



With an Eye on the Future¹

Ted Ward

The honor of being recognized by one's professional colleagues through their labors of love and ministry in this book is gratefully acknowledged. When word of the tribute came to me, it was accompanied by an outline indicating that several pieces of writing sampled from across the forty-six years of my career were to be included. Although generous, this stirring up of old controversies was unsettling. Most of my writing has been focused on contemporary issues, and those issues change. They change in part because concerned people bring attention to them in a timely manner. Such is the responsibility of the educator.

I was asked to write a new piece that might help my other articles “make sense.” Perhaps the invitation was intended to add a humorous touch, but I have taken it seriously. Always ready to take up a new challenge, I have indulged here in an autobiographical style, a form that I have rarely used and which my students know I generally disdain in serious professional literature. But this time it seems appropriate to write in a “warmer” first-person voice. Because most of the people represented by the new writing in this volume were closest to me during their doctoral studies, I have decided to pull back the curtains a bit and pass the tribute to several of my mentors whose influences, in turn, have come through to my students and to their students.

For many people *teaching* is defined in terms of content. What the learner needs to know—or know how to do—is at the core of the definitions of teaching, learning, curriculum, schooling, and ultimately of human competency itself. What do you teach? *History*. How nice! *And what do you teach?* French. *How nice*. Now and then a smug temptation drives the conversation to a deeper level: What do I teach? *People! That's what I teach!* The questioner usually has in mind the content field or the subject that is being taught. Fair enough. But as Ivan Illich and many others similarly concerned about depersonalization of modern education are quick to point out, the human task of teaching and learning focuses first and foremost on the learner. Content is but the instrumentation or the tools toward human fulfillment.

Finding Ideas to Shape a Career

Early in the second half of this century, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, a research and professional development division of the National Education Association, took as its motto, “The curriculum is people.” The worthy intention was to stimulate and encourage redefinition of curriculum away from its preoccupation with *things* and toward a re-centering of the importance of the human aspects of the teaching-learning environment. The simplicity of the motto provided something more important than an academic redefinition of the term *curriculum* could ever provide. Its appeal was to the heart more than to the head. For the Christian, it struck a valid chord: People are the creatures of greatest importance to God. As we treat creation with responsible embrace we honor God. Whatever we do in the cause of education must

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be done with respect and honor. We cannot violate people through coercion or manipulation. Human dignity, not intellectual content, is the highest value of education. As God is above those things he has created, people are above those things they have created.

In the midst of the resultant debates and ideological transformations, doctoral studies in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in the College of Education at the University of Florida provided the conceptual framework for my career as an educator of educators. Heretofore, my early motives as a teacher were focused on knowledge and skills that I believed to be necessary and valid. Since I had enjoyed the worthy content that I was teaching, others should surely also find that enjoyment and worth. Especially for a music teacher, these matters of enjoyment and worth were matters of deep conviction. They provided a thoroughly ethnocentric and even egocentric frame of reference in which success and failure were defined in terms of the shortcomings of the students: lack of talent, immaturity, misguided taste, and lazy unwillingness to pay the stiff price for competency. Three mentors at the university were especially significant in the development of my conceptual framework.

Discovering Social Science

Kimball Wiles, the chairman of our department and subsequently dean of the college, through his seminars and his transformational book, *Teaching for Better Schools* (1952), demonstrated the potential humanness of educational procedures through models that drew their foundations from social science. Until Kim and others of his associates in the “group dynamics research” movement came along, education was largely in the hands of the philosophers and historians, on the one hand, and tacticians of instructional delivery, on the other. The first took their foundations from the lore of human history; the second put little stock in foundations of any sort, choosing instead to focus on the simple pragmatics of “getting people to learn things.” Kim Wiles showed a promising bridge between these two crude domains: the responsible study of human society. Following the pioneering work of Robert Havighurst and B.O. Smith (another University of Florida loyalist), and deeply drenching his new scholarship in the emerging social sciences (social psychology, sociology, and embryonic educational anthropology), which were augmenting the now-dated maxims from psychology, Wiles provided some of the strongest arguments for grounding educational theory in research of the human context. The impact of Christian values and teachings was there to see, if one took the trouble to probe and appreciate it.

