There have recently appeared two books by Professor Randolph Crump Miller of Yale University Divinity School, dealing with the relationship between systematic theology and religious education. In the first of these books he maintains that theology can be taught "in terms of relationships at any age." In this first volume, The Clue to Christian Education, the author endeavors to show how Christian theology can be taught to the various age groups. The later book, appearing in 1956, is entitled Biblical Theology and Christian Education. The September-October issue of Religious Education, of which Dr. Miller is the recently appointed editor, devotes thirty-four of its seventy-seven pages to a symposium on the subject, "Theology and Religious Education."

In this emphasis upon theology and Christian education he sets forth the organic relationship between content and method, doctrine and the learning process, and theology and Christian living.

The organic relationship between content and aim and method has long been recognized as a basic principle in education. Far more than this principle connotes, however, is mystically operative in Christian education. The Bible, Christian education and theology, are of one and the same pattern and fabric. This is shown in the Shema, the Sermon on the Mount, Christ's conversations, the Paschal discourses, Paul's admonition to Timothy, and countless other passages throughout the Bible.

Bower and Hayward in Protestantism Faces Its Educational Task Together mention the fact that it is often assumed that organization and administration in education have nothing to do with the educational process itself, thus ignoring the basic dictum that aim controls all of the educational endeavor. In such an assumption organization is thought of as "merely providing the mechanical framework within which the educational process can go forward." It is now recognized that organization is as much a part of education as curriculum or teaching. All of the aspects of the educational endeavor must
be devoted to but one end, the improvement of teaching for the realization of objectives. All phases of Christian education constitute it a theological discipline.

It is Christian theology which distinguishes Christian education from that which is merely religious. Religious education has always been theological in that it has forwarded positions for, against, or about, God. Atheism is a religious and theological position, but it is assuredly not Christian. Secular education as a discipline must by its very nature identify itself with the aim, purpose, content, and methodology of the subject to be taught; hence in educational nomenclature are such expressions as "the teaching of science" and "the teaching of religion." But in religious education, Christian education is an expression of revealed theology. Education may exist apart from English, or mathematics, or science, as disciplines, but Christian education cannot exist apart from that with which it is identified.

Those who have never thoroughly considered education as a field of study have tended to down-grade it as a system of mechanically acquired techniques, a carnival of fads and fancies, a more or less fascinating array of gadgets, or a passing vogue in goble-de-hook. Such persons fail to see that in an enlightened culture, communication and nurture are basic. The history of education is directed to the discovery and evaluation of the best possible methods for communicating and developing knowledge and skills. The philosophy of education is devoted to reflection upon the most desirable ends in the over-all educational endeavor. Educational psychology is concerned with the success of the pupil in learning. Christian education as a discipline is said to be concerned with the propagation and communication of the Christian Gospel, efficiency in Christian service, and promotion of the Christian ethic. It is the identification of process with purpose which makes education such a meaningful and challenging discipline. Carpentering cannot be disassociated from construction, banking from finance, surgery from anatomy, medicine from physiology, or Christian education from the Bible and theology. The term "Christian" forces Christian education into a common mold with biblical and theological thought. There may be education about Christianity which properly falls into the category of religious education; but Christian education involves mystical elements which are a part of itself. It partakes of the reality which it teaches. Certain facets of Christian
teaching may be emphasized in religious education, but such emphases do not constitute Christian education. Just as in the passing generations mental health, psychiatry and counselling, group guidance, a secularistic pragmatism with emphasis upon biology and the sciences, or aesthetics, may be emphasized as representative of Christian culture; so elements of the Christian ethic, the good life in the temporal sense, and religion as a refining influence, may be projected. But Christian education involves much more than fragmentary emphases, as does Christian counselling and guidance.

