# Christian Schooling: Telling A World View Story*

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For many years advocates of Christian schooling have linked the overarching purpose of their enterprise to transmitting and developing an integral 'world and life view.' More recently there has been considerable discussion of the 'rediscovery of narrative,' leading to a characterisation of schooling as (cultural) 'story-telling' (see Bolt 1993). This chapter explores the meaning and limitations of linking education with the inculcation of a particular world and life view, or Christian mind. It asserts the compatibility of a world view emphasis and a narrative emphasis by re-interpreting world view as 'the story of our lives.' The narrative character of world views is examined, and the components of a world view (Memory, Vision, Ethos and Symbols) are discussed. I propose that this analysis, coupled with an understanding of education as cultural story-telling, provides helpful tools for exploring what a world view emphasis means for the practice of Christian schooling.

### World and Life View: Education for Discipleship

The purposes of Christian education need to be expressed in broad, life-embracing terms. For example, John Van Dyk writes:

> A Christian school is a place where Christian educators refuse to be satisfied with providing only factual knowledge and marketable skills. Rather, teachers in a Christian school seek to transform all activities and studies into an expression of biblical wisdom, training the students to walk as disciples of Jesus Christ. (Van Dyk 1985, 3)

Van Dyk clearly indicates that the Christian identity of the school not only touches everything that happens within its walls, but also expresses itself in the way students are taught to engage their cultural environment. The students' (or more specifically, the **[p.76>]** graduates') whole walk of life is to be shaped by their identity as committed followers of Jesus, citizens of the kingdom which Jesus initiated in principle. Nicholas Wolterstorff has summarised this view as follows:

> The goal of Christian education is not just the formation of a way of thinking. Nor is it that plus the development of moral character. Nor is it that plus the cultivation of a mode of piety. Nor is it that plus the transmission of one and another part of humanity's knowledge. Education is for the totality of life in a kingdom. (Wolterstorff 1984, 4)

This very broad understanding of the purpose of Christian education has often been linked to the notion of a 'world and life view' (or, in recent years, simply 'world view'). The inculcation of a Christian world and life view has been deemed to be the school's key contribution to the overall goal of fostering a life of discipleship. The phrase 'world and life view' expresses an understanding that faith is the life principle around which Christians should organise their entire pattern of cultural engagement.[1]

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[1] Abraham Kuyper understood Christianity to be a comprehensive life system (life in a kingdom). Christians, according to Kuyper, are called to be culturally engaged, contributing to the revitalisation and transformation of culture on the basis of their Christian life principle. (See, for example, Vanden

A 'world and life view' is simultaneously a way of understanding our total environment, i.e. our relation to God, others, ourselves and the rest of creation ('world'), and an orientation to how we should conduct ourselves in that environment ('life').

*'World view' and 'Christian Mind'*
In much Christian educational thought the notion of a world and life view has been very closely linked with the notion of a Christian mind. This linkage has the potential to significantly shift the meaning of world and life view. A recent example of this linkage (and such a shift) can be found in John Bolt's book, *The Christian Story and the Christian School*. Bolt writes:

> An obvious answer to the question, Why Christian schools, would seem to be to develop Christian minds. After all, the primary task of a school, it could be said, is teaching students how to think, and thus a Christian school should teach stu **[p.77>]** dents to think Christianly. Thinking Christianly is often expressed in such visual imagery as a Christian perspective or a Christian world view. (Bolt 1993, 135)

Bolt defines a world view as 'a *thoughtful* (and therefore primarily but not exclusively *cognitive*) comprehensive view of human life in relation to God, the world, and other humans' (Bolt 1993, 232). Developing a Christian mind is a matter of 'teaching students to think in accord with a coherent, scripturally-based, comprehensive world view' (Bolt 1993, 140). Christian educators undertake to give their students a Christian perspective, based on God's revelation on all curricular topics.[2] For example, 'a Christian perspective on the environment sees the world as God's creation to be taken care of by human beings, rather than as raw material to be exploited greedily for personal consumption and comfort' (Bolt 1993, 135). According to Bolt, 'it seems incontrovertible that one of the particular tasks, perhaps even the chief one, of the Christian school is the cultivation of distinctively Christian ways of thinking' (Bolt 1993, 147).

Bolt seems to recognise indirectly that defining a world and life view in terms of distinctively Christian ways of thinking may be too narrow and overly intellectualistic for the purposes of schooling. He writes that:

> concern for the development of a Christian mind is not merely to satisfy the needs of the intellectually curious or gifted. The Christian world view shapes the way Christian people live, helping them to make decisions and choose vocations. (Bolt 1993, 141)

Bolt does not elaborate how this shaping works, except to say that ideas have consequences, and that civilisations are shaped by their fundamentally religious

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Berg, F. 1978. *Abraham Kuyper: A biography*. St Catharines, Ontario: Paideia Press.) For a discussion of the roots of the idea of a 'world and life view' see Wolters 1989.

