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Teaching Christianly: The Challenge Continues

John Van Dyk
Dordt College

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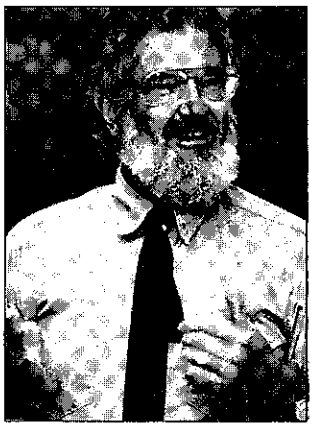

by John Van Dyk

In March, 1993, the first decade of the annual B.J. Haan Educational Conference Series ended. Every year for the past ten years, at the time when the geese fly north, teachers, college professors, school administrators, education students and other interested folk gathered together at Dordt College to consider important educational topics.

Typically, a B.J. Haan Conference consisted of two public meetings, usually conducted in successive evenings, and three all-morning "inter nos" sessions. Participants in these *inter nos* sessions were the conference speakers, a number of Dordt College faculty members, representatives from Christian schools, and various consultants and guests. The *inter nos* sessions provided opportunity to grapple with the theoretical underpinnings and practical implications of the conference themes.

The articles by John Vanderhoek and Stuart Fowler in this issue of *Pro Rege* were delivered as public lectures at our final conference last March. In some ways these lectures represent a point of transition: they concluded the first ten-year Series, but at the same time they signal the next ten years. Recently, the Dordt College administration approved a proposal to continue the series for another ten years.

The Conference Series began when Rev. B.J. Haan, the first president of Dordt College, retired in 1982. During his career as pastor and college president, Rev. Haan tirelessly promoted the cause of Christian education at all levels.[1] When he concluded his twenty-three years of service at the helm of Dordt College, the Board of Trustees fittingly decided to honor him by establishing the annual B.J. Haan Educational Conference Series. The Board mandated that the Series develop "serviceable insight of direct and practical use to Christian elementary and secondary school teachers."

The Theme of the B.J. Haan Series

Sponsored by the Dordt College Center for Educational Services and the Education Department, the B.J. Haan Conference Series has focused on questions about teaching. What is distinctive Christian teaching? What is the difference between teachers teaching, say, algebra, history, language

Dr. John Van Dyk is Professor of Education at Dordt College and Director of its Center for Educational Services.

arts, or science in a Christian school and teachers teaching these subjects in a public school? If there is no difference, or only negligible difference, is it a responsible use of money to finance expensive Christian education when public schools are free? Indeed, within Reformed circles the rising costs of private education prompt questions about the viability or necessity of Christian day schools.[2]

We could argue, of course, that how teachers teach is not all that important, as long as Christian schools provide safe, sheltered, and moral environments and include a healthful dose of Bible study and devotional exercises. But such a position is difficult to defend. As one parent once put it to me, "My home is where my kids learn morality and develop a sense of security, and the church teaches them Bible and devotional expertise. We don't need expensive Christian schools to do that. Better to spend all that money on more urgent causes!"

Others may argue that how teachers teach is perhaps not all that significant as long as they are professing, sincere, Bible-believing Christians. Presumably Christian teachers automatically teach Christianly. But such a view is patently mistaken. True, teaching Christianly presupposes a Christian teacher; but the reverse is not always true. It is quite possible for a committed Christian teacher to engage—often unknowingly—in teaching and management practices quite at odds with our Christian confession. A teacher can be a dedicated Christian, one who sincerely loves the Lord; yet his or her teaching activity can, at the same time, be subtly controlled by worldly educational philosophies.[3]

It seems clear, then, that if Christian schools are to be distinctive and worth the financial sacrifice, their teaching should be distinctive and worth the sacrifice. This, indeed, is the position taken by Dordt College and reflected in the work of the Center for Educational Services.

