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Robert Bruinsma

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Are Christian Schools Worth Having?



by Robert Bruinsma

Introduction

For over thirty-five years, I have been a professional educator. Seven years were spent teaching in both elementary and high school settings in public as well as Christian day schools. Then, for twenty-eight years, I taught at a small post-secondary Christian institution, The King's University, in Edmonton Alberta, where, among other duties, I developed both the elementary and secondary teacher-education programs.¹

While few laypersons would claim expertise in a field such as medicine, I am always amazed at how many people without any formal educational credentials consider themselves experts on educational matters. Recently, I saw a bumper sticker that read: "BLAME IT ON THE SCHOOLS!" And we do, for a number of reasons:

- Adolescents can't read, spell, do arithmetic or write a coherent sentence—it's the fault of all those options and not enough of the basics in the school curriculum.
- Kids today can't think clearly and don't have flexible problem-solving skills—it's because the schools rely on rote memorization and the amassing of soon-to-be irrelevant data.
- Kids are disrespectful of authority and lack self-discipline—what can you expect when schools don't teach and demand adherence to tried-and-true standards of performance and behavior?
- College and university students are passive, dull grade-grubbers more concerned with how much an assignment counts towards their final grade than how it challenges their intellect—it's because grade-schools and high schools are regimented, mindless places that stress docility, punctuality, and conformity rather than places that encourage creative collaborative skills so necessary in a progressive, more tolerant, less authoritarian society.²

Each of these critiques implies an understanding of the nature and task of schools in society and presumes the existence of some obvious common understanding of what "education" is. A cursory examination of writings on contemporary education suggests little consensus and perhaps a great deal of confusion about the nature of education and the school's task in present society.³ In this essay I briefly consider the historical development of

Dr. Robert Bruinsma is Emeritus Professor of Education, The King's University, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

our present Western school systems, then explore several distinctions that may help educators focus on their specific task. As an outcome of these discussions, I conclude by sketching my view of the Christian school's task in society.

A LITTLE HISTORY

The Influence of Plato's View of Education

I begin not so much with the origin of formal schooling as with the origins of two distinct conceptions of knowledge, one of which has more greatly influenced our present conduct of schooling than the other. A culture's concept of knowledge, of what it means to say that one knows something (known philosophically as epistemology), determines to a large extent how that culture will define its educational objectives and eventually structure its schools. The epistemology that has most greatly impacted the conduct of schooling in the West has Graeco-Roman origins. At the risk of over-simplification, I will limit my discussion of Graeco-Roman influences to the writings of Plato, primarily in *The Republic*. Plato's writings on education in *The Republic* exemplify the Greek heritage that informed medieval views on education and beyond.⁴

For Plato, the sensible world of ordinary experience represents but a vague shadow of real and ultimate existence; the latter can be appreciated and understood only by means of disciplined contemplation. Thus, for Plato, the aim of formal education is to convert the eternal soul from the study of the fickle, sensible world to the contemplation of real existence (what he referred to as *Forms*). Humans are to be liberated from the shackles of their limited, physical senses by means of disciplined inquiry into the true nature of things. The ultimate method (for Plato) of achieving true knowledge is dialectic, or philosophical inquiry. Thus, knowledge is to be primarily derived by means of rational, analytical inquiry into the nature of ultimate reality, i.e., metaphysics. Suggestions for the vehicle of this inquiry were made by Plato in considerable detail and strongly hint at the later formalization of a curriculum (with additional input from Aristotle) as the *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric and dialectic) and

the *quadrivium* (mathematics, geometry, music and astronomy): the seven liberal (or liberating?) arts.⁵

Central to Plato's educational theory is the doctrine of reminiscence, or recollection. Plato was concerned with demonstrating the existence of moral absolutes (partly in reaction to the relativistic Sophists of his day), but he realized that absolutes do not exist in the sensory world and that sense perceptions cannot yield knowledge of the necessary and universal. Therefore, he believed that we must have known those absolutes in a state of pre-existence, however dimly they are recalled during life. Thus, the act of rational inquiry is trying to recall something already known in a dim and confused way.⁶

In *The Republic* we find Plato's famous analogy of the cave to illustrate his theory of knowledge. Most of us are like people with our faces towards the back of the cave, on which we see only dim reflected shadows of the world outside, but which we (mistakenly) take to be the real world. But with a great effort and the right kind of education, a few people (mostly men) may finally be able to turn around to look directly at the sun and see the real light, which represents the Form of the Good. Such people arrive at the final and highest level of understanding, that of true certainty (*noesis*). In fact, the thrust of Plato's illustration of the cave is to deny his teacher Socrates' claim that *all* humans possess a latent ability to discover within themselves a knowledge of pure universal principles for guiding conduct. Plato's considered view was that ultimately only a small class of humans (predominately men) of superior intellect and insight could attain that kind of understanding.

Plato's plan for the perfect society as outlined in *The Republic* reflects this rather elitist view of education. The state's population would be divided into three classes, corresponding to the three divisions of the human soul: the lowest class—"men of iron," representing desires or appetitive function—would include farmers, artisans, and merchants, i.e. the working class. The second class—"men of silver," representing the spirit or will—would consist of guardians or soldiers who were characterized by the virtue of courage. The

highest class—”men of gold,” representing intellect or reason—would be made up of rulers who were to be characterized by the virtue of being godly or wise, and thus philosophically knowledgeable. Because the state’s very reason for existence is to make the good life possible for humans, that is, to develop happiness in accordance with the principles of justice, those who conduct the life of the state would have to have attained true knowledge (*noesis*) of the Good. It is therefore not surprising that Plato’s educational outline focuses almost exclusively on the education of eventual Rulers (Philosopher Kings) and that he is unalterably opposed to the competing oratorical view of training individuals to some specific occupational competence.

In fact, nowhere does Plato mention anything about the kind of education that the mass of individuals, the workers, should receive.

Finally, something should be mentioned about Plato’s view of the family as it pertains to education. Plato hoped for a state in which the family and all private property would be abolished, at least for the two upper classes. Men and women should be treated alike in every regard, even receiving the same basic kind of education supervised by the state. The Rulers would determine the genetic qualifications of all individuals and regulate who would be allowed to have children. Plato feared that bonds of kinship and ties of natural affection would challenge the supremacy of the Rulers and thus lead to the disruption of the state.

Plato’s utopian republic was a “heavenly” vision, not an empirical reality. He recognized that a small likelihood existed for his utopia to come about on earth, but “whether it exists or even will exist on earth matters not, for the wise man will order his life after it, having nothing to do with any other.”⁷ Historically, Plato was to have an enormous influence on the subsequent development of Western civilization and education. His central claims—that education must not be narrowly vocational, that virtue must take precedence over utility, and that knowing has a pre-

eminent claim over doing—have endured over the centuries and provoked both sharp criticism and fervent support.