[2] Bolt claims that 'because God has spoken to the extent that he has, we are able to see things from his point of view' (Bolt 1993, 136), and that the goal of Christian education is 'to teach students to see things from God's perspective' (Bolt 1993, 137). These formulations appear presumptuous at best, and seem to take insufficient account of the epistemological effects of the fallenness of human beings. Furthermore, Bolt seems to overlook the fact that all human knowledge is culturally situated and partial.

convictions, choices, and visions. The key seems to be that these ideas and visions have a normative thrust; the Christian thinking (i.e., the Christian perspective) which Christian schools teach is oriented to how people *ought* to **[p.78>]** think (as in the example of a Christian perspective on the environment mentioned above). Since ideas have consequences and since Christian thinking has this normative thrust, it is assumed that Christian thinking beckons people to action. Thus Bolt claims that the Christian mind shapes concrete Christian discipleship.

*Shortcomings*
While Bolt claims that the emphasis on Christian thinking does not have an intellectualist bent, others are less certain. A case in point is Nicholas Wolterstorff's critique of the claim that the purpose of Christian education is to impart a world and life view. Wolterstorff finds this formulation inadequate because it:

> puts too much emphasis on a 'view', that is, on what we have called cognition. To be identified with the people of God and to share in its work does indeed require that one have a system of belief—call it the Christian world and life view. But it requires more than that. It requires the Christian *way of life*. Christian education is education aimed at training for the Christian way of life, not just education aimed at inculcating the Christian world and life view. (Wolterstorff 1980, 14)

Interestingly, the 'more' of which Wolterstorff speaks was historically understood to be part and parcel of the meaning of 'world and life view.' While there may have always been inadequacies in the concept, Wolterstorff's critique also signals a gradual slippage in its interpretation, from a 'life orientation' to a way of thinking.' Wolterstorff's comments indicate that the emphasis on a Christian way of thinking, even when combined with the belief that ideas have practical consequences, has not borne the anticipated educational fruit in terms of inducing a life of discipleship.[3]

**[p.79>]**

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[3] It must he acknowledged that the concept of world view is susceptible to interpretations which imply a certain detachment from life. In his essay, 'On world views and Philosophy,' Jacob KIapwijk comments that for Wilhelm Dilthey (whose views influenced neo-Calvinist thinkers in the nineteenth century) *Weltanschauung* meant 'having a look at' or 'having a view of.' Klapwijk suggests that this idea of a world view is:

> somewhat contaminated by the metaphor of seeing. This metaphor contaminates his idea not only with overtones of the medieval notion of a *visio dei* but also, more particularly, with notions of German Romantic Idealism. ... [A] world view is conceived of primarily as an idea, a spiritual principle, a contemplation of the world. (Klapwijk 1989, 42)

Klapwijk suggests that this contemplative and somewhat resigned understanding has been prominent in discussions of world view since the time of Dilthey.

Klapwijk also notes that the Dutch philosopher J. P .A. Mekkes substituted the word *levensovertuiging* (life conviction) for the word *Ievensbeschouwing* (life view) to communicate the fact that the Christian view of life (or any other view of life) is not a speculative contemplation but an active conviction (Klapwijk 1989, 43).

The concern Mekkes addressed is very similar to what I have in mind in suggesting a re-orientation of our understanding of world view.

Wolterstorff discusses his doubts that 'the Christian way of *thinking about* the world will just naturally express itself in the Christian way of *being* in the world' (Wolterstorff 1984, 21) extensively in his booklet *Keeping Faith*.

He rejects the assumption that an education that teaches students to think Christianly will automatically energise students to live the life of faith. When the recipients of such an education emerge from the school and take up their adult lives, it is likely that 'they will *talk* the Christian mind and *live* the mind of the world' (Wolterstorff 1984, 25).

Wolterstorff articulates several reasons for questioning the view that Christian thinking will express itself in a life of discipleship. First, he notes that while Christian thinking may be indispensable for such discipleship, it does not *produce* it.

> In great measure it is a-rational factors that shape our actions: factors such as *discipline, modelling,* and *empathy*—along, indeed with what may be called *casuistry*: reasoning from principles which the parties in the discussion share, to applications of those principles in life.

> [If] the goal of Christian education is not just to *equip* students to live Christian lives but also to inspire and energise and dispose them to do so—that the goal is to contribute to their moral and spiritual *formation*—then we have to reflect on how we can make responsible use of these a-rational factors, and how we can make responsible use of reasoning from principles to application of principles. Developing the latter would, for one thing, require more praxis-oriented scholarship than the academic-discipline model calls for. (Wolterstorff 1989, 56)

For Wolterstorff, the 'Christian mind' approach takes in-sufficient account of, among other things, powerful forces of socialisation in the lives of young Christians. Particularly in a **[p.80>]** world in which Christians are socialised every day, by agents as powerful and effective as the mass media, into a way of life which reflects something other than the Christian mind, this approach cannot be expected to carry the burden of fostering integral Christian discipleship.

A second problem with the 'thinking Christianly' emphasis is that it focuses one-sidedly on the positive task of developing culture, and does not sufficiently take into account brokenness and suffering in a fallen world.

