PAPER

EDUCATING IN A "STORY-FORMED" COMMUNITY

A New Hope International Educational Monograph Number 1, 2004
Edited and published February 2011

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A Work in Progress

Abstract

Narrative and story telling have become important themes in education. This paper considers the role of story in developing a learning community. The author makes an important distinction between *story telling* and *story forming*. These concepts are developed through an understanding that views education as taking place in a learning community which has a story-formed-world-view. In this understanding curriculum refers to the story we believe should be formed in the learning community. *Story-forming* occurs in community when people through experience build a story that becomes their own story. This has particular significance for Christians who are called to live worthy lives as the people of God. The goals of Christian education cannot be achieved if we limit education to developing the different domains such as cognitive, psychomotor or affective not even if we attempt to add a fourth domain, the pneumatic. Nor will they be achieved simply by providing a strong cognitive rationalistic emphasis in teaching. What we need to have is a more wholistic understanding that education at its deepest level involves forming a "plausible story" by which both the individual and the community live.

Introduction

I became interested in the idea of community in 1972 when I was studying for a Master's Degree in Community Studies at Macquarie University to assist me with my work in the community as pastor of a Western Sydney Church. I was also studying for the ministry at Morling College at that time and my study led me to an interest in the Church as the Body of Christ. These two themes came together in 1974 when I was involved with a fellow pastor and a small group of other Christians in the commencement of a new school. However, it was more than just a new school; it was a new concept - a "Christian community" school. The basic theoretical structure of this school came from my study of the Epistle to the Ephesians, which convinced me that Paul's idea of community should be the foundation of Christian education. Although my understanding of what this means has changed over the past 30 or so years, nothing that I have learnt has changed my opinion that the development of a Christian learning community is at the core of what Christian education must be about.

Community

What is "community" and how can we form it in the context of schooling so that it assists in the process of education? Community can be defined as ***any group of people in an intentional relationship who share common values and who agree to participate together to achieve common purposes***. God designed people to live in community. *The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him"* (Genesis 2:18). Paul in the Epistle to the Ephesians explains that from before the world was created God's purpose was to create "a people" for himself who would live to the praise of his glory. Paul explained that God's promise to Abraham (Genesis 26:2-4) would reach its fulfilment when Gentiles through faith in Christ were incorporated into his people. (Ephesians 3:6) *This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.* Peter also emphasised the corporate nature of our calling when he said. *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light* (1 Peter 2:9).

Living as God's People

As God's people, Paul urges Christians to live a life worthy of the calling they have received (Ephesians 4:1). This involves living in humility, love and unity (4:1-6), living a different lifestyle (4:17-19), thinking differently (4:20-24), living a holy life as befits God's children, (4:25-5:20) and having godly relationships (5:21-6:9). Since it is a Christian's responsibility to live this way, an important aim of Christian education is to assist students to live lives that are worthy of their calling to be God's people. The educative task of the Church which includes children, may be summed up in Ephesians 4:15, *Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.* The phrase, "speaking the truth in love" translates the Greek participial phrase "αληθευοντεσ εν αγαπη". Although this phrase is impossible to translate literally in English, (if English had a verb "to truth" we could translate it "truthing in love") it clearly implies that growth depends on truth being an active component in all areas of life. There must be truth in words and deeds set within a relationship of love not only with Christ, but also with other people. Too often Christian education has been seen more in terms of teaching propositional truth or doctrinal truth rather than "doing or practising the truth in love". This may be a reflection of the rationalistic way "truth" was understood in the "modern" period as empirical knowledge, verifiable by scientific investigation. This is too narrow an understanding of truth. In post-modern thinking, truth is often seen in terms of a construct of the individual or the social group. This view however denies the possibility of a Divine Revealer, the Word. The Bible

tells us Christ is the WORD. He claimed, *I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.* (John 14:6). In the Bible truth includes data, information and knowledge but is much more than this. Truth is found in the person of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible and as experienced through the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers and must be expressed by relationships and actions as much as by words. In teaching the truth, relationship is more formative in the lives of students than is the content of the teaching.   Jesus said, *you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free* (John 8:32). Truth is found in the knowledge of Jesus which is experienced in the relationship of community (Ephesians 4 12-13). This is a far cry from the legalistic and rationalistic "truth" taught in some Churches and Christian schools where students can be "battered" with truth but never experience it in relationship. Equally it as a long way from the relativistic and personal truth taught in many secular schools that allows for little meaning or purpose outside individuals or their society and leaves the individual without godly values or purpose and often without true significance or meaning. In a Christian community where truth is learnt in relationship, students "will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ."(Ephesians 4:15). This means that they will share Christ's values, have significance because of their membership of his Body because they experience the love of God and of other people in the community.

