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Lee Hollaar

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# Christian Education: Yesterday's Dream, Today's Experience, Tomorrow's Vision

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by Lee Hollaar

I'm not the man my wife married over thirty years ago. If you were to look at the person in the wedding photo, you would almost certainly agree. Even I notice the obvious changes in the photo. Where once there was hair it is now thin. Where it's not thin it is nearly white. When the photo was taken we had our hopes and dreams—and a few fears. Mostly it was hope. Through those thirty years our life together has been influenced by many factors: experiences, difficulties, blessings and affirmations. Children changed our home forever. We had no idea how our lives would unfold. I was a promising student aspiring to be an engineer but turned out to

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*Mr. Lee Hollaar is the Education Coordinator of the Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia.*

be a teacher and a high perpetual student who eventually moved to another country. My wife, a busy homemaker, ended up as a librarian who also was willing to move to another country, both pursuing a common vision for life. There were jolts and bumps. And by God's grace there was laughter and celebration. The story continues to unfold. We still have some dreams and hopes. But marriages don't just happen. For God's people we are called frequently to seek His will for marriages. They take a lot of ongoing maintenance and nurture.

## Motivation for Christian Schools

The story of many Christian schools is similar. A number of years ago, people had a dream, a dream of working together so that a Christian day-school might emerge. And like our marriage, most had no idea where this might lead. Perhaps they weren't sure at all if it would survive financial hard times, depressions, enrollment declines, and trouble within the family where some members left a bit alienated.

What was the dream of those who met many years ago, most likely in a smoke-filled consistory room? For what did they really hope? A place for their children to get away from strange ideas in a strange land? What did they consider to be good education? Remember that these people, most likely parents and grandparents with a nudge from the pulpit, generated Christian schools with little influence from educators. In fact, these schools were heralded as parent-controlled schools—and ensuing generations of parents still say that. We give thanks and celebrate the foresight and the faith of those who

decided to embark on a vision for Christian education. To be sure, they had some notions of what good education was. And they called it *Christian*, meaning different, Christ-honoring and Christ-like.

But our world has changed so much since those days. Many once new activities and practices have now become long cherished and sometimes inextricable traditions.

Our founding parents even in their wildest dreams never imagined the facilities and programs that exist in many of these schools today. In today's complex world, who decides what is good Christian education? Many gifted Christian educators now serve these schools and help articulate a vision for schooling. Many school boards have at least one college-educated board member. In today's world the state or province boldly enforces legislation and regulations that shape school programs. So we can legitimately ask, What does parent control mean in a differentiated society where the state, professional educators, and society as a whole have an influential presence? Who decides the purposes of schooling? Who decides what the school should teach? What curriculum materials should be used? What methodologies? What kind of teachers should be employed? Who should be encouraged to enroll? Who should be denied access?

As the Spirit stirred the hearts of God's people to create places such as Dordt College, Sioux Center Christian School or Vancouver Christian School—signposts that the kingdom of God is at hand—they were responding to biblical givens and cultural realities. Their motives were noble. We celebrate that. The Spirit also stirs our hearts today as trustees of this inherited vision for Christian education, calling us to respond to the same biblical givens but a vastly different set of cultural realities. And one of the premises that shapes Reformed thought is the need to live immediately before the face of God, *coram Deo*, constantly reshaping to be His fit instruments of reconciliation, His presence in this broken world, keeping those signposts in good condition, giving direction and marking off territory in today's world.

