

kelde gedachte als ongereformeerd en onschriftuurlijk heeft kunnen veroordeelen. En daar staat tegenover, dat de Belijdenis juist niet spreekt van een algemeene werking des Geestes, waardoor de zonde weerhouden wordt in het hart des zondaars. Wij verzoeken daarom met alle vrijmoedigheid nog eens, dat de kerken het ongereformeerde en onschriftuurlijke van onze beschouwing in het licht stellen. Kunnen ze dat niet, dat houden wij ze voor God verantwoordelijk om belijdenis te doen van hare booze daden ten opzichte van ons. En deze verantwoordelijkheid rust op ieder ambtsdrager en lid, die bewust met deze gruwelen medegaat.

H. H.

DR. CLARENCE BOUMA'S NEW PLATFORM

The 'National Union of Christian Schools convened some three months ago in Chicago, Illinois. In the list of names of those educators, invited by the Board to address the Convention, appears the name of Dr. C. Bouma. His deliverance was published and constitutes one of the ten lectures or papers comprising a booklet, bearing the title, "Educational Convention Papers." Being a member of the Union I received a copy.

I read and re-read Bouma's paper. I am prepared now, to make a few remarks. I feel constrained to do so, for the situation which Bouma's paper reflects is fraught with danger for our Christian Schools. Bouma, together with that group of educators of which he is a member, would place the Christian School on a platform sufficiently inclusive (to use his own terminology) to permit the co-operation of all Orthodox Christians. Dr. Bouma admits that he is not engaged in the exploitation of a brand new idea. Fact is that such men as Dr. H. Beets and the late Rev. Johannes Groen have been wanting this thing for many years. Dr. Bouma, however, made the co-operation of all orthodox Christians appear attractive, practical and achievable. Many, upon reading his paper, will say: "It can be done in Bouma's way." Here is the reason for the appearance of my article.

From a purely formal point of view the paper of the doctor cannot be called a commendable piece, of work. In the opening paragraph the author makes the following assertion, viz.: "You have undoubtedly taken notice of the discussions relative to *this problem* which have appeared recently in 'Christian School Magazine'..." The term, "this problem," induces the cautious reader to search the surroundings for a statement of it. He discovers, however, that the author makes mention of a problem, yet failed to assert what that problem may be. The reader is left in the dark. It is possible that the author expects his readers to regard his theme as a statement of the problem. It reads: "Can the Distinctive Character of the Christian School be Maintained if we Solicit and Obtain the Co-operation; of All Orthodox Christians?" This is no formulation of a problem. The author should have prefixed to his theme the adverb: "How." He should have written: "How can the Distinctive Character of the Christian School be Maintained if we Solicit and Obtain the Co-operation of All Orthodox

Christians?" Had this been done the reader would immediately know.

Further, it is most difficult to detect the logical connection between the author's theme and the three divisions of his composition. They read: "(I) Let us be active in propagating the Christian school idea among all Christian groups of our country. (II) Let us maintain unwaveringly whatever is really fundamental, essential, distinctive in the basis of our Christian school system as we have it. (III) Let us welcome all fellow Christians willing to co-operate upon this basis into our movement, whatever their church affiliation; and let us urge those who feel they cannot stand on our distinctive platform to organize on a platform more acceptable to themselves."

The composition contains paragraphs which lack unity. Attend to the following: "Can we solicit and obtain the co-operation of all orthodox Christians and still maintain the distinctive character of our schools? - This is virtually a question as to the platform upon which the movement rests. Shall we make our platform more general, less specific, more inclusive? Shall we invite those fellow Christians outside of our own group to join hands with us on the same platform which we now occupy? Would this be fair? Should we not, if we are really in earnest about soliciting the active support of other Christian groups not standing upon our distinctive Reformed platform, be ready to adopt a platform in which there can be nothing that is offensive to such groups?"

"I trust," so the author continues, "you all realize that *this question* is basic for the future development of our Christian school system."

Now, the preceding paragraph contains no less than six interrogative sentences. Hence, the reader will invariably ask, "Which question?" Again, the reader is left in the dark.

Again, words with a vastly different meaning seem to be regarded by the doctor as synonyms. Ultimately, so the author avers, the issue between those who do, and those who do not wish to widen, to generalize, the platform of our schools, hinges on the question as to just what each considers essential and accidental in the platform upon which our school system stands today.

"Now it seems to me," thus the author continues, "the essential, the distinctive character of our Christian school system can be reduced to two elements, to two propositions."

Here the doctor seems to identify the platform and the character of the school system. Otherwise the term platform is regarded as a synonym of the term character.

And then this: "The first pertains to method, the how of this school training. The answer to the 'how' of this school training I would formulate in these words: The parents, being the responsible agents for the education of their children, operate and control the schools." According to the professor, the method of the instruction and the agents controlling the schools are identical. This, to be sure, cannot be.

The doctor likes to engage in word-play, too. Attend to the following: "Our platform must be distinctive, but it must in no sense be ecclesiastical. The doctrinal standards of this or that denomination are not to be taught in our schools. What should be taught is that specific world and life view, which we commonly call Calvinism, and Calvinism in this sense is a bigger, more inclusive, and a differently articulated thing than the particular standards of any denomination. Calvinism in this sense is not one of many church creeds; it is fundamental Christianity come to its fullest and richest expression in present-day thought and life. To be sure, its theological implications are expressed in the various creeds of the Reformed and the Presbyterian churches, but Calvinism as a world and life view is not an ecclesiastical standard. Calvinism in its fundamental implications is nothing hut Christian Theism come to its own.

