CHAPTER 1

1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND GENERAL ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter attention will be given to the motivation and necessity
of undertaking this study. The methodological procedures, the scope
and delimitation of the study, and the structure of the study will also
be stated in this chapter.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Education and schooling have been under severe and constant attack since
the Russians launched Sputnik in 1957. There has been, since this time,
a flood of books critical of the failures of the schools in the Wes=
tern world. A critical assessment of these books about contemporary
educational theory and school theory over the past twenty-five years
reveals that over these 25 years great changes have taken place with
regard to both educational thought and practice, also with regard to
schooling.

Moreover, it is an arresting fact that educational thought regarding the
school in this period has undergone more changes and that educational
practice in the school has been subjected to greater dissatisfaction than
in any other past period. The school as an _institution_, in particular,
came under severe attack, and in left radical and left liberal quarters
there was talk about a "crisis" of the school. In most Western socie=
ties the later 1970's have been a period of increasing dissatisfaction
with educational institutions in general.

The source of this dissatisfaction is not difficult to find. In the
relevant literature, there is a large amount of data available to support
the contention that the schools are in deep crisis. Some have critici=
zed the school and talked about a crisis of the school because of its
lack of success in fostering high levels of academic achievement, for
its lack of discipline, and for neglecting talented students (cf. Bestor,

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1953; Hutchins, 1953), while others say the school is so inhuman in its treatment of children that it is in many cases not a fit place for child= ren to be in (cf. Neill, 1982; Glasser, 1975; Patterson, 1973; Goodman, 1971(a); Holt, 1968; Kozol, 1967; Leonard, 1979; Silberman, 1970). Some underline the failure of the school to fulfil the contemporary expecta= tions which certain segments of society have held for education (Hurn, 1978:1 - 9), and certain left radicals accuse the school of being oppres= sive, manipulative, monopolistic, and autocratic, so much so that they want to demolish to the root the school as an institution (cf. Reimer, 1971; Illich, 1974(a); Holt, 1976(b); Goodman, 1971(a); Freire, 1973).

The increasing number of private and free schools is also indicative of the extent to which the modern school is beset with problems. According to a recent study, in 1975, 1 070 private Roman-Catholic schools, 171 private evangelical schools, 253 general private schools, in 1978 16 "Landerziehung"-schools and in 1980 57 Waldorfschools had been established in West Germany (Van der Walt, 1982(a):109). In Northern America, also, there were about twenty-five free schools operating in the period from 1965 to 1967, but the number had grown to about 600 by 1972 (Graubard, 1972:352).

It has indeed become today a platitude or a reality of educational thought to say that the school as an institution is in deep trouble or in crisis.

1.3   TOPICALITY OF THE PROBLEM

A survey of the literature on the crisis of the school reveals the fol= lowing topical problems:

1.3.1   In the first place, the nature of the criticism of the school
        does not reveal any homogeneous character. What the critics accuse
        the school of varies widely as is shown in the preceding para=
        graph. It is, therefore, necessary in this study to outline some
        central problems of the school.

1.3.2   In the second place, the modern school allegedly remains in deep trouble
        or in crisis, although the calls to reform or improve the school

situation have been met by many positive suggestions. It may
fairly be said that various points of school criticism and the
suggested ideas for reforming the school could not, so far, suc=
ceed in solving the alleged problems or crisis of the school. Rather
they have contributed other elements of crisis to the school.
It is, therefore, necessary to explore the reasons why criticism
against the school has failed to solve the problems or crisis
of the school.

1.3.3   In the third place, there appeared on the scene in the past decade
        or so some extremely radical critics of the school. Never be=
        fore had the Western school system faced such serious threats to
        its survival as a key institution in the society. These so-cal=
        led left radical school critics have suggested "deschooling"
        society as a solution to the education and school crisis. Now,
        it has become an important and urgent question for Christian educa=
        tionalists as to whether the school as a social institution can
        survive the attacks of the left radical school critics or whether
        it will succumb to the attacks. This question can only rightly
        be answered from a Scriptural perspective.