Growing up into Him

If we grow by "practising the truth in love" how are truth and love related? I have often used the metaphor of a canoe to illustrate this. A trunk of a tree that has been washed into the sea will drift about under the influence of the currents and the waves. But if the log is hollowed out as a canoe and given a sail and a rudder it will move in the direction of the helmsman. It needs power (the wind in the sail) and direction, (the rudder) working together to stop it being carried about by the elements. The Apostle Paul (Ephesians 4:14-15) suggests that a child is without direction unless brought up in a community in which truth and love interact. In this case truth provides direction but love gives the power for change. Paul in writing of the unity of the Body of Christ points out that this Body has individuals who are differently gifted according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (Ephesians 4:7). This indicates that each person is given grace to fulfil the function or role God has assigned to him or her in the Body. This allows for individual differences and functions but will not allow for individualism. We are all part of a Body and our gifts are given for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7).
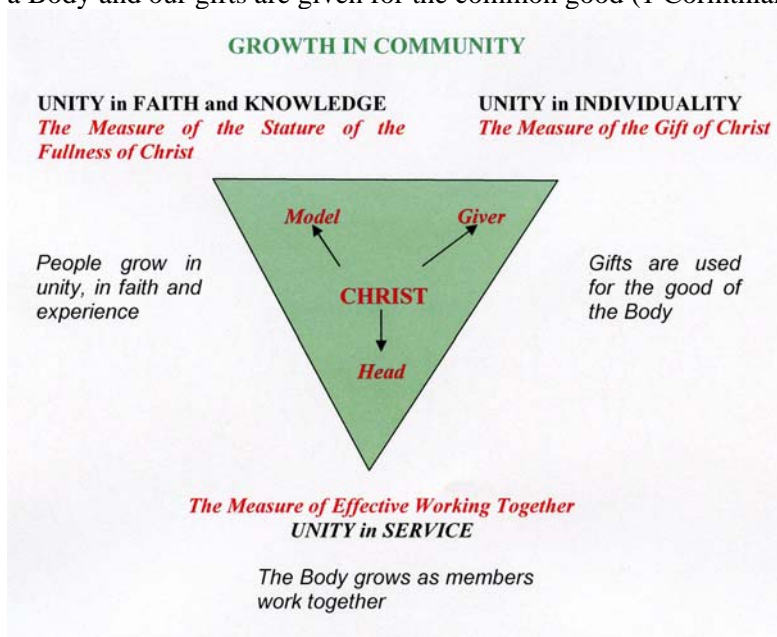

Figure 1

Teachers are included in the list of specially gifted people given to the Body to assist in preparing God's people to do works of service so that the Body will be built up until all reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4 11-13). This state of maturity is achieved through unity in faith and in the knowledge of Christ. By speaking of "unity in the faith and in the knowledge of Christ", Paul seems to imply that maturity is not an individual thing but something that comes through unity. In order to grow students need to be encouraged to work together in faith development and in experiencing together the knowledge of the Son of God. Growth then occurs through "practising the truth in love" as we use the gifts given in his service according to the measure of the effective working together of the various parts. The sort of growth that Christ wants in his Body is not our individual development so much as the development of cooperative service. This is the ultimate measure of maturity in Christ. In this way the Body *grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work*. (Ephesians 4:16) This model of growth is shown in Figure 1.

The Nature of a Christian Community

A Christian community must reflect the nature of its God; its Creator, Saviour and Sustainer. God is revealed in the Bible as One who acts in the world he has created, in righteousness and love. Just as there is a tension between God's love and his justice in his dealing with us, so there needs to be a triadic tension between justice (righteousness) and mercy (love) and action in a Christian community. (See Figure 2)
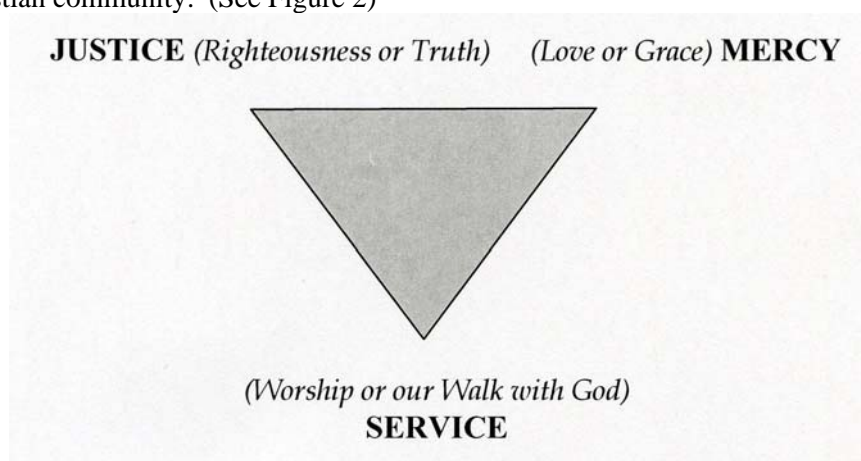

JUSTICE *(Righteousness or Truth)*   *(Love or Grace)* **MERCY**

*(Worship or our Walk with God)*
SERVICE

Figure 2

The prophet made God's requirements quite clear, *He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.* (Micah 6:8). God's justice and mercy met at the cross of Jesus Christ. It is only in our worship of the crucified Son of God that we can resolve the tension between justice and mercy. As his followers, members of a Christian community must hold to both justice and mercy and respond to his love in self-sacrificial service. They need to act justly and love mercy while serving God humbly. A community may be distorted by the overemphasis of justice, mercy or worship. Micah tells us God requires all three not an emphasis on one. . This balance is well expressed in the phase *Speaking the truth in love we grow up into him in all things.*

Developing a Triadic Balance

In a recent article Fyson (1999) introduced a model which built on the above concept which he developed in the light of the work done by McMillan and Chavis. I have somewhat rearranged his model below so that it more closely responds to the triadic model of community above while retaining the aspects Fyson has introduced into his model. This model (Figure 3) has a number of significant points to make. The triadic form reminds us that

true community has its source in a triune God in whom there is a perfect balance between justice (or righteousness), mercy (or love) and service (or worship). God has a threefold requirement of his people; (Micah 6:8) they must reflect his justice and mercy and walk humbly with him.

