

# **The Dilemma of Education**

[Cornelius Van Til](#)

# Preface

The first edition of this booklet was published by the National Union of Christian Schools. By permission of its director, Dr. John A. Vander Ark, the second edition is now published by the [Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company](#).

A few typographical errors have been corrected. No other changes have been made.

June, 1956

# Contents

## Introduction

1. [The Foolishness of Christianity](#)
2. [The Modern Substitute](#)

## 1. The Instrumentalist's View Of Education

- A. [Dewey's Positive Claims](#)
- B. [Purification of Environment](#)
- C. [The School as the Central Integrating Agency](#)
- D. [Religion In Dewey's System](#)
- E. [Summary](#)

## 2. The Idealist's View Of Education

- A. [Idealistic Criticism of Dewey's Instrumentalism](#)
- B. [The Idealistic Principle of Continuity](#)
- C. [Plato Also Opposes Tales](#)
- D. [Dewey vs. Plato](#)
- E. [Pinpointing the Dilemma](#)

## 3. Some Recent Views On Education

- A. [The Harvard Report](#)
- B. [Arnold S. Nash](#)
- C. [Henry P. Van Dusen](#)

#### 4. Various Christian (Non-reformed) Views Of Education

- A. The Roman Catholic View
- B. Protestantism in General
- C. Report of the N.A.E. Committee
- D. God-centered Education In Fundamentalism
- E. The Principle of Unity in Fundamentalism

#### 5. The Reformed View Of Education

- A. The Goal of Education
- B. Criterion in Education
- C. The Motivating Principle in Education
- D. The Unity of Culture
- E. Common Grace

## Introduction

Have we a goal to set before our youth? What is the aim and purpose of human life? Do we have a standard by which to direct our pupils to this goal? And what should be the motivating principle as they seek to achieve that goal?

Man has always asked himself such questions. Christians too are familiar with them. Man's chief end, says the Christian, is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. The revealed will of God expressed in the Scriptures is the proper norm for man's life. And faith in the God of Scripture should be man's motivating power.

Christians teach their children these things. It is all summed up in the expression that man must live his life to the glory of God. In seeking the glory of God, man the individual and mankind as a whole will also be enriched. If men seek first the kingdom of God, then all other things will be added unto them.

It is with this positive idea of building the kingdom of God that the Christian philosophy of education, as Christian philosophy in general, begins. But Satan has interrupted the building program of the human race. Accordingly the Christian must also oppose the efforts of Satan. He must seek to destroy Satan and his works in order that the constructive work assigned to man in the beginning may go on.

There is no doubt as to the outcome of the battle with the evil one. Satan is only a creature. His opposition to the kingdom of God is certain of defeat. He will be restrained so that the creative forces placed in the human race by the Creator will have full opportunity for expression. Part of the glory of that kingdom will be due to the fact that it has successfully withstood the attack of King Diabolus.

## The Foolishness of Christianity

But all this seems naive to modern man. How can an educated individual seriously hold such views? Such tales may possibly be presented as myths but they would be harmful if said to be true. How can any one know anything about the self-contained God of historic Christianity? Such a God would have nothing in common with man. Such a God is beyond human experience and therefore meaningless for human experience.<sup>1</sup> It is, of course, legitimate to use the notion of such a God as a limiting concept (*Grenzbegriff*). We may act as if such a God

---

<sup>1</sup> cf. Josiah Royce, *The World and the Individual*, (New York, 1923) Vol. 1., p. 129 ff.

exists. But with Kant we must realize that human knowledge does not go beyond human experience. We may even say that we are "guilty in Adam" and that we are now "righteous in Christ" who is both Son of God and Son of man. But to teach children that these things are true in the ordinary historical sense of the term is to prepare them for life in fairy land. A true philosophy of education must know what it is doing; it must not be out of touch with the actual situation of human life. A philosophy of education is by implication also a philosophy of human experience. Modern educators are fully aware of this. John Dewey even entitled one of his books, *Experience and Education*.

## **The Modern Substitute**

Modern man has his own substitute for historic Christianity. He, not God, determines the goal of life. He must be his own standard of right and wrong. He must provide his own power of motivation.

To teach children these things, he insists, is really to prepare them for life. To speak to them of heaven and hell is to create false hopes and false fears. But to speak to them of improving themselves and mankind is to set up a goal which they can understand and possibly attain.

The historic Christian view and the modern view seem thus to be hopelessly at odds. Can any good come from a discussion between them?

It can at least be said that the Christian will benefit from knowing what objections are brought against his position. He does not want to build utopia. He wants his educational philosophy to be in touch with the needs of men. But Christians are also missionaries. Their warfare is not an end in itself; they want to win their opponent for his ultimate good. And the Christian must be humble because what he has he has received by grace. But what he has, he also believes to be true. And truth is relevant to human experience.

But who may speak for historic Christianity? And who may speak for the modern view? Shall elections be held and the majority vote determine this question? That would be hopeless. So we must be "arbitrary" from the beginning and judge in the light of Scripture. Let us begin with John Dewey.

# 1. The Instrumentalist's View of Education

John Dewey is certainly hostile to the Christian faith. He has consistently opposed all forms of transcendence. He rejects the Christian notion of the self-existent, transcendent God. But he also opposes the philosophical notion of transcendence given by idealists. Dewey often seems to regard these as identical. At least he regards them as equally hostile to a proper view of human experience. Concerning this identification we shall speak later. First we must note Dewey's opposition to every form of transcendence.

The common essence of all these theories, in short, is that what is known is antecedent to the mental act of observation and inquiry, and is totally unaffected by these acts; otherwise it would not be fixed and unchangeable. This negative condition, that the processes of search, investigation, reflection, involved in knowledge relate to something having prior being, fixes once for all the main characters attributed to mind, and to the organs of knowing. They must be outside what is known, so as not to interact in any way with the object to be known. If the word 'interaction' be used, it cannot denote that overt production of change it signifies in its ordinary and practical use.<sup>1</sup>

Here we see that for Dewey the idea of transcendence involves pure staticism. And staticism does injustice to human experience, which he conceives to be simply an active interrelationship of experience with itself and its environment. And the static view does no justice to this, for to it human activity is a matter of indifference. Staticism has a spectator view of life. When those who hold the static view of reality want to ascribe some reality to the acts of the human mind, they have to do so at the expense of what they hold to be true. If the mind intervenes in knowledge, then knowledge is no longer knowledge in the full sense of the term. Wherever the mind of man contributes anything to the knowledge of the situation, it falsifies it.

Dewey charges that this staticism is essentially dualistic.

A number of theories of knowing have been criticized in the previous pages. In spite of their differences from one another, they all agree in one fundamental respect which contrasts with the theory which has been positively advanced. The latter assumes continuity; the former state or imply certain basic divisions, separations, or antitheses, technically called dualisms.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Quest for Certainty*, (New York, 1929) p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Democracy and Education*, (New York, 1920) p. 388.

## A. Dewey's Positive Claims

Dewey's position is frankly anti-Christian. He clearly maintains that man is the final reference point in human experience. Man must look within, and within only, if he is to have continuity in his experience.

The pupil must be shown how to set his own ideals. He must learn to find the criterion within himself. He must learn to rely on his own research for motivating power. Only then will he learn to see legitimacy and meaning in what he is asked to do.<sup>3</sup>

### **1. The Criterion**

The question of a criterion, standard or norm may be singled out for further discussion. Dewey is conscious of difficulty at this point. He has emphasized that human experience is growth, continuous, progressive growth. But how can we distinguish human growth from animal growth? Is there any direction in growth as such? Can teachers determine which experiences are educative and which experiences are "miseducative"?

Of course experience in stealing is "miseducative." There are experiences that the pupil must be advised to shun. Dewey maintains that: "any experience is miseducative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience."<sup>4</sup> Any experience that leads to callousness, to a lack of sensitivity and responsiveness, is miseducative. Richer experiences in the future are restricted by such experience.

### **2. Application in Practice**

The criterion then must always be internal to human experience itself. The pupil must find the criterion within himself, and the teacher must help him find it there. The teacher must help the pupil "to select the kind of present experiences that live thoughtfully and creatively in subsequent experience."<sup>5</sup> It is thus that direction in growth or direction as part of growth will be accomplished.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> *Experience and Education*, (New York, 1938) p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> *Democracy and Education*, p. 28 ff.

In helping the pupil, the teacher does not, however, "convey beliefs, emotions and knowledge."<sup>7</sup> If he did so he would break up the "experiential continuum," the progressive growth and continuity in experience.

## **B. Purification of Environment**

The direction of the pupil's growth must be attained by a process of purification of the environment.

It is the business of the school environment to eliminate, so far as possible, the unworthy features of the existing environment from influence upon mental habitudes. It establishes a purified medium of action. Selection aims not only at simplifying but at weeding out what is undesirable. Every society gets encumbered with what is trivial, with dead wood from the past, and with what is positively perverse. The school has the duty of omitting such things from the environment which it supplies, and thereby doing what it can to counteract their influence in the ordinary social environment. By selecting the best for its exclusive use, it strives to re-enforce the power of this best. As a society becomes more enlightened, it realizes that it is responsible not to transmit and conserve the whole of its existing achievements, but only such as make for a better future society. The school is its chief agency for the accomplishment of this end.<sup>8</sup>

It is only when education is conceived, negatively, as purification of the pupil's environment and, positively, as reaching toward a "better future society" that the principle of the "experiential continuum" reaches its full expression. Only in this way can really harmful influences be kept from the pupil. The most harmful influences are those which bring ultimate separation between groups of men. Any experience which is not attainable by all men is evil, for "when and only when development of a particular line conduces to continuing growth does it answer to the criterion of education as growing. For the conception is one that must find universal and not specialized limited application."<sup>9</sup>

But again Dewey is conscious of difficulty in his point of view. At least he fears that his views may be misunderstood.

Has he really been able to explain the idea of direction in human experience? If he stresses the idea of the "experiential continuum," how can man profit from past experience? How can he set an ideal of improvement for himself? This can be done only if he can make the idea of the present intelligible to himself. How

---

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> *Experience and Education*, p. 29.

will the teacher be able to point the pupil to an ideal democracy? How will he be able to provide the purifying medium that the pupil needs in order to make progress toward the ideal society?

### **C. The School as Central Integrating Agency**

The purification, note carefully, must absolutely exclude anything that is not universally attainable. When pupils from old-fashioned Christian homes and churches come to school, how shall they be shown that the ideals they have learned there are harmful to the progress of the ideal democracy? The school must act as a unifying, harmonizing center of human experience. It must be the melting pot of humanity.

One code prevails in the family; another, on the street; a third, in the workshop or store; a fourth, in the religious association. As a person passes from one of the environments to another, he is subjected to antagonistic pulls, and is in danger of being split into a being having different standards of judgment and emotion for different occasions. This danger imposes upon the school a steadying and integrating office.<sup>10</sup>

What elements of Christianity would have to be kept out of the school? Any conception of God as self-existent would be contraband. The idea of God's creation of man and the universe, man's fall into sin, and the salvation of some rather than all men would be evil too. The idea that some men are born again by the work of the Holy Spirit while others are not would have to be excluded. Such doctrines would be miseducative. The pupil could not integrate such teachings in his attempt to realize the ideal universal human society. To teach such doctrines would be a violation of the principle of the "experiential continuum."

#### **1. The Omniscient Teacher**

It becomes increasingly apparent that the teacher in Dewey's schools must somehow know that these teachings of Christianity cannot be true. They must protect their pupils from the evil influences of such disintegrating and miseducative doctrines. So they must be sure that these doctrines are not true. They must know that it is impossible that they can be true. They must be able to assure the pupils that there cannot be a judgment coming. They must be able to make universal negative assertions about all future experience. And they must make such assertions on the basis of present experience as it is intelligible without reference to anything beyond itself. In other words Dewey's teachers

---

<sup>10</sup> *Democracy and Education*, p. 26.

must first assert that man knows nothing of a transcendent realm. But they must also assert, in effect, that they know all about it. They must assert that nobody knows anything about it. This means that they who claim to know about it must be mistaken. And then they themselves, nonetheless, presume to know all about it. They must be omniscient in order to know that no one can rightfully claim to know anything about God.

## 2. The Dilemma of the Scientist

But perhaps we should not blame the teachers in Dewey's schools for this plight. After all they in turn learn from the scientists. For it is only from science that authentic and dependable knowledge is obtained.<sup>11</sup>

Science has taught us the operational method of research. By this operational method, modern man has learned to discard all forms of learning based on dualism. Science has taught us to substitute data for objects.

By data is signified subject matter for further interpretation; something to be thought about. Objects are finalities; they are complete, finished; they call for thought only in the way of definition, classification, logical arrangement, subsumption in syllogisms, etc. But data signify material to serve; they are indications, evidence, signs, clues to and of something still to be reached; they are intermediate, not ultimate; means, not finalities.<sup>12</sup>

This substitution of data for objects has set free the constructive activity of the mind of man. It guarantees the complete pliability of the material which the mind meets.

It is in this way that Dewey seeks to do away with facts which, prior to man's knowledge of them, have any revelational character. On Dewey's theory there can be no revelation of God to man. There can be no such revelation because the only objects through which such knowledge could be mediated have been liquidated into data. These data tell us nothing till man has put his own message into them.

It is thus that the scientist enables the teacher to teach the pupil that there can be no such God as Christianity professes to have.

---

<sup>11</sup> *Quest for Certainty*, p. 79.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

## **D. Religion in Dewey's System**

The issue between Dewey and the Christian is therefore not that of religion as such. It is not that Dewey would exclude religion from the curriculum of the school. On the contrary, he substitutes the religion of modern science for the historic Christian religion.

This means that in place of the objective realities (the facts) of historic Christianity, Dewey substitutes the self-sufficiency of the adjective (descriptions). Man is religious says Dewey. It is an historic fact that he is. His adjustment to his environment is a religious procedure. He projects an ideal society for himself. He sets up standards of action for individual and group behavior. And then he teaches the pupils by means of integration to reach the ideal society of the future. All this is religion. And it is accomplished in the process of education. For in education we deal "with that imaginative totality which we call the universe."

## **E. Summary**

This is, of course, a bare outline of Dewey's position. But it appears to be adequate and fair because we have taken the elements that Dewey is most concerned to stress.

Human experience as self-explanatory at the present moment, is the basis of it all. This human experience is social and racial in nature. And growth is its chief characteristic. This growth progresses toward an ideal society or democracy.

This ideal democracy must exclude Christianity. Aiming to teach the pupils no doctrine, they are yet taught that the doctrines of Christianity are not true. By the "scientific method" the pupils are taught to share in a "common faith." Such a common faith is in accord with the principle of the "experiential continuum." This "common faith" is the only thing that may rightly be asserted about the universe as a whole.

According to Dewey then, the teachers must present to the pupils as religion a philosophy of reality which absolutely excludes Christianity. This philosophy of reality is said to be involved in the adoption of the modern scientific methodology. For this scientific method involves the idea of ultimate change. And as such it must exclude the notion of the God of Christianity who is forever the same.

## **2. The Idealist's View of Education**

We have now seen that Dewey has not given a satisfactory philosophy of education. But what about idealistic philosophy? Idealism has also been rejected by Dewey. It too was said to hold to something static and antecedent to knowledge. Dewey says it makes learning by experience impossible.

In passing it may be noted that Dewey has other enemies besides idealism and Christianity. Any philosophy that maintains the slightest "staticism" is evil in his sight. But it is only with idealism that we are now concerned. More specifically we are here concerned only with monistic idealism which seeks coherence and unity in experience.

Thus we have practically narrowed our discussion to what Dewey calls the Greek view of education. And the Greek view, as far as it is "static," is best expressed by Plato. What then does Plato have to offer in contrast to Dewey?

### **A. Idealistic Criticism of Dewey's Instrumentalism**

Applied to Dewey's philosophy of education, the idealistic criticism would run something like this. Dewey's principle of the "experiential continuum" offers no unity to educational theory. It would be impossible, on Dewey's basis, for any one to know anything about a future ideal society. No one could know anything about the future at all, for the future is not subject to experimentation. Therefore the future, on Dewey's view, must be "hopelessly transcendent."

Thus the scientist cannot tell the teacher, and the teacher cannot tell the pupil how to relate his present experience to the improvement of society. Education would lose all sense of direction. The teacher would fall back into dreaming dreams and relating them as truth. He would by blind authority insist that the pupil must believe these dreams. All the evil features of an authoritarian educational policy would reappear.

At this point Dewey might appeal to the past. He might claim to see into the future because of observed tendencies in the past. But the idealist would answer that on Dewey's premise the past is as dark as the future. For on Dewey's view we cannot use the laws of contradiction and of identity while thinking of the past. With respect to the past, we have nothing but the "data" of the present. And these data contain no message. They must yet be interpreted. Thus the past must be known in terms of the future, and the future is unknowable.

In this way learning by experience is shown to be quite unintelligible. For Dewey only the present is real. It must be intelligible in terms of itself. Yet the present must become intelligible to itself in terms of ideals for the future. This future is completely unknowable. And in the past men have also worked toward this completely unknown future, so that we can get no help from the past either.

The idealist contends then that Dewey's philosophy offers no known ideal or goal for education. It presents no valid criterion for distinguishing between the educative and the miseducative. It cannot explain how human experience in the past could have aimed at a goal of which nothing could be known. Education on Dewey's basis is merely animal growth.

Historical experience, says the idealist, presupposes the priority of the reflective mind. Therefore we have to presuppose an absolute mind in terms of which the individual human mind knows its ideals; receives its standard, and begins its activity. On Dewey's view the individual human mind would at the beginning of history have to be a mature mind. Not only would the individual mind have to be a mature mind, it would also have to be omniscient. Only an omniscient mind knows the future. And individual experience, according to Dewey, cannot get under way without knowledge of the future.

At this point Dewey might interrupt by saying that he is only asking that men know the foreseeable future. To this the idealist replies that there is no foreseeable future unless there is an absolutely foreseen future. Reality must be rational throughout if there is to be rationality anywhere. How can Dewey start from the "luminous fog of immediacy" and yet make universal assertions about all future possibility? If Dewey wants to start from the "psychological primitive," he should have the boldness to say that "the spirit has the right to soliloquize" and to change the laws of logic as language is free to change its grammar. It should lie down in its primitive paradise quietly breathing its animal faith.

And how then can Dewey rightfully exclude the tales of paradise given in the Bible, asks the idealist? When pupils from Christian homes believe the biblical tales to be true, by what standard is Dewey to lead them toward the ideal society in which no one believes such tales?

## **B. The Idealistic Principle of Continuity**

Idealism has effectively shown that pragmatism has no intelligible view of human experience, and therefore gives no intelligible explanation of the process of learning by experience. It has shown that Dewey's principle of continuity gives

no unity but only diversity and discontinuity. What positive foundation then does idealism offer for the intelligibility of human experience and education? What is its principle of continuity? Will it be able to present a unity which pragmatism was unable to provide?