Discovering the Ears of Teaching

Clara Olson was the chairman of my doctoral dissertation committee. (In those days one did not have a chairperson. Clara said that she was as good a chairman as anyone and saw no reason for a title different from the rest). She was only a few years from retirement, and she poured into those of us closest to her in that period her newfound passion for the anthropology of education. She was instrumental in opening my eyes to the value of learning about human processes in education from intercultural experience. As I finished, she left (at age 70) for her first Asian assignment, a year with the Ministry of Education in Thailand. Clara Olson showed us that the only alternative to being trapped in one’s own narrow perspectives and perceptions is deliberately to seek experience in other cultural contexts. She had grown up with the post-slavery biases of the very racist and segregated north-Florida society. Through her eyes we learned to see and to abhor the social violence, injustice, and inhumanity, which were all around us even at mid-century. She taught us how to work for change; we learned the importance of starting with the aspirations of those who were hurt by injustice. She taught us the futility of activism that started from our own views of the problems and

their resolutions. In short, she taught us that educators who undertake basic problems in society need first of all to learn to listen.

What a delight it has been to see these values mature into the operational style and methods of several of the Christian mission and ministry enterprises we have helped to build, and now to discover the sharing of these insights in a new form of professional literature following from the work of Paulo Freire and others who have caught this message of truth. (See Jane Vella's *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach—The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults* [1994]).

Discovering Social Learning

Louise Hock was closer to my own age. After several years as a teacher in an outstanding laboratory school she joined the faculty in our department. Because her classroom experiences as a secondary school teacher overlapped with my early teaching experience, I was especially willing to listen to her. She was a nontraditionalist in her educational style but was ever so gentle and humane. Her profound thoughtfulness was a model worth emulating. Louise is one of the few people I ever really tried to copy. Most of my attempts were faulty, but I finally saw to the very heart of what her style represented: she actively believed that learning is a social process. She put into practice her conviction that people learn more effectively *and* more efficiently when they work and learn together through social interactions, joint projects, and discussions wherein helping one another is valued above surpassing one another. After one memorable experience in which Louise and I had been team-teaching a masters-level seminar, it flashed before me: God's evaluative judgment in Genesis 2:18 also relates to *teaching*: "It is not good for the man to be alone." This was the biggest "Aha!" of my years with Louise. What a teacher-learner!

These three mentors encouraged the conceptual foundations that give structure to this Christian's lifelong spiritual quest as an educator. In brief, the principles formed through experiences with Kim, Clara, and Louise have provided a functional context for the doing of education as a Christian:

1. Motivation to learn comes from inside. The teacher cannot give it to the student. Whatever the reason or combination of reasons for wanting to learn, they do not come from the teacher. Nonetheless, the teacher has a transcendent responsibility for helping the learner discover and identify from within those interests, needs, and concerns that may be constructively related to the learning experience.
2. All substantial learning comes about as the experiences of one's past and the perceptions they have created come into interaction with new experiences in such ways to encourage evaluation leading to the realigning or maturing of one's understanding.
3. Teaching and learning are most effectively experienced when the two are intertwined. A teacher should always be a learner; the learning process is enhanced by teaching. These two are most symbiotic when in a continuously rolling interaction rather than being sequential.
4. Learning to know oneself and learning about one's learners and their social contexts are never-ending tasks for the responsible educator.
5. Intercultural work experience is a major source of deliverance from narrowness and bias in the understanding of oneself, others, and the diverse meanings of human behavior.

Honoring Christ by Empowering Others: Can You Run in the Rain?

References to valuable friendships and professional mentoring at the university could continue for many pages, but there is space here for only one more, Charles Durrance. If it were not for the beyond-the-call-of-duty initiatives of this dear Presbyterian elder, our discouragement after departure from a seriously flawed experience in Christian education could have continued into deeper frustration. But no. In the providence of God the first encounter with the admissions process at the University of Florida was rescued by Charlie Durrance. We had arrived in a campus parking lot in mid-afternoon with a three-month-old baby, after having dragged a semi-functional trailer with all our earthly goods from Illinois through three days of nonstop rain. The decision to go to graduate school was one of very few options that had seemed feasible, once the school in which we had been planning to continue as faculty and staff seemed destined for self-destruction.

In those days not long after World War II, one's home-state universities provided almost tuition-free education. So we scurried to Gainesville—back to “gator land”—wet, exhausted, and emotionally drained. The first discovery at Gainesville was that we were stuck again. The close of registration was only two hours away, and since we had filed no preregistration documents—the decision to leave Illinois was made only a week earlier—the polite but firm assistant at the counter said, “Perhaps you could set things up now for next semester.”

Margaret and little David were huddled in the steaming car, enduring the driving rain, and here I was, feeling very much alone. A door at the side of the counter suddenly swung open and out popped a man who turned out to be the graduate admissions director for the College of Education. He took one look at the pathetic sight at the counter and swung into action. “What seems to be the problem?” he asked with a gently reassuring smile. I told my story once again, assuming that smiles notwithstanding, the logistics of my registration as a graduate student were insurmountable at this time.

