



“The school with the Bible”¹: From meaningless to meaningful Citizenship Education in South Africa

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Abstract

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Citizenship Education has re-emerged as an important issue in Curriculum 2005. Closer scrutiny of this educational innovation reveals the existence of a number of problems. The aim of this article is, on the one hand, to sensitise policy-makers, curriculum developers and educational administrators who are involved in the drafting of a blueprint for Citizenship Education in public schools, to the need to take note of Reformational Christians' views on government, citizenship and society, and the quest for the so-called “school with the Bible”; and on the other, to assist Reformational Christian educators responsible for the teaching of Citizenship Education in public schools to teach it from a biblical perspective. To this end, this article intends the following: to explore some tenets of a Reformational Christian theology of state (like John Calvin's); to revisit the Reformational Christian doctrine of sphere sovereignty; and illustrate the practical implementation of Calvin's theology of state and the Reformational Christian doctrine of sphere sovereignty in Citizenship Education teaching in public schools.

1 This phrase is usually used to refer to a Christian grouping of schools in the Netherlands. In the South African context it was commonly used in the late nineteenth century during the so-called Du Toit-Mansvelt era, 1882-1898 (Schoeman, 1989:128).

Opsomming

“Die skool met die Bybel”: van betekenislose tot betekenisvolle Staatsburgerlike Opvoeding in Suid-Afrika

Staatsburgerlike Opvoeding het as ’n belangrike aangeleentheid in Kurrikulum 2005 na vore gekom. Uit ’n ondersoek van laasgenoemde onderwysvernuwing blyk dit dat daar ’n aantal probleme in hierdie verband bestaan. Die doel van hierdie artikel is tweërlei: eerstens om beleidmakers, kurrikulumontwikkelaars en onderwysadministrateurs wat betrokke is by die opstel van ’n bloudruk vir Staatsburgerlike Opvoeding in openbare skole se aandag op Reformatoriese Christene se siening oor die owerheid, burgerskap en samelewing te vestig en hulle stryd vir die sogenaamde “skool met die Bybel” onder eersgenoemde se aandag te bring. Tweedens is die doel om Reformatoriese Christen-opvoeders wat vir die onderrig van Staatsburgerlike Opvoeding in openbare skole verantwoordelik is te bemagtig om dit vanuit ’n Bybelse perspektief te onderrig. Vir dié doel word enkele grondbeginsels van ’n Reformatoriese Christelike staatsteologie (soos dié van Calvyn) ondersoek. Ook word herbesin oor die Reformatoriese Christelike siening van soewereiniteit in eie kring, en die praktiese implementering van Calvyn se staatsteologie en die Reformatoriese Christelike leer van soewereiniteit in eie kring in die onderrig van Staatsburgerlike Opvoeding in openbare skole word geïllustreer.

1. Introduction

Citizenship training in schools has a long history in Western society. The coming of the franchise for the entire adult population in South Africa in 1994 made policy-makers, curriculum developers, educational administrators and educators aware of the importance of instruction in the rights and duties of citizenship (Dickson, 1992:74; IDASA, 1999:1-3). Prior to 1994 no specific subject existed by means of which South Africans of all racial groups could be trained for citizenship. Citizenship Education was taught, indirectly, via History and subjects such as Youth Preparedness, Inkatha Studies, and Right Living (Trümpelmann, 1986:4-7; De Lange, Engelbrecht & Taunyane, 1989:236-238, 252).

Generations of South Africans thus passed through school with little exposure to Citizenship Education, and, as a result, widespread ignorance of the system of government, the political process and other civic issues which still exists in South Africa today prevailed. This “civic deficit” poses a possible danger to South Africa’s new-found democracy. History teaches us that few countries have sustained democratic governments for prolonged periods, and world events are there to remind us that democracy and the rule of law are not historical necessities, but a victory of the human moral sense that needs to be reinforced and renewed constantly in the minds of all individuals (Branson, 1998:1).