In summary, the Graeco-Roman view equated virtue with knowledge and vice with ignorance and thus saw education in the broadest sense as a means of salvation: good education makes good people. Graeco-Roman education was therefore fundamentally rationalistic, elitist, and ultimately state controlled.

A Judeo-Christian Contrast to Plato’s Views

I’ve spent as much space as I have on the general Graeco-Roman conception of knowledge and education because of its influence on later Western educational

development, and so that it can be contrasted with the less influential Judeo-Christian epistemology.

Many of the differences in the development of education in Old Testament Israel, as compared to the Graeco-Roman world, can certainly be accounted for in the more agrarian, less differentiated societal structures of the Jews. Yet there are distinct differences that arise also because of the unique Jewish (Biblical) conception of one God who comes to a people to make with them a covenant and to provide for them a rule for living. There is much less emphasis on human reason and much more emphasis on divine revelation in the Jewish conception of knowledge. Israel had to learn to live by every word that proceeded from the mouth of the Lord rather than by their own (sinful) rational insights. Knowing God’s will is inextricably bound up with following God’s commandments. Knowing God is more than intellectual, rational understanding; it is actively *doing* God’s will. Thus, knowledge of righteousness for the Hebrews was not an abstraction to be realized through contemplation; it was a reality to be evidenced as a way of life characterized by communion with God and obedience to God’s word, and it is primarily the responsibility of parents:

Hear, O Israel:
The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.
You shall love the Lord your God with all your

Knowing God is more
than intellectual, rational
understanding; it is actively
doing God's will.

heart,
and with all your soul,
and with all your might.
Keep these words, that I am commanding you
today in your heart.
Recite them to your children,
and talk about them
when you are at home
and when you are away,
when you lie down,
and when you rise.⁸

In contradistinction to the Graeco-Roman view of education as the means to salvation, the Biblical view is that salvation comes only through repentance and renewed fellowship with God. Education does not make good people; it only develops good and bad people to a fuller possibility of working out their *goodness* or *badness*.

At the core of biblical Jewish culture is the confession that life is of one piece, that there is no distinction to be made between the sacred and profane. Educational historian Christopher Lucas has this to say about this absence of dualism in Hebrew culture:

It is tempting to conclude that education as initiated tradition was primarily a matter of religious instruction. This is true as far as its content and goals were directed toward concerns modern man [sic] would call sacred, as opposed to secular. On the other hand, no such distinction existed in Jewish culture. There were no divisions between the sacred and the secular, the religious and the profane. Life was viewed as a unitary whole and if, in retrospect, the ultimate aim of Jewish education is viewed as an effort to establish a “sacral” society consecrated by God’s laws it is only because modern man [sic] is heir to a set of distinctions introduced subsequently into Western culture. For the Jew, all human existence was infused with a religious consciousness, a kind of global awareness that set the terms of his education; “Yahweh, he is God, there is none else.... And you shall keep his statutes, and his commandments... that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days upon the land which Yahweh your God gives you forever.”⁹

To this Jewish conception of the integrality of knowledge and life, Christ came as the perfect example of a life so lived. There were no sacred-secular, theory-practice, mind-body, word-deed dualisms in his life. These were Greek notions foreign to his way of being. Christ made it clear that knowledge and truth are not solely propositional statements formulated according to rules of logic but that, in fact, knowledge and truth are irrevocably tied in with a way of being—his way: “I am the truth.”¹⁰

In summary, and in distinction from Graeco-Roman education, Judeo-Christian education is fundamentally existential, non-elitist, and family centered. The dominant epistemology stresses that true knowledge is first a gift from God and is realized through living a life of faithful obedience.

The Graeco-Roman/Judeo-Christian Synthesis

The history of the meeting of Judeo-Christian and Graeco-Roman thought is characteristic of so many of the clashes between two powerful ideologies: a strong conflict and opposition on some fronts, synthesis and accommodation on others. Within three hundred years after Christ’s death and resurrection, there was a substantial synthesis of Greek and Roman educational ideals with that of the Christian lifestyle. With the rise and legitimization of the Roman Catholic church, “Christian education” came to mean, first, ecclesiastical indoctrination; secondly, the training of priests for the church and monks for the monasteries. Thirdly, it also implied that what the polis had been for the Greeks and Romans, the *ecclesia* should now be for the Christians. Finally, Christian education required that the theologian now take the place of the philosopher. To the seven liberal arts of the Greek and Roman education were added the study of theology; the three Christian virtues of faith, hope and love; and the investigation of ecclesiastical canon law. Theology became the queen of the sciences, and life was composed of essentially two realms—sacred and secular—which, of course, reflected the Greek dualisms of mind-body, theory-practice, philosopher-worker, etc. By about the 5th Century A.D., Christian education had become public education in the sense that the Church was also the State, and the Church completely controlled all

forms of formal education.¹¹ Eventually in the tug-of-war between the sacred and the secular, the sacred began to lose out, and the Renaissance marked the rebirth of the Greek ideal of “man as the measure of all things”¹² and human reason as the means to one’s own salvation. Renaissance humanism, moved along by the later “religion” of Reason, developed still later into the revolutionary spirit of the 18th-century Enlightenment. Increasingly, educational theories and practices were intimately linked with and fostered by doctrines of human autonomy. The rise of science, and particularly the psychologizing of education under the primary influence of Rousseau and developed by such educators as Pestalozzi, Herbart, and Froebel, led people to believe in formal education within the confines of the compulsory school as the tool with which to liberate humankind from ignorance and oppression.

The Protestant Reformation and Education

The Protestant Reformation made a break with the Roman Catholic traditions of the Middle Ages and, within the confines of the institutional church, made a valiant and more-or-less successful effort to counter some of the attacks of the Renaissance and Humanism on the Christian religion. In the schools, the Reformation failed to succeed as well as it did in the churches. Protestants continued the centuries-old custom of regarding Christian education primarily as the educational ministry of the institutional church, and because there were soon many Protestant denominations, education could no longer be thought of as something essentially “public” in nature as it could when the Roman church represented all the public. Thus Christian education became “private” education, and aside from the ecclesiastical and “sacred” aspect of the curriculum, Christian schools continued (and continue) to teach some version of the classical seven liberal arts in the hopes that this may “make Christian youth become better, more intellectual and more cultured members of the church.”¹³

Despite the positive contributions of the Protestant Reformation to the spread of literacy, the sacred (i.e., private)-secular (i.e., public) dualism became accepted not only in Christian education but in Christian life as a whole.