The decision to focus the B.J. Haan Series on the theme of teaching Christianly emerged after careful deliberation and extensive consultation with Christian educators in various parts of the country. It is striking that the literature on Christian education developed and published over decades of reflection devotes so little attention to the nature and practice of classroom teaching. Christian educational literature has traditionally emphasized philosophy and curriculum. For example, a number of excellent documents articulate a Christian philosophy of education.[4] And we need to think only of the tradition of publishing Christian textbooks by organizations such as Christian Schools International. Valuable curriculum development, in fact, continues to this day.[5] But while, to be sure, much of this curricular material includes suggested learning activities and teaching strategies, it is difficult to find evidence of sustained, systematic reflection about the nature of teaching as such. An early textbook by Calvin College education professor Cornelius Jaarsma, *Human Development, Learning and Teaching*,[6] illustrates this reality. From its title one would surmise that at least one-third of this 300-page book would treat the question of teaching, but only on nine pages is the nature of teaching discussed.

Teaching Christianly: Review and Summary

The B.J. Haan Series began with a survey of the lay of the land, so to speak. A number of speakers addressed questions about the history of research on teaching, instructional models, philosophical assumptions, and the problems we face in understanding what teaching really is.[7]

The next stage of the series was devoted to developing an alternative model. The model we proposed describes teaching as a three-dimensional process of guiding, unfolding, and enabling. By way of unfolding appropriate curricular content and skills, we suggested, the Christian teacher guides students along and enables them to function as knowledgeable and competent disciples of the Lord.

Guiding, unfolding, and enabling: to what, specifically, do these terms refer? I limit myself to a brief review.[8] First, teaching activity is guiding activity. This dimension of teaching is expressed, for example, in teacher modeling, in the exercise of discipline, in appropriate classroom management, and in motivating and encouraging students. Such activities nudge students in a certain direction. Of course, a guide needs to know what direction to follow. A critical question, therefore, confronts us teachers: In what direction are we to nudge our students? This question brings us to fundamental issues about the purpose of Christian education. Ultimately, I believe, the goal of Christian schooling is to equip our students for knowledgeable and competent discipleship, to prepare them for "works of service" (Eph 4:11-13).

Unfolding, our second descriptor, means that the teacher opens up to the students what they as yet do not know or as yet cannot do. The Christian teacher, through the use of effective curricular material, discloses to the students God's creational design for the subject matter, the distortions brought about by sin, and the possibilities for healing and redemption.

Both guiding and unfolding must lead to enabling. Enabling means that teachers must seek to create the conditions whereby students learn to be willing and able servants of God in our world today. Enabling in discipleship must be the goal of every classroom, no matter what grade level or subject area. The task of enabling cannot be left to counselors and Bible teachers, nor restricted to off-campus activities. Christian teachers, therefore, will want to examine their curricular material and pedagogical methods carefully, and try to design the kinds of guiding and unfolding experiences that will provide optimum opportunity for enabling in discipleship to occur.

Discipleship, as used in this model, should be understood in a broad sense. It means to be attuned to hearing the will of the Lord for life, and to be able to respond in genuine servanthood, as stewards of God's good earth and all its creatures, and, as agents of God's reconciliation, to be busily and eagerly healing brokenness wherever it is encountered, whether in our personal lives, in our communities, or in the world at large. Preparing for this kind of discipleship in our increasingly complex world requires extensive Christian schooling.

The work on teaching understood as guiding, unfolding, and enabling led to the final phase of the B.J. Haan Series: the implementation of the model in daily classroom practice. We began with the biblical principle that the Christian community is to be the Body of Christ, a community of believers working together to disclose God's Kingdom rule. Christian classrooms are not exempted. They, too, are to be expressions of the Body of Christ. Consequently, the series explored the nature and implications of the collaborative classroom and critically investigated teaching strategies such as cooperative learning, shared praxis, and designing participatory learning activities. In addition, working with biblical givens about our covenant children as unique, gifted image-bearers, we paid special attention to the growing literature and research on learning styles. Our final B.J. Haan Conference on community in school and classroom concluded this phase of the Series. The articles published in this issue of *Pro Rege* emerged from this final conference. They address issues relating to both the communal nature of schools and the individuality of the students.