"Taken in this sense, Calvinism is not exclusive' in relation to the standpoint of ecclesiastically non-reformed fellow Christians. It is inclusive." So far Dr. Bouma.

We agree, it all sounds very beautiful, yet it means nothing. One question: What is that Calvinism which is a bigger, a more inclusive, and a differently articulated thing than the particular standards of any denomination? Define and exhibit, please, the content of this more inclusive Calvinism. Dr. Bouma avers that it is difficult to state in final form and in a definite complete set of propositions what that distinctive view of life really is. Great spiritual principles and realities, says the doctor, often elude our grasp. That is true, and therefore I would recommend that we permit the Christian school to continue on its present distinctly Reformed platform until Dr. Bouma succeeds in grasping and defining these great spiritual principles and realities.

I repeat, from a formal point of view the production of the professor is faulty. It is these defects which helped to make the composition a rather vague and indefinite piece of work.

What is the author really aiming at? It is not an easy matter' to discover what the author wants. One must read between lines and occasionally remove a "nay" and in the room thereof place a "yea." Let us attempt to trace the doctor's path of reasoning.

The author informs us -that there are two desires within him which clash. Dr. Bouma is at variance with himself. As a supporter of the free Christian school he desires to be distinctive, to be separate and to live alone. Says the professor: "As supporters of the free Christian primary school, we realize that we are and ought to be distinctive. This desire seems to urge us, accordingly, to be distinct and apart from the majority of fellow citizens."

On the other hand, as a promoter of the cause of Christian education, he desires to be of service to others and to share with others the good things he enjoys. It is his desire that others join him. Hearken once more unto the professor. Says he: "But the promoters of the cause of education are also conscious of another desire,

viz., to be of service to others. We also recognize the obligation to share with our fellow citizens, especially our fellow Christians, the good things we enjoy. We would have others join us."

There you have the two desires clashing in Bouma's soul. It is strange that the two should clash. They are also present in my soul, and get along very well together. No trouble whatsoever. On the one hand, I desire to be distinct and to be separate. On the other hand it is also my desire to be of service to my fellow citizens' and to share with them the good things I enjoy. And the two desires are at peace with each other. What is more, both desires are being satisfied, ever.

Further, the fact that these two desires of mine are at one, means that I who desire to be of service to my fellow man am the one who desires to be distinct and to be separate. In other words, the desire to be of service to my fellow citizen is at one a desire to be distinct. In fact, it is our conviction that only as long as we are distinct will we continue to serve;

Now, then, the very fact that the two desires clash in Bouma's soul indicates that his desire to be of service to his fellow citizens as a promoter of the cause of Christian education is at one a desire to sacrifice his distinctiveness upon the altar of greater service. If this were not true the clash would be psychologically impossible. The matter is clear now. Bouma is conscious of two desires, viz., the desire to be distinct, to be separate and the desire to broaden out, to become more general and less specific and that in the interest of greater service. It cannot be otherwise but that two such desires clash. Bear in mind that I am judging the writer out of his own mouth.

Dr. Bouma goes on to tell us that the conflict between the two desires gave rise to a problem, viz., How can we solicit and obtain the co-operation of all orthodox Christians and still maintain the distinctive character of our schools. It is difficult to see how a problem of this kind can possibly rise out of a conflict between two such desires as stipulated above. However, Dr. Bouma asserts that it happened and we will take his word for it.

Let us analyse the so-called problem or rather restate it. In doing so it must be borne in mind that it is the desire of Dr. Bouma that a certain number of distinct groups of orthodox Christians co-operate in the matter of Christian instruction. These several groups, however, must retain their distinctiveness. So the doctor insists. "Does this mean," so he asks, "that we are introducing ecclesiastical divisions into what ought to be a unitedly Christian school movement? Does this mean that we say to all who do not belong to a Reformed or Christian Reformed church: You cannot join hands with us? Does this mean that we demand of Christians not belonging to these denominations that they shall occupy with us the platform of the creed of our particular denominations? Far from it." And again: "But if some err on the one side by failure to be distinctive, it cannot be denied that we are at times in danger of falling into the other extreme of making the Christian school movement ecclesiastical,

denominational. This is likewise a mistake. Then we are inclusive, though we must be inclusive in the best sense of the word. The Christian school is not a denominational affair."

It is plain that Dr. Bouma insists that each distinct non-reformed group, willing to co-operate, shall maintain their distinctiveness nevertheless. This is one of the elements constituting the doctor's problem. Any formulation of the problem should express it. Let us now restate the doctor's problem. Here it is: "How can we maintain the distinctiveness of our Christian schools and obtain, in the matter of Christian instruction, the co-operation of various non-reformed Christian groups, which groups shall, even though they co-operate, maintain their distinctiveness."

This is the problem which Dr. Bouma laid before his audience. And he claims to have found the solution. And the doctor appeared before an audience of educators with the problem and his solution thereof.