One of the major effects of the Protestant Reformation was the spread of more-or-less universal literacy because of a desire to promote reading ability among believers so that they could read the Bible for themselves. Martin Luther was a tireless advocate for universal schooling for the young. He argued that part of the care of the young with which parents are charged involves their education, and especially literacy education. Luther championed free schools for all children as a matter of public welfare and urged that municipalities

not only maintain schools at public expense but also make attendance compulsory. He argued that “if the magistrates may compel able-bodied subjects to carry pike and musket and do military service, there is much more reason for them compelling their subjects to attend school. For, there is a far worse war to be waged with the Devil, who employs himself secretly in

harming towns and states through the neglect of education.”¹⁴

Many years later, the Puritans in New England used Luther’s line of argument to institute compulsory schooling in the famous *Old Deluder Satan Act of 1647*. Its preamble eloquently argued that “it being one of the chief projects of that old deluder, Satan, to keep men [sic] from knowledge of the Scriptures, as in former times by keeping them in an unknown tongue, so in these latter times by persuading them from the use of tongues...learning may not be buried in the graves of our fathers in church and commonwealth.”¹⁵ Towns of fifty or more families were instructed to appoint a schoolmaster to teach all children to read and write. He was to be paid either by the parents or by the inhabitants in general. Thus, Protestant Christianity and compulsory state-supported elementary schooling have grown up together for centuries.

Despite the positive contributions of the Protestant Reformation to the spread of literacy, the sacred (i.e., private)-secular (i.e., public) dualism became accepted not only in Christian education

but in Christian life as a whole. For this reason, especially in North America, Christians saw the state as the acceptable agent for educating their children in secular matters, the church taking care of the sacred. Especially at a time when North American culture still retained a veneer of Christian mores, this was the predominant state of affairs.

With the thoroughgoing secularization of society that has occurred since WWII, many Christians have become concerned with the relativization of the supposed Judeo-Christian ethic of our society, and so there has been an accelerating move by Christians to establish what I call “reactive” day-schools—reactive because they are being established (for the most part) as a reaction to the perceived evil of deteriorating Christian values in society but are not much concerned with making any substantive contribution to the conduct and structure of formal education in our society. They remain unconsciously or, in some cases, willingly mired in the contextual framework of dualism—of private and public, church and state, Christianity and the world, faith and knowledge, the Bible and learning, sacred and secular, prayer and study, subjective and objective, revelation and nature, Christ and culture, and so on.

The Rise of Free Compulsory Schooling

Schools as we know them today in Europe and North America are a relatively recent historical development. Mass compulsory schooling started in Prussia circa 1800. The Prussians realized that a state-controlled school system could be a powerful instrument of molding its citizens into a patriotic, compliant work force.¹⁶ Most European nations followed suit, and formative New World educators such as Horace Mann (1796-1859) in the U.S.A and Edgerton Ryerson (1803-1882) in Canada visited Prussian schools and copied many of the European models for public (state-controlled and financed) education.

Massachusetts was the first U.S. state to enact a compulsory schooling law in 1852, while Ontario was the first Canadian province to pass such a law in 1871. Today, citizens of Canada and the U.S.A. take it for granted that almost all children from ages five or six to sixteen should be in school. Most are in public schools, that is, schools fully funded

by the state, though as many as five percent of school-age children attend private or independent schools funded directly by parents with the aid of school societies, churches, and other philanthropic organizations.¹⁷

As mentioned above, this national interest in schooling was not primarily an altruistic one of producing thoughtful citizens.¹⁸ Rather, the emerging nation states of the late 18th and 19th centuries saw the school as an instrument to indoctrinate young citizens in the reigning ideologies of patriotism and to provide training of a national workforce to meet the needs of emerging industrialization. In the U.S.A. and Canada there was also the need to integrate the multitudes of immigrants arriving daily in order to make them *good* Americans and Canadians¹⁹

The aboriginal inhabitants who preceded the arrival of European settlers presented a peculiar problem. They were considered ignorant pagans who were clearly inferior humans interfering with the “manifest destiny” of “Christian” Europeans that Pope Alexander’s 1493 Doctrine of Discovery asserted had every right to colonize and seize land not inhabited by Christians. Those aboriginals who were not systematically eradicated from the land were confined to reservations, sometimes starved, and usually forced to assimilate in residential schools.²⁰ The stated aim of these schools in Canada was, in the words of Canada’s first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, to “take the Indian out of the child” through religious indoctrination and the eradication of their languages and cultural traditions.²¹ The abject failure of this statist project continues to reverberate in the present era, as witnessed by high rates of aboriginal incarceration, low educational achievement, and myriads of other social problems brought about by what the Canadian government has admitted to being “cultural genocide”²²

What Should Schools Teach?

Besides the three Rs of reading, ‘riting, and ‘rithmetic, what else should schools teach? The influence of the Renaissance on the Reformation revived classical learning in the Protestant schools. Catholic education had long been influenced by neo-Platonic and Aristotelian epistemologies that

valued distasteful, rational knowing above all. In the medieval Catholic universities, the Graeco-Roman seven liberal arts of the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic (i.e. philosophy)) and the quadrivium (mathematics geometry, music, and astronomy) were supplemented with theology and the study of canon law. The Protestant schools founded by the followers of Luther (Philip Melancthon) and of John Calvin (Johann Sturm) didn't deviate greatly from this classical, humanistic learning except for the addition of scriptural and catechetical studies. Sturm argued that the purpose of education was piety (*pietas*), knowledge (*sapientia*), and eloquence (*eloquentia*).²³ Piety was to be gained through Biblical studies and prayer, knowledge was obtained through the traditional classical studies, and eloquence, unfortunately, degenerated into the formal study of Latin grammar. So, in the end, these new Christian schools of secondary and higher learning were not much different from their former pre-Reformation classical counterparts. Elementary schools focused primarily on teaching basic literacy and, for the few who went beyond several years of schooling, preparation for entrance into the higher schools.

The Influence of State Involvement in Schooling

When, in the 19th century, the nation state of Prussia instituted compulsory state schooling, it not only fully funded elementary education, but as is the wont of any government funder, also controlled the organization of the schools, the hiring of teachers, and, most importantly, the curriculum. Briefly stated, the primary goal of early Prussian education was to produce more literate soldiers and more obedient citizens. As war became more technologically complex, soldiers needed to be able to read instruction manuals for the operation and maintenance of weapons; and, more importantly, the Prussian government, like all subsequent modern governments, realized that the state-funded schools could serve as an important tool for the indoctrination of compliant, patriotic citizens²⁴

Whenever political tensions lead to war or revo-

lution, the ascendant group always seeks to exert its control on schools and churches. Thus, whether in the case of the communist revolution in 1917 or the rise of Nazism in pre-war Germany, the state sought to exercise control of the masses by making sure that especially teachers, ministers, and priests toed the party line. And, as mentioned above, the history of the interaction of European colonialists and the indigenous populations indicates a similar animus.