The Current Situation

In a world in which educational fads come and go at a surprisingly rapid pace, the final word about teaching Christianly has surely not been spoken. So our work must continue, as winds of change blow through the educational scene, in reaction to mounting, often perplexing problems confronting both public and private schools. In a climate of uncertainty and confusion, voices proclaiming panaceas and easy solutions readily find a listening ear. This means that Christian educators need to be especially vigilant, lest they unwittingly be drawn onto pathways they should not travel.

Teaching is a three dimensional process of guiding, unfolding, and enabling.

How then shall we teach? Is the traditional stress on direct instruction the best way to go? Should we adopt the Madeline Hunter model? Or switch to cooperative learning? If so, what kind? Should we follow Bob Slavin, the Johnson brothers, or Spencer Kagan? Is a strict academic transmission model appropriate or should we dabble in transformational teaching theories? Or maybe the narrative, storytelling approach, recently entering educational circles, offers new options? And what are we going to do with learning styles? Ignore them? Follow Bernice McCarthy, Rita Dunn, Anthony Gregorc, or Howard Gardner? How do we respond to whole language? Or to renewed calls for phonics? What about shared praxis? Assertive discipline? Control theory? Holistic education? Indeed, how then shall we teach? Or shall we simply identify—and dismiss—any nontraditional educational approach as a manifestation of "New Age," stick our heads in the sand, and continue our—often unexamined—teaching practices?

In this bewildering world of claims and counterclaims we have no choice but to address the

issues head-on. More than ever before there is a need to focus on the question of what it means to teach Christianly. If we don't, we will inevitably be forced to follow dominant secular approaches, as we so easily tend to do and so often have done. Specifically, our task as Christian educators is twofold. On the one hand, we need to explore, in a positive way, the nature and practice of authentic Christian teaching. Such explorations require continuous reflection about the biblical philosophical perspectives that ought to drive our teaching practice. On the other hand, we need to be in dialogue with the educational spirits besetting us on all sides. Rather than ignoring or dismissing them, we must identify them, expose them, critically evaluate them on the basis of our own carefully examined stance, and, wherever possible, learn from them.

In the remainder of this article I wish to examine and describe some of the spirits assailing our Christian classrooms. To put it more concretely, I want to describe some of the challenges confronting the practice of teaching Christianly.

Spirits of the Age

The apostle John tells us to discern the spirits of the age (1 John 4:1). This discerning is no easy task. As our civilization unfolds, so does the complexity of viewpoints and philosophical positions, many of which have become confusingly interdependent and interconnected. Anyone who has dabbled in intellectual history knows about its complexity. It is not my intention to present a precise analysis. Instead, I limit myself to a rough description of some of the key perspectives continually harassing Christian education and, consequently, forcing us to continually examine our teaching practice.

We do well to remind ourselves that philosophical perspectives and worldviews are not merely innocent products of human ingenuity, as our history of rationalism would have us believe. We are not just talking about some interesting, often quaint but largely irrelevant ideas tossed about by whimsical ivory-tower academics; rather, we are talking about dynamic, powerful forces originating in belief or unbelief, forces which take hold of the hearts of men and women and children and drive them to order their lives in certain ways. We are talking about spirits that produce convictions and commitments that no rational analysis can erase. In short, we are talking about deadly serious matters.