However noble our foreparents may have been, we do well to remember that they too had to fight against the same powers and principalities that attend modern living. Without being smug, suffering from blind blissfulness of what we assume to be a perfect 20-20 hindsight, we need to visit the

cellar to check out the foundation. We must come to understand the meaning of cracks in the foundation so as to estimate the stability of the edifice. Or to use another metaphor: We must take from the altars of the past the fire, not the ashes. What was it that moved the founders of these schools to respond boldly and prophetically to the Spirit's leading and sacrificially to give of time, money, and sweat? Christian education was critically important to them. What made it so important to them that other things could wait? Certainly they too had their doubts and doubters. But they were attempting to be faithful in the times in which they lived. In retrospect they were, in the words of Brian Walsh, prophets.<sup>1</sup> They

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### *What does parent-controlled Christian school mean in a differentiated society?*

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had a prophetic critique of the spirits of the age, and they had a prophetic hope claiming God's blessing upon faithfulness. In such a prophetic community, according to Brueggemann, the first question isn't whether a vision or a worldview is realistic, viable, practical or implementable. Rather, is the vision faithful?<sup>2</sup>

It is said that sheep may get lost simply by nibbling away at grass and never looking up: wandering over one hill, walking around another, pursuing only the choicest, most appealing, tempting blades in the valley. After a while they may or they may not look up. If they do stop and look up they will see an unfamiliar landscape. How could we have gotten so far off course when everything seemed to be going so well?

That's not a problem for sheep only. That can be true for any of us in our personal, communal, or institutional life. We can focus so much on what is immediately before us that we fail to see life in the larger perspective. We nibble at the tempting grasses of athletic successes, enrollment growth, and the appeal of being perceived as matching the state or provincial curriculum. The issues of the day become so consuming: building projects, fund drives, promotion, and basketball. As Christian schools move along as organizations, like nibbling sheep, they can lose sight of their original vision or purpose, losing something of that first love. So easily they can become distracted by the excitement

of school growth and the need to expand the facilities, or by problems that attend discipline concerns or enrollment loss when suddenly the need to promote becomes important. And add to this list the displacement or distortion of the original vision; as organizations continue to live they become ossified. Rules, history, tradition, and policies—however important and useful—can contribute to a formal way of serving. We sometimes even resist examining the way we do things around here. In fact, too often school leadership becomes defensive about the past, threatened by questions, however legitimate. Dialogue can be thwarted. The prophetic voice can be muffled.

I want to underscore the importance of regularly looking up as we consume the succulent blades of grass in modern pastures. Prophetic critique and prophetic hope result from honest reflection on and celebration of faithfulness: asking the right questions and seeking the right answers. To be a reflective and discerning Christian community we need to follow the advice from our parents: Look both ways before crossing the road. Looking both ways is a prudent activity that shapes the prophetic voice. If we fail to look both ways, we put ourselves in peril.

Thus we begin with a look back. We build on our history: celebrate the good, maintain the essentials, and make necessary correctives. What may have been some blindspots in the founding vision? What displacements occurred along the way? For example, to what extent was the original vision really an attempt to perpetuate a comfortable and parochial and ethnic comfort zone—even though the language implied a far more noble intention? Some Christian schools were generated amid shouts that Our strength is in our isolation! To contemporary Christians more sensitive to the evangelical imperative and more receptive to schools being a trans-denominational enterprise, these words may sound quaint—if not downright unchristian. However, as part of the church of all ages, we can assess our present location by taking an honest look back. Enlightenment style triumphalism that depreciates other historic attempts at faithfulness only contributes to our myopia.

The Dutch Calvinists who began many Christian schools may have been many things. But trendy they were not. H.B. Kuiper once observed that Dutch Calvinists don't skate on one night's ice." They

waited for many cold nights before venturing on the pond. They talked through issues long and hard before breaking ground. Many smelly cigars, much strong coffee, and equally strong conversation preceded the opening of a school. Today many Christian schools tend to fall prey to either traditionalism—unqualified allegiance to past practices—or they fall prey to fadism, accepting the latest educational trends with a me-too attitude. And some schools, strangely enough, have both mind-sets operating simultaneously.

Some Christian school communities see the past as normative. We place ourselves in peril to walk on a winter's accumulation of ice long into spring when the blasts of warm wind and the impulses of strong currents have weakened the ice.