The ANC government immediately began to realise that South Africa had neglected something very important and, if the new-found democracy was to survive, that Citizenship Education had to be taught to every future generation. For this reason, Citizenship Education has re-emerged as an important issue in Curriculum 2005, especially within the Social Sciences learning area (Kagiso Publishers, 1999:1; National Department of Education, 2002:15). For the National Department of Education (2001:23) Citizenship Education entails: “the explicit and continuing study of the basic concepts and values underlying ... democratic political community and constitutional order”; and consists of, “Learning activities, curriculum, and/or educational programmes ... concerned with rights and responsibilities of citizenship – the purpose is to promote knowledge, skills and attitudes conducive to effective participation in civic life”.

Closer scrutiny of the above educational innovation reveals the existence of a number of problems, such as drafting a blueprint for Citizenship Education programmes; how public schools charged with delivering democratically inspired programmes on Citizenship Education should meet the challenge; how Reformational Christians’ views on government, citizenship and society should gain their rightful place in Citizenship Education, etc. For the purposes of this article, the focus will only be on the problem of Reformational Christians’ quest for the so-called “school with the Bible”; hence for a biblically sensitive approach to Citizenship Education. According to some scholars (McNeill, 1954; Venter, 1972; Hexham, 1979) the Reformational Christian (as Calvinist) world and life view may be defined as the world and life view of the burning heart; burning with an ardent love for God and a consuming devotion for the honour of His name and the interests of the kingdom of Jesus Christ in all walks of life. Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 10:31 may be viewed as the motto of the Reformational Christian world and life view: “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (Holy Bible, 1991:203).

Christian National Education as a Reformational Christian-oriented educational system has formed the basis of the Reformational Christians’ education from 1652 to 1994. For many contemporary South Africans, it is synonymous with apartheid education and is a scapegoat for the many imbalances and inequities prevailing in South African education. After the first democratic elections in 1994, the National Department of Education embarked on a curriculum review process, as the curriculum is at the heart of the education system. A paradigm shift in education was a prerequisite and an educational approach known as Outcomes-based Education was consequently introduced (National Department of Education, 2001:1, 2). According to the National Department of Education (2001:14) Outcomes-based Education may be defined as “ ... a process

and achievement-oriented, activity-based and learner-centred educational approach”. The way in which the outcomes are described, will inevitably lead to a humanistic and horizontal approach to education (National Department of Education, 1997:1, 2, 27, 31).

A separation of church and state is thus advocated and government is tending to view religion as a private matter without a clearly defined social role (Republic of South Africa, 1996:6). Hence, a confusing education situation may arise for the Reformational Christian learner: on the one hand, in catechism class on Sunday he/she learns that the sovereignty of God is true for all nations and is of force in all authority which people exercise over people; and on the other, at public day school in Social Sciences he/she is taught that government derives its authority from the will of the people (Republic of South Africa, 1996:3). What is the truth? What is taught in catechism class or what he/she learns in public day school? What is the Reformational Christian to do? Throw down the gauntlet and accept that “the school with the Bible” has finally been laid to rest?

The main aim of this article is on the one hand, to sensitise policy-makers, curriculum developers and educational administrators involved in the drafting of a blueprint for Citizenship Education in public schools, to the need to take note of the Reformational Christians’ views on government, citizenship and society, and their quest for the so-called “school with the Bible”. As their Reformational Christian convictions are still a central part of their very being, a biblically sensitive approach to Citizenship Education is preferred. On the other hand, the intention is to assist Reformational Christian educators so that they will be able to teach Citizenship Education from a biblical perspective in public schools. To this end, this article intends to touch on the following: to explore some tenets of a Reformational Christian theology of state (like John Calvin’s); to revisit the Reformational Christian doctrine of sphere sovereignty as a theory of society; and to illustrate the practical implementation of the above two aspects in Citizenship Education teaching in public schools. As researcher one attempts to be objective, but as Reformational Christian researcher one is obligated to propagate the twin pillars of the Reformational Christian world and life view, namely, *solī deo gloria* and *sola scriptura*. This article is thus compiled within the above frame of reference.

2. Some tenets of a Reformational Christian theology of state (like John Calvin's)

2.1 Introductory remarks

Regarding the Protestant Reformation and democracy Elazar (1995: xxxv) states that:

The road to modern democracy began with the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, particularly among those exponents of Reformed Protestantism who developed a theology on politics that set the Western world back on the road to popular self-government, emphasizing liberty and equality.

Prior to the Protestant Reformation (1500-1650), the starting point for most theologies of state, the Christian citizen was obligated to submit to the civil ruler. Even moral corruption or incompetence alone were hardly sufficient reasons to revolt against the ruler. Government was viewed as established by divine providence (Hall, 1996:2). The early sixteenth century consensus regarded, according to scholars such as Griffin (1994:3) and Tyndale (1964:64), among other tenets the following aspects to be accepted: government *per se* is divinely ordained by God in Scripture; bad rulers are sent by God to chastise the nation for their sins; rebellion causes more harm to the innocent than to the guilty.

The Protestant Reformation (1500-1650), however, created a confessional landscape in which a ruler of one faith often confronted a sizeable number of his subjects who espoused another faith, such as the Spanish king Charles V (1506-1555) and his son Philips II (1555-1650) in the Netherlands (De Haas, 1968:42-43). At a time when toleration was seldom thought of and almost never practised, such monarchs would typically try to impose a uniformity of belief, giving nonconformists a choice between conscience and crown. In medieval times precedents for rebellion occurred, but Protestants became animated in their search for theological foundations for more democratic expressions (Evans, 1994: 173). Holl (1959:45) summarised the major effects of the Protestant Reformation (1500-1650) thought in this regard as: "on the one hand, a deepening of the theory of the state; on the other, a definite limitation of its powers".

In course of time and due to some of the abuses and excesses of civil rulers (such as that Luther's writings had to be burnt and that an inquisitor should be appointed to determine who had to be burnt at the stake, beheaded or buried alive), delimitations of this principle of unqualified submission became increasingly acceptable (De Haas, 1968: 44). Most Protestants came to accept a modified (passive) kind of

resistance if the ruler mandated something explicitly opposed to matters revealed in the Bible. Despite Protestant unity on this issue, there was a division on the issue of whether or not it was permissible to actively resist the civil magistrate. (Civil rulers were commonly known as magistrates and were divided into three categories: lower, intermediate and higher magistrates.) And if such active resistance was recognized, to whom was this responsibility entrusted: to the masses or to the lower magistrates (Hall, 1996:1)?

Many Protestant Reformers such as Martin Luther (1483-1546), Martin Bucer (1491-1552), John Knox (1505-1572), John Calvin (1509-1564) and Theodore Beza (1519-1605) had a specific view on this issue and articulated a theology of state. Not all, however, left behind full treatises of their views on the issue. Much of their understanding must be gleaned from their commentaries or assorted tracts. However, a substantive treatment on the role of the state was written by John Calvin (Hancock, 1989:85). Calvin's primary teaching on this matter is recorded in his *magnum opus*, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Holl, 1959:66-67). Only those tenets of Calvin's theology of state relevant to this article will be discussed in the following section, that is, the authority, role and task of civil government and the duties of Christian citizens toward civil government.

2.2 Authority, role and task of civil government

Calvin (1960:IV, XX, 1, 2) argues that civil government is a token of how lovingly God has provided for mankind. According to Calvin, the task of the civil ruler is to provide for a public manifestation of religion to exist among Christians, and to see that humanity be maintained. Calvin believes that if there is no civil government and if depraved people thought that they could go “scot-free”, they and society will surely deteriorate into anarchy. He argues that when Psalm 2:12 bids man (i.e. the rulers of the earth) to “Kiss the Son”, God does not at the same time bid the civil rulers to lay aside their authority and retire to private life, but to submit to God the power with which they have been vested, so that He alone may tower over all (Calvin, 1960:IV, XX, 5). On Romans 13 Calvin (1979a:479) comments that:

powers are from God, not as pestilence, and famine, and war, and other visitations for sin, are said to be from Him; but because He has appointed them for the legitimate and just government of the world. For though tyrannies and unjust exercise of power, as they are full of disorder are not an ordained government; yet the right of government is ordained by God for the well-being of mankind.

Calvin (1960:IV, XX, 4) recognises the holding of civil offices as entirely appropriate, even going so far as to speak of civil service as the most sacred and by far the most honourable of all callings in man's life. In his *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* Calvin (1960:IV, XX, 6, 9) refers to these civil rulers as "vicars of God", and sees their role as ordained protectors and vindicators of public innocence, modesty, decency, and tranquillity, and remarks that their sole endeavour should be to provide for the common safety and peace of all. He states the "appointed end" of civil government as being:

... to cherish and protect the outward worship of God, to defend sound doctrine of piety and the position of the church, to adjust our life to the society of men, to form our social behaviour to civil righteousness, to reconcile us with one another, and to promote general peace and tranquillity (Calvin, 1960:IV, XX, 2).

The use of the sword was the necessary correlative to human depravity. The civil magistrates were to be honoured as "superiors" in keeping with the fifth commandment (Ex. 20:12). Even evil rulers kept God's law to some degree, and disobedience was justified only for legislation contrary to God's law. The task of civil government according to Calvin (1979a: 481) is prescribed in Romans 13:4:

Magistrates may hence learn what their vocation is, for they are not to rule for their own interest, but for the public good; nor are they endued with unbridled power, but what is restricted to the well-being of their subjects; in short, they are responsible to God and to men in the exercise of their power. For as they are deputed by God and do His business, they must give an account to Him; and then the ministration which God has committed to them has a regard to the subjects, they are therefore debtors to them.

Calvin (1979c:329-330) reminds one that even kings are not to arrogate to themselves more than is fit. He thus comments on Psalm 82:

It is unquestionably a very unbecoming thing for those whom God has been pleased to invest with the government of mankind for the common good, not to acknowledge the end for which they have been exalted above other ... but instead of doing this, contemning every principle of equity, to rule just as their own unbridled passions dictate. So infatuated are they by their own splendour and magnificence as to imagine that the whole world was made only for them. Besides, they think it would derogate from their elevated rank were they to be governed by moderate counsels; ... To correct this arrogance, the psalm opens by asserting that although men occupy thrones and judgment-seats, God nevertheless continues to hold the office of supreme ruler The more effectually to overthrow this irrational self-confidence with which they are intoxicated, civil order is termed the assembly of God; for although

the divine glory shines forth in every part of the world, yet when lawful government flourishes among men, it is reflected therefrom with pre-eminent lustre.

Later on in the same passage, Calvin reminds his reader that kings may lift up their heads above the clouds, but they, as well as the rest of mankind, are under the government of God. He further warns against the depravity of rulers:

Moreover, there is a certain devilish frenzy which infatuates the princes of the world, and leads them voluntarily to pay greater respect to wicked men than to the simple and innocent. Even supposing that the wicked continue inactive, and use no endeavours to obtain for themselves favour ... yet those who bear rule are for the most part inclined of themselves to the bad side. The reason why the prophet upbraids them, is that wicked men find more favour at their hands than the good and conscientious (Calvin, 1979c:351).

2.3 Duties of Christian citizens toward civil government

Calvin (1960:IV, XX, 22) enumerates the duties of Christian citizens toward civil magistrates as follows: Firstly, subjects should think most honourably of their office. The intention is not to see the rulers as necessarily evil, but as Peter (1 Peter 2:17) teaches: "the word 'to honour the King', includes a sincere and candid opinion of the king". Secondly, subjects should prove their obedience by paying taxes, obeying proclamations, and serving in the "armed forces" to protect the nation. Moreover, Calvin (1960:IV, XX, 23) warns Christians not to intrude excessively into the authority of the magistrates.

Unless it amounts to actual disobedience to God, even wicked rulers should be obeyed as having their authority solely from God (Calvin, 1960:IV, XX, 25). The reasons provided for this view are the following: Scripture regards all such calamities as God's curses; the providence of God; the general testimonies of Scripture on the sanctity of the royal person; and the sovereignty of God (Calvin, 1960:IV, XX, 25-29). However, even with such clear calls to submit to the civil ruler, in some cases, magistrates are justified in overturning a wicked ruler. This should, however, not be done by private individuals. Calvin (1960:IV, XX, 31) acknowledges that at times God's will has been done in the overthrow of wicked rulers; yet Calvin still prefers to allow the Lord to correct unbridled despotism. Concerning revolution, Calvin advocates a peaceful, incremental revolution via the intermediate magistrates:

For if there are now any magistrates of the people, appointed to restrain the willfulness of kings (as in ancient times the ephors ...), I am so far

from forbidding them to withstand, in accordance with their duty, the fierce licentiousness of kings, that, if they wink at kings who violently fall upon and assault the lowly common folk, I declare that their dissimulation involves nefarious perfidy, because they dishonestly betray the freedom of the people, of which they know that they have been appointed protectors by God's ordinance (Calvin, 1960:IV, XX, 31).

The obvious exception to any of these rules, however, is that the Christian is not only free but also obligated to resist the magistrates who compell ungodly activity (Calvin, 1979a:478). Calvin teaches that not only are there exceptions to the above considerations, but also that obedience to God is of primary importance: obedience is never to lead us away from obedience to Him (Calvin, 1960:IV, XX, 32; Keen, 1992: 259). However, this view is balanced with Calvin's (1960:IV, XX, 32) conclusion that a person should comfort himself/herself with the thought that he/she is rendering that obedience which the Lord requires, when he/she suffers anything rather than turn aside from piety. Calvin (1979b:480) believes that any government is better than no government at all. In sum, however, he concludes:

Now this passage [Romans 13] confirms what I have already said, that we ought to obey kings and governors, whoever they may be, not because we are constrained, but because it is a service acceptable to God; for He will have them not only to be feared, but also honoured by a voluntary respect.

3. The Reformational Christian doctrine of sphere sovereignty as a theory of society

According to scholars such as Kuyper (1953, 1997) and Gousmett (1999) the Reformational Christian doctrine of sphere sovereignty briefly entails the following: In terms of the biblical doctrine of creation (Gen. 1:1-31; 2:1-4) a diversity of creatures were created by God. These creatures were characterised by a web of interlacing relationships, so that together they all form a harmonious order of creation. The unity of creation is found in being subject to the one law-order established by God for creation. This law-order provides the conditions for the existence of all creatures, and ensures their functioning according to the intention of God for them. In terms of social life, the latter comes to expression in the doctrine of sphere sovereignty (Kuyper, 1953:85).

The doctrine of sphere sovereignty is thus the recognition that in society there is a diversity of structures (family, school, church, state), each having its own internal structure and authority, that originate from their own special tasks. These spheres of society receive their sovereignty

from God and not from the state. That means that no sphere is the highest, from which all the others derive their power and right to exist. Rather, society comprises all spheres. These spheres are co-ordinated with one another and no sphere is subordinated to any one or more spheres in a hierarchical fashion. These spheres are jointly and individually subject to the ordering Word of God. Each structure must respond in its own way to the Word of God. No structure is mediated by another structure, nor may it be hindered from responding to Gods Word by another structure.

While each sphere is sovereign in its own field, and has its own norms to follow, it does not mean that it is independent of the other spheres, since the norms for the spheres are norms for human life as a whole. Human beings live in all these spheres as whole beings, not as fragmented beings. This differentiation is to permit the performing of specialised tasks within human society, and to prevent people of living as though they have no responsibility or accountability to others (Kuyper, 1997:12-15).

The state, for example, is only one of the spheres of society with the task of protecting the other spheres of society. Its task is to ensure the establishment and maintenance of just relations between all spheres, including the sovereignty of these spheres. Those that are weak must be enabled to become strong, those that overreach their proper bounds must be drawn back. The state may, however, not interfere with the proper exercise of the authority of the sovereign spheres (Gousmett, 1999:31-33).