Today, state and provincial departments of education in the U.S.A. and Canada have huge and expensive curriculum and testing arms to make sure their citizens are learning not just the three Rs but also what it means (in the view of the government of the day) to be good citizens.²⁵

The influence of the Renaissance on the Reformation revived classical learning in the Protestant schools.

The Dutch Effort of Radical Christian School Reform and Its Effects in North America

In the 19th century, in the little country of The Netherlands, two men tried to come to grips with the insidious Graeco-Roman dualisms of the times and attempted to reassert the Biblical conception of life as being, in its totality, either service to God or service to some other master. It was for them a question of the Word of God or the word of humans, the Kingdom of God or the polis of humankind. Dutch politician Guillaume Groen Van Prinsterer (1801-1876) and the Dutch theologian and political reformer Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) spearheaded a revolution that eventually saw the formation of a system of Christian day schools that proclaimed a desire to be free of church and state and to let God's word illumine every curricular subject.²⁶ This struggle for parental control of schooling led to the development in the Netherlands of a pluriform school system of many ideological and religious persuasions, fully funded by the state but, in principle at least, not controlled by either the state or church.

In the late 19th century, Dutch immigrants to the U.S.A. brought this vision of Christian schooling with them. In Canada, a surge of post WWII immigration included many Dutch Calvinists who

were used to having their own Christian schools.²⁷ However, both the U.S.A. and Canada were not particularly hospitable to this pluriform view of education. Although churches were often actively involved in elementary education in the early colonial histories of both countries, we have seen that it soon became the norm for schooling to become government controlled. The common public school became the primary means of making good American or Canadian citizens from the disparate mélange of immigrants that soon populated the New World. Though private schooling continued to be tolerated (and was used primarily by the rich for the economic advantage of their children), it was viewed by many as not only elitist but also unpatriotic.²⁸

During the 20th century, schooling became increasingly important. No longer was a basic elementary education enough to meet the needs of the ever expanding and diversifying economies of both Canada and the U.S.A. A high school education became a minimum requirement for most entry-level jobs, and, with the increasing participation of women in the work force, school was also expected to provide custodial care for all children aged 6-16 for the better part of the day.²⁹

Despite the increasing cost associated with this expansion of compulsory schooling, many Christian parents were unwilling to abrogate the responsibility of raising their children in the faith to the secular state public school. These parents strongly believed that in baptizing or dedicating their children to the Lord, they could not, in good conscience, turn over the bulk of their children's nurture to institutions that did not recognize Jesus Christ as the Lord of all. Thus, at considerable personal cost, since government funding was (and still is) either non-existent or minimal, they established and maintained Christian day schools, and eventually Christian colleges and universities as well. The two major Christian school associations in North America are Christian Schools International (CSI) and the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). CSI has its roots in the Dutch-Reformed religious communities in the U.S.A. and Canada, while ACSI schools have arisen out of a broader base of Evangelical Christianity in both countries. The schools of these associations

are either parentally controlled (CSI) or frequently ministries of local churches (ACSI). Together these associations of Christian schools educate hundreds of thousands of children in their K-12 schools in North America. How much money parents spend to operate these schools is difficult to determine; but, based on recent enrolment data supplied by CSI and ACSI, it certainly runs into the hundreds of million dollars annually.³⁰

Over the past century, and especially during the last fifty years, much work has been done at both philosophical and curricular levels to justify and define the distinctive character of the education that takes place in Christian schools. Most Christian day schools have vision and mission statements that emphasize their commitment to instilling a Christian worldview in their pupils and to help parents educate their children to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ and responsible, ethical citizens.³¹

Yet, however much these schools profess to be distinctly and radically Christian, they are sometimes as much creatures of the secular culture in which they exist but claim to resist as those creatures who embrace the secular culture; and their structure, curricula, and day-to-day operation are only superficially different from that of the state schools from which they claim to be uniquely different.³²

Although Christian parents are willing to make a substantial sacrifice to have their children educated in Christian schools, most of them are also eager to have their children become successful citizens. They want their children to go to good colleges and universities. They want their children to get good, well-paying jobs and to enter prestigious professions such as law and medicine. For Christian schools to be recognized as providing the kind of preparation that these aspirations require, they must be appropriately accredited. The teachers in these schools must be state or provincially certificated, the schools' curricula must meet government standards, and the students must write government achievement tests and graduation exams to be awarded a recognized diploma. Furthermore, at the high school level, students must be prepared to write college/university entrance exams set by various secular bodies such as the Educational Testing

Service or other agencies. With all these secular accrediting requirements and with secular bodies setting the standards for further education or entry into various professions, how many degrees of freedom really exist for the Christian school to be distinctively Christian? And, if Christian schools can't be distinctively Christian because of all the secular requirements placed on them, is there any point in having them, considering the enormous cost involved?

Of course, we must be realistic enough to realize that we cannot escape our culture and its historical development. The question of whether the continuing existence of schools is historically inevitable is an open one, but schools as we know them now are going to be here to stay for quite some time yet. Confessing, as they do, that God is also the God of history, Christians must accept the need to work within the historical framework in which they find themselves, even though they know that much of what has happened in history has been a-normative. Christian teachers and administrators must recognize their limits. Schools are, to a large extent, a product of their wider culture and reflect the local communities that they serve. To the extent that there is confusion and disagreement in Christian school communities about exactly what it means to serve the Lord in the world, to that extent schools will mirror that confusion and uncertainty and will have difficulty in clearly defining their nature and task. Thus, Christian educators live and work in an environment of considerable stress while being paid considerably less for their services than are their counterparts in the public, state-supported systems.

However difficult it may be, the real challenge for Christian schooling in the 21st century is to define more precisely what it means to engage in integral Christian education rather than simply settling for what John Hull has described as "Christians educating."³³

We should not, however, expect the school to fulfill those functions which are more properly the purview of the entire body of Christ. The central

role for the entire Christian community is, I believe, to (re)capture the Biblical sense of knowledge as an inseparable unity of faith and action. In other words, Christian culture must come to realize more fully that to know God is not only to confess certain beliefs about God but also to *do* God's will. In order to do both, we must distinguish among the different tasks performed by various institutions in fostering such a world-and-life view and practice. But, before

considering the specific task of Christian schools, I will explain the effects of compulsory formal schooling in Western society, since some of our current educational crises can be traced to this phenomenon.