On the other hand, we can depreciate the issues that concerned those who have gone before us. Conditioned by today's blurring of denominational distinctions, we are tempted to embrace changes too readily, less sensitive to being distinctive. For example, perhaps we have become somewhat silent if not apologetic regarding some residual ethnic or parochial trappings or a somewhat artificial us-them mind-set that marked earlier expressions of Christian education. The antithesis doesn't get much press today. But not understanding or appreciating earlier concerns can lead to reactionism. However, making correctives is not merely reacting against what we don't like. J.I. Packer warns against walking backward, i.e., away from something:

"The reaction of man worketh not the righteous of God . . ." If you are walking backward away from something that you think is a mistake, you may be right in supposing it to be a mistake, but for you to be walking backward is never right. Sooner or later, people who walk backward in the physical sense stumble over some obstacle behind which they never saw, because their minds and their eyes were fixed on what they were trying to get away from, and then they fall. We are meant to walk forward, not backward. Reaction is always a matter of walking backward, and thus it brings its own nemesis.<sup>3</sup>

While part of the motivation of those who founded Christian schools was to avoid the spirits afoot in a strange culture in a strange land, we today do well to be aware of the spirits which pervade modernity: materialism, individualism, relativism, and hedonism. If we think about it, perhaps isolation is a lesser sin than assimilation or enculturation. In

his research involving a number of Christian school students, Stephen Kaufmann found that *sports* was the single most—by a two to one margin over anything else—distinctive program or tradition at their school.<sup>4</sup> This finding would undoubtedly make the founders of these schools spin in their graves. What an accommodation to fit in to modern culture! There are stories of Christian high schools that spend upwards of \$80,000 to field a football team but claim that the community doesn't have the resources for continuing education—courses that help teachers to further shape insights in teaching and learning that are distinctively Christian.

Kaufmann elaborates further. Rather than the Christian school community living an isolated and therefore presumably a very different lifestyle, we are turning out well-adjusted, competent students who are quite capable of making their way in the world, but not ready to make a mark on it, who may achieve good grades but not do well in coping with human need, who are ready to live comfortably for Christ, but are not equipped to be Jesus' disciples, to seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

To maintain a vision, or rather to keep the vision focused, each generation of Christian school supporters (in a Christian elementary school today, a generation changes every five years) should pause and reflect upon biblical faithfulness in our institutional life. This reflection takes on greater urgency as Christian schools wrestle with increased societal mobility and increased ecumenical mosaics—something to celebrate but something which may contribute to drift and displacement. Such reflection seems very appropriate for established schools with long, stable histories where traditions can impede a vibrant, living vision. And that includes the governance structures as well. Too infrequently do we assess the faithfulness of our institutional life whereby we ask Is ABC Christian School functioning the way it should in all areas of its institutional life, including the way the board does it business? School leaders should regularly engage as much of the Christian school community as possible to consider the school's vision and practice. They should pause to humbly celebrate God's gracious goodness, and to give thanks for the Spirit's power in those who have preceded us. We should pause to discern the spirits of our time and consider faithfulness. And we should pause, encourage, and invite renewed

ownership and to claim anew the promises of biblical faithfulness.

In discerning the motives of our hearts, we, like Abraham, need to submit everything to the service of the Lord. Words I once heard from Howard Snyder seem appropriate: "Any traditional form, structure or practice that helps us be alive and faithful should be kept and improved. Any that insulate us from the fresh fire of the Spirit should be modified or retired."

Honest, prayerful and communal reflection will assist the Christian community to see our blindspots, blindspots for which our foreparents perhaps had a natural aversion. The spirits of our age have deep,

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*As trustees of an inherited vision for Christian education, we are called to respond to the same biblical givens but a vastly different set of cultural realities.*

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deep intractable roots. For example, individualism. Two Canadians, Reginald Bibby, a prominent researcher in the field of sociology of religion, and Donald Posterski, a prominent Christian authority on youth, provide an informative window on current youth culture in Canada based on a recent survey of 4000 teens in that nation's schools. Their report published in a book entitled *Teen Trends* challenges adult youth leaders to assess the prevailing attitudes that penetrate our very living rooms via the media. They tell us that our young people are

mirroring Canadian society's unprecedented emphasis on the importance of the individual—personal freedom, personal rights, personal values, personal dreams, personal fulfilment, and personal power. What is not clear is whether young people can have it both ways. Unless a balance is struck between emphasis on the individual and emphasis upon the relational, individualism will frequently destroy the very good life that they so deeply value.<sup>5</sup>