Dualism

The idea of teaching Christianly is probably most consistently and effectively torpedoed by the lingering commitment to dualism. Though in essence an old and familiar medieval heresy, repeatedly described and criticized in detail, dualism somehow never seems to lose its power. To summarize: dualism is a perspective that divides human life into two separate, basically unrelated realms, namely, a spiritual or sacred realm of religion and morality, and a secular realm of independent science and reason, of objective, neutral curricular content and technical teaching practice to which the Word of God has practically nothing to say. Dualism promotes the view that the difference between a Christian and a public school is to be found mainly in additional "religious" activities, moral teachings, biblical studies, or a Christlike example. Of course, these factors are not unimportant. But when they are seen as the distinguishing character of Christian schooling, a spirit of dualism has taken over.

In a dualistic school, then, both curriculum and pedagogy remain virtually untouched by the Gospel. Dualism accepts the argument that teaching strategies are neutral, neither Christian nor unchristian. It fails to see teaching activity as essentially religious activity, grounded in worldviews and commitments. Dualism exempts teachers from having to grapple with the hard questions of Christian perspective on curriculum and teaching. Sprinkled with a Christian coating, teaching practice itself remains unexamined.

Dualism brings about a fundamental distortion in the concept of unfolding. As we noted, to teach Christianly means, among other things, to unfold curricular material from a creation/fall/redemption perspective. But such a perspective is fundamentally a religious perspective. It reflects an approach rooted in a scriptural vision. Dualism, however, attempts to confine religious perspectives and orientations to a separate realm, a realm intrinsically unrelated to curricular content or instructional practice. Unfolding, consequently, itself becomes a dualistic activity composed of religious classroom practice, such as prayer, singing of hymns, and Bible reading on the one hand, and teaching neutral, generally accepted knowledge on the other. Elsewhere I have described this type of teaching as "simply teaching," as distinct from teaching Christianly.[9]

A critical problem with dualism is that the separation between spiritual and natural realms neatly covers up contradictory teaching practices. For example, it allows teachers to give lip service to biblical ideas of community and mutual service, yet at the same time run authoritarian, individualistic, and competitive classrooms. To a dualistic teacher, community and mutual service belong to one realm, competitive learning to another. Dualism, in other words, effectively masks a contradiction between biblical community and pagan individualism.

Intellectualism

A bedfellow of dualism is the ancient bugaboo of intellectualism. Intellectualism is a perspective inspired by the ancient pagan Greek idea that the rational mind is the heart of man. "To train the person we must train the mind" is the intellectualist's slogan. In medieval times, Christian philosophers and theologians wedded this pagan idea to biblical terminology by asserting the existence of a "rational soul." By "soul" the medievals referred to something somewhat akin to the Hebrew concept of "heart," while the rational part—the natural light of reason, presumably untrammeled by religious beliefs—represented the continuation of Greek intellectualism. The idea of the "natural light of reason" as an autonomous source of knowledge spawned a host of modern varieties of rationalism and scientism.

Intellectualism contradicts the biblical vision of the "whole person," and tends to denigrate and neglect social, confessional, and emotional needs. Intellectualism, therefore, is blatantly reductionistic. It encourages a myopic vision of teaching as aimed primarily, if not exclusively, at "academic excellence." Intellectualism clearly goes hand in hand with dualism: the excessive preoccupation with the life of the mind allows a sharp separation between the academic and other aspects of teaching and learning, especially those considered to be "spiritual."

It is important to recognize several educationally important versions of intellectualism. One of these is *perennialism*. Any textbook on the history and philosophy of education will tell you that perennialism has been a dominant approach to schooling. And indeed, such a judgment is correct. Perennialism sees truth as content permanently delivered by the sages of civilization. Robert Hutchins' "Great Books approach" and Mortimer Adler's *Paideia Proposal* are but expressions of this perspective. What is needed, according to perennialism, is that students learn to absorb the wisdom of the ages by studying the classics of Western culture. Christian schools, with their predilection for notions of "God's eternal truth," are easily led into perennialist traps.