Plato says that no principle of continuity can be found which positively controls human experience. We must look beyond the temporal to the eternal for that unity which human beings need. Genuine continuity must be that of immutable reality. Therefore true or genuine knowledge too can be only of the pure unchangeable being that is above or beyond temporal being. If man to any extent has true or pure knowledge at all, it is because he somehow participates in this eternal changeless being. Man's intellect, which works according to eternal laws of logic, itself participates in eternal being. In Plato's own words the

true lover of knowledge is always striving after being that is his nature; he will not rest in the fanciful multiplicity of individuals, but will go on—the keen edge will not be blunted, neither the force of his desire abate until he have attained the knowledge of the true nature of every essence by a kindred power in the soul, and by that power drawing near and mingling incorporate with very being, having begotten mind and truth, he will know and live and grow truly, and then, and not till then will he cease from his travail.<sup>1</sup>

But Plato recognizes that it is not possible for the philosopher to mingle incorporate with eternal being while he is in this world of change. While he is in this world, the element of non-being insinuates itself into the element of true being that is in man.

And the philosopher also, conversing with the divine and immutable, becomes a part of that divine and immutable order, as far as nature allows; but all things are liable to detraction.<sup>2</sup>

Here then is Plato's principle of continuity. It lies in the fact that man is to the extent that he is really man, namely in his intellectual existence, virtually identical with the eternal divine order. While he is in the body, man only participates in this being of God. But participating presupposes ultimate identity. Without the presupposition of that ultimate identity, there would be no participation. Man shares in absolutely immutable being and therefore shares in the knowledge of that immutable being. Man is therefore, to the extent that he exists at all, one with the divine and therefore omniscient too. It is this principle of unity which Plato offers in place of that of the Sophists and in it the philosophy of

---

<sup>1</sup> *Republic* 6, 490 Jowett's tr.

<sup>2</sup> *Republic* 6, 500.

Parmenides reappears rather than that of Heraclitus. It is the sort of unity that today the idealists are setting over against that of Dewey. By means of it, idealism aims to make human experience and learning by experience intelligible.

### **C. Plato Also Opposes Tales**

One point may be noted in particular. Plato, no less than Dewey, opposes the tales of mythology and theology. His philosophers must be kings. They have the proper principle of continuity; they use the law of the intellect to show that the tales of mythology and theology about the origin and destiny of the world may not influence the young.

You know also that the beginning is the chiefest part of any work, especially in a young and tender thing; for that is the time at which the character is formed and most readily receives the desired impression.

Quite true.

And shall we just carelessly allow children to hear any casual tales which may be framed by casual persons, and to receive into their minds notions which are the very opposite of those which are to be held by them when they are grown up?

We cannot allow that.<sup>3</sup>

Of course Plato told many tales himself. But he introduced these as only second best. They did not have legitimate philosophic standing. If theology spoke of the creation of the world by God as Plato himself did, philosophy knew that this was not meant to be a serious explanation of origins. There was no harm in teaching proper tales to the young; but they must be censored by the philosopher. There is no harm in speaking as if Santa Claus were just now entering the chimney, as long as the adults know that there is no real Santa Claus.

### **D. Dewey vs. Plato**

Let us see how Dewey would evaluate the views of Plato and of idealism in general. What would Dewey have to say about the idealistic principle of continuity?

His basic criticism would be something like this. The idealistic principle of continuity is wholly beyond or above human experience and therefore wholly

---

<sup>3</sup> *Republic 2*, line 377.

unknown. In practice therefore, educational philosophy is left with the same problem that pragmatism faced. Did not Plato himself assert that the world of temporal experience is the world of Heraclitus? In this world all things change. There is no discernible continuity in it. If we admit continuity, we must to that extent deny the reality of our sense perceptions. If the changing world is said to have any reality, it must be because it participates in the changeless world. But no one can show us anything unchangeable. The idealist's principle of continuity has been attained by pure negation. It is therefore wholly meaningless in practice.

Is Dewey right in his criticism? There is little doubt that the pragmatist's criticism of the idealist's position is correct. It is right, moreover, in precisely the same way that the idealist's criticism of pragmatism is right. Each has shown that the other cannot furnish any knowable principle of continuity for human experience. Thus the goal, the standard, and the motivating principle of human experience and of education remain utterly unknown to man in practice. On the other hand both agree that they must keep out the tales of Christianity. In other words both idealism and pragmatism have to claim to know reality exhaustively. In order to make the universal negative assertions which they virtually make when they exclude Christianity, they really claim to know all reality exhaustively. Specifically, pragmatism claims to know that there is no changeless God back of the world. And idealism claims to know that the changeless God it posits back of the world cannot make himself known through the changing reality of the temporal universe. Both positions are therefore internally self-contradictory.

Moreover both the idealist and the pragmatist have to live by their own negations. The apparent continuity that pragmatism has is borrowed from the idealism which it rejects. Similarly the apparent applicability of the idealist's principle of continuity is borrowed from the pragmatism which it rejects. A consistent pragmatic theory would lead to pure indeterminism and equivocism. A pure theory of idealism would lead to determinism and univocism. In pragmatism God is completely drawn into the stream of discontinuity; in idealism man is completely lost in the supposedly eternal principle of continuity.

Neither of these positions has ever been maintained consistently, by itself. On the one hand idealism has had to borrow the irrationalistic principle of individuation from pragmatism in order in any way to apply its principle of identity. On the other hand pragmatism has had to borrow the idealistic principle of identity in order to get a measure of apparent coherence into its theory. If one succeeded in destroying the other altogether, it would also destroy itself. It is like

two nations at war with one another who must still import each other's goods in order to keep up the fight.

Since pragmatism and idealism thus depend upon each other, we may make the same basic criticism of each. In fact, the two positions frequently appear intermingled with one another. A person seeking a tenable philosophy of education may try to avoid both extremes and follow the middle of the road. There is no other source from which he can draw unless he is willing to turn to Christianity.

The modern view of education then, whether pragmatic or idealistic or a combination of the two, is subject to the criticism that it cannot teach.

In the first place the pupil who must learn is out of contact with all knowledge. He lives in the pitch darkness of a cave; he can ask no questions. He lives in non-being and there is no knowledge of non-being. And even worse, the teacher lives there too. He is also unable to ask questions. How could he think or talk about an ideal society? Even the scientist and the philosopher who are supposed to help the teacher are also in darkness. The pupil, the teacher, and the scientist-philosopher are in the same fix. The beginning of intelligible human experience cannot be explained on the purely immanentistic principles of idealism and pragmatism.

In the second place the scientist-philosopher must be omniscient. And the teacher, if he could teach, must know everything. He could not sympathize with one who asked questions. But even the pupil would have to know everything. In fact the scientist-philosopher, the teacher and the pupil must all be omniscient. But this omniscience would be purely formal; it would have no content. They would know everything without being able to distinguish anything. For all unity would be one abstract form.

## **E. Pinpointing the Dilemma**

We conclude then that the idealistic philosophy of education is based upon the same assumption of human ultimacy as is that of pragmatism or idealism. Modern idealism, to be sure, speaks a great deal about the "Beyond." But when this "Beyond" is really beyond, it has no qualities. It has no content of any sort. It is meaningless for experience. On the other hand, when it obtains quality and content it has to obtain this by becoming relative to and subject to human experience.

In his book, *The Idealistic Argument in Recent British and American Philosophy*,<sup>4</sup> G. Watts Cunningham brings this out very well. He says that if the "Absolute" is conceived of as "out of time," then it is wholly useless as a principle of explanation. On the other hand if the "Absolute" be submerged "within time," then there is nothing left of absoluteness. So he advocates the idea of the "Absolute" realizing itself "through time."

Thus there has been a "meeting of extremes in modern philosophy." The pragmatist may charge the idealist with placing both the pupil and teacher in an ideal realm, virtually identifying them with the Absolute. Then both know everything. On the other hand the idealist may charge the pragmatist with placing both the pupil and teacher in an animal paradise of the psychologically primitive; then neither knows anything. But both positions are subject to both charges. For both positions grow from the same root which assumes that man must find the continuity of his experience by making himself the ultimate reference point of meaning in human experience.

It is only when both idealism and pragmatism are thus traced to the same root that both are seen to be equally hostile to Christianity. The two are equally anxious to keep the Christian story from being presented as truth to the pupil. Both presuppose that the God of Christianity does not exist. Their arguments against the truth of Christianity spring from the common assumption of human autonomy. Both will permit the pupil to take a course in religion only if that religion does not seriously pretend to offer a Christian life-and-world view which competes with the philosophy presupposed by the curriculum.

This is the dilemma of modern education. It has merged the teacher and the pupil into one. And it has to think of the pupil-teacher as both knowing everything and as knowing nothing at the same time.

All this is not to say that the modern teacher cannot teach. Nor is it to say that the modern scientist cannot teach the teacher anything. Science and teaching go on. But it is in spite of this non-Christian philosophy of education that they go on. Modern philosophy of education, like modern thought in general, has to live on borrowed capital. It has to live by the truths of Christianity or it could not even oppose Christianity. But to this point we shall return later.

---

<sup>4</sup> (New York, 1932.)

### 3. Some Recent Views on Education

#### A. The Harvard Report

We can now turn to a brief treatment of some recent literature dealing with the philosophy of education. A number of "reports" by committees of educational institutions and a large number of books by individuals have appeared. In the first group there is the Harvard Report called *General Education in a Free Society* (Harvard, 1945).

The report deals with "common standards and common purposes" in education. It seeks to help young persons take their place "as citizens and heirs of a joint culture" through an intelligible understanding of these common aims. If young people are to take their place in a common culture, they must understand the intellectual forces that have shaped the Western world. And so, among other things, they must have religious education.

To study either past or present is to confront, in some form or other, the philosophic and religious fact of man in history and to recognize the huge continuing influence alike on past and present of the stream of Jewish and Greek thought in Christianity. There is doubtless a sense in which religious education, education in the great books, and education in modern democracy may be mutually exclusive. But there is a far more important sense in which they work together to the same end, which is belief in the idea of man and society that we inherit, adapt and pass on.<sup>1</sup>

This idea has been described in many ways, but perhaps the most common way in recent times is that of the dignity of man. To the belief in man's dignity must be added the recognition of his duty to his fellow men. Dignity does not apply to an individual separate from all other beings but springs from his common humanity and exists positively as he makes the common good his own. This concept is essentially that of the Western tradition: the idea of man as free and not a slave, as an end in himself and not a means.