His next question provided a flicker of hope: “Do you happen to have your Wheaton College transcript?” Knowing full well that you can't be admitted on the basis of an “unofficial copy,” I felt almost foolish pulling a rather wet and sweaty copy out of my shirt pocket. He scanned it for all of ten seconds then quickly scrawled across it: “Approved as official. Charles L. Durrance.” He handed it back swiftly, glanced at the clock, and asked: “Isn't Gil Dodds the track coach at Wheaton?” Whatever that had to do with anything wasn't quite clear, but I affirmed his recollection. “Did you run for Gil?” “Yes, but not well enough to make the team” “Feel like running in the rain?” “Sure, whatever you suggest.” I would have run to the moon and back for this man, so instantly did his “can do” spirit fill me with hope.

With about fifteen minutes to spare, I was back in front of that same counter. Charlie's smile had turned into a huge grin: “You made it! You're in!” I had run well, following the route that Dr. Durrance had hastily sketched over a campus map torn from a university catalog. At each planned stop he had put the name of a person I was to see. “Trust me,” he had said, “each of these people will have heard from me, and I will tell them your story. They may not ask you much. Each will have a signature ready or will put it on one of the papers you will be carrying by then. And here's my rain bag; carry the stuff in there to keep it dry.” I could hardly believe that a stranger could take such an interest in *anyone*. I ran from one unfamiliar building to another, paying extraordinary attention to the map my newfound brother had drawn.

For years I had been steeped in the propaganda that is passed around so convincingly in small colleges and among conservative Christians that you must fear and, if possible, avoid large universities. And here, in my first hour inside a big state university, I had discovered an important truth: God has his faithful followers planted all over the place, even where you are least likely to hope. On this first day I began to learn something else: God builds the bridges. It isn't that we are so clever or so lucky as to be able to cash in from time to time on some holy lottery; the truth is that God prepares the way and builds the bridges. Our task is to seek them out as we walk—and occasionally *run*—day by day, allowing God's guidance into our lives.

Every lesson we learn in life has implications for our future. My professional commitment to being a “can do” educator began that day. Even during my most bureaucratic institutional assignments I have tried to pass along to others the model of Christian values and behaviors that I saw in Charles Durrance. Here was a respected Christian layman fulfilling a series of responsible positions within the university, and quite well liked by everyone. He placed people above bureaucracy, human needs above institutional regulations, and he always started with the challenge, “Let's try!” It wasn't that he did things *for* you; Charlie did things *with* you—always helping you identify your part in the effort, always tuned to what you could do rather than to where you failed or what you could not do. “Let's try!”

Teaching Touches the Future

The teacher's task is inherently future oriented. Only an overwhelmed or pedestrian educator could be so concerned with maintenance and survival as to block out the insistent preoccupations with things to come. It is in the “something evermore about to be” of which Ellen Glasgow wrote in her marvelous Christian novel *Vein of Iron* (1935) that the true educator finds inspiration and purpose. Without a future-directed orientation everything becomes hum-drum repetition. Early on, I learned the importance of *hope*. So much of life carries disappointments and jolts. If one loses the perspective that comes from awareness of God's control of the future, there isn't much to hold at the end of the day.

Two propositions about curriculum have guided my professional development since early in my career. To the informed educator, curriculum is the meeting point between purpose and content. Purpose must always have priority. The quality, relevance, and contextual worth of purpose is the key to good educational planning. As Peter Drucker says, *efficiency* is concerned about doing things right, whereas *effectiveness* is concerned with doing the right things.

Proposition One

Every curriculum reflects an image of the future. More precisely, in every educational plan there is some sort of assumption about the value of the learning experience. This notion of value has its roots in the future of the learner or the context in which the learning will be of use and will make a positive difference. The guiding imagery of the intended outcomes is often left in a vague and amorphous state; many teachers do their teaching from habit or as a mere fulfillment of formal customs. Many times students wonder, Is there really any intention or purpose at all? Even then, a view of the future, whether wise or foolish, lies implicit, deeply embedded in the process and its activities, having its effects on the learner for better or worse. The responsible educator learns to live with these images of the future, weighing them against evidence and trends, sharpening and clarifying. Is it any wonder that educators are second only to economists in the extent of time and effort given to the emerging derivative science of futurism? Christians in education have an even more profound reason for stretching their perceptions into the future tense: biblical Christianity provides insights

into God's intentions and God's plans for bringing this creation into an ultimate judgment and newness. How we teach reflects a concern for partnership with God in the matters of fulfilling God's plans, surely not taking them into our own hands, but becoming ever more conscious of God's transcendence in the maturing of all things.

