achievement, all human search for values, all human society, Christ enters into life from above with gifts which human aspiration has not envisioned and which human effort cannot attain unless he relates men to a supernatural society and a new value-center. (Niebuhr, 1951, p. 42).

Within this synthesis of nature and grace, the church is responsible to directly supervise nature and cultural life (DeMoor, 1994, p. 47); the church "is

able to exorcise to some extent the evil of the natural realm and is able to bring the state and other social institutions under its wing, baptizing them as much as possible into Christ" (Niebuhr, 1951, p. 136). According to Niebuhr, this group is represented by Thomas Aquinas[4] and his followers. This synthesis is different from the philosophy underlying CSI schools. Although there must be recognition of some common ground shared between the Thomistic and the Neo-Calvinist perspective, there is a consciously maintained philosophical distance between the views. As seen by Reformed Neo-Calvinist thinkers, the Thomistic synthesis of faith and reason is too dualistic in the way that it regards the natural realm as temporal, and grace and knowledge of God as a gift added to nature (DeMoor, 1994, pp. 45, 46; Niebuhr, 1951, p. 134). In addition, there is a rejection of the traditional Thomistic conception of the church with authority over other societal institutions. The Neo-Calvinist sees the church, the state, the school, and home as each "sovereign within its own sphere... not transcend[ing] any other sphere[s]... which are equally sovereign in their own respective spheres of authority and task" (DeMoor, 1994, p. 52). One respondent, a curriculum coordinator, put it this way:

> Dutch Calvinists... came to this country and set up these schools, which I
>
> think is a true statement—with the Dutch Calvinist Kuyperian influence
>
> that is growing and being accepted—they did it from day one, A) in the
>
> English language and B) interdenominationally, always. Even though it
>
> was done in the basements of [CRC] churches, it was always an
>
> interdenominational affair from the beginning and that was done with

---

[4] Thomas Aquinas, Saint, philosopher, theologian, doctor of the Church (Angelicus Doctor), patron of Catholic universities, colleges, and schools, b. at Rocca Secca in the Kingdom of Naples, 1225 or 1227; d. at Fossa Nuova, 7 March, 1274.
(http://www.value.net/~bromike/aquinas/thomas.html)

conviction. That was done out of the Kuyperian view of the sovereignty of the church and the state—sphere sovereignty and sphere partnership together, those two are always tight, they come out of the nostrils of a Dutchman—sphere sovereignty comes out of one nostril and sphere partnership comes out of the other whenever a Dutchman breathes. At least a Reformed Dutchmen, those who came here, those Kuyperians. Those two are terribly important and they always have to be seen together. The church has nothing to do with the school, period, in terms of governance. It has every thing to do in terms of partnership, but nothing in terms of governance. And I think that's where you see a lot of structure taking place in our schools when you look at our documents, look at our practice, that we [the church] have a very firm commitment to staying out of running the school but being very firm supporters of it.

So we see, in the view of this respondent, a complete rejection of the Thomistic view that the church ought to have authority over institutions in culture. In the second round of questions I checked the perceptions of the other respondents and they uniformly agreed that "sphere sovereignty" figured into their understanding of the way CSI schools should be governed. They agreed with the complete rejection of the authority of the church to govern the schools. These Reformed educators take a different road than their counterparts in the Thomistic educational tradition to understanding the relationship between faith and culture.

Christ and Culture in Paradox

Another view, close to the centre of the range of Christian responses to culture, is that the Christian is

subject to two moralities, and [is] a citizen of two worlds that are not only discontinuous with each other but largely opposed. In the *polarity* and *tension* of Christ and culture, life must be lived precariously and sinfully in the hope of a justification which lies beyond history. Luther may be regarded as the greatest representative of this type, yet many a Christian who is not otherwise a Lutheran finds himself compelled to solve the problem in this way. (Niebuhr, 1951, p. 43)

Luther must, of course, be identified with the Reformation and with Protestantism but is not considered part of the Reformed tradition to which we have been referring. Fellow reformer John Calvin, took a different tack than Luther in the development of a philosophical understanding of the way that Christianity exists in relation to culture. The view of "Christ and Culture in Paradox" also is not the view upon which CSI schools are founded.

Coincidentally, an education coordinator I interviewed had used Niebuhr's work as a foundational element in his doctoral dissertation in the area of Reformed thought. (I took this to be a noteworthy confirmation that Niebuhr's work provided a suitable framework for this discussion on Reformed educational thought.) His assessment was that he personally lived life between the "Paradox" view and the next and final view we will examine. However, he affirmed that the Neo-Calvinist position seems to fit best with Niebuhr's final group, those who characterize Christ as the transformer of Culture. As we shall see, the other respondents also see the CSI schools as "transformational" and yet they recognize a default tendency toward this kind of paradoxical dualism in themselves and the schools in general.

Christ the Transformer of Culture

As we have considered and compared the other views, we have had glimpses of this fifth view in which

> Christ is seen as the converter of man in his culture and society, not apart from these, for there is no nature without culture and no turning of men from self and idols to God save in society. It is in Augustine that the great outlines of this answer seem to be offered; John Calvin makes it explicit. (Niebuhr, 1951, p. 43)

One of the characteristic ideas in this view is that human nature is fallen or deformed. This might seem to align this fifth group with the "Christ Against Culture" and the "Paradox" points of view (Niebuhr, 1951, p. 45) but at least two distinguishing factors set this view apart. The first is that the fallen state of man is just that—fallen, from its original and perfect created form in the image of God. "Man's good nature has become corrupted; it is not bad, as something that should not exist, but warped, twisted, and misdirected" (Niebuhr, 1951, p. 194). The effects of that fallenness upon the institutions of culture may be pervasive but the world is not regarded as evil in and of itself. It retains the stamp of the Creator and it remains *God's* world. "Calvinists maintain that God's common grace[5] saves all people from the worst effects of their sinfulness and provides the basis for restoration in human culture and scientific study" (DeMoor, 1994, p. 52).

A second distinguishing factor is that culture is not to be abandoned or withdrawn from but transformed or redeemed by Christians working in the

---

[5] Related to the concept of common grace is the concept of natural law, the idea that the same universal divine mandate is imprinted upon humanity's conscience as part of God's image. "Thomas Aquinas was one of the most brilliant exponents of this notion of natural law since Augustine, [and] modern historians are agreed that John Calvin was one of the chief architects of our modern understanding of this theory" (Horton, 1994, p. 162).

institutions of society through social and cultural discipleship. Social and cultural discipleship takes the religious concepts of the redemptive work of Christ and his lordship and applies them widely. Not only is Christ's sacrifice to be regarded as a means of private, personal redemption, but the "conversionist" would say that redemption applies also to cultural activity. "Through questioning and changing every aspect of life, every social and cultural institution" (Tarnas, 1991, p. 245) all things are to be done God's way. "We take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor. 10, New International Version). Because the "world" is seen as fallen from perfection, not inherently evil, and because redemption is provided for all human endeavor, the conversionist has a "more positive and hopeful attitude toward culture" (Niebuhr, 1951, p. 191).

These things were affirmed by an education coordinator, who said, "among Christian schools, the schools of the Reformed tradition were unique in being more 'culturally engaging.'" He characterized the Reformed educational tradition "as using a curriculum that isn't moralized, as being reflective about gospel values, as containing a transformational vision, and as emphasizing that 'the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof'" (1 Cor 10:26). Earlier, we also heard a principal say, "the Reformed worldview... emphasize[s] Christian cultural transformation." This seemed to be representative of the posture adopted by all the respondents. In the follow-up survey I asked them if they agreed with the statement that CSI schools are "culturally engaging, emphasizing a 'transformational vision' in which Christians are to exercise a redeeming influence." They all responded affirmatively. In general terms then, schools within this tradition can be classified in Niebuhr's "Conversionist" category. The next chapter will have

much more to say about the way the conversionist ideas are worked out within the context of the Canadian Neo-Calvinist schools.

Conclusion

With the help of Niebuhr, I have attempted to locate the Reformed tradition, and Reformed Neo-Calvinist thought in particular, within the range of Christian responses to culture. It has been found between the extremes of "anticulturalism" and "accomodationism." It distinguishes itself from other Christians in the middle with a more positive attitude toward culture than those, like Luther, who felt life in society had to be lived precariously and sinfully in the hope of justification beyond history. The Reformed response to culture is distinguished also from the Thomistic perspective by the concept of sphere sovereignty and its rejection of church authority creeping into other cultural spheres.

As the citations from the respondents indicated, they directly or incidentally defined themselves as what Niebuhr calls "Conversionists" in the middle of the range of Christian cultural responses. They also said numerous other things which created a more specific definition of their Neo-Calvinist philosophical position and its relationship to education. The educators in the CSI tradition identify themselves as Reformed and as Neo-Calvinists in particular. Four times in this chapter the respondents indicated in some way that the philosophy of Abraham Kuyper defined this Neo-Calvinism from other strands of Calvinism. We will explore that further in the subsequent chapter.

They characterize themselves by comparing and contrasting their views and their practice with other religious and educational traditions. In the next chapter we will look at the self-understanding or visional dimension of the Reformed educational tradition.

Chapter 3
The Vision as They See It:
Neo-Calvinist Reformed Christian Educational Philosophy

For the sake of my own understanding and that of my readers, I want to get inside the ideas that form the foundation for the practice of education in the CSI Reformed Christian schools. This chapter engages the CSI school movement at what Browning calls the "visional" level, a "context of specific traditions... carried by particular narratives, stories, and metaphors that shape the self-understanding of the communities that belong to the tradition" (Browning, 1991, p. 105). Browning, a theologian, considers this kind of analysis vital to the understanding of religious organizations. Greenfield, an educational theorist, supports the view that institutions need to be studied at this level.

> Organizations are human creations, the products of human will; therefore their study should be concerned with human intention, existence, and history. Greenfield believes that organizations are "subjective understandings that people choose to live by—thereby making them real only through their own will and effort" (Greenfield as cited in Foster, 1986, p. 60).

Schools in the Reformed tradition *are* consciously created and built upon understandings the parents and educators choose to live by and these schools are made real, in a quite literal sense, by the will and effort of the communities that operate the schools. If "organizations are inside people and are defined completely by them as they work out ideas in their heads through their actions in the practical world" (Greenfield as cited in Foster, 1986, p. 60)

then an understanding of the ideas in their heads is crucial to understanding the organization.

The Neo-Calvinist Version of Conversionist Thought

In the last chapter we located the CSI tradition as the general "Conversionist" type in which Christ is regarded as the transformer of culture. In this chapter we will look at the specific manifestation of the type in Neo-Calvinist educational philosophy. This school of thought is descendent from a Calvinism that developed in Holland at a time and in a circumstance that allowed for the outworking of the philosophy on a national scale. "The Calvinist worldview was translated into a philosophical paradigm and into social action in the Netherlands by Groen Van Prinsterer, Abraham Kuyper, Herman Dooyeweerd and many others" (DeMoor, 1994; Tarnas, 1991).

The Kuyperian Influence

Four times in the previous chapter, the respondents identified "Kuyperian" philosophy as, in some way, foundational to the ideas they express. A complete analysis of the philosophy of Abraham Kuyper[6], "the foremost Calvinist leader in the Netherlands from 1880 to 1920" (Van Brummelen, 1986, p. 3), is well beyond the scope of this study. However, the philosophical elements of practice that are cited by the respondents

---

[6]Dr. Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) was a Dutch Calvinist theologian, philosopher and politician. As leader of the Anti-Revolutionary Party in the Netherlands he served as Prime Minister of his country from 1901 to 1905. A man of immense talents and indefatigable energy, he occupied himself with the task of reconstructing the social structures of his native land on the basis of its Calvinistic heritage in almost every area of life. He was editor of two Christian newspapers for over forty five years, served his country as a member of parliament for over thirty years. In 1880 he founded the Free University of Amsterdam in which he occupied himself as teacher and administrator, and still found time to publish over 200 volumes of intellectually challenging material including *Encyclopaedia of Sacred Theology, The Work of the Holy Spirit,* and the classic devotional text *To Be Near Unto God.* At his seventieth birthday celebrations in 1907 it was said of him that "The history of the Netherlands in Church, in State, in Society, in Press, in School, and in the Sciences of the last forty years, cannot be written without the mention of his name on almost every page." (http://www.kuyper.org/stone/info.html)

throughout the study seem to have their origins primarily in Calvinist Kuyperian thought.

In the second round of questions, I asked the respondents about this. The question was worded this way: "Several respondents identified the philosophical paradigm that is foundational to CSI schools as Neo-Calvinism. Specifically they identified the Neo-Calvinism as 'Kuyperian.' Would you characterize the Reformed philosophical foundation in the same terms?" All those who responded, did so affirmatively. One school principal answered affirmatively and qualified his answer by saying:

> There is an important philosophical stream found in some of the people who have been connected to Calvin College which is not exactly Kuyperian, nor is it dualistic and separatist. Nick Wolterstorff [a philosophy professor at Calvin College] is an example. This stream is more strongly rooted in the Anglo-American philosophical traditions than the Kuyperians are and would probably see the Kuyperians as being too triumphalistic and naive in talking about transforming culture. But within Canada especially, I think it would be correct to say that most CSI schools are Neo-Calvinist and Kuyperian.

This then refines the focus somewhat more. Although Wolterstorff, in particular, is associated with Reformed educational thought in America, the educators in Canada identify primarily with Kuyperian philosophy. As the study progresses the outlines of Kuyperian thought, particularly as it is embodied in the Canadian CSI educational tradition, will become evident.

Without diminishing the significance of other philosophers in the tradition, it can be said that the Kuyperian perspective is the defining characteristic of this Neo-Calvinistic strand of Calvinism. The respondents

characterize their philosophy as Kuyperian and literature within the tradition makes it explicit:

> Without denying the doctrinal and moral facets of Calvinism, the "Kuyperians" attached much greater importance to God calling Christians to be actively engaged in politics, commerce, science, education and the arts. Kuyperians wanted Christian school pupils to analyze and respond to societal phenomena and issues. In obedience to God and in a uniquely Christian way, students must be helped to contribute to the growth and development of society. (Van Brummelen, 1986, p. 3)

While Kuyper as theologian, philosopher and prime-minister of Holland had opportunity to implement the ideas of Calvinism on a grand scale, Neo-Calvinists today continue to implement the philosophy in the institutions of culture in which they have opportunity. Neo-Calvinist philosophers working within the realities of the contemporary political climate have implemented their philosophy in new ways that fit new realities. They may not have the wherewithal to shape a nation, as did Kuyper, but they can implement their ideas within institutions of their own creation.

The elements of Neo-Calvinist/Kuyperian philosophy that emerge in the responses of the participants will be examined carefully since those elements can be regarded as active in the consciousness of the participants. If they are in the consciousness of the participants, they are elements of the philosophy that may well have an impact on the practice of education. That is the question which is being considered in this study: "What impact does it have to consciously educate under the direction of a religious educational philosophy?" As I analyzed the responses, the most frequently occurring

responses identified were these: 1) the foundational nature of religion in education, and 2) Christian cultural affirmation and transformation.

The Foundational Nature of Religion in Education

In the responses of those who participated in the study, the importance of thorough-going integration of Christian thought and perspectives into all aspects of education arises more than any other theme. This has been true historically and continues to be so. "One of the themes that recurred repeatedly in the history of Calvinistic schools was that 'Christian principles' and 'the teaching of the Lord' must permeate all instruction" (Van Brummelen, 1986, p. 5).

The literature within the tradition contains frequent descriptors of practice such as, "Christian faith is integrated into all areas of life and learning" (Stronks, 1995, p. 28); "teaching through religion not about religion" (DeMoor, 1994, p. 68); "Christ's lordship extends to every square inch of creation" (Stronks, 1995, p. 167) and "education of the kingdom, by the kingdom and for the kingdom of God" (Beversluis, 1982, p. 3).

The strength with which these convictions are held is captured in the comments of a curriculum coordinator.

> Let's talk about the [new] school in Edmonton, a Christian school that's
>
> just applied to become a public Christian school in Edmonton. They say
>
> its going to be a Christian school. They are going to sing songs, they are
>
> going to pray in the morning, they are going to pray the Lord's prayer,
>
> they are going to be teaching the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on
>
> the Mount, and the Apostle's Creed. They will avoid the creationist
>
> debate and they will avoid the abortion debate as much as possible. OK?
>
> They are going to be good little boys and girls. They're going to have the
>
> basics, the three Rs, which, by the way, is two spelling mistakes. They've

pushed all the right buttons and they are going to be a clean and well-lit school that is going to have those kinds of Christian virtues added to the school. Those kids are going to learn that is what Christianity is about.

First of all, the Sermon on the Mount is not a mild little clean document. It sets the whole world up on end. The Apostle's Creed, is not Biblical, but is a creed that was written by people who were arguing their tails off about who Jesus Christ was. That's why half the thing is about the person of Christ, whether he was actually God or not and so on. It came out of an immense argument. The ten commandments, as subtle as "do not kill," are not necessarily going to allow you to avoid certain arguments in society such as whether you support Pat Buchanan or Robert Dole... or Bill Clinton for that matter. Those kinds of issues are here and they are with us. They are in the news every day. To avoid them for the sake of keeping things clean and well-lit and quiet, is unfortunate. It can't be done but you will get people who think that it can be done.

I think, for instance, of the [two specific denominational groups]—who are supporters of [a particular] school, who (I'd die for the right for them to believe this but I don't necessarily share their beliefs) believe that these things can be done. You can be "sort-of" Christian. You can have a school that teaches just the regular stuff, the neutral stuff but in a Christian atmosphere. So they haven't bought into the idea that the curriculum itself is infused with beliefs. They actively promote themselves as being the agency that will avoid any kind of controversy in that way. They will try to rear kids who will be like them and who will see that Christianity can be put on the shelf when it's convenient or when it's necessary. I think kids in our schools will see that it cannot.