### **Rootless or Root Bound?**

We seem to be either rootless or root bound. And we cannot escape the strong cultural influences that permeate society. Some are powerful. For example,

some Christian schools actually contract to have news prepared for a teen audience, complete with commercials targeted at this age group. This is piped right into the classrooms of these schools during prime teaching time. Research has shown this to be some of the most successful advertising. Another example can be found in the recent book summarizing the work of the Calvin College Center for Christian Scholarship, *A Vision With a Task*, in which a vignette describing the observed activities of a student's life in school asks, "Does *Seventeen* magazine tell Julie each month that her looks are much more important than developing her gifts?"<sup>6</sup>

Such influences often walk subtly, silently, and incrementally. Without a clear vision, people and the schools in which they live tend to fall prey to many of the whims and fads that come along; schools and their supporters are often more rootless than one might expect. On the other hand, without a clear vision we can become root bound. Then we tend to stagnate or fossilize, either worshipping our traditions—and, honestly some have become sacred cows if not golden calves—or repeating tired ways of doing things and becoming bored with the common project which ought to unite the community, ignite its wonder, and spark its enthusiasm. We can no longer assume that these schools have a driving ethos. In the words of John G. Mitchell in *Re-visioning Educational Leadership*, we should be

developing the vision to see far into the past, knowing from where we have come, how we developed, what values and traditions have shaped and determined us the most, and to what degree we are indebted and enslaved to our predecessors. It means seeing into the far future . . . .<sup>7</sup>

### Re-Visioning

Being introspective is a demanding, potentially unsettling task. Besides, no one gets excited at the invitation to look for hype and common blindspots in our collective ego. The Germans refer to corresponding collective ecclesiastical ego as *Kirchturmgeschichte*, the reporting on church circumstances from the viewpoint of one's own church tower.<sup>8</sup> We prefer to think that everything is all right: After all, our graduates are doing just fine! Furthermore, a community interaction involving discussions with teachers can be

intimidating as parents feel they can't hold their own with teachers; teachers too can be intimidated by parents who ask questions. All of which if left unattended contributes to a negative spiral of dysfunctionality and a distorted sense of community.

In reality, to engage in such reflection counteracts dysfunctionality and builds community. Scripture informs us that we can and must enable one another. We too often sell one another short. Parental control, for example, is limited too often to the board or its committees' work. Parental involvement must be commensurate with their recognized covenantal responsibility. Nowhere in a survey of the literature does one find a significant role for parents in shaping the mission for public education. Parental involvement is limited to volunteering in the classrooms or playground, running concession stands and, of course, insuring that their children do their homework. Setting school direction and shaping the program is presumed to be the role of professional educators, perhaps with the help of trustees. In the Christian education community, parents too must be involved in the conversation about a vision of Christian nurture that is continuous with the home. To do less seems to buy into yet other spirits of our age, namely individualism and consumerism, a fee for service. And you can't build community by merely exchanging fees for service.<sup>9</sup> Teaching isn't so esoteric that parents can't understand it. In fact, when engaged in dialogue they grasp the issues readily and are engaging. Teachers, administrators, and board members become encouraged to hear how much people really are interested in Christian education.

We must, in a sense, step outside of the world we know so well to overcome what Walter Brueggemann in *The Prophetic Imagination* calls static triumphalism. David Purpel in *The Moral and Spiritual Crisis in Education* refers to this as cultures smugly mired in a self-congratulatory inertness.<sup>10</sup> Are we humble enough to ask basic questions again? Or have we become smug? The call is to reflect while our schools yet have a North Star to guide our education.