4. Practical implementation of Calvin’s theology of state and the Reformational Christian doctrine of sphere sovereignty in Citizenship Education teaching²

In this section a classroom example is provided of how to teach Citizenship Education using Calvin’s theology of state and the Reformational Christian doctrine of sphere sovereignty as resources. This is, however, only a guideline; the design of the complete learning programme³ is left to the individual educator.

2 Activities as described in this section are most suitable for Grade 8 and 9 learners and should be simplified for Grade 7 learners.

3 Citizenship Education is one of the organising principles for the Social Sciences learning area. The learning outcomes, assessment standards, etc. of the Social Sciences learning area will therefore be used to design the complete learning programme (National Department of Education, 2002:10).

If the school's learning programme organiser is: "Authority and government in society", the learning outcomes of the learning programme could include the following: to explain the reasons as to why authority and government are essential; to identify the authority, role and task of government in society; to examine the duties of Christian citizens toward civil government; and to discuss the proper relation between government and other institutions in society.

The facilitator should ascertain the learners existing knowledge by instructing them to answer the following questions: Imagine that you wake up one morning and find there is no longer any authority. All rules, laws, police, courts, educators, principals, and governments have disappeared. What problems might arise? How would you protect your rights? Would you even have any rights? This part of the learning programme can be concluded by asking learners in groups or as a whole class to identify contemporary problems in South Africa that stem from an absence of effective authority. The facilitator may encourage learners to suggest ways in which authority might help solve these problems. A small group of learners then assesses the answers and prepares a report for the class. The facilitator then writes the following statement on the blackboard: "To be free, one must be chained". Learners are allowed to take five to ten minutes to write down what this statement represents in a half page or less. After completion, each learner reads his/her notes while the facilitator lists the main points under the statement on the blackboard (Dean, 1999:1-2).

The facilitator asks learners what Romans 13 teaches and then informs them that according to Romans 13:1-7 God has established civil authorities to execute justice; to establish order in society; and to provide for the common good. Let learners then form three groups. Each group should read Romans 13:1-7 and discuss the following questions: Would it not be possible for all South Africans to live as they choose with total freedom and without a government establishing limits to South Africans' individual freedom? Why does South African society really need rules and regulations? What are the authority and role of government according to Romans 13:4? One person from each group can report that group's findings to the class.

The facilitator then explains to the learners that because government authority is ordained by God, we as South African citizens should honour the authorities (Rom. 13:5-7); should pray for them (1 Tim. 2:1-4); should pay what we owe (Mk. 12:13-17); and should live in obedience and owe obedience, although not blind obedience (1 Pet. 2:13-17). The apostle Paul used his citizenship to object to injustice (Acts 16:35-39; 22:24-29). The apostles understood that Christians sometimes should

disobey civil authorities when their mandate contradicts the laws of God (Acts 5:29). We as South African citizens are therefore to participate in and influence the government. Let learners also consider the biblical examples of Joseph (Gen. 41), Daniel (Dan. 6), and Paul (Acts 17:22-34; 22:22-26:32) in this regard. Then, let learners read Romans 13:5-7 and 1 Peter 2:18-21 and discuss the following two questions in their groups: What are your duties and responsibilities as a citizen of South Africa? What is the role you play in government? Groups can report their ideas to the class.

The facilitator should draw the learners' attention to the fact that institutions in society, such as the state, often perform actions they should not, which may generate or perpetuate injustice and misery. History bears testimony to many such cases. Some recent examples are: the National Party government in South Africa (1948-1994), the Serbian government in Kosovo (1989-1999), the Hutu regime in Rwanda (1994-1999), the Freetown government in Sierra Leone (1996-2002), the ZANU-PF government in Zimbabwe (2000-2002), etc. (CIA, 2002:1, 19, 24, 48). The facilitator should explain to the learners that society is, however, based on God-given freedoms and responsibilities and that Christians are to be the salt of and light in the world, including their relationships with the government (Mt. 5:13-14).

The facilitator then distributes copies of the following extract dealing with a Reformational Christian view of the proper relation between the government and the other institutions in society:

... the family, business, science, art, and so forth, are all social spheres, which do not owe their existence to the state, and which do not derive the law of their life from the superiority of the state, but obey a high authority within their own bosom; an authority which rules by the grace of God In this independent character a special higher authority is of necessity involved and this highest authority we call sovereignty in the individual social spheres ... these different developments of social life have nothing above themselves but God, and that the state cannot intrude here, and has nothing to command in their domain. The sovereignty, by the grace of God, of the government is here set aside and limited, for God's sake, by another sovereignty, which is equally divine in origin. The state may never become an octopus, which strafes [sic] the whole of life. It must occupy its own place Does this mean that the government has no right whatever of interference in these autonomous spheres of life? Not at all. It possesses the threefold right and duty: whenever different spheres clash, to compel mutual regard for the boundary lines of each; to defend individuals and the weak ones, in those spheres against the abuse of power of the rest; and to coerce all together to bear personal and financial burdens for the maintenance of the natural unity of the state (Kuyper, 1997:16-18).

Have learners read the above extract and then complete the following questions in their workbooks: In what way may the problems cited earlier (see above) be the result of an inadequate understanding of the structures and tasks of the various institutions in society? How should government relate to other authority structures? What, according to the author,⁴ may lead to a “perfect” society? What is your opinion in this regard? Finally, the facilitator can assess (by means of product assessment) the learners’ understanding of a Reformational Christian view on the proper relation between the government and other institutions in society.

Conclude the learning programme with the following homework assignment. Instruct learners to read the newspaper for several days. They should list problems related to ineffective authority and note what happened in these instances. After they have finished their lists, let them write a letter to the local authorities suggesting ways authority can be used to deal with one of these problems. They can report the outcome of the exercise to the class (Center for Civic Education, 1999:1-7).

5. Conclusion

Since the implementation of the outcomes-based approach to education in public schools (in 1994), the basic goal of all education and training in South Africa has been and is a total transformation to womb-to-tomb education, featuring among others global, humanist, relativist and socialist values, where feelings and skills reign supreme and facts are minimised. The implications of the above for the Reformational Christian learner are staggering, as the new values are in opposition to much of what Christianity teaches. This shift from a belief in absolute values to a belief in relative values will affect the way in which Reformational Christian learners will view “freedoms, rights and responsibilities”, as well as how Christianity will be viewed in a few years’ time. All “freedoms, rights and responsibilities” will then be based on the feeling of the moment and on what seems right; which deems tolerance as the ultimate good, but which is mercilessly intolerant of things it deems in opposition to itself. Many Reformational Christian parents are well aware of the fact that their values and beliefs are not acknowledged in their children’s classrooms, but are not always aware of the fact that they have, in terms of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 108 of 1996, the right

4 Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) was an influential, sometimes controversial, Dutch Reformed theologian and political leader whose tireless efforts to combine religious orthodoxy and social reform have encouraged generations of Christian intellectuals (Kuyper, 1953:85).

to expect that their values and beliefs be respected in their children’s schooling (Republic of South Africa, 1996:6).

No one can read the history of the Reformational Christian without realising that the Word of God has been a guiding principle from the beginning. Reformational Christians today still live in the spirit of the Christian (like the Calvinist) religion, and as their Reformational Christian convictions are still a central part of their very being, they still prefer the so-called “school with the Bible”. Education, including Citizenship Education, should therefore embody the teachings and moral truths of God’s Word. Education should equip learners with a theoretical framework that will help them approach the issues of the day, including political issues, with the insights and principles of a Reformational Christian world and life view. Calvin’s comments on issues pertaining to civil government and citizenship and a Reformational Christian doctrine of sphere sovereignty will provide the true picture regarding Citizenship Education. To omit a biblical perspective on Citizenship Education will lead to a rather meaningless education. Meaningfulness, however, can be obtained if the requirements of Scripture are met.