Of course, we must be realistic enough to realize that we cannot escape our culture and its historical development.

Some Effects of Compulsory Schooling³⁴

Compulsory education developed in the West after families and communities lost their ability to prepare youth for adult work. The breakdown of informal modes of socialization—families, apprenticeship, and communities—led to the support for formal ways of teaching the young by segregating them from the wider society in specialized institutions. This support for formal teaching led, in turn, to the creation and expansion of compulsory schooling. Until very recently, this development was universally viewed as not only necessary but also desirable. Only extensive schooling, most people believed, was satisfactory preparation for life in an increasingly complex society. Compulsory schooling could emancipate children from the prisons of the often narrow and parochial environments from which they came, and universal schooling meant that access to the accumulated cultural heritage of Western civilization could be everyone's birthright rather than a privilege confined to a small elite. The model of schooling that was adopted for the masses was the essentially elitist Greco-Roman one, which stressed the liberating benefits of the liberal arts and sciences.

Though we might like to attribute the rapidly increasing support for longer periods of compulsory schooling to an enlightened realization of the benefits of a liberal education, the truth is more mundane. Educational sociologist Christopher

Hurn suggests that the basic motivation for increasing the length of compulsory schooling was the desire for status, power, and prestige. He makes three plausible assumptions: 1) that education is usually associated with high status, 2) that all groups in society would like to obtain higher status for their children, and 3) that the overall wealth and resources of Western society are increasing.³⁵ Given these three assumptions, it is easy to conclude that low and middle status groups would seek, through schooling, to raise their relative position in society. To the extent that these groups are successful, high-status groups will seek to preserve their relatively more privileged position by seeking even more schooling for their children. Thus, while in 1910 most American high-status individuals had an average of ten years of schooling and low-status individuals averaged only five years, by 1920 the average number of these groups was twelve and eight respectively.³⁶ Thus, the educational ante was raised repeatedly to preserve the relative status positions of different groups in society. We have come to a situation today where a twelve-year high school diploma is worth little more in terms of status and opportunity for advancement than a grade-eight education was fifty years ago. After a time (that for many has arrived), schooling becomes merely a means of earning credentials with little connection to the functional requirements of a given job or vocation and instead simply reflects the status of the position. A college or university bachelor's degree is now considered *de rigueur* for any self-respecting middle class, upwardly mobile person.

But, as Hurn points out, there is a serious hitch in this process of schooling as a means of upward mobility. It depends on a faith in education not that much different from the faith required in the stock market. To the extent that investors believe that competition with other investors will drive prices higher in the future, they will be willing to pay what might otherwise seem inflated prices in the present. Up to a certain point, confidence begets confidence; but at some point, of course, a series of events—sharply lower corporate earnings, omissions of dividends—intervene to shake or diminish the confidence, and a downward spiral occurs.³⁷

We are now witnessing such a crisis of confidence in the educational marketplace. For start-

ers, many groups in our society are beginning to realize that “compensatory education” is a myth. There is, they believe, no point in continuing to chase the goal of higher status through schooling if the criterion for meaningful advance keeps being raised. What’s the point of struggling to obtain a high school diploma if even college graduates can’t find high-status jobs? Secondly, employers are beginning to give preference to applicants having specific job-related skills rather than general educational credentials, thus leading to an erosion of confidence in a four-year liberal arts or sciences education as a route to higher status or at least high-paying positions.³⁸

There are still forces working in the opposite direction, of course. There remains a strong societal conviction that somehow education (schooling) is a “good thing” and that high-status jobs, at least, require general cognitive skills that on-the-job training cannot provide. High-status groups, furthermore, are likely to share certain values and lifestyles acquired, in part, in schools and universities. They are likely to prefer recruiting individuals with similar educational experiences. Thus, we are witnessing a tug-of-war between the concepts of schooling in the liberal arts as a road to social and economic mobility and that of schooling as specific job training, with a third undercurrent suggesting that, for a significant number of students, the business of schooling just isn’t worth the effort anymore.³⁹

Increasing disillusionment with the effectiveness of schools; apparent failure of schools to compensate for prior inequalities among students; reports of widespread vandalism, violence, and alienation in contemporary high schools; and sheer difficulty in reforming educational institutions in any fundamental way: all these have led increasing numbers of intellectuals to question the rationale for segregating young people in specialized institutions away from the wider community. Such age-graded segregation in which one teacher is confronted with thirty or perhaps more students who do not necessarily choose to be there and who may be deeply divided in their interests and inclinations leads to the phenomenon of a “youth culture”—with all that the term implies about youthful rebellion against adult authority and adult values.

A currently popular response to these perceived

evils of schooling is the attempt to dissolve the boundaries between schools and the “real world” and return the education of the young to the community; in short, to abolish compulsory education in its present form. Career education programs—“work experience” programs of various sorts—have been championed since the 1970s and are proliferating in the name of “real world” education.⁴⁰

However, several false assumptions must be dealt with before we readily embrace this move to deinstitutionalize the school. First, we must be careful not to substitute a new romance of meaningful and relevant work for the old romance of schooling. It is not clear that most jobs in contemporary society provide greater amounts of choice and discretion than traditional schools provide, nor is it clear that they stretch the critical, intellectual and imaginative faculties of those who do them. To place a fifteen-year-old boy or girl on an assembly line or fast-food outlet will perhaps provide some experience in the “real world,” but it will do nothing to help such youth acquire skills needed to find more satisfying work or widen their horizons intellectually or spiritually.

Secondly, the idea of placing a greater reliance on the community to provide educational services for the young assumes that communities do indeed exist outside the school environment. However, most communities are not equipped to provide educational experience for youth superior to those provided by the schools. In many if not most neighborhoods, the informal social arrangements supposed to assume the roles of failed formal institutions are not there in much strength, so that when reformers call on the community to reconvene, the relevant people or institutions have neither the time, resources, bonds of personal acquaintance, nor motives to respond.

What are Christian Schools For? A Personal View

Let me summarize the situation. I began with

I agree with Hull that Christians who are engaged in schooling and the schools in which they teach have been in almost every significant way carbon copies of their secular counterparts both institutionally (structurally) and functionally.

a brief historical and philosophical review to demonstrate that schooling in the West (including Christian schooling) has developed from predominantly rational Graeco-Roman rather than existential Judeo-Christian epistemological roots. This has resulted, I argued, in a view of worthwhile schooling as being directly related to the supposedly humanizing and liberating influence of the liberal arts and its derivatives and a depreciation of the manual and vocational arts. Secondly, the relationship of status with credentials, obtainable only through schooling,

has led to ever-increasing depreciation in value of years of schooling so that we now face the consequences of an educational inflation that makes given credentials worth less every year. This phenomenon (along with many other socio-economic factors) has led to a crisis of confidence in the schools, which makes them stressful places to work.