> The wounds of the world scarcely enter our curriculum. We talk abstractly about justice and injustice; but we do not look much at *concrete cases* of injustice, probing their causes and asking what can be done. Or at least, the academic-discipline model of the curriculum does not invite us to do this. To talk only of developing culture is to talk as if we lived in a sin-free but culturally-undeveloped situation. But of course we do not. Our calling is not only to develop culture, but to free the captives. To the cultural mandate of which our tradition has so often spoken we must add the liberation mandate. (Wolterstorff 1989, 57)

In another context Wolterstorff cites a third shortcoming of the emphasis on developing a Christian mind. The emphasis on rigorous and integral Christian thinking can obscure a sense of 'delight and gratitude and worship: delight in God's

creation, delight in humanity's works of art, grateful worship of God' (Wolterstorff 1984, 19).

Another significant shortcoming can be added to those cited by Wolterstorff. The emphasis on Christian thinking is most serviceable to students who are what we might call 'cognitively gifted'; i.e. students whose gifts lie particularly in the intellectual domain. While orienting education to the intellectually gifted may be defensible at advanced levels of academic education, it is not defensible at lower levels. In a school situation which brings together students with a wide variety of giftedness (including those whose giftedness runs in directions other than the intellectual), the main educational models should not favour one set of gifts over another. The elementary and secondary levels of education require a central metaphor which is not simply borrowed from a postsecondary model which is weighted toward fostering the development of intellect.

**[p.81>]**
Wolterstorff's consideration of the shortcomings of the Christian mind model leads him to call for 'a more comprehensive, a more holistic' curricular model. He proposes what he calls the 'shalom community' model, which suggests that a biblical vision of *shalom* (and of the community of faith as a community which fosters *shalom*) needs to guide Christian schools and colleges in planning their learning program (Wolterstorff 1986, 16). Bolt has a quite different approach to the limitations of the Christian mind model. Since he maintains that the chief task of the Christian school is to cultivate distinctively Christian ways of thinking, Bolt is reluctant to propose an alternate model. He regards the formation of a Christian mind as 'a necessary but not entirely sufficient goal,' and proposes that a 'reformulation of the task of the school in terms of narrative categories' will address the shortcomings of the Christian mind model. Bolt's emphasis on narrative categories' is, of course, very similar to the theme which is developed in the remainder of this chapter. However, Bolt's 'necessary but not entirely sufficient' approach means that he is disposed to tinkering with the Christian mind model rather than radically overhauling it. In the end Bolt ends up simply adding a narrative emphasis to the traditional Christian mind model. We must ask ourselves, whether a more drastic rethinking of our key metaphors for elementary and secondary Christian education can help us move forward in the task of equipping people to live as faithful disciples in our time.

*Narrative Plausibility Structures*
In *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* Newbigin provides a very insightful discussion of how human beings (tacitly) indwell a cultural tradition. A culture, says Newbigin, is "a whole way of understanding and ordering things which is embodied in language, story, and all the forms of social life which are made possible through a shared language and a shared story" (Newbigin, 1989, 35). Our culture provides us with a whole set of tools (words, language concepts, etc.) on which we tacitly rely while we focally attend to new areas of learning. Newbigin continues:

> Most of this we learn, or perhaps one might say absorb, during the first few
> years of our lives as we learn to talk, to read, to share in the common story of
> our people. Normally we simply take it for granted. We are not conscious of it.
> Like the **[p.82>]** lenses of our spectacles, it is not something we look at, but
> something *through* which we look in order to see the world.... We indwell

[these lenses].  So also with the vast amount of our culture—its language, its images, it concepts, its way of understanding and acting. (Newbigin, 1989, 35)

This image of "lenses" through which we attend the world is very closely related to Newbigin's reference, in various contexts, to what Peter Berger calls the "plausibility structure" of a society. Plausibility structures are "patterns of belief and practice accepted within a given society, which determine which beliefs are plausible to its members and which are not" (Newbigin, 1989, 8; see also p. 53). Our plausibility structure, we could say, has to do with the fundamental shape of the cultural lens which we indwell (i.e., it has to do with how these lenses have been ground). Our plausibility structure is our basic framework, our comprehensive tool, for "the whole way of understanding and ordering things" which, for Newbigin, constitutes our culture matrix. It seems clear that Newbigin's understanding of a tacit cultural plausibility structure belongs in the same conceptual neighbourhood as what many Christians might call world and life view.

For our present purposes the interesting thing to note is that for Newbigin plausibility structures have a narrative cast. This is certainly true for Christians. Newbigin asserts that "the gospel gives rise to a new plausibility structure, a radically different vision of things from those that shape all human cultures apart from the gospel" (Newbigin, 1989, 9). At heart, what is revealed in the Gospel is not a set of propositions but a story. "The Christian faith, rooted in the Bible, is—I am convinced—primarily to be understood as an interpretation of the story—the human story set within the story of nature" (Newbigin, 1989, 13). By implication, other plausibility structures also have a basically narrative cast, providing those who indwell them with an interpretation of universal history and the place of their culture in that history.