A second, equally problematic manifestation of intellectualism is *positivism*. Without going into detail, let it suffice to say that positivism sees truth as contained in the articulation of discrete, objective facts. Oriented to the belief that only scientific, abstract, and verifiable knowledge is true knowledge, positivism promotes the idea that learning is essentially the acquisition of factual knowledge, and, as a result, encourages a transmission model of learning. Positivism has powerfully affected education. Many teachers of history, social studies, and natural science, sought only to drill facts into presumably empty heads. The teaching style associated with positivism is the "TCT approach": talk, chalk, and test, along with a hefty dose of note-taking and memorization.

The goal of Christian schooling is to equip our students for knowledgeable and competent discipleship.

Both perennialism and positivism seriously short-circuit the guiding-unfolding-enabling model. In essence, these approaches reduce teaching to a very restricted form of unfolding. Guiding and enabling play no role.

Individualism

Another powerful spirit gripping the contemporary educational scene is individualism. Like intellectualism, individualism has its roots in ancient pagan Greece. It flourished especially among a group of philosophers called the Sophists. Though underground for some time in the Middle Ages, individualism powerfully reasserted itself at the time of the Renaissance when ideas of human autonomy and individual freedom became firmly entrenched in Western civilization. Individualism sees persons as autonomous islands, only externally related to each other and governed by laws of self-interest. Individualism fosters selfishness, misplaced ambi-

tion, and materialism. It accounts, for example, for the fundamental argument in the pro-choice perspective: the woman has a "right" to her own body, as if the fact that a male was involved has no relevance. Individualism does not recognize the reality of societal structures such as family, friendship, or human relationships. Married couples, for example, are merely individuals existing in some kind of agreed contract, rather than in permanent, normed bonds of loyalty and troth.

We need to be clear about the distinction between individualism and individuality. We are, of course, individual creatures. Each one of us is, in fact, individually unique. Individualism, like all "isms," represents a serious exaggeration, and therefore a serious distortion. It exaggerates the role of the individual and asserts that there is no reality outside of individual things and individual persons.

Individualism clearly contradicts the biblical concept of the "Body of Christ," and dismisses collaborative classrooms as impractical or inefficient. As already suggested, individualism frequently controls Christian classrooms, especially those in which students are responsible only for their own, not each other's learning. Such individualistic classrooms are rife with unmatched competition. Uncritically accepting the legitimacy of such unmatched competition, teachers adopt methods of "grading on the curve." Entire schools frequently promote individualism by "honor roll" programs, which leave numerous students, gifted in other than recognized ways, in the dust or falling between the cracks.

Vaguely aware of the power of individualism, schools have begun to explore cooperative learning strategies. Indeed, cooperative learning looks very attractive when we realize its strong stress on social interaction and collaboration. Christian educators, however, need to treat cooperative learning with caution. Much of it as practiced in the secular world is shot full of behaviorism and relativism, and often is merely a cloak for a continuing individualistic stress on personal ambition, achievement and success. Consequently, cooperative learning needs to be critically assessed and radically reinterpreted within a framework of teaching Christianly.[10]

Egalitarianism

Egalitarianism is still another spirit infecting our Christian classrooms. In some ways, egalitarianism constitutes a peculiar reverse of individualism: the stress is on conformity and sameness. It ignores the reality of individual gifts and learning styles and prompts teachers to treat and evaluate all students on the same basis, ostensibly under the cloak of fairness and equality. It encourages school boards to approve standard core curricula, standardized testing, and excessive student-teacher ratios.

Egalitarianism emboldens teachers to look at their classrooms as consisting of three types of students: the overachievers, the underachievers, and the kids in the middle. The group in the middle is particularly vulnerable to the destructive effects of egalitarianism. While the gifted on the one hand and the learning disabled on the other frequently enjoy special attention, the students "in the middle" are all classified as "average," hence all essentially the same. As a result, their peculiar gifts and needs are generally overlooked, and they are prevented from reaching their full potential as unique image-bearers of God.[11]

Pragmatism

One of the most powerful spirits affecting Christian education is the perspective of pragmatism. This American-grown philosophy sees practical outcomes as determinative of the character and quality of action. If a course of action works, i.e., meets with assumed criteria of success, it is to be judged appropriate. Pragmatism does away with the need to consider deeper levels of principles, assumptions, and normativity. It is not concerned about the question of what constitutes a good goal. Reaching the goal—whether good or bad—is what counts.

