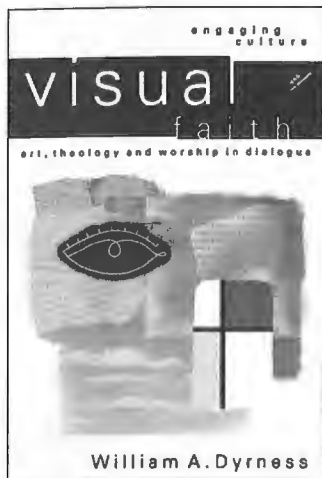


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Christian Education in the Reformed Tradition¹

George Brown, Jr.

Introduction

It can be argued that each branch of the Protestant family of churches is known for a distinctive contribution to the life and work of the whole church. Baptists, for instance, are known for evangelism and Episcopalians for liturgy. Methodists are identified with social action. If evangelism, liturgy, and social action are distinctive contributions of Baptists, Episcopalians, and Methodists, education would be the special gift of the Reformed family of churches.²

This paper explores the distinctive characteristics of Christian education in the Reformed tradition, from the particular perspective of the Reformed Church in America (RCA). Attention is given to education in the Reformation period, and developments are traced from their foundation in the Netherlands to their appropriation by the Reformed church in New Netherland. The assets and liabilities of this education legacy are examined, and some agenda items for the future suggested.

Foundations in the Old World

The association of the Reformed tradition with education dates back to the Reformation and the influence of John Calvin and John Knox. Richard Robert Osmer, associate professor of Christian Education at Princeton Theological Seminary, has called John Calvin “the Protestant theologian of the church’s teaching ministry.”³ This assessment is not surprising, given the importance Calvin attached to education. Calvin created resources for the church’s teaching ministry. And while his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* is widely regarded as a textbook for theologians and pastors, it was also used in the education of the laity. His many tracts were intended to be instructional.

Calvin wrote two catechisms: *Instruction in Faith* (1537) and *Catechism of the Church of Geneva* (1541). Peter Y. De Jong has commented on Calvin’s approach to catechesis:

This understanding of catechesis as an intensely personal speaking and listening and responding completely dominates the form as well as the contents of Calvin’s catechism. This is one of his signal contributions to the nurture of children in and by the church. Here the self-revealing triune God is powerfully

and persuasively active through the teaching ministry in drawing the children into conscious fellowship with himself and thus eliciting from them the response of faith, hope, and love.⁴

Calvin's commitment to education went beyond writing and teaching, for the establishment of the College of Geneva in 1559 was largely the result of his efforts. Calvin's approach to education was built around three institutions: the church, where people gathered for worship and instruction in the faith; the home, where parents were the primary teachers of the young; and schools, where the young learned – among other things – to read, and where older learners were trained for leadership in the church.

Calvin's understanding of education and educational practices flowed out of Geneva, across the European continent. It found expression also in the ministry of John Knox in Scotland. Both Calvin and Knox looked to the home as a primary setting for the religious nurture of the young. Families were to read the Bible together daily and parents were to instruct their children in the Christian faith. Knox believed that children should be questioned in the church about their understanding of the Christian faith on a regular basis. One reason for this practice was Knox's belief that it would contribute to the edification of adults in the church.

Like Calvin, Knox prepared a catechism for instructing the young. In his survey of Knox's approach to Christian education, Marshall C. Dendy noted that "the catechism was used particularly in the preparation of children for admission to Communion. This was regarded as the minister's first duty. Knox believed that at least two years of instruction were necessary for those who were to receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for the first time."⁵ In addition to the Christian nurture provided at home by parents and religious instruction at church by the pastor, children were to be educated in schools. Dendy observed that "public school education for every child was conceived in the minds of the Reformers. Part of their concept of the Reformation was that the ability to read would enable people to discover the meaning of God's Word for themselves and that through education people would be prepared for useful, intelligent service to the church or state."⁶ Knox advocated the establishment of schools in every town. He believed every child should have at least four years of education. Those who passed an examination at the end of that period continued in school for another six years. Following ten years of schooling, universities offered further education in law, medicine, and theology.

If Knox's work in Scotland influenced the shape of Christian education in Presbyterian churches in the new world, the contours of Christian education in Reformed churches in New Netherland were shaped by events that took place in Dordrecht. As Arie R. Brouwer, a former general secretary of the RCA, noted in *Reformed Church Roots*, the educational strategy of the Reformed church in New Netherland was based on the method of catechizing stipulated by the Synod

of Dort (1618 and 1619). That method employed three educational contexts: home, school, and church.⁷ Parents were responsible for catechizing their children at home, and schoolmasters instructed children in schools established by the church, while pastors, assisted by elders, supervised the catechizing of the young by parents.

Adapting to the Challenges of Education in the New World

The threefold educational strategy of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands was followed by the Dutch Reformed churches in the New World. In 1792, the General Synod of the Reformed Dutch Church in America adopted Explanatory Articles that applied the governmental articles of the Synod of Dort to the North American context.⁸ Under these articles, pastors were charged with responsibility for instruction within the church, schoolmasters were to attend to the religious education of students enrolled in schools, and parents were to instruct their children at home. Robert W. Lynn's doctoral research on the history of Protestant education in the United States shows that the Reformed church was not alone in adopting this strategy. The "triangular institutional base" of church, home, and school was normative for American Protestantism until the end of the Civil War.⁹

Article LVI of the Explanatory Articles recommended that if suitable schoolmasters could not be found to provide instruction in schools that conformed to the Reformed faith, parents should be "particularly attentive to the religious education of their children, not only by instructing them, and daily praying with them at home, but by never employing schoolmasters whose characters are unascertained or suspicious, and especially none who scoff at the holy scriptures or whose conduct is immoral."¹⁰ Article LXI of the Explanatory Articles emphasized the importance of the pastor's role as teacher in relation to the preparation of youth and others through instruction for making confession of their faith. Elders were to admonish ministers who neglected this responsibility. If a minister did not have a good reason for neglecting his responsibility for teaching, and continued to ignore the urging of the elders for a year, his neglect was to be reported to the classis.¹¹

Consistories were charged with the responsibility of establishing and maintaining schools. The first parochial school was founded in New Amsterdam by Adam Roelansten in 1637. A second wave of Dutch immigrants in the 1800s established grammar schools, academies, and colleges. First Hope College, and then Western Theological Seminary grew out of the academy established in Holland, Michigan, in 1851. Northwestern Academy was founded in 1882 and eventually evolved into Northwestern College. Academies were also established in German Valley, Illinois, and in Cedar Grove, Wisconsin. The rise of a system of common or public schools eventually resulted in the demise of these parochial schools.¹²

By the end of the eighteenth century, a new educational institution was starting to make its appearance in America. First established in England by Robert Raikes, the Sunday school was soon adopted by American Protestant churches. Sara Van Doren was instrumental in opening a Sunday school at the First Reformed Church, New Brunswick, New Jersey, in 1799. Another was opened in New York six years later.¹³

With the advent of the Sunday school, the Protestant strategy of education in America shifted from the triangular pattern of education in home, school, and church to a dual pattern of public school and church school.¹⁴ As William Bean Kennedy reports,

By 1860 there had emerged a general consensus in American Protestantism that the combination of public and Sunday school teaching would largely take care of the needed religious teaching of the young. In that pattern the public school was primary; the Sunday school was adjunct to it, providing the specific religious teaching it could not include. Only on the basis of such widespread Protestant dependence upon common schools for a fundamental part of religious education can the place of the Sunday school be understood.¹⁵

Reformed churches did not immediately embrace this new arrangement. As Brouwer points out, for about twenty years (1850-1870), there was "considerable discussion" on the floor of General Synod about the role parochial schools should play in the church's educational strategy.¹⁶

Nor did the innovation of Sunday school receive immediate widespread acceptance. In his study of the Sunday school movement between 1789 and 1860, William Bean Kennedy noted an ambivalence toward the Sunday school: "The churches felt ambivalent about adopting the new instrument, for it meant giving up at least the appearance of some older forms and the embracing of something new, the origins of which were not above question."¹⁷ In newer churches, Sunday school took the place of catechizing. While catechism declined in some older churches, where it remained in place and the Sunday school came alongside it, there was often tension.

By 1860, a shift had taken place from a broadly ecumenical Sunday school movement to denominational Sunday schools. But as Kennedy pointed out, "However eagerly the church leaders tried to make of the Sunday school a denominational nurturing agency, it remained difficult to get the Sunday school to produce persons who were more narrowly denominational than broadly Christian."¹⁸

Christian Education in the RCA Today

In 1998, a group of Christian educators from the RCA's Regional Synod of the Great Lakes began meeting together to address concerns related to the support of educators and Christian education. They developed a list of values that was later printed in bookmark format with the following text:

VALUING CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The RCA demonstrates that it values Christian education when it . . .

- honors the teaching ministry of the church and those who teach in it,
- recognizes the educational and formative character of all its activities,
- encourages those who have the gift of teaching to answer God's call to the church's education ministry,
- requires ministers of Word and sacrament to equip themselves for leadership of their congregation's Christian education program,
- certifies qualified Christian educators and encourages congregations to give preference to certified educators when hiring staff,
- invites religious educators to serve on its committees, commissions, agencies, and share in its programs,
- creates and sustains appropriate structures for the support and exercise of the church's teaching ministry, and
- provides the human, material, program, and financial resources necessary for effective Christian education at denominational, regional, and congregational levels.

Today, the Reformed emphasis on education is reflected in the liturgy, government, and doctrine of the RCA. The value assigned to education is found in liturgical forms. Terms such as "sound learning," "instruction," "mutual growth," "teach," and "teacher" appear throughout the RCA's order for "The Ordination and Installation of a Minister of the Word" (1987). When the

sacrament of baptism is administered, members of the congregation promise to teach “the gospel of God’s love” and parents are asked,

Do you promise
to instruct these children
in the truth of God's word,
in the way of salvation through Jesus Christ;
to pray for them,
to teach them to pray; and
to train them in Christ's way
by your example,
through worship, and
in the nurture of the church?

("Order for the Sacrament of Baptism," 1994).

In this part of the order for baptism, the high value placed on education is reflected in the use of the verbs “instruct,” “teach,” and “train.”

The emphasis on education is not limited to the RCA's liturgy, for with regard to ministers of Word and sacrament who serve a local congregation, its *Book of Church Order* (BCO, 2000 edition) states:

The office of the minister in the local parish is to serve as pastor, teacher, and enabler of the congregation, to build up and equip the whole church for its ministry in the world. As pastor and teacher, the minister preaches and teaches the Word of God, administers the sacraments, shares responsibility with the officers and members of the congregation for their mutual Christian growth, exercises Christian love and discipline in conjunction with the elders, and is careful that everything in the church is done in a proper and orderly way. As enabler the minister so serves and lives among the congregation that together they become wholly devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ in the service of the church for the world (Chap. 1, Part I, Art. 1, Sec. 4).

The BCO (1999 edition) specifies that the education of the young is also a concern of the classis. The classis's superintendence of churches includes annually inquiring of ministers and elder delegates of each church, “Is the education of the young people in the essential truths of the Word of God carried on by catechizing, or is it otherwise faithfully attended to in your congregation?” (Chap. 1, Part II, Art. 7, Sec. 1.c.).¹⁹

In Search of a “Home” for Christian Education

The place of Christian education in the denominational structures is an indicator of how the church views and values education. If one thinks of an organization as a jigsaw puzzle, then a brief survey of the RCA's organizational structure reveals a missing piece. Consider, for example, that the RCA has established commissions to address the following concerns: Christian Action, Christian Unity, Church Order, History, Judicial Business, Nominations, Race

and Ethnicity, Theology, Women, and Worship. Commissions serve a policy-making function in the life of the denomination. The *BCO* states that the "commissions shall prepare studies and develop policies for recommendation to the General Synod as they shall consider useful or as the Synod shall assign. They shall also carry out other responsibilities specifically assigned in these *Bylaws* or by legislative act of the General Synod" (Chap. 3, Part I, Art. 5, Sec. 1:b). While functions like worship, theology, and governance all have a "home" in the RCA in a commission (viz., the commissions on Christian Worship, Theology, and Church Order), no comparable commission for Christian Education was ever formed. Could this lack of an institutional or systems "home" for this function of the church be one reason Christian education does not receive adequate support and is less visible or important in the eyes of the church?

Until the RCA's restructuring in the 1960s, the General Synod Board of Education (constituted in 1830, or 1832, depending on which source is consulted) had functioned like one of the current commissions. After the restructuring of the sixties, the Board of Christian Education was folded into the Division of Church Life and Mission of the General Program Council, along with the Board of North American Missions, the Board of World Missions, and the Stewardship Council.