While the original vision for a particular Christian school may have been generated by the laity, with the benefit of clergy, forging a communion around a kitchen table over cups of strong coffee, the vision of Christian education today is the vision of a

community: parents, teachers, business, industry, professionals, scholars, and even students. Yes, a differentiation has occurred. And we are all richer because of it. In Christian schools which still stress parent control, wouldn't it seem strange to assess the faithfulness of the school and consider where it should be heading without hearing the voices of teachers, those specifically trained and gifted in the area of nurture? An activity involving the whole community in some way embodies Christ. It is a blessing of a functioning communion: we come together to discuss faithfulness, a recipe that almost cannot fail. Stuart Fowler says, to be an effective community, communal life . . . needs to be focused on the shared life that constitutes the communal bond.<sup>11</sup> There is opportunity for mutuality, a critical, common empowering. Fowler continues with some observations suggesting that such opportunities do not come from leadership largesse:

It is not a matter of those at the top empowering those under them. Such top-down thinking is incompatible with communal life. It is a matter of all being empowered by the community to fulfil the calling of the office of each and of all participating in the activity of empowering.<sup>12</sup>

### Shaping a Vision Statement

Vision statements are the rage these days—regardless of the process. They're trendy. Yet vision statements not "owned" by a broad community are ink on a page to be filed under V; they are of little use. Yet many Christian schools continue to appoint a small committee to articulate such a statement. Vision requires ownership. There is no substitute. According to Roland Barth, a leading authority on school improvement, an inflicted vision (from above), a borrowed vision (from another school), an inherited vision (simply continuing what has been done), or a homogenized vision (simply collecting everyone's opinions) in reality doesn't work.<sup>13</sup> And more importantly, such visions fly in the face of what it means to be a community, living *coram Deo*. The school community must take ownership of the vision and the school program so that they can celebrate, select, reject, strengthen, and integrate.

The community should come together to ask basic questions, all of which are unavoidably religious: Who am I? Who are we? Who are children? What difference does it make to consider that we are

imagers of God? What is the task of the school? What is expected of a Christian school? What does it mean to be truly educated? What is the purpose of life? What is the nature of created reality? What does it mean to know God? And, what are the attributes we would like to see in our graduates? For the Christian school, answers to all of the above questions must comport with biblical givens, a biblical worldview.

Common answers to such questions begin to form the basis for a school vision. A school vision then encapsulates the dreams and hopes of the school community. Vision is not only a way of seeing; it is also a way of going. The vision comes with

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a task wrapped up in it.<sup>14</sup> A well articulated vision owned by the participants helps maintain a vision. Barth underscores the potential for effecting positive change by arguing that "A school with a vigorous, soaring vision of what it might become is more likely to become that; without a vision, a school is unlikely to improve."<sup>15</sup> He goes on to make this claim:

a vision is a kind of moral imagination which gives school people, individually and collectively, the ability to see their school not only as it is, but as they would like it to become . . . . A school [community] must make deliberate choices not only to have a vision and about what that vision should be, but also by what means it intends to craft the vision.<sup>16</sup>

Barth not only emphasizes the need for a vision, defined as much more than the basic article of the typical Christian school constitution, but he also underscores that the process of arriving at such a benefit can recapture some of the ownership or first love that our foreparents had. He says, ". . . the process is every bit as valuable as the vision itself."<sup>17</sup> I would go even further. *The process is the most important part of vision setting.* Barth concludes that Vision making is one of the highest levels of activity of human kind.<sup>18</sup>

Each of us sees life and even Scripture itself through a lens that is shaped and refined by our family, education, and experience. That doesn't necessarily mean the lens is acceptable to Christ.

