

The disabled child must be taught to put his trust in God, to rely on Him, and to serve Him so that to God may be all the glory.

This is no small task. We must pray for wisdom and patience in dealing with these children of God.

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## **A Biblical View of the Responsibility of Parents in Education**

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Recently the "Great Debate" has drawn attention to the parlous state of education in our country but, despite the contributions of politicians, educators, industry, the universities and colleges, etc., no clear policy has emerged. Anyone and everyone is prepared to speak and write at length on the subject for all have participated in one way or another and have their pennyworth to add. Acquisition of the basic skills (the three R's), vocational training, preparation for leisure and citizenship are glibly offered as educational aims and the very glibness of the presentation deceives many. But these are not educational aims: they are simply a recognition of the various facets of existence in a modern society; a passive acceptance of the status quo but taking no cognisance whatever of a meaning and purpose in life. They are descriptive not formative. We shall look in vain to the philosophers, the educational theorists, psychologists, curriculum builders, and government appointed committees; there are reams of educational jargon and hundreds of "in" words to confuse and repel any parent who may wish to find out what is happening to his children, but no one can define "education" for no one can tell us what is the meaning and purpose of life.

No one, that is, except the Author of Life Himself, Who simply and clearly stated, "This is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Even more succinctly He declared, "I am . . . the Life." And speaking of the purpose of His incarnation, "I am come that ye might have life and that ye might have

it more abundantly.” What more can we ask? We are born into this world that we might have a personal encounter with God and so true education (a “leading out”) is that which will lead us to God.

It follows that state education as practised today is completely worthless in this respect and is even dangerous for not only will it not lead us to God, it will lead our children away from Him. There is no subject in the curriculum which will point to God as Creator and Upholder of the Universe: rather they are taught that the universe is the result of blind chance and that man is the end product of a “fortuitous concourse of atoms.” There is no mention of God’s righteousness and absolute holiness nor are the pupils ever taught that they will be brought to judgment at the last day and will have to give account “of every idle word that they shall speak.” When is the love of Christ’s atonement ever mentioned? Let us say that all is ignored to the point of extinction, and so the very stuff of life is missing from the curriculum. Whenever “origins” are mentioned in history, biology or even general literature (English) evolutionism is overtly taught or tacitly assumed and creationism is not even mentioned as a credible alternative.

It is a fond hope that RE (Religious Education) will somehow act as a corrective. The RE departments in the College of Education are liberal in the extreme and only in the rare cases where a convinced evangelical takes an RE class is there a chance of the truth being taught, “a pelican in the wilderness” (Ps. cii 6)! Let parents not be deceived, the whole weight of the consensus is against the Christian faith. The great majority of teachers are unconverted men and women; pleasant, decent, hard-working and altruistic though many of them are, the Bible and the Author of the Bible calls them “blind leaders of the blind.” We must not water down the truth and we cannot afford to be squeamish when the salvation of our children is at stake. Paul writes, “If our gospel be hid it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not. . . .” We dare not trust the education of our children to unbelievers who are blind, who will lead them “until both fall into the ditch.”

I can almost hear some of my readers exclaiming, But that means “spiritually” blind and refers only to spiritual matters, to the teaching of RE and so on. “These teachers are quite fit to teach math, French, physics, and so on!” On the face of it the argument sounds very convincing, but it is not biblical. There is no separation of knowledge into secular and religious categories. The truth is one and indivisible and so also must be the knowledge of the truth or to use a more biblical term,

the understanding of the truth. This dichotomy between sacred and secular which we Christians are wont to practise is nowhere more dangerous than in the field of knowledge. The Christian has a unique understanding of life, of *all* life (excluding nothing) and we forget this at our peril. If you are in doubt about this assertion, read the first three chapters of I Corinthians, perhaps better in the GNB; because of the freshness of the language it will have a greater impact, especially in the closing verses (18-23) of the third chapter. This whole subject of the nature of truth, the knowledge and understanding of the truth and the application of it to our daily living (wisdom) is one which requires a more detailed treatment than can be given in this article. At this juncture it is enough to say that the regenerate mind, taught by the Spirit of God is far more trustworthy and efficient instrument than the greatest human intellect submerged in the darkness of unbelief.

To whom then can we entrust the education of our children? The answer is obvious and is stated unequivocally in the Scriptures. When God called out a people for Himself and set a pattern for their national life the focal point emerged in these memorable words: "Hear, O, Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children. . ." (Deut. vi 4-7). Psalm lxxviii 1-6, sets out at greater length the continuity and importance of true education: "That they might set their hope in God and not forget the works of God but keep his commandments."

Many will say that this type of education is not practicable, but history contradicts them.

In his home and daily life the Jew constantly reminds himself of his duties and his obligations towards God. . . . From 1500-1000 BC certain Hebrew Semetic tribes developed a remarkable democratic educational system. . . the Hebrews required boys of every social class to attend school. . . the Hebrew schools were religious schools. . . they taught the boys to read sacred writings. . . Hebrew girls were taught at home by their mothers. (and later on in history) A synagogue may sponsor study groups and education. . . it usually has a school where Jewish children study Jewish religion, literature, history, language. . . . (Quotations from "World Books" vol. 6, p. 67 and vol. 11, p. 143.)

The people of God under the old covenant could do it, should the people of God under the new covenant do less?

Over the last fifty years education in Scotland has changed com-

pletely in nature, changed because the underlying philosophy and understanding of the educational process has changed radically. In 1872 the churches handed over to the state the responsibility of educating the children of the nation, fondly believing that the ethos of educational thinking would remain Christian. They trusted that the agreement making the teaching of religion legally binding upon the civil authorities would be sufficient to ensure a truly Christian education. How sadly their confidence was misplaced is only too evident today. Not only is the teaching of the Christian faith sadly neglected but the philosophy of education is now humanistic and definitely anti-Christian. The pupil brought up in a Christian home finds himself (or herself) in an alien atmosphere which becomes more clearly and aggressively so as they grow older. Even in primary school however there are teachers who challenge and even mock the faith of the Christian pupil.

Up till now Christian parents have been so apathetic or so blind to the reality of the situation that they have done little or nothing even to inform themselves on what their children are being taught in school. The following appeared in the *Scotsman* (12.5.78):

Parents are taken to task by a Committee of the Church of Scotland for adopting a laissez-faire attitude and for failing to nurture their children in the Christian faith. . . . It is time to recognise anew that the prevalent mood among so many parents of "Let's leave it to the children," simply does not square with the baptismal promise of parents to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

It is a complete contradiction that parents who make these vows should hand their children over to unbelievers to be indoctrinated in a humanistic and anti-Christian philosophy.

That this is the truth of the situation cannot be denied. Why then do so-called Christian parents flagrantly disobey the vows they have made before God? The answer to this question is complex for many contributory factors are present to a greater or lesser degree. Complacency, ignorance, wilful blindness, laziness, the pressure of daily living, the demands of a materialistic society, giving in to the general consensus for fear of man, unlawful deference paid to human intellect and academic prowess, and so the list could go on. However the greