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Editor's note: Dr. Otto presented this paper at Covenant College in the spring of 2002.

Historical Studies and Creational Development:

Constructing a History Program in Light of a Reformed Perspective

by Paul Otto

Asked to address the topic of "opportunities and calling for a history major at a Reformed institution," I bring some expertise in this area from my former position as Chair of the Dordt College history department and member of Dordt's Curriculum and Academic Policies Committee. Whatever expertise I have gained in this area comes from that experience, not from professional training in pedagogy or curricular development. I begin by laying out some questions which seemed appropriate, given my experience: How should a Reformed, Christian, biblical history program look? Whom should it train? How should it train them? For what should it train them? How does ideal meet reality?

The last of these questions seems especially important. We may identify the principles of a Reformed history program, but how do we develop a program that takes into account the practical realities of fluctuating student enrollments, limited staff, the North American higher education environment, accreditation expectations, and so forth? I have limited the topic by assuming a traditionally structured college curriculum, which includes three- to four-credit, semester-long courses taught by a single professor. If we were to establish a new foundation upon which to build a history program, we could consider more radical schemes of teaching and learning, including interdisciplinary approaches, shared student learning, independent research and exploration, and greater faculty-student interaction. However, such an approach requires broad, fundamental commitment to change across the institution.

My overall purpose, then, is twofold: to establish principles and issues for developing a Reformed history program, and to make suggestions for a program that could work in a typical North American context. For support, I draw on my experiences as former student and faculty member at two Reformed institutions of higher learning, evi-

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dence drawn from departmental reviews at those institutions, ideas gleaned from books and articles, and my own ruminations. I direct this article to those who work at building, revising, and supporting academic programs. While a Reformed college should ask its history department what that department can do to make an excellent program that conforms to the wisdom and light of Scripture, the department should ask the college (its administration and board) what the college can do to support those efforts.

Principles for developing a Reformed history program

A Reformed history program begins with establishing several broad principles. First, it must identify the goal of Reformed institutions of higher learning; second, it must establish a working definition of history; and third, it must consider, in light of the previous two, the purpose of a major in history.

In considering the central goal of a Reformed institution of higher learning, Dordt College works with a document titled *The Educational Task of Dordt College*. This work states that "the central educational task of Dordt College is to provide genuinely Christian insight on an advanced level."[1] Such insight is necessary, *The Educational Task* states, because "to function effectively as a Christian in a technological and secular civilization requires deepening wisdom and understanding."[2] No longer can Christian institutions of higher learning "be satisfied with the transmission of abstractions. They must provide the kinds of insight that enable Christians to carry out their task effectively in a complicated world." *The Educational Task* refers to this task as "serviceable insight." This concept is not to be equated with service learning. Service for the sake of doing is a no more effective or proper means of learning and education than is studying for the sake of knowledge. Nor is the only effective learning to be equated with service, as the case is often made.[3] Rather, "serviceable insight" refers to the importance Dordt places on the value of the learning which takes place. We read Augustine and Calvin or Marx and Kierkegaard, not for the purpose of acquiring information and tools but in order to learn about God's world and our place in it, to learn how to think clearly, to develop wisdom, and to continue learning and understanding. Why? Because God calls us, as his image-bearing servants, to love and serve him. To do that, we need to know which questions to ask and how to answer them in obedience to God's faithful laws for his creation.[4]

Indeed, in *The Educational Task of Dordt College*, "serviceable insight" is explained as "a contemporary expression of the Scriptural references to wisdom and *understanding*. The Bible teaches that the 'the fear of [*Yahweh*] is the beginning of wisdom, a good understanding have all they that do his commandments.'"[5]

While academics might see our endeavor as somehow "transferring" information and insight to our students, I strenuously disagree with that interpretation. Learning, ultimately, is the responsibility of students, while faculty guide by joining students in this learning. This idea was well summarized by Calvin Seerveld, who, when speaking

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at Dordt College, said that the goal or purpose of education is for teachers and students to "take time to be . . . holy scholar[s]." Seerveld explained "higher education" as

> a special opportunity for a younger generation to taste and for an older generation to show-and-tell scholarship together, to be engrossed with the musical capability of the human voice, the intricate biosphere and genetic code of weeds, or the relative power of images and words for convincing people what is important or true.

Directing his comments to students, Seerveld continued,

> During your time in higher education, some real-

> ity of God's world fascinates you, and now you have the opening to spend time in probing, examining, researching, practicing, and testing your growing understanding of whatever this wonder be in all its marvelous interconnected richness until you gain the beginnings, as Dordt's *Educational Task* document states, of "serviceable insight."[6]

The second goal, that of defining history, leads to the proposition of history as "Creational Development," an idea generally associated with Reformational thinking.[7] While historical study is an area which faculty and students can examine together, few Christian scholars agree on a definition of history. To emphasize what I mean by history and the historical, I must state what it is not. The common conception of history is that of a narrative of significant events, often political in nature, which helps us understand where we are today and how we might avoid the mistakes of the past. As an inscription upon the wall of the history seminar room at Johns Hopkins University proclaimed in the late nineteenth century, "History is past politics and politics' present history."[8] Such a narrowly defined aphoristic summary of history as discipline or subject is not consistent with a biblical understanding of humankind and their calling to serve God. The nature of humankind and their calling are the starting point for defining history. History is not a long chain of events out of the human past; it is not simply some historian's interpretation of those events considered to be significant. Instead, it is the course of developments resulting from human beings living out their identity as God's creatures and image bearers who have been endowed with cultural formative power. Of global scope, and beginning with the creation of mankind, history encompasses all of humankind's cultural activity.[9]

Granted, our record or knowledge of this cultural activity is limited by extant evidence and the purposes of history that God reveals to us in his Word, but this limitation does not change the fact that for Christians, history is a story, an epic, called forth by Yahweh the Lord, and played out by his image bearers. It has a beginning, and we anticipate, if not an end, a fulfillment of prophecies foretold in Scripture. History, then, is not just past events, although historians focus their research on what came before and not what came after, but, as understood by Christian historians, part of the larger drama of the unfolding of God's created world at the hands of his image bearers.

The story, of course, is more complex than that since humankind exercises its cultural formative power in response to God and his law. Since Adam's fall, sin has shaped and affected the choices humans make in developing creation. While the task of God's image bearers has not changed, their ability to fulfill that task has changed. Adam's sin significantly disrupted the covenantal relationship between God and his image-bearers. Instead of turning to God, humans put idols in God's place. They do not recognize Yahweh as the sovereign Lord but turn instead to his creation or some aspect of it as the object of their adoration and praise. Before the fall, humankind developed God's creation in obedience to his expectations for it; however, since the fall, they are strongly inclined towards disobedient choices. The choices that humans make are choices of the heart, religious choices, i.e., the most fundamental expression of their humanness. Out of these day-to-day choices to obey or disobey God come the products of human endeavor: culture, society, the very stuff of history. By God's grace, through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit, obedient fulfillment of the cultural mandate is possible, but evil continues to corrupt the application of this God-given power exercised by his image bearers.

It is this idea of history that is expressed on the webpage of the Covenant College Historical Studies Department:

> The historical studies department believes that human culture is fundamentally an outworking of worldview commitments expressed in a pattern of ideas, beliefs, and values as embodied in a particular institutional system. The department makes that focus the framework of its reconstruction and analysis of the past. Furthermore, a key aspect of this approach is centered in the concept of the unfolding or development of human culture. That study proceeds with the recognition that the Christian motifs of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation form a larger meaning framework within which the cultural response of

humankind takes place.[10]

In short, then, I understand history to be the story of humankind as God's image-bearers, fulfilling God's mandate to develop the creation, and since the fall, doing so under the constraints of sin but with God's promise to redeem his people and his creation from evil.

In light of the Christian-college goal and our understanding of history, what then is the purpose of the history major? The history program at a Reformed institution serves primarily to familiarize students, either in an introductory way as in a core course or in a more detailed and systematic way as in the major, with the story of humankind's role in creational development. This is training, not in a particular career or profession but in a particular discipline of the liberal arts. As such a component, it involves its students in the study of humankind and their affairs. It thus serves, as do many other disciplines of the liberal arts, to give students greater cultural awareness, to help them understand the human condition, and to train them to read, write, and communicate effectively. Such training in history, akin to that in literature, philosophy, and theology, prepares students to serve in a variety of functions. The list of vocations for a practical application of this liberal learning is extensive, including, but not limited to, business, education, law, law enforcement, and ordained ministry.[11] However, history, as described earlier, is so broad and all-encompassing that its disciplined study prepares students for service in many fields.

The history department at Dordt College recently drafted a new set of goals that well summarizes the purpose of a history program at a Reformed college and, if fulfilled, provides the broad training which would serve students in a variety of careers:

> (1) To confess that Jesus Christ is the King of all creation, including all human cultural activity, and to declare that, notwithstanding sin and its consequences, God continues to call humans to obedient cultural formative activity and redeems that activity in Christ.
>
> (2) To develop and communicate biblically directed learning, insight and research into humankind's generation-by-generation and worldwide use of its God-given cultural formative power.
>
> (3) To promote and facilitate students' development of biblically directed historical insight, thinking, research and writing on topics in all branches of human cultural formative endeavor.
>
> (4) To encourage and help prepare students to develop and use biblically directed historical insight and thinking in every office to which they are called, to the honor and glory of God.[12]

As described by these goals, historical instruction plays a vital role in a Christian liberal arts institution. A Reformed history program emphasizes responsible and obedient Christian service, emphasizes the historical nature of the world, i.e., the ongoing unfolding and development of creation through human cultural activity, and provides training in critical reading, thinking, and communication.

Practical Considerations

While much of this paper has addressed important fundamentals, I would be remiss in discussing curriculum and program without first addressing practical considerations that bear on curricular development. These include budget concerns, faculty training and expertise, accreditation, and student experience and interest.

First, the growing cost of private higher education cannot be overlooked. Many of the colleges in the Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities are "tuition driven"; that is, their operating costs are primarily paid out of tuition revenue. Because of the schools' relative youth and the limited ability/willingness of Christians to contribute substantially to Christian colleges, endowments remain small, providing little assistance to operating expenses at many colleges. The direct result is tight budgets and the inability to staff academic programs as liberally as necessary. Faculty at these schools teach seven to eight courses a year, sometimes requiring as many different preparations. At Dordt College, the need for controlling costs and

keeping tuition down has led to the adoption by the Board of Trustees of a permanent student-to-faculty ratio, ranging from a maximum of 16:1 to a minimum of 15:1. On the surface, such a ratio seems to translate into class sizes of 15-16 students and advising loads of similar number. In reality, faculty who teach general-education courses not identified as writing intensive or who teach in very popular majors carry significant teaching and advising loads. Furthermore, that ratio means little room for expanding the faculty in a major that is not growing significantly. With a total student enrollment of about 1300 (of which virtually all take one history class and at least another third take a second) and a history program of about 40 students, Dordt College has funded only three full-time faculty and no adjunct even while, by its own standards, the teaching load of these three faculty has at times exceeded the FTE of 4.5 faculty.[13]

Budget concerns have also led to the development of new programs at Dordt and elsewhere, often those more professionally or career oriented, in order to attract new students or students from traditional pools (though the new courses have also been justified by the Kuyperian world view at Dordt). Consequently, while the addition of new faculty affects programs such as nursing and criminal justice, the traditional arts and sciences programs can increasingly find themselves under pressure to defend their courses as well as the "low" enrollments which can occur in their upper-division classes. As to faculty experience and expertise, history departments can expect to be limited in the number of available faculty. Because historical training is fairly specialized, the faculty of any particular department will lack the expertise to cover a broad range of courses, especially at the upper-division level. What courses are offered and how the curriculum is structured will reflect the competencies of the current faculty. According to Paul Morton, great changes in the curriculum and course offerings at Covenant College resulted from changing faculty in the early years of its history program. While such seeming instability or discontinuity in a program causes concern, any curriculum should be designed with built-in flexibility. An upper-division course in colonial American history may be a valuable component in a particular program, but if a change in faculty means that no specialist in early America is available to teach it, such a course should be replaced by the specialty of a new faculty member.

Accreditation and other outside forces can also affect a curriculum. First of all, different forms of accreditation will affect a program. Most higher education institutions seek general accreditation by the regional higher-education accrediting agency. Second, as students receiving training in the history program may also be seeking teacher certification, the program must address certification expectations. These expectations can be driven by demands of state teacher-certification agencies, by schools hiring teachers, and by education departments themselves. The American Historical Association has established its own standards for preparing teachers in history; these emphasize training in subject matter and disciplinary techniques.[14] However, when certification programs for secondary education are combined with traditional undergraduate liberal-arts training, as they are in Iowa, the integrity of such disciplinary- and subject-matter study can be threatened. On the other hand, when secondary certification is obtained separately from a traditional liberal arts degree, as it is in Oregon, the study of history can proceed without interference from outside agencies or programs. In addition, when history departments offer courses needed by students in other majors that are professionally accredited, such accreditation may affect the shape and content of a course. Social Work and engineering, for example, are often accredited individually and with specific requirements.

For what other reasons is accreditation a concern? Accreditation certainly has its merits. In general, college accreditation helps guarantee certain minimum academic standards. Also, as Christian colleges and universities become established and seek to attract students, they need to assure students of their programs' viability and competitiveness. However, as Christians living in a society not necessarily directed by biblical norms, we should recognize that accreditation agencies may not validate talk about religion and Christian philosophy. Requiring/inviting our students to go to chapel twice a week is one thing, but operating from a Christian worldview is another. What do

accreditation agencies think about courses on the Christian philosophy of history? Or, what if the current educational and pedagogical trends run contrary to the educational principles developed by Christian scholars? At some point, Christian colleges, if they are to remain true to the gospel, may have to forego accreditation in order to consistently offer a genuinely Christian education. That time has not yet come, but certainly curricular decision-makers must carefully deliberate on accreditation concerns. As we develop programs and curricula, we must confront these extra institutional expectations and, at some point, be ready to go our own way.[15]

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Another area of consideration is student experience and interest. Since World War II, increasing numbers of students have joined the ranks of college attendees, including many from non-college-educated homes and from high schools not geared towards college preparation. At the same time, high-school training generally has deteriorated. We cannot assume that our incoming students have received uniform or adequate academic preparation, common historical training (in either content or method), similar theological and philosophical frameworks as our own, and so forth. Furthermore, students lead increasingly busy, *programmed* lives. An essay in *The Atlantic Monthly* called "The Organization Kid" points to an educational system and experience of young people characterized by ongoing involvement in many activities. However, their increased busy-ness does not necessarily indicate their substantive understanding of any one activity or subject.[16] As we develop our history programs and core requirements, we must consider students' experiences.

Also, as we choose which courses to teach, we should consider student interests. We should neither accommodate offerings to students' passing fancies nor ignore student interest altogether. Since faculty may too easily dismiss student interests as uninformed, naive, and fad-driven, I would suggest that we consider students' calling as learners. As we nurture learning, we should attune our ears to student interests, which may represent calling no less than do our own fancies. Some of what they deem important should inform us as well.

Implementing a Reformed history program in North America

When we consider, on the one hand, our lofty Reformed ideals and, on the other, the practical realities of operating a Christian liberal arts college in North America, what sort of program can we develop? Since a Reformed perspective on history points to the wide-ranging diversity of human cultural expression, we should expect a diversity of courses. Such a curriculum is possible only if resources prove to be as unlimited as the diversity of human cultural expression. Furthermore, the various considerations already identified mediate against stating, in universal concrete terms, what courses a curriculum should include. More importantly, we should understand a curriculum not simply in terms of courses but in terms of components that address the goals already outlined.

I would recommend that the curriculum include four aspects, not necessarily mutually exclusive or isolated in separate courses:

> (1) the necessary core and general education offerings required by the institution;
> (2) surveys covering as much of the breadth of human cultural experience as possible;
> (3) in-depth courses in areas reflecting the expertise of the faculty, goals of the institution, and interests of the students;
> (4) courses providing specific training in the discipline of history.

Let me briefly elaborate upon each of these. First, through a core history requirement for all students pursuing a college degree, students develop historical-mindedness. Historical-mindedness means not simply acquiring a body of knowledge

but rather developing sensitivity to the historical, universal calling to humankind to develop God's creation through cultivation and societybuilding. My goal for that core course is students' appreciation of their own cultural formative power, their calling to wield that power in obedience to God's law, and their understanding that religion or worldview—choices of the heart—shape mankind's actions in culture forming.

Second, through an introduction to content deemed important to the institution, such as world history or western civilization, students see more concretely how people have developed creation and where God may be calling them to exercise their "God-given cultural formative power," as stated in the Dordt history-department goals. Students in a liberal arts program should take one or more courses that meet this goal.

Third, through a variety of survey courses, students encounter the global expression of human cultural-formative power. Of course, small history departments can hardly cover everything, and our specialized historical training mitigates against offering surveys that cover more than 100 or 200 years. Sometimes we can't even imagine a chronologically ordered course covering more than 50 years, though courses of such narrow scope may serve a few students well. Surveys should be just that, surveys of broad historical periods and cultural or geographic regions. If broad enough, courses can cover most of the cultural regions of the world, introducing students to the broad patterns and forces of historical development across the globe.

While this goal may seem impossible, Dordt offers just such a range of survey courses, one for Canada, one for United States history, a series covering the Western world from ancient Greece through twentieth-century Europe, and one course each on Latin America, the Muslim world, and East Asia. There are gaps, but students seeking an introduction to most areas of the world will satisfy their initial curiosity. However, if the thought of such broad surveys still rankles, one must remember that Scripture offers a brief but beautiful survey of the creation of the world. Whether we take it to have occurred in six twenty-four-hour days or billions of years, we can agree that God's creative work as described in Genesis 1 was certainly far more complex and nuanced than the Scriptural account. Just as that biblical survey of creation serves many purposes, so, too, can broad historical surveys of human cultural activity serve us.

The curriculum should consist not only of broad surveys but also of in-depth upper-division courses, as faculty expertise, student interest, and institutional needs dictate. A quick glance at the Dordt catalog might suggest a hodgepodge of courses at the 300 level. The rationale for these courses, however, is clearly rooted in the concerns listed above. For example, courses in American evangelicalism, British topics, and colonial America all reflect the respective expertise of department members. Courses such as "Modern Middle East," "American West: History and Environment," and "Media, Power, and Modern American Culture" reflect student interests and broader institutional needs. In these courses, students undertake in-depth study in fields of their particular interest with expert and dedicated scholars.

Such upper-division courses are not simply accommodation to student demand and faculty expertise; rather, they are vital opportunities for students to grow in their understanding of a Reformed perspective as taught by experts in their fields. For example, when I taught in my primary field of colonial American history, I was able to develop more thoroughly there, than in any other class, my understanding of cultural development, worldview and religious motivations, and questions of ethnic and cultural diversity.

Last, a history curriculum must train students in the methods, means, and theory of the discipline of history, culminating in independent research. Such training prepares students for projects in other history classes and insures intentional training in the discipline of history. These courses allow students to explore important theoretical issues, develop the skills needed to undertake historical research, and combine the theoretical and practical as they research their own topics. By the time of graduation, history majors will have been thoroughly introduced to the discipline of history and prepared for graduate work.

Please indulge me one final time as I point to the Dordt curriculum as an example. Dordt has introduced a new requirement—Introduction to

Historical Studies—and also requires Historiography, in addition to the senior seminar, of majors. Freshmen or sophomore majors take the introductory course, which considers preliminary questions of perspective and philosophy, and receive training in reading, library research, historical analysis, and writing, which provides the tools and perspective for other courses. In historiography, juniors grapple with the history of historical interpretation and Christian approaches to historical study. Finally, in senior seminar, majors engage in independent research but do so within the community of student-scholars. This sequence provides a step-by-step development of critical disciplinary thinking, Christian understanding of history, and disciplinary skills, all of which parallel and correlate with learning occurring in content courses.

A program that covers these four areas, even if not worked out as was done at Dordt, will help develop historical-mindedness; introduce students to broad historical developments; provide opportunities for detailed study with trained experts of important times, place, and topics; and guide students from popular interest in the discipline to undertaking independent research.

A framework for developing a list of courses is not enough. A history department must also consider how to make an effective program. Pedagogy is best left to individual instructors in consultation with peers and mentors. Still, we can ask, "How do we effectively aid students in a study of creational development?" While documentary analysis is important, so too is critical interaction with other interpretations of history. Reading, analyzing, and writing about primary documents, students develop the historical-mindedness to understand that history is not just about the facts of the past but is rather "a foreign country."[17] Reading and critically reviewing the work of other historians, students make the distinction between history and historical studies. Like analysis of primary documents, critical reviews help students explore how faith commitments shape actions or, in this case, historical interpretations.

Such vitally important exercises depend on faculty's having the time to guide students through those assignments and being actively engaged in similar activities. The prerequisite for such guidance is smaller classes, lighter teaching loads, and fewer preparations. Faculty always seem to be asking for these, and administrators always seem to be saying no to such requests. Successful teaching and productive learning demand it, however. Most faculty that I know at Christian liberal arts colleges are there because they want to teach undergraduates. They request lighter loads, not primarily for more research time but for more time to assist students in learning. Faculty need time to meet with small groups of students for pouring over documents and essays together and to lovingly critique and correct their students' analyses and writing. Students need access to faculty who listen to their concerns, answer their questions, direct them to resources. A successful history program is built upon such academic relationships.

In fact, a history program is not only about curriculum and teaching but also about professors mentoring. How do they do so? While students need formal advising in both academic and career planning, they also need informal advising, where teacher-scholars share their experienced wisdom with student-scholars, who in turn share their insight, passions, and ideals. Faculty can work structurally to build a community of scholars, not just within the curriculum but also outside it, by finding ways for students to assist with research, socializing formally and informally, and attending conferences together. Faculty need to share their lives—as teaching scholars and research scholars—with students, for teaching is scholarship and vice versa. If we are called to impart insight (as at Dordt), we are called to develop insight. We share what we have learned not only when we teach, present papers, and publish, but also when we advise informally.

None of those things can happen successfully without research. Rarely does a teacher go into the classroom without preparation. However, if we genuinely seek integral Christian scholarship, we can't simply teach textbooks since textbooks rarely reflect our perspective. We must develop our own biblically directed insight as we teach history. If, as Calvin Seerveld suggests, higher education is about taking time to be holy scholars, a major goal as faculty is to incorporate students, for their few years with us, into the life of scholarship.