While there is not a commission for Christian education in the RCA's denominational structure, there is a Council for Christian Education and a General Synod Council Congregational Services Committee. Although an education representative from each of the regional synods serves on the Council for Christian Education, their role is largely advisory to the Office for Education and Faith Development. The Council for Christian Education does not report to the General Synod or the General Synod Council. The General Synod Council Committee for Congregational Services does report to General Synod through the advisory committee on Christian Education and Discipleship.

Christian education's place in the denominational structure changed again in 2000. Until then, Christian education was under the umbrella of the Congregational Services Unit. But in that year the Congregational Services Unit was combined with the unit for Evangelism and Church Development Services. The merging of the units recognized a certain interdependence – namely, that discipleship is not complete without education, public witness, worship, and discipleship training (the focus of Congregational Services), and evangelism and church development (the focus of Evangelism and Church Development Services).

While the close relationship between education and mission in the RCA has been beneficial, the current merging of the Congregational Services and Evangelism and Church Development Services units may have a negative as well as a positive effect. Education – which was already only one of four elements in a single unit – is now one element among six in a combined unit. Such conditions increase the risk that Christian education will be pushed to the

margins of denominational life and the importance of teaching thereby weakened.

Certifying the Competence and Character of Teachers

The RCA's conviction that candidates for the ministry of Word and sacrament must receive formal training is matched by the insistence that teachers meet high standards of competence and character. In 1962, the Classis of West Central overtured the General Synod to request the Committee on the Revision of the Constitution "to consider the examination of Directors of Education and make appropriate Constitutional revisions to provide more judicious oversight of such servants of the church" by classes and consistories. The advisory committee responded with a hearty concurrence: "Your Board is already preparing standards for directors of Christian education for the guidance of our churches together with a fitting induction service that will elevate this office in the eyes of our congregations. We must have guidance for, and oversight of, those who teach our children and youth as well as those who preach in our pulpits" (*Minutes of General Synod*, 1962: 76).

For more than a decade there was an ongoing discussion of the certification of Christian educators. The General Synod of 1975 directed the Board of Theological Education to study the process for licensing ministers of Christian education and to prepare a plan for licensing directors of Christian education. Progress was reported at the next year's General Synod, and in 1977 a plan was presented that provided for three categories of certification: certified director of Christian education, certified minister of Christian education, and certified associate of Christian education. The General Synod approved the plan and created a committee on credentials.

Shortly after the RCA launched this process, the seeds were planted for organizing Christian educators. CERCA—Christian Educators Reformed Church in America—was organized as a small, voluntary organization for professional Christian educators and youth workers in 1982.²⁰ CERCA was created with a twofold purpose: (1) to promote and strengthen the church's education ministries, and (2) to support and encourage RCA Christian educators, youth workers, and ministers of Word and sacrament who are engaged in the church's teaching ministry at congregational, regional, and denominational levels.

When the certification program of the late seventies proved to be flawed and ineffective, CERCA members assisted in revising the RCA's process for certifying Christian educators and worked hard at urging Christian educators and youth workers to become certified ministers of Christian education or associates in ministry. CERCA continues to be a vital advocate for competence in Christian education and youth ministry through certification.

The implementation of the revised certification process has led to a dilemma in the area of church order. The category of associates in ministry was injected into a system that recognized only offices and assemblies. An associate in

ministry was neither an office nor an assembly. Allan J. Janssen's note on the *BCO* sums up the situation:

This relatively new article introduces a new category into the church order, an "associate in ministry." "Associate in ministry" is not an office. Oddly, the article does not describe such associates. They were intended to be Christian educators, and they were included within the classis in order to grant them a higher profile in the church. The classis was designated as supervisor to regulate more closely their lives and conduct. However, they are not members of the classis. Indeed, since they are not officers of the church, they cannot be (and one wonders how they would be conceived in such an office). Thus, it is doubly odd that the classis would supervise them in any way.²¹

One wonders if a reconsideration of the nature of the office of teacher would offer a way out of this dilemma. Could the understanding of the so-called "fourth office" be broadened to include Christian educators? Perhaps, although the RCA's historic identification of the office with theological education would be a significant barrier to opening it to other teachers in the life of the church.

The Reformed Contribution to Christian Education

As a distinctive quality of the Reformed church, education represents a contribution of that church to the wider church. Specifically, it offers the resource of the Heidelberg Catechism in Christian education, the role of the pastor as teacher, and the reinforcement of Christian education through the constitution.

The Heidelberg Catechism: A Resource for Christian Education

The Heidelberg Catechism occupies a central position in the Reformed tradition of education. Osmer notes two important functions of catechetical instruction: (1) It affords individuals the opportunity to appropriate the vows made on their behalf at baptism, confessing their faith before the congregation, and (2) it provides every member of the church with a common set of beliefs.²² It is the second function especially that qualifies the Heidelberg Catechism to serve as one of the RCA's "Standards of Unity," along with the Belgic Confession and the Canons of the Synod of Dort. In addition to use in the nurture of the young in the context of home and family, the Heidelberg Catechism was also the text for catechetical instruction by pastors in the church setting and a basis for preaching themes. Brouwer observed that in terms of a congregation's worship and preaching, the catechism was "the instrument which nurtured the core of their community life."²³

Among the guidelines consistories are to follow in providing for services of worship the *BCO* requires that "the points of doctrine contained in the *Heidelberg Catechism* shall be explained by the minister at regular services of worship on the Lord's Day, so that the exposition of them is completed within a period of four years" (Chap. 1, Part I, Art. 2, Sec. 7f.). Before use of the Common Lectionary with its three-year cycle of Scripture selections became widespread, the *Liturgy and Psalms* (1968) offered a four-year lectionary based on a *lectio continua* approach. Selections from the Heidelberg Catechism were woven together with biblical texts that allowed ministers to fulfill the constitutional requirement within the stipulated four-year period.²⁴

On the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism, Howard Hageman lamented its neglect and praised its virtues for Christian nurture. Hageman attributed the catechism's neglect to its outdated language, the restriction of its use to the young, and the perception that the focus was primarily on intellectual content. He felt the third reason to be the most significant. For many people, he observed, "The purpose of a catechism is to give the content of the Christian faith, preferably in as bald a form as the mathematics table."²⁵ Such wooden use of rich educational resources is not reflective of the best pedagogical principles and practice.