His call to us is to see life and Scripture through the lens of biblical faith. Lesslie Newbigin puts it like this:

Every Christian reader comes to the Bible with the spectacles provided by the tradition that is alive in the community to which he or she belongs, and that tradition is being constantly modified as each new generation of believers endeavours to be faithful in understanding and living out Scripture . . . .<sup>19</sup>

Those entrusted with the vision of a Christian school must act as trustees of that vision—keeping it refined, keeping it focused, asking the right questions, and embracing mightily that which is deemed as faithfulness. Part of the Christian life is to celebrate and wrestle with past articulations. As Douglas John Hall says:

Each generation must both learn from and struggle with what is handed over (*tradere*); for, unless it does so, it remains dependent in a false sense, that is, it fails to achieve theological maturity. Maturity . . . means accepting the past for the truth that it conveys, but also testing that truth in relation to present and impending realities that our mothers and fathers in the faith could not have anticipated . . . .<sup>20</sup>

Hall goes on to cite James Russel Lowell (1819-1891), *Once to Every Man and Nation*:

New occasions teach new duties;  
Time makes ancient good uncouth;  
They must upward still and onward  
Who would keep abreast of truth.

A school community engaged in such a reflective activity, unwittingly perhaps, models to its young people another biblical given: lifelong learning and taking seriously the notion that we are a community of learners and a community of leaders.<sup>21</sup>

Christians living between memory and vision then erect signposts for Gods kingdom, *rex dominium*, literally, kings domain, by seeking to *conserve*, discern, and reform. We conserve by passing on the story and worldview of our tradition: our meaning, purpose, roots, cultural anchorpoints and accumulated wisdom. We *discern* by encouraging critical analysis of the world, by promoting new insights, and by testing all things and holding fast to the good. And we *reform*, guided by a vision of a new and better world," modeling and teaching "a life of reforming discipleship that is responsive to God . . . in creation and in the structures of society."<sup>22</sup> Overall, Christian schools seem better at

conserving than discerning or reforming. If that is true, then biblical faithfulness requires us to find the will and the means to equip our students to discern the spirits of our age. We need to move beyond reflecting culture to transforming culture, erecting signposts of God's Kingdom. We as a Christian community involved in education must shape schools that equip students to be either thermometers or thermostats.<sup>23</sup>

### Doing It

What follows is a modest proposal to every Christian school community, a proposal that can in a significant way guide and direct education, our way of thinking and talking about ourselves.<sup>24</sup> It is not intended to be the latest of slick tricks, so epidemic in education. Rather it is a proposal that may build community and function as a map. I propose that each Christian community state clearly its vision for its biblical response—what it believes about nurture, learning, and teaching. Such a vision statement should be used as the common language which renews the community's conversation. It should be unpacked when a prospective parent inquires about the school; it can be unpacked for prospective teachers; it can be used to orient new board members. It can also be the common language by which the board, committees, administration, and staff weigh decisions or assess priorities.

The vision setting workshops that I have participated in typically take place on a Friday evening and Saturday morning. All constituents of the school are urged to attend with the understanding that the motivation for the school will be revisited, the current program and activities will be examined, and a future agenda will be shaped. (It should be noted that in the case of communities that operate a Christian high school, students are encouraged to attend and participate.)

The workshop begins with a review of the roots, the original motivation for the school, as prepared by someone in the community. What were some of the strong, influencing nascent factors and subsequent factors and events that were significant in the school's narrative? Typically this is followed by an activity evoking a healthy dialogue encouraging community acceptance of the fact that some differences of opinion exist but that this need not necessarily detract but rather can enhance an honest reflection if the school is truly *our* school. Using



the metaphor of a mirror, a presentation is then given which invites the community to reflect on some biblical givens that direct Christian education, e.g., nurture, community/body of Christ, unity and diversity, gifts, worldview, a definition of the learner, curriculum, cultural pressures such as individualism, promise and pitfalls of prevailing ideas about schooling, and the whole child.