Proposition Two

The planning of curriculum is a concern for the decisions about what should be taught why, to whom, and under what conditions. I will admit authorship of this action-definition of curriculum. It has found its way into the literature, usually identified only as being from an anonymous source or simply common lore. This lack of attribution is no more worrisome than other uses of material from my seminars, lectures, and sermons, which appear as if by magic in the writings and speaking of many of my most loyal students. (Perhaps we could all be happier if we accepted a Muslim view of plagiarism: to quote from another is to give honor to Allah's communicator. Whether or not that person is named, Allah is the source of truth. Allah knows the communicator. It is enough that Allah knows).

This proposition has its roots in the pioneering work of Florence Stratemeyer, Bunnie Smith (B. Othanel Smith), and Robert Havighurst, people with whom I was a very junior partner but was always accepted as having worth in my person and my ideas. The first component of the action-definition is *concern for decisions*. It raises to a high level of consciousness that someone must take responsibility and must decide how best to share that responsibility of deciding. Jane Vella uses the abbreviation *WWW* to focus the three key questions into one: *Who needs What according to Whom?*

The second element of the action-definition is the *What-Why connection*. A responsible educator cannot decide *what* should be taught apart from the issue of *why* it should be taught. Thus I deliberately leave out the comma to make one question, *What should be taught why?* One cannot responsibly determine the content or specify the objectives without accountability for the issues of worth, need, and appropriateness.

The third element pushes the issues of appropriateness forward by linking the *what-why* with the *to whom?* The responsible educator always seeks to determine the appropriateness of a learning experience to the developmental capability and the social maturation of the learner. Not everyone can learn everything. The elegance of a curriculum depends extensively on the fit between the intended outcomes and the planned learning experiences, on the one hand, and the readiness, fitness and awareness of need in the learners, on the other hand.

The fourth element is the connection of all of these careful decisions to the question, *under what conditions?* Here the focus is on the learning situation itself. What amount of time? What sort of social relationships while learning? What physical situation? What resource materials? What learning exercises? And perhaps most important, exactly *where?* It is in the careful study of nonformal education that this set of issues becomes most clear. Typically, the presuppositions about place, space, time, and task that discourage imaginative curriculum planning are a direct outcome of narrow thinking conditioned by extensive experiences within formal education. It grieves me to discover over and over again that for many who engage in educational leadership, imagination about learning contexts is limited to classrooms, clocks, hierarchical formal relationships between teacher and learner, and physical space in which the knowing person looks in one direction and the ignorant look in the opposite direction.

How sad to see people limit Christian education to situations that emulate schools. Even the most powerful context of the church's nonformal education options, church camping, often ends up looking like a series of school classes punctuated by swimming, eating, bed-making, and more eating. Camping is a great learning environment precisely because it is a whole context in which learning can be talked and walked at the same time.

Into a New Arena for Learning

When I took early retirement from Michigan State University in order to move to Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, most of my closest associates were startled. Even some of my closest partners in ministry were alarmed, fearing that I was accepting the invitation without adequately considering the consequences. Surely it was a matter of great curiosity at both schools. What was the "fit?" Was the Divinity School ready for what it was likely to discover? Was I knowledgeable about what I would face?

Having consulted extensively in theological education institutions for about fifteen years, and having taught myself many of the content fields expected in a theological faculty member, I felt that both the senior administrators at Trinity and I were reasonably well-suited to each other. The tasks that they had laid out for me in the development of their doctoral programs and the institution's development of international relationships among similar theological graduate schools were matters that I could be expected to handle with fair competency. So Margaret and I followed God's hand with no fundamental reservations. We have been confirmed and reconfirmed; it has made sense to us. I can recall no conversations in which either of us has said, "Maybe we shouldn't have done it." But for many of my colleagues in the Divinity School it has not been so easy. Clearly, for some, I am still a misfit. Nevertheless, Christian grace and a sense of family have been transcendent. Trinity is a great educational institution.

In the earlier years the misgivings of some of my faculty colleagues were revealed mostly as curiosity. Far too often I was asked to tell about the differences between teaching in a large public university and at a much smaller church-affiliated theological school. I could occasionally detect what people wanted to hear: that it was indeed a blessing now to be among the safe and sanctified halls of ecclesiological ivy; that it was an emotional relief; that students at the seminary are much more purposeful and better scholars; and that it was more gratifying to be doing work for the kingdom of Christ. But I rarely took the questions seriously enough to respond other than in trite ways: "Don't worry about me. I can make it."

