

own “laws” of operation, its own domain, its own authority. Today people like to lump them all together and talk about their “kingdom vision” for Christian politics, Christian economics, Christian education, etc.

At least two cracks in this theory were spotted by Dutch thinkers who lived after Kuyper, people we don’t hear much about in North America. One defect is that if you view all these “spheres” like pearls on a string, the *church* loses its biblical uniqueness and preachers no longer dare to be too specific anymore about the economics and politics and science of their parishioners. The other problem — and I suspect you’ve seen this firsthand — is that the church’s *confessions* are ruled irrelevant to “Christian” educational, political, economic and scientific enterprises. Let the church (with her confessions) be church, but let the school be . . . free, to make her own.

Our point here is that if the Christian home sets the tone, it also picks the tune.

And now the educational “sovereigns” may begin nervously fingering their diplomas and clearing their throats. “What do you mean, parents pick the tune? Who’s the expert — they or we? Who took courses in Educational Theory and Child Psychology and Elementary or Secondary Ed?”

There you have it — the primary, most fundamental, absolutely crucial issue involved in the “what,” the *perspective*, of Christian day school education: whom does God authorize, through His Word and His providence, to teach *your* children?

We need perspective before process, the “what” before the “how.” Before asking where the bucks go in Christian education, we’d better know where the buck stops. ■■■

VIEWPOINTS

Where should I go to college? That’s not the most vexing question faced by our young people today, but it is an important one. Sometimes the answer to the question is practically dictated by vocational requirements, by geographic considerations, or some other special circumstances. But more often than not it isn’t. Usually one has to weigh the options available. Usually, too, those options include institutions both Christian and secular. And that can present problems. A serious-minded child of God will wonder, how should I make that choice? Given the differ-

ence in the nature of the instruction which one can expect to receive at the Christian versus the secular; given the purpose of all education; given my own educational goals, as I've sought to determine the will of the Lord with respect to my calling in life — given all of that, what considerations in choosing a college may I see to be legitimate?

*Hard questions these are, requiring a good deal of sanctified judgment. We thought therefore that it might be helpful to have the question looked at from several different points of view in our "Viewpoints." Accordingly, we asked a college student, Erika Pipe (a member of our Southeast Protestant Reformed Church), to reflect on her choice of a state university. In order to gain also a parent's perspective, we asked Erika's father, Mr. Tim Pipe (who himself attended a Christian college), to give his view of the matter. And, finally, we turned to Mr. Jon Huiskens, a graduate of Calvin College and for twenty years registrar at Hope College, to explain why he is inclined to steer young people in the direction of a Christian college. Jon informed us that a couple of years ago he had written a similar article for *Beacon Lights*. So, with permission, we've reprinted a good part of that article.*

Here, then, are their thoughts, for your consideration:

Attending a Secular College

Erika Pipe

College was something I had looked forward to for many years. During my high school years, brochures from colleges and universities all over the United States poured into the mailbox. At first I thought it would be great to attend a college/university that wasn't close to home. However, after looking at the cost of room and board, plus tuition at some of these schools, I decided to live at home and attend a school within driving distance.

After much thought and many discussions with my parents, I chose Grand Valley State University, a secular school. There were two reasons for my decision. First of all, I wanted to receive a good education. After talking with advisors and with people who were attending GVSU, I felt confident that I would get a good education at Grand Valley. Secondly, although I wanted a good education, I didn't want to spend

\$8,000-\$10,000 per year for tuition. At GVSU my tuition was under \$2,000 per year. Because the tuition was affordable for me, I hoped to complete my college education and be free of tuition debt.

I must admit that I was more than a little afraid when I started my education at Grand Valley. All of a sudden the realization hit me that for the first time I might be the only Protestant Reformed person in a class. I was going to be the "exception" and not the "rule." I asked myself, how would the professors teach their classes? What if I were called on to say how I felt on certain issues? All my life, I had teachers who taught every subject from a godly perspective. God created the world. God created numbers. History is the unfolding of God's plan for mankind. Our whole life is centered in God's Word.

Now, I had to take a Geology class that used a textbook that was introduced by the theory of evolution. I had a Philosophy course that praised Socrates and the "thinking" man in general.

I also asked myself if I would be able to have friends at a secular university. What if I not only felt like a fish out of water, but looked like one, too. Without a doubt, many questions were milling around in my mind.

Keeping in mind that I have had only one year of education

at GVSU, I will try to answer some of the questions I had before I started.

It is my feeling that most of the professors are careful not to offend anyone's religious beliefs. In my Philosophy class I felt compelled to answer the teacher's question on whether man has a soul, and if he does, how did he receive his soul. With my heart thumping wildly, I raised my hand and answered that I believed man had a soul and that God created it. I waited for the ridicule, but none came. In fact some students agreed with me. There were others, however, who thought man had a soul, but were not sure how he received it. The professor did not say how he felt, but all the ideas presented seemed fine to him. Certainly, there were some courses that had ideas that were contrary to Scripture, but also many that were quite good, such as my English and History classes.

And, yes, I have met new people at Grand Valley. It is amazing how people from various Christian schools are able to find each other at a university whose student body numbers in the thousands.