Hageman's characterization of the catechism's use stands in stark contrast to Calvin's approach to catechizing, which was holistic, dialogical, and relational. Calvin's method was not merely intellectual, but involved the heart as well as the head. And, as DeJong has pointed out, for Calvin catechesis "was intrinsically a dialogue between minister and catechumen in the presence of the living God of the covenant who through his Word of grace and salvation actively engages in molding the hearts and lives of his people to his praise. Although basically an educational instrument, *i.e.*, a manual used to impart truth, its form gave evidence throughout that under the Spirit's guidance it could and would serve as a 'means of grace.'"²⁶ Calvin's approach "presupposed a personal relationship which provided the context for imparting information."²⁷

Hageman saw the value of the catechism for Christian nurture in terms of its content, relevance, communal character, and devotional quality:

When the Heidelberg Catechism is considered and used seriously, it is an instrument for Christian nurture in depth. Here is the summary of the faith, but always presented in terms of involvement. Here is the summary of the faith, but always fostered in the context of the Christian community. Here is the summary of the faith, but relentless in its applications for our style of life in the world. Here is the summary of the faith, but one that can be said on the knees. A whole faith for a whole man for the whole of his life—and for the whole church. This is an instrument for Christian nurture. This is the Heidelberg Catechism.²⁸

Viewed from this angle, the instructional value of the catechism is one of the more positive contributions of the Reformed church to the practice of Christian education. As George Hunsinger has observed, "As much as anything, it was the catechisms that were responsible for the success of Protestantism. They made it possible to transmit a lovely, well-informed faith from one generation to the next."²⁹

Teacher: A Role for Pastors

Historically, pastors have played an important role in catechetical instruction. They not only taught catechism classes for the young, but they were also responsible for making sure that children received instruction in the catechism from their parents at home. Today, conventional wisdom among Christian educators holds that the pastor is the key to effective Christian education in the local church. Where pastors support Christian education, teaching is valued and learning thrives. Where pastors are indifferent to the church's teaching ministry, morale among teachers and leaders is low and learning is viewed as an optional or elective activity. This conventional wisdom is confirmed by research. A 1990 study of Christian education by the Search Institute identified three characteristics of pastors that were positively associated with growth in a mature faith: high commitment to an educational program for adults, significant investment of time in that program, and knowledge of the theory and practice of Christian education.³⁰

Inherent in the Reformed tradition is considerable support and reinforcement of the pastor's significant role in Christian education. Pastors of Reformed churches are called to be shepherds *and* teachers. The "Charge to the Minister" in the liturgy for ordination and installation begins: "Beloved fellow servant in Christ, be attentive to the flock whom the Holy Spirit may give you to shepherd and teach, and to all those among whom you shall labor" (*Worship the Lord*, 1987). In the following service of reception into the classis and installation of a minister of the Word, the congregation is asked to affirm that they receive the candidate as their "pastor and teacher." Finally, the presiding officer declares that the candidate is "the lawfully installed pastor and teacher" of that church. This language of the liturgy is consistent with the BCO's description of the office of the minister in the local parish as cited earlier. Thus, the emphasis on the teaching role of the minister is prominent in the constitution of the RCA.

Candidates for ordination in the RCA promise to "instruct, admonish, comfort, and reprove, according to everyone's need" and to "share responsibility for the mutual growth of all members of the congregation" (*Worship the Lord*, 1987). In addition to the attention directed to "instruction" and "mutual growth," the language of the liturgical order is congruent with what is sometimes referred to as "learner-centered education." That is, instruction is to be in accordance with each person's need, and embraces the principle of shared leadership in that

the responsibility for mutual growth is a "shared responsibility" and does not fall to the pastor alone.

Moreover, the Reformed tradition supports effective Christian education in its insistence on "sound learning" for those who are called to the office of minister of Word and sacrament. The interrogation for ordination begins with the acknowledgement that the candidate has been found to be "qualified as a person of sound learning and of Christian character" (*Worship the Lord*, 1987). And for a brief period of time, Christian education was specifically identified as one of the areas in which candidates were to demonstrate competence. The 1995 General Synod adopted a recommendation to revise the section of the *BCO* that stipulated the subjects in which candidates for the office of minister of Word and sacrament were to be examined. To the list of nine subject areas was added a tenth: "Christian educational theory for and practice with children, youth and adults" (*BCO* Chap. 1, Part II, Art. 8, Sec. 6.b.). Thus, from 1996 until 1999, RCA students of theology were examined in Christian education.³¹

The RCA, following the church order of Dort, also recognizes the role of teacher apart from the office of minister of Word and sacrament. "Teacher" or "professor of theology" is understood to be a "fourth office." Article XVIII of "The Rules of Church Government" established by the Synod of Dort states: "The *office of the TEACHERS or PROFESSORS of Theology* is to explain the holy scriptures, and vindicate the pure doctrines of the gospel against heresy and error."³² For Calvin, only pastors and teachers have "an ordinary office" in the church. Nevertheless, he noted a difference between pastors and teachers in that "teachers are not put in charge of discipline, or administering the sacraments, or warnings and exhortations, but only of Scriptural interpretation—to keep doctrine whole and pure among believers. But the pastoral office includes all these functions within itself" (*Institutes*, IV.3.4).³³ Calvin's distinction is maintained by the section on professors of theology (Article XIX) in the Explanatory Articles of the Synod of Dort, which interprets Rule 18 in view of the American situation:

The distinction between the first and second office in the church, that is, between the Ministers of the word and Teachers of Theology, is founded in the nature of the respective offices. The former are those, who by preaching and ruling, instruct, and govern the church; and are, as such, denominated pastors or shepherds of the flock: the latter are those who are set apart only to teach and defend the truths of the Gospel, and for that reason, are excused from fulfilling the pastoral duties. This distinction was noted in the early ages of the Christian church. It was attended to at the reformation, and was productive of important benefits, especially with respect to the education of candidates for the holy Ministry. The reformed Dutch Church perseveres in

preserving the same distinction, and determines that the instructing, and preparing youth for the service of the sanctuary, shall not be left indiscriminately to every Minister, or any individual who may choose to assume that office.³⁴

The Reformed contribution to the philosophy and practice of Christian education is twofold at this point. First, it underscores the importance of the pastor's role as teacher in the congregation. Second, it identifies a teaching office distinct from that of minister of Word and sacrament in the office of teacher or professor of theology.