1.3.4   In the fourth place, although the existing educational system has
        been, and is being, attacked on all sides, one can hardly find in
        Christian-reformational circles, to date, any comprehensive and
        systematic research which diagnoses the reasons why schools today
        should pass through such a bombardment of criticism.[1]

        These topical problems of the school underline the necessity for
        undertaking this study. In addition, this study has gained im=
        portance since the publication of the Provision of Education in
        the RSA (Human Sciences Research Council, 1981). By indicating
        various shortcomings of the present educational structure for
        formal education, this Report on schooling and education has pro=
        ved that much of the criticism of the school as a formal insti=
        tution in the last fifty odd years can possibly be justified.

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1. As far as can be ascertained, in Christian educationalist circles only
    a few researches have been undertaken into the alleged problem or crisis
    of the modern school (cf. Van der Walt, 1980(b); 1982(a); 1983(c);
    Schutte, 1973; Olthuis, 1972).

This study can also be instrumental in drawing some guidelines
for formal schooling in the RSA in years to come.

1.4 AIMS OF THE STUDY

This study attempts to achieve a threefold over-all aim:

1.4.1 In the first place, it tries to compile and analyse the main or
       fundamental problems or crisis of the school;

1.4.2 In the second place, it evaluates these problems or crisis of the
       school fundamental-educationally; and

1.4.3 In the third place, it tries to find a Christian solution to the
       alleged crisis of the school from a Scriptural perspective,
       attempting to make a contribution to a radically Christian science
       of education, and theory of the school.

1.5 SUBSIDIARY AIMS OF THE STUDY

In order to attain the above-mentioned over-all aim, the following sub=
sidiary aims are formulated:

1.5.1 to sketch the alleged problems or crisis of the school in a brief
       historical context;

1.5.2 to sketch the alleged problems or crisis of the school in the
       contemporary North American regional context;

1.5.3 to sketch the alleged problems or crisis of the school in the left
       liberal context;

1.5.4 to sketch the alleged problems or crisis of the school in the
       left radical context, and

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1.5.5 to see the alleged problems or crisis of the school from a
Scriptural perspective.

1.6 THE METHOD OF RESEARCH

1.6.1 The methodology used in pursuit of this study is characteristic
of fundamental or theoretical educational inquiry. The method
applied to this study is, therefore, based mainly on the documen=
tary analysis of both the primary and the secondary works concerning
the theme of the study.

1.6.2 The problem-historical method was indicated, since no really pro=
per and significant grasp of the present-day fundamental crisis
of the school can be gained unless it is seen within a problem-
historical context (Van der Walt, 1982(d):39).

1.6.3 The method of reflection (cf. Van der Walt, 1982(d):37) about
principles and problems of the school is also used in this study,
in order to fill in gaps which could not satisfactorily be filled
in by a survey of the literature.

1.6.4 Various views of the school, school criticisms, reforming ideas
of the school and also the alternative ideas to the present
schooling are criticized and evaluated in this study by means of
the immanent, transcendental, and exheretical critical methods
(cf. Van der Walt, 1982(d):40 - 43; Strauss, 1978(a):1 - 10).

1.6.5 This study is, hopefully, guided by the principle of sola Scriptura.
Although the Bible was not intended to be a textbook for the
various sciences, it does present us views about God and the uni=
verse which nature today does not teach properly. This study, how=
ever, does not try to derive from Scripture alone a full answer
to all the problems of education and the school. Those who think
they can derive truly Scriptural principles for education and the
school from Bible texts have a very mistaken notion of Scripture.
Using only the Bible as a source in scientific work leads to
biblicism. On the other hand, looking at creation alone apart

from Scirpture leads to secularism. The Bible is a corrective of
false impressions made by nature in its distorted condition because
of man's fall into sin. Therefore, as Calvin (1967:70) states
it, one must look at the created reality through the "spectacles"
of Scripture to interpret it properly (cf. Duvenage, 1982;
Spykman, 1981:152 - 159; Meeter, 1975:42 - 46).

1.7 SCOPE AND DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

1.7.1 Disciplinary delimitation

This study is a fundamental educational study. It will, therefore, con=
centrate mainly on fundamental or theoretical problems and questions
of the modern school. This limitation of scope implies that no matters
or problems of purely historical, comparative, didactical, psycho-educa=
tional, socio-educational, ortho-didactical or ortho-pedagogical (etc.)
nature will primarily be taken into account, but references to them in
passing are not excluded.