The diagram shows that to develop a truly Christian community there must be a balance both in our **actions**, shown by the external arrows, and also in our **attitudes** and values shown by the internal arrows.

[After Fyson (1999)]
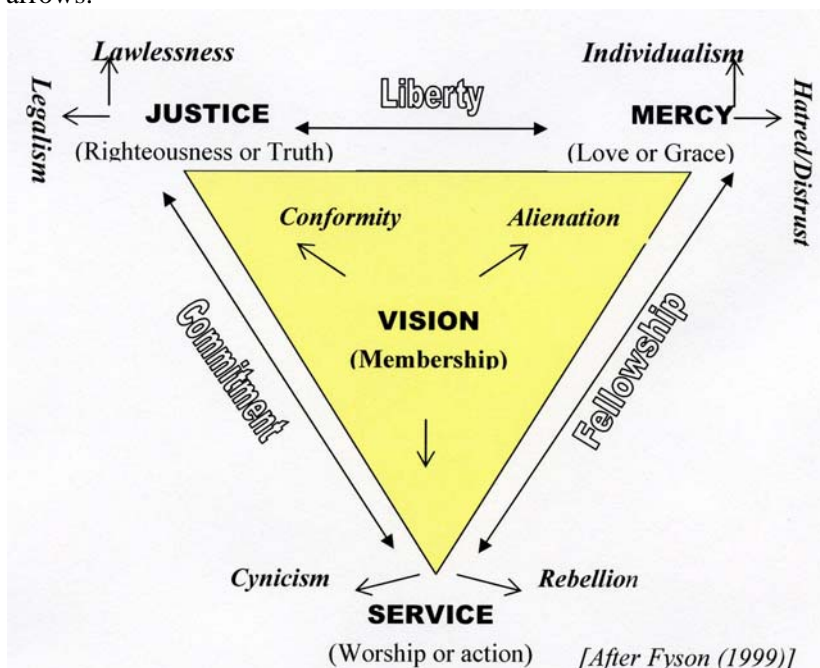
Vision

If the community is to be cohesive it must be united around a common vision which unites the members. Community by its nature must be voluntary. You can force a group of people to attend a class but you cannot force them to be a community; that is a choice they must make. To be a community there must be a common vision. If there is to be a true vision for the community that will be strong enough to keep its members united (effective membership) the internal tension must be maintained in balance. Without a common vision community will disintegrate as people moving away from the centre and towards the extremes. Some members may overemphasise justice (righteousness or truth) and tend towards conformity (or in the case of a leader, control). Other members may over emphasise mercy (love or grace) which, leads to individualism, and a consequent **alienation** from the community which appears to lack rules of conduct, real boundaries or any sense of belonging. Leaders who over emphasise mercy will tend towards permissiveness possibly because they are afraid that any attempt to maintain standards will be seen as unloving and will mean a loss of approval. Others might over emphasise the practical service or worship component, which can lead to **pragmatism** since the members act not out of vision but out of a sense of necessity. In leaders this shows as tendency to over emphasise efficiency -the "paper over people" syndrome.

In all cases what suffers is relationship. True relationship is what binds people in a community and this comes from a shared vision. To preserve a Christian community members must have the possibility of choice; to adopt the vision of the community or not. Members should have an allegiance, not to the leader, but to the Lord of the community. The common vision that a community has will in fact act like a group worldview that is shared by all that strongly identify as members of the community.

Liberty

There is a tension between justice and mercy in all relationships. The balance between these gives "**liberty**". Liberty in Christ is part of our inheritance through Christ. Jesus says, *You will know the truth and the truth will make you free* (John 8:32). Paul adds, (Galatians 5:1) It *is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*

The opposite of liberty or freedom in Christ is legalism or bondage to the "yoke of slavery" to the Law. In legalistic relationships justice overcomes mercy. However legalism has another extreme, it can result in the rejection of law which gives rise to **lawlessness**. Where relationships are governed by liberty there is an emphasis on truth and justice but grace is also present. People need God's standards but where these are imposed as a legal standard they are too great to bear. In a school community rules are needed because children have not reached the stage of maturity where they are ready for true liberty. However, if the rules are applied in a legalistic and arbitrary way children will reject them in **rebellion**.

Fellowship

There is also a tension between mercy (or love) and service (or worship) The proper response to God's mercy is our love of our brothers which is expressed in true **Fellowship** (which in the New Testament means participating in others lives). This is the true indication of our love for God*, And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.* (1 John 4:21) The proper response to God's love in our lives is the fruit of the *Spirit love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.* (Galatians 5:22-23) The Apostle John reminds *us Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth* (1 John 3:18). The opposite of brotherly love is selfish **individualism** where self-love replaces love for others. Those who over emphasise mercy fail to really love since those they love are loved as objects that are only of value in so far as they reflect glory to the individual. Where acts and deed are done out of duty and not out of real love people feel manipulated and the result can be **hatred and distrust**.

Commitment

There must also be a balance between justice and worship. Our proper response to God's truth and righteousness is a willing **commitment** to Christ in obedient discipleship. Arbitrary or harsh justice leads to **rebellion** while an over emphasis on external worship (formalism or externalism) leads to **cynicism**. Far too often in Christian schools we see relationships that do not display the triunity of Godly relationships viz liberty, love and commitment; instead the deviant forms of relationship of legalism, lawlessness, rampant individualism or hatred and distrust, rebellion or cynicism are in evidence. Broken relationships can be healed in a community that is faithful and that maintains a triadic balance.

True community involves unity. Unity requires genuine humility (humble walk), a true concern for God's righteousness and holiness (acting justly) and a genuine love for others demonstrated by a willingness to forgive (loving mercy). *Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart* (1 Peter 1:22). *This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.* (Matthew 18:35). We need to understand that unity does not mean uniformity and humbleness does not mean self-destruction; there is an assertiveness for what is right that will be seen in truly humble people. Forgiveness does not mean overlooking wrong- it means forgiving those who truly repent just as we would like to be forgiven by God. The key operation of a community is edification (building up of each other) and cooperative service to the Head of the Body

Community and Education

The rapid growth of Christian schooling is in part a response to the growing awareness among parents, pastors and educators of the effect of what Fernhout (1997 page 96) calls "the cultural dominance of the story of post-Enlightenment modernity (and its myth of neutrality)". This dominant worldview idealises the individual, absolutises tolerance, and sees all other values as relative values that an individual may adopt as a personal set of values. This worldview denied the possibility of God and deified the natural; rationality and science were glorified and elevated above revelation. But any philosophy that absolutises the individual creates for itself a paradox because if each individual does what is best in his or her eyes - the result is anarchy. Lacking any external authority the only way to resolve anarchy is through absolutising the power of government. Thus actions are not governed by values such as right or wrong but by whether they are legislated as legal or illegal.

Although postmodernism has challenged many of the premises of modernism it has not challenged its basic premise; the centrality of the individual. This worldview is reinforced by the most powerful, influential and highly sophisticated media ever known. The media is one of the most powerful influences on the thought and action of young people as they grow up. This has resulted in a crisis in Christianity in modern, affluent Western society. Evangelical Christianity is in decline partly because in its battle against modernism, evangelicalism unwittingly conformed to the central ideals of modernism while fighting its outward symptoms. Christianity has been individualised (I accept Christ as my personal Saviour) and privatised (I don't need to go to Church to be a good Christian). We have taken the priesthood of believers- a corporate idea - and individualised it to the extent that each individual believes he or she can interpret God's word as he or she wills. Individuals refuse to accept discipline from the community of God's people. In many cases the cold rationality of much earlier religious practice has only replaced one form of individualism with another, which has made "feeling" the arbiter of spirituality instead of "correct" doctrine. Many emphasise personal devotion yet forget that the Biblical test of loving God is whether a person loves his neighbour. Spirituality is measured on the one hand by doctrinal correctness or on the other hand by spiritual fervency or gifts. The Biblical call to holy living involving love, unity and forgiveness is overlooked as the individual strives for his or her own individual form of piety. If the love of God is stressed but his holiness is neglected, worship is reduced to that which happens formally or informally within an arranged service. What is needed is a radical return to a biblical concept of community.

If the Church and the Christian school are to be effective in meeting this challenge it must happen through developing a community based on a more powerful story than the secular story-it must be a community with a worldview based on the story told in the Bible. A story such as this is only developed in a community that shares the story. This story forms its worldview

A Story-Formed Community

Fernhout (1997, 85-86) suggests that "A world view does not… provide stories, rather, an embracing, plausibility-giving story provides a worldview". A story-formed worldview can be understood as a kind of condensation or shorthand of all beliefs, attitudes, values and action that have shaped the life of a person and have been adopted by the person through the story they have been told.
Fernhout uses a diagram (Figure 4) to show how a worldview is story formed. Many people think about a worldview as the result of an intellectual enterprise and engagement in philosophical reflection. His concept of a worldview appears to have its grounding in the experience of the community. It is influenced, as the diagram shows, by the interaction of its memory, vision, symbols and ethos. The Community's *memory* of its story, includes, according to Fernhout "a culture's cumulative response, through time, to the worldview

questions (who are we, where we are, what is wrong and what the solution is?) In memory the response to these questions is orientated towards where the story has been in the past". He also notes that " A living memory is essential; … if a story is to remain vibrant and formative, there must be a community of people capable of remembering and reinterpreting that story. In a living story people draw strength by remembering" (Fernhout 1997, 86)
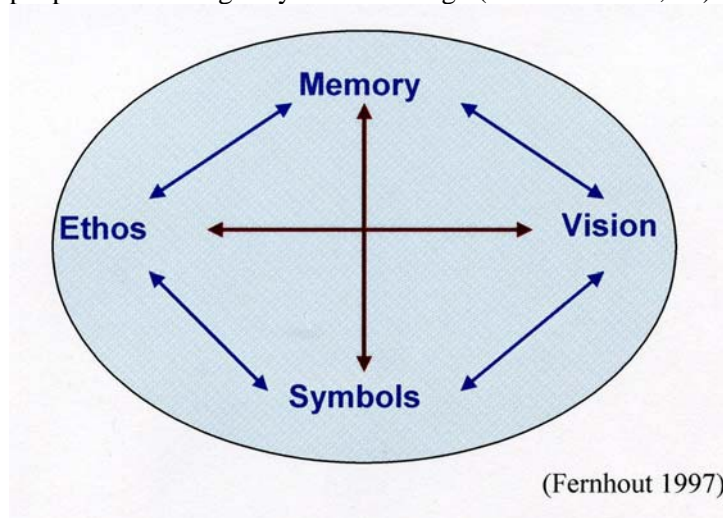

(Fernhout 1997)

Figure 4

Vision (or critical imagination) is, according to Fernhout deeply rooted in memory and also addresses the worldview questions. The story points the way forward to what might be done. Thus the emphasis is on the last two worldview questions (what is wrong and what is the solution?) These questions emphasise not what is but what ought to be. As Christians, while we know the problem of existence is due to the sinfulness of a fallen world, we also know that as a community of God's people we have a responsibility towards meeting the needs of a suffering world. (See Matthew 25:32-40). The solution to the world's problems cannot be left solely to preaching. We also need to be involved in action. James emphasises this when he says in relation to those who claim faith but are unmoved by human suffering and deprivation*, In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.* (James 2:17).