The Constitution: Reinforcing the Church's Teaching Ministry

While catechetical instruction in Reformed circles is usually associated with teaching the Heidelberg Catechism, for Daniel J. Meeter the RCA's constitution is itself catechetical. To say that the constitution is catechetical "means that the whole document aims to teach, every line of it, not just the Heidelberg Catechism within it. The whole thing means to teach us how to live out of the scriptures. It means to teach us the anatomy of the Body of Christ."³⁵ To convey his understanding of the nature of the RCA's constitution, he offers (in addition to the images or metaphors of "skeleton," "glue," and "boat keel,") the image of a machine shop "toolbox":

Disciples cannot be conformed to the image of Christ in a vacuum. They need to be formed in a way that relates to the culture in which they live. They need to be preached to, they need to be washed and fed with the sacraments, and they need to be governed. There have to be tools to do this. What the Reformed church has is tools. Isn't that what a denomination is, after all, a machine shop for the work of shaping disciples? The shop-workers are the pastors, elders, deacons, and educators, and the toolbox is the constitution.³⁶

Meeter calls the constitution a "How-to-be-a-Reformed-Church Kit."³⁷ That sounds like the perfect resource for facing the current mainline denominational challenge of how to sustain a viable identity. "Protestants Look to Their Roots," an article in the October 19, 2000, issue of the *Wall Street Journal*, reported an emerging emphasis on denominational identity. "Part of the Protestant emphasis on sectarian roots," it said, "is responding to the realization by church leaders that members don't understand the way their denomination is supposed to work."³⁸

Both the United Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have adopted educational responses to the identity crisis facing their congregations. In response to the current emphasis on denominational roots, in 2000 the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) launched its "first Presbyterian-specific Sunday-school curriculum" in thirty years.³⁹ They also wrote a new catechism

and created a set of resources to support its use by congregations in rooting adults, children, and new Christians in the Presbyterian tradition.

Maintaining denominational identity is a special challenge for small membership denominations like the RCA. Too small to mobilize the resources necessary to produce its own comprehensive curriculum, the RCA has had to rely on ecumenical partnerships in order to produce quality resources for the Christian education of adults, youth, and children. In the middle of the twentieth century, the RCA partnered with the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) and several other smaller Presbyterian bodies to create the Covenant Life Curriculum (CLC). In the early 1970s the RCA joined with fourteen other denominations to develop a system of four curricular options known as Christian Education: Shared Approaches (CE:SA). While a number of RCA congregations used The Bible Way curriculum published by the Christian Reformed Church, it was not until the 1990s that the RCA partnered with the Christian Reformed Church to produce Living in Faith Every Day (LiFE), a curriculum for children.

While joint curriculum development ventures such as these reflected economic realities and ecumenical commitments, cooperatively produced curricula tend to focus more on broad areas of common belief and values than on distinctive denominational characteristics. In developing the CLC, this issue was addressed by issuing an RCA edition of *Through the Ages*, an adult study of church history co-authored by Ernest Trice Thompson of the PCUS and Elton M. Eenigenburg of the RCA. Even when writers for cooperatively published curricula came from the ranks of the RCA, the resources still lacked sufficient denominational distinctiveness to serve as an identity curriculum to nourish members in the Reformed tradition.

In the late 1970s, the RCA developed and published a denominational identity curriculum known as *Heritage & Hope*. This series of four seven-week units focused on RCA history and theology, worship, world missions, and North American missions. While *Heritage & Hope* was not a comprehensive curriculum in the same way that the CLC or CE:SA were, it did offer resources for adults, youth, and children, as well as leader guides for adapting their use in family and intergenerational settings. *Heritage & Hope* was a significant curriculum project for the small membership RCA.

Some Liabilities of the Reformed Perspective

While the Reformed tradition's strong emphasis on education has much to offer the wider church, it is not without liabilities. The perception that Christian education is only for the young is one point of weakness. The tendency to equate Christian education with schooling and a reluctance to engage in critical thinking are two other areas of vulnerability.

A Perception that Education Is Only for the Young

Writing about the use of the Heidelberg Catechism in Christian nurture, Howard G. Hageman concluded from conversations with church people “that a generation ago when the Catechism was still in general use, it was entirely limited to the instruction of twelve- and thirteen-year-olds and that the goal was to train them to recite a portion of it perfectly.”⁴⁰ This perception—that the catechism is an educational resource only for children and youth—was one of three reasons Hageman cited for the neglect of the catechism in the 1960s. The impression that Christian education is primarily or solely a matter of educating the young is one of the liabilities of the Reformed influence on Christian education today. Its roots are in the attention that Calvin and Knox and the Church Order of Dort gave to the religious education of the young. Today, that impression is reinforced in a number of ways. As was noted earlier, the “constitutional question” RCA classes ask regarding Christian education in the churches under their jurisdiction is framed in terms of the young and ignores how adults might be engaged in learning opportunities. LiFE, a curriculum that is for children only through the sixth grade, reinforces the notion that further learning is not required for adolescents or adults. Little wonder then that the 1990 Search Institute study of effective Christian education found that “*Participation in formal Christian education declines with age.*”⁴¹ “Most denominations,” the report noted, “have much greater success in including children than high school students and adults. Because of the potential power of Christian education to promote faith maturity and loyalty, a major task facing denominations is to increase the involvement of high school students and adults in formal Christian education.”⁴²

Dependence on a Schooling Model of Education

When asked to name what they associated with Christian education, most seminarians in introductory courses answer, “Sunday school.” Those seminarians are not alone in equating education with schooling and Christian education with the Sunday school. Osmer explains that response this way: “Almost from the beginning of this country’s existence, the Protestant churches have been dominated by a Sunday school pattern of education. Congregational education has been thought of almost exclusively in terms of the church school on Sunday morning. Administration, resources, and debate over the appropriate goals of church education have largely assumed this pattern.”⁴³

Yet, in the history of the Christian church, the Sunday school is a very recent educational institution. Long before Robert Raikes came on the scene, the church used a variety of means for educating the faithful. The catechumenate emerged as a strategy in the early church for instructing those new to the faith. Art—in the form of frescoes, mosaics, and stained glass—was used to educate illiterate believers. The lectionary, with its selection of Old and New Testament

pericopes, introduced the faithful to the central stories of the Old Testament, the life and teachings of Jesus, and key themes from New Testament letters and, through repetition, embedded them in the hearts and minds of worshipers.