Following such a presentation, those in attendance are divided heterogeneously into groups to reflect on preassigned issues. Issues include such components of schooling as these: 1) what we teach; 2) how we teach; 3) school size and enrollment policy; 4) facilities; 5) role of society, board, principal and committee; 6) financial stewardship; 7) extra-curricular activities, and, 8) engaging new parents into the vision and promotion. While there are some defining questions intended to give everyone a grasp of the particular issue, each is asked to return to the plenary session with a report using the following matrix:

**CELEBRATE**—recognize and give thanks for that accomplished by God's grace;

**STRENGTHEN**—important activity but needs work;

**ELIMINATE**—encourage to discontinue that which is no longer appropriate;

**INITIATE**—undertake that presently absent but necessary.

The conclusions of the discussion groups are shared in plenary session and further comment is invited should people who participated in another group have a particular concern that didn't appear in the report. These summaries are saved for future board discussion.

Benefiting from a discussion of the roots and assessing where our school is at, the entire group is then challenged to give common meaning to old terms such as service, all of life, community, transforming, academics, and discipleship. They then return to the same groupings as before and shape a vision statement essentially answering the questions: Who are we? Who do we serve? How do we fulfil our educational task? When back in plenary session these emergent vision statements are presented. Inevitably they are either embraced or challenged as group members develop a growing sense of ownership. Common strands are then summarized. The different emergent vision statements are then given to the board with the recommenda-

tion that a committee be struck representing each of the constituent groups present at the workshop. The mandate of this committee is to forge a vision statement that captures the strengths of all of those presented. This then is presented to the school membership for discussion and adoption. This vision statement then becomes the working statement of why we exist and how we function. It is suggested that in five years or so the exercise should be repeated. But it takes a will to undertake the task. As Barth points out, "A school must make deliberate choices not only to have a vision and about what that vision shall be, but also by what means it intends to craft the vision."<sup>25</sup>

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Such a vision-setting exercise invites people to have the eyes of their heart open (Ephesians 1:18). To gather as God's people and to seek faithfulness to His will builds the Christian community. And as Carl Henry once said, Not even evangelicals can strait-jacket the Holy Spirit! The exercise has potential to give parents and teachers an answer as to what our Christian schools have to offer today's world. It is optimistic and forward looking. It has potential to encourage the abiding prayerful and financial support of grandparents who may have questions about education today. It reminds us of the power of sin, that we need a Savior, all of which sounds a bit quaint, or at worst, bigoted and offensive to today's culture. It helps to keep some biblical notions on nurture and language current, e.g., a life of discipleship. We are called to be a prophetic community, a prophetic people. We are called to be a covenanting people, not consumers; passionate, not asleep; culture formers, not culture followers.<sup>26</sup>

As Reformed Christians committed to understanding God's Word and revelation, to use the words of Jacques Ellul, we must understand the Bible as ceaselessly putting questions to us; and we, of course, are ceaselessly putting questions to it.<sup>27</sup> If you entertain vision, you believe that the future is open to change, that it is not settled. We are not the victims of our past, especially not we who live in Jesus Christ and have shaken off the yoke of our fallen race. Neither are we hostages of the present.

Vision views humans as being in the image of God, giving them a sense of worth. Vision views the world as sustained by God for exactly the purposes we dream of when we image Him. And vision views the purpose of life that we shall love God above all and our neighbors as ourselves. So, just as a marriage begins with hopes and dreams, we can look at the hopes and dreams of our foreparents and, after examining that foundation, nurture a vision that by God's grace and a responsive obedience leads to contemporary faithfulness that reflects Christ's rule for this world. The work of Christ must continue—also in education. Those of us called to serve there, in every generation, must strive to make education fit the image of Christ.

Jesus will be in agony until the end of the world; it is necessary not to sleep during this time.<sup>28</sup>

#### END NOTES

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- 3 J.I. Packer, *A Passion For Holiness* (Cambridge: Crossway, 1992) 212-213.
- 4 Stephen Kaufmann, "Student Ownership of the Mission of Selected Christian Schools." A paper presented at July 1992 CSI International Conference, Toronto.
- 5 Reginald Bibby and Donald Posterski, *Teen Trends* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1992) 164.
- 6 Gloria Goris Stronks and Doug Blomberg, eds., *A Vision With a Task* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993) 21.
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