It is emphasized that this goal of education as the means by which men serve one another as well as themselves includes religious education. But this religious education must be incorporated into the study of our "common beliefs" which must be passed on to the coming generation by means of education.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45, 46.

The report therefore stresses even more than Dewey the teaching of our “common heritage.” The authors claim, however, that Dewey’s emphasis upon change in the future is not inconsistent with their own basic views.

Yet, in spite of its seeming conflict with views of education based on heritage, strong doubt exists whether the questioning, innovating, experimental attitude of pragmatism is in fact something alien to the Western heritage or whether it is not, in the broadest sense of the word, a part of it.<sup>2</sup>

The Harvard Report, then, wants to take a mediating position in relation to all aspects of our culture. It seeks to do justice to the modern scientific view of things. It wants to include in its teaching program the heritage of Greece. And it also wants to include the contribution that Christianity has made. For it recognizes that Christianity was not exclusively concerned with life hereafter; it was also deeply interested in man on earth and in his progress here below.

Again, historical Christianity has been expressly and consistently concerned with the importance of this life on earth, the doctrine of the Incarnation, that God took the form of man and inhabited the earth, declares this concern. While perhaps for Greek thought, only the timeless realm had importance, in Christian thought the process of history is vested with absolute significance. If the ideal of democracy was rightly described above in the interwoven ideas of the dignity of man (that is, his existence as an independent moral agent) and his duty to his fellow men (that is, his testing by outward performance), the debt of these two ideas to the similarly interwoven commandments of the love of God and the love of neighbor is obvious.<sup>3</sup>

Thus in the Harvard Report, Christianity with its doctrine of God the creator and redeemer is included with the other factors in “our tradition” as if it were virtually on one plane with them. That means that Christianity must not have telling, that is controlling, significance for general education in a free society.

The foundation of education, as far as the Harvard Report is concerned, is something of a cross between Plato and Dewey. It is therefore unable to make education intelligible. (Its principle of continuity would lead to stark identity and its principle of discontinuity would lead to blank meaningless particularity.)

## **B. Arnold S. Nash**

---

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

In his book, *The University and the Modern World*, Arnold Nash gives a thorough diagnosis of the predicament in modern educational philosophy. In concluding this analysis he writes:

In particular we have seen how the liberal *Weltanschauung* (world-and-life view), based upon the premise that science is presuppositionless and deals with facts and not with values, is dissolving before our eyes.<sup>4</sup>

Neither can we accept any form of totalitarianism, "whether with a Marxist or a Fascist label—on the grounds that each of them is an attempt to remedy the disease of modern civilization by aggravating the condition that produced it."<sup>5</sup> If there is to be any hope, argues Nash, we must abandon the piecemeal character that has marked recent educational policy. We must have no more science without metaphysics, social science without political bias and history without propaganda. Instead, the university teacher must be willing "to accept responsibility for the creation and teaching of a unified and coherent philosophy."<sup>6</sup>

When Nash then attempts to indicate the "form" of knowledge in the future *speculum mentis* (mirror of the mind) he seeks his new frame of reference in the sociology of education. "The real value of the sociology of knowledge is the plain truth of its principal thesis that there are fashions of thought that cannot be adequately understood so long as their origins are obscure."<sup>7</sup> "The sociology of knowledge sets out to show how the social milieu provides the individual with a background of thought on the basis of which he deals with everything presented to him."<sup>8</sup>

How then does "Christian thought" fit into this sociology of knowledge? Does it have a place in Nash's view? It surely does, for if sociology is to help us it must gain insight into man's ontological status. It must know something of the origin and nature of man. And whence shall we derive the ontology of knowledge in the coming *speculum mentis*, asks Nash. He replies that he would go to the Judaic Christian tradition as a fresh source of wisdom.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>New York, 1943, p. 225.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* p. 225.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.* p. 226.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.* p. 237.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.* p. 238.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.* p. 253.

To the Christian university teacher, comes therefore, the summons to share in a task of supreme moment. It is to help create a *Weltanschauung* which steers a middle path between the Charybdis of liberal atomism and the Scylla of totalitarian dogmatism.<sup>10</sup>

All this sounds hopeful from the Christian point of view. Nash urges a return to the Judaic Christian tradition for wisdom. He desires a comprehensive philosophy of education which is to have a self-conscious ontological reference. The educational effort must be placed in the broadest possible perspective that social science can offer. It is not to be a matter of teaching a few courses on religion as a "secular" curriculum. There is not to be a little borrowing from professional theologians. Christian scholars in the secular subjects must themselves work out a philosophy of education which includes all branches of learning.<sup>11</sup> Thus Nash rejects the "widespread but fallacious notion that religion is merely one subject among others in the curriculum of a school or college."<sup>12</sup>

It is in this way that Nash tries to overcome the weakness inherent in a view such as that of Dewey by again presenting criteria by which to distinguish between good and evil. "Elliot, like his teacher Dewey, has not faced the fact that 'consequences' can only be 'tested' by criteria that transcend and yet are relevant to the consequences in question."<sup>13</sup> So Nash follows Fred Clarke rather than Elliot in saying that the activities of the school must be "penetrated by Christian faith."<sup>14</sup> And again with M. L. Jacks, Nash holds

Religion in schools is much more than one among many subjects: it may be said, in a sense, to be the only subject, for it enters into all, and without interference acts as a co-ordinating and correlating force, giving them their significance in the scheme of things entire.<sup>15</sup>

Nor is it only the spirit of the Judaic Christian tradition that must permeate the subjects of the curriculum. Quoting Jacks, Nash speaks of the "truths of Scripture" that must have determining influence. "To suggest that the Creator of the Universe is a fit object for cultural achievement would be ludicrous if it were

---

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p. 260.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* p. 260.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p. 266.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* p. 276.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p. 277.

not blasphemous.”<sup>16</sup> So with the words of the Archbishop of Canterbury we may well say,

If you give to children an account of the world from which God is left out, you are teaching them to understand the world without reference to God. If He is then introduced He is an excrescence. He becomes an appendix to His own creation.<sup>17</sup>

Nash is also willing to listen to Andre Schlemmer, a neoorthodox Calvinist, who also rejects the “anthropocentrism” of modern philosophy of education.

What then is the conclusion of the matter, asks Nash. It is that a “Christian intelligentsia” must create a “Christian *speculum mentis*.” The creation of such a Christian *speculum mentis* can only be accomplished by the co-operative efforts of great scholars such as William Temple; Reinhold Niebuhr; Jacques Maritain and Andre Philip; V. A. Demant and J. H. Oldham; T. S. Eliot and Nicholas Berdyaev; Paul Tillich and W. A. Visser’t Hooft.<sup>18</sup> It is assumed that the resulting *speculum mentis* will not be such as Fundamentalists or any other dogmatist would offer. “The Word of God, not any system, whether liberal or fundamentalist, which seeks to express it, is alone sovereign and final.”<sup>19</sup> Thus we are assured that we shall not have a theology that pretends to dictate “throughout the whole realm of scholarship and learning.”<sup>20</sup> There will be room for theology, but it must be “related to and be illumined by the wider setting of man’s knowledge of the universe in which it will occupy its appropriate position, but also to which it gives ultimate meaning.”<sup>21</sup>

The Christian intelligentsia are therefore to produce a *speculum mentis* that will be beyond the differences that have separated Protestants and Roman Catholics, orthodox and neo-orthodox. To be sure, Calvinists too may be represented if only, like Schlemmer, they take “radical departure from the usual fundamentalist philosophy which like all other scholastic systems, ancient and modern, whether Thomist, Marxist or Nazi, has an answer to every question.”<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p. 278.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* p. 278.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* p. 288.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* p. 286.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* p. 291.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* p. 292.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* p. 286.

Is it strange that Nash denies "that the 'form' of the new frame of reference cannot be described before it has been achieved"?<sup>23</sup> The Christian church has not been able to achieve such a *speculum mentis* throughout its long history; it has tried hard enough but in the trial it divided into the "sectarianism" which Nash detests.

What is our reaction? Why not at least try something new? Why not invent something? Isn't that how progress is made? But there is really nothing new in what Nash offers. The elements out of which his new *speculum mentis* is composed are those of Plato, and Dewey again. The basic ideas with which the Christian intelligentsia are ordered to work are to the effect that reality is ultimately irrational (Dewey) and that it is at the same time ultimately rational (Plato). The combination of these ideas is supposed to bring harmony between Plato and Dewey. Both will gladly permit Karl Barth to represent Christianity and to speak of the Word of God as absolute and final. For Barth does not relate the story of the Christian religion as really true. He will not require for it a central place in the educational policies of the school. He will rather with them talk about a "beyond" that is absolute but wholly unknown and a here-and-now which must be handled by criteria that have no intelligible relation to that God which all silently worship. God must be absolute and his revelation final but nobody knows or will ever know anything of what that revelation is. God is the limiting ideal of a humanity which sets its own ideals.

The university, in fact, betrays its mission as soon as it claims to teach final and ultimate truth in the form of scholastic, whether Thomistic or Marxist or Fascist, systems which have no place for new facts. We may see 'as through a glass,' but of one fact we can be certain. It is that any intellectual synthesis which declines to believe that 'the Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His Word' is intellectual idolatry.<sup>24</sup>

So Nash rejects any direct revelation of God available in intelligible propositional form. But after he has thus bowed historic Christianity out of the front door, he takes it back in through the back door. Only then does he verbally magnify the place and importance of religion, not as a subject among subjects but in a sense as the only subject, the subject permeating all others. In spite of all this he has not offered any solution to the dilemma of modern education. For Nash, God is wholly beyond us, but when he reveals himself, he is wholly within human experience. His philosophy of education is then perhaps more Platonic than modern, and may for that reason be better in a sense; but he does not

---

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p. 228.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* p. 288.

actually bring the Christian religion to bear upon the dilemma of education. He is in effect reducing Christianity to an equal footing with other religions.