Having outlined the parameters of a reformationally influenced history program, my comments have been directed primarily at faculty, but no program can succeed without the support of the rest of the institution. Administrators, student services, and other college divisions, constituents, and trustees must commit themselves to building and promoting genuinely Christian academic programs and encouraging holy scholarship.

What does this mean? It means providing the support, encouragement, financial wherewithal, resources, and infrastructure to make Christian higher education possible. The calling of Christian education requires many elements: small classes, a variety of classes at each level, scholarly resources for faculty and students, time/space for advising and mentoring, and the funding to promote such elements. Academic institutions must remain academically focused, with the emphasis on learning and scholarship. Further, they must make ongoing, public recognition of academic accomplishments by faculty and students, time and space for advising and mentoring, and the funding to promote such elements.

Christian colleges can easily become sidetracked from their central academic missions. Programs aimed at enhancing student life or increasing admissions, such as extracurricular activities, football and other athletic programs, service activities, and so-called spiritual development, can all siphon important resources away from academics and send the message that learning and scholarship are not central to the mission of the institution. We should not forget Calvin Seerveld's call to "take time to be…holy scholar[s]." Service, worship, and extracurricular activities sponsored by an academic institution should always support, enhance, and encourage Christian academics: they should never detract from them.

Who can address these needs and how? Besides the central work to which students and faculty are called, others also are called to advance Christian higher education. Administrators should ask themselves how their institutional plans and procedures promote Christian higher learning on the campus. Non-academic divisions on campus need to ask themselves how their programs and policies, especially as they affect students, contribute to student learning and academic calling. Constituents need to ask themselves and the faculty what resources they can contribute in order to sustain and enhance Christian higher learning.

I am speaking broadly now, but rightly so. No academic department is involved in an isolated review of its program. All of us as Christian academics and those who support Christian academia are called to the task of Christian higher education, a Godly and holy calling. Those committed to Christian higher education must continually seek ways to improve, support, and insure the continuation of Christian liberal learning. Our Godly mandate to develop God's creation expects no less of us.

Endnotes

1. *The Educational Task of Dordt College* (Sioux Center, IA: Dordt College Press, 1979, 1996), 11.
2. *Task*, 11.
3. For a recent discussion of this issue, see Harry Fernhout, "Serviceable Insight: Wisdom at Work," in John H. Kok, ed., *Marginal Resistance: Essays Dedicated to John C. Vander Stelt* (Sioux Center: Dordt College Press, 2001), 109-127.
4. Calvin Seerveld commented on it this way: "Consecrated studious thinking, imagining, speaking, writing, and reading is doing something and doing something as important as a pregnancy: preparing with 'serviceable insight' for the birth of 'insightful service.' Christian college time is seedtime; the harvest comes later. In this amazing academic crucible we know as an institution of 'higher learning,'mentor and novice have the busy, tiring 'leisure' to build up a treasury of knowledge and understanding that will stand them in good stead when the lean years and the hard times come. Academic time allows teacher and student to meander around eddies of history that deserve to flow fresh in our stream of consciousness, to experiment in essay and lab and make mistakes that become 'holy'mistakes when the overview the mentor provides gives the student encouraging, forgiving, redemptive guidelines in which to 'do it again.'" "Reformational Christian Philosophy and Christian College Education," *Pro Rege* 30.3 (March 2002), 12-13.
5. *The Educational Task* goes on to say, "Also, 'Look carefully, then, how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore don't be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.'" It says, further, " 'who is wise

among you? Let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom,'" *Task*, 11.