Initially, the Sunday school's purpose was more evangelistic than educational. As American pioneers moved westward, they planted Sunday schools along the way. Before a community was able to erect a church, a Sunday school was usually already in place. That early evangelistic orientation still often overshadows the instructional purpose that was later assigned to it. Despite predictions of its demise and creative attempts to replace it, the Sunday school remains at the heart of Protestantism's educational strategy.

Several Christian educators have provided tools to break out of the schooling model of Christian education. George Albert Coe did this in the early part of the last century with his book, *A Social Theory of Religious Education*. C. Ellis Nelson also helped to shatter the schooling paradigm with his thesis "that whatever is done or said, or not done or not said *is* teaching."⁴⁴ From this perspective, worship, service, fellowship, and even committee work had educative possibilities. It remained for John H. Westerhoff III to help popularize Nelson's work and disseminate it in the church. In *Values for Tomorrow's Children* (Pilgrim Press, 1970), Westerhoff offered an alternative vision for the future of church education that was not dependent upon Sunday school. Recognizing the formative nature of socialization, Westerhoff advocated what could be called a religious enculturation or socialization approach to Christian education. Maria Harris, a Roman Catholic religious educator, used art as a tool for breaking the school mold of religious education. Harris identified five curricula or ways to fashion Christians—fellowship (κοινωνία), worship (λειτουργία), service (διακονία), advocacy (κήρυγμα), and teaching (διδασχία).⁴⁵

Iris V. Cully, a veteran Christian educator, once wrote that worship "has been the basic way by which people have learned what it means to be Christian."⁴⁶ The connection between liturgy and learning is part of the RCA's Dutch heritage. As Meeter notes,

The liturgical forms we inherited from the Synod of Dort were often criticized for being too didactic, but the Netherlands Liturgy was designed specifically to be strong in teaching. It tended to focus on the evangelical promises more than the doxological mysteries. It tended to go deep rather than lofty, aiming for the "comfort" of the soul rather than the inspiration of the spirit. Its whole purpose was to teach the people how to live in comfort and die in peace. It was a catechetical liturgy.⁴⁷

This way to break out of the schooling mold recognizes the educative character of worship and makes more intentional use of the formative power of liturgy in the church's ministry with adults, children, and youth. Brouwer made this important observation about liturgy: "The task of shaping the liturgy goes

on. Each time the people of God offer themselves in worship, something happens, and the liturgy is affected. But the liturgy also shapes the church. We are formed by the hymns we sing, the orders of service we follow, and the sermons we hear. The shape of the liturgy reveals the shape of the church."⁴⁸ This observation is an important reminder of the relationship between liturgy and Christian formation.

One of the dynamic ways the RCA has challenged the domination of the schooling model in Christian education is through the Children and Worship program. Growing out of the work of Jerome Berryman in Houston, Texas, and Sonja M. Stewart in Holland, Michigan, the RCA's Children and Worship training program has offered a worship approach to the Christian formation of children and, in the process, of the program's adult leaders. Influenced to some extent by Children and Worship, the LiFE curriculum produced cooperatively by the Christian Reformed Church and the RCA is another recent effort to depart from the schooling model. Leaders are encouraged to think of themselves as a "faith model, a spiritual guide, a faith nurturer, a colearner with the children" rather than as a teacher. Guided by a vision for faith modeling, the resource materials profess to avoid "classroom language."⁴⁹ As innovative and creative as these curricular resources strive to be, they look like any other church school resource and list a focus and learning goals for each session. Nonetheless, LiFE curriculum represents an important attempt to move away from a schooling model in Christian education.

An Ambivalence about Education

Contemporary education in the Reformed tradition today contains a curious paradox. On the one hand, the love of learning and the value of an educated clergy are embraced. On the other hand, a kind of anti-intellectualism substitutes piety for knowledge and devalues education. Thus, despite the Reformed zeal for education, one sometimes discerns an ambivalence toward it. In Western Seminary's centennial lecture, Isaac C. Rottenberg commented that "there has sometimes been a tendency among us to regard piety as an adequate substitute for scholarship."⁵⁰ Five years earlier Gerrit T. Vander Lugt had stated it more sharply: "Thinking is not an activity in which the Reformed Church has specialized."⁵¹ In the 1960s, Rottenberg and Vander Lugt were both describing a denominational culture that frowned upon scholarship and critical thinking. In the late 1970s, Brouwer concluded that "theological discussion has usually been carried on in a climate of fear and suspicion, a climate not conducive to sustained theological discussion or the publication of theological journals."⁵² Rottenberg called attention to an apparent avoidance of controversy and creativity in Reformed theological scholarship, while Vander Lugt suggested ways to stimulate theological thinking in the church. The latter urged the General Synod to engage in more theological discussion and wanted the

seminaries to cultivate in seminarians a "spirit of continuous theological inquiry."⁵³

Publication as a means of educating was an important part of the ministries of both Calvin and Knox, and writing has continued to be an important dimension of education in the Reformed tradition. Rottenberg observed that faculty publication tended to be limited to articles for the denominational magazine and pamphlets that addressed practical and catechetical needs.⁵⁴ Vander Lugt advocated scholarly publication that was not restricted by regional or institutional interests. But perhaps Vander Lugt's most visionary suggestion was for the establishment of an agency for renewal:

Over and above all this, we need throughout the church "An Agency of Renewal," such as the "evangelical academies" in Germany and "Kerk en Wereld" in the Netherlands. The name is relatively unimportant, except as it ought to indicate what the function of such an agency is. What is needed throughout the church (not just on our seminary and college campuses) are places for lay people to meet, not for the purpose of becoming agents of promotion for the program of the church, but for serious consideration of what the theology of revelation is. We have been concerned and rightly so with the training of an "official" ministry. But we have not been concerned as a church with the training of lay people to be theologically-literate participants in her life and movement.⁵⁵

While the appearance of *Perspectives* in 1986 helped address the need for a forum for the kind of critical theological publication both Vander Lugt and Rottenberg had advocated, there continues to be something of the climate of mistrust and suspicion that Brouwer described. While the denomination continues to require a Master of Divinity degree and a Certificate of Fitness for Ministry for candidates for the office of minister of Word and sacrament (although providing an "approved alternate route" toward ordination that does not involve the granting of the Master of Divinity degree), there is also an undercurrent of discontent with formal seminary training. And while there are significant centers for training laity in both the eastern and western regions of the church today, the kind of center for theological reflection and renewal envisioned by Vander Lugt is still largely unrealized.