### C. Henry P. Van Dusen

How far have we come now in examining the problem? We began with the modern spirit as it was expressed in John Dewey. We went on to ask whether philosophical idealism could help us solve the dilemma of modern education, and we saw that it could not because it too was based upon the assumption of man's self-sufficiency. The Harvard Report was seen to be but a mixture of Plato and Dewey. Then we looked at modern liberal Christianity as expressed in the work of Arnold S. Nash. We saw that he desires to combine the good elements from various movements, including that of Christianity. He even wants to make Christianity the primary force in determining the future *speculum mentis*. But it then appeared that the Christianity he proposed to give central significance in education was a liberal or at best a neo-orthodox theology. And the heart of this liberal-neo-orthodox theology is that it excludes the idea of a God who actually and clearly speaks to man in history. The God of neo-orthodoxy is himself shrouded in mystery. He, as well as man, is looking beyond himself for help, and while he must know everything to know anything, in fact really knows nothing.

We now refer briefly to another book. It is Henry P. Van Dusen's *God in Education* (New York, 1951).

In the "widespread re-examination of fundamental educational philosophy among the universities and colleges of the nation," says Van Dusen, we must not forget to ask about the nature of man and the nature of truth.<sup>25</sup> In fact all philosophies of education make assumptions on these questions. Van Dusen thinks that the motivation of the Harvard report is "primarily pragmatic." It looks merely for a " 'common body of information and ideas which would be in some measure the possession of all students.' "<sup>26</sup> Then, speaking of the work done at Yale and at Princeton, he says: "Yale and Princeton take higher ground. They face squarely the ultimate issue of the unity of truth, and therefore of the coherence of knowledge which is man's apprehension of truth."<sup>27</sup>

Van Dusen maintains that a consideration of the unity of truth and the coherence of human knowledge brings one squarely to the question of God.

---

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* p. 78.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* p. 79.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* p. 79.

Truth is an organism. "Any segment of knowledge which is portrayed without recognition of its organic relatedness to all other knowledge is being falsely presented."<sup>28</sup> So God must be central in education, for if he is not, he is kept out altogether.

Positively expressed, argues Van Dusen, we need to return to "the great tradition."<sup>29</sup> We must have a reaffirmation of the "genetic and sovereign principle of the Hebraic-Hellenic-Christian tradition" and therewith "the restoration of religion to a position of necessary, and unchallenged centrality; and the acknowledgment of the reality and regnancy of the Living God as the foundation of both learning and life."<sup>30</sup>

But again, as in the case of Nash, so in the case of Van Dusen, no one knows or can ever know who or what God is like. His God too is completely beyond us and wholly unknown, for he is a mixture of the Christian and the Greek points of view. That really means that the Greek point of view must predominate. The Christian point of view may not be self-interpretative. It must undergo a synthesis with the Greek point of view. This means that pure Christianity is not given central significance in education. The dilemma of education remains unsolved because the weaknesses of both the Greek and the modern views are deliberately included in the proposed solution of Van Dusen.

---

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* p. 80.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* p. 95.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* p. 95.

## **4. Various Christian (Non-Reformed) Views of Education**

Our criticism of the liberal-Christian view of education as represented by Nash and Van Dusen may be summarized by saying that their principle of unity is not basically different from that of the non-Christian idealistic philosophy of education. And idealistic philosophy has no principle of unity which is basically different from that of the modern philosophy of John Dewey. The God of Van Dusen, the God of Nash as well as the God of Plato is either a pure form because he is the result of pure negation or else if he exists, is himself submerged in the realm of the irrational. And that God is also the God of dialectical theology.

Since these views offer us no solution, let us turn to the representatives of the historic Christian faith. First we must ask whether it is not possible to find a classical Christian tradition whose God can really help us in our dilemma. If the Christian intelligentsia of the liberal and neo-liberal movement cannot offer us a unified outlook, perhaps the official churches can.

### **A. The Roman Catholic View**

We first turn to the Roman Catholic position. Romanism existed prior to Protestantism. Moreover it offers what it considers to be a unified outlook in education. This unified outlook is directly based on what it calls a unified conception of reality and life as a whole. "Every system of education is based on a philosophy of life. All education properly so-called is based on a complete philosophy of life. All true education is based on the true philosophy of life." <sup>1</sup>

In examining this "true philosophy and philosophy of education" a Protestant at once faces the Romanist conception of the relation of authority to tradition. Our examination has shown that as long as men speak only of traditions and of gods who do not speak to men in a direct and ascertainable manner no help can be derived from them.

But tradition stands on an equality with authority in the church of Rome. And the tradition that it holds is at least partly informed by the philosophy of Aristotle. The method of Aristotle's philosophy is considered legitimate for the interpretation of the realm of natural life. According to Roman Catholicism the

---

<sup>1</sup> De Hovre, F., and Jordan E., by John D. Redden and Francis A. Ryan in *A Catholic Philosophy of Education*, (Milwaukee, 1942) p. 15.

“secular realm” can, at least to a large extent, be correctly and properly interpreted by means of the principle of unity that Aristotle offers.

The Aristotelian principle of unity is correlative to a principle of discontinuity which involves the ultimately irrational. Accordingly the god of Aristotle does not know himself, has not created the world and has no providential control over it. If such a conception of God is central in at least one segment of the Christian’s education, then he cannot expect the God of Christianity to be made central anywhere else either.

The Roman Catholic allows the Aristotelian elements in his world-and-life view to overshadow the truths of Christianity to such an extent that he cannot make God central in education anywhere. The apparent unity offered in Rome’s philosophy of education is an artificial one. There is no unified outlook that rests upon the centrality of the doctrine of God as revealed in Scripture.

## **B. Protestantism in General**

The result of this brief analysis leads us to ask whether there is not at least a general Protestant tradition upon which we may build our educational philosophy. Since all Protestants believe in the centrality of the Bible as the finished revelation of God to man, can’t they leave aside their internal differences when they seek to work out an educational philosophy? Can’t they leave to the churches the teaching of their distinctive views, while they unitedly develop a philosophy of education based upon their submission to the Bible and their agreement on such doctrines as that of man’s creation in the image of God and of salvation through the atoning blood of Christ? Can we not base a philosophy of education on classical Protestantism?

But our disappointments have not yet ended. Perhaps here we shall be most disappointed of all. Certainly we do not wish to build separate schools and separate ourselves in our educational efforts from other Protestant Christians unless we are compelled to do so. We took no pleasure in saying farewell to Dewey; we certainly took no pleasure in saying farewell to idealism and to the Judaic-Christian-Greek tradition of the modern philosopher-theologian. We took even less pleasure in separating from those who, like the Roman Catholic, profess to believe not merely in some metaphorical or ideal Christ but in the historical Christ who is the Son of God and Son of man. How much more painful then to separate from those who have gone so far with us. If it is not feasible for

Protestants to cooperate with Roman Catholics is it not at least possible for all "Evangelicals" to co-operate in such an educational enterprise?

### **C. Report of the N.A.E. Committee**

It is well known that a broadly Protestant basis was taken in the Report of a Committee appointed at the Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals held in 1946.<sup>2</sup> The fine report, written by Frank E. Gaebelein, president of the committee and himself an outstanding educator, deserves our careful attention. It deserves particular attention from those who, because of their allegiance to the Reformed Faith, have in the past found themselves unable to co-operate with the educational enterprises of Lutherans, Arminians and other non-Reformed Evangelicals. Reformed Christians rejoice in the schools which Dr. Gaebelein represents. Reformed Christians will readily admit that many such Evangelical Protestant teachers may in practice be extremely effective teachers. But the question we face here is how Christian educators can solve the dilemma of modern education. The question is how they can ask those who follow Dewey or Idealism to forsake those Positions and accept the Christian answer. That Christian answer to the dilemma must be clearly distinguishable from the answer of the non-Christian. It must put the Christian God at the center of its educational program. It must have a God that is above man, one who is not himself enmeshed in time and change. At the same time it must have a God who is known to man. In other words it must have a God who is inescapably because originally known to man. Man must from the outset of his individual and racial existence be in touch with the truth or he can never know the truth.

Many claim that if such a God and such a Bible are wanted we must go to American Fundamentalism. And if we want the Christ of the Scriptures and his substitutionary atonement, then again we must go to American Fundamentalism. Finally, if emphasis upon the work of the Holy Spirit in man's salvation is desired, again we must go to American Fundamentalism.

We must admit that in one sense this claim is true. Yet it is not true in the full sense of the term. The difference between American Fundamentalism as represented by Dr. Gaebelein and the Reformed Faith as we hold it, hinges on the question of the human will. This difference is not limited to the question of man's salvation in the narrow sense. It is a difference that has controlling significance for one's entire world and life view.

---

<sup>2</sup> *Christian Education in a Democracy*, (New York, 1951.)

American Fundamentalism is generally Arminian in its thinking. Arminianism attributes to man, the creature, a measure of autonomy which belongs to God alone. Arminianism holds that man is able to initiate that which is wholly new, even for God. God had to limit himself in order to create man. God the Son made salvation possible for all men when he died on the cross. But it is up to man himself whether or not he will accept the opportunity offered him. And God the Spirit does not have to make sinners alive from the dead because they are not wholly dead in sin. The Spirit needs to help but does not need to renew man in order that he may see and believe the truth.