Only once did I let it fly. One of my closest faculty friends baited me with the question. He knew how I despised the question and the temptation to make invidious comparisons between the university and the theological school. We were sitting in his office musing about a currently disturbing political issue and being very unguarded in our conversation. With a chuckle, he asked, "Tell me just once more, what makes this place different from the university?" I sat quietly and gave the question some of the most careful reflection I had allowed myself. This friend deserved to hear from my heart. Then it popped out. Without even refining the words to express my thoughts, I blurted, "It is so hard to work day after day among people who are so _____ right all the time!" (The deleted expletive is a word often heard as theology professors lecture on the status of the nonbeliever).

After a shocked moment of surprise that I had uttered such a foul judgment, I noticed that my friend had doubled over in gales of laughter and was struggling to stay on his swivel chair, which seemed itself also to be out of control for the moment. My next words were not really repentant but instead reflected on the insight of the “Aha!” moment: “Sorry, it just came out. But maybe that’s the deeper truth of all this.” I had never reflected cogently on this possibility before. But I surely have done so since.

Perhaps there lurks a sort of “Inquisition anxiety” among theology professors: They once burned people for religious error; maybe they still do. Better not say it wrong—they might burn me. Better not utter anything I’m not ready to defend—they might burn me. Better not admit that I’m wondering about the accepted way to look at this issue—they might burn me. Better not spend too much time in unsafe conversation (stick with the Bears and the Cubs)—they might burn me.

The resultant forms of dialogue and verbal interaction thus sound more structured than spontaneous, more contrived than natural, and more defensive than expansive. Of course, theology is not the only discipline where the truth is revered, but especially in conservative Christianity and in Orthodox Judaism, the Word is Truth. And indeed, I have no quarrel with this maxim. But in the handling of the Word of God, as in the handling of empirical information from other facets of God’s revelation, there simply must be scholarly dialogue and sober reflection on the ways that our perceptions and previous presuppositions color and even blind us to new or deeper truth.

While at Michigan State University, and before that the University of Florida, I had inadequately valued the importance of the open dialogues we had about ideas. Only after I came into the divinity-school situation, where such dialogues rarely allow for free association and seem to discourage the teasing out of a new hypothesis, did I realize how much I missed this freedom to talk and think at the same time. For a person committed to the values of social learning, this is indeed a handicap.

On the other hand, it is so exciting to share a common ground of “bottom line” convictions with one’s colleagues. Even when debate and discussion seem most fruitless, we come to resolutions with a sense of deep confidence when we seek wisdom and common ground in the truth revealed in Scripture. We come to rest there as a family. In today’s confused world, where hardly any common agreement on any moral issue seems feasible, being *the people of the Book* is very much a source of real peace and hope.

The Realization of a Deliberate Learning Community

The most significant discovery since moving into the development of doctoral study programs at Trinity is perhaps the capstone of my professional career. Much to my delight, joy, and intellectual satisfaction, I have found here the reality of a true learning community. We came close from time to time at Michigan State, close enough that I knew it could happen. Thus, in making the move to Trinity, one of my greatest hopes, one for which I fervently prayed, was that we could find that crucial balance between trust and compulsion to wrestle with ideas, between concern for one another and respect for personal responsibility, between honest intellectual exercises and profound spiritual maturation, and between warmth of relationships and toughness of reasoning that would fulfill the highest images of graduate study and the highest images of social learning all at the same time.

It has happened, and beyond my hopeful imaginings. We have seen the goal of a learning community come to pass. Partly because of the widely shared common ground among faculty and

students at Trinity, and partly because of the characteristics of the doctoral students who have joined us here, the dreams, hopes, visions, and motives of a lifetime quest for optimal learning environments have been overwhelmingly fulfilled here in the doctor of education and the Ph.D. in intercultural studies programs.

These programs, each in turn, surged forward so quickly that we were suddenly launched into the enviable position of needing to select candidates carefully. As we tell the students whom we do accept, less than 25 percent of applicants, “You are here because we want you. We will see you through to fulfillment of your intentions.” Thus a covenant of mutual responsibility provides the basis for this community of learners. I believe that under such circumstances if we cannot select really superb doctoral students from this reservoir, we have only ourselves to blame. Then in true Harvard style, having selected the best, we try hard not to hurt them much, and thus ultimately we can take institutional credit for anything good they may ever do. (Get thee behind us, Satan).