Worldview stories are according to Fernhout "also embodied in key cultural *symbols"* which can be events, rites or things. All communities have key activities that are important signs of their story. And these symbols have powerful connections to the values of the community since they operate at an emotional or affective level. Sport is for most Australians a powerful symbol - almost a rite. It forms part of our story telling who we are. It serves as a potent part of the vision that binds our community together.

Finally a story formed worldview incorporates what Fernhout calls *ethos* which he claims includes "key life aims in service of which people are prepared to invest their energies and talents. These basic life aims serve to define as sense of character, ie a sense of the kind of life practice the story calls forth".

This model thus provides a realistic and useful understanding of worldview and how it is formed. The story, which forms the worldview, must be a plausible story. A plausible story is one that is believed and trusted, that shapes our expectations and hopes (vision), that has key symbolic representations, that has great significance to its members and is one that influences the attitudes and actions of people in the community. In Acts we read the account of the commencement of the earliest Christian community, which is an example of this model in action. The first Christians *devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.* (Acts 2:42) The Apostle's teaching was the story of

Jesus, told for us now in the four Gospels. This story (*Memory* in our model) which the early Christians had some experience of themselves was told and retold so that it became a shaping force in the community. It was their story and they lived in it. It was the "good news" that had to be shared wherever they went. They devoted themselves to the fellowship (κοινωνια) literally to participating in each other's lives, sharing their concerns and looking after the needy. This *fellowship* was the hallmark (or in our model the *ethos*) of their community. It attracted others to it. It was the love in action that distinguished them as his disciples. *By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another*. (John 13:35). The breaking of bread was obviously a key *symbol* of this community. We are not sure whether this act was identical with what we call the Lord's supper today or referred to a common meal that had cultic significance. Whatever its form, the love feast as it became known, was a symbol of great importance that characterised this new community. Their devotion to the prayers, times of community praying which expressed their hope and their aspirations was to some extent a logical out flowing of their *vision* of spreading the good news across the whole world. Prayer continues in this prophetic visionary sense to be important in all Christian communities. Where prayers become formalised and repetitive and only a list of "gimmes" (requests), it is a sure sign that the community has lost its vision.

WHY IS EDUCATION IMPORTANT?

Education is important to children growing up for two major reasons. Firstly, children need the guidance, information and skills if they are to live effectively and fulfil their God-given task. Children are born helpless and grow to maturity over a 20-year period. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that children are given the care, guidance and education needed to live effectively. But people were created for a purpose – to glorify God and to revere Him. It is equally important that children should grow up to live lives worthy of their calling to be God's people. Secondly, education is also needed because students have to live with other people, family, church and the wider society. This process involves socialisation – that is learning to live with other people, and enculturation - that is understanding the norms by which people in a given society operate. This involves understanding the collective memory, vision, symbols and ethos of a society. Each family, church or other community will have its own cultural norms to which members will need to adapt. Education thus needs to provide guidance, information and skills in a caring atmosphere where students feel secure and to also pass on the values and attitudes they will need to function effectively as part of the society in which they live.

What is the Role of the School?

Schools should be aware of these two functions and to recognise that both aspects of education will happen simultaneously and they need to be intentionally wholistic in their approach. A school that thinks it only needs to be concerned with teaching information and skills has completely misunderstand its purpose. (Fernhout, 89) "In the dynamic interaction of these two factors, the process of education takes place. Each new generation is called to grow to maturity, and each new generation needs to be included in the accumulated knowledge embodied in a culture's shared way of life. Education is a process of bringing a new generation into full participation in a way of life so that eventually the new generation can take responsibility for shaping that cultural way of life into the future".

Schools should encourage students to:
- Develop the skills and knowledge values and attitudes they will need;
- Live effectively and to fulfil their God-given vocation;
- Participate appropriately in a culture which, at times, will be alien to them;
- Help to shape the culture to be more Godly or at least to be a witness to it of what God requires.

Education should be concerned with the formation of the worldview of the students as well as their vocational preparation. How do teachers help to form a worldview? Fernhout believes that a worldview is "story formed". This seems an eminently defensible view. Since people's worldviews are formed by their interactions with, and our understanding of, the culture that they live in there will be a variety of ways by which this culture is passed on from one generation to the next all of which involve a form of story-telling. That is, there is a story that is passed on but it is told in a variety of ways. It is important however not to be misled by the metaphor. The 'story' involves much more than a verbal story, and it is certainly more than any "written down" story. This becomes clearer if we see how story can form the various components of a worldview as suggested by Fernhout in his model. In accepting Fernhout's view that education is *a process of cultural story-telling,* we need to recognise that there are many story-tellers and the school does not have a monopoly on telling the story. In fact, in many ways schooling can be relatively uninfluential unless it recognises the importance of story-forming through all four components of a worldview.