The desire to avoid controversy continues in the church's teaching ministry. Writing out of a Methodist context, Charles R. Foster discusses what he calls "a relatively unconscious conspiracy":

Theologically trained clergy, religious educators, and curriculum policy decision makers have withheld from laity the methods and skills to interpret the scriptures and to engage in

theological reflection capable of opening up their deepest questions and illumining their most hidden doubts. . . . Users of most church education curriculum resources unknowingly experience this conspiracy because publishers, seeking to avoid controversies that might limit sales, limit reader engagement with biblical texts to relatively uncontroversial interpretations and approaches to theological reflection.⁵⁶

The avoidance of controversial themes and topics in curriculum stands in contrast to one of the findings of the 1990 study of effective Christian education. A “*thinking climate*” – that is a climate in which thinking is challenged and hard questions are encouraged – was found to be one of six significant characteristics of congregations that contributes to faith maturity and denominational and congregational loyalty.⁵⁷

There is, of course, a sense in which the ambivalence about education reflects an inherent tension between piety and scholarship, between faith and learning. Reformed churches, while valuing a “learned clergy,” have also recognized the value of compensatory gifts for ministry. Thus, the BCO has always provided the means by which persons whom the church recognizes as gifted for ministry can be ordained without the usual seminary degree.

Agenda for the Future

Semper reformanda – always reforming – means that a Reformed contribution to Christian education in the twenty-first century cannot focus only on the past or present. The Reformed church seeks continued correction and renewal through study of the Scriptures and theological reflection under the leading of God’s Spirit. God’s people are always out there on the sidewalk, as it were, standing on tiptoe to look through a peephole in the wall erected around the construction site in order to catch a glimpse of what God is building.

There are at least two agenda items that should be addressed as the RCA continues to appropriate its legacy of education. The first involves the revitalization of the teaching office, while the second focuses on a specific proposal to bring Christian education from the margins to a more central place in the denomination.

In 1990, Osmer called for the “rehabilitation of an ecology of education within the church, something that is more consistent with the teaching office as it is found in classical Protestantism.”⁵⁸ Osmer based his proposal on a study of the teaching office in Martin Luther and John Calvin. He identified three “centers of teaching authority” in the thought of the Reformers: “(1) centers of scholarly theological education and clergy education, (2) centers of practical theological reflection and lay education, and (3) centers of teaching and education on behalf of the denomination as a whole.”⁵⁹ Thus, seminaries and

professional theologians, denominational bodies and leaders, and congregations and pastors constitute Osmer's vision for an educational ecology for the church.

Osmer further identified three tasks: "transmissive-preservative," "reinterpreted-transformational," and "educational."⁶⁰ For him, each center of teaching authority – seminary, congregation, and denomination – is to focus on all three of these tasks rather than concentrating on only one of them. He also observed that the third center – denominational bodies and leaders – "is greatly undervalued in most mainline Protestant churches."⁶¹

One way that congregations help determine the church's "normative beliefs and practices" is by "forming persons grounded in Bible and doctrine who are capable of serving on representative bodies of the denomination Almost all mainline Protestant denominations involve laypersons in governing bodies that are responsible for working on behalf of the denomination as a whole. In their education of these persons, congregations exert an important influence on the beliefs and practices that are offered by the denomination."⁶²

The minister of Word and sacrament serving as the pastor of a local church plays a key role in Osmer's proposal for the revitalization of the teaching office of the church:

The ordained ministers of the church are in the best position to facilitate the emergence of a revitalized teaching office in the contemporary church. It is they who can interpret the work of professional theologians and seminaries to the congregation. At the same time, it is they who can put pressure on this center of teaching authority to fulfill its role in the teaching office in terms of its scholarly work and its theological education. Ministers are best able to mediate denominational teaching to the congregation and to call the denomination at every level to take its teaching ministry seriously. But most important of all, the ministers of the church are in the best position to lead congregations to an understanding of themselves as centers of teaching and practical theological reflection and not just as places where personal needs are met and crises surmounted.⁶³

Osmer's view of the critical role for ministers of Word and sacrament is congruent with the Reformed emphasis on the teaching role of the pastor. The critical question is whether or not these ministers are ready and willing to claim that role.

One way for the RCA to revitalize the teaching office would be to create a commission on education. Congregations lack the resources, and the seminaries lack the authority to do this. Only the denomination has both the resources and the authority to help revitalize the church's teaching office. Such a goal cannot be accomplished unilaterally but requires the cooperation of congregations, seminaries, classes, and regional synods.

To create a commission on Christian education would involve challenges. To add an eleventh General Synod commission would require additional funding at a time when budgets are already tight. That may well be one reason that a proposal to explore the establishment of such a commission presented to the General Synod of 1995 was not pursued. However, the creation of a commission on education need not increase the number of General Synod commissions. If consideration of this commission were part of a thorough review of the present commission structure, it could help reduce their number. One could argue that commissions should reflect only the church's essential functions, leaving the rest to committees, task forces, and agencies. Thus, the denomination could reassign responsibilities of the current ten commissions in a way that would reduce their number to six: administration (οἰκονομία), advocacy (κήρυγμα), community (κοινωνία), education (διδασχία), witness (ευαγγέλιον), worship (λειτουργία).⁶⁴ Such a move would provide better stewardship of scarce resources, give Christian education a "home" in the denominational structure, and help to revitalize the teaching ministry of the church.

Conclusion

The RCA is blessed by its legacy of education. The Heidelberg Catechism as an educational resource and catechesis as a pattern for faith formation, the affirmation of the pastor's teaching role and the teaching office, and a constitution that is at heart educational are significant contributions to the church's educational task. At the same time, some elements of the Reformed legacy of education are problematic: the identification of Christian education only with the young, the association of education with a schooling model, and an ambivalence about the relationship between faith and learning. Critical appropriation of this legacy is needed if its benefits are to outweigh its liabilities. Finally, more must be done to revitalize the teaching office and to move Christian education from the wings to center stage.

ENDNOTES

¹ The idea for this issue of the *Reformed Review* grew out of the convergence of a vision for a "Year for Education" and the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of CERCA, the RCA's organization for Christian educators and youth workers. The publishing of this issue with its focus on Christian education by Western Seminary, the sponsoring of denominational and regional events for educators by CERCA, and the compiling and distribution of a notebook of education resources for congregations by the RCA's Office for Education and Faith Development are all part of an initiative now known as "Learning for Life."