To make sense of Reformational Christians’ views on civil government, citizenship and society, and their quest for the so-called “school with the Bible”, this article has unpacked some tenets of Calvin’s theology of state and a Reformational Christian doctrine of sphere sovereignty; and has provided an example of the practical implementation of the above two aspects in a Citizenship Education learning programme. Against the above backdrop this article is concluded with the following remarks:

- *Reformational Christian view on government, citizenship and society:* God as the Creator has instituted government as a means by which He wants to uphold order and provide justice in society among fallen people. It is an interim structure, designed to direct and regulate the political relationships among people during the interval between the Fall and the Lord’s return (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). The institution of government belongs to God’s kingdom of power. Its symbol therefore is the sword (Rom. 13:4). Scripture assigns to it the twofold task of rewarding the good citizen and punishing the evildoer (Rom. 13:3-5; 1 Pet. 2:15). The core of the Christian’s attitude towards government is expressed by the New Testament term “subordination” (Rom. 13:5; 1 Pet. 2:13-14). This term signifies a person’s responsibility to rank his/her own needs as subordinate to those of others. The practice of this tenet in one’s attitude towards government is a specific manifestation of the general stance of Christians towards their fellow human beings (Rom. 12:10; Eph. 5:21; Phil. 2:3-4). The opportunities for carrying out the responsibilities of Christian citizenry vary according to the strength of the church in a

given society and the form of government. God created order out of primordial chaos (Gen. 1:1-2) and thus brought about the conditions which make life in society possible, despite the ambiguities of human existence which derive from the Fall (Gen. 3:1-8). Civic order is a gift of this sustaining God, whose will it is to check and control the forces which at all times threaten society with anarchy.

- *Enhanced well-being of society:* In Curriculum 2005 faith-inspired teaching has been excluded. Although it is not proper for public schools to proselytise, it is also not permissible to change them into religion-free zones either. Learners in public schools, according to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 108 of 1996, have a right to an education which is infused with those values and beliefs about which significant consensus in the classroom exist. It is also possible to find common ground in this regard in spite of religious differences in the classroom, rooted in a commitment to respect one another. The well-being of the wider South African community will indeed be enhanced when the youth of South Africa are helped to find a set of values and beliefs which ennoble their lives and by which they can live.
- *Let their voices be heard:* Reformational Christian parents and educators have to make sure that their values and beliefs are, along with those of others, also included in any proposed blueprint for Citizenship Education, as it will make a profound difference to how their children and learners live their lives in South Africa and to how they think about government, citizenship and society. Appropriate democratic methods have to be used, such as letters to members of parliament, petitions, submissions to appropriate government commissions and boards.
- *Build a bridge between faith, schooling and calling:* By far the greatest challenge Reformational Christian educators face is to build a bridge between faith, schooling and their learners' calling as Reformational Christians in the outside world; hence, to give learners an opportunity to think about political issues in explicitly Reformational Christian terms. The professional development of teaching material is necessary to assist educators in this regard, because educators working in the system have been unwitting accomplices to the new system by not knowing how to teach Citizenship Education from a biblical perspective.
- *Dissemination of information:* The dissemination of information to non-Reformational Christian policy-makers, curriculum developers, educational administrators and educators regarding the Reformational Christian view on government, citizenship and society is vital, as many of the above role-players hold negative feelings towards the Reformational Christian world and life view. Ways to disseminate information may be brochures, dialogue, open letters, advertisements, songs, plays, etc.

- *Virtuous citizenry*: Democracy could not survive without a virtuous citizenry, and a virtuous citizenry is, among other factors, dependent on faith-inspired Citizenship Education. Religious convictions are an integral part of that which equips learners to be effective and responsible citizens. In fact, their religious convictions create their values. More than 400 years ago Martin Luther (1483-1546) put it aptly, when he said: "Politics and law are not a path to grace and faith. But are not grace and faith a path to right politics and right law?" (Horace, 1963:77).

The above is by no means an exhaustive account of this theme. Citizenship Education teaching in public schools, including Reformational Christian-inspired Citizenship Education teaching, is a newcomer to South Africa and is such a comprehensive theme that justice cannot be done to it in a single article. Issues which deserve further attention include Citizenship Education for a virtuous citizenry and strategies to promote Reformational Christian-inspired Citizenship Education teaching in public schools.

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Key concepts:

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