From the respondents, the importance of this thorough-going integration sometimes came forth expressed as a fear about its loss. There were some comments like, "I fear that in ten years our school will become little more than a Sunday School." Tied up in that is a concern that the schools will cease to strive toward Reformed practice—a practice in which Christian thought is reflectively brought to bear upon all subject matter. The fear is that the schools will move toward a practice that is characterized by a lack of reflectivity and a lack of integration of faith—a practice which is metaphorically and recurrently described as an "icing on the cake" kind of practice. A K - 9 school principal said:

> [In the 1960s] pastors were often providing leadership to explain why
> Christian schools were necessary but their educational philosophy was
> often rooted in their church theology. It should be noted that there is a
> distinct difference between Christian Reformed Church theology and
> Reformed Christian educational philosophy. The [former] was often the
> "icing on the cake" type practiced in the classroom. Many of the teachers
> were not certified or degree teachers and lacked training and
> understanding in reformed educational philosophy. Thus schools were
> "Christian" because the day opened and closed with prayer and there
> was the Biblical Studies program and, of course, reference was made to
> God in Science and Social Studies.

This quote, the first part of which was previously cited, is from a high school teacher in her sixth year of teaching in a CSI school:

> Our worldview permeates our curriculum. This was a new experience for
> me. In the Catholic school (and I hear the Mennonite school here is the

same) I did not need to concern myself with teaching "French from a biblical perspective." This was done in the "religion" class. I have come to understand the sacramentality of all of life, and to try and apply it in daily practice. This is often a challenge when I prepare units as one can easily become "preachy" and sound phony. One always has to ask whether one is just putting a bit of biblical icing on a secular cake, or whether the cake is indeed made with a different recipe.

Another respondent, a curriculum coordinator said:

and so, we are past the point in Reformed Christian schools where people say, "No, no, this part is not tainted in any way by religion." The public school "sin" of saying, "nothing is influenced by religion" is one part of that continuum. In the middle of that continuum are those that say, "Christian education is the icing on the cake," it's the prayer in the morning, it is the songs that we sing, the chapels, and certain parts of scripture such as the ten commandments, the sermon on the mount, and so on. The rest is sort of neutral stuff again. On the very far side of that continuum is Reformed education which says all things need to be brought into obedience to Christ.

The continuum idea expressed above seems helpful in describing where Reformed Christian educators see themselves. They want to go beyond the midpoint, "icing on the cake" kind of practice. They strive toward the end of the continuum where religion infuses all aspects of their practice. It might be useful to angle this scale upward to the right to indicate the sense that these educators feel their work is an uphill battle. The default is toward secularized educational practice; diligence and hard work are required to move practice toward the transformational vision they hope to achieve.

The Continuum

<--->

Secularized	'Icing on	Transformational
Educational	the Cake"	Vision: Christian
Practice	Practice	Perspectives in All
		and Through All
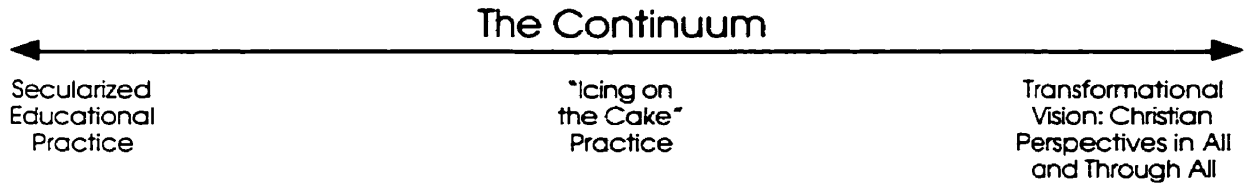
In answer to a question about the degree to which the schools were successful, the previously quoted curriculum coordinator said:

Obviously it happens in every school, because each one of the schools that I'm a part of... we're defined by that continuum, we have defined ourselves and have placed ourselves at a particular point on the continuum. So, yes it happens in all schools. Are there some schools that are better at it than others? Yeah. Are there some teachers who are better at it than others? Yes. Does every school have a range of people who are good, better, best at doing that kind of thing? Yes. There are some leaders, by that I mean people who are paid big money to be leaders, principals, administrators and so on, who are very good at defining that for teachers and drawing that out of teachers. There are also some principals who never do it. They're very lousy at it. They don't do it. I won't name any.

On each staff too there are people who are very good at being collegial, at helping others draw those things out, at working together on those issues. Then we also have projects, curriculum writing projects, professional development days, the Christian perspectives courses that we teach, in which we try to sharpen the focus of people's understanding. There are probably some brand new teachers who have just recently spent two weeks at trying to really carefully define that again, who may be well more versed and more articulate at that than some more experienced

teachers or administrators who may not have kept up with the lingo, who

may not have kept up with the process of curriculum development...

The significance of this may be easily overlooked or discounted because other religious traditions use similar language to describe their practice. This quotation from a principal bears repeating.

Schools in the conservative evangelical tradition sometimes use language

similar to transformational schools ("Christianity in all areas of life") but

the meaning they give to those words is not so much a call to evaluate

and transform as it is a call to protect children from worldly influences

and to inculcate a high standard of personal morality in all situations.

This is not to say that other religious traditions do not have a right to use similar language but only to say that when Reformed educators use it they attach a great deal of significance to it and pack the language with a tremendous amount of meaning. When looking at the visional level, the expressed self understanding of this religious educational community, the idea that Christianity is foundational to all areas of life and learning is probably the single most-frequently used concept to define Reformed education.

Why is this concept so important? It emerges from a theology that puts a premium on the sovereignty of God. Without getting deeply into the theological elements of this, it would be safe to say Calvinists emphasize God's sovereignty as much as, if not more than, many other Christian theological traditions. Education framed in terms of Christian perspectives throughout, is consistent with a high regard for God's supreme rule over everything in creation.

Cultural Affirmation in Education

In the second chapter, we saw that the CSI educational tradition fell into Niebuhr's "Conversionist" category largely because of its more hopeful view that culture was not evil in and of itself but only corrupted; in this view Christians are to be at work in culture exercising a redeeming influence as opposed to isolating themselves from cultural influences. Without any prompting, three respondents in the first round of questioning used the idea of cultural affirmation or cultural transformation, to define themselves. As mentioned, those responding to the second round of questions all agreed with the statement that CSI schools "are more culturally engaging, emphasizing a 'transformational vision' in which Christians are to exercise a redeeming influence." Cultural affirmation or transformation was the second most significant defining characteristic used by the respondents—next to the concept of the "foundational nature of religion" previously described.

From my experience in this educational community, a few examples of culturally affirmative responses to culture stand out and they are as much aimed at educating the teachers and constituency as the students. Christian Schools International produces a quarterly newsletter called *Media Studies* which reports on popular culture like movies, television, CD-ROMs and the Internet. "Its purpose is to examine developments in the popular media, to provide a Christian perspective on such developments, and to point toward classroom activities and lessons focusing on the media" (Bordewyk, 1996). Schools are beginning to establish media studies courses or units within their curricula in order to reflectively work out a Christian, critical, yet culturally affirmative, response to the popular media.

I identified another attempt at cultural affirmation in the way our school library wrestled with censorship issues. Our library contains a fairly

wide variety of age appropriate literature. As might be expected, parents occasionally take exception to books that contain language and content they deem to be unacceptable. Since our parent community has representation from the whole range of Christian responses to culture, what one parent finds objectionable might be seen by others as an important cultural statement or, at least, it might be regarded as harmless. A curriculum coordinator interviewed for this study spoke to the same issue:

> The tension isn't just between people, it goes through us, much like the antithesis of sin and salvation, it doesn't sit between two people it cuts through the middle of all of us. I just got a newsletter item about books in the library. What do your children read, what don't they read, what do you give them, what do you keep from them, how do you tell the difference? My wife has someone right now (she teaches language arts in grade 7) who is on her case because all the books she assigns are "of the devil." And so, her daughter, who is my daughter's best friend, and my wife is her favorite teacher, but in spite of all of that, the books that she gets, her mother refuses to let her read because they are "of the devil." They talk about issues that have to do with the real world. They sometimes use language that is not acceptable. They sometimes deal with matters of fantasy and other things which are supposedly "new age" and therefore are to be kept from her daughter.

> This mother really wants her [daughter] to be isolated much more than my wife wants her to be isolated. Both of them want to make judgments about what this girl can and cannot, should and should not be dealing with at any particular age. It's not that one is making choices and the other isn't. They disagree about what those choices are. That's a real struggle. That's not just some theoretical debate. It's whether this girl,

Harmony, should be reading these books or not. My wife, as a teacher, says she must be reading them. She must be learning to discern. She must be learning to deal with these things. She must be learning that in a Christian school. The mother says, no, you're not going to read it. Those examples are countless and they take place every day.

In our school, this came to a head in the area of fantasy literature. Some parents were suspicious of books depicting situations outside the realm of reality. These parents arguably fell into the "Christ Against Culture" category previously described. They questioned classics like *The Hobbit* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* despite the clear allusions to Christian themes contained therein. Since there was an apparent danger that a minority might govern the literary choices of the majority, our librarian developed a position paper on the fantasy genre of literature. The document is clearly "Reformed" in that it affirms the cultural importance of the fantasy genre of literature:

> We need to acknowledge that there are sincere Christians who are uncomfortable with the type of literature under discussion in this paper. We need to be sensitive to the concerns they express. For it is true that, traditionally, Christians have often been reluctant to accept "make-believe" as a legitimate form of play, and that honest work and rational intellect have often been elevated at the expense of play, emotions, and the imaginative. It is important that we develop a more balanced approach; for when we perceive play and "make-believe" negatively, then the legitimacy of imagination, creativity and its various forms of expression is *not* enhanced. Being an artist, musician, or storyteller become second-rate occupations for those fit for service in the Kingdom of God. (Folkerts & Folkerts, unpublished manuscript, n.d.)

The document represents a grass roots attempt to be true to Neo-Calvinist thought in an educational context. At the time it was implemented it was done with high regard for the range of opinion in the school community but there was the clear sense that a firm position had to be taken on this issue. When the document was adopted as the *school's* position by the Education Committee and the Board is was a modest but significant moment of school self-definition. It was one instance where the school deliberately positioned itself on the continuum of cultural responses at a place some distance from the conservative extreme.

Within a diverse Christian constituency, it is not easy to maintain a middle position. The difficulty of remaining true to Neo-Calvinist philosophy has been aptly demonstrated:

> In [his] case study in conservative American Christianity, William D. Romanowski analyzes the failure of the Christian Reformed Church to apply its own Neo-Calvinist principles in their policy regarding the cinema. In effect, the synthesis of religious fundamentalism and the secular concept of a cultural hierarchy equated the antagonism between elite and popular cultures with the spiritual battle between God and Satan. Consequently, movies were treated as hostile to the church and banned from the realm of Christian experience and transformation. This had direct implications for the development of religious and educational institutions. (From the abstract, Romanowski, 1995)

This is an example of the tension that operates within religious communities between the desire to remain true to beliefs and the need to be relevant. At a recent education convention (October, 1997), teachers from the prairie province district of Christian Schools International had an

opportunity to hear Romanowski speak on this very topic. He proposed engaging the popular media within the classroom by creating media studies courses and units. He suggested that, without a high degree of media literacy taught in our schools, our students would be ill equipped to see popular culture as both a reflection of our society and as the "quasi-educational" institution which it has become. For example, he demonstrated ways that popular media tends to educate our youth in highly stereotypical sex-roles despite its claims to be inclined otherwise. He also discussed the ways that movies, for example, can express our fears, hopes, fantasies and foibles; they are snapshots of the human condition.

Discussion opportunities after the lectures became the perfect forum to test these ideas with my colleagues and I opened discussion by expressing my enthusiasm for Romanowski's presentations. There was a fascinating range of responses, not unlike Niebuhr's characterization of Christian responses to culture. Some of my colleagues shared my enthusiasm but others had reservations about engaging popular culture in the manner suggested. The latter group expressed fears that such familiarity with popular culture might well have a corrupting influence upon the youth in our care. They cited their own personal choices to avoid engaging in activities that might entrap them in bad habits or take captive their thoughts to things other than devotion to their faith. There was a recognition of their own susceptibility as well as concern for the susceptibility of young people. While they acknowledged that some individuals might have the strength of character and the intellectual capacity to see the media for what it is and respond faithfully to it, they worried that others might be taken in by the barrage of conflicting messages which is the popular media.

So it seems that, even within a group of educators claiming to be Reformed, there is a microcosm of Niebuhr's range of Christian responses to culture. Without a doubt the same range is reflected within the parent community and the wider supporting constituency. At its simplest, it can be expressed as the longstanding tension between two groups—those who are more protectionistic and those who are more culturally affirmative. Speaking to the historical nature of the tension, H. W. Van Brummelen writes:

> Two overlapping but distinct strains of Calvinism affected the North American Schools. The original nineteenth century pietistic... supporters emphasized Calvinistic doctrines and strict personal moral uprightness... Even today, their modern counterparts send children to Christian schools primarily to isolate children from unhealthy "worldly" influences. The second group has consisted mainly of followers of Abraham Kuyper... [attaching] much greater importance to God calling Christians to be actively engaged in politics, commerce, science, education and the arts. (Van Brummelen, 1986, p. 3)

In this connection, I asked the respondents two follow-up questions in the second round. The questions were, "Do you share the view that there are two different groups represented in CSI schools?" and "If yes, do you see the line between groups primarily distinguishing one CSI school from another or do you see the line running through each school 'dividing' the school into groups?"

With regard to the first question the respondents agreed that there were two groups but with some qualification. It was said that "these two are certainly the most obvious but are not mutually exclusive." In addition, two respondents felt there might be two or more groups (the third named group

was the strand of Reformed educators in the "Wolterstorff" line, as discussed earlier in this chapter).

In response to the second question regarding the line dividing the groups, there were a few interesting responses:

> I think both are true. Some schools are more intent on being transformational than others. Within some schools some teachers and programs are more transformational than others. (A school principal)

> The line runs through our school but I wouldn't say it "divides" us into two groups. It's more subtle and complex than that. (A school principal)

> The line runs smack through you and me as it does through our school communities. (A curriculum coordinator)

The ramifications of this for leaders in this educational tradition are significant. The school constituency, the teaching staff and the administrators themselves manifest different and sometimes contradictory views of the school's ideal posture with regard to culture. Working with a realization of this, can lend the administrator some sensitivity to the divergent views. As he or she leads, the awareness of the divergence can shape communication in a way that pays attention to the diverse concerns rather than running roughshod over the sensibilities of the people with contrary opinions.

To the extent that opinions can (and should) be shifted toward a culturally affirmative position, it can be done more effectively with the understanding of contrary opinions and the history informing those opinions. Rather than suddenly declaring that the popular media will become a subject of the curriculum, the school leader can take the time needed to bring the constituency into the decision making. Many Christians,

administrators included, are, at times and in certain areas of their lives, inclined to be protectionistic. A full recognition of that reality can guide the kind of personal and communal reflection needed to raise awareness and make change.

Some Other Anecdotes in the Narrative

Having now, in this chapter, identified the two most frequently reported defining characteristics of Reformed educational thought, there are yet a few important strands of Reformed educational thought that have not emerged from the tapestry—strands of thought which seem to have significant educational import. Having worked as an "outsider" within the Reformed educational community for some eighteen years and having become a bit of a student of the tradition, I have had opportunity to pick up the threads of the narrative and weave them into a fairly comprehensive story for my own understanding. There are a few more strands of the narrative that ought to be threaded into this description to create a more complete picture for the reader.

God Given Pursuits as Sacred

One recurring element of Neo-Calvinist thought in education is the rejection of the notion that there are *high* sacred and *low* secular callings for the believer (Tarnas, 1991, p. 244). "Luther argued that God is more impressed with the milkmaid, milking her cow to the glory of God, than with all the lavish and pious exercises of the monks" (Horton, 1991, p. 254). This idea was even more dynamically expressed by John Calvin as a "conception of the vocations of men as activities in which they may express their faith and love and may glorify God in their calling" (Niebuhr, 1951, p. 217). Neo-Calvinist thought carries these ideas forward to the present.

If all God-given occupational pursuits are seen as equally "sacred" and one's faith is seen as having application to all pursuits, it can have a profound impact on the way in which one lives in community, regards work, practices politics and carries out the education of children. This view, built on the foundational idea that God is sovereign over all things, has led to the formation of Christian labour unions, agricultural associations, political organizations, social agencies, medical clinics, colleges and schools. The Neo-Calvinist worldview informs the philosophy and action of each of these organizations.

General and Special Revelation

When dealing with the educational and philosophical question, "How do we know?" there is a doctrine, sometimes described as the doctrine of general and special revelation, to which Reformed educational philosophers consistently appeal. *Revelation*, that is, the way in which things are revealed to us, becomes an educational question because the Christian scholar is compelled to wonder what is worthy of study. If "the world" is regarded as essentially evil then study of it is worthwhile only insofar as is necessary to mount a defense against it. If the world is regarded as God's creation and, as such, is seen as reflecting the attributes of the creator, then the study of the world not only fills our heads with useful knowledge but reveals something of the creator to us.

Within some traditions, scripture is regarded as God's only source of revelation. Reformed philosophers note that scripture itself teaches of another form of revelation. The Belgic Confession, one of the pillars of the Reformed theological structure, expresses the idea of two sources of revelation, two books by which we may know and by which we may know God:

> We know him by two means: First, by the creation, preservation and
> government of the universe, since that universe is before our eyes like a
> beautiful book in which all creatures, great and small, are as letters to
> make us ponder the invisible things of God... Second, he makes himself
> known to us more openly by his holy and divine word, as much as we
> need in this life, for his glory and for the salvation of his own. (Art. 2)

Dealing with these "books" in reverse order, it is in the second book, the scriptures or *special revelation*, that God is believed to make himself known explicitly and declares how we should live in the light of his truth. This form of revelation is taken very seriously within the Reformed tradition. Special revelation is not subordinated to rational thought or regarded, in a relativistic sense, as one source of knowledge among many. However, it does not stand alone because the first book of revelation, the created realm, is first in time *and* primary, "constituting the matrix into which special revelation comes and against the background of which special revelation is understood" (Committee on Creation and Science, 1988, p. 6).

The "first book" of revelation is the created realm in which we have our sense experience, make observations and draw conclusion as we function as rational beings. Drawing upon the Biblical canon, scholars in the Reformed tradition affirm that "what may be known about God is plain to [us]. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood **from what has been made** [emphasis added]... " (Rom. 1: 19, 20).

> Abraham Kuyper expressed this teaching in a very pointed way by saying
> that if, without any addition, one says, "I am bound by Scripture," then
> one has made a very incomplete confession. For there is another Word of

God to which we are also bound, a different Word, the language which God speaks through nature (*Band aan het Woord*, 1899, p. 9). Thus we confess that there are two books of revelation, which are different yet mutually interdependent. (Committee on Creation and Science, 1988, p. 6)

In the second round of questions I asked, "Does the concept of 'General and Special Revelation' figure into your thinking about educational practice from a Reformed perspective?" All those who responded one way or the other, did so affirmatively. One of the respondents, a school principal added, "A Neo-Calvinian update of that is to say that Creation is meaning."

What are the educational ramifications of all of this? Authentic application of the Reformed philosophy of the "two books" has actually allowed for considerable intellectual freedom for the Reformed Christian scholar and scientist. The report, which I have twice quoted, by the Committee on Creation and Science was commissioned in the face of considerable controversy regarding the scholarship of the scientists within a Reformed college. Professors of astronomy were writing and teaching things about the age and origins of the universe that did not seem to conform to traditional interpretations of scripture. Since the college in question *was* a denominational college, the questions arising from the controversy became matters for the church to investigate. The conclusion of the committee, largely based upon an unwavering commitment to special and general revelation (with unmistakable overtones of the concept of sphere sovereignty), was that it was not right to restrict authentic scholarship in the realm of nature. "What does general revelation reveal? The primary answer is that it reveals God" (Committee on Creation and Science, 1988, p. 7). The report's concluding declarations included this passage:

The church wishes also to respect the freedom of science by not canonizing certain hypotheses, models or paradigms proposed by the sciences while rejecting others... (Committee on Creation and Science, 1988, p. 44)

The freedoms of the scientists were thus upheld but the issue was not settled with the presentation of the report. In fact, the entire affair caused considerable division within the church and it continues to be a sensitive issue. The working out of this dimension of the Reformed philosophy does not seem to be consistent throughout K – 12 schools in the tradition. Even though the schools are not *directly* affiliated with the church, they are influenced by the issues faced by the church. It is in this area that people in the various Reformed institutions continue to wrestle with what it means to be authentic in their understanding of their faith and philosophy. Because the issues raised have been so divisive, topics like the age of the universe are sometimes avoided or are poorly taught in spite of the fact that it is philosophically inconsistent to do so.

Notice, however, how the concept was recently expressed again in a CSI publication, the *Christian Educators Journal*, indicating that it continues to inform the thinking of the educators in the tradition.

As a classroom teacher in a Christian school, I have often arrived at the conclusion of a lesson believing that the teaching would have sounded much the same in a secular school. Often it seems as though God is just an add-on, some icing on a cake that is the same regardless of religious perspective. The struggle is to recognize God's active involvement. A key to his work in classrooms is found in a full understanding of general revelation.

For Reformed Christians, revelation has always been a key concept in epistemology. There is special revelation—Scripture and Jesus; and there is general revelation—seeing God through his creation. Often general revelation is summarized as "All truth is God's truth..." (Hall, 1997, p. 2)

Always Reforming

Another significant thread in the tapestry of Reformed educational philosophy is expressed in the Reformation credo *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*—the church reformed and always reforming. "Even the church is subject to error and reformation as is the rest of societal life including the state in its role of serving public justice, all subject to continuous reformation according to the ordinances of God" (DeMoor, 1994, p. 53).

In the second round of questions I asked the respondents, "Does the concept of 'Always Reforming *(semper reformanda)*' figure into your thinking about educational practice from a Reformed perspective?" All those who replied responded affirmatively.

Referring once more to the conclusions of the Committee on Creation and Science:

> The church urges its scholars, including theologians and natural scientists, to exercise an appropriate critical restraint with respect to "the assured results" of their investigations and the "clear consensus" of their disciplines, mindful that interpretations of Scripture as well as theories of reality are ever in need of reformation *(semper reformanda)*. (p. 45)

Like most institutions, it seems that schools in the Reformed tradition change more in reaction to external pressure than through proactive internal initiatives arising from an underpinning philosophy. Based on the

interviews done with educators in the tradition, the aim to be "always reforming" seems to be difficult to realize. It is in this area that there is tremendous opportunity for growth into the espoused philosophy. In this area it seems that the "narrative envelope" that carries the tradition is, in practice, somewhat under-inflated. The intent to be continuously reforming has considerable educational promise but the risks of pushing the envelope, in a fairly conservative religious organization, can appear quite daunting to the would-be changer of the *status quo*. The previously quoted curriculum coordinator put it this way:

> the very people who are the strongest in terms of maintaining the Reformed tradition, maintaining the good Latin phrases of constantly reforming, will also be the strongest ones in terms of saying, "yeah, but that's not the way we do it." That comes with the territory… constantly reforming, that's the toughest one. That's the toughest one, because it requires us to be very open to the leading of God's word and God's spirit. And culturally or otherwise, we tend to be people who like things the way they were. I know I do. We didn't do it that way before so why change now? Change is very hard for people.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have looked at what Browning calls the visional level of the CSI educational movement—the narratives, stories and metaphors that shape the self understanding of these schools. As a subset of Niebuhr's "conversionist" category, Neo-Calvinists see themselves as Kuyperians, for the most part. The elements of Kuyperian thought that were mentioned most frequently were the *foundational nature of religion in education* and *cultural affirmation in education.*

A continuum, ranging from "secularized educational practice" at one end to a "transformational vision" at the other, is a useful image for expressing how these CSI educators picture various types of schools.

The Continuum

◄───►

| Secularized Educational Practice | "Icing on the Cake" Practice | Transformational Vision: Christian Perspectives in All and Through All |

Because they regard religion as foundational to the educational task, they see themselves striving toward the transformational end of the continuum and they do not regard dualistic, "icing on the cake" practice as adequate religious education.

Neo-Calvinists, like others in Reformed traditions, stand for an affirmative cultural response, believing that God's common grace operates in all humans and that Christ's redemption can extend to all human endeavour. Culture can be restored from its fallenness. In the face of the secularization of society, Neo-Calvinist institutions have been formed in which the sovereignty of God over all areas of human endeavour can be explicitly acknowledged. The schools struggle to work this out in their stance with regard to literature and popular culture. They are pulled by anti-cultural, protectionist forces within their constituencies and within their own thinking as they attempt to work conscientiously toward culturally affirmative ideals.

Three other significant components of Neo-Calvinist thought that I was able to identify in the literature, the interviews and from my experience within this educational tradition are:

1) the idea that vocational pursuits are not to be regarded as "high" sacred and "low" secular; rather all occupations ought to be regarded as activities in which people may glorify God in their calling.

2) the doctrine of general and special revelation, a doctrine that has particular educational significance and

3) the credo *semper reformanda*—always reforming—that cries out against static interpretations in theology, philosophy and science.

The implementation of affirmative cultural response and constant reformation as principal educational objectives in CSI schools is an ongoing struggle. While most of the educators and many of the parents identify with the Reformed worldview intellectually, implementation requires a high degree of reflectivity and a willingness to take risks within a religious community that finds change difficult.

Chapter 4:
The Obligational Dimension of Practice in CSI Schools

The previous chapter was largely about the ways that educators in the CSI Reformed Christian school movement explain their practice from a religious and philosophical point of view. The reasons for doing what they do, as they see it, are drawn from a philosophical tradition—Neo-Calvinism—which is a particular interpretation of the historic Biblical text. The practice of these educators is surrounded by stories and metaphors that give shape to the "narrative envelope"—the self understanding of the community. As we looked at the community from their own philosophical and theological perspective, Browning says we were looking at the "visional" dimension of the organization.

According to Browning, the visional dimension is but one of several ways to look at an organization and any one, when taken alone, may not provide a complete picture. Browning is saying we should slice through the practice of an institution in different directions to get a more complete understanding, not entirely unlike taking a cross section to see beneath the metaphors and religious expressions at the visional level and analyze what motivates people to function in institutions the way they do. Another dimension identified by Browning, a cross section if you will, is the *obligational* dimension.

> Within these traditions... the workings of human reason gradually
>
> elaborate general principles of obligation that have a rational structure.
>
> These general principles of obligation... might indeed be embedded within
>
> the narrative structures of these traditions. But these principles can be
>
> identified and can gain some relative independence from the narratives in

which they are originally embedded. It is not that the narratives are unimportant and incidental, as the liberal tradition has held. They very definitely contribute something original and profound to these general moral principles. Nonetheless, moral principles with common structures can be identified within differing narrative traditions, and this reality is important for dialogue between traditions. (Browning, 1991, p. 105)

The obligational angle brings particular questions to the inquiry. What are the moral principles with common structures that can be identified in the practice and philosophy of the Reformed tradition and other traditions? How does the practice of the Reformed Christian schools coincide with the practice in other schools? How can this common ground be used to foster dialogue between traditions (Browning, 1991, p. 104)? Educational theorists have also pointed out the importance of dialogue across differences. Burbules and Rice, for example, advocate for such dialogue even when we might be inclined to presume that dialogue will be difficult and that little or only partial understanding will result (Burbules & Rice, 1991, p. 408). Browning points to a recent and unprecedented desire in Western societies to engage in dialogue because:

[we] are desperate to find ways to make shared and workable decisions about the common good and the common life. The twin realities of modernity and liberalism have worked against the maintenance of shared traditions, social narratives, and communal identities. When it comes time to decide an issue about the common good, shared assumptive worlds are so fragmented that struggle, often unproductive, invariably ensues. (Browning, 1991, p. 90)

Perhaps we can find, within the Reformed Christian educational tradition, some common structure around which dialogue between traditions could potentially be conducted. As we shall soon see there are common structures that are largely unrecognized by the participants in this educational tradition.

In the interviews that I conducted, it became apparent that some of the actions described in religious terms or described as the outworking of Reformed Christian educational philosophy, were not necessarily actions unique to religious organizations. Since the actions did not contradict religious practice, they were easily framed in religious terms by the respondents. One principal said of the administrators' role:

A Biblical view of administrative leadership is important in developing a staff which can work out of a transformational vision of its calling and task. In our case, we set for ourselves the goal of working as servant leaders in a collegial teaching community. First of all, the three administrators (the principal, the assistant principal responsible for staff and curriculum development, and the assistant principal responsible for administration and student services) bear responsibility for their areas to the three of us rather than to the principal alone. Weekly meetings ensure joint ownership and decision making.

Secondly, we view our task as supportive to the most important work of the school, the teaching and learning happening in the classrooms. As a result, teachers are given a prominent role in the planning and decision making process. At staff meetings, this is facilitated through cross department support groups of four members each. Important issues are discussed within these groups. The groups give informal written reports to the principal. He then summarizes the general

staff reaction and proposes action to the administrative team. Those plans come before the whole staff for its approval. The process is not strictly democratic, nor strictly consensual; it follows the route that makes most sense for the issue. The staff is encouraged to express its real reactions, feelings and dreams. For that to happen, the administration must take staff response very seriously and absolutely refuse itself the luxury of implying that there are better and worse opinions on an issue. Taking staff reaction seriously does not mean abdicating all responsibility. There have been times (very few) when I have overruled the staff's consensus because I felt the health and viability of the school was at stake.

The initial sentences of this quote frame it in religious terms. This is the narrative portion which Browning affirms as important, non-incidental, and contributing something original and profound to the general moral principles. However, the administrative approach that follows the religiously framed introductory narrative, is one that could be embraced in virtually any setting, religious or secular, educational or otherwise. In fact, it seems to be a very "nineties" kind of approach, not unlike the method that corporations like Saturn have adopted in order to produce automobiles, and high employee and customer satisfaction. This school principal saw this administrative approach as the one best suited to accomplish the philosophical and religious goals of the school, so much so that it became part of his expression of servant leadership or a "Biblical" approach to school leadership.

The patterns of servant leadership are manifest in situations other than religious ones but people working within this religious context frame it in "sacred" terms, as part of their "narrative envelope," so to speak. The

explanation offered by the respondents, at the visional level, is a religious explanation for an action that *can* be reduced to a general humanistic principle of *obligation*—namely, equal regard for others. By identifying this as a general humanistic principle, Browning would not be attempting to dispute the religious origin of the concept of servant leadership. In fact, he is quite a strong proponent of the notion that:

> all Western people are shaped to some extent, even if they consider themselves atheist or agnostics, by an effective history with a religious dimension. The great religious monuments and classics of a culture are a part of effective history, shaping our sensibilities, even when we do not believe we are actually believers. (Browning, 1991, p. 90)

By identifying equal regard as the basis for the concept of servant leadership, the social scientist is able to find the unifying themes in various human endeavours and demonstrate that diverse peoples are motivated by similar principles. That being the case, Browning would advocate for dialogue between various traditions in order to support one another in achieving the common goals.

Another school principal listed a considerable number of practices he considered to be Reformed and Christian but many of them were also practices that one might well see in good schools, religious or not.

1. Encouraging leadership in students through leading assemblies, a student council, a staff-student policy review committee.

2. Encouraging an intramural program and an interschool sports program, where students get to put into practice values we stand for.

3. Insisting students have a passing standing before they take on extra curricular responsibilities.

4. Having an extensive band/choir program with touring possibilities.

5. Having opportunities to have service oriented programs

- collecting food through canvassing the whole town.

- highway clean-up and raising funds for student council programs

- seeing that a % of student council funds goes to charity (e.g. send a child to a Christian school in Honduras)

- offer a tutoring program by Seniors for Juniors

- have a peer-counselling program

- have staff in pairs where they mentor each other

- try to operate as staff by consensus (80%+)

- Do larger, integrated units together as a school, grades 8-12

- Human Sexuality Day

- 3 day unit on film "Lorenzo's Oil"

Again, equal regard for others figures prominently as the basis for a number of items on this list. Consider, for a moment, at this inclination to honor the principle of equal regard for others, to serve others. There is a body of literature that attempts to get inside the minds and hearts of those who serve others. Two books that speak to this dimension of human behaviour are *Acts of Compassion: Caring for Others and Helping Ourselves* by Robert Wuthnow and *The Call of Service: A Witness to Idealism* by Robert Coles. Of the many insights these books lend, the one that comes first to bear upon this discussion is the difficulty of discerning what really motivates people to serve others. The interplay between what is given and what is received in the act of service is complex. Cynically and simplistically speaking, the more one gives, the more one gets so service is really a selfish act. The authors demonstrate

that it is far more complex, subtle and ultimately "sacred" than that. There is a dimension of the human self that simply cannot be explained as stimulus-response and acts of compassion cannot be explained in terms of what the compassionate person gets in return (Coles, 1993; Wuthnow, 1991).

Wuthnow and Coles also amply demonstrate that the inclination to serve, the capacity to act compassionately, is fairly prevalent in, but by no means restricted to, those with religious convictions. This common structure is the type of connection that Browning is attempting to identify in order to facilitate dialogue between traditions. However, we have now seen two examples in which educators have identified their practice as religious practice. They do not separate their faith from their practice at all.

On this score, Browning notes that some social scientists and theologians say the rationalities and concomitant practices of a given organization are so tied up in its tradition that "it is impossible to abstract them from these traditions and give them intelligibility independent of the traditions that gave them birth" (Browning, 1991, p. 102). Browning contends, however, that "some relative distance can [emphasis added] be acquired in some cases so that common values and rational principles can arise out of diverse traditions to guide our practical dialogues in pluralistic societies" (Browning, 1991, p. 102).

Based on the interviews, I would say that it is *very difficult* for the participants from this tradition to spontaneously give intelligibility to their practice apart from the tradition. The respondents seem immersed in their religious tradition and see it as the *source* of all they do. There is a propensity to frame common practice in religious terms, to take basic good ideas and "sanctify" them by surrounding them with Christian language, to appropriate ideas and practices from other sources and unconsciously claim them for the

cause of Christian education. It is almost like an innocent plagiarism; when you quote something heard or read in a forgotten context as your own. Then, once appropriated, the practice has new meaning and significance in the religious context. It has become part of *religious* practice and, mysteriously, the practice seems now to have arisen from the tradition. The respondents do not spontaneously give intelligibility to their practice apart from the tradition; for them, the practice is part of the tradition. For example, one of my interview questions was, "Can you give a sense of the degree to which the practice in your schools is similar to the practice in other schools but done for different reasons? (different meaning is attached to similar practice)." Not a single one of the respondents thought of practices that fell into that category. They all considered their practice as one that emanated from their religious and philosophical position.

I was somewhat taken aback to find this powerful tendency in myself. In a paper I wrote in 1994, I was very busy framing my practice in religious terms and defending it:

> In *The World We Created at Hamilton High*, after analyzing the ethos of good schools, Grant makes the statement, "The case needs to be made anew that morality is independent of religion and that religion is neither a necessary nor a sufficient justification for the most basic, universal, ethical principles. Even from within, so to speak, new moral standards are often raised in criticism of specifically religious practice..." (Grant, 1988 p. 189). From a liberal point of view this is a logical conclusion. I understand how Grant and others would come to hold this perspective, but I do not agree with it. For me, and from a Christian perspective, morality is not independent of religion. Not only is religion a necessary and a sufficient justification for the most basic universal, ethical

principles—religion is the *source* of morality and the necessary and sufficient justification for the highest ethical principles. There are no new moral standards to be raised although we often need to re-evaluate our practice in light of evidence that suggests that our interpretation and practice are not consistent with revelation.

Wuthnow indicates that the ability to transcend the special language and beliefs of a religious tradition is somewhat exceptional among religious people. He describes many others as the "faithful who can speak only to the faithful" (Wuthnow, 1991, p. 138). Perhaps this tendency is not surprising because religiously and philosophically oriented people have adopted a worldview, a lens through which they see the world, a paradigm if you will. As Foster so succinctly puts it, "a paradigm is as much a set of blinders as it its a lens" (Foster, 1986, p. 57). I know a self-described Marxist who analyses every institution in terms of power relations, dividing between those who own and control, and those who are exploited. He does this to the point that he seems to frequently suspect the motivation of those in authority and occasionally interprets benevolence as manipulation.