Did the doctor actually succeed in solving the problem? He did not. The problem cannot be solved. Let us be thoroughly aware of the implications. The distinctive character of the platform upon which our Christian schools rest must be maintained. The non-reformed groups, whose co-operation is sought, shall also maintain their distinctiveness. Yet their co-operation must be obtained and that on the basis of a platform constituted of those elements expressive of our distinctiveness. Let me repeat, it cannot be done. It will never happen. It ought to be plain why it cannot be done. If certain non-reformed groups agree to co-operate with us on the basis of a platform constituted of those essential elements expressive of our distinctive character it means that they have embraced those elements responsible for our distinctiveness. In other words, they will have become like unto us. For Dr. Bouma will have to concede that, in general, parents want their children taught only those things which, they, the parents, themselves believe. I repeat, if parents of non-reformed faith agree to co-operate on the basis of our distinctive platform it is because such parents have changed their religious views and are now at one with our distinctive platform. In other words, they will have become like unto us. Yet Bouma, it appears, insists that these non-reformed groups shall, even though they agree to co-operate, maintain their distinctive character.

We now grasp the situation. Dr. Bouma appears before a group of educators for the purpose of telling them how a thing can become like unto something else from which it differs and yet remains what it is. In other words, Dr. Bouma will explain to the group of educators how the impossible can be done.

And these pedagogues, I understand, listened with rapt attention while the doctor explained to them how such things are brought about. And when the doctor had spoken the pedagogues, assembled, agreed that they had been listening to words of profound wisdom. For, mark you, the address of the doctor was printed. Copies of

that speech are even now being distributed among the members of the Union. The Union, permit me to say, is engaged in the praise of folly.

But did the doctor actually succeed in explaining to his audience how it is possible for a thing to become like unto something else from which it differs and yet remain what it is. He did not. This is very evident from his answer to the question, "Can the distinctive character of the Christian school be maintained if we solicit and obtain the co-operation of 311 orthodox Christians, if these Christians (the doctor should have added) maintain their distinctive characteristics?" We have pointed out that the doctor's elucidation of his subject clearly indicates that this last clause should have been added. Now, then, let us attend to the reply. It is this: "Let us maintain unwaveringly whatever is really fundamental, essential, distinctive in the basis of our Christian school system **3s** we have it."

It ought to be clear to all that the doctor is not answering his question. He asks: "How can a thing become like unto something else and yet remain what it is?" And the reply that this "something else must remain what it is" is, evidently, not the reply required by the question. The two, viz., the question and its answer are very poorly mated. There is absolutely no connection between the two. Whereas the essay proper was meant to be a development of that question, and whereas the question and its answer are unrelated, and whereas the question is at once the theme of the essay it follows that the theme and its essay are altogether unrelated.

Had the doctor not insisted that the non-reformed groups, whose co-operation he would obtain, must maintain their distinctive character, he would have been able to appear before his audience with a solution. Had he asked how we can maintain the distinctive character of our Christian schools and obtain the co-operation of non-reformed groups without insisting that these groups must remain what they are, even though they agree to co-operate, he would have been asking a sensible question, one which he at least could have answered. Fact is, that he did appear before his audience with this very question. However, the doctor, later on, added an element which converted his question into a piece of nonsense.

But supposing Dr. Bouma had not converted his question into nonsense by insisting that the non-reformed groups shall maintain their characteristics, could his answer in that case be regarded as a suitable reply? In no wise. The admonition to maintain unwaveringly whatever is really fundamental, essential, distinctive in the basis of our Christian school system as we have it, I say, this admonition is no reply to the question as to whether the distinctive character of the Christian school can be maintained if we solicit and obtain the co-operation of all orthodox Christians.

The question which the doctor put to his audience requires an altogether different answer. He should have replied **3s** follows: "We can maintain the Reformed char-

acter of our Christian schools and at once obtain the co-operation of non-reformed groups if such groups cease to be non-reformed and become Reformed. On the other hand, if both we and the groups, whose co-operation we seek, insist on maintaining their distinctive character, co-operation is not possible."

This should have been Bouma's reply. It is the only possible one. The assertion, "Let us maintain unwaveringly whatever is really distinctive, fundamental and essential in the basis of our Christian school system **3s** we have it" is frightfully meaningless **3s** a reply to the question which was made to serve as the theme of his paper.

It must not be supposed, however, that the treatise of the doctor is without a real theme. The contents of the paper make it very plain that Dr. Bouma is attempting to give an answer to the following question, viz., *How can we obtain, in the matter of Christian instruction, the co-operation of non-reformed groups.* It ought to be plain that there are but two answers. These non-reformed groups must become reformed or we must cease to be Reformed relative the platform which is to serve as a basis for the Christian school. One of two things must happen shall there be co-operation. However, Dr. Bouma has still another solution. He would place the Christian school upon a vague, neutral, indefinite, indistinct, colorless platform expressive of the doctrinal distinctiveness of no group. Bouma's paper clearly indicates this is the very thing he wants. Let us quote the doctor. Attend to the following assertions: "Let us maintain unwaveringly whatever is really fundamental, essential, distinctive in the basis of our Christian school system **3s** we have it. But, you immediately interpose, precisely what is essential, fundamental, distinctive in our Christian school system? --This is the crux of the matter. Ultimately the issue between those who do, and those who do not wish to widen, to generalize the platform of our schools, hinges on the question as to just what each considers essential and accidental in the platform upon which our school system stands today."