1.7.2 Delimitation of the content/research topic

1.7.2.1 Since this study is a fundamental or theoretical educational
study, its focus is mainly concentrated on the ontological,
anthropological, epistemological, societal relationships,
ethical facets of, and religious ground motif of the alleged
problem or crisis of the modern school.

1.7.2.2 No pretensions are made of an exhaustive treatment of the cri=
ticism of the school. Only the general crisis line of the school
is traced by means of an extensive survey of the available
literature on criticism of the school.

1.7.2.3 This study is limited mostly to an investigation of the crisis
of Western schools. The crisis of the school in the Communist

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bloc is left out of consideration in this study because it is actually a matter beyond the reach of this investigation.

1.7.2.4   The (neo-) Marxist criticism of the school is also excluded in this study. In actual fact, this topic would require a se= parate research project. For this purpose, one may be referred to the following literature: Bowels and Gintis (1976), Husén (1979(b)), Brezinka (1981), Van der Walt (1980(c); 1983(d)), Van Wyk (1973), Schoeman (1980(a)), Basson (1982) and Henning (1982(b)).

1.7.3   Definition of terms

1.7.3.1   <u>Education</u>   The term "education" is used in this study to mean an activity in which one person (usually a "mature" person with authority) leads another person (usually an "immature" person) to a certain goal according to certain norms. It is an ongoing process which leads and equips an "immature" person with know= ledge and skills enabling him or her to fulfil his or her cal= ling and task on earth.

1.7.3.2   <u>Teaching</u>   In the context of this study the term is used to mean the transmission of knowledge and skills regarded as necessary to the pupils by teachers.

1.7.3.3   <u>Learning</u>   The acquisition of knowledge and skills which will benefit the pupils.

1.7.3.4   <u>Instruction</u>   This term refers to the didactical (teaching- learning) situation in which knowledge and skills are conveyed to the pupils.

1.7.3.5   <u>Schooling</u>   The term "schooling" in this study means the organi= zed action of teaching which takes place under the auspices of the school as a social institution for the sake of learning.

1.7.3.6 <u>Religion</u> The term "religion" is used throughout the study in referring to the innate direction of the heart of a human being toward God or (a) god/gods.

1.7.3.7 <u>Crisis</u> A serious, problematic, or unstable situation which re= quires immediate attention and amelioration.

1.7.3.8 Other terms, like "left liberal" and "left radical" will be cir= cumscribed in paragraphs 4.2 and 5.2.

1.8 THE PROGRAMME AND STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The programme of research and the structure of this research report coin= cide. The study is divided into six chapters:

1.8.1 <u>Chapter 1</u> introduces the study and states the problem, the need and aims for the study, the methodological procedures, the scope and delimitation of the study, and the structure of the study.

1.8.2 <u>Chapter 2</u> presents a brief historical review of the development of the school, and also of some of the problems which the schools have faced from primitive times up to the end of the 19th century.

1.8.3 <u>Chapter 3</u> is devoted to the examination of the alleged problems or crisis of the school in Northern America. This chapter traces the general crisis line of the school to which pragmatism, the scientific reformational movement, the countercultural move= ment, and the return-to-basics movement have contributed.

1.8.4 <u>Chapter 4</u> consists of a discussion of the school ideas of the left liberals. In other words, special attention is given in this chap= ter to the school ideas of those who criticize the school on the basis of human freedom and individuality but at the same time want to reform the school environment from <u>within</u> the school system.

1.8.5 Chapter 5 is used for an examination of the left radicals'
       criticisms of the school and of their alternative strategy
       for the present school system.

1.8.6 Chapter 6 presents a Scriptural perspective on schooling as an
       answer to the crisis of the school. For this purpose, the alleged
       problems or crisis of the school, which were discussed in the
       previous chapters, are first of all profiled, and, then, the
       origin or cause of these problems or crisis is examined from
       a Scriptural perspective. Finally, a brief prognosis of the
       future of the modern school is given.

1.8.7 Chapter 7 contains the general conclusion of the study, as well
       as the findings and some recommendations on the findings of this
       study.

1.9 CONCLUSION

Some introductory remarks for this study were made in this chapter.
The next chapter will now trace the roots or origin of the crisis of
the modern school within a brief historical context.