This characterisation of the narrative character of plausibility structures accords well with the recent widespread discussion of the narrative sub-structure of human experience and knowledge. Scholars in a wide variety of fields of study have taken note of the fact that story is present everywhere in human life. Theologian Michael Novak remarks that "the human being alone among the creatures on earth is a story-telling animal: sees the present arising out of a past, heading into a future; perceives reality in narrative form" (Novak 1975, 175).  In his contribution to *Why Narrative?* Stephen Crites writes that experience is an incipient story because (i) experience is temporal (i.e., it takes place in time and thus has a sequential character), (ii) past experience is not lost but retained in memory, and (iii) humans illuminate new experience by consulting memory and 'placing' new experience within a (narrative) recollection of the past. (Crites 1989, 72-3)  In *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences* Donald Polkinghorne suggests that:

> narrative is a scheme by means of which human beings give meaning to their experience of temporality and personal actions. Narrative meaning functions to give form to the understanding of a purpose to life and to join everyday actions and events into episodic units. It provides a framework for understanding the past events of one's life and for planning future actions. It is the primary scheme by means of which human existence is rendered meaningful. (Polkinghorne 1988, 11)

Whatever the strengths and weaknesses (and biases) of the views of these individual authors, it is clear that they resonate with Newbigin's approach in two ways: (i) in a particular cultural setting humans indwell that culture's pattern of ordering and

making sense of experience, and (ii) this pattern (plausibility structure) has a fundamentally narrative character.  Newbigin's approach thus has the potential for creative dialogue with scholars in fields as varied as theology, hermeneutics and developmental psychology and, importantly, education.[4]

*World View as Story-Formed Life Orientation*
This emphasis on the narrative matrix of knowing, combined with Newbigin's awareness of the role of narrative plausibility structures in human activity, provides very fertile resources for a re-interpretation of the Christian understanding of world view, in a manner that addresses the shortcomings previously noted. In *Truth is Stranger Than It Used to Be*, Brian Walsh and Richard Middleton make extensive use of the category of 'metanarrative' to elaborate what they mean by a world view. They **[p.84>]** note that while their earlier influential book, *The Transforming Vision*, did not 'use the category of story to describe the Christian world view, it is precisely as a *narrative of God's intent to redeem a fallen creation'* that the Bible answers what they deem to be the four world view questions (Who are we? Where are we? What is the problem? What is the solution?) (Middleton and Walsh 1995, 64).

The re-interpretation of world view offered by British New Testament scholar N. T. Wright, which is based on the contribution of Walsh and Middleton, is extremely helpful for our purposes. Wright asserts that a world view has to do with the deepest presuppositions of a culture or society, and that it thus underlies and shapes that culture or society's conceptual understanding of the world. In Newbigin's terms, we could say that a world view is the most basic and overarching of the interpretative tools which people in a cultural tradition indwell.  Wright states that:

> Worldviews... are like the foundations of a house: vital but invisible.  They are that *through* which, not *at* which a society or individual normally looks; they form the grid according to which humans organize reality, not bits of reality that offer themselves for organization.  They are not usually called to consciousness or discussion unless they are challenged or flouted fairly explicitly, and when this happens it is usually felt to be an event of worryingly large significance. (Wright 1992, 125)

According to Wright:

> there are four things which worldviews characteristically do, in each of which the entire worldview can be glimpsed.  First... worldviews provide the *stories* through which human beings view reality.  Narrative is the most characteristic expression of worldview...

> Second, from these stories one can in principle discover how to answer the basic *questions* that determine human existence: who are we, where are we, what is wrong, and what is the solution?...

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[4] 4~For an extensive summary of the 'rediscovery of narrative' and its relevance to education, see chapter 5 of Bolt, 1993.

Third, the stories that express the worldview, and the answers which it provides to the questions of identity environment, evil and eschatology are expressed... in cultural *symbols*....

Fourth, worldviews include a praxis, a way-of-being-in-the-world. The implied eschatology of the fourth question (`what is the solution') necessarily entails *action*.... The choice of life aim reflects the worldview...; and so do the intentions and motivations with which the over-all aim goes to work. (Wright 1992, 123-4)

These four interacting functions of a worldview can be sketched as follows:

*Figure 1*
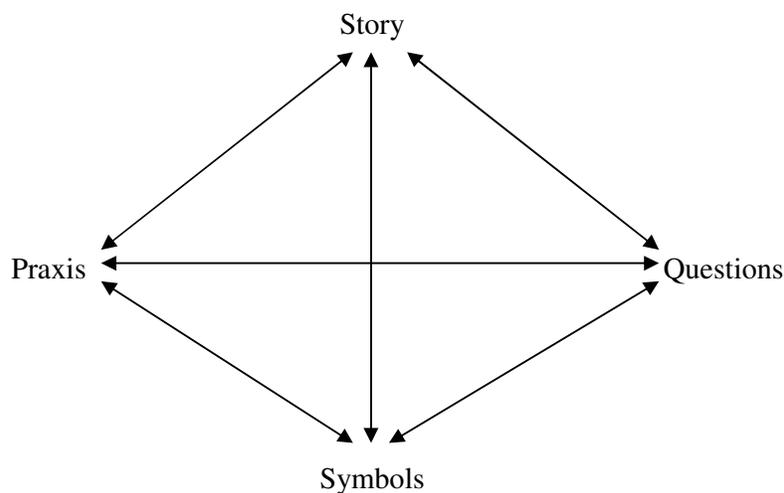


Wright's own formulation of these four functions of a world view suggests that the element of story is more basic, more fundamental in this configuration than the others. Wright states that narrative is the most characteristic expression of worldview, and notes that the 'questions' and 'symbols' are rooted in the world view story. In another context, Wright states that stories are 'a basic constituent of human life;' human life can be seen as 'grounded in and constituted by the implicit or explicit stories which humans tell themselves and one another' (Wright 1992, 38). In light of this, and against the background of Newbigin's insight into the fundamentally narrative character of plausibility structures, I suggest that story is best understood not as one 'function' of a world view, but rather as the matrix of a world view. A world view does not, as Wright suggests, provide stories; rather, an embracing, plausibility-giving story provides a worldview. A worldview is story-formed; we could say that a worldview is a kind of condensation or shorthand (a first ordering) of a life-shaping story.

In light of these considerations I suggest the following modification of Wright's sketch of the components of a world view (figure 2). In this configuration *memory* refers to a community or a culture's response, through time, to the world view questions identified by Wright (who are we, where are we, what is wrong, and what is

the solution?). In memory the response to these questions is oriented to where the story has been in the past. A living memory is essential; Stanley Hauerwas is correct when he observes that if a story is to remain vibrant and formative, there must be a community of people capable of remembering and reinterpreting that story. In a living story, he maintains, people draw strength by remembering. A remembered story renders a community or culture capable of ordering their new experience in a manner consistent with the story (Hauerwas 1981, 54).

The element of *vision* (or critical imagination) is deeply rooted in memory and also embodies a response to the basic worldview questions. But here the 'beckoning' aspect of the world view story is central. The focus is not on what has been but on what ought to be. As Walsh and Middleton (and also Wright) assert, the world view questions elicit not only a descriptive response, **[p.87>]** but simultaneously a visional response; a world view embraces an understanding *of* the world and *for* the world (see also Olthuis, 1985). There is always an awareness, made explicit in the third and fourth world view questions, that things are (not yet) as they should be. A world view story, by providing its adherents with the resources to envision something different and better, inspires people to live toward the vision. This dynamic is clearly visible, for example, in the writings of the Old Testament prophets.

Because it is oriented to what ought to be, vision has the quality of being critical of both the present and the past. In a story-formed world view, then, the present moment of a community or culture stands in a creative tension between the resources of memory and the critique of vision.

The vision element of story-formed world view is what Wolterstorff has in mind, I believe, when he calls on Christian education to pay attention to the wounds of our world. Because vision has the character of critical imagination, it does not rest easy with, or overlook suffering and pain in the world. Rather, it invites the story participants to join in living toward the envisioned solution of those problems. For Wolterstorff, the 'shalom community' functions as the vision toward which Christians are called to live.

As noted by Wright, world view stories are also embodied in key cultural *symbols*. These symbols, he suggests, can often be identified by the fact that challenging them, produces anger or fear. Symbols can be events, rites, or things. Some of these will be cultic in nature. Cultural symbols are often expressed in architecture; modem secular cities are dominated by office towers rather than cathedrals. The powerful connection of world views and symbols is succinctly captured by Langdon Gilkey when he states that symbols:

> shape or express the understanding of reality, of space and time, of human being and its authenticity, of life and its goods, of appropriate behaviour, symbols which together constitute the unique gestalt, the identity or uniqueness of a social group. (Gilkey 1981,43)

Finally, a story-formed world view incorporates an *ethos* (called 'praxis' in Wright's model). This dimension brings into view an understanding of the fundamental vocation of humans **[p.88>]** in the world. In terms of the Christian story, this vocation might be characterised as 'stewardship of creation,' or 'responsible discipleship.' The ethos dimension focuses on key life aims in terms of which people are prepared to

invest their energies and talents. These basic life aims serve to define a sense of character, i.e., a sense of the kind of life practice the story calls forth. Character, says Stanley Hauerwas, has to do with an orientation that our life a theme.

> Our character is the result of our sustained attention to the world that gives a coherence to our intentionality. Such attention is formed and given content by the stories through which we have learned to form the story of our lives. To be moral persons is to allow stories to be told through us so that our manifold activities gain a coherence that allows us to claim them for our own...

> Our character is constituted by the rules, metaphors, and stories that are combined to give a design and unity to the variety of things we must and must not do in our lives. If our lives are to be reflective and coherent our vision must be ordered around dominant metaphors or stories. (Hauerwas 1974, 74)

### *Education as Cultural Story-telling*
Education can be understood as a mutual undertaking (or covenant) between generations to learn a cultural way of life in the setting of the vast theatre of creation. In this covenant an older generation undertakes to share with a younger generation what that generation needs to know in order to live well and to carry forward a story-formed tradition into the future.