So it may be with Christians who aim to be philosophically consistent; it seems that if it is done within a Christian institution, it must a "Christian" thing to do. Practice is often framed in religious terms even though the same practice carried out in a non-religious setting might not be seen as having a religious basis. Perhaps what makes this tendency "Reformed" is that it is consistent with an Augustinian type of appropriation of things secular for sacred usage. As did Augustine and John Calvin after him, these educators seem to be saying that Christian and good practice are the same thing; if it is good practice it must be Christian. They might even say that good practice

arising in secular contexts is simply evidence of God's common grace or natural law operational in all people.

To the extent that such a view might allow the Reformed educational community to be open to new ideas and might help the community to be "continuously reforming," the tendency to frame all things in religious terms could be seen a good thing. It is good for religious institutions to appropriate good ideas from the secular world without regarding them as suspect simply because they are secular.

To the extent that such a view might be interpreted as a form of religious arrogance (all the good ideas are really Christian ideas anyway), it is a bad thing. Don Posterski, a Christian author and researcher, speaking to the issue of religious arrogance cautions that:

> Living with a sense of reasonable certainty is one thing; propagating
> unexamined religious rhetoric is another. Fixed ways of thinking and
> doing things can stifle and restrain people and organizations. People who
> are locked into the supremacy of their own ways seldom value the ways
> of others. They can become little people living in small worlds. (Posterski,
> 1995, p. 33)

Browning would caution that the principles of obligation ought to be identified as common threads running through traditions and used for the purpose of fostering dialogue between traditions, not creating barriers.

In the interviews I have done, educators in the Neo-Calvinist Reformed Christian tradition describe themselves and genuinely see themselves as doing something essentially different, philosophically and practically, from what is being done in other schools. While it is evident that many of the things they do are much like the things done in other schools,

secular and religious, it is the self-understanding of the educators that is remarkably consistent throughout the tradition. As I analyzed the interview responses, I asked myself if what was being done was significantly different from what might be done in another educational tradition and, sometimes the answer was, "no." That has some significance in itself, but not apart from the reality that the respondents *saw* their work as different. While I did uncover distinctive educational practices that are evident in this tradition, the key was not always so much the uniqueness of the actions of the group but the unifying mindset.

A teacher from a British Columbia school, with experience in public and Roman Catholic schools, listed as things "different" about her school's practice: admission policies; a curriculum uniquely permeated by the Reformed worldview; teaching religion through the curriculum; as opposed to punishment, discipline fitting each child as a unique image-bearer of God; and finally:

> Spirit of community : this is what I find the most reformed in our school
>
> system. Covenant rules, not contract. We have a calling, not a job. Trust
>
> is given and experienced. Trust and commitment is also what is expected
>
> of staff members. I have never worked with such arrangement before and I
>
> have come to value it immensely. This principle is applied in many
>
> aspects of our system: job negotiations, evaluation, etc.

Other respondents identified some of the same practices as distinctly Reformed; still others identified a different set of practices but there remained the overarching sense that Reformed Christian education was different in substantial ways from what was going on elsewhere. They consciously or subconsciously don a particular set of lenses when they look at their

educational practice. Even though it is apparent that the prescriptions may be somewhat different, or some lenses may be tinted differently than others, they name their spectacles a "Reformed Christian world and life view."

In spite of the fact that I was able to identify, in the third chapter, a cohesive if not singular Neo-Calvinist *philosophy* of Christian education, there appeared to be only a few central distinctive *practices* that characterized *all* the schools represented by those I interviewed. Many of the interviewees used a common set of metaphors and key scriptural verses in their descriptions of practice. They also engaged in some key practices which we will examine in the next chapter. However, they didn't necessarily and universally do all the same unique things—things that could be called Reformed. They, like educators in secular and religious schools everywhere, struggled to do the right things—sometimes with reference to their philosophy but at other times simply with reference to what Browning would call common principles of obligation.

From the data gathered, it is not easy to summarize what it means to be Reformed in educational practice. It doesn't necessarily mean one thing to all the respondents. In fact, it may mean an appropriation of many other things, bringing them under the umbrella of Christianity and *re-forming* them, or as the subjects of the study said, "taking every thought captive to Christ (2 Cor. 10: 5)." So there it is again, that Augustinian propensity to appropriate all good things for sacred use.

Is there a lesson to be learned in this? Personally, as one who would call himself a reformed educator, I think it pushes me away from the parochialism that I may have tended toward. I will continue to frame my practice in religious terms because my worldview is very important to me. However, the discoveries made with regard to the obligational dimension of

practice cause me to recognize that some of the strength of my educational philosophy and practice has been, and will continue to be "borrowed." I hope then that I will not slip into an entrenched position wherein I might be inclined to believe that my practice is now reformed and needs no further alteration. I hope that I will use this knowledge to engage in dialogue with "other traditions," since many of the things that motivate educators are in common and we have a lot that we can learn from each other.

Chapter 5:
The Tendency-Need Dimension of Practice in CSI Schools

If the obligational dimension of practice is doing things that humans are morally obligated to do for one another, then the *tendency-need* dimension is doing things we would tend to do or things we need to do for ourselves as individuals or for ourselves in community. In Browning's analysis, these actions may not be as lofty as the principles of moral obligation but they are, nevertheless, vitally important to the understanding of reasons for being and doing. Browning maintains that the simple practices of satisfying basic needs or responding to human tendencies, can and do become enveloped in the narrative with which religious people surround their practice.

To analyze the practice of religious institutions from the tendency-need angle, Browning brings a different set of questions to bear. To what extent can the practices described by the participants be explained in terms of people meeting their own needs and following basic human tendencies? Are the actions legitimate ways of meeting needs? How can the practice be seen in terms of different dimensions of human value?

What tendencies, needs and values are regarded as basic and human? When investigating this, Browning suggests using Maslow's hierarchy of needs or using George Pugh's "more updated and empirically supported list" (Browning, 1991, p. 169) of human needs. Pugh's list of needs or values contains three broad categories in his primary list: *selfish* values, *social* values and *intellectual* values which are briefly defined thus:

[1] selfish values (values associated with individual welfare and survival); [2] social values (values that motivate individuals to contribute

to the welfare of the group); and [3] intellectual values (values that motivate efficient rational thought). (Pugh as sighted in Browning, 1991, p. 106).

With regard to the first category, it is probably safe to say that the operation of Christian schools is higher up any hierarchy of needs than individual welfare and survival. These Christian schools can, and occasionally do, function in that realm when they are engaged in providing food, clothing and shelter for their community. However, in terms of *primary* function, most Christian schools within the CSI tradition operate at a different level.

It is within Pugh's second set of values where some of the actions of the CSI schools seem to fit. The social values that motivate individuals to contribute to the welfare of the group, figure very prominently in the *raison d'être* of these affiliated schools. An elementary school principal put it this way:

> The focus of student services, or whatever that general area should be called, is on the formation of a school community. We believe that the individualism of our culture does not produce a healthy setting for children and that a Biblical view of personhood places us within communities. As a result we promote as many connections between students as we can. We speak often of the goal of creating community within individual classrooms and teachers have various means of doing that, running from class devotions to co-operative learning. In addition, we "buddy" older and younger classes. The teachers involved make as much or as little of that relationship as they wish. Many teachers do a great deal because the system works so well. Often older and younger

students are spending classroom time together on a weekly or biweekly basis. We also promote cross grade groupings in grades three and four and in grades five through six... The issue at the heart of creating a student community is the issue of belonging. Developing connections between students is vital. Developing a sense of community within classrooms is vital.

So, if we grant that contributing to the welfare of one's own community is a basic human need, we see that this school is busy meeting that need. The establishment and maintenance of these schools could be seen as motivated, in some measure, by the *need* to sustain community welfare and as a *tendency*, good or bad, to segregate in order to accomplish these goals of the community. At the visional level, the "official" explanation is that the schools exist to bring the education of children under the lordship of Christ, creating an agency to transmit "kingdom" values. The motivation has traditionally been explained in terms of a Biblical mandate to acknowledge and honour God's sovereignty, and to exercise a redeeming and transforming influence in all areas of life. The most contemporary and practical expression of the aims of Christian education comes from the recent CSI publication, *A Vision with a Task: Christian Schooling for Responsive Discipleship.* To encapsulate it and make it more accessible to those who are not from a Reformed background this most recent literature uses the language of "unwrapping gifts, sharing joys and bearing burdens, and creating shalom" (Stronks & Blomberg, 1993, p. 34).

To what extent are these official explanations religious narratives used to sanction, bless or otherwise justify a practice which is carried out for more basic, perhaps less lofty, reasons? To cut to the heart of the matter, the question that is sometimes asked is, to what extent is the Neo-Calvinist

agenda of starting Christian parallel organizations (such as Christian labour unions, schools, etc.) in fact a *tendency* toward sectarian withdrawal, and, alternately, to what extent a deliberate strategy to influence culture for Christ's sake?

At the visional level, there is clear and consistently expressed intent to avoid the pitfall of sectarian withdrawal. In Neo-Calvinist educational literature, it is identified as a problem and one to be avoided. For example, in *12 Affirmations: Reformed Christian Education for the 21st Century*, the authors identify gaps to be addressed in the practice of Reformed Christian education, the first of which is:

> the gap between our rich Reformed philosophy of Christian education
>
> and our actual practice. Historically, Reformed Christian schools have
>
> tended to isolate and protect. (Vryhof, Brouwer, Ulstein, & VanderArk,
>
> 1989, p. 15)

Having thus identified the problem, the authors affirm what kind of schools Reformed schools ought to be and what they ought not to be. They distance themselves from educational movements which exhibit tendencies they regard as undesirable. For example, they lament that:

> poorly informed parents, educators, and others throughout the rest of
>
> society continue to lump Reformed Christian schools together with
>
> Fundamentalist Christian schools, stereotyping all Christian schooling
>
> with an unjustified image of segregation, bigotry, unexamined right-wing
>
> politics, and anti-intellectualism. (Vryhof, et al., 1989, p.17)

In the reflective moment, in their philosophy, at that visional level, Neo-Calvinist Christian educators see their stand against sectarian

separateness as part of their reason for being. They acknowledge the historic tendency toward separateness in their own practice but they speak and presumably work against it. They do not wish to be characterized as an organization of sectarian withdrawal.

How ought I to approach the issue of sectarian withdrawal as an academic question and fairly represent it? As proposed from the outset, I will rely upon Browning to provide the grounded theory and the framework for the investigation. When examining a particular church group with a similar set of issues, he posed questions which I have adapted for the study of the schools in question.

1. Are the needs that Reformed people pursue through their schools historically created? Can they be justified at this stage in history? (Browning, 1991, p. 166)

2. If we grant that the pursuit of existential needs is the right of people within the context of their religion (Browning, 1991, p. 167), then what are the issues to which these educators ought to attend to ensure that the pursuit of those needs is done to an ordinate extent? Conversely, are their areas of practice which indicate inordinate pursuit of needs at the expense of the needs of others?

First, are the needs that Reformed people pursue through their schools historically created? Can they be justified at this stage in history? At the outset, it appears that the needs being met were social needs, as Pugh would call them, values that motivate individuals to contribute to the welfare of the group. The CSI Reformed Christian school movement was probably not too different from other religious school groups that formed throughout Canada within immigrant populations. Many schools at the time were formed as a

hedge against assimilation into a culture that was different and threatening to immigrant populations. One respondent, a seasoned school principal, put it this way:

> I well recall the meeting a few of us had with some of the original movers and shakers who worked hard to establish [our] school. For a long time we probed and probed to obtain the answer to the question, "Why was [the school] established? What was the motivation?" The answer was long in coming, but finally the answer given was, "We wanted to make sure that there would be a church in the future"—no doubt the church in reference was the Christian Reformed Church... The establishment of [our school], in my opinion was motivated primarily by the parents' desire to religiously isolate their children from Canadian society—i.e., remain theologically pure. Thus rather than pursuing what should have been the primary reason to establish a Christian school, i.e., a school based on Reformed Christian educational principles, little thought was given to what a Reformed Christian education meant in terms of educational philosophy translated into educational practice.

The same respondent went on to describe how Neo-Calvinist Reformed Christian educational philosophy was gradually brought to bear upon the practice of the school as the ties between the church and the school were loosened. The concept of sphere sovereignty became better understood as a philosophical construct within the communities. The cooperative relationship of the home, school and church, with no one of the spheres dominating another, "grew on" most Reformed school societies.

It is quite remarkable to discover unsolicited confirmation of Browning's notion that the narrative envelope, the philosophy if you will,

evolves around the practice of the organization. The practice of Christian schooling seems to have been originally motivated, in part at least, by the desire to isolate immigrant children and perpetuate the teachings of a particular church denomination. The school did not exactly serve that purpose in the long run because the school population became denominationally diverse and the immigrant population experienced significant degrees of assimilation into Canadian culture. Nevertheless, the school seemed to help satisfy the basic felt need of the group to remain true to the tenets of the Christian faith. The narrative envelope changed and developed as the group began to express its self-understanding of what they were accomplishing. As many other schools did the same thing, they corporately harkened back to their Calvinist roots for the substance of their philosophy and the Neo-Calvinist educational tradition developed and matured in North America.

Was this a one way street? That is, did the philosophy develop exclusively to sanction the practice? This could be no more the case than saying that the practice developed exclusively from sober reflection on a philosophy that was prefabricated in Calvinist ivory towers. Again, Browning comes to our aid and reminds us that nothing proceeds strictly from theory to practice or vice-versa. Rather he suggests that there is more of a dialectical process between practice and theory—a conversation he describes as flowing from practice to theory to theory-laden practice (Browning, 1991, pp. 39-40).

So, was the need historically created? Yes, the historical reality of immigrant populations struggling to withstand assimilation is well documented. There is a body of literature that analyses schools formed by religious immigrant populations, the French Catholic and Mennonite schools in particular, which has revealed the political nature of the struggle to resist

assimilation. The schools, beyond their educational function, were sites of resistance to what was perceived to be a governmental threat to freedoms of religion and language rights (Ens, 1993; Francis, 1953; Gregor & Wilson, 1984).

Can the needs that Reformed people pursued through their schools be justified at this stage in history? Resistance to assimilation was an original motivating factor but we are now at a different point in history and today the schools now function within a well developed self-understanding that says nothing about resistance to assimilation and naturally admits nothing about sectarian withdrawal. In fact, the philosophy, as discussed in Chapter 3, proclaims quite the opposite—that one of the ends of Reformed Christian education is to equip Christians to be agents of cultural transformation, to be salt and light in the world as servant leaders. Evolving organizations change their practices and change their reasons for being. So the assessment of the needs that an organization seeks to meet and the legitimacy of that quest are more properly done in the context of the current situation. This brings us to the next question.

If we grant that the pursuit of existential needs is the right of people within the context of their religion (Browning, 1991, p. 167), then what are the issues to which these educators ought to attend to ensure that the pursuit of those needs is done to an ordinate extent? Conversely, are their areas of practice which indicate inordinate pursuit of needs at the expense of the needs of others?

Obviously, there is a continuing felt need to conduct the education of children within a *religious* context in order to transmit the worldview as described in chapter 3. There seems to be an implicit understanding that people "become" within the context of institutions like marriage, the home, the church and the school. As Robert Bellah puts it:

while we in concert with others create institutions, they also create us: they educate and form us—especially through the socially enacted metaphors they give us, metaphors that provide normative interpretations of situations and actions... We form institutions and they form us every time we engage in a conversation that matters, and certainly every time we act as a parent or child, student or teacher, citizen or official, in each case calling on models and metaphors for the rightness and wrongness of action. (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1991, p. 12)

The school is seen as an institution in which children can become Christian in mind; can come to more fully understand and embrace the worldview of the parental community. Many parents work hard and sacrifice greatly to provide that kind of education. This is what Browning classifies as an *existential* need and deems to be basic, human and concerned with "the insecurities and anxieties created by human self-transcendence, finititude and contingency" (Browning, 1991, p. 167). It is apparent that in bringing the education of their children under the "lordship of Christ," as it is described at the visional level, this educational community is also attempting to meet an existential need to ensure that their faith and worldview is passed on to their children. It is, in fact, framed as a covenantal responsibility between humankind and God.

As we have seen, the Reformed thinkers and writers show an *intent* to avoid the problems associated with sectarian withdrawal. Do the schools actually attend to the potential problems of sectarian withdrawal and work to mitigate them? No doubt this varies from school to school and probably from classroom to classroom. In my experience within one school I would say that there is significant interaction with students from other schools and in

different walks of life but there is little emphasis on service. From my contact with educators from affiliated schools, I have seen exemplary development of service opportunities. Each school can be judged on the same basis that we would judge all schools.

Are there areas of practice which indicate inordinate pursuit of needs at the expense of the needs of others? It has been my experience that people do not generally have difficulty with Christian schooling on religious grounds. The difficulty seems to surface when there is the perception that children are being removed to an elite and separate environment, more on the basis of the parent's ability to pay than on a strong identification with the religious goals of the school. One public school teacher recently asked me if we screened our potential families before admission. Not sure where he was leading with the question, I cautiously answered that the desire for a religiously based education was a key criteria for admission. He expressed relief that this was the case because he had difficulty with children leaving the public system for an elite education which would cost the public school the loss of some of the "best" students. If the parents genuinely wanted a *religious* education for their kids that was fine with him.

In conclusion, the Reformed Christian school communities can be seen operating at the tendency-need level through the operation of their schools. *Tendencies* toward segregation, like the inclination of immigrant communities to resist assimilation, were evident in the past. Such historically created needs have long since lost their justification. The Reformed school communities continue to see their schools as one means by which they can transmit their faith and worldview to their children and in so doing, they meet a basic existential *need*. It is important that the school and the parents genuinely seek to make that need the basis for the operation of the school. To

the extent that the school becomes elite or exclusive on other grounds, it can be perceived as an institution that inordinately seeks to meet its own needs at the expense of others.