Throughout this analysis I have not treated the Christian school as a separate entity—because I don’t think such a treatment is historically justified. What makes a Christian school Christian? Dr. John Hull, former Dean of the Faculty of Education at The King’s University, has argued that there is a fundamental difference, beyond mere semantics, between schools that are staffed by teachers who are Christians and those schools staffed by teachers who are teaching Christianly.⁴¹ I agree with Hull that Christians who are engaged in schooling and the schools in which they teach have been in almost every significant way carbon copies of their secular counterparts both institutionally (structurally) and functionally. I write “*almost every. . . way*” because there is an essential difference. It is a difference that is, however, not a characteristically educational one. Christian schools have consciously confessed Christ as having something to do with education, have been staffed by committed Christ-believers, and have sought, in however broken a fashion, to impress upon young people the need for Christ’s salvation in both their personal lives and in the restoration of the world.

Through the working of the Spirit, countless children, adolescents, and adults have been blessed by attending or working in Christian schools; and for that we can give God thanks. But, I believe we are a long way away from being able to offer a Scripturally sound educational justification for the structure and function of our schools as they exist at present, and we have also not come very far in articulating a functionally meaningful philosophy of Christian educational reform either.

The concluding part of this essay will suggest the directions we must take if the rather colossal efforts at establishing alternate Christian educational systems are to be worthwhile.

I begin with a caveat: We must be realistic enough to realize that we cannot escape our culture and its historical development. Christian teachers and administrators must recognize their limits. As pointed out previously, schools are a product of their wider culture, and particular schools reflect the communities they serve. To the extent that there is confusion and disagreement among Christian school communities as to what it means to serve the Lord in the world, to that extent schools will mirror that confusion and uncertainty and will, with difficulty, clearly define their nature and task. Thus, Christian educators must be prepared to work in an environment of considerable stress.⁴² Much of this stress is also caused by the fact that Christian schools are expected to fulfill those functions that are more properly the purview of the entire body of Christ.

The central role for the entire Christian community is, I believe, to (re)capture the Biblical sense of knowledge as an inseparable unity of faith and action. In other words, Christian culture must realize more fully that to know God is not only to confess certain propositional beliefs about God but also to do God's will, especially as is expressed and modelled in the life of Jesus. We must, though, distinguish the different tasks of the various institutions to foster such a world-and-life view and practice. To do so, I will distinguish among three terms which are often confused and used interchangeably, namely, *nurture*, *education* and *schooling*.⁴³

Nurture, the broadest of these terms, incorporating the others, refers to the sum of human influences that develop the child into a mature,

integrated person capable of exercising his/her full religious calling. Nurture begins in the home with the family and includes biophysical factors such as the provision of food, clothing, shelter, and health care, as well as psychosocial and spiritual leading.

Education is that part of nurture concerned with consciously leading or introducing the child/person into understanding the customs, beliefs, aims, and perception of reality of a given culture or subculture. Thus, education involves socialization, enculturation, and a general leading of a child into a particular *walk of life*. Education takes place both implicitly and explicitly, with agencies such as family, church, state, voluntary organizations, mass media and school all playing a role in the process.⁴⁴

Schooling is a process characterized by analytical examination of creation and culture and is founded in the historical unfolding of society. Although every school activity should be considered an element in the total nurturing and educational process, *it is the unique structural ordering of reality and culture that sets the school apart from other societal institutions such as the family, church, and state*. Schooling should thus be a limited and distinct aspect of nurture and education that should not usurp either the prior role of the family or that of other institutions and agencies that have a legitimate role to fulfill in this regard.

It is not only useful but essential that every educator develop a clear grasp of the distinctions just made. Failure to distinguish among nurture, education, and schooling leads to a lack of clarity about the role of the school and accounts for the phenomenon of the school and its teachers taking on ever increasing responsibilities and roles that do not clearly belong to them.

Lest I be misunderstood, I am not arguing that the school should be a place for theory as opposed to practice, of liberal arts as opposed to vocational arts. Students are whole persons, and teaching is a human-relations profession. My point is that school is first and foremost a place where conscious analysis of the multifaceted nature of creation is undertaken. It is not, in principle, primarily a place where children and adolescents are to be fed, catechized, trained for a specific occupation, entertained, baby-sat or counselled—although all of these are fine and good things to do for and with children

and adolescents.⁴⁵ The school may in fact have to do some of these things before it can engage in its primary task, but in doing so, it should not assume that these tasks be or become normative programs. In that sense the Christian school also has the task of pointing out to the broader Christian community—family, church, business—how it may be neglecting its task in nurture and education. For example, shutting down the school for three days to go skiing is an instance of the school’s usurping the function of the family or the Christian club, whereas a three-day field trip devoted to a detailed ecological study of a local ecosystem is clearly within the parameters of the school’s task of analyzing God’s good creation. Devoting tremendous capital and human resources to developing a competitive football program at the expense of a well-considered physical education program for every student is another example of a school’s misunderstanding its central, limited task.

What the Christian school must do to distinguish itself from its secular counterparts is to very consciously develop a curriculum that is more than just an icing of Christian piety on an otherwise secular cake.⁴⁶ Christian schools must consciously work at developing a transformative praxis that challenges the dominant conformist ideals of a secular culture, which measures success primarily in economic terms. Such a “teaching for transformation” model is starting to take hold in several Christian school communities. I have been privileged to serve on the board of one such school community in Edmonton, Alberta, where the Edmonton Christian Schools, in conjunction with the Prairie Center for Christian Education, are actively developing a transformative curriculum based on infusing several Biblical “through lines” throughout the schools’ programs. Students from K-12 are challenged to consider how these “through lines” are evident in their lived experience. Currently, and in no specific order, these are the through lines: God Worshipper, Image Reflector, Order Discerner, Earth Keeper, Servant Worker, Idolatry Discerner, Justice Seeker, Creation Enjoyer, Community

My point is that school is first and foremost a place where conscious analysis of the multifaceted nature of creation is undertaken.

Builder, and Beauty Creator.⁴⁷

Not all of these “through lines” are or should be embedded in every lesson or school activity, but it isn’t difficult to see how these Biblical guidelines for Christian living can be explored in the traditional subject divisions of a school curriculum as well as in a more fully integrated approach to studying all of God’s creation in a uniquely analytical, school-like manner.