Memory

The memory of a community is recorded in the stories told verbally, pictorially, in writing and electronically . But who tells the story? Parents do, but so does the church, the peer group, the school and the media –arguably the most influential storyteller in Australian society. Memory, and the stories that build it, help to define the worldview questions, "Who am I?" and "Where am I?" What people say to us and whether they affirm or criticise us will to a large extent affect our understanding of ourselves. This is also influenced by how we see ourselves measuring up to the view of a person portrayed as a norm for our society/community. Similarly, our understanding of what constitutes reality is determined very largely from the story that we "hear" from a variety of sources.

Symbols

Symbols, along with memory, help to define who we are and what is of ultimate value to us. They also help answer the worldview questions "Who am I?" and "Where am I?" At this point, we need to define what is meant by symbols. "Symbols can be events and rites or things. Some of these will be cultic in nature" (Fernhout). Symbols are things that move us deeply. They 'stand for' what and who we are. Sport is a powerful symbol for most Australians who identify with a sporting team as an expression of themselves. For instance, a commonly heard phrase after Australia's World Cup cricket victory was "We won". The win by the Australian cricket team helped to define Australians as 'winners' in their view of themselves.

I was involved in a minor car accident once when I backed my car out of my drive and across the road to the other side of the street. Because of oncoming traffic I drove faster than I realised and my car collided with a car parked opposite. The accident put a small dent in the front fender of a Mercedes owned by a relative of a neighbour. It was clearly my fault but the driver and his wife and mother wanted more than just information about my licence number and insurance policy, they wanted my blood! At the time I could not understand their rage. True, I had put a small dent into their Mercedes but you would have thought I had murdered someone. Clearly, this car was more than a mode of transport; it was significant as a symbol of its owners and their identity. Many of us have symbols like this. The way we worship, the style of clothes we wear and our regular routines are but some examples of important symbols. To some extent, all symbols are cultic ie they are to do with what we worship! We each have different symbols. A school uniform may be a symbol for parents and teachers, but it seldom is for students. Cultural story telling will influence our symbols; in most cases it is what defines them.

Ethos

All communities have shared values, which define the answer to the third 'worldview' question, What is wrong? Despite the fact that educationalists often teach students that they

must work out their own values since there are no absolute values – values are in fact adopted from the culture of the community in which we learn.

A story my wife told me about her kindergarten class illustrates this. She had given her 5-year old students a lesson on honesty and they all had been able to tell her that it is wrong to steal or lie. As the students went out to lunch there was an argument. One girl blamed a boy for stealing her lunch – he denied it. The class was called back. On investigation, the boy was found to have her lunch. He had stolen and lied. My wife said to me, "Well, I failed in that lesson". Well, she did and she didn't. The verbal story telling was seen to be relatively ineffective, but the acted story, when the class community got involved, helped to reinforce the fact that the class community did not approve of stealing. It was not something to be done in this class. It is in ways like this that story affects our values. We do not always live by our personal values. There is often a conflict between the personal and family values and the values of the community. Which will finally win out will in many ways depend on the effectiveness and the plausibility of the story told.

For example, a young man may grow up in a family where drugs are frowned on. Initially he shares these family values. Why might he change? He may change for a number of significant reasons. If the "story told by" his peer community says drugs are acceptable, that may be more powerful than the story told by his home. If, as he grows up, the story that defines him includes the need to be a drug user, or if the family story depletes rather than builds up his image of himself, he may become a drug user. If drug use is an important symbol in his peer community then that alone might be enough to turn him to it and if his peer group's vision says "There is no future", then personal satisfaction may be a more powerful motivation than the fear of the consequences of drug abuse.

Vision

In a community people share a common vision about life and how solutions may be found to the problems of life. The vision provides answers to the fourth worldview question. In a school community the story we tell and live out will help form the students' vision for their future. A school that does not address the vision of its community is likely to have adopted the vision of the world about it with its materialism, its pleasure centred view of life and the eventual meaninglessness of a view that says since there is no eternity, *Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.* (1 Corinthians 15:32)

Fernhout is surely correct when he says, "Education involves all four components in a story formed worldview. It is therefore interesting that in his own analysis he only concentrates on memory and vision. Perhaps we all tend to over emphasise the importance of the narrative elements in story forming and put too little emphasis on the acting component.

Fernhout's diagram has a number of arrows linking the various components. He does not suggest meanings for these interactions. In Figure 5 I have suggested a number of possible meanings to the arrows, which suggest the various interactions that together help form a worldview.

Our World and Life View

I have firstly suggested that the vertical and horizontal arrows could relate to how we answer the four basic worldview questions.

Where we are?