More to the point, an ethos emerged smoothly in which the students recognized quickly that they were free to put aside the competitiveness and self-serving that are commonly part of the learned habits of the formally educated. With this inhibition to effective learning laid aside, a supportive relationship of peers developed among faculty and students in which the valuing of learning together is shared and appreciated. It really works. Recently this characteristic of our work together as faculty and students has been documented in a highly scholarly and elegantly researched ethnographic study by Laurie Bailey (1996).

A Brief Agenda for Christians in the Twenty-First Century

Humankind is leaving the twentieth century painfully unprepared for the twenty-first. The quagmire of hopelessness, lawlessness, immorality, anger, frustration, and inter-ethnic hostility is indeed frightening to any honest assessor. The public arena suffers from loss of confidence and respect for institutions. The private sector suffers from rampant autonomy and self-seeking in which personal values are largely floating on pragmatic foam thrown about in the turbulence of parental and community ineffectiveness and guilt, expressed at every turn as denials of social accountability and insistence on liberty without reciprocal responsibility. Has there ever been a time when responsible public education and effective religious education for people of all ages have been more needed?

Ethnic Strife: Unprepared for the Rising Water Table

Undoubtedly, it is more *natural* for human beings to prefer to be grouped with people who are as much like themselves as possible. Tragically, the people of the church of Jesus Christ have more often preferred to live *naturally* than to accept the transcendence across racial, gender, and status lines that is held up in Scripture as the model for the church (Galatians 3:26-28). Thus today's Christians are very little more prepared than the general society to deal positively with the racial and intercultural tensions of our time. It is not enough to shrug, “This problem has always been with us.” Of course it has. And it always will be until Christians show the way through it.

What makes our period in history different is the acuteness and persistence of inescapable problems created by racial and social divisiveness. In centuries past, people-clusters—*natural* and rather exclusive units within communities and neighborhoods, across towns, cities, and nations—could find ways to distance themselves from those they disdained. The world was like a great plateau pockmarked by ponds—little ponds, big ponds, everywhere ponds and puddles. But with massive

increases in population and the creation of helter-skelter interconnections through the technologies of travel and communication, the water table is rising and the puddles and ponds are all flowing together. This confluence produces turbulence more than homogenization, swirls more than smooth mixtures. Few today can pull apart and escape. Fewer yet have the will and the skills to cope effectively. So chaos reigns.

Agents of Reconciliation

If the fragmented and destructive environment of the former Yugoslavia is ever restored to peaceful productivity, the historians will surely note respectfully the effectiveness of a genuine peacemaker, Richard Holbrook. This competent negotiator and arbitrator, with skills honed through appropriate education and the experiences of his early career and his service as the U.S. Ambassador to Germany, has demonstrated an ideal of service that should be recognized and valued by every Christian. Like the Apostle Paul, Christians should see themselves as the ambassadors of Christ, working skillfully as agents of reconciliation, reconciling human beings to God through the finished work of Jesus Christ and reconciling human beings with one another in the name and service of the Prince of Peace.

If only Christian higher education could grasp this vision. What need there is! What a task could be undertaken by the Christian community's educational institutions! Why not become the source of well-prepared negotiators and peacemakers? As we endure the sounds of this roaring overture to the new century, humanity is splitting and crunching along this fault line and that. The world is crying out for help and healing, but competent, trained, experienced, and motivated peacemakers are in very short supply. And grief upon grief, some Christians, in their preoccupation for self-preservation and craven desire for separateness from the dirty tasks of this world, sometimes even disdain those Christians who do dedicate themselves to the ministries of relief, development, reconciliation, and public service. The name Jimmy Carter comes to mind. I make no secret of my admiration and respect for this man of God.

Putting Christian Education Together

Christian education, at all levels and for all purposes, is beginning to emerge from its bondage to traditionalism. Undertaking reform, restoration, remediation, and rejuvenation is the necessary task of educators who participate in God's continuing redemptive involvement with human society. Helping to interpret new visions and to carve out new models are exhilarating prospects for the twenty-first century Christian educator. This prospect calls for readiness. One important starting point is to come to a clearer understanding of how the church came to embrace such dysfunctional educational motives and forms.

Teaching for Foundation-Building

Seeing learning as an end in itself is a common problem within formal education. Two contrasting positions are commonly taken by teachers: some assume that anything that the person will ever need to know should be at least represented and given attention in the formal curriculum; others assume that trying to anticipate and deal with every learning and information need within the scope of even three or four years of formal education is futile. Teachers holding the second position are more inclined to find ways to introduce channels of inquiry and to teach the means and procedures by which the student can begin a process of lifelong learning. By contrast, those holding the first position tend to organize and deliver great quantities of information, often overwhelming the students and leading them toward frustration and resentment.