According to Dr. Bouma there are those who wish to widen, to generalize the platform of our Christian schools. Of this group Dr. Bouma is a member. We guarantee to prove that such is indeed the case. How would this group accomplish the thing they advocate? The first step in that direction would be to eliminate from the platform upon which the Christian schools stand non-essential elements, non-essential truths. Bouma would do so. Says he: "Any thinning out process in these matters of *fundamental truth* and conviction, must in my estimation, be rejected as **3** precarious and undesirable procedure. Let us maintain unwaveringly whatever is really *fundamental, essential, distinctive* . . ."

Bouma's admonition to cling to fundamental elements and essential truths, speaks volumes. It goes to show that there are those ready to cast aside the fundamental and the essential. Dr. Bouma, on the other hand, would retain the fundamental and the essential, but eliminate

the non-essential. That Bouma would like to see this happen is very plain. For in the following paragraph he attempts to distinguish between essential and non-essential elements. "But," says the doctor, "you immediately interpose, precisely what is essential, fundamental, distinctive in our Christian school system? . . ." "Now, it seems to me," so Bouma continues, "the essential, the distinctive character of our Christian school system can be reduced to two elements, two propositions."

• It is clear that the doctor is now ready to distinguish between the essential and the non-essential: That he has reference to doctrine is most clear from the following: "Now it seems to me the essential, the distinctive character of our Christian school system can be reduced to two propositions. The first pertains to the method, the 'how' of this school training. The second pertains to the content, the 'what' of this school training. And in reply to the 'what' of this school training I would say: The Calvinistic outlook upon the world and attitude toward God and fellow man forms the warp and woof of all instruction and training." And then this from the doctor's pen: "Does this mean that we are introducing ecclesiastical divisions into what ought to be a **unitedly Christian** school movement? Far from it. The doctrinal standards of this or that denomination are not to be taught in our schools."

It is plain that Dr. Bouma is letting the terms "essential" and non-essential apply to the truth. Non-fundamental truth, according to Bouma, should not enter into the construction of the platform, neither should such truth be taught. It is the Calvinistic outlook upon the world and attitude toward God and fellow man which forms the warp and woof of all instruction and training. The pedagogue, laboring in the Christian school, shall teach Calvinism. Not that Calvinism of which our creed is an expression, but a bigger, more inclusive, Calvinism. Calvinism in **3** sense in which it is not a church creed. (Page 8 of the pamphlet.) We shall see presently what that bigger Calvinism may be.

The question cannot be suppressed whether non-fundamental truth may be discarded even by the pedagogue. It must be remembered that also this truth is God's truth. Hence, the pedagogue who sets it aside is slapping God in the face. Yet Bouma advocates doing so and that in the interests of greater service. astounding! The pedagogue setting aside non-fundamental truth is greatly discrediting God's word, and fostering in his pupils **3** disrespect for God and His truth. Such a procedure would necessarily affect the standard of morality of the child. Only the big things count. The small things do not matter. Forget them. This principle, once having taken root in the soul of the child will bear fruit. And that fruit will be a loose life.

It is surprising that Dr. Bouma dare advocate discarding the non-essential truths. It should be remembered that he was a member of that committee which urged Synod to depose us for having departed from so-called non-fundamental truth. Does he mean to say that it is

the prerogative of the schoolmaster to set aside the non-essential? Is it his contention that the non-essential may be disregarded if only it is done in the interest of greater service? Dr. Bouma's inconsistencies are of such a nature **3s** cause one to, doubt his sincerity.

The thing which he proposes is fraught with danger. Who is able to determine in each instance to which category a truth belongs? Where will the line be drawn? What is to be the standard? And finally, is it **not** a rather hazardous matter to attempt to distinguish between **es**-sential and **nbn**-essential truth? Does the distinction really hold?

Thus we have succeeded in discovering the first step in this broadening-out process. What is next? According to Bouma these so-called fundamental truths should be formulated in such a way as not to militate against the creed of any one group. That is to say, these truths should be cast into a form characterized by indefiniteness and indistinctness. Let us quote from the doctor's paper. "To define and exhibit in detail the content of this world and life view is not the purpose of this address. *To put these principles into words, is our perennial task*, just as it is our perennial task as Christian thinkers, as Christian teachers to enter more fully into the depths of the fulness of the riches in Christ."

According to Bouma these fundamental principles must be put into words. These essential truths must be given a certain form. What must that form be? Let us hearken to Bouma. "Does this mean that we are introducing ecclesiastical divisions into what ought to be a unitedly Christian school movement? Far from it. The doctrinal standards of this or that denomination are not to be taught in our schools." And again: "But if some err on the **one** side by failure to be distinctive, it **cannot** be denied that we are at times in danger of falling into the other extreme of making the Christian school movement ecclesiastical, denominational. This is likewise a **mistake** . . . The school is not **3** denominational affair." And now this: "But though we recognize that the Christian schools ought in no sense to be church schools, many of us seem to have the idea that, after all, the only basis that ought to be expressed in the constitution of our organizations must be the Three Formulas of Unity of the Reformed churches.