This kind of pragmatism fosters an eclectic approach to teaching. To a pragmatist teacher, any technique is okay, as long as it works. Teachers in fact frequently demonstrate this kind of eclectic pragmatism by their propensity towards a "recipe syndrome": they look for quick-fix solutions to complicated problems, and adopt educational fads without a critical, Christian examination of their religious and philosophical assumptions.

Akin to this kind of eclectic pragmatism is an approach we may call instructional pluralism.[12] Such pluralism continually looks for options. Any educational approach is automatically arranged on a tray of equally acceptable options. To teachers, there are a thousand ways to teach, and indeed there are. But to a pluralist, none of these ways is any better than

any of the others. To a pluralist teacher, there is only one guiding norm: unguided individual preference. Such pluralism should worry us, for, after all, though we see through a glass darkly, there are indeed rights and wrongs, there is better and worse. There are norms—for teaching, too—that we need to seek out and to which we must respond.

Pragmatic, eclectic pluralism is especially in vogue in our postmodern age. Now that the idea of objective truth has been officially debunked and replaced by a commitment to uncertainty and individual difference, educational theorists are free to investigate and invent without regard for frameworks, direction, or normativity. All of this makes pursuing the idea of teaching Christianly an even more difficult task.

Exclusivism

Finally, I make mention of yet another spirit: the spirit of exclusivism. Last year, while in Australia, I worked with a Christian school principal by the name of Bill Oates. Bill was half aborigine. He came from a background that knew about marginalization and minorities. One time Bill said to me: "When the Lord comes back, the first question he will ask us Christian educators is not whether we have attained the perfect Christian curriculum or the perfect Christian approach to teaching. Rather, the Lord will ask: What have you done with my little ones, especially those who are poor and orphaned, the marginalized and rejected, those who have been expelled from other schools because of presumed behavioral and learning disabilities?" Bill Oates' vision was to offer truly inclusive Christian education. The Christian school is to be a lighthouse, he said, a light on the hilltop, a place where the needs of all kids are met, not just of those who can afford it or who have the required academic gifts.

Let's face it: Christian schools today serve only a segment of middle-class Christian society. In fact, some Christian schools are still set up primarily for those who are not handicapped in any serious way. The kids with handicaps are "too expensive" to accommodate in our mainline Christian schools. Kids with vocational or industrial talents are often not welcome either. They are shunted off to the voc-tech schools around the corner, as questions of whether or not these students are receiving a Christian education quietly fade away.

How then shall we teach?

Although we may as yet not be entirely clear about the actual practice of teaching Christianly, there can hardly be debate about the impact the various spirits make on what we do in our classrooms. Continuing exploration of distinctive Christian teaching, then, must remain high on our agenda. But such explorations cannot be separated from the consideration of another, equally important component of educational practice: the question of how children learn. The fact is that the spirits discussed above are associated with certain theories of learning. For example, intellectualism and positivism see kids as empty vessels.[13] Other views, such as a pragmatistic progressivism, look at children as flowers to be cultivated, and ignore the reality of sin. Currently constructivism is on the market: kids must eke out their own private universe of meaning. These issues surely will be addressed in the next ten-year B.J. Haan Series.

The challenges facing Christian education are enormous. Continuing investigation of the nature and character of teaching Christianly in our complicated age is surely not an ill-timed or superfluous frivolity. We solicit your help as we put our hands to the plow.

END NOTES

1 For example, under the leadership of Rev. Haan, Dordt College was established. A primary purpose of the new college was to meet the needs of area Christian schools, which suffered from a serious shortage of qualified teachers. Cf. M. Vanden Bos, *A History of Dordt College: the B.J. Haan Years.* (Sioux Center, IA: Dordt College Press, 1990) 15-20.

2 *The Banner*, a weekly publication of the Christian Reformed Church, has addressed the pros and cons of Christian day schools on a number of occasions. In my own travel to various Christian school communities I sometimes encounter a disturbing lack of understanding of and interest in Christian education.

3 On a larger scale this situation can occur in a Christian school as a whole. It is not uncommon to find that the actual practices in a Christian school contradict what is articulated in the school's statement of purpose. For example, while a school's philosophy may call for the training of "the whole child," in reality much of classroom teaching is often restricted to academics and intellectual concerns. Or the school praises individuality and uniqueness while at the same time structuring an environment of stifling conformity.

4 E.g., the CSI documents "Curriculum: By What Standard?" (N. Wolterstorff); "In My Father's House" (N. Beversluis), and "The Beginning of Wisdom" (J. Van Dyk); *Christian Educational Distinctives* (S. Fowler, Potchefstroom Univer-

sity for Christian Higher Education); *Twelve Affirmations* (Vryhof e.a., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House); *Hallmarks of Christian Schooling* (Stronks and Vreugdenhill, Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools); and articles too numerous to detail.

5 Districts 10 (Ontario), 11 (Alberta), and 12 (B.C.) continue to produce impressive and useful curricular material.

6 Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans (1959). Chapter 8 of this book discusses the question What is teaching? The discussion occupies pages 243 to 252.

7 As a result of this phase, several articles were published in *Pro Rege*. Two of them appeared in the June, 1984, issue: "Describing Instruction: Basic Assumptions" by Larry Reynolds, and "From Theory to Instruction: Implications for Christian Schools" by Gloria Stronks. Harry Van Belle's article "Relational Anthropology and Education," also dating from the first stage of the B.J. Haan Series, appeared in the September, 1985, issue.

8 For more detailed descriptions, see the following articles: "Teaching Christianly: What Is It?" Series of four articles in *Christian Educators Journal* (Oct/Nov 1986, Dec/Jan 1987, Feb/Mar 1987, and Apr/May 1987); "Teaching Christianly: Another Look" in *Calvinist Contact*, March 27, 1987; "Christian Teaching: Is There a Difference?" in *The Banner*, September 7, 1987; "Teaching Christianly: From Theory to Practice" in the Dordt College *Voice*, October, 1987; and "The Practice of Teaching Christianly" in S. Fowler, H. Van Brummelen, J. Van Dyk, *Christian Schooling: Education for Freedom* (Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, 1990) 155-168. Workshops and seminars on the guiding/unfolding/enabling model have been conducted in school communities in nearly 20 states, three Canadian provinces, and five foreign countries.

9 "Teaching Christianly: What is It?" *Christian Educators Journal*, Feb/Mar 1987.

10 The workshops in cooperative learning offered by the Dordt College Center for Educational Services take pains to clarify the difference between secular versions of cooperative learning and a Christian understanding of a collaborative classroom.

11 The Center for Educational Services is currently studying the feasibility of a "multifunctional classroom," i.e., a classroom in which the gifts of all the students, including of those "in the middle," can be celebrated, and the needs of all, not just of some, of the students can be met. Future B.J. Haan Conferences will surely address this important issue.

12 I am indebted to Stuart Fowler for suggesting this term to me. Of course, "pluralism" is a term widely used to describe a variety of situations. In educational circles "pluralism" is nowadays most commonly associated with cultural diversity. So our use of the term represents a departure from standard practice.

13 Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator whose work is widely studied in North America, talks about the "banking approach" to teaching and learning. Freire compares such teaching to depositing material into empty accounts.