CHAPTER 1

1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND GENERAL ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

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

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

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

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

The source of this dissatisfaction is not difficult to find. In the relevant literature, there is a large amount of data available to support the contention that the schools are in deep crisis. Some have criticized the school and talked about a crisis of the school because of its lack of success in fostering high levels of academic achievement, for its lack of discipline, and for neglecting talented students (cf. Bestor,
1953; Hutchins, 1953), while others say the school is so inhuman in its
treatment of children that it is in many cases not a fit place for child-
ren to be in (cf. Neill, 1982; Glasser, 1975; Patterson, 1973; Goodman,
underline the failure of the school to fulfil the contemporary expecta-
tions which certain segments of society have held for education (Hurn,
1978:1 - 9), and certain left radicals accuse the school of being oppres-
sive, manipulative, monopolistic, and autocratic, so much so that they
want to demolish to the root the school as an institution (cf. Reimer,
1971; Illich, 1974(a); Holt, 1976(b); Goodman, 1971(a); Freire, 1973).

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

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

1.3 TOPICALITY OF THE PROBLEM

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

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

1.3.2 In the second place, the modern school allegedly remains in deep trouble
or in crisis, although the calls to reform or improve the school
situation have been met by many positive suggestions. It may fairly be said that various points of school criticism and the suggested ideas for reforming the school could not, so far, succeed in solving the alleged problems or crisis of the school. Rather they have contributed other elements of crisis to the school. It is, therefore, necessary to explore the reasons why criticism against the school has failed to solve the problems or crisis of the school.

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

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

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

¹. As far as can be ascertained, in Christian educationalist circles only a few researches have been undertaken into the alleged problem or crisis of the modern school (cf. Van der Walt, 1980(b); 1982(a); 1983(c); Schutte, 1973; Olthuis, 1972).
This study can also be instrumental in drawing some guidelines for formal schooling in the RSA in years to come.

1.4 AIMS OF THE STUDY

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

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

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

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

1.5 SUBSIDIARY AIMS OF THE STUDY

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

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

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

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

1.5.4 to sketch the alleged problems or crisis of the school in the left radical context, and
1.5.5 to see the alleged problems or crisis of the school from a Scriptural perspective.

1.6 THE METHOD OF RESEARCH

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

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

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

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

1.6.5 This study is, hopefully, guided by the principle of sola Scriptura. Although the Bible was not intended to be a textbook for the various sciences, it does present us views about God and the universe which nature today does not teach properly. This study, however, does not try to derive from Scripture alone a full answer to all the problems of education and the school. Those who think they can derive truly Scriptural principles for education and the school from Bible texts have a very mistaken notion of Scripture. Using only the Bible as a source in scientific work leads to biblicism. On the other hand, looking at creation alone apart
from Scripture leads to secularism. The Bible is a corrective of false impressions made by nature in its distorted condition because of man's fall into sin. Therefore, as Calvin (1967:70) states it, one must look at the created reality through the "spectacles" of Scripture to interpret it properly (cf. Duvenage, 1982; Spykman, 1981:152 - 159; Meeter, 1975:42 - 46).

1.7 SCOPE AND DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

1.7.1 Disciplinary delimitation

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

1.7.2 Delimitation of the content/research topic

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

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

1.7.2.3 This study is limited mostly to an investigation of the crisis of Western schools. The crisis of the school in the Communist
bloc is left out of consideration in this study because it is actually a matter beyond the reach of this investigation.

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

1.7.3 Definition of terms

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

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

1.7.3.3 Learning The acquisition of knowledge and skills which will benefit the pupils.

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

1.7.3.5 Schooling The term "schooling" in this study means the organized action of teaching which takes place under the auspices of the school as a social institution for the sake of learning.
1.7.3.6 Religion  The term "religion" is used throughout the study in referring to the innate direction of the heart of a human being toward God or (a)god/gods.

1.7.3.7 Crisis  A serious, problematic, or unstable situation which requires immediate attention and amelioration.

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

1.8 THE PROGRAMME AND STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

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

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

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

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

1.8.4 Chapter 4 consists of a discussion of the school ideas of the left liberals. In other words, special attention is given in this chapter to the school ideas of those who criticize the school on the basis of human freedom and individuality but at the same time want to reform the school environment from within the school system.
1.8.5 Chapter 5 is used for an examination of the left radicals' criticisms of the school and of their alternative strategy for the present school system.

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

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

1.9 CONCLUSION

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