For all age divisions and groups, Christian education begins with the nature and character of God as theistic, triune, and immanent in the personal, not pantheistic, sense. Before the child is born, godly parents are concerned with his future relationship to God. As soon as he begins to grasp the meaning of spoken symbols the Lord Jesus is presented to him as living, loving, and endearing Himself to childhood. Our primary knowledge of Him comes from a Book which is not the product of men's minds. Men did not make Christ. God is not a mere philosophical concept to be conjured with in terms of pantheism, atheism, deism, on any level. He is only apprehended as He is completely accepted and believed upon as the supernatural God of the Bible.

Man is a special creation in the image of God with moral capacities and responsibilities. The curse of the Fall is upon him and he cannot live to the age of moral responsibility without knowing himself to be a sinner. This sad truth is associated with the eschatological and temporal fact that men are judged and condemned according to the deeds done in the body. While an infant is heir to man's fallen condition, until he reaches the age of accountability he is not a theological nor legal subject of judgment and condemnation. Hence the infant is not in a state of condemnation upon whom the judgment of God rests for deeds done in the body. He is, however, in possession of a fallen nature which must be changed, without volitional involvement on his part if he dies in infancy. There are no unregenerated natures in Heaven. Theology is not merely related to the Nursery School or the Beginners, it is the very stuff of infant teaching in the church. It is the Christian education of infants.

When the child becomes literate his attitude toward the Book of Books is a basic matter. It is not bibliolatry to accept the Christian doctrine of inspiration and special revelation. One
does not worship a dictionary because he believes in it and guides his thinking and communication by its inexorable demands. There is no Christian education which is not the teaching of the Bible as the Word of God.

The "bird's nest" philosophy which once characterized religious education has long since been abandoned in the teaching of children. World War I taught us some things about the fact of evil. Messengers brought to the parents of little children news of the death of an older brother on the field of battle. Tiny children witnessed the tears of grief as they had the anxiety etched upon the faces of their parents. Little birds do sometimes fall out of the nest, and are eaten by cats. Nature is both benevolent and ruthless. God is not a part of nature, but over and above it. He is the over-ruling God of love, knowledge of whom must be translated into the language of childhood. There is sin and evil in the world, and the only remedy for it is in the Person whom the Bible and Christian experience present to a suffering world. The Christian doctrines of salvation and redemption are completely identified with Christian instruction, and the essential identification of Christian education with salvation and nurture does not change with the opinions of men, nor their carnal desires.

In his beginning years the child is presented his version of the Scriptures. The doctrines of the revelation, inspiration, and authority of the Scriptures are projected in the story telling method. Since the child cannot read, he is utterly dependent upon what he is told and what he sensuously experiences. Thus is bound upon the devout and theologically intelligent story teller the obligation of great faithfulness in transmitting the Scripture to the child. Sceptics take liberties with the Scriptures and pervert, distort, or emasculate them, and Christian teachers of little children may do the same thing by injecting unwarranted imaginative elements into the lesson story or film script, and some day the child may say as he reads the Scripture for himself, "This is not the way I heard it!"

The curriculum maker in the children's division must heed St. Paul's instruction to Timothy, who had been so carefully educated in the Scriptures by his mother and grandmother, to "rightly divide the Word of Truth." In this day the Bible must be rightly divided in terms of grade adaptation as to difficulty of comprehension and content, and the spiritual and moral needs of the individual.
No one can teach Christian education as a discipline without raising such questions as, "When does a child attain the age of moral responsibility? Does the infant need to be born again? How do the Scriptures apply to the primary child and his needs?"

The Christian life and ethic cannot be taught without due emphasis upon eschatology. Man being a creature of two worlds, his immortality forces consideration of eschatological questions. St. Paul knew this and said that if in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men most miserable.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the nature and mission of the Church are completely identified with Christian education. Christian education is mystical and more than human. What is the Church? It is Christ carrying on His teaching ministry in human embodiment through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church. In Christian education the Holy Spirit is the teacher, employing the bodies and spirits of believers as instruments. Therefore, in Christian education the teacher must have the mind and spirit of Christ, not merely information about Christ or the good life or proposed schemes for the correction of social ills. And what is the mind of Christ? It is what He believed and taught about Himself, about God the Father, about the Scriptures, about human responsibility and need, about evil and its relation to eternal destiny, about grace and eternal life, about the person and work of the Holy Spirit, about the Church, about the life of the Christian, about the heavenly home and His eventual return in visible presence to the earth. In the Church it is His indwelling Spirit.