The difference therefore between the Arminian position and the Reformed Faith is not limited to a few minor details. It is rather an all inclusive and all pervasive difference. What is the significance of this difference for education? It means that the same criticism that we have made of the Roman Catholic position applies here. With Romanism the Arminian view accepts a principle of interpretation for human life which comes in part from man himself. Then we have no fully intelligible philosophy of Christian education. We cannot clearly show that the non-Christian view is wrong. We cannot maintain that God must be central in education; we cannot show why education should be Christ-centered. All this results from the Fundamentalist's insistence that man must have a measure of autonomy and thus keeps within him a little of the poison which it is the very business of Christianity to destroy. We do not mean to criticize the sincerity of the Christian faith of individual men who hold the Arminian point of view. We are speaking of the philosophy of education in which the difference between the Arminian and the Reformed view of man is purposely ignored as is done in the work of Gaebelien and his associates.

#### **D. God-Centered Education in Fundamentalism**

Gaebelien no doubt wants to start from the Bible as absolutely and directly authoritative. He wants nothing to do with neo-orthodoxy and modernism.<sup>3</sup> In commendable fashion he speaks of the need not only for religion but for the Christian religion as the basis of a philosophy of education. Education must be God-centered and Christ-centered. But he hopes to make it such in terms of the "Protestant tradition, grounded in the Christianity of the Bible." That is to say, he seeks to accomplish his task by means of the doctrines which Protestant evangelicals hold in common. He does not feel the need of the Reformed Faith in order to solve the dilemma of education, although he is perfectly aware that

---

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

others do. He knows all about the National Union of Christian Schools which is committed to a philosophy of education directly and self-consciously based upon the specifically Reformed view of Christianity. Distinguishing his own organization from the National Union of Christian Schools, he says:

The Union is an organic body in which all school members must adhere to one and the same system of Christian faith; whereas the Association is an association of schools which are and remain distinct, and which, though representing various traditional and ecclesiastical outlooks are true to the generally accepted doctrines of evangelical orthodoxy.<sup>4</sup>

And he adds, "Here is a type of education which knows what it wants and sets out boldly to achieve its purpose."<sup>5</sup> This philosophy of education seeks its unity and its ultimate reality in God. It thinks of God as both transcendent and immanent. It starts from man as image-bearer of God. It desires that the pupil commit himself as a sinner to Christ and through him to achieve true culture.

In spite of this laudable aim Gaebelien is not able to probe the depth of the dilemma of modern education. And therefore he cannot clearly present the Christian solution to that dilemma.

### **E. The Principle of Unity in Fundamentalism**

According to American Fundamentalism, the principle of unity in education is not clearly and exclusively found in the God of the Scriptures. Man is not altogether viewed in the light of Scripture. The Bible does not teach that God controls whatsoever comes to pass for that would be out of accord with the autonomy of man. Scripture does not teach that Christ died for his people only; that would be out of accord with the autonomy of man. Scripture does not teach that the Holy Spirit must renew men from death before they can believe in God; that too would be out of accord with the autonomy of man. God cannot reach the individual directly; he must reach him through a universal, be it the lowest universal. To say that God touches the individual directly as an individual is to violate his personality. It would violate the image of God in which man was created by God himself.

It will readily be seen that this type of reasoning seeks the principle of unity in education partly in something that is above the Creator-creature distinction. As a

---

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

result education cannot be God-centered, Christ-centered and Spirit-centered. A measure of rationalism is again made correlative to a measure of irrationalism in the educational philosophy of Fundamentalism.

The pupil is asked to commit himself to Christ and to God. But when he is asked to do so, he is, as it were, told that in order to choose he must take his place above the two opposing positions of Christianity and non-Christianity. That presupposes that there is some place in the sky, abstracted from either system of education, whence man may have a neutral view of the systems that he passes in review. To say to him, as the Reformed person does, that man cannot make an intelligent choice between the two systems except it be from within the Christian system would, in the eyes of Fundamentalism, be to attack the legitimate autonomy of man. But the result of such an attempt at neutrality is to place the pupil in an educational void.

## 5. The Reformed View of Education

Only upon a Reformed basis can God really be made central in education. This is true because only in the Reformed system are Christ and the Holy Spirit really central in education. The Reformed view is based exclusively upon the Bible. The doctrines of creation and providence imply that God originates and arranges all the facts of the universe according to a "logic" that is above man. Man's systems must therefore be consciously analogical to the system of God.

The God of the Bible is self-contained and all-sufficient. He is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. Being self-sufficient, he is not correlative to a principle of individuality that is as original as he and which needs him as its correlative. He is not merely a formal or abstract principle of unity which is meaningless until it is brought into contact with brute factuality that stands over against him. There is no non-being or potentiality that acts as an original opposite him.

In the nature of the case, this God must be presupposed by man. He cannot be proved to exist in the way that pragmatism or idealism seeks to prove its principle of continuity. If his existence would be proved in this way then he would be only a correlative to factuality as ultimate as himself. He would then again be worthless as a principle of unity.

It is the Bible alone that speaks of such a God. And the Bible speaks of his absolute authority. This God always speaks with authority. This God of the Bible, who speaks authoritatively through his Word, is the presupposition of the intelligibility of human experience. He is recognized in the Reformed Faith as the final reference point for all human predication. In this respect the Reformed Faith really stands squarely opposed to all forms of non-Christian thinking. Non-Christian thinking takes man as the final reference point in predication. It places man where the Reformed Faith recognizes God.

The two positions are therefore basically opposed to each other on all scores. The question is not simply as to which one is in accord with fact and logic. The question is rather in terms of which presupposition fact and logic have meaning at all. On which position is there any intelligible application of logic to fact at all? The question therefore concerns the philosophy of fact and the philosophy of logic. Any argument between them that does not go back to the question of presuppositions begs the question. The Christian position seeks to make human experience intelligible in terms of the presupposition of God; the non-Christian

position seeks to make human experience intelligible in terms of man who is conceived of as ultimate. On this basic matter we have seen how the Roman Catholic tries to straddle the fence by trying to interpret part of human experience in terms of man and part in terms of God. And the Fundamentalistic position makes a similar attempt with the same fatal results. There is therefore no orthodox position except the Reformed Faith that is really able to challenge Dewey or Plato.

It should be emphasized that it is not simply by means of an appeal to the so-called distinct doctrines of Calvinism that the Reformed Faith makes this claim. It is rather by the full consistency with which it maintains all the Christian doctrines that this end is obtained. It is in terms of God who is self-existent and self-contained and in terms of the doctrines of creation and providence, taken without qualification, that man knows the goal, the standards and the motivating principle of life. Let us look at each of these separately.

## **A. The Goal of Education**

On the Reformed basis man from the beginning knew the goal of his life. God made all the facts that surrounded him. God made man in his own image. There was thus no fact within or outside of man which was not fully revelational of God. The nature or essence of every created fact lies in its function in the process of the divine self-revelation to man.

Therefore even man himself must fulfil this revelational function. He was created in the image of God and he was to become more fully expressive of that image. His historical task was, as God's imagebearer, to show forth the glory of God.

It is in this connection that we must refer to the original supernatural revelation that was given to Adam. Through it man was actually told about his future task. He was to increase in the self-conscious manipulation of the facts of the universe to the glory of God. He was thus to build the kingdom of God.

This positive supernatural revelation of God to man is both correlative to and supplementary to the revelation of God in the facts within and outside of man. Only when they are thus immediately involved in one another are they seen for what they truly are. Only when "natural" and "supernatural" revelation are seen thus to supplement one another, is man placed in his proper historical perspective. Only thus do we see what he was and what he was meant to become both individually and racially. Only in this way is man functionally defined as the

covenant being that he is. God has given man a project in which he is to be engaged.

Man's project is to build the kingdom of God. And this is to be done by mankind as a whole since the first man represented all men. Man knew it because he had been informed of it by God through a supernatural communication of thought joined to factual revelation. Thus God first taught the philosopher-scientist, and the latter was to instruct the teacher so he as the teacher could teach the pupil what man's task is.

It has already been noted that on a non-Christian basis man cannot know what this task is. He would then have to know everything in order to know anything. Yet he is himself surrounded by Chance and cannot even distinguish one fact from another.

But even non-Reformed Christian positions are unable to define man's cultural task. The God of Romanism and of Arminianism does not himself know the cultural objective. He does not control the future in an unqualified way. The realization of his own objectives is dependent upon what millions of men will do. If he desires man to be his representative on earth, he can urge him to take that place. He can tell men that he hopes his project, with their help, will be successful. But even to himself his own ideals are but limiting concepts; he has no ultimate control over history.

Only the Reformed Faith maintains the biblical idea of a God who from all eternity is sovereign, who knows what he wants and is able to attain his goal without doubt. This position alone can challenge the non-Christian in the field of education. Only in the God of Christianity as set forth in the Reformed Faith does one escape the abstract universal of idealistic philosophy, and with it the god who needs an environment to become conscious of himself, a god who must gradually learn what he wants to do and what he wants mankind to do.

## **B. Criterion in Education**

Secondly, there is the question of the criterion or standard. It has been indicated earlier that on the non-Christian presupposition, the distinction between what is educative and what is miseducative cannot be made.

The Reformed Faith frankly begins with the presupposition of the absolute truth of the Christian position. It is this that the teacher tells the pupil. As he has learned that the goal of human life can be known only from the authoritative

revelation of God, so he knows that the criterion by which man must live can be found only in this revelation too.