Within much of higher education it is not unusual for faculty members to keep themselves so thoroughly informed in matters of the content of their specialties that they have little mental energy or professional time left to come to any sort of professional understanding of the learning processes and the art and science of teaching. These are the professors who try to cover everything they think a student will ever need to know. When such professors are in the majority within a department, they usually control the departmental examining process. Their examinations often sound like the script for a “trivia” game. Students in their sections will likely perform better on the examinations than the students of the second type of professor. But students who are more likely to continue their learning from the foundation provided in their earlier learnings are not always holders of the best grade records.

Follow-up studies of graduates show that those who continue to learn—in contrast with those who go stagnant after completing a degree—have acquired an integrative style of learning. For these learners it is more important to *think* than to *recall*. At some point they began to resist the cognitive overload by spending more time with the underlying questions: *So What? What difference would it make if? How does this relate to that?* If this is so, then what happens to the other? Intellectual exercises of this sort may jeopardize the getting of higher grades, but such a student later rises up to applaud the professor who encouraged this sort of mental process. The bottom line is that professors who give more attention to laying a sound foundation of learning skills and put substantial trust in the students’ prospects for continuing education are more often the ones whose students later attest to continuing to learn.

Sustainable Habits

Academic jumping of hoops is futile. If learners strain and stretch in unnatural ways, they may achieve good grades, but they often end such an experience with a sigh of relief and a murmur of “never again.” Graduate education in any applied discipline such as theology or education is a professional development experience; thus it must meet the tests of applicability and functionality. For the leader in the community of faith nothing is more practical than the skill and habit of reasoning theologically. People who cannot or will not think in God-centered abstractions and theoretical constructs are seriously undereducated. Tragically, it is possible to hold even a four-year graduate theology degree without having built the habits of thinking theologically. Academic theology, or academic education for that matter, should be held accountable for helping to develop in its students the sustainable habits of reasoning and thought. This outcome is far more important than merely causing students to demonstrate on some Olympian field of memory and verbiage that they have all the right answers to a set of rather predictable questions.

The False Dichotomy Between Word and Deed

Since childhood in a Christian home with concerned parents, I have been struggling with a stubborn question. Even after discovering the Epistle of James and relishing its blunt condemnation of fruitless belief, the struggle has continued. *Why is it so easy to be a Christian? More to the point, why do so many Christians let their kinship with Christ count for so little in their lives?*

The looseness of the uses of the word Christian is appalling. This is not to argue for some absolute litmus test of behavior beyond the tests provided in Scripture, but rather to assert that if evangelical Christianity is to make its appropriate contribution, we must take far more seriously the contributions we make toward godliness in human society. Some seem satisfied to take stands against things they judge to be evil; I appeal for taking stands with equal fervor *for* things that God advocates. The issue that differentiates among species of Christian lifestyle is whether it is more

important to stay away from things or to become involved. *Social action* is a term that still divides the house. Pity. Pity.

The days ahead will severely test the adequacy of one's Christian roots. If the roots are shallow, based in cognitive information about what the Bible says, falling away will most likely be the consequence. If the roots are deep, nourished by *doing* the things of faith, the prospects for making a worthy contribution to society and thus deserving a hearing for one's faith-claims will surely be greater. The way we look at education will have much to do, therefore, with the quality of our Christian maturity.

He has showed you, O man, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy and to walk
humbly with your God.

(Micah 6:8)

A Basis for Dealing with the Future

The Christian community has done as well as almost any of the other broad subdivisions of American society in the matter of lifelong learning. The Christian church has long embraced a lifelong encounter with exposition and application through regular exposure to sermons. Christians assume that there is always more to know. Quite recently there seems to be an increasing interest in learning things of God among those who are coming to recognize the dangers and turmoil in human societies that arise from denial of ultimate truth. The church, at home and abroad, faces a more comprehensive task in teaching and learning than ever before.

Learning Across a Lifetime

The concept of learning as a lifelong task is well supported in biblical teaching and in Christian theology. Lifelong development is given far more space in the Bible than is the somewhat more popular material on the conversion experience. The cultural contexts and mandates of both the Old Testament and New Testament assume that the progression toward wisdom is a function of maturing across life. Even our Lord's final instructions to his disciples brought up the issue of lifelong learning as a fundamental part of disciple-making: "Teaching them to obey [do] everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). How long does it take a person to learn, in the Hebraic sense of *doing* as the evidence of having learned, to do all things that our Lord has taught? It takes a lifetime, no less.