The image of 'covenant' clearly signals that education is not merely something one generation does *to* another. True, setting the direction and the framework of education is primarily the responsibility of those who have reached a certain stage of maturity. But education is never a one-way street. The providers of education also benefit from the engagement. The process of education enables an older generation to deepen its appropriation of a tradition in all the dimensions discussed in the preceding section (memory, vision, symbols and ethos). And members of the younger generation bring their own unique gifts, their own often profound insight and sensitivities to the covenant of learning as active participants.

Education is always a pressing human concern for two key reasons. The first reason has to do with the design of the human maturational process. Humans go through a long, drawn-out process of growth and development. Consequently education is *necessary*; the wisdom and knowledge we need to live in the world is gained gradually, over time. Human knowing-for-life cannot be imprinted on a computer chip and installed in a machine brain, ready to be switched on.

The second reason education is such a basic concern is that no human being, since the dawn of time, has appeared on the scene at the beginning of human cultural development. In biblical terms, from the beginning humans have been busy 'dressing and keeping the garden.' This process of exploring and interacting with the whole host of creation is inherently a *learning* process. A culture or way of life develops as people who share a bond of time and space give shape to a pattern of living which embodies this learning. This pattern will include the development of distinctive ways of interacting with other people, with animals and vegetative life, with the inanimate world, and with what that culture takes to be God. Over time, a culture develops a fund of what people have learned, in experience, in these various kinds of interaction. Each generation is concerned to share this fund, this inheritance, with the rising generations.

In the dynamic interaction of these two factors (the stretched-out maturing process and the cultural accumulation of learning) the process of education takes place. Each new generation is called to grow to maturity, and each new generation needs to be initiated into the accumulated knowledge embodied in a culture's shared way of life. Education is a process of bringing a new generation into full participation in a way of life, so that eventually the new generation can take responsibility for shaping that cultural way of life into the future. Education, in this broad sense, readies young learners to become responsible carriers of a cultural tradition, and enables older learners (teachers) to remain creatively involved in deepening their own knowledge-for-life.

If, as Newbigin suggests, the plausibility structure of a cultural tradition has a narrative cast (or if, in my words, a community or cultural worldview is story-formed), then it makes sense of conceive of education as a process of cultural story-telling. When we educate we are engaged in telling the next generation the cultural story of what previous generations have found important to know in order to keep their way of life healthy and flourishing. In education, we tell the rising generation (those who represent the future) about the past learning experience of our culture or community, in order to enable them to understand where we have come from, and why certain things are important.[5]

Education involves development in all four dimensions of a story-formed worldview. In the present context we will focus specifically on the role of memory and vision. In elementary and secondary education the memory dimension must receive particular attention. The early years of the educational process are a time primarily of cultural initiation, a time of incorporating a new generation into a tradition. Earlier I noted that a cultural tradition develops a fund of what people have come to know in encountering their world. This fund constitutes the curriculum of the educational process. The process of education allows the rising generation to 'catch up' with cultural developments and equips them to turn the cultural *fund* of knowledge into cultural *capital*—resources for maintaining and shaping a way of engaging in life. Through the process of education learners develop an ownership stake in a living cultural memory.

Newbigin underscores the fact that initiation in cultural memory is never an end in itself. Comparing school learning to learning to ride a bike, he stresses the need to submit oneself to the 'tradition of bike riding' until one has internalized that tradition (Newbigin 1989, 43). He asserts that a young scientist must submit herself to the authority of a tradition for a long time before she is ready to work alongside someone doing original research (Newbigin 1989, 45). But submitting to a tradition is never the end of the matter. Newbigin writes that teachers should never be content that students accept something on their authority; they must strive to reach the point where students come to see for themselves that something is true (Newbigin 1989, 41). The authority

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5   7  Walter Brueggemann in his book *The Creative Word: Canon as Model for Biblical Education* points out that in the Old Testament Scriptures, whenever the younger generation asks "What does it all mean?" the response of the older generation is to tell the old, old story (the story of what God has done, is doing and will do, and of how Israel is called participate, not spectate in this drama).  He points out that story is the primal mode of learning in the Bible. To "give Torah" is to give instruction, and the Bible does this in the first place by telling a story. (Brueggemann, 1982: chapter 1)

of a tradition (cultural memory) can never serve as a substitute for a personal grasping of truth. Acceptance of the authority of a tradition should always be directed to the point at which people see for themselves that something is true (or not true) (Newbigin 1989, 48). Such persons are ready to carry a tradition forward innovatively, and to re-forge a tradition in the light of new experience.

While Newbigin here highlights the gradually emerging role of personal responsibility (ownership) in learning, it seems to me that the development of the *vision* (critical imagination) dimension of a worldview is also in play. A one-sided stress on memory can be extremely stifling. In schooling, a *fixation* on memory is often associated with what is called "traditional" education, which strongly emphasises the handing on of important bodies of knowledge. In a classical traditional education these bodies of knowledge, accumulated in the past, are treated as if they are essentially complete; the tradition is a received tradition, and the teachers job is to pass it on.