Thinkers within the tradition recognize the historic tendency toward segregation and strive toward a practice that avoids the pitfalls of sectarian withdrawal. They draw upon their Calvinist philosophy to frame their practice as one which ought to be culturally affirmative and engaging. Their success at achieving these goals will no doubt vary from school to school.

Chapter 6: Practical Reason,
Characteristic Practices and Challenges

The two previous chapters described the obligational and tendency-need dimensions of Reformed educational practice. In a sense, this involved deconstructing the narrative envelope which surrounds the practice of this religious community and identifying common elements in the practice of Reformed Christian schools and other institutions. We discovered some good but not uncommon educational practices, many of which were based upon principles of obligation such as equal regard for others. We discovered a fairly strong propensity to attach religious significance to those practices. We also discovered that this community is busy satisfying human needs and following tendencies through the operation of schools like this for their children. Such analysis gives a little critical and objective distance from the narratives surrounding the practice and helps one identify some of the things that are not necessarily religious in the practice of these Reformed educational communities.

Practical Reason

It is now time to turn attention to the themes and practices that were identified in the study which *are* rooted in the philosophical and religious. The philosophy and practice of CSI schools was examined as it is presented by the participants and philosophers because, as Browning maintains, there is an embedded wisdom and reason within the traditions as they have evolved. The narratives used by the educators in this tradition are ways of articulating their self-understanding but at the core of the narrative envelope is the accumulated wisdom and reason of this educational community. Providing Christian education for their children has accomplished things that this

community values. Over time, the tried and true practice—the practical reason—has been enveloped in tradition and framed in religious and philosophical terms. Now, according to Browning, the underlying reasons for doing what they do may not be easily seen, surrounded as they are by religious trappings.

What practical reason or wisdom is being carried in the envelope of Reformed Christian educational philosophy? I would suggest that the community is able to retain a measure of control over the educational environment and teach a way of life they wish to transmit to their children. There is a recognition that introduction into the worldview of the religious community happens most successfully in an "immersion" environment. There is a sense in which they have tried to distinguish themselves as a particular type of Christian community somewhere in the middle ground between extremes that are manifest within the broader Christian world. In chapter 2, it took considerable explanation to locate the Reformed position within the range of Christian responses to culture. If members of a community have a sense that their worldview is complex enough to require significant explanation, that it sits south of one extreme and a little north of another, then they will need to devote considerable time and resources to the transmission of the worldview. If the worldview is to be sustained, haphazard instruction will not suffice and a Christian school is seen as the way to provide an adequate teaching in the tradition.

This brings us back to Browning's view of the interrelationship between a religious tradition, practical reason and the interpretation of historic Biblical texts. He calls a religious tradition a "narrative envelope" surrounding a core of practical reason. He says the narrative envelope carries the practical reason and the practical reason shapes the envelope *by*

influencing the way the historic texts are interpreted (Browning, 1991, pp. 11, 49). In the case of the Neo-Calvinist educational tradition, the schools' ability to transmit a worldview can be seen as the practical reason carried by the narrative envelope. That practical reason, causes this educational community to interpret some Biblical texts differently than other Christians, even other Reformed Christians. A single example will have to suffice. In the immediate context of the giving of the ten commandments, these words are found:

> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6: 5-9)

This passage, among others like it (see Psalm 78), is regarded as a scriptural mandate and Neo-Calvinists see Christian education as a vehicle by which parents can impress a way of life and love for God upon their children. The immersion suggested by the passage above is not complete if the education of the child at school and at home do not have the same aim. Others, who also regard scripture as authoritative, read the same passage of scripture and do not read the necessity of Christian education into it. The practical reason—the need to successfully transmit a worldview—compels the people within this tradition to interpret scripture in a way that supports their view that Christian education is a requirement. That interpretation shapes the narrative envelope, so to speak. It becomes part of the expressed self-understanding of the community because it helps justify their actions.

This is not to say that the actions and interpretations are not legitimate. It simply illustrates that the narrative envelope carries the practical reason and the practical reason shapes the envelope by influencing the way the historic texts are interpreted. In this case, Neo-Calvinist educational philosophy carries the need to successfully transmit a worldview and that need shapes the philosophy by influencing the interpretation of the Biblical texts.

At the visional level, the self-understanding of this community, the Neo-Calvinist tradition of providing Christian education carries an embedded wisdom or practical reason. It exists not only for tradition's sake but it helps transmit what the participants feel is a distinct worldview and one worthy of preservation.

What difference does it make to educate under the direction of this religious worldview? It provides a structure within which elements of the educational enterprise can be positioned. It establishes some things as "givens," at least until the next time they need to be reformed. Knowing the givens in the equation allows the people in this tradition to carry out their educational responsibilities in relation to reference points, philosophical landmarks, and shared understandings. They believe. They would say they believe in a calling to live all of life and to educate their children in a way that honours and glorifies God. In as much as they authentically pursue that goal, it can have a substantial impact on the educational program. Within this type of institution the entire educational community can work at "becoming." Their hope is to become what God would have them be—a redeeming influence in their work and the world.

Characteristic Practices and Challenges

If "practical reason" can be conceived as it has just been described, then it follows that the schools would engage in some characteristic practices in order to work out their philosophy. As in Chapter 3, where I identified the elements of philosophy most frequently reported by the respondents, the remainder of this chapter identifies the distinctive and characteristic practices most frequently reported and observed. As mentioned in the previous chapters, educators in the Neo-Calvinist Reformed educational tradition describe themselves and genuinely see themselves as doing something essentially different, both philosophically and practically, from what is being done in other schools. This self-understanding is remarkably consistent across the participants in the study and with those who have been steeped in the tradition, in particular those educated in one of the Christian Reformed colleges. Implementing and sustaining the Neo-Calvinist Reformed perspective is a personal passion, and a seriously regarded responsibility, among the participants. To encapsulate the task and goal, they use the phrase "a transformational vision."

Transformational Language

The broadening of the denominational base in the Reformed educational communities has had an impact on the language used to describe the educational enterprise. One respondent, a principal from Alberta, pointed to the shift:

> I think that in general the "Reformed Christian philosophy" is quite
> prevalent in theory, at least, in most CSI schools. In our school in
> particular, that philosophy is one which we promote. We do not,
> however, use that terminology, because our staff and parent community

are denominationally diverse and I find that if you use the "old" terms,

like "reformed" it is a stumbling block to communication.

It seems that the use of the word Reformed is problematic in at least two ways. Firstly, it conveys a specific denominational connection to the average listener and those who are not from a Reformed denomination seem to regard its use as "exclusive" language and a barrier to their full participation in the school community. "If this is a Reformed school and we're not Reformed, then this is not *our* school." The schools genuinely desire to be interdenominational, regardless of some of the perceived difficulties, and so the use of the word Reformed is becoming less frequent.

Secondly, the meaning of the word "reformed" is shifting within the common lexicon as its religio-philosophical meaning is overshadowed by other meanings. In connection with education, there is the unrelated "reform school" which is jokingly batted around from time to time. In the Canadian context there is also the potential for a mistaken association with the Reform political party. There is also the unfortunate reality that the word Reformed is in the past tense as if the reform has already happened. This runs contrary to the foundational Reformed principle of "always reforming."

Consequently, other descriptors are becoming more frequently used than "Reformed" in CSI literature and conversation. A number of the participants in the study spoke of a "transformational vision of Christian education." In recent CSI publications, the variations on the word *reform* are almost always written with a lower case *r* and the word itself is used interchangeably with the word *transform* (Stronks & Blomberg, 1993, pp. 18, 246). In many ways, the word *transformational* is superior for communicative purposes because it overcomes the problems of denominational association and it more closely captures the essence of what was discovered in chapter 3

about the Reformed worldview. You may recall that the Reformed perspective was characterized as one in which Christians were to be busy *transforming* culture by questioning and changing every aspect of life, every social and cultural institution.

In this shift toward the use of the word transformational, there is an apparent acknowledgment of and acceptance of increasing denominational diversity and the change is itself a reform that should be characteristic of this community. An Alberta principal speaks to the challenge of using language in an inclusive way:

> It seems to me that there is a danger of "hiding behind" terminology. It appears that, in some cases, traditional phrases (e.g., "sacramentality of all of life," "Christian cultural transformation," "Kuyperian," "sphere sovereignty") are in danger of becoming somewhat meaningless. The terms are thrown about, assuming everyone knows what they mean. They are a "CSI shorthand." I fear, however, that in some cases, they have become phrases that we cling to, but don't fully understand or live up to. Also, as our Christian schools mature and as the supporting communities diversify, it is essential that new life is breathed into old terms. The ideas and philosophy are great, but for someone raised outside the Reformed community, what does "Kuyperian" mean? I think we need to spend more time "talking the talk" without using our traditional "catch-all" phrases. Make the vision come alive in words and phrases that are meaningful to the current people involved in Christian education. As the Corn Flakes commercial says, "Taste them again for the very first time."

The Challenge of Increasing Diversity

Twice now the view has been expressed that having teachers trained in the tradition is of some importance. Our hiring policies, at the Winnipeg school, give preference to teachers trained in the colleges associated with CSI, namely Calvin College, Dordt College, Redeemer College, and The King's University College. However, it has become harder to hire teachers from these colleges, because of the relatively small number of Canadian graduates and the increasing requirements regarding the number of education hours required to obtain teacher certification in Manitoba. As we hire more local graduates, concern is occasionally raised at the Education Committee level or within the interview committee about the gradually changing ratio of teachers from Reformed background compared to those educated outside the tradition. To some extent the fear appears to be based upon a concern about the "otherness" of those from different Christian traditions. Other people simply will not see and do things the same way. Coupled with that is the concern is that the school may lose its ability to share and transmit an understanding of a Reformed world and life view.

Related to this diversity within the teaching staff is the issue of denominational diversity within the school population at large. The principal of a mid-sized prairie school addressed the issue this way:

> I feel that the Reformed perspective is the direction that must be followed
> educationally, but sticking to that perspective is increasingly difficult as
> we become more denominationally diverse. Some parents from a more
> evangelical and/or fundamentalist perspective see something quite
> different for a Christian school, and the high enrollments in some schools

with this other focus make it a point that must be acknowledged and dealt with.

This is an interesting recurring theme, namely that denominational diversity is regarded as somewhat problematic by some of the educators interviewed. The influx of new participants is welcomed but it brings with it the challenge of communicating the transformational vision with inclusive language and at some points standing firm on key defining characteristics of Reformed education. I believe that one of the tensions is found at the interface of the home, the school and the church. In the Neo-Calvinist Reformed educational philosophy, as described in chapter 3, those three institutions are to exist in separate yet overlapping spheres of influence in the life of the child. The emphasis tends to be on the separateness of the spheres more than on the degree to which they overlap; each sphere is sovereign in its mandated area of responsibility.

Consequently many of these Reformed schools shy away from activities that they regard as the real function of the church. For example, in my experience, there is comparatively little emphasis upon spirituality, "conversion" experiences, and worship activities. I recall an occasion when some staff at our school had an impromptu discussion about an after school program conducted by a few parents called the "praise team." Students in the team played instruments, sang Christian praise songs, and some were involved in worship dance routines. The staff discussion centred around whether this was an activity that should be encouraged within the school. Should something so clearly worshipful, a church function, be carried out by the school? The principles of sphere sovereignty were invoked by those of Reformed background to support their view. The praise team's practices were never interrupted, but the fact that there was a discussion at all demonstrates

a marked contrast to many schools of, say, evangelical lineage, where praise teams are heartily endorsed as part of the schools' programs.

In the Reformed tradition, Christian perspectives are to be integrated into all subjects, but this is more of a reflective, academic and philosophic goal than it is a spiritual one. This is not to say that the Reformed educators downplay the importance of the spiritual dimension of life, however, generally speaking, they do not see the development of spirituality as a *primary* goal of the school.

In some measure, the reluctance to emphasize spirituality has to do with the historic stoicism of this religious community and of Calvinism in general. This is a people not typically given to exuberant expression of spirituality and so their practice and philosophy tends to emphasize the reflective over the celebrative. More than one respondent regarded an emphasis on spirituality as flawed practice and philosophically inconsistent. From a school principal:

> Much of what happens in Christian School's International Schools is led by [a Reformed] vision, but not all. A dualistic, Pietist [sic] worldview tradition is also strong in Reformed circles. This tradition tends to be protectionistic and moralizing in its approach to education. In many CSI schools, the official rhetoric is transformational, but the practice is led by a dualistic worldview which spiritualizes and moralizes its Christianity. For example, a school might describe itself as a school where all areas of the curriculum are taught from a uniquely Christian point of view. In actual fact, however, much of the teaching is being driven by provincial or state curriculum materials or by the teacher's guides which accompany curriculum materials. The Christian quality of the institution arises mostly

from "spiritual" activities including devotions and Bible study and from a moralizing rhetoric which the staff direct at student behaviour.

Those who are new to the school from "Evangelical," or "fundamentalist" traditions sometimes fail to appreciate the Reformed philosophic distinction of roles between school, home and church. There is considerable expectation that the school will emphasize spirituality and morality much the same way that a church sponsored organization might. Many people expect the school to perform as an extension of the church rather than as an institution with a distinct mandate in the educational realm. This distinction is also sometimes lost on teaching staff who are not reared or educated within the Reformed tradition. Added to all this, there is also a general loosening of the historic stoicism to which I referred earlier, especially on the part of younger teaching staff. This has given rise to a shift in emphasis to varying degrees within some schools.

Is the nature of the change brought on by increasing denominational diversity "problematic?" Perhaps the last words on this belong to this curriculum coordinator who addressed the concern that the schools were moving with the population and might lose their Reformed distinctiveness:

Well, that's funny. That's a contradiction in terms. If your motto is to be

open to reform, but make sure you never change, then you gotta go home

and think about it again. *Semper reformanda*, but make sure you do it the

way that I want you to do it. Yeah right. I can also guarantee you that if

you say this school will never change that it also won't be here ten years

from now. So what else is new?

Q: Do you think that distinctive reformed element, however you

encapsulate it, is being diluted, watered down or lost?

Am I being diluted as a man by cleaning toilets on Saturday? My first answer and public answer to that is no. My mother, God rest her soul, would say, "just a little bit." She'd come to me sometime in the kitchen when I was doing dishes or changing dirty diapers and she would say, "I think you do a little bit too much in the house." And I agree with her. OK? Am I being diluted as a man. Yeah, my ideas of what men are have been formed throughout the last 44 years. Yeah that idea is being slowly diluted. Is the fundamental principle that I learned a little bit wrong? Yes I think so. I think we had it wrong when I was learning instinctually what men and women are.

Is it good that things are changing? Yes it is. Does that mean that my whole world is being turned upside-down by that? Yes. Are there some things that I will never change? When my wife is changing tires on the car she thinks, I can do this, women can drive cars as well as men can. She feels the need to say that she can do this too and I feel the need to say, "Go ahead dear, you drive, you can do it." OK? There are implied understandings that we all live with, and without them we would be dead. We all have those things that we all hold dear and firm but if we have the humour of the Spirit living in us then we'll be willing to make changes even though it feels funny. Don't deny me my right to fee! funny about it. Don't deny me the right to express that from time to time; to even complain about it because things aren't as comfortable as they used to be. I think I would probably feel much more comfortable if I were a real man and not someone that does dishes [laughter]...

We are inveterate traditionalists. If I had to make a choice about what clothes to put on every day of the year and that choice was totally open, I'd go nuts. If I had to go to a store and pick a new set of clothes

every day I'd go nuts. I like going to my closet, finding familiar stuff and putting it on. Once in a while I'll put something new in there, but it changes the closet as I knew it. This sweater is new and I'm a little uncomfortable with it. I don't like the collar on it and it doesn't fit right and my wife bought it so it wasn't even my choice. That's the way we are in schools too. We must feel comfortable in our schools and at the same time we have to push ourselves to feel uncomfortable and to change when change is needed. If you can see the Christian school society in that sense, then it makes sense. That there are people who have the *semper reformanda* image who can say always change but make sure that you don't change any things that I like. That's what it means to be human and Spirit led.

There seems to be wisdom in adopting the posture suggested here. There is a recognition that change is inevitable and uncomfortable, desirable and disconcerting, necessary and threatening. Ultimately change is good when thoughtfully executed and consistent with *semper reformanda*.

An Important and Difficult Job

I got a clear sense that these educators feel the task is immensely important but at the same time extremely difficult. Greenfield talks of the way that administrators are responsible for carrying the vision of an educational institution and these administrators take the responsibility very seriously. It is not uncommon to hear a voice of lament from administrators when it comes to getting philosophy implemented in practice. Here are a few examples. The first are selected comments from a senior administrator:

I have recommended to the Education Committee a complete overhaul of the professional development policy. Hopefully, we can get teachers to read more books that are authored by individuals who are well versed

with reformed educational philosophy. As stated previously, I have recommended to the Education Committee that a course of study be worked out for 'new' teachers coming aboard who are unfamiliar with reformed educational philosophy.

We have teachers who have not caught the vision of reformed Christian education and who see the school as a ministry of the church. Thus, developing a Christian lifestyle and a commitment to Christ becomes the most important factor, in their view, for Christian education. Important as lifestyle and commitment are, the point of reformed Christian education is missed. The reformed vision has to grow on you; an understanding of sphere sovereignty and an understanding of what the reformed thinkers such as Kuyper, Bavinck, Jellema, and Jaarsma among others were addressing from a reformed perspective takes years of growth and a willingness to grow.

If there is one regret, then, it has to be the apparent inability for me to convince teachers of the importance of integrating the reformed educational world-and-life view effectively into their curriculum nor having had sufficient time to work with them. Too often the textbook becomes the curriculum. Too often the curriculum guide determines the content. Yet, both the guide and the textbook are secular in content and perspective. To develop units with a distinct reformed philosophical perspective is beyond the ability level of many teachers and thus it is not done. Lack of training at the college/university level to develop effective units is one major reason.