Unfinished Business: Dialogue

The agenda for Christian education in a more demanding future will surely carry some surprises beyond our power to predict. But, just as surely, today's unfinished business will find its way, perhaps with increased urgency, into the agenda for the new century. The word *dialogue* still frightens some Christians. It suggests an openness and willingness to get in touch with people who hold different views. And so it should. Among Christians, dialogue—processes of systematic and focused conversation and explication of mental paradigms—is an enriching and fulfilling part of the learning process. Through dialogue we not only hear other ways of expressing ideas and gain insights through others' perceptions, but we gain facility and confidence in the organizing and expressing of our own understandings. One of the best arguments that can be made in support of residential study

is the deeper quality of dialogue that it can encourage—assuming that the academic environment is used for that purpose. Further, the Apostle Paul demonstrated in several situations that were new to him, in Athens for example, that dialogue concerning people’s culture, religious presuppositions, and world view is a basic necessity for effective evangelization.

Unfinished Business: Culture Learning

The most pressing social need within every nation and across every international connection in this post-ideological world is for intercultural and especially inter-ethnic reconciliation. Leaders in the church face an increasing challenge to help the people of God learn within the church the rudiments of intercultural reconciliation. The example in Acts 6 when the church acknowledged its own internal bias and prejudice becomes more important with every passing year. Leaders must be good culture learners and effective teachers of culture learning.

The Crucial Rudiment: Lifelong Spiritual Development

Continuing education and lifelong learning are the ways and means by which a godly leader keeps sharp and fit. Spirituality is reflected in worship, a fountain of responsiveness to God’s holiness. It is reflected in the humility of a Christlike walk of life, extending into the good works of life as evidence of faith (as emphasized in James). At the bottom line, such stewardship of life, its spirituality, mission and resources, is an appropriate response to the grace of God shown through the Lord Jesus Christ. Learning must first and foremost be concerned with the relationship of God’s Word to life and experience. If the Word of God is to be of any significance in the maturing of faith, it will need to be put into action. The context of social life is where the best learning takes place. Donal Dorr, in *Spirituality and Justice* (1984), focuses on the place of godly work, surely the most controversial of the exercises of spiritual development. Dorr’s effectiveness in connecting biblical materials to the ministries of Christian help and witness in an unjust world is outstanding. For many evangelicals the rediscovery of the Epistle of James has aroused social consciousness and has led to the recognition of the importance of applied ministry and the works of the gospel in the life of every maturing believer. To come into a fullness of relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ requires a commitment to lifelong spiritual development.

I Have No Disciples

I must hope that somewhere in God’s grace there is a special forgiveness for pride in one’s students. I thoroughly enjoy the warm and joyous thanksgiving that bubbles up from seeing one’s children and one’s students as especially worthy people. This pride is constrained by the recognition that I have not caused the success of another. I can take no credit for the gifts that God has given. I dare not see myself as more than God’s instrument for a time and for a purpose. It is tempting to take credit for the meritorious accomplishments of others. Whatever God has allowed me to be and to do for another person is but one piece in the grand tapestry of God’s providence in that person’s life. I am but one parent to my sons and daughter. I am but one teacher for my students. Perhaps too often I speak of “my students” or “my former students” with that selfish and possessive word *my* revealing just how close to manipulative control I may wander. Am I eager to add to my stature through claims upon the excellence of someone else?

Do I see my students as being my disciples? Sometimes this word *disciple* is used very loosely. The teachings of Jesus revealed in the first twelve verses of Matthew 23 have become very important to me. I hear our Lord warning against loose use of titles and against relating to one another in any

hierarchical manner that would obscure the basic truth that we are all brothers and sisters, under one Father and serving one Lord. We should understand discipleship in this manner: my students, Jane and John, are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ; I too am a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. We share our discipleship. We stand side by side before our Lord. We help each other in our discipleship because we three are disciples of the same Lord. Thus, quite surely, I have no disciples.

Through the generous providence of God I have enjoyed the satisfactions, pleasures, and the disciplines of the teacher's calling. As a further grace, I have been given marvelous students—many, many of them with their own intensity of awareness of God's calling and the rich experiences of their walk of faith under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. For all of these things I would claim no recognition except for a small note of identification with another hero of my Christian faith—Johann Sebastian Bach—whose final wet ink on every completed work spoke of his true motivation: doing all for the glory of God. *Soli Deo Gloria.*