The vision dimension of our community and cultural stories highlights the fact that a cultural way of life cannot simply be past-oriented. Vision invites and beckons those who live in the story to orient themselves toward an image of how life ought to be. Guided by the visional element, the educational story told to each new generation must be open to being reshaped. A story emphasis thus acts as a safeguard against rigid educational conservatism.[6]

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[6] 8.       In his effort to reflect on Christian education in narrative terms, John Bolt also uses the categories of memory and vision. He describes the Christian school as 'a visionary community of memory' (Bolt 1993, 188). In his elaboration of what this means, however; Bolt primarily stresses the school's task in building memory. He States that the school's 'very nature as an educational institution qualifies it and defines it by the special task of remembering' (Bolt 1989). The school passes on the community's 'civilizational memory, its cultural wisdom' (Bolt 1989). Bolt notes that this confirms the traditional view of the school as a place which develops cultural literacy. The task of the school is 'to prepare its students for citizenship in a Specific community, to mould character, and to encourage virtues consonant with the historic values and traditions of that community. Teachers are thus custodians of a civilization and students its heirs' (Bolt 1989). Bolt goes on to mention the importance of accumulating shared symbols, and to stress that wisdom is rooted in memory and tradition.

In all of this, the Christian school's unique challenge, to be in the world but not of it, receives no attention. From Bolt's discussion of the school as a community of memory one would not get the impression that cultural memory is world view-loaded, and that one of the tasks of the school is to enable students to practice critical spiritual discernment with regard to the dominant (or, for that matter, traditional) cultural memory.

This is not to say that the dimension of vision is totally lacking in Bolt's discussion. Since the narrative context of Christian education is the Christian story, it should he oriented 'God's redemptive mission' (Bolt 1989). Bolt does not elaborate in this context how this vision dimension provides a critical assessment of the school's cultivation of civilisational memory. No doubt Bolt would assert that this occurs through the schools cultivation of a Christian mind (i.e., teaching students to think Christianly). This takes us back to our previous consideration of the shortcomings of the 'Christian mind' approach; it is difficult to see how Bolt's use of narrative categories represents an advance with regard to these shortcomings.

It appears that the dimension of vision, particularly as it stands in critique of memory, remains underdeveloped in Bolt's narrative re-interpretation of the task of the school. In fact, in his book, this narrative re-interpretation becomes a means of buttressing an essentially traditionalist model of the school as the custodian of culture.

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The authors of *A Vision with a Task* stress this point when they state that 'Christians live between memory and vision,' between the establishment of God's kingdom and its completion. 'Through God's grace we may erect signpoints of that kingdom. The Christian school does this by seeking to conserve, discern and reform' (Stronks and Blomberg 1993, 17-18).

### Curriculum

The interplay of memory and vision in education becomes clearly visible if the nature of the educational curriculum is understood in the light of education as cultural story-telling. The curriculum of education provides an overview and systematisation of what participants in a culture have learned in past engagement in and with the world. This implies a dynamic understanding of curriculum. It does not consist of fixed bodies of knowledge, as in traditional education. Rather, the curriculum is a fund of knowing which we retell to inspire a faithful way of life in the rising generation.

When the systematised curriculum becomes an end in itself i.e., when 'covering' bodies of knowledge (information) becomes the thrust of general education, something has gone wrong. Perhaps an analogy is helpful in this regard. The systematic curriculum is to a cultural story what systematic theology is to the **[p.93>]** biblical story. Systematic theology is important, but it is not an end in itself. Focusing just on systematic theology is not the most effective way to incorporate learners into active participation in the biblical story. Similarly, while a teacher probably needs a good conceptual grasp of systematic curriculum, teaching organised bodies of knowledge should not become an end in itself in general education.

If we apply this approach mathematics, for example, we need not regard maths as a body of information, quite fixed and unchanging because it simply copies a fixed order of reality. Rather, maths can be seen as a *record*, an *account* of human knowing in relation to the numerical possibilities (order) of creation. In other words, math can be viewed as a compilation of the fruitful results of such exploration. As such, the mathematical record is open to reinterpretation. Innovations occur in mathematics. Sometimes, as a dimension of cultural change, new systems of math arise, if they seem to promise more fruitful, more explanatory possibilities for our knowing of, our relating to, numerical reality. But in any particular period of time, education must make the existing and relevant cultural fund of mathematical knowing available to the learner. A growing young person cannot fully participate in culture unless they have some handle on the cultural fund of our knowing in relation to numerical reality. But, especially in elementary and secondary education, the focus remains on the numerical dimension of concrete reality as an arena of human engagement, and not on an abstracted science of mathematics. And even our knowing of numerical reality, as recorded in mathematics, must remain open to further transformation in light of the visional dimension of our story.