There can be and is no Christian education which can be thought of apart from Christian doctrine, for Christian education is the teaching aspect of Christian theology. It is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Christianity, and therefore Christian theology, is for the whole of life. Essentially, Christian theology is not human speculation or philosophizing about the character of God, the destiny of man, the nature of the universe, human freedom, and the problem of evil. It is necessarily biblical. It is grounded in "Thus saith the Lord."

Christian education as a theological discipline pertains to the whole of life. It views life in terms of dimensions, such as its length or longevity. It is concerned with age groups and their varying needs at levels of experience and responsibility.
Nursery school, kindergarten, primary, intermediate and senior children, are to be confronted with the Christian revelation in accordance with Paul's instruction to Timothy. Older youth, young people, young adults, the middle aged and senior adults, are to be ministered to in terms of their needs through the Word and the Christian witness. This the Church, the body of Christ, the tabernacle of the Holy Ghost, does, in its teaching ministry. It communicates Christian theology in word and life. It also views life in terms of depth. It has to do with man's deepest needs. The problem of sin and of rising from its depths confronted David the king. It deals with rescue from defeat and humiliation in the realm of character, with life after death, with love and fellowship among men as reflected in King David's exultant cry, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God." A clear conscience, a sense of direction, are matters of depth. Evangelism and worship in Christian education fathom the depths of man's nature. Where his affections take root, where loneliness and desolation thrive, where the heart cries out for the living God, the Christian teacher ministers with the great truths of the Gospel. He challenges to the discovery of self-forgetfulness and the peace of God which passeth knowledge and the joy of unselfish service. He presents the great doctrines of the New Birth and the life of the Spirit to man in his deepest need and longing. Depth is a present dimension. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Repentance and saving faith come to focus in the depth of man's need, his fallen estate. For him love and faith are a sure and steadfast anchor, attainable in the depths of repentance, faith, and the assurance of the Word validated in Christian experience. There is breadth as well as length and depth to life. The call of Christ is universal, it is to a whole wide world. Christianity is a missionary endeavor, the Church, the mystical body of Christ, extending beyond denominational boundaries and confines around the world. There is the broad way which leadeth to destruction. These are theological considerations. The mistaken broad-mindedness of toleration of evil and the break-down of faith are also matters of breadth, theologically. Christian education is concerned with altitude. Heaven is above us. Christ was lifted up, rose from the dead, and ascended into Heaven. Christian education is concerned with a theological climate in which aspirations, hopes, ambitions and desires, can only be met in
the exalted Christ. The church in its Christian education program, its teaching ministry, challenges to the complete dedication of talent to its highest uses and inspires to such heights of service and devotion as the world cannot envision. Thus theology is bound up with life in all its dimensions.

Man is a creature of two worlds, and God the Father meets him on these levels. There can be no Christian intelligence apart from Him. Christian education as a discipline is devoted to the science and art of communicating spiritual truth and the nurture of Christian personality in the Holy Spirit. It is concerned with a moral universe. It is a theological discipline because it is devoted to making known and effective in human life the biblically derived doctrines of the Church. It is not merely an addendum to a biblical and theological seminary curriculum. It stands with theology at the heart of it. There is no teaching in the practical fields which is not theological. This is tacitly acknowledged when we refer to such teaching as "practical theology."

The general principles of education apply to Christian education, but the essential thing about Christian education is that the Holy Spirit is author of the text-book, director of the curriculum, and the Great Teacher. The Church, the body of Christ, continuing His teaching ministry, is the living embodiment of Christian theology--practical, systematic and biblical.
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