Our understanding of where we are in the cosmos and how we got here is largely influenced by memory. It is very clearly story formed. The things we have been told taught or learn in the past by experience, the ideas of our friends what we read or see on the TV, video theatre or hear on the radio, reading magazines etch all significantly affect our understanding of

where we are in the universe. A person's theory of origins is an attempt to answer this question. Although it is true that memory has significance in all four answers to worldview questions some of the other questions are significantly impacted by other factors in a story formed community.
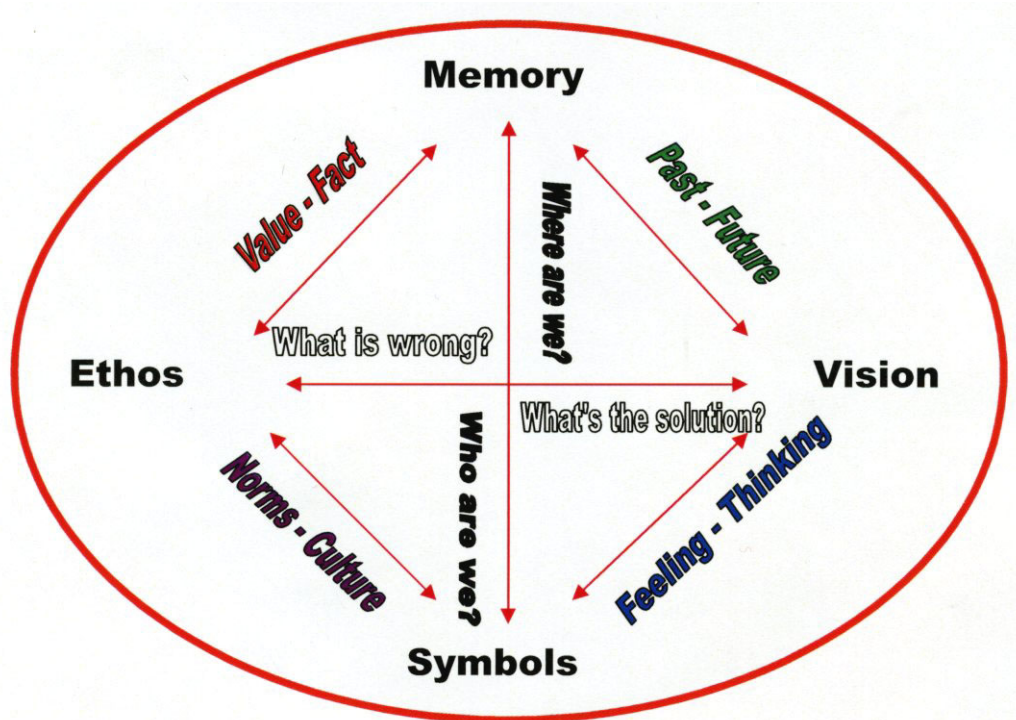

FIGURE 5. An Interpretation of Fernhout's Diagram (1997) Frisken 2011

Who we are?

Who we are is often very largely identified by our symbols. The cars we buy, the clothes we wear, the place where we live, the worship style we are happy with, the sport we follow- all these can help define for us our answer to this most significant world view question. Our symbols are bound up in the question of whom or what do we worship? Do we see ourselves as made in God's image and accountable to worship him or do we believe we are we self-authenticating and thus ultimately self centred.

What is wrong?

The horizontal arrow relates to the other two worldview questions, "What is wrong?" and, "What is the solution?" Our ethos which involves ideas about what is right or wrong helps us define the worldview question of what basically is wrong in the world. Our ethos is story formed. It grows form the story of our life and the stories we are told; from our earliest experiences and what we read, view, and are told. Everyone has some idea of what they think are the basic problems that humanity faces and what causes the problem. If our ethos is basically humanistic we will understand the problem in terms a lack of power for the individual caused by poor education, class oppressions, or a failure of the government to meet social need. If we have a biblical understanding we should see that the root of problems lies in the disobedience of the individual caused by his sin and alienation from God.

What is the solution?

A person's vision for life is based on his or her understanding of how the problems of life can be resolved. Some people believe the answer lies in a new social order, or better education, or stronger government action or a return to the past or a completely new approach for the future. The Christian ought to have a very different analysis of what is wrong and how it can

be remedied. Christians should have a biblical vision which leads to a commitment to Jesus Christ and his purposes and action in the world. Other people may have a nihilistic or a hopeless vision. They in effect say there is nothing that I as an individual can do that will make any difference; so why try? Their solution is doing nothing.

A balanced Community

Memory, vision, symbol and ethos all form important components of a balanced community. But to is easy to get these out of balance. The diagonal arrows remind us there is a tension between the components.

Past-Future

While we need guidance from our past and need to remember our story we must not allow ourselves to be bound in the past. We need to have a strong and clear vision for the future. Biblically this may be seen as a prophetic word; a word from the Lord that is directional for our living as a community. However the vision should not lead to the abandoning of the past since to forget the past is to be condemned to repeating its mistakes.

Feeling-Thinking

A vision is usually expressed in words. People may be driven by a clearly articulated and defined idea but others have a direction governed by their feelings and their symbols. In the Bible vision often was associated with symbol thus making it less cerebral and often more ambiguous. Men are often ideas-driven while women are more aware of the importance of feelings. A good balance is needed in community so that one is not emphasised to the detriment of the other. I grew up in a religious community where doctrine and rational thinking was of more importance than liturgy, ceremony or symbol. A view like this can deprive the community of richness and possibly of power. A vision or word that directs a community needs behind it the substance of feeling the deep emotional commitment that brings life to a community.

Norms -Culture

There is a tension between the norms of a community, those practices that are based on what is believed to be right and the symbols of the community around. These are both in different ways story-formed. Over emphasis on ethos can lead to legalism and a society governed by regulation. Overemphasis on symbols can lead to idolatry and people doing what ever they feel is right. People can be oriented more to the rules of the community than to its feelings and symbols or vice versa. This is true of non-Christian as much as Christian groups. The community bound to symbols will place immense importance on ceremony, liturgy and the dress or uniform flag, and other symbolic areas of group life. The group that is oriented towards ethos will have a higher stress on correct behaviour following the rules. What a good community needs is a balance. Evangelical communities often emphasis the doctrinal correctness in their beliefs but at the same time find their symbolic satisfaction in non-Christian areas of life such as sport, possessions etc.