"Now this," claims Bouma, "is a mistaken conception. The Three Formulas of Unity are not an adequate platform for our Christian school movement. . . In the propagation of the Christian school idea we should do all in our power to avoid and eliminate the ecclesiastical and denomination³¹ setting which seems to linger in the minds of many supporters of the movement. As ecclesiastical standards these formulas form the basis for all teaching and preaching in the Reformed and Christian Reformed churches. But these Three Formulas of Unity of the Reformed churches are not to be looked upon as the Three Formulas of Unity of the Christian school movement. After ³¹¹, the adoption of certain standards by a given denomination is a church matter, an ecclesi-

astical affair, and our schools are not church schools." So far Bouma.

It is plain, from the above quotations, that according to Bouma no church creed should be used as the basis of the Christian school. Now he shall have to admit that it is exactly the creed of a church which is expressive of the doctrinal distinctiveness of that church. Hence, the form in which these fundamental truths or principles shall be cast may reflect the doctrinal distinctiveness of neither the Reformed creed or any other creed. Such **3** formulation, or such a platform upon which the Christian school shall stand militates against no creed and is in harmony with every creed.

Will Dr. Bouma be so kind as to define the various elements constituting a platform of that nature. The brother admits that it is difficult to state in final form and in a definite set of complete propositions what that distinctive view of life, constituting that platform, **really** is. If the doctor ever spoke the truth he did then when he complained to his audience of the difficulty of our perennial task which is to exhibit and define in detail the content of this world and life view which, since it is in conflict with no creed, hasn't any enemy in the world but to the contrary is the friend of all. Such a platform must lack distinctiveness. It will have to be **amazingly** general and vague. A school standing on such **3** platform will also lack distinctiveness.

It is plain that the world and life view of which the doctor dreams is a nonentity, "een onding." Yet Bouma claims it's there, awaiting to be lived and expressed. The doctor has even decided upon **3** name. The child when born will be christened "Calvinism." Not the Calvinism found in John Calvin's Institutes, but a Calvinism which is a bigger, **3** more inclusive, and a differently articulated thing than the particular standards of any denomination.

Although Dr. Bouma admitted that he is not ready to formulate the basic principles of this bigger, more inclusive Calvinism, he does nevertheless refer us to certain attempts which have been made in the past. The doctor makes mention of commendable statements of the principles underlying the instruction of our schools. He refers those, who care to **persue** this subject any further, to such statements. Among the pamphlets to which he refers us, is the one published by the National Union of Christian Schools, entitled, "Basic Principles of the Christian Schools of America." These principles, drawn up by the Union give us an idea of what this new Calvinism will be like. Let us reproduce them.

- (a) The Bible is the Book of books. By virtue of its divine organic inspiration (II Peter 1:21) it is unique among all books. The Bible is not only the infallible rule of faith and conduct, but also the infallible guide of truth and righteousness. ⁴¹¹ school administration, instruction and discipline should be motivated by Biblical principles.
- (b) God is triune (Matt. 3:16, 17). He is the creator of all that is, the sustainer of ³¹¹ that exists, and

the ultimate end of all things (Rom. 11:33). God is transcendent (Isaiah 40) and immanent (Psalm 139), is the absolute loving Sovereign over all (Daniel 4:31); men should seek to do His will on earth as it is done in heaven.

- (c) Man is a fallen creature (Genesis 3). Though depraved, man is nevertheless an image-bearer of God (Eph. 2:5), and thru restraining grace he is able to do civil good (Romans 2:14). Though lost in sin, man can be saved thru faith in Christ (John 3:16); and thru restoring grace, in principle, is able to do spiritual good (I John 3:9).
- (d) The world is steeped in sin. All aspects of life, individual and family, social and political, industrial and economic, even the animal world, nature and things in animate, show the mars and scars, the subversions and perversions of sin (Romans 8:22). The virtue order and beauty which is still present in the world is a manifestation of God's goodness (Matthew 5:45).
- (e) The all-embracing objective of the school is to promote the glory of our covenant God: (a) by seeking in humble dependence upon God to equip the pupil for his supreme task, namely, to realize himself as God's image-bearer (II Tim. 3:7); and (b) by seeking in that same dependence upon God to re-constitute the sin-perverted by realizing God's Kingdom in all spheres and phases of life (Matt. 6:33). This is possible in principle thru Christ, who is not only the Creator (as the Logos) but also the recreator (John 1).
- (f) In determining the Course of Study to be offered, in preparing the lesson material, in giving the daily instruction, the above purpose should be consciously present as the all-embracing objective. To accomplish this great task, the teacher must have the fear of God in his heart and the determination to live it out in his profession; and he must utilize to the full whatever light God's special revelation sheds upon the various realms of human knowledge.

It is not our purpose to criticize these principles now. A few remarks. The above formulation is, to a degree, very specific, and reflects the doctrinal distinctiveness of certain creeds also. Principle (a) is the embodiment of certain tenets of the Reformed faith. Also principle (b), and to a degree principle (c). Principle (c), (d), (e), and (f) are expressive of the doctrinal distinctiveness of certain elements present in the creed of Pelagius and the creed of Dr. A. Kuyper. That is to say, among the elements constituting the above interpretation of religious principles are also found the theory of common grace, the doctrine of the free will of man, etc.

It is evident from the above formulation of principles that at least to a degree the doctrinal standards of the Reformed church are being used as a platform for the Christian school. And this platform is recommended and

praised by Dr. Bouma who insists that church creeds cannot be used as a platform of the Christian school. Here again the doctor is at variance with himself. This much is plain that this bigger Calvinism of the doctor is permeated with the theory of common grace.

A careful study of the Union's interpretation of principles and of Dr. Bouma's paper indicate that he is not adverse to creeds as such for he incorporates in his platform the creed of Dr. A. Kuyper. Dr. Bouma does not like the creed of the Reformed and the creed of the Presbyterian church. And that for the reason that these doctrinal standards contain elements which are obnoxious to him. It would not do to single out and cast aside the undesirable elements. A better way is to insist that these church creeds cannot be used as a platform of the Christian school and thereupon urge the friends of the cause of Christian instruction to set them aside in their entirety. This having been done, the doctor can now urge the friends of the Christian school to formulate again the truths of Scripture. And Dr. Bouma, together with the other leaders of the movement, will take care that the hateful elements are omitted, and certain other elements (common grace) inserted. How clever! We shall see whether the thing which Dr. Bouma advocates can, may, and need be done.

G. M. O.

TRUTH

The truth reminds one of the sun ;
Oft' in a shroud, behind a cloud
It hides. Anon.

The clouds give way, out bursts a ray
And then appears the sun.

Once Luther was put to the question:
"But, Doctor, how can we proceed,
What sustaineth our great undertaking?
More aid and more help we shall need.*

The Doctor, perplexed, asked this question
And, question-wise made his reply :
"Do threads hold the clouds in the heavens
Or cordage the clouds in the sky?"

—Contributed.

THANKSGIVING PROGRAM

The Girls' Society of the First Protestant Chr. Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Mich., expects to render a program on Thanksgiving Evening, November 25, at 7:00 P. M., at the church on corner Franklin St. and Fuller Ave.

A short miscellaneous program will be given after which the Rev. H. Hoeksema will speak on

"THE PRESENT DAY YOUTH."

This will be instructive as well as entertaining for both young and old.

DR. BOUMA'S NEW PLATFORM

In our previous article we subjected the so-called principles of the National Union of Christian Schools to a careful scrutiny. It became plain that these principles should not be made to serve as a basis for our Christian schools. For they are woefully deficient. Indefiniteness and vagueness are their chief characteristics. They are exceedingly brief and contain loopholes sufficiently large for the heretic to crawl through.

Yet Dr. Bouma, in that paper of his which we are criticizing, refers to these principles as "commendable statements of the principles underlying the instruction of our schools." He informed his audience that the Christian school should no longer be permitted to rest upon the confession. The three Formulas of Unity of the Reformed Churches should not be regarded as a fit basis for the Christian School. They must, by all means, be set aside to make room for some such statements of which the principles of the Union may be regarded as an example. "The Three Formulas of Unity (I am quoting Bouma) are not an adequate platform for our Christian School movement. They are ecclesiastical Standards but they are not intended to be and should not be looked upon as an adequate platform for the Christian School movement. In the propagation of the Christian School idea we should do all within our power to avoid and eliminate the ecclesiastical and denominational setting which seems to linger even in the minds of many supporters of the movement. If we should adopt these denominational standards as the platform of the movement, we should revert to the ecclesiastical basis which the movement has discarded some time ago. I do not condemn, wrote the doctor, reference to the Reformed church standards in the constitution of our societies, such as are found in most of them today, but we should remember that such references are merely a convenient, but very imperfect characterization of the principles upon which the school stands. In fact, all we have in these standards (and, let it be understood that I am speaking from the point of view of the Christian school movement) is a statement of certain theological implications of the *Christian world and life view which we seek to inculcate in our schools. Now as such these formulas of Unity may be referred to in our constitution, but it should not escape our attention that as such they are but a convenient label. They are by no means and under no considerations the one and real basis for our Christian school movement.

As ecclesiastical standards these formulas form the basis for all teaching and preaching in the Reformed and Christian Reformed Churches. These Formulas are, hence (I am still quoting Bouma) in a very real sense the basis, the foundation, of the particular churches which have adopted them. But these Three Formulas of Unity of the Reformed Churches are not to be looked upon as the Three Formulas of Unity of the Christian school movement. After all the adoption of certain standards of a given denomination is a church matter, an ecclesias-

tical affair, and our schools are not church schools. This in no wise militates against the standards of any church. It is only plain recognition of the fact that church affairs must be church affairs and that the School movement does not belong to 'these. If we wish to mention the church standards in our constitutions, it should be remembered that such mention bears a referential, not an exclusive Character; just as for example a good presbyterian standing on the same foundation as do we in the school movement might include a reference to the standards of his denomination, none of which standards are the same as the Reformed churches. For church life and theology à confessionnal basis is unavoidable and essential. Not so for the Christian school movement. So far Dr. Bouma.

It is plain that the author of the paper which we are criticizing, is of the conviction that a church creed is no fit platform for a Christian school. Let us attend to the reason. It is this: "After all the adoption of certain standards by a given denomination is a church matter, an ecclesiastical affair, and our church schools are not church schools."