A principal from a smaller K - 8 school in Alberta wrote:

We try, as a school, to keep on top of this in several ways. We hold, plan to hold, one curriculum focused staff meeting each month, at which we talk specifically about these topics. The past year we began to go through *Stepping Stones to Curriculum* together, but it is quite hard going. Some teachers really enjoy this type of book and others have a really hard time with it. Also, as principal, this year was not an easy one in terms of staffing turnover and other "crises" so I did not have the time and energy to really keep the topic going. As a result it sort of fell by the wayside after a while. I need to decide this summer if we will pick it up again in the fall.

Finally an experienced administrator from a fairly large school said:

What we have endeavored to do is to 'educate' teachers in Reformed Christian philosophy. We have tried to do that with the book *Vision with a Task*. Regrettably, when it came to one of the most important chapters dealing with curriculum and integrating the school's philosophy I found the least interest from the teachers. We have asked those who have not taken any Christian college courses to take a Christian perspective course. But one course does not a reformed Christian educator make.

In addition to lamenting the difficulty of the task, the preceding quotes reinforce three themes that have been touched on already. Firstly, it is regarded as somewhat problematic to have teachers not educated in the tradition and families from outside the tradition enrolling their children. Training for teachers and exposure for parents is desirable, if a foundational Reformed character is to be maintained.

Secondly, the purpose of education in the Reformed tradition is not primarily about spirituality, lifestyle and commitment. It is about a world and

life view, a reflective way of life in which all things are seen from a Christian perspective.

Thirdly, the exclusive use of provincially approved textual and curriculum resources is inadequate Christian educational practice because of their pervasive secular outlook. Consequently, Reformed educators need to be busy in the development of Christian resource materials.

The administrators try to foster Reformed educational practice in several ways. Here they speak to their other efforts to accomplish the task:

We encourage our teachers to get involved in curriculum writing projects through District 11. I personally feel that writing Christian curriculum with colleagues is one of the best professional development activities for teachers. The process that occurs results in most cases in a fine unit that is published, but it also gives the teacher experience in writing a unit in which a Christian perspective is evident. Once a teacher has this experience, it makes it easier to plan a similar unit of their own. Some of the mystique and intimidation of the task is removed. (An Alberta principal)

The assistant principal responsible for staff and curriculum development also encourages teachers to integrate faith and practice within the classroom. She does this by asking for yearly and major unit plans and making 'vision' a component of the concerns she explores when she discusses these plans with the teachers involved. In doing this she is greatly aided by the materials which have been provided for teachers by the Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia (CSI District 12). These materials range from unit planning guides and actual unit plans to handbooks in curriculum areas. In addition, the assistant principal

encourages teachers to become involved in a variety of curriculum projects and workshops, including many which are sponsored and supervised by the SCSBC. (A British Columbia principal)

I also try to plan inservice days that challenge us to take our talk and make it live in our classrooms.... We encourage our teachers to take the District 11 Christian perspective course. I found it really helped me and seems to do the same for others.... Through in-school activities such as teacher-principal conferences at the beginning of the year to set goals, teacher evaluations, and the writing of long range plans, a discussion and evaluation of Christian perspective is worked on. (An Alberta principal)

Just recently we have developed a course of studies for such 'new' teachers who must engage in reading a book with a strong reformed educational emphasis. As well, these teachers will be asked to develop a unit in which a reformed educational philosophy is integrated. Also, the recently developed curriculum materials by CSI (Healthy Living) and District 11 shows a very distinct well-worked out Reformed Christian educational philosophy and all teachers have been provided with these materials as resource materials to support the provincial curriculum. The units some teachers have developed also indicate a clear vision of integrated reformed philosophy. (A Manitoba principal)

Curriculum Development

In the previous section, as the administrators discussed their attempts to foster Reformed Christian education practice, they demonstrated the degree to which they feel the need to be distinctly Reformed in their practice. The importance of curriculum development was mentioned several times as the means by which they try to accomplish their goals. One of the longest serving principals in western Canadian CSI schools had this to say:

Excellent attempts to write curriculum got underway in the three Canadian Districts. It spurred on the CSI curriculum department to develop distinctly Christian curriculum/resource materials for the schools in the late 1970s and into the 1980s. Those were exciting years and crucial years to give identity to the Reformed Christian schools. And in those years, I believe, greater expression to Reformed Christian educational philosophy was given in CSI schools in Canada then will ever be given again. [Our school], also through some very 'reformed' teachers, had a clearer understanding of the Reformed Christian education philosophy and how to integrate that philosophy into the curriculum. There has been a clear understanding that the Christian religion is not only creedal but, philosophically speaking, a world-and-life-view. There is an understanding of the question: "What must a Christian be and do in the world?" So the issue of stewardship, discipleship, responsibility and accountability are mainstay issues confronting the teacher and students at all times.

This respondent pointed, first, to a practice that is common among these schools, namely the coordinated development of Christian curriculum by teachers. Because commonly available textbooks are written from a secular point of view, this kind of development is regarded as important to the process of maintaining a Christian educational practice. Writing of units provides the teachers with resources written from a Christian perspective and it draws upon the experience and expertise of a number of Christian educators. This kind of activity is encouraged as professional development and satisfies professional development requirements in employment contracts.

In the three Canadian districts, there are annual curriculum writing projects in which teachers, of the same subject area or the same grade level, will meet for two weeks in the summer to write a unit. The assembled team of teachers, usually with the support of a district curriculum coordinator, pull resources together from a variety of sources and write a unit in which they attempt to reflectively apply Christian perspective to the topic at hand.

For example, a science unit on ecology would be framed in terms of the stewardship responsibility given to humankind in the cultural mandate of the first two chapters of Genesis. The mandate to "have dominion," "subdue," "rule over" the earth, and the charge to work the garden of Eden and take care of it, is regarded as a God-given stewardship responsibility for creation. Beyond good ecological citizenship, "earth-keeping" is framed as service mandated by the creator. Coupled with the view discussed earlier, that work is God-given, this perspective lends visional depth to the study of ecology. It takes it beyond the realm of science and ecological citizenship and lends authoritative and responsive meaning—we ought to serve God in this way and we gladly do so in response to the gift of creation for our use and enjoyment.[7]

When the team of teachers complete writing the unit they take it home for their use in the classroom and copies are made available to other teachers through the district curriculum banks. As seen in other quotations, total dependence upon textbooks and curriculum guides is not regarded as good practice because the underlying philosophy of secular guides does not acknowledge God as creator, and does not acknowledge God's ongoing

---

[7] This perspective is also corrective of other interpretations of scripture in which Christians have, at times, interpreted the mandate 'to have dominion' as a license to exploit. When I taught this in my science classes, we had some eye-opening discussions about the exploitive practices that have been justified rather than combated on the basis of this phrase from scripture.

sustenance and involvement in creation and the lives of his creatures. This kind of curriculum development activity happens at the local district level and it also happens on a larger scale when CSI undertakes a textbook series. Text or resource materials have been developed in many subject areas and all grade levels.

Returning to the quotation above, this respondent and others express the idea that the Reformed philosophy should be integral to education. Curriculum and resource development is one way that these educators seek to make that a reality in the classroom. Note also that the respondent, a long time administrator in the tradition, expressed the sense that the emergence of the philosophy for the schools was a developmental process through the seventies and eighties. This supports the notion explored in the last chapter, that there is a dialectic between practice and theory. Theory and practice develop and can change as they respond to tensions with the contemporary situation. Another educator, also a school principal, speaks to that challenge:

> I think the challenge in our school is to move from the theory into the practice. We believe and state that our Christian commitment and perspective must be integrated into all subject areas so as to shape a Christian world and life view,[8] but actually having this happen on a regular basis, with authenticity, is a challenge. In some cases, a lack of training in this area is the main factor (i.e., hiring teachers who do not come from this background), but in general, even when we know it in our heads and can speak eloquently about it, actually doing it in the classroom is another thing. The time and energy needed to develop units

---

[8] Notice the use of "world and life view" as a recurring descriptor of the philosophy. Wrapped up in that phrase is the notion that this is more than a theoretical construct or a religion, it is a way of life.

and lessons that have a strong Christian perspective, are the main limiting factors that I see.

The Development of Textual Materials

Textual materials based on the Reformed Christian worldview have been developed and are in use in most of the affiliated schools. The development of such textual material in various subject areas is perhaps one of the most important practices of CSI schools for the maintenance of a transformational perspective. When asked about the standard by which the Reformed perspective ought to be measured this curriculum coordinator referred to several CSI publications.

Walking with God in the Classroom, Stepping Stones, A Vision with a Task, Those are the three latest ones out. Those are books that state and restate. *Living in Hope, Family Life Education, Healing the Hurting,* all of our publications in different areas keep calling people to their task, keep reminding people of their task, keep helping them do their task and I think those are the continuous string of reinventions of what Christian education means and how it is to be done. And I think when people read those things they say, 'yeah I can find myself at home with this, the language sounds familiar, the jargon sounds familiar, even if its new jargon. Is that what I'm trying to do? Yeah that's what I am trying to do, that'll be helpful.' There are also publications that I read and I say, 'that is not what I am trying to do, I don't feel at one with that if it's leading in different directions.' The *Christian Educator's Journal* is another attempt at doing that, our educational publications, our units.

Q: I think that to me, among a few other things, stands out as one of things that distinguishes CSI school from other schools.

It distinguishes us from ACSI schools for sure. ACSI schools, by and large, are not very interested in the development of Christian *curriculum* materials.

Q: Where would their emphasis be?

On teacher spiritual health, on student spiritual health and strength, on their commitment to God—which are all wonderful things. I wouldn't say that we're not interested in those things. So when you look at their conferences, you look at their publications, they speak more of an individual and a communal dedication to God. When you look at our publications you see a dedication to working God's word in the field of education.

Here is found affirmation of some of the observations made earlier: 1) the transformational perspective is not primarily about spirituality or commitment, 2) the narrative envelope is evolving and the language is changing and, 3) the publication of units and books by teachers and by CSI, respectively, is very important to the development and maintenance of the transformational perspective.

One of the respondents, a curriculum coordinator, was also the lead author of a high school textbook series entitled *Living in Hope* which is a revision of an earlier series called *Man in Society*. I asked him to talk about some issues in the development of Christian textual materials:

> I had to write, we had to write, something about homosexuality and how we would deal with that topic. First of all, it was not dealt with in our 1980 version of *Man in Society* because, homosexuality, even though it existed since the time of Sodom and Gomorra, wasn't talked about then. When it got to be 1990 we had to address the issue of homosexuality.

We had to address homosexuality but we didn't know what to say about it. We didn't even know where it belonged, whether it belonged in the self-image unit or in the 'troth' unit—marriage, courting, dating, friendship unit—and so we had to make some decisions about that. For one, we put it in the self-image unit, not in the 'troth' because that's where we believed it should be, because, in our opinion, in 1990 it was something that had more to do with self-image than it did with 'troth' relationships. We also had to come up with some articles and we needed to say something about homosexuality.

The easy thing to do is to make a very strong homophobic statement. There are plenty of pieces in the scripture where we can be very homophobic and say "bah... scripture says no, don't do it, for God's sake don't it." That would be the easy way out. Scripture does say that. Scripture, I believe, has some very strong words for the way in which male and female were created and the purpose of their creation and so on, which speak very much against the practice of homosexuality.

The other thing is that we also know and it has been revealed to us through the lives of people, friends and family, and students that people who are homosexual are people. Homosexual is an adjective, not a noun. That became our reminder, if you will, our statement. Homosexual, first of all, is an adjective not a noun. You will see that in the text. Without saying, look, anything is fine, which, for example, not to pick on the United Church, but the United Church, I think, has come to the point on homosexuality where they say anything is fine. We're not at that point. We don't want to say that yet, because we don't think its fine but we also don't think that it should become a noun. If we take a look at

what is happening in our society and in our Christian school society and in our general community, that is the mistake that is being made.

So, we had piles and piles of key materials, readings, things that people had written, Christians have written, about homosexuality. I had no bigger pile than the one on homosexuality to choose from because I was looking all over the place for just the right thing. That took me the longest amount of time in the writing of that textbook, just trying to determine what was there. I read through the entire pile a number of times and finally I threw the whole pile away. I sat down at 4:30 in the afternoon at my computer, just before supper, and I said, 'I now know what I want to say' and I just wrote it, quickly. That was the article on homosexuality in *Living in Hope.*

What I tried to do was to tell the story to students of every relationship I've ever had with homosexual people. Beginning with the dirty bugger who felt me up in a movie theatre in Vancouver when my brother and I went there and this guy came and sat beside me and tried to feel me up and I was grossed out and I thought it was terrible.

[There were] a number of other incidents of a teacher who had a homosexual friend who was married and had children—he was heterosexual for a long time but came to be homosexual. Instead of condemning him or whatever, whenever he had the urge to practice homosexual acts he would come to my friend. Something like an AA buddy. He'd go and live with them for a while. I thought that was very good. There was a recognition that there was something wrong with committing homosexual acts especially in terms of the fact that the guy was already married to a women and had children. There was something more than just his immediate urge to go and commit some homosexual

act, there were the responsibilities of life that he had to deal with and he handled them in such a way that he was able to, like an AA member, actually come and draw strength from a fellow Christian. I admire that in the sense that it never condemned the individual but it condemned some acts that needed to be faced and it dealt with them in a positive way. There wasn't a condemnation there, there was only a realization and a building of community.

There were students who came to me as school counsellor and dealt with their problems with homosexuality. So I describe all of those things. In a sense, a whole spectrum of relationships that I've experienced in terms of homosexuality, some which were crude and harmful and some which have effects on people which they never knew about, and others which were very creative ways of dealing with homosexuality. Ending up with a homosexual student of mine who, when he became a teacher in one of our schools, was fired because he was openly gay.

It shows a community struggling and that's what we wanted to show. It shows that treating the word homosexual as a noun gets you in trouble, treating it as an adjective is more helpful. Treating people as if they are people and part of the community is helpful. Acting as if everything is fine, no problem, anything goes, gets you into trouble again. We tried to illustrate that in the book. Any kind of derision at this point of anyone who holds those kinds of points of view is unhelpful and sinful.

It's under a section called "We're not sure." That was the title "We're not sure." There are other things. Anorexia which is dealt with. Again you didn't talk about anorexia a long time ago. Now you do because its something that you need to deal with. That also is there under

"we're not sure." Those titles reflect what I think is a very strong Reformed understanding that there are things that we are simply not sure about. We're sure about lots of things within that "We're not sure" but where that lands you, we don't know. We're not quite sure yet, we haven't figured that out, we're busy at it. And you bloody well better be Christ-like in your way of dealing with this as we are figuring it out rather than becoming a bombastic person who throws stones and calls people names. So to me that's a good illustration of thinking that is "constantly reforming" in light of scripture, in light of the world around us but which does not always lead us to easy answers. That's one example. I can give you a hundred more but you may run out of tape.

Much of the quotation speaks for itself, giving a sense of the struggle to come to terms with difficult issues and to communicate the struggle in the form of a high school textbook thereby consciously making the struggle a communal one, one that is faced within the context of the classroom setting.

The quotation also intersects with Browning's work remarkably well. Browning says a lot about the way in which the narrative envelope of an organization, its practice and the changing contemporary situation are related to one another in tension. The practice of an organization is stretched between the traditions embodied in the narrative envelope and the changing contemporary situation. Societal change can have an impact on practice and this may cause dissonance between the practice and the tradition. Participants in the tradition can respond in different ways. They may be inclined to leave the practice unchanged because a change would run contrary to the interpretation of the historic texts upon which the tradition is based. Alternately, they may reinterpret the historic texts and modify the narrative

envelope in response to the changes. The tension between the tradition and societal change is thus mediated in the practice.

Does that pattern fit in this case? Here is an institution that previously had little to say about issues like homosexuality and anorexia. They were issues that were not talked about in the textbook material written in the 1980s. Societal change raises the issues and they must be dealt with in one way or another. Even though the historic Biblical texts and their traditional interpretation might be expected to lead toward a firm homophobic stance, the human face of the issue causes the community to consider the issue in its full complexity. The community changes its practice from silence on what was previously taboo, to a more open dialogue, in the forum of the classroom, about the complexity of the issues. The historic Biblical texts are not ignored—homosexual practice is still seen as morally problematic for the family and for individuals. However, the educators hold up the teachings of scripture in one hand, the reality of the human condition in the other, and make this issue a matter of curriculum so their children will consider the question "What must a Christian be and do in the world?" The tension between the tradition and societal change is thus mediated in the practice.

Conclusion

The chapter began with an explanation of the practical reason carried by this tradition. Even though motivations are complex and are all framed in religious terms (as discovered in the chapters on the dimensions of obligation and tendency-need) the core reason for Reformed education is the transmission of a worldview. The transformational vision is carefully and reflectively located between extremes; sustaining it requires more than haphazard instruction. Neo-Calvinist educational philosophy carries the need to successfully transmit the worldview and that need shapes the

philosophy by influencing the interpretation of Biblical texts. The Neo-Calvinist worldview provides a structure for the educational enterprise—a context in which this community can work toward becoming what they believe God would have them be.

To accomplish their goals they face challenges and engage in several characteristic practices. In the challenge of increasing diversity within the schools the language being used to describe their practice is shifting. The schools hire teachers educated in Reformed colleges when possible but as other teachers are also hired, the schools provide professional development opportunities to increase the staff familiarity with Reformed educational thought. The school principals generally feel a great deal of responsibility for developing and maintaining a Reformed distinctiveness in classroom practice. The development of curriculum at the district level and textbooks at the international level is a key distinctive practice in CSI.[9]

In these challenges and practices, there is evidence supporting Browning's ideas. For example, in the language shift and the changing subject matter found in new textual material, one can see that the tension between tradition and societal change is mediated in the practice of these religiously based schools. The final chapter will attempt to summarize the findings of this study, contemplate the implications for educational practice, and point to areas where further research is needed.

---

[9] The districts invest in salaried curriculum or education coordinators, who play a vital role in encouraging the development and implementation of curriculum. Their presence and importance was not directly covered in this study but their influence is evident in nearly every aspect of the school movement.