Conclusion

I am aware that the task of Christian schooling is complex and that I have not addressed many other issues that should be considered in the quest of what counts for truly Christian schooling. For instance, we must come to grips with defining the role of vocational education in the Christian

school—not just for the non-academically inclined but for everyone. Clearly, we must allow more students to leave school sooner and more gracefully than they do now. Analytical knowledge is only one variety of knowing, and not everyone can or should be equally challenged in this regard.⁴⁸ Also, the role of Christian schooling for children with developmental and cognitive challenges needs greater attention. And, of course, Christian schools must resist the never-ending credentialing rat-race that has little to do with real learning.

Finally, Christian communities and their schools need to view themselves as communities of resistance to the dominant secular idolatry of consumeristic excess to ensure that the answer to the question posed by the title of this essay can be a resounding “Yes!” rather than an inconclusive “Maybe.”

Endnotes

1. In 1996, The King’s University College (now The King’s University) became the first private/independent post-secondary institution in Canada to offer a provincially accredited teacher education program.
2. I do not have specific sources for these quotes. Over the years I have scribbled them on random

pieces of paper as I came across them and collected them in a folder. I have been working on this essay off and on over a number of years. I wrote a draft shortly after completing a few years of high school teaching in 1972. I did a bit of work on the paper in the 1980s before the busyness of university teaching and administration made me forget all about it. About a year ago, I rediscovered the essay in among some old files, and thought it might be worth updating. One of the things that struck me was how relevant many of my original references were to the current situation; and, so, I have decided to keep some of them in support of my arguments.

3. This is a non-controversial statement that can be borne out by checking the “Education” section of any bookstore or reading daily newspaper “Letters to the Editor.” In my province of Alberta, the following types of legal schooling choices are available to parents (though only a few are supported by some government funding): Public, Separate (primarily Catholic), Private (including those based on different religious faiths, pedagogies, and genders). In addition, there are options for home schooling, distance learning, and elite, private boarding schooling. All these choices testify to the lack of consensus about what counts for the best or even good education.
4. I am neither a trained philosopher nor historian of education. My description of Plato’s educational views is drawn from a reading of *The Republic* in English translation by Francis M. Cornford. (London: Oxford University Press, 1945). For fuller treatments of Plato’s educational philosophy see John E. Adamson, *The Theory of Education in Plato’s Republic*. (New York: Macmillan, 1903), and Rupert C. Lodge, *Plato’s Theory of Education*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1947).
5. A curriculum is the course of study and teaching practices of a school. The word *curriculum* has a Latin origin related to our word *circus*. A curriculum is thus a “circuit” or a course for running a race. Therefore, a school curriculum is really an (intellectual) course on which we wish our students to “run.” The *liberal* arts are those disciplines viewed by Plato and Aristotle as liberating humans from ignorance towards true understanding. Since then, Western education has always had a salvific aura, i.e. education has been harnessed to make people “better” in some fundamental way.
6. Hence, *education* (from the Latin *educere*: to lead out) is a drawing out, rather than a pouring in of knowledge.
7. As quoted in Christopher J. Lucas, *Our Western Educational Heritage* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 83. I am indebted to this excellent text by Lucas for my source of much historical information in this essay.
8. Deuteronomy 6:4-7, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).
9. Lucas, 156.
10. John 4:6 NRSV
11. John C. Vanderstel, “The Struggle for Christian Education in Western History.” In John Vriend *et al.*, *To Prod the Slumbering Giant*. (Toronto: Wedge, 1972), 54.
12. Protagoras (c. 481 BC – c. 420 BC) as quoted in *Theaetetus* by Plato section 152a.
13. Lucas, 258.
14. *Ibid.*, 251.
15. *Ibid.*, 476.
16. See James Van Horn Melton, *Absolutism and Eighteenth-Century Origins of Compulsory Schooling in Prussia and Austria*. (Cambridge University Press, 1988). Melton points out that the development of a standing army in Prussia (and other emerging nation states) in the 18th century enabled rulers to preserve social order in a way that had not been possible before. In addition, compulsory schooling was used by the Prussian state to promote patriotism given the earlier defeat of the Prussian army by Napoleon at the Battle of Jena (1806) and subsequent loss of territory and heavy financial reparations imposed on Prussia by the French. The establishment in 1808 of a new department of public instruction, led by Wilhelm von Humboldt, was seen by Prussia’s leaders as a means of rescuing the country from its French oppressors.
17. A recent (November 2019) personal communication from the Executive Director of the Association of Independent Schools and Colleges of Alberta (AISCA) provided an estimate of the enrolment of K-12 students in independent (private) schools Alberta’s to be approximately 5% of the total public/separate school student population. Not all these schools are Christian schools.

18. American commentator H.L. Mencken (as quoted by Lucas in a footnote p. 471) was skeptical of claims that [public] schools would be instruments in “teaching people to think.” Instead he alleged their aim is “to make the pupil a good citizen, which is to say, a citizen differing as little as possible, in positive knowledge and habit of mind, from all other citizens. In other words, it is the mission of the pedagogue, not to make his pupils think, but to make them think right... . His fundamental function in America is to manufacture an endless corps of sound Americans. A sound American is simply one who has put out of his mind all doubts and questionings, and who accepts instantly, and as incontrovertible gospel, the whole body of official doctrine of his day, whatever it may be and no matter how often it may change.” Henry L. Mencken, *A Mencken Chestomathy*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), 315-316.
19. Hurn, 81-83.
- On a personal note, I remember my grade two (1953) opening morning exercises in an Edmonton public school that included us standing at attention at our desks, facing the British flag and a photo of the Queen while reciting “*I salute the flag, the emblem of my country, and to her I pledge my love and loyalty.*”
20. See James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life*. (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013).
21. On June 11, 2008, then Canadian Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, issued a formal apology on behalf of all Canadians for the Residential School System.
22. Stated by Canada’s then Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Beverly McLachlin (*Globe and Mail*, May 28, 2015).
23. Lucas, 23.
24. Melton, *Ibid.*, Note 16.
25. In my Canadian Province of Alberta, the Ministry of Education’s budget is second in size only to that of the Ministry of Health. Some examples of government ideology in curriculum making: a recent vision statement of Alberta’s Ministry of Education proclaimed a “Triple E” overarching purpose of K-12 education, that being the formation of “Effective, Ethical, and Entrepreneurial citizens.” The recent, left-leaning, New Democratic (ND) government engaged in a massive overhaul of the curriculum created during the forty-four years of the previous Progressive Conservative government’s tenure. With the return in 2019 of a once again conservative government (the United Conservative Party) the revisions of the ND government have been placed on hold and new “common sense” and business-friendly curricular reforms are already well under way.
26. Kuyper wrote a famous Christian manifesto, *Pro Rege (For the King)*, after which this periodical is named.
27. For a history of the development of Kuyperian Calvinist schools and their subsequent spread to the U.S.A. and Canada, see Peter De Boer and Donald Oppewal, “American Calvinist Day Schools,” in *Christian Scholars Review* 13 (1984), 2: 120-140.
28. I attended East Edmonton Christian School from 1954 to 1960 in the (then) Town of Beverly (now a neighborhood in Edmonton, Alberta). The editor of the town’s (now defunct) weekly newspaper, *The Beverly Page*, often wrote about the Dutch Reform (sic) School and asked why these European immigrants couldn’t just send their children to the local public schools like other immigrants who were eager to become “true” Canadians, rather than cling to their curious Netherlandic customs.
29. During a public-school teachers’ strike in Alberta a few years ago, there was initial support and sympathy for the teachers’ demands for reduced class sizes and other working-condition issues. This sympathy evaporated within a week as harried parents sought alternative day care for their children, either with friends and relatives, or at expensive care facilities. Soon calls went out to government officials to legislate an end to the strike. Missing out on essential learning was seldom, if ever, mentioned as the reason the teachers should get back to work as soon as possible. See also Christopher J. Hurn. *The Limits and Possibilities of Schooling: An Introduction to the Sociology of Education*. (3rd Ed.). Allyn and Bacon, 1993, 231-232 for an analysis of the custodial function of American schools.
30. There are 340 CSI member schools in North America serving approximately 101,000 Students. (Data supplied by CSI in an email November 20, 2019.) ACSI serves over one million students in K-12 schools in North America (personal communication, November 26, 2019). In addition, according to 2015 data from the U.S. National

Center for Educational Statistics, there are over 600 Christian colleges and universities in the U.S.A. serving many thousands of students. Estimating how much money is involved in these endeavors is difficult, but it is certainly in the hundreds of millions of dollars annually.

31. For example, the Vision Statement for the Edmonton Society for Christian Education and its schools is: *Accepting Christ's Invitation to Live for Renewal*, and its Mission Statement is: *Responding to God's grace, Edmonton Christian Schools challenges students, through Christ-centered education, to actively play their role in God's story.*
32. In structure, most Christian day schools of which I am aware have adopted typical age-graded classrooms from kindergarten to grade 12, housing approximately 30 students per grade under the tutelage of one or more teachers who are state certificated, teach state mandated curricula, and participate in state mandated achievement tests. To this is added an icing of Christian perspective and Christian practices such as prayer and chapel service. For a scholarly analysis of this situation see John Hull's "Aiming for Christian Education, Settling for Christians Educating: the Christian School's Replication of a Public School Paradigm," *Christian Scholars Review*, XXXII: 2 (Winter 2003).
33. Hull, 2.
34. For this section, I draw heavily on Christopher J. Hurn, *The Limits and Possibilities of Schooling: An Introduction to the Sociology of Education*. 3rd Ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1993). While this may seem to be a dated source, the first edition came out in 1978, and I am amazed at how prescient Hurn was then, and how relevant his analyses still are to the current situation.
35. Hurn, 13-14.
36. *Ibid.*, 9.
37. *Ibid.*, 264-270.
38. *Ibid.*, 10-11.
39. *Ibid.*, 266 ff.
40. Eleanor McGowan and David Cohen. "Career Education: Reforming School Through Work." *The Public Interest* 47 (Winter 1977), 46.
41. See Endnote 29.
42. I have had great difficulty in finding information about teacher attrition and burn-out in Christian schools, but there is evidence from public sources about these matters. For example, the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), representing approximately 40,000 teachers, has conducted studies on both issues (including a review of the American literature). Its study on teacher attrition, published in 2013, reports that five years after graduation, between 25 and 50% of teachers have left the profession, depending on the jurisdiction in which they teach. This in a province that pays the highest teacher salaries of any jurisdiction in Canada, and much higher than almost all jurisdictions in the U.S.A. See *Teaching in the Early Years of Practice: A Five-Year Longitudinal Study*. (Edmonton: ATA, 2013), and Alberta Ministry of Education's 2015 report: *Alberta Teacher Workload Study*.
43. As mentioned in my first note, this essay has a long history. I did not make as careful attributions as I should have early on, but I am indebted to Arnold H. DeGraff, who made somewhat similar distinctions, especially regarding the concept of "schooling" in an essay titled "The Nature and Aim of Christian Education" (Toronto: Institute for Christian Studies, n.d.).
44. American media ecologist Neil Postman (1931-2003) argued that popular culture as represented by the media is perhaps the most dominant and potent form of education. His analysis was made before the advent of cell phones and social media; and were he alive today, I'm sure he would feel vindicated by his earlier claims. See Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York, Viking, 1984). In a later book, *The End of Education: Redefining the Value of School* (Knopf, 1995), Postman argues that the then current crisis in America's educational system derives from its failure to supply students with a transcendent, unifying "narrative." Instead, he argues that today's schools promote the false "gods" of economic utility, consumerism, technology, or ethnic separatism and resentment. I believe that Christians can offer a very different and more hopeful narrative, which should be reflected in the schools they operate.
45. In many K-12 schools, and especially in colleges and universities, the co-curriculum (e.g. sports teams, clubs, hobbies, fitness programs, travel experiences, counselling etc.) take up an increasing amount of the budget. The staffing for these programs frequently equals or exceeds that for the

academic curricular program. For example, The King's University 2019/20 Calendar lists approximately 50 full time teaching faculty positions, and a total of 83 administrative/student support positions (not all of which are full-time). On a cost basis, academic staffing vs. non-teaching staff is generally about 1:1 in Canadian universities (personal communication from the Associate VP of Institutional Research at The King's University).

46. The “no icing on the cake” reference comes from an old book of the same name by Jack Mechielsen (ed.). *No Icing on the Cake: Christian Foundations for Education*. (Melbourne, Aust.: Brookes-Hall Publishing Foundation, 1980).
47. More detailed description and details about the Teaching for Transformation (TfT) curriculum and the attending “Through Lines” can be found on the Prairie Centre for Christian Education's

(PCCE) website at www.pcce.ca/Teaching-for-Transformation. Dordt University's Center for the Advancement of Christian Education (CASE) has partnered with the PCCE to aid in the diffusion of the TfT curriculum in the U.S.A. The Canadian EduDeo Ministries use the TfT model with schools in Central America and Africa, and the Christian Academy in Japan is also using it.

48. During my years as a Christian college/university professor (1981-2009), I have long bemoaned the “bums in seats” practice for the difficult task of financing Christian post-secondary schooling. In my view, far too many fine young people are spending a great deal of (often borrowed) money, in an unhappy quest for a university degree in which they are neither very interested nor intellectually suited.