According to Dr. Bouma, then, a school, the instruction of which is made to rest upon a creed of a given denomination becomes a church school. And our Christian schools may not be church schools.

Is Dr. Bouma correct? Does the adoption of a church creed as the basis of the instruction of an institution of learning convert that institution into a church school? And the answer to this question must be an unequivocal "no." What, let us ask, is a church school? A church school is an institution controlled and governed by the church. It is the church which determines the policies of such a school. Its instructors are appointed by the church, likewise its officials. Of such a school Calvin College is an example. Now I ask, do we place a school under the control of a given denomination when we adopt as a basis for the instruction of that school the creed of that denomination? No indeed. It appears that the reason why the instruction of a Christian school should not be made to rest upon a church creed of a given denomination is of no weight. It does not hold.

Let us attend a little more closely to Dr. Bouma's reason for insisting that a church creed of a given denomination may not enter into the construction of the platform of a Christian school. This being done, such a school, avers the doctor, will have been converted into a church school. We wish to point out that if Dr. Bouma should get his way our schools would cease to be Christian. If Dr. Bouma would have the courage to be consistent he should have to insist that the friends of the Christian school remove from the platform upon which the school is made to rest, the various religious elements, every one of them, including the tenets of his so-called bigger Calvinism. Let us make this plain. Dr. Bouma well knows that the church of **Jesus Christ** has expressed itself relative to some very important and vital matters. The sum total of the various creeds of the

Christian church contains a doctrine of God, of man, of sin, of Christ, of salvation, etc. Keep in mind, now, that Dr. Bouma insists that no church creed shall enter into the construction of the platform upon which the Christian school is to rest. Yet that platform, according to Bouma, must have something to say concerning the vital matters of religion. Also the platform of the Christian school must be constituted of a doctrine of God, of a doctrine of man, of a doctrine of the world, of a doctrine of sin and redemption. And the specific Principles of the Union is composed of a doctrine of man, of a doctrine of God, of a doctrine of sin and redemption. The platform is therefore a creed. Now then, if Dr. Bouma shall succeed in avoiding that the Christian school be placed on a platform constituted of a church creed of a given denomination, he must see to it that the various elements constituting this platform differ *materially* from the elements or doctrines comprising a church creed. In other words, Dr. Bouma's new platform must differ materially from the sum total of the various church creeds. If such be not the case, that is, if Dr. Bouma's new platform turns out to be, in a material sense, a reproduction of a church creed, that platform itself would be nothing else but a church creed. It is plain that if Dr. Bouma hopes to achieve his aim he must furnish the Christian school with a doctrine of God which differs materially from the doctrine of God of any known Christian creed.

Now the question arises whether this should be done. Should the Christian school be made to rest upon a platform which differs materially from the church creeds of Christianity. Let us confine ourselves to the creed of the Reformed churches. Should we adopt as a platform of our Christian school a set of principles which differ materially from the creed of the Reformed churches? May this be done? It may and should be done if it can be proven that the confession of the Reformed churches is a false confession. If, on the other hand, Dr. Bouma is of the conviction that the creed of the Reformed churches is, as near as he can see, a correct formulation of the vital truths revealed to us in Scripture, he may not set it aside, not even as a schoolman. He ought to see that in doing so, he is engaged in setting aside truth, that is, what he holds to be the truth. According to Bouma's own confession, the content of the creed of the Reformed churches is at once the content of his faith. In setting these creeds aside, Dr. Bouma is repudiating his own faith. May he do this? No, indeed, not even as a schoolman. Dr. Bouma shall have to admit this.

Dr. Bouma may not set his creed aside nor can he, providing it is his conviction that what this creed asserts is true. It is a psychological impossibility for one to militate against his own convictions. Only in so far as Dr. Bouma is convinced that what our creed asserts is not true, only in so far as he is able to set this creed aside. And the fact that the doctor is urging the friends of the Christian school to do this very thing, can only mean that he, at least to a degree, has broken with our creed. An examination of the Specific Principles of the Union

will bear me out. Let me adduce a few examples. The Specific Principles assert that "God is triune, that he is the creator of all that is, the sustainer of all that is." These particular assertions are nothing else but a material reproduction of church creeds. Likewise the assertion that God is both transcendent and immanent. As far as these particular assertions are concerned, the specific principles of the union are a church creed. These Principles also contain elements which militate against our creed. (See my former article.) As far as these assertions are concerned, the Principles of the Union are not our church creed. It is plain that if Dr. Bouma is to have his way the Christian school must be made to rest upon a platform which differs materially from the creed of the Reformed churches. And this means that Dr. Bouma's platform will be a departure from what we hold to be the truth. I repeat, the thing which Dr. Bouma proposes is possible if he and the friends of the Christian school have broken with the Confession of the Reformed churches. Let me again say that the fact that Bouma appeared before a group of educators with a plan of this kind indicates only too clearly that the doctor, at least to an extent, no longer feels for the truth as set forth in The Three Formulas of Unity. And the Principles which he recommends prove that such is indeed the case.