### Christian Educational Witness: Indwelling the Story

If education is, at bottom, a process of cultural story-telling (i.e., if its underlying aim is to foster participation in a cultural story and 'absorption' of its plausibility structure), then the educational engagement of Christians should be imbued with, penetrated by the biblical story and its life-world. Each new generation of Christians needs to be steeped in that story so that their lives can tell the same story as the

biblical story. As Newbigin puts it, the important thing for Christians is not so much understanding the biblical text as it is understanding the world *through* the text (see Newbigin 1989, 98). Christians are to live in the biblical story as the community whose story it is, and from that indwelling they try to understand and cope with the events of their time in order to carry the story forward (Newbigin 1989, 99). A plausibility structure, Newbigin continues, is necessarily embodied in an actual community which carries forward a tradition as it meets new situations (Newbigin 1989). The Christian community is 'invited to *indwell* the story, *tacitly* aware of it as shaping the way we understand, but *focally* attending to the world' that community lives in, so that the community can confidently (though not infallibly) increase its understanding of the world (Newbigin 1989, 38). For Newbigin, this is a key dimension of the meaning of the biblical theme of the 'renewing of the mind (Newbigin 1989).

As Newbigin notes, however, in a modern pluralist society Christians encounter competing and conflicting stories. This situation is complicated by the fact that one particular story may gain a cultural advantage by dominating the cultural mind set and controlling the means of education. As Charles Scriven puts it,

> our world sustains a variety of shared stories and shared histories. These nourish and authorize a variety of ways of life. Within a region, country or civilization, certain commitments broadly shared may unite the existing diversity into a prevailing cultural outlook that is the dominant vehicle of challenge to Christian existence. (Scriven 1988, 62)

On Newbigin's analysis, this is exactly what has happened in secularised Western culture; the story of post-Enlightenment modernity has dominated the public square of our culture, and has won control of the cultural story-telling in our societies educational institutions.

This situation raises two important challenges for contemporary Christians who seek to indwell the biblical story in the area of education. First, they face the challenge of maintaining a keen critical consciousness with regard to their own educational efforts, and with regard to the education of their children. As responsible followers of Christ, Christians need to ask *whose* memory, *what* vision, and *which* symbols and ethos are present in the education they offer, and particularly in the education they and their children receive. The teaching of history or science or any other subject will always embody an ultimate story. The basic allegiance of Christians is to the story told in the Bible. The challenge facing Christians is to measure, by the standard of this story, the cultural memory, vision, symbols and ethos communicated to the next generation. For Christians who are concerned that education enable a new generation to indwell the biblical story, these cannot be matters of indifference.

If the Gospel is an embracing story, then Christians cannot avoid challenging its rivals. In particular, the cultural dominance of the story of post-Enlightenment modernity (and its myth of neutrality) cannot be permitted to stand unchallenged. But how should this challenge be framed? According to Newbigin, the whole orientation of Christians should be one of *witness* to the Gospel. The biblical story challenges the claims of the reigning world view primarily 'through the witness of a community which indwells the story the Bible tells' (Newbigin 1989, 97). By 'acting out' the

story, and by articulating what this story means for cultural policy and practice in areas such as education, Christians witness to the truth of the Gospel story.


*Conclusion*
This chapter began by noting that the aim of Christian schooling is typically articulated in terms of fostering a life of discipleship. It was observed that this encompassing aim has been pursued through world view formation, and this has often been identified with the development of a Christian mind. But as Wolterstorff's critique indicates, the 'Christian mind' ideal is not well suited to fostering practical discipleship. An exploration followed concerning the possibility of re-interpreting 'world view' as a story-formed life orientation, a narrative-inspired way of learning into life. Further, an analysis was presented of the components of a world view and it was suggested that these have practical import for the practice of education, if education is understood as a process of cultural story-telling.

The metaphor of education as cultural story-telling speaks directly to Wolterstorff's call for a new model of the curriculum, and expands this call beyond the postsecondary level. The analysis presented in this chapter goes beyond Wolterstorff's proposal of a 'shalom community' model, I suggest. The 'shalom community' metaphor focuses on the *vision* component of Christian educational story-telling, and particularly on the *content* of that vi **[p.96>]** sion. The analysis presented in this chapter takes a step back, as it were, to examine the four structural components of a Story-formed world view. These structural components can serve as basic organising principles in constructing a learning program which embodies the foundational image of schooling as biblically-guided cultural story-telling. In other words, the structural components (memory, vision, symbols, and ethos) can serve as guides in constructing a learning program which draws students into a community of people committed to living the gospel story in contemporary culture. These components can assist Christian educators in sorting out how Wolterstorff's 'shalom community' orientation can be given curricular substance.

The metaphor of education as cultural story-tel1ing, coupled with Newbigin's challenge to Christians to 'act out' the gospel story in the world, also indicates how Christian schools can participate in 'reclaiming the future.' If our calling as Christians is to participate in culture as a community of witness which indwells the story told by the Bible, then the fundamental task of schooling is to draw a new generation into the plot of this story and to equip them to carry it forward. Our story is fundamentally one which invites us to testify to God 's great reclamation project. Our calling is to live as disciples who witness to that reclamation while trusting that the final outcome of the story rests in God's hands.