There are also quite a few people that attended Covenant Christian High School that go to GVSU. Every day during breaks between classes, many of us meet somewhere on campus.

Even though I have not wanted to be involved in extra-curricular activities at Grand Valley, I have never felt isolated at school. The only thing I desire to gain at this school is an education that will enable me to become a teacher.

It is my prayer that the many

years of thorough Christian education received in my home, at Adams Street Christian School, at Covenant Christian High School, and in my church will help and guide me to achieve this goal. ■□■

Are Secular Colleges an Alternative?

Tim Pipe

Any discussion of our children and college education must begin with establishing the proper perspective. If we are Christian, God-fearing parents, then our motives and methods in assisting our children in the choice, first of all, whether to attend college, and then, what college to attend are governed by our beliefs. Our calling in all things is to serve our Father in thought, word, and deed; and this principle should be applied also as we and our children face the issues of college education.

Preliminary to any advice given by parents on which college a child should attend there would have been approximately eighteen years of some emphasis, in the home, on education. To a greater or lesser degree, all parents put some value on education and its purpose. We would be hard pressed to find a person that

could disagree with the assertion of Solomon in Proverbs 1:3-7 that "a wise man will hear and will increase learning." It is obvious that the knowledge and wisdom of Proverbs are of a spiritual nature; but it is also apparent that there is a theme which gives value to the instruction that distinguishes us from the fool. Proverbs 15:2 states that, "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness." This discussion does not logically leave us with the assumption that all children must attend college. It does, however, speak of a never-ending obligation, on our part, to increase in knowledge and wisdom. Therefore, if the talent and the means are present we, as parents, should promote college education with our children.

In a society which is demanding more and more special-

ized skills in the job market, parents must recognize that their advice regarding education can affect their children's entire lives. It is not wrong to discuss the job market, salaries, and educational requirements. As future parents, our children must realize that they too will support families. They should also understand their obligation to support our churches and schools with their prayers and financial gifts. Financial concerns, when one makes career choices, are not primary, but they are very pertinent to the matter at hand.

An even more important consideration is the fact that as Satan becomes increasingly more deceitful in his attempt to lure us from the truth, we should arm ourselves and our children for this struggle. A proper emphasis on education is a tool in this arena. We and our children should be knowledgeable about current events, we should be literate, and we should cultivate oral and written communication skills. Our children must be able to understand what is happening in the world and they must be able to speak and write about what they see. These skills can and should be applied, also, as we interact with fellow believers. We must be able to understand the Scriptures and to express ourselves thoughtfully and clearly. The instruction of college educa-

tion can then, when applied by the work of the Holy Spirit, be very worthwhile in the life of a believing child of God.

But our subject is a bit more focused than whether college education is necessary. The previous views are, however, important to a discussion of whether a secular college can be an alternate choice. I am not prepared to make a concise judgment one way or the other but I can relate some pertinent experiences. Some important considerations are the curriculums at the particular colleges and whether credits are transferable. Also, if your child needs financial assistance there are major differences in available funds. The proximity to your home is also a factor. The environment and atmosphere of a particular college and whether your child is socially active is something which should be carefully considered. College campuses can provide many distractions and temptations.

One of the considerations that we will mention separately is the matter of cost. This is mentioned separately because, for one thing, it is very significant and, for another, in many cases it is the final consideration. Even where there is a total commitment to Christian education, many people now feel that our private Christian colleges are no longer institutions that preserve the truths that we

hold dear. If this is true, does it make any sense to pay the significantly higher tuition/housing costs compared to the state colleges and universities? I do not feel that cost can be the only consideration, but it certainly is being weighed against benefits by many potential students. My feeling is that, when examining different colleges, parents and children should discuss all of these issues completely, and cost is a fair topic.

I am not promoting a decision to attend a secular college based strictly on cost. I do feel, however, that we must take a critical look at what is happening in the Christian colleges. I attended a local Christian college several years ago. At that time chapel attendance was mandatory, and a major issue was the publication of a satirical issue of the *Banner* called the *Bannaner*. Now, at that same institution, chapel

attendance is practically nonexistent, and the major issues are the infallibility of Scripture and whether the literal presentation of creation is accurate. I bring this up only as an observation and not as a judgment. It is sad to think that if our children choose to attend a Christian college we must prepare them by alerting them to some of these differences.

I do believe in Christian education at every level and, referring back to our opening statement, we must prayerfully consider how we can best serve God. Attendance at a Christian college should be the first option considered — simply to show support for the principle of Christian education. If after careful consideration that option does not seem to support what we and our children feel college education should offer, then attendance at a secular institution is a legitimate alternative. ■■■

Choosing a College

Jon Huiskens

Many young people are deciding, about this time of year, where to go to college. In the process of making this decision of where to go, many of you are going to have to face squarely the question of what type of institution you will attend: will it be a Christian college or a

secular one? My preference is for the former, the Christian college, and the purpose of this article will be to demonstrate why.