² See Jack L. Stotts, "Education for the Public Good," in *Always Being Reformed: The Future of Church Education*, ed. John C. Purdy (Philadelphia: The Geneva Press, 1985), 26-28.

³ Richard Robert Osmer, *A Teachable Spirit: Recovering the Teaching Office in the Church* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), 120.

⁴ Peter Y. DeJong, "Calvin's Contributions to Christian Education," *Calvin Theological Journal* Vol. 2, No. 2 (November, 1967), 185.

⁵ Marshall C. Dendy, *Changing Patterns in Christian Education* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964), 48.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁷ Arie R. Brouwer, *Reformed Church Roots: Thirty-five Formative Events* (New York: Reformed Church Press, 1977), 89.

⁸ *The Constitution of the Reformed Dutch Church* (1793) is reproduced, with commentary, in Daniel J. Meeter, *Meeting Each Other in Doctrine, Liturgy & Government*, Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America, No. 24 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993).

⁹ Robert W. Lynn, *Protestant Strategies in Education*. Monographs in Christian Education, No. 1, ed. C. Ellis Nelson (New York: Association Press, 1964), 14.

¹⁰ Meeter, 133.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 136-37.

¹² Brouwer, 88-89.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁴ Lynn, 14.

¹⁵ William Bean Kennedy, *The Shaping of Protestant Education: An Interpretation of the Sunday School and the Development of Protestant Educational Strategy in the United States, 1789-1860*, Monographs in Christian Education, No. 4, ed. C. Ellis Nelson (New York: Association Press, 1966), 27.

¹⁶ Brouwer, 89.

¹⁷ Kennedy, 74.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁹ The inclusion of education in this instance has both a positive and a negative valence. On the positive side of the ledger, education receives some attention; on the negative side, education's scope is limited to youth and children and excludes the education of adults. This exclusion reflects an all too common misunderstanding of Christian education as being only for the young.

²⁰ CERCA originated when Christian educators from across the RCA gathered in Holland, Michigan, in October 1980 for "Educating for a Faith-full Journey," an event sponsored jointly by the RCA and Western Theological Seminary, and to hear John H. Westerhoff. During a plenary session they discussed the need for a professional Christian educators' organization. Participants recommended the formation of a task force to develop such an organization. In March of the following year, representatives met in Newark, New Jersey, to draft bylaws for what became Christian Educators Reformed Church in America (CERCA). By September, CERCA had 29 members. The bylaws were adopted in October 1982 at a second denomination-wide event for Christian educators.

²¹ Allan J. Janssen, *Constitutional Theology: Notes on the Book of Church Order of the Reformed Church in America*, Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America, No. 33 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 205-206.

- ²² Osmer, 184.
- ²³ Brouwer, 15.
- ²⁴ *The Liturgy of the Reformed Church in America together with Psalter*, ed. Gerrit T. Vander Lugt (New York: The Board of Education, 1968), 200-207.
- ²⁵ Howard G. Hageman, "The Catechism in Christian Nurture," in *Essays on the Heidelberg Catechism* (Philadelphia and Boston: United Church Press, 1963), 161.
- ²⁶ DeJong, 183.
- ²⁷ William P. Haugaard, "The Continental Reformation of the Sixteenth Century," in *A Faithful Church: Issues in the History of Catechesis* ed. John H. Westerhoff III and O.C. Edwards, Jr. (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow Co., 1981), 126.
- ²⁸ Hageman, 179.
- ²⁹ George Hunsinger, "Social Witness in Generous Orthodoxy: The New Presbyterian 'Study Catechism,'" *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* Vol. XXI, No. I (New Series, 2000), 42.
- ³⁰ Peter L. Benson and Carolyn H. Eklin, *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations, A Summary Report on Faith, Loyalty, and Congregational Life* (Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1990), 55, 56.
- ³¹ Instead of nine subject areas, the 2000 edition of the *Book of Church Order* lists five general areas ranging from character and call, comprehension of the RCA's history, theology, and church order, to skills in biblical interpretation, competence, and commitment. The list no longer includes a specific reference to Christian education or the church's teaching ministry, although it might be argued that teaching is included in the reference to "competence for ministry."
- ³² Meeter, 68.
- ³³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1057.
- ³⁴ Meeter, 106-107.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 173.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 191.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 173.
- ³⁸ Barbara Carton, "Protestants Look to Their Roots," *The Wall Street Journal* (Thursday, October 19, 2000), B4.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, B4.
- ⁴⁰ Hageman, 160.
- ⁴¹ Peter L. Benson, Dorothy Williams, Carolyn Eklin, and David Schuller, *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations, A Six-denomination Report* (Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1990), 41.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 53.
- ⁴³ Osmer, 188.
- ⁴⁴ C. Ellis Nelson, *Where Faith Begins* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1967), 184.
- ⁴⁵ Maria Harris, *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989).
- ⁴⁶ Iris V. Cully, "The Church's Worship as Formative of Christian Community," in *Does the Church Know How to Teach?*, ed. Kendig Brubaker Cully (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1970), 235.

⁴⁷ Meeter, 173.

⁴⁸ Brouwer, 20.

⁴⁹ *Shipwrecks, Snakes, and Narrow Escapes*, Grades 3 & 4 Leader's Guide (Grand Rapids, MI: CRC Publications, 1994, 1998), 5.

⁵⁰ Isaac C. Rottenberg, "Tendencies and Trends in a Century of Theological Education at Western Theological Seminary," *Reformed Review* Vol. 20, No. 2 (December, 1966), 42.

⁵¹ Gerrit T. Vander Lugt, "The Theological Stimulation of the Church at Large," *Reformed Review* Vol. 15, No. 2 (December, 1961), 24.

⁵² Brouwer, 103.

⁵³ Vander Lugt, 26-27.

⁵⁴ Rottenberg, 41-43.

⁵⁵ Vander Lugt, 29.

⁵⁶ Charles R. Foster, *Educating Congregations: The Future of Christian Education* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 26.

⁵⁷ Benson et al., *A Summary Report on Faith, Loyalty, and Congregational Life*, 37.

⁵⁸ Osmer, 188-89.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 185.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁶⁴ Reducing the number of commissions by nearly half would result in a cost savings without necessarily eliminating functions of existing commissions. For example, responsibilities currently assigned to Church Order, Judicial Business and Nominations could be reassigned to a new commission on administration; responsibilities currently assigned to Christian Action could be reassigned to a new commission on advocacy; and responsibilities currently assigned Christian Unity and Theology could be reassigned to a new commission on witness.