Here again any standpoint short of the Reformed Faith takes a compromising position, because there education is considered as a matter of choosing between the two positions from the vantage point of some neutral third area. Commitment to God and to Christ as Lord is supposed to be made without the initial regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. But such a commitment is neither a commitment to God or to Christ in the full sense of the term. For the God and the Christ of the Scripture remain what they are only if commitment to them is made in terms of being drawn to them by the power that proceeds from them. Without this, the God and the Christ of the Scriptures turn once again into abstract universals who are themselves dependent upon a non-rational principle of individuation. So also a Bible that must first be proved to be a worthy criterion for human experience by being tested by a higher standard is no ultimate criterion. If human experience in terms of itself as the criterion must first judge the Bible, why should it after that need any Bible at all? Our conclusion is that not only on the question of the goal or purpose of human life but also on the question of criterion, the Reformed Faith alone offers a clear-cut challenge to both Dewey and Plato. On the Reformed basis alone the teacher has a criterion for judging what is educative and what is miseducative. Whoever is in accord with Scripture is educative; whatever is not in accord with it is miseducative. Difficult as it may be for both the teacher and the pupil to make out in individual instances how to apply this criterion, the criterion itself is plain and simple enough.

### **C. The Motivating Principle in Education**

Finally, there is the question of the motivating power in human experience. For the non-Christian, this is faith in man himself, but for the consistent Christian position it is faith in the triune God of the Scriptures.

On the non-Christian basis human experience operates in a vacuum. On its basic presupposition men are in a cave and doomed to remain there forever. They are in darkness and day will never dawn for them. Darkness and irrationality are by definition ultimate. The pupil is in darkness, the teacher is in darkness, the scientist-philosopher is in darkness and their god is likewise in darkness.

They could not begin to think of the light of rationality, for rationality must come by chance. And absolute rationality must come by projection on the part of a rational animal that has itself attained its rationality by accident. This rational

animal then uses the law of contradiction, itself a growth by accident, and by means of it assures himself that the God of Christianity cannot exist.

In contrast with this the Reformed position again begins frankly with the doctrines of creation and providence as given in Scripture. On the basis of these doctrines the teacher and the pupil were, from the beginning, surrounded by light. They were in contact with the truth. They could not help but be in contact with the truth. They themselves are revelational of God as their Creator and their Lord.

But again the various Christian positions that fall short of the Reformed view compromise with the non-Christian position. By insisting on their notion of human freedom, they take man out of contact with their God. They do this supposedly in the interest of logic. They seek to shield God from responsibility for sin. But in thus shielding God they reduce him to finite proportions. They make him a God who has no ultimate control over man and the universe. Thereby they again bring God and man into the cave of ultimate chance and darkness. According to the non-Reformed position, Christ does the best he can to save man; he makes salvation "possible" for all. But his purpose may also fail with respect to them; all of them may decide not to accept his offer. Then Christ would have failed. Then Satan would not be defeated. And the kingdom of hell may yet prevail against the kingdom of God.

How on this basis can the teacher urge the pupil to work for the kingdom of God? He can find no intelligible explanation for such a kingdom, if there is no all-controlling plan of God for the universe. A God not truly sovereign can only dream as to what he would like to realize in the course of history. His dreams have no discernible delineations. Reality is ultimately irrational. The teacher then cannot know how to integrate himself. How can any one integrate himself with the indeterminate? And if unable to integrate himself, neither can he teach the pupil proper integration.

## **D. The Unity of Culture**

In the preceding discussion we have maintained that only consistent Christianity can account for the process of learning and of teaching. It has been our contention that on the non-Christian basis, there would be no coherence in human experience at all.

The antithesis between the Christian and the non-Christian principle is therefore absolute. There are those who serve and worship the creature, and

there are those who serve and worship the Creator. There are those who know the ideal of human life and the criterion for human life and who are alive by the power of the Spirit so that they strive for the realization of the true ideal of life. On the other hand there are those who know neither the true ideal nor the true criterion and are spiritually dead. There are no degrees of deadness. There is therefore an absolute antithesis between the two principles.

Yet the absolute antithesis is one of principle only. And principles do not come to full expression in human life until the end of history. In practice therefore, the non-Christian can know and teach much that is right and true.

Shall we say that the philosophers, in their exquisite researches and skillful description of nature were blind? Shall we deny the possession of intellect to those who drew up rules for discourse, and taught us to speak in accord with reason? Shall we say that those who, by the cultivation of medical arts, expended their industry in our behalf, were only raving? What shall we say of the mathematical sciences? Shall we deem them to be the dreams of madmen? Nay, we cannot read the writings of the ancients on these subjects without the highest admiration; and admiration which their excellence will not allow us to withhold.<sup>1</sup>

It is thus that Calvin speaks after he has shown that human depravity “not only extends to the whole human race, but has complete possession of every soul.”<sup>2</sup>

Nor does Calvin fear to stress the absoluteness of the principle of sin lest he do injustice to the goodness and truth and beauty that he finds in the culture of unbelieving men and nations. On the contrary the ideas of total depravity and of the unity of human culture are involved in one another. They are involved in one another because they spring from the same root—God’s all-controlling counsel. God has one unified plan. It is within this plan that men engage in their cultural pursuits. This is the positive basis for the unity of human culture. It is from this positive basis that the Reformed view takes its direction.

## 1. The Common Goal

In the first place God speaks to the human race as a whole when he set before it the ideal of a common racial culture. God offered all men the prospect of great reward for a common cultural task faithfully performed.

---

<sup>1</sup> Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 2, Chap. 2, Section 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*<sup>??Book?????Chap?????Section????</sup>

On the non-Christian principle there is no God to offer such a prospect. There is no unity at all. There is nothing but diversity. Any unity that is sought cannot be a unity of culture attained by a common striving for a common goal through history. For the unity of the non-Christian principle is the timeless unity which reduces all diversity to identity. There is on this basis no meaning to the idea of universal history and universal culture.

All non-Reformed positions are not adequately aware of this fact. Of course, it is true that they do teach much about God and the world that is true. It is even true that non-Reformed Christians often use the same concepts that are used by those of the Reformed Faith. And so the Reformed Christian should rejoice in the fact that there are many schools which are based upon evangelical Christianity. The opposition between the Reformed and the evangelical Protestant positions should always be that of friends stirring up each other to see and teach the full truth. The sharpest criticism made against the Arminian view of education by those who are Reformed must never obscure the fact that each is seeking in his own way to magnify the name of God and of his Christ.

But precisely because Arminians insist that man is able to do that which goes against the ultimate counsel of God we insist that it does not do full justice to the biblical idea of the unity of the human race and the unity of culture. God is in control of history and all that comes to pass comes to pass because of his ultimate determination. Nothing less than this idea, directly taken from Scripture, will do justice to the unity of culture. Without this idea, human activity would be activity in the void. God is the captain of the ship. He has made the ship and he controls the wind and the seas. He has taken on his crew. He has offered them a rich reward at the end of the journey. He will see to it that the ship reaches its destination.

## **2. The Common Revolt Against God**

The second point to be mentioned is based upon the first. There was at the beginning of history a common rejection of the mandate given man and a common spurning of the reward promised at the end of the journey. There was mutiny on board and every member of the crew was party to it. It was the purpose of the chief mutineer to take over the ship. Satan had seen a vision. He had envisioned himself as the captain of the ship. He promised the crew "greater" rewards than God had promised them.

But Satan's vision was a mirage. He had forgotten that God, as captain, was in complete control of all things. Satan did not realize that his success would at the

same time be his failure. If he had really taken over the ship the ship would have floundered. And with it Satan, the captain, and his fellow mutineers would have gone down to destruction.

But even so this would have been Satan's victory. For he would have succeeded in defeating God. God would have gone down with the ship also.

Had this taken place, it would only have meant that God had himself been mistaken about his own control of the ship. He really had never been the captain. He had only dreamed that he could bring the ship to its desired haven. The Romanist and the Arminian ideas of God assume at the outset of their thinking that God may be defeated. But if he could be defeated, then he never was absolute. Then there were forces over against him that were from all eternity as original or ultimate as he. Sin cannot on their basis be defined as any want of conformity to or transgression of the law of God. For strictly speaking there is then no law of God. The law of God actually is the arrangement that God has ordered for the created universe and therefore also for man the rational creature.

But on the Romanist and Arminian basis, law is that which God and man together do in co-operation with one another in a common environment. Of course this is so only to the extent that the Roman and Arminian views hold to their doctrine of free will. To the extent that they hold to the doctrines of God's creation and providence, they virtually deny this their own view of free will. But the point that distinguishes their views from that of Reformed thought is precisely that in some measure they ascribe autonomy or free will to man. And to the extent that they ascribe such a free will to man, to that extent they virtually deny the law of God. And in virtually denying the law of God they virtually deny that sin is defined exclusively in relation to the law of God. They virtually deny that it is the business of the crew to take its orders from the captain only. It is their assumption that they too, as well as God, should have the veto power in the control room of the ship. Thus the matter of criterion is not settled in the way that it should be settled on Christian principles. There is no longer any absolute and clear knowledge of the goal. The distinction between north and south has been blurred. In fact the ship's captain cannot direct his course as he desires. He, together with the crew, is adrift in the ship which he thought he could control but actually cannot. The rudder has broken.

On the other hand, upon the Reformed view, sin is sin against the law of God. God knows the goal of history and can therefore promise mankind an eternal reward for faithful labor and obedience. Any rebellion is exclusively opposition to God. And therefore it is absolute rebellion. His position is absolute and therefore

rebellion against him must be absolute. It is the setting aside of God as God. Is that anything less than absolute?

### **3. The Offer of Common Victory over Evil**

But thirdly it must be added that although this rebellion is absolute it is certain to be absolutely destroyed. Satan is bound to fail. The crew that follows the first mutineer is bound to be defeated. The true captain knows all the while what they were doing. Nothing was hid from him. Their secret thoughts were as clear to him as the midday sun. Their thoughts, like everything else, were completely under his control. The captain will therefore surely bring his ship to the intended harbor. There will be absolute frustration of Satan who intended absolute destruction.

It is through Christ the Son of God, whose work is sovereignly applied to the hearts of men by the Holy Spirit, that the ship is saved. Christ saves the world. He not only intends to save the world. He will save the world. He has in principle saved the world. The world and its culture is even now saved for God. It is also being saved for God.

So the gospel of salvation is offered universally. It is offered to mankind. It is offered generally. It is offered indiscriminately. But it is offered conditionally. Men must accept their cultural task and opportunity anew in Christ. They are told that God will by this means attain his original goal. If they desire to be saved and if they desire their culture to be saved, they must accept the Christ of God. Of course they cannot really accept Christ except through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. But even Adam could have been obedient to God only through the power of God. All human action is, in the nature of the case, based upon the more ultimate action of God. Man's action, like his thought, is analogical. But for that very reason it is significant. Because it is surrounded by the ultimate will and plan of God human action and thought is not performed in a void.

But what about those who do not accept the Christ of God? What about those who continue their mutiny against the captain of the ship: God continues to call them, as part of the crew, to repentance. He sends forth a general call to the whole human race, promising those who repent and believe that they will be saved and have their culture saved also. He also continues to threaten those who will not believe that they will be destroyed. They will be kept on board until the end of the journey. They will not simply be kept in ward. They will even be allowed the freedom of the ship. But they will of necessity help to do the work of

the ship. And so of necessity the total culture to which they had to contribute will be saved.

This saving of their culture will therefore be in spite of their own principle. Their principle, the principle of mutiny, was aimed to destroy the ship. It may be compared to the fire that is started in one of the cabins of the ship. If not put out it would destroy the ship. Its principle is absolutely destructive. But it is under perfect control. Hence those who have made the fire cannot even succeed in destroying the work that they, together with the rest of the crew, perform daily aboard the ship as it sails on to its destined haven.

It should be remembered that the mutineers are not perfectly self-conscious. But at bottom they realize that their own mutinous endeavors are bound to fail. Calvin, like Paul, emphasizes the fact that all men have the knowledge of God within them. They know, therefore that mutiny is certain to end in self-frustration. They know that to sin against God is at the same time to sin against the law of their own being. They know that mutiny does not pay. For mutineers must still work, and as mutineers they must labor for the captain without finally reaping the reward that he has offered them.

So their mutiny is something that requires artificial stimulation all the time. Rules of navigation are carefully drawn up by the chief mutineer which are calculated to show that the captain is not properly directing the ship and that he will therefore be unable to reach his own destination. Yet such rules of Satan are artificial and false imitations of the rules which he himself learns from the way the captain actually handles the ship.

Even so the mutineers believe that they will finally be successful. They make themselves believe that no one, while still on the open sea, ought to make a choice for the captain rather than for the chief mutineer. So there are degrees of self-deception by which the mutineers labor.

The conclusion of the whole matter is this. There are two mutually exclusive principles for the interpretation of life. The Christian principle presupposes God who speaks authoritatively through the Bible, giving man basic principles for the interpretation of the whole of life. The non-Christian principle presupposes man who speaks authoritatively of himself. Psychologically, of course, the Christian must also begin with man. But he begins with man acknowledged as the creature of God. So it is still true that the Christian interprets all of life in terms of God and the non-Christian interprets all of life in terms of man.

It is impossible to choose between these two positions by an appeal to a neutral third position. To attempt to do so is in effect to judge the case in advance in favor of the non-Christian position.

The discussion between the two positions must therefore be one that takes place for the sake of the argument. This means that each takes his place, hypothetically only, upon the pre-supposition of the other in order to see what happens to human experience.

Since the Christian must seek to win the non-Christian, it is he who should first be ready to think himself sympathetically into the position of the party he is trying to win. He therefore listens patiently to all the objections that the non-Christian has against the Christian position. But he at once sees that all these objections rest upon one fundamental assumption, the assumption of man's ultimacy. And therefore the real question between the two positions has not even been touched unless it be asked upon what foundation the non-Christian can make his objections to Christianity intelligible. On what foundation rest the guns which he directs against the Christian position?

When this question is considered, it appears that this placement is the truth of Christianity itself. In other words, the non-Christian needs the truth of the Christian religion in order to attack it. As a child needs to sit on the lap of its father in order to slap the father's face, so the unbeliever, as a creature, needs God the Creator and providential controller of the universe in order to oppose this God. Without this God, the place on which he stands does not exist. He cannot stand in a vacuum.

Applying this to the problem of Christian education, we see that on the non-Christian basis the teacher cannot teach unless he borrows the truths of Christianity. He needs the very idea of God and his authoritative revelation in order to make this God and his revelation entirely subject to man.

Thus the fact that he can and does teach is intelligible only because that which he assumes not to be true is actually true. He teaches, therefore, but he teaches by accident. He is able to teach because his own principle is not true and because the principle of Christianity is true.

Understanding this the Christian becomes conscious of the necessity and value of his own educational program. It is he who must furnish not only the philosophy of education for himself, but he must also furnish the weapons with which the unbeliever must attack him in order to be defeated. And when the

unbeliever is defeated, then his own work is established. When the fire on the boat is put out, then the work of the crew is saved from destruction.

### **E. Common Grace**

In what has preceded a sharp distinction has been made between the Reformed and the non-Reformed or evangelical Christian views of education. The "particularism" of the Reformed Faith has necessarily been emphasized. In Romanism, Lutheranism and Arminianism, God cannot deal directly with the individual. God can present a general offer of salvation to men, but the individual man must finally decide whether he will accept it. But the Reformed faith holds that God not merely offers general possibilities but also actually accomplishes his will within individual men.

But individualism or particularism by itself is not the hallmark of the Reformed Faith. There is a distinct universalism involved in Reformed particularism. This has already been mentioned. We must examine it briefly now in connection with the Reformed conception of common grace and its bearing on education.

It has been repeatedly indicated that in non-Christian thought an abstract or formal universal is the correlate of an abstract, purely contingent, particular. It has also been indicated that in the non-Reformed orthodoxy, Christianity is toned down by the introduction of remnants of these two.

It is clear then that true universalism goes with true particularism. Where God does reach the individual directly, he reaches him in all his relationships. It is upon a Reformed basis only that the unity of the race and the unity of its culture is fully maintained. It is this that the Reformed doctrine of common grace underlines and helps to effect.

But in order to assign this doctrine its appropriate function in education it must be woven into the whole complex of Christian doctrine. And the heart of this system of doctrines lies in the recognition that God himself directly and constantly confronts the race with his requirements and promises. In the beginning God's attitude to mankind was one of general favor. After mankind rebelled against him, he still is gracious to them while at the same time he calls them to repentance. But the call to repentance has a forward as well as a backward look. God continually calls mankind toward the goal that he has set for it. After the entrance of sin, the call toward that goal must be accomplished through the Christ. Thus the idea of common grace is directly related to special or saving grace. In other words, common grace is Christologically conditioned.

There would be no commonness if it were not Christologically conditioned, otherwise commonness would be reduced to blank identity. The "goodness of God," says Paul, is calculated to lead men to repentance (Rom 2:4). But repentance also includes sorrow for not having undertaken the cultural task assigned to mankind, and a determination to undertake it anew.

If God's gifts of common grace such as "rain and sunshine," are thus seen as being a part of God's general call to repentance, then believers must also include that in their "testimony" to unbelievers. Believers have by grace repented from sin and undertaken their cultural task anew. They ask unbelievers to join them in a common obedience to God through Christ. "It is for that reason," they testify, "that God's good gifts are given you. We beseech you, in Christ's name, be ye reconciled to God." It is God's long-suffering patience which would lead you to repentance that enables you to do all those things which "for the matter of them" are "in themselves praiseworthy and useful." God intends to accomplish his ultimate end, the establishment of his kingdom. That is the reason why you are now able to contribute positively to the coming of that kingdom. The harps you make, the oratorios you produce, the great poems you have written, the scientific discoveries you have made will, with your will or against your will, all find their place in the unified structure of the kingdom of God through Christ. Now, then, in God's name repent, for otherwise the Israelites will "borrow" your treasures and you shall perish in the Red Sea like the Egyptians.

The Roman Catholic has no such doctrine of common grace. In his system the believer and the unbeliever have an area in common without difference. Romanism assumes that the "natural theology" of the natural man is a true evaluation of the revelation of God in nature. It thus virtually confuses God's revelation to man with man's response to that revelation. The same is true, in large measure, of non-Reformed Protestantism. Here too the objective and the subjective are confused, and the confusion introduces the abstract universal and the abstract particular into Christianity.

It goes without saying that the Reformed doctrine of common grace may not rest upon such confusion. The idea of common grace may not become the basis for a "neutral territory" between believer and unbeliever, patterned after the natural theology of Rome. Then the challenge that believers must present to unbelievers in the field of scientific knowledge, e.g., would be unnecessary. Such an essentially scholastic notion of common grace would also mean the loss of the hope of the unity of science.

The doctrine of common grace, properly imbedded in Reformed thinking as a whole, is indispensable for the unity of science, and therefore for the duty of challenging unbelief thoroughly and comprehensively.

The Reformed community, we conclude, must follow its own educational program. Much as it appreciates what is done by brethren of non-Reformed Christian persuasion, it is on the Reformed basis alone that a comprehensive Christian view of life can be set over against the world of unbelief. Only the Reformed view shows the full power of Christianity in meeting the challenge of the wisdom of the world and in offering men, with the pleading voice of the Christ who wept over the multitudes of Jerusalem, the reward of their labor for this life and the life to come. The Reformed community takes no delight in building alone. It takes no delight in living in ecclesiastical isolation. But if there is reason for it to live and to work alone ecclesiastically then there is the same reason for working alone educationally. And yet our hope is not to work alone forever. Our aim is the ultimate good of all who love the gospel and all those who should love the truth.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Van Til, Cornelius ; Sigward, Eric H.: *The Works of Cornelius Van Til, 1895-1987*. electronic ed. New York : Labels Army Co., 1997