To write an article addressing this question and have it apply to different groups of people in different places is a difficult

charge — for several reasons. First, our churches are located in diverse settings — both rural and metropolitan — which means that access to college may be near, within commuting distance, or far, which may necessitate living on campus or in housing nearby. Second, our young people have diverse interests, which means that, depending on one's vocational and/or educational goals, choices of colleges may be limited to those who offer a specific program. Third, our parents have diverse expectations and requirements of higher education, which means that some may take the attitude that the college down the road is good enough, or it may mean that some will want "the best" for their sons or daughters.

Fact is, our young people have pursued higher education both at Christian and at secular colleges and universities. No one has insisted that one ought to have priority over the other. As noted above, many considerations come into play here, and they should. Parents and their sons and daughters will need to discuss these matters together and come to their individual conclusions. What I write here is based upon my own experience and is my own opinion. All I can hope for is that you will consider what I have to say in making your decisions. . . .

That we are supporters of Christian education there is no doubt. Our entire educational system is testimony of that. That commitment, however, has never been extended to higher education. There has been much talk about establishing a Protestant Reformed college. Such an institution would help, no doubt, in one's decision about where to go to college. But that idea is not very practical today. To establish a teacher-training program, for example, as some have suggested, is practically impossible to do. The State of Michigan has not approved any new teacher-training programs in the last 15 years. And the one proposal it did have, from an already established institution, was rejected. So what is left to consider are public institutions, private institutions which have become secular, or private institutions which still actively proclaim a Christian perspective. So, given the options, how is a person to decide?

In order to answer this question for myself, I was forced to go back to my own upbringing in an area of the country (yes, contrary to the thinking of many Michiganders, there are other legitimate states in the union) where my parents had to decide already at the elementary level where we were to go to school. There were two options: the local Christian school or the local

public school. There was never any doubt (and that was confirmed again by my father in recent discussions) where we were to go. Public education was not an option as long as there was an existing Christian school. Why was this so? The most obvious reason was that one was Christian and the other was not. . . .

I see no reason, now, why that same thinking ought not be applied to the selection of a college. But, it seems that many of us lose our conviction here and turn to preference. The line of reasoning we use to send our children to local Christian schools seems to end at the conclusion of high school education. It seems, then, that any college or university is fair game for our children to attend.

I know that there are reasons given for that approach to choosing a college: finances, closer to home, program of study, etc. And, I will admit that oftentimes these considerations are real and need to dictate how our decisions are made. The question I want to raise, however, is whether the matter of Christian vs. secular college or university is made a consideration here. Do we, as parents, and do we, as students, make that a *primary* consideration in our college choice? My hope is that we will and that we do.

Why so? The answer follows

directly from what has gone before: the choice is between an institution that is Christian — Christian in its mission, Christian in its perspective — or an institution committed to a secular perspective and a secular mission. What you can expect from a secular college is a secular perspective on history, on man, on the world. What you can expect from a Christian college is a Christian perspective on history, on man, and on the world.

This is not to say, however, that you will be able to agree with everything that is taught. But, at least, the people with whom you deal will approach problems and solutions differently and you can expect your professors to understand what you are trying to say.

If the decision, then, is to choose a Christian college because it is that — Christian — there are going to be certain things that are necessary for you as a young person to understand. First, you will have to be a person of discernment. You are going to encounter new ideas and perspectives and beliefs and philosophies with which you don't wholly agree, and you will have to be able to sort out what you can embrace and what you can not. Second, you will have to be a person with courage — courage to speak your mind and courage to hold on to your beliefs whether that be in classroom discussions

or in “bull sessions” with your peers.

The results can be very positive. If you come to college with convictions and with the ability to articulate, tactfully, those convictions, the result can be that you will be strengthened in those convictions. Just the fact that probably for the first time in your life you will not be able to rely upon the old phrase, "I don't believe that, because my church doesn't believe that" and will have to defend yourself can be a refining, sharpening experience.

So, I come back to the beginning. We have never insisted that a Christian college be a requirement. In some cases, that would not even be possible to require. Some programs just are not available at a Christian college; many technical and vocational programs are offered only at the local community college. But, where there is choice, I would urge our young people to attend a Christian college. There is much to be gained, I believe, if they do. What, for example, would one who is going to be a

medical doctor or a nurse prefer in his training, a Christian perspective on health care or a secular one? Or, if one is going to be a teacher, what would be preferable, a Christian perspective on education and on the child, or a secular one? The list could go on.

Some final words for anyone who is going to college. Keep in touch with your parents, your minister, and anyone else who can help you through the difficulties of college life. We often think that once you become a college freshman, you automatically become an adult. My experience has shown that much maturing goes on during college years, and the more help and guidance you have, the better off you'll be.

As for me, I've talked with many young people and am willing to help, even if you are going to some other school "down the road." My view of where to go may be somewhat biased after spending more than twenty years at Hope College, but I believe that I am open enough to help you wherever you choose to go.

EXAMPLE

We may occasion other men's sins by example, and the more eminent the example, the more infectious it is. Great men cannot sin at a low rate because they are examples; the sins of commanders are commanding sins; the sins of rulers ruling sins; the sins of teachers teaching sins.

Ralph Venning