6. Seerveld, "Reformational Christian Philosophy," 12.

7. "Reformational thinking" refers to the Reformed system of thought in the tradition of Abraham Kuyper, Herman Dooyeweerd, and others. Reformational thought as applied to the study of history has been developed in several sources, including Herman Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular, and Christian Options*, translated by John Kraay and edited by Mark Vander Vennen and Bernard Zylstra (Toronto: Wedge Publishing, 1979), especially pp. 61-87; C.T. McIntire, "The Focus of Historical Study: A Christian View," unpublished essay (1980); C. T. McIntire, "Historical Study and the Historical Dimension of Our World," in C.T. McIntire and Ronald A. Wells, *History and Historical Understanding* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 17-40; C.T. McIntire, "The Ongoing Task of Christian Historiography" (Toronto: Institute for Christian Studies, 1974); Sander Griffioen, "The Relevance of Dooyeweerd's Theory of Social Institutions," in Sander Griffioen and Bert M. Balk, ed., *Christian Philosophy at the Close of the Twentieth Century: Assessment and Perspective* (Kampen: Kok, 1995), 139-158; Bob Goudzwaard, *Capitalism and Progress: A Diagnosis of Western Society*, translated and edited by Josina Van Nuis Zylstra (Toronto: Wedge and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), xix-xxi; B.J. Van der Walt, *Afrocentric or Eurocentric? Our task in a multicultural South Africa* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroomse Universiteit, 1997). I have applied some of these concepts to the study of the early American frontier: "Reassessing American Frontier Theory: Culture, Cultural Relativism, and the Middle Ground" in *Frontiers and Boundaries in United States History*, edited by Cornelis A. van Minnen and Sylvia Hinton (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2004), 27-38; *The Dutch-Munsee Encounter in America: The Struggle for Sovereignty in the Hudson Valley* (New York: Berghahn Press, 2005 [in press]).

8. Photograph of the Johns Hopkins University seminar room for history students (The Huntington Library, San Marino, California), reprinted in James West Davidson and Mark Hamilton Lytle, *After the Fact*, fourth edition (New York: McGraw Hill, 2000), 73.

9. In 1980, the Dordt College History Department offered such a description of history when it stressed its importance to the curriculum: "Crucial to [an] understanding of the diversity within the unity of creation is a thorough knowledge of man and of the record of his attempts either to fulfill or to avoid the mandates for his thought and life as set down in Scripture[;]...studying history...means coming to an awareness of how and with what effect finite man, placed in a temporal setting, has reacted to the Scriptural admonitions of an infinite and timeless God." NCA Review Report, Departmental Curriculum/Program Information, History Department, 10/1/80, 1.

10. http://www.covenant.edu/undergrad/academic/history/ (Accessed 3/28/02).

11. "Careers for Graduates in History," National Center for the Study of History, chart, 1984.

12. *History Department Program Review, Dordt College* (November 3, 2000), 37. In 1980, the department articulated a similar list:
    1. To learn how historians write history and how they endeavor to reconstruct the past.
    2. To perceive the impact that presuppositions have had upon men as they act and react to one another and to differing and different societies.
    3. To understand how and with what success men have constructed political, social, economic, and cultural institutions in order to meet the needs and demands of a given society at a given period of time.
    4. To equip themselves and their future students with an understanding of how society came to be what it is and thus to gain some direction as to how to meet the needs and demands of society in the future.
    5. To know that history involves more than mere memorization of names, dates, and places.
    6. To understand that a knowledge of history requires analysis and interpretation as well as memorization.

    NCA Review Report, Departmental Curriculum/Program Information, History Department, 10/1/80, 1-2.

13. *History Department Program Review, Dordt College* (November 3, 2000), 26.

14. American Historical Association, "Criteria for Standards in History/Social Studies/Social Sciences," 2004. http:www.historians.org/teaching/policy/CriteriaForStandards.htm and www.historians.org/teaching/policy/benchmarks.htm.

15. As one example, the current guidelines at Dordt college for reviewing programs has been culled from the regional accreditation agency. Their guidelines explicitly ask reviewers if their program is sufficiently diverse, inclusive, etc. Obviously, such political correctness grows out of particular faith commitments that can run contrary to Christian beliefs.

16. David Brooks, "The Organization Kid," *Atlantic Monthly* (April 2001): 40-54.

17. David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).