Value-Fact

A fourth tension in community is the tension between value and fact. The Enlightenment led to what Greene (1998 P128) calls "the violent separation of fact from value". Facts are deemed to be public and of fixed meaning until changed by science (which is the story teller) while values are private and relative and one may choose what values to hold. The only thing that seems to be forbidden is to challenge the values of another person. Yet this is precisely what we must do if we believe that there are God-given values. This separation is wrong and it is important to understand that values are based on what God has revealed and that those things revealed by God in his Word are just as absolute as the findings of science.

DEVELOPING A STORY-FORMED CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

How then can we develop a story-formed school community in which the biblical story is more influential than the stories of the world? Paul's teaching in Ephesians and Romans would suggest that to live differently involves living as the Body of Christ in love, humility and unity.

We have already discussed how Paul (Ephesians 4:1) has challenged his readers to live lives worthy of their calling (to be the people of God). Later in the chapter he strongly asserts, (4:17) so *I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking*. How we live and think differently is the central issue, which we need to address.

Paul addresses this same issue albeit slightly differently in his Epistle to the Romans, *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will* (12:1-2). These verses are often quoted by supporters of Christian schooling as defining the task of Christian education in terms of transforming people by the renewing of the mind. However, these verses should not be viewed from a modern perspective, which sees the mind in cognitive terms, but rather in the Pauline perspective of the mind of Christ, which is found in his Body. (1 Corinthians 1:10 and 2:16) The language used in both Romans 12 and Ephesians 4 and 5 suggests very strongly that the way to ensure we live differently and are not unduly influenced by the surrounding society is to live effectively in community. This is an answer that is not at all popular in today's world which so strongly emphasises the individual. And we too easily write off the early chapters of Acts as an aberration in the development of the Christian Church. Instead we should see it as a model for Christian living, not one we should attempt to slavishly imitate but certainly one we should learn from.

What we need, if we are to live differently and not conform to our corrupt society, is a radical reinterpretation of what it means to live "in community" in the 3rd millennium.   The following points are key ideas, which need to be further explored. I believe that it is only as we establish these values that Christians, in dependence on the Holy Spirit, will be able to live effectively together in community and thus be able to withstand the powerful influence of the world.

Live Sacrificially

Jesus said (Luke 9:23) *If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me*. Paul called Christians to *offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship*. The call to sacrificially living is not popular in our self-centred and self-serving world but it is Christ's way. Modern Christianity is often founded on a low-cost discipleship basis and we wonder why it is so ineffective.

Live humbly

Paul says, *Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you* (Romans 12: 3). This also stands strongly in contrast with the worldly thinking where self-affirmation, self-assertiveness and the building up of self-esteem are seen as foundational for success. Paul here calls us to view ourselves in the context of the Body in which we are placed. He says, *be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love* (Ephesians 4:2).

Live as His Body

We are called to recognise that there is only one Body and we are all part of each other, while each has different gifts, (Romans 12:4-5) there is an underlying oneness. (Ephesians 4:4-6) and all parts of the Body is under the Headship of Christ, (Ephesians 5: 23, 29-30.)   But Christians seldom live in the reality of being one Body with each part supporting the other. Because Christ's people are his Body it is essential that they live in true unity and interdependence. This calls for each to recognise that what they are is a result of God's grace and to use their gifts to serve others (Romans 12:6).

Live in Unity

Just before his death, Jesus prayed that his followers would live in unity so that the world would recognise that he came from the Father. (John 17:20 –21) *I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.* Paul took up this same theme (Ephesians 4:3*); Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.* The individualism of our age stands in strong contrast to the unity that the Bible requires of all. A Christian community is to make every effort to preserve that unity. Unity is not the same as uniformity or conformity. There is freedom in unity to be the person God has made each of us to be while recognising that no one can fully be what God calls him/her to be without others.

Live in Love

Paul shows that the basis for our life together is to be love. This is not a theoretical love but one that has practical consequences (Romans 12: 9-13) *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hos*pitality. Part of the suggestion in these verses is that sincere love involves a hatred of what is evil. We are therefore called to renounce the way of self-centred living that our own sinful desires would lead us to. Rather we need to put on a new godly way of living- not just as individuals but also as the people of God. As such we are to be taught in him, that is in his Body and in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus who is the Head of the Body. (Ephesians 4:21-25) *Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of one body.*

We are called to live in a dynamic relationship in which we together learn the truth that is in Jesus in a way we never could on our own. This is what Paul is talking about when he speaks of our growth to maturity being through unity. (Ephesians 4:13) until *we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

Putting This into Practice

What I believe these passages are teaching us is that developing a Christian mind is a matter of developing a community way of thinking. This is to be marked not by uniformity or conformity, which often leads to a Christian community that is out of balance. The attitudes must be governed by our vision to be the people of God living together in humility and unity. Our relationships are also to show the triadic balance referred to earlier that is characterised by liberty, commitment and brotherly love. Christian schools are seldom based on such a balance. The learning community often lacks any true vision or unity. The structures in

which we work are more organisational than organic and the leadership and governance is more hierarchical than of the true servant-leadership type, to which Christ calls his people. Having a story formed community means learning to live out the biblical worldview in our practices as well as our words - this is a challenge that we need to think more deeply about.

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