The task which Dr. Bouma imposes upon the friends of the Christian school is a huge one. These friends must furnish the Christian school with, let us say, a doctrine of God which differs materially from the doctrine of God of any creed of a given denomination. Will they succeed? Fact is that these friends of the Christian school have succeeded in supplying the Christian school with a doctrine of God differing materially from the doctrine of God of the creed of the Reformed churches. The principles assert that God is the absolute sovereign over all. Our Creed asserts no such thing, but the very opposite.

There is another matter to which we wish to call attention. We shall quote the doctor: "The Kantian dualism, reinforced in theological form by Xlbrecht Ritschl, is the accepted doctrine with most of our would-be liberal theologians today. They insist that science, knowledge is a matter of the intellect, of thought, of the head, but that religion is not thought, is not a matter of intellect, has nothing to do with the head. Religion according to them, is a matter of feeling and volition, of the emotions, of the will. It is a matter of the heart and has nothing to do with the intellect . . . and this same fundaniental dualism pervades our educational system at the present time. The public school only teaches knowledge, science. It appeals to the reason of the child. It deals with the head. The home and the church are to furnish the religious training You see the dualism. The divorce is complete." So far Dr. Bouma.

Dr. Bouma denounces, and rightfully so, the dualism pervading our educational system at the present time. Dr. Bouma insists, and correctly so, that we may not

treat the mind of the child as if it were composed of water-tight compartments, and then claim that religion is a matter of only one of such compartments, the heart (Kantian dualism), the head (dead orthodoxy).

In view of the above it is a noteworthy thing that the term faith nowhere appears in the Specific Principles of the Union. And the introduction to these principles reads thus: "The following is an attempt to interpret the more specific religious principles basic to education to which orthodox Christian school communities are committed." The author of these principles calls them 'interpretations.' And he speaks of an *attempt* to interpret. Such expressions as "We believe that . . ."; or "we confess with our mouth and believe with our heart" are altogether lacking. The absence of such statements stangely impresses one who reads. One cannot suppress the question whether the one responsible for these principles was sure of himself, and whether these principles are not meant for the heart but only for the head. In other words, does it not appear as if the author of these principles is treating the mind of the child as if it were composed of a number of watertight compartments. Would not these specific principles, being meant for the head only (so it appears) inaugurate a 'dualism in the educational system of the Christian School? It is strange that the absence of the term 'Faith' failed to draw the attention of Dr. Bouma.

Dr. Bouma's plan cannot be executed by those who are adhering to the creeds of the church to which they belong. The thing which Dr. Bouma advocates is psychologically impossible. Dr. Bouma's plan is a ridiculous thing. The doctor proposes the impossible.

More than once does Bouma attain to the height of the ridiculous. He would solicit and obtain the co-operation of all non-orthodox Christians. The basis of co-operation must be sufficiently broad to satisfy these various groups. The platform constituting the school of which Bouma dreams must not militate against the creeds of any one of the groups. Such a platform shall have to be amazingly general and vague. But now attend to this: "And should we not, in view of these considerations and in order to obtain the co-operation of various non-Reformed Christian groups, abandon our present distinctly Reformed basis and join hands with our fellow Christians on such a more general Christian basis?" And now attend to the professor's answer: "My reply is a positive and an unequivocal no."

And then this: "To inculcate a positively Christian, the Calvinistic world and life view is the fundamental task of all Christian instruction . . . to put these principles into words is our perennial task." Further on one happens upon this statement: "Neither can the Bible serve as a platform for the Christian school movement." But now if the Bible cannot be used as a platform for the Christian school movement, where does the doctor think to derive his principles from?

We conclude that what the doctor proposes is an impossibility. If we maintain the distinctive character

of our schools we cannot obtain the co-operation of non-Orthodox groups as long as these groups insist on remaining what they are.

It seems to me that the doctor's paper should open men's eyes as to what is really going on. The paper simply indicates that there is an element in the Christian Reformed Church which broke with the creed of the Reformed Church. And they are now scheming to rid the church of this creed.

G. M. O.

HE WILL COME

He will come, He will come ;

In a glorious array

When the troubles of earth have all passed away.

As a thief in the night, with His heralds of light,

Bedecked and arrayed with a heavenly might.

In the broad of the day or the dark of the night

When the turmoil shall cease and the judgment. and right,

He shall bring when He comes, when He comes.

He will come, He will come at the end of all time,

When the heavens shall open

And the trumpet shall chime.

He will come, He will come; whether nations may rave,

To awaken the dead both in sea and in grave.

All races, all sects, whether free, whether slave.

With the word of His power, at an unconscious hour

When the smoke of this earth to the heavens shall tower.

But the'ransomed and blessed He shall save

When He comes.

He will come, He will come

When the elements burn;

And the prophecies filled that foretold His return.

When the earth with its splendor shall be overthrown,

And the regents be servile, He ruleth alone.

When the great and the small shall approach to His throne.

When the moon and the stars shall be hidden in gloom,

When the good and the bad shall arise from the tomb.

And He judges aright; some to life, some to doom

When He comes.

Then this great dispensation of time will end

When the things foretold with the happenings blend.

Then, not for our works is the blessedness given

And not for our merit we enter in heaven.

When He comes, when He comes.

-Contributed.

In den hemel is het schoon!

Waar men zingt op blijden toon,

Met een altoos vroolijk harte,

Vrij van alle pijn of smarte.