Chapter 7: Sustaining the Transformational Vision

In many respects, the findings of the later part of the previous chapter describe my journey of understanding as I have studied the practice of this educational community. In the first chapter, as I declared my bias, I also declared my inclination to believe that practice is largely a response to revelation in much the same way that Karl Barth and many theologians after him have believed that we move, "from revelation to the human, from theory to practice and from revealed knowledge to application" (Browning, 1991, p. 105). What has become clear throughout this study is that religious narrative and practice are much more fluid than I had previously imagined. I have to affirm Browning's contention that the process of working out ideas flows from practice to theory and back again. In the movement back and forth, the practice changes and the ideas change. In the case of a religious organization that sometimes means a change in the interpretation and understanding of the historic Biblical texts.

In the case illustrated near the end of the preceding chapter, the change in the textbook represented a shift in posture with regard to the issues surrounding homosexuality. The change effectively impressed a shift in educational practice upon all those in CSI who adopt the textbook for use in the classroom. Why did the textbook authors effect this change rather than advancing a "homophobic" view which they could have justified on the basis of traditional interpretations of scripture? Is it because the dialectic between practice and theory is relentless and that change is inevitable? Or is it because, in this instance, they were successful in being Reformed, transformational and always reforming? Perhaps the change happened because of the compatibility between those two options. Perhaps the transformational view,

when operational, when reflectively engaged, is able to manage the inevitability of change and develop "new reconstructed religious meanings and practices" (Browning, 1991, p. 105). Could it be that the Reformed philosophy of education makes a difference in educational practice?

And now to return to the question posed at the beginning of the study. "What difference does it really make?" or better, "What impact does it have?" to consciously educate under the direction of a religious educational philosophy. In the case of this worldview, it seems to help the educational communities steer a middle course between extremes, to stay on course in the face of considerable change and to respond to change effectively and reflectively. A few moments to review the examples would be worthwhile.

The schools are all experiencing increasing diversity within their school communities and staff. What was nearly an exclusively Christian Reformed community as recently as twenty years ago has been reduced to representations as low as ten percent in some schools. In the face of these changes, constitutional documents are being re-written, the language used to describe practice is shifting, and some senior administrators have expressed doubts about the long-term sustainability of the vision of CSI schools. In spite of all of this, the respondents convey a very unified sense that what they are doing in the affiliated schools of CSI remains distinctive and worth preserving. The respondents continue to identify strongly with the Reformed, Neo-Calvinist roots of the tradition and take measures to define themselves and their practice as such, even though they need to use newer, more inclusive, language to do so. They uniformly resist becoming, "icing on the cake" Christian schools by affirming that their faith is foundational to and inseparable from the educational enterprise. Through publications and through the support provided by the curriculum coordinators, Christian

Schools International encourages the schools to adopt a culturally affirmative stance by implementing media studies courses and encouraging exposure to a range of literature. The umbrella organization has also published documents which identify the error of historic tendencies toward segregation and schools have responded by implementing programs in which students and staff have opportunities to be more outreaching by engaging in service. Even in their propensity to frame all the facets of educational practice in religious terms, these educators demonstrate a singularity of purpose.

Surrounded as it is by the narrative envelope of this tradition, the practical reason for what they do has been, at times, in danger of being lost in the jargon. That essence, the existential need and felt obligation to faithfully transmit a worldview to the next generation persists and finds expression in a number of distinctive practices. A short list includes inservice education and professional development opportunities for staff, district level curriculum development, international level text book and resource publication, and investment in the services of curriculum and education coordinators. When faced with difficult issues, this group of schools, by reflectively engaging their philosophy and worldview, is able to consciously make the struggle to understand and respond a communal one.

It seems to make a difference. It is not without pitfalls. It does not always go smoothly and the range of diversity within the community seems to make it increasingly difficult for the participants to be of one mind. Nevertheless, consciously educating under the direction of a religious educational philosophy, has a substantial impact on the practice that is carried out in the affiliated schools of Christian Schools International. It is time to turn attention to the implications of this for educational practice.

Implications for Educational Practice

It's Important

With independent schools representing only about five percent of the general school population and schools in the CSI tradition representing a fraction of that, what is the significance and importance of this school movement? I believe the importance lies in the purpose and mission this educational community has by virtue of its Reformed heritage and its transformational vision. It is the importance of a shared idea and a unifying mind-set. Beyond the sacramental, the private, and the personal dimensions of a particular belief, this Reformed worldview calls for acknowledgment of God's sovereignty in and through every human endeavor, including education.

That might not be a unique claim among faith groups except for the reality that this particular group extends its worldview to a number of institutional structures in somewhat different ways than others who also say that faith ought to influence all of life. The existence of religiously based schools and other organizations does not necessarily distinguish this tradition from other religious groups. However, the philosophy under-girding the CSI tradition and the way it is carried out, speak of a religious community in a "holy quest" to maintain an identity and a vision. It is a Neo-Calvinist Reformed identity and vision of what Christians must be and do in the world. It sits at a particular place within a range of Christian responses to culture and the participants are remarkably unified in their belief that it is a good way to live out their convictions.

The philosophical constructs, dating back to Reformation times, provide a framework for living and educating that does not have to be rethought at every turn in the road. It has some ways and means to

understand, relate to, and affirm contemporary culture. There is a shared understanding about the way to respond to revelations from scripture and to discoveries in science. The framework is flexible enough to adapt to change with a built-in adaptation device—*semper reformanda*, constantly reforming.

There is a narrative, perhaps a "grand narrative," that gives this group of people a reason for being, for acting, for getting on with life and service without re-negotiating the terms of reference every morning as they wake up in a world shaped by modernism and rocked by post-modern uncertainty. For these reasons and others, the worldview and the school movement are important to the participants. If it is important to this educational community one can, provisionally at least, grant it importance to society and culture. Perhaps this experiment in living and educating in a manner consistent with a worldview has produced and will continue to produce results worthy of study, reflection and application as we all try to make our way in the world.

It's Difficult

As demonstrated in the preceding chapters, execution of the plan is a daunting task. This educational community is pulled in different directions from within and without. The fairly conservative nature of the community sometimes keeps them from fully realizing the potential in the philosophy. Affirming culture in the educational context has its risks because there are elements of culture that are questionable at best. How does one discern? Would it not be easier to avoid cultural influences and shelter children from them rather than discern between them? Constant reformation is exhausting and unsettling. It is easier to be Reformed than reforming.

A changing constituency and teaching staff can pull in directions that may not be consistent with the central and important elements of the transformational vision. Many newcomers to CSI schools expect little more

than an "icing on the cake" kind of Christian schooling. As some of the respondents indicated, it is quite difficult to deliver more than the icing. Some schools and teachers are better at it than others.

The Less Successful

In the opinion of the respondents, the schools that fall short are the ones that slide along the continuum toward secularized educational practice.

The Continuum

◀───▶

Secularized Educational Practice	Dualistic "Icing on the Cake" Practice	Transformational Vision: Christian Perspectives in All and Through All
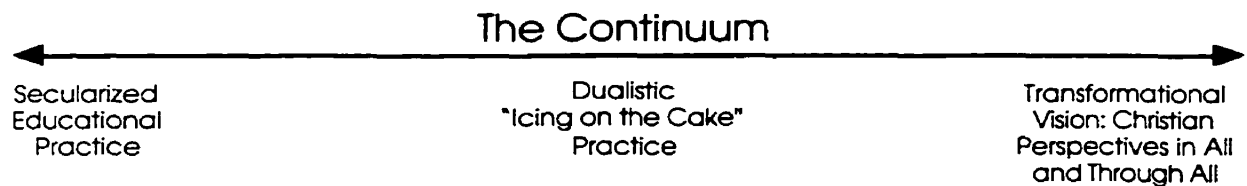
They are schools with a dualistic worldview, dividing between the sacred and the secular by tacking religious exercises onto an otherwise secular curriculum—the "icing on the cake" schools. They are also the schools that moralize and spiritualize their Christian practice, directing moralizing rhetoric at student behaviour. Schools that fall short regard children as objects to be trained into conformity rather than appreciating the fullness and uniqueness that comes from being created in the image of God.

Schools within the CSI tradition are susceptible to falling short of the transformational ideals. As one respondent, a school principal, put it:

> Because transformational thinking cuts against the grain in our North
>
> American cultural setting, it is difficult to maintain. The default setting,
>
> so to speak, is dualism. Christian schools need to work to develop and
>
> maintain a school culture which is transformational.

Many of the responses collected for this study are characterized by a sense of striving toward the transformational end of the continuum. The

respondents believe that Christian education is authentic only when the educational enterprise is infused with Christian perspectives.

The More Successful

The respondents believe the goal toward which they are reaching is a Christian education substantially different from the schooling offered elsewhere. One author, Beversluis, was quite explicit about the distinctions. He characterized the long-standing church operated schools as *parochial* schools, concerned primarily with encouraging "commitment to sound doctrine, Christian morality and an abiding church loyalty" (Beversluis, 1982, p. 1). Some more recently established schools, largely created out of dissatisfaction with changes in the public school, were classified as *protest* schools. Schools in the Reformed tradition, he said, were not indifferent to the concerns of the parochial and protest schools, but they differ in their fundamental reason for being. Beversluis, other authors and thinkers in the tradition, and the respondents in this study, all share the belief that the transformational vision has a depth and breadth that makes it different from the practice in other Christian schools.

That overriding belief is important to the success of these schools— success, that is, in achieving the goals identified as transformational. As I will discuss when considering avenues of further research, much more needs to be done in order to explain the full scope of the transformational vision as it is expressed within CSI. However, to understand the transformational vision, *as reported by the respondents*, one needs to take in the entire breadth of the responses, as I have attempted to reveal them in the preceding chapters. For the moment, to *summarize* the vision it would be helpful to revisit a key response. Consider again this comment from an elementary school principal

(with boldface emphasis highlighting key elements that have been identified throughout the study):

> I think that a strength of the Reformed worldview is its applicability to education. This is particularly true of those versions of the Reformed worldview which emphasize **Christian cultural transformation** (e.g. the Dutch Kuyperian and Neo-Calvinist movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries). Reformed educators in the transformational tradition have emphasized the **foundational nature of religion in human life**. In place of **sacred/secular dualism**, they opened all of life to Christian response. They pointed to a narrative of history which gave depth and resonance to the Christian life: God created the world, man fell into sin, and Christ came to redeem the world. They exposed the extent of sin's effects, including its effects in institutions, but also proclaimed a **high view of creation**. According to it, the whole world, both natural and cultural, is God's creation, is rich in meaning, and is held together in Christ. These themes—and others, I'm sure—provided a rich visionary context for the development of an educational movement. It offers a way of seeing our task as educators and as Christians which has integrity and depth.

In a single paragraph, this respondent touches on most of the elements of the transformational vision that have been identified throughout the study. The idea of the **foundational nature of religion in human life** does not allow for human cultural activities like education to be separated from religion. Consequently, education must go beyond a **sacred/secular dualism** (icing on the cake) kind of practice. All subject matter, every activity, is to be seen and studied from a Christian perspective; God must be acknowledged as

sovereign in *all* things. Within a whole range of possible Christian responses to culture, the transformational vision includes and chooses a **high view of natural and cultural creation** which allows for open-minded exploration of the physical realm, affirmation of culture and an emphasis on **Christian cultural transformation**. Although there is more to the transformational vision, these are the elements that appeared most prominently throughout the course of this study. As such, an understanding of these is a good beginning to understanding the kind of thinking that characterizes the schools being studied. One would expect schools that are successfully implementing the transformational vision to be paying some attention to these elements in the day to day practice of their schools.

It seems that transformational ideals are quite philosophical, requiring a higher degree of reflectivity than many of the participants can muster or sustain without adequate direction and leadership. As the respondents indicated, leadership is important to the task. Good leaders seem to appropriately surround their practice with "transformational language." They encourage the development of Christian curricula and encourage the use of texts written from a transformational perspective. They support professional development opportunities such as inservice days and summer workshops in which teachers can learn about this Christian transformational vision. Teachers who have not been educated in one of the Reformed Christian colleges are required, by some of the employing CSI schools, to attend Christian perspectives courses and read current literature in the tradition.

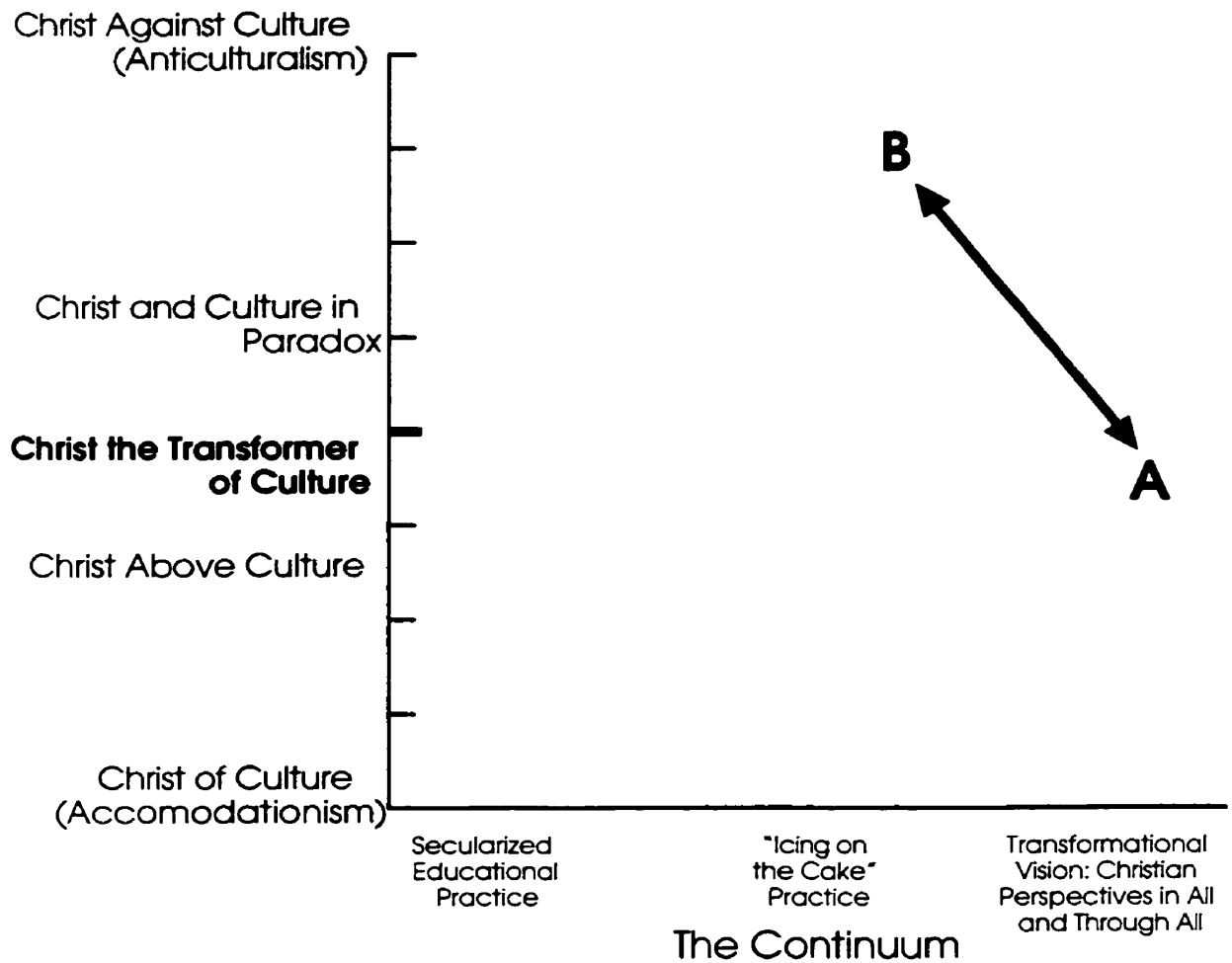### The Intersection of Transformational Vision and Cultural Transformation

As one considers the marks of "successful" schools in this tradition, the opinion of the respondents regarding the most important defining

characteristics of transformational practice deserves special consideration. Recall that the two most frequently cited defining characteristics of Reformed educational philosophy were the **foundational nature of religion in education** and **cultural transformation or affirmation**. The foundational nature of religion in education corresponds well with "The Continuum" previously described. At the transformational end of the continuum is a school practice in which the foundational nature of religion is fully realized. The second defining characteristic, cultural transformation or affirmation, corresponds well with another scale or continuum, namely Niebuhr's range of responses to culture.

It has been seen that the schools are pulled along both of these scales by changes and challenges that face them. With the influx of participants from different backgrounds, this school movement is being challenged to retain its near-middle position within Niebuhr's range of Christian responses to culture. As has been seen, CSI schools must also continually strive to keep their position at the transformational end of "The Continuum" of school types.

It has been helpful for the staff at our school to have an appreciation of where we hope to be in relation to other schools and with regard to the range of possible responses to culture. A framework for understanding the relationship between these two scales can be constructed by graphing an intersection between them. The range of cultural responses and the continuum of school types can been seen to intersect in the diagram on the following page.

The Intersection of Transformational Vision and Cultural Transformation

```
Christ Against Culture
        (Anticulturalism)  ┌─
                           │
                          ─┤                    B
                           │                     ↖
                          ─┤                       ↖
                           │                         ↖
Christ and Culture in      │                           ↖
            Paradox  ┌─    │                             ↖
                           │                               ↘
Christ the Transformer    ─█                                ↘
        of Culture         │                                 A
                           │
                          ─┤
Christ Above Culture       │
                           │
                          ─┤
                           │
                          ─┤
                           │
Christ of Culture          │
  (Accomodationism)  └─────┴──────────────┴──────────────┴──────────
                       Secularized        "Icing on       Transformational
                       Educational        the Cake"       Vision: Christian
                       Practice           Practice        Perspectives in All
                                                          and Through All
                              The Continuum
```

In this figure, the range of cultural responses forms the vertical axis on the plane (with an arguable arrangement of the three positions near the centre). "The Continuum" then forms the horizontal axis on the same plane. It is more than a happy coincidence that the root word "transform" appears on both axes. Niebuhr chose to characterize Calvinists as those who regarded Christ as the *transformer* of culture. The thinkers within this Calvinist tradition have adopted the word *transformational* to describe the vision they

have for working out their views in culture and with a complete integration of Christian perspectives.

With reference to espoused philosophy, the point plotted as **A** represents the position at which CSI schools would be inclined to place themselves—a point some distance, on the vertical axis, from anti-culturalism. On the horizontal axis, point **A** represents the transformational ideal in which the foundational nature of religion in education is fully realized—the point at which Christian perspectives infuse all aspects of educational practice.

The point plotted as **B** represents a position toward which some schools within the CSI family are inclined to gravitate. They might be more conservative in their worldview and inclined to move away from the center position on the vertical axis because of their concern about the corrupting influence of modern culture. Alternately, others might be plotted away from the transformational ideal on the right of the horizontal scale because they do not fully appreciate or see the need for comprehensive integration of Christian perspectives throughout the practice of the Christian school.

Once staff members have an understanding of the range of Christian cultural responses and the continuum of school types, fruitful discussion comes from trying to graph their own position and the position of their school on the graph. For the sake of comparison, it is also interesting to speculate where other Christian schools and traditions might fall on the graph. Interestingly, the staff comes to recognize that their own school can be plotted in different locations depending upon the particular issue being used as a measure. They come to see, for example, that the school can be more true to espoused philosophy in the choice of library materials than it is the treatment of contentious scientific issues.

The respondents in this study seemed to indicate that most CSI schools would fall somewhere near the line between points **A** and **B**. Recall the principal who said, "Much of what happens in Christian Schools International Schools is led by [a transformational] vision, but not all. A dualistic, Pietist worldview tradition is also strong in Reformed circles." A curriculum coordinator was also heard to say, "There are some leaders, by that I mean people who are paid big money to be leaders, principals, administrators and so on, who are very good at defining [the transformational vision] for teachers and drawing that out of teachers. There are also some principals who never do it." The recent development of media studies courses and the consciousness that CSI schools have historically served to isolate and protect, are indicators that this tradition is working toward achieving its transformational vision.

The Reformed educators who are steeped in the tradition seem to be intent on leading their schools toward point **A** on the graph, but they live with the realization that not everyone in the constituency is inclined to move with them. Some respondents reacted with some frustration and fear about the direction that some CSI schools may be taking. Others, still intent on maintaining a transformational distinctiveness, nevertheless operate with the understanding that the current situation is a call for sensitivity and responsiveness to change. To do otherwise, would be to deny the responsibility to be constantly reforming. Ironically, fear for the future of the schools, although an understandable human response, might be seen as an expression of some doubt about the sovereignty of God. All the participants ought to affirm, with the authors of the textbook series, that they are *Living in Hope*.

I would suggest that "successful" schools in the transformational tradition ought to have a fairly clear sense of where they are and where they hope to be within such a framework. Without dictating the preferred choice for individuals, administrators should, nevertheless, be able to define for their staff members where the school is intending to be. What is the school's position on literature choices? What is the school's posture with regard to popular media? As discussed previously, this means the principal and staff may have to muster the courage to take some risks and demonstrate great sensitivity in the midst of a fairly conservative constituency.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the principal should be able to work with staff in the development of what it means to have a transformational vision. It seems important to provided inservice and professional development opportunities, encourage the curriculum writing process, frame practice in "transformational" terms, and generally be the torchbearer when it comes to defining the character of the school.

Successful schools also avoid the pitfalls of ghettoized practice by remembering that separate schools have historically isolated and protected rather than fulfilling the genuine function of making the educational enterprise religious and world-serving. When schools adopt primary reasons other than religious ones, they risk questions about the legitimacy of their goals; they stray into the realm of elite and exclusive practice which cannot be justified on religious grounds.

Schools can also avoid a cloistered image and practice by, for example, ensuring that students have opportunities for community service and by choosing to study a breadth of literature that is not limited by exceedingly conservative censorship. Successful schools have the courage to push the envelope little by little as they touch on the difficult and controversial

dimensions of life and learning. Whether wrestling with the issues surrounding homosexuality, popular media or the discoveries of science, the more transformationally faithful schools are prepared to risk re-viewing conventional understandings and re-forming their views and practice in the light of ancient and new revelation.

Final Thoughts on the Educational Implications

CSI educators need to go to school on the successes and failures of their counterparts in the affiliated schools. They need to be continuously re-examining and reforming their practice. They should remember and value a tradition that can be rightly seen as a response to the transcendent meaning they have found in their faith. They need to acknowledge that some of what they do is simply good educational practice which has become framed in religious terms. Without undue parochialism, they ought to continue to carefully appropriate the good in the practice of other educators and stay abreast of current educational research. To act in a manner consistent with their philosophical position—some distance from anti-culturalism—and in light of the often unrecognized common ground between themselves and others, I believe CSI educators need to be open to dialogue with other educators and traditions.

The schools in the Neo-Calvinist Reformed Christian tradition are being faced with change and they are changing. They are challenged by a changing constituency and teaching staff. They are responding with modifications to the language which surrounds their practice and are struggling with sharing and maintaining their vision. The schools are stretched by societal change and they are responding with curricular change and some new understandings of historic Biblical texts. Philosophy and practice speak to one another and change each other in the tension of living

out a religious worldview in a secular society. Will this community be changed by the relentless forces of external pressure or will they re-form *themselves* in response to the changes and with reference to the wisdom embedded in their tradition? That is a question to which these educators must attend. In as much as they are conscious of the forces acting upon them, they can be responsive and deliberate about their reaction.

Further Research

The questions posed to the respondents were quite general and they were give the freedom to talk about anything that came to mind in connection with the themes presented. Granting that freedom allowed me to pick up data that became critical to the study—data that I would not have uncovered had I restricted the participants to answering the questions exactly the way they were posed. For example, the entire concept of the "transformational vision" emerged somewhat incidentally. Going into the study I was not aware that the concept formed such an important part of the respondents' thinking. While I am happy to have uncovered it, I know that I have not done justice to the concept. Outlying comments from a few respondents make it clear that there is much more to be said. There is an apparent foundational structure that I have not begun to address. An education coordinator pointed to the structure in his responses to the second round of questions:

> The transformational framework comes from an integrated/continuity
> theming of creation - fall - redemption and fulfillment... The creation, fall,
> redemption and fulfillment theme/framework is critical as it deals with
> God's plan (as demonstrated initially, as perverted, as restored by grace,
> and to what end in the *eschaton*). As someone once remarked, if you enter

the narrative at the cross (redemption/work of Christ [grace]) it is often hard to go back to creation and understand God's intention for humans and for creation.

Further research in this area should flesh out the transformational narrative with reference to the structure mentioned above and some digging should be done to find the documents and texts that give expression to the transformational vision in education. It is clear that greater emphasis is placed on the creation narrative in this tradition than many other Christian traditions. The study of that distinction, alone, would yield much fruit in further research on the breadth of the transformational vision.

Greater significance seems to be placed upon the transformational concept by the British Columbia respondents than by the prairie respondents. This may be a reflection of the directions being taken in curriculum development in the different regions; that, in itself, may be worthy of study.

As the issues facing these schools were identified, it became clear that many of struggles being faced by the schools had to do with managing change. Further research could be done to determine how current literature on school change intersects with the kind of change being faced by the CSI schools. Are the issues the same? Does the reformed transformational structure have the tools to manage change well? Does it have inherent limitations that could restrict its ability to respond effectively to the societal changes being faced?

Finally, it would be of considerable interest to look at the impact of a Reformed worldview upon school ethos. While my general impressions led me to believe that there is a positive environment and strong sense of community within the schools studied, direct research into the question might prove fruitful. There were a few indications along the way, that an emphasis on the traditional narrative, to the exclusion of the uninitiated,

may have a negative effect on the school ethos. It would be interesting to study the relationship between the practical expression of the narrative and perceptions of the participants regarding school climate. To what extent do the schools that consciously avoid the clichés and jargon succeed in creating a more inviting and inclusive environment for the non-Reformed portion of the school community?

Conclusion: That's What It Means To Be Human and Spirit Led

The motivations for educating in the affiliated schools of CSI are complex. Sometimes one sees very *human* tendencies and needs working themselves out in the actions of this educational community. At other times one sees a religious community responding to the transcendent meaning they find in their faith, their tradition and the religious monuments of scripture. In that moment, one could say that they are *spirit led*.

On the "human," more self-serving side, it has been seen that, historically, the motivation was partially born of immigrants' felt need to resist assimilation into Canadian society and preserve the teachings of a particular church denomination. On the spirit led side, the narrative of the Neo-Calvinist Reformed Christian educational community has explained the motivation in terms of a Biblical mandate to acknowledge and honour God's sovereignty, and to exercise a redeeming and transforming influence in all areas of life. In the most contemporary expression of that, from *A Vision with a Task* the narrative envelope takes a different, more inclusive, shape as it uses the language of "unwrapping gifts, sharing joys and bearing burdens, and creating shalom" to encapsulate the aims of Christian education.

As Browning has suggested, the narrative envelope, that communally expressed self-understanding, evolved from its early form into its current form in a continuing dialectic between practice and theory. At times, in the

more human movement, the philosophy seems to have developed to sanction practice. At other times, in what might be characterized as a spirit led movement, practice was altered to open participation to a broader constituency. As that change takes place, the expressions of philosophy are beginning to shed the "insider" clichés. Curricular change in the sciences and social sciences can be seen, as new evidence and contemporary issues press upon the practice of the schools.

That narrative envelope changes as it goes through these kinds of transformations and it still carries the practical reason—the existential need and felt obligation to faithfully transmit a worldview to the next generation. That constant remains. It makes a difference. It is a human endeavour. It has a spiritual dimension. That's what it means for this educational community to be human and spirit led.

Appendix A: Christian Schools International Member School Statistics

Canadian Statistics by Province

Province	# of Schools	# of Students
Ontario	74	12 002
British Columbia	37	7,694
Alberta	21	3,837
Manitoba	2	543
Saskatchewan	2	207
Prince Edward Island	1	62
Canadian Totals	137	24,345

(Christian Schools International, 1997)

Appendix B: The Second Round of Questions

1. When I asked the initial questions about the impact of a Reformed perspective on education, a few educators made some preliminary comments in order to define what *they* meant by "Reformed." Here are a few.

A teacher framed it this way:

Our worldview permeates our curriculum. This was a new experience for me. In the Catholic school (and I hear the Mennonite school here is the same) I did not need to concern myself with teaching "French from a Biblical perspective." This was done in the "religion" class. I have come to understand the sacramentality of all of life, and to try and apply it in daily practice.

A curriculum coordinator said:

Anyone who takes all of scripture seriously and tries to make "scriptural norms take cultural forms," I guess I would call Reformed.

A principal articulated it this way:

Every Christian worldview has its strengths and weaknesses. I think that a strength of the Reformed worldview is its applicability to education. This is particularly true of those versions of the Reformed worldview which emphasize Christian cultural transformation (e.g. the Dutch Kuyperian and Neo-Calvinist movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries). Reformed educators in the transformational tradition have emphasized the foundational nature of religion in human life. In place of sacred/secular dualism, they opened all of life to Christian response. They pointed to a narrative of history which gave depth and resonance to the Christian life: God created the world, man fell into sin, and Christ came to redeem the world. They exposed the extent of sin's effects, including its effects in institutions, but also proclaimed a high view of creation. According to it, the whole world, both natural and cultural, is God's creation, is rich in meaning, and is held together in Christ. These themes—and others, I'm sure—provided a rich visionary context for the development of an educational movement. It offers a way of seeing our task as educators and as Christians which has integrity and depth.

    a. Would you say that these "definitions," taken together, capture the essence of your understanding of being Reformed in education? **Yes/No**

    b. If no, what would you add or change?

2. Several respondents identified the philosophical paradigm that is foundational to CSI schools as Neo-Calvinist. Specifically they identified the Neo-Calvinism as "Kuyperian."

Would you characterize the Reformed philosophical foundation in the same terms? **Yes/No**

3. One principal wrote:

Much of what happens in Christian School's International Schools is led by [a transformational] vision, but not all. A dualistic, pietist worldview tradition is also strong in Reformed circles.

Harro Van Brummelen has written:

Two overlapping but distinct strains of Calvinism affected the North American Schools. The original nineteenth century pietistic... supporters emphasized Calvinistic doctrines and strict personal moral uprightness... Even today, their modern counterparts send children to Christian schools primarily to isolate children from unhealthy "worldly" influences. The second group has consisted mainly of followers of Abraham Kuyper... [attaching] much greater importance to God calling Christians to be actively engaged in politics, commerce, science, education and the arts.

a. Do you share the view that there are two different groups represented in CSI schools? **Yes/No**

b. If yes, do you see the line between the groups primarily distinguishing one CSI school from another or do you see the line running through each school "dividing" the school into two groups?

4. Do you feel that the "transformational" view is the ideal to which you are striving but that the "default setting," so to speak, is an "icing on the cake" kind of dualism? **Yes/No**

5. In one interview, I heard a principal say that he feared that CSI schools might become protective hot houses from the world rather than a preparatory institution teaching the students *how* to live in the world. Another principal put it this way:

Schools in the conservative evangelical tradition sometimes use language similar to transformational schools ("Christianity in all areas of life") but the meaning they give to those words is not so much a call to evaluate and transform as it is a call to protect children from worldly influences and to inculcate a high standard of personal morality in all situations.

a. Do you share those perspectives? **Yes/No**

b.   If no, how do you see it differently?

6.   Some of the respondents characterized CSI schools as unique among Protestant Christian schools for a variety of reasons. Beyond the things mention already, two of the most frequently mentioned were:

a.   they are more culturally engaging, emphasizing a "transformational vision" in which Christians are to exercise a redeeming influence,

b.   they share a greater emphasis on a Biblically mandated obligation to be caretakers of creation.

Do you share these perspectives? **Yes/No**

7.   Some respondents mentioned that the concepts of sphere sovereignty and sphere partnership played an important function in the structure of CSI schools. In particular they saw sphere sovereignty as carefully defining the roles of the church and school as separate, in terms of governance. There seemed to be a complete rejection of the authority of the church to govern the school.

Does sphere sovereignty figure into your understanding of the way that CSI schools should be structured and governed? **Yes/No**

8.   During the 18 years I've worked in a CSI school, the concept of "General and Special Revelation" and the concept of "Always Reforming (Semper Reformanda)" have been occasionally cited in the context of a Reformed educational perspective and worldview.

a.   Does the concept of "General and Special Revelation" figure into your thinking about educational practice from a Reformed perspective? **Yes/No**

b.   Does the concept of "Always Reforming (Semper Reformanda)" figure into your thinking about educational practice from a Reformed perspective? **Yes/No**

References

Augustine of Hippo (n.d.). On Christian doctrine. E-text in the public domain.

Bellah, R. N., Madsen, R., Sullivan, W. M., Swidler, A., & Tipton, S. M. (1991). The Good Society. New York: Random House.

Beversluis, N. H. (1982). In their father's house: a handbook of Christian educational philosophy CSI Task Force on the Future of Christian Education.

Bordewyk, G. L. (1996, October). From the copyright bar. Media Studies, p.

Browning, D. S. (1991). A fundamental practical theology. Minneapolis: Augsberg Fortress Press.

Burbules, N. C., & Rice, S. (1991). Dialogue across differences: Continuing the conversation. Harvard Educational Review, 61(4), 393-416.

Christian Schools International (1997). CSI Directory. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Christian Schools International.

Coles, R. (1993). The call of service: a witness to idealism. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Committee on Creation and Science (1988). The report of the committee on creation and science Synod of the Christian Reformed Church.

DeMoor, A. (1994) Tolerance in religious education: three dissenting worldviews in Canadian education. University of Alberta.

Ens, G. J. (1993). Mennonites and modernism: The changing impact of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute on Mennonite education and society in Manitoba, 1899 – 1948. In R. d. C. Bruno-Jofré (Eds.), Issues in the History of Education in Manitoba Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press.

Foster, W. (1986). Paradigms and Promises: Re-Viewing Administrative Theories. In Paradigms and Promises Buffalo: Prometheus Books.

Francis, E. K. (1953). The Mennonite school problem in Manitoba, 1874 - 1919. The Mennonite Quarterly Review, 27(July), 204 - 237.

Grant, G. (1988). The world we created at Hamilton High. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Gregor, A., & Wilson, K. (1984). The development of education in Manitoba. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt.

Hall, J. (1997). Narrating God's Activity in Your Classroom. Christian home & school, 37(2), 2-3.

Horton, M. S. (1991). Putting the amazing back into grace. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.

Niebuhr, H. R. (1951). Christ and culture. New York: Harper & Brothers.

Posterski, D. C. (1995). True to You. Winfield, BC, Canada: Wood Lake Books, Inc.

Romanowski, W. D. (1995). John Calvin Meets the Creature from the Black Lagoon: The Christian Reformed Church and the Movies 1928--1966. Christian Scholar's Review, XXV(1).

Stackhouse, J. G. (1997). E-mail. In

Stronks, G. G. (1995). Questions. Christian home & school, 73(5).

Stronks, G. G., & Blomberg, D. (Ed.). (1993). A vision with a task: Christian schooling for responsive discipleship. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.

Tarnas, R. (1991). The passion of the Western mind: understanding the ideas that have shaped our world view. New York: Harmony Books.

Van Brummelen, H. (1998). A choice between five types of Christian schools. Christian Courier, 1998(2), 12.

Van Brummelen, H. W. (1986). Telling the next generation: educational development in North American Calvinist Christian schools. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc.

VanderArk, D. R. (1995). Retooling for tomorrow by drawing on the past. Christian School Administrator(January).

Vryhof, S., Brouwer, J., Ulstein, S., & VanderArk, D. (1989). 12 Affirmations: Reformed Christian Education for the 21st Century. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

Wuthnow, R. (1991). Acts of compassion: caring for others and helping ourselves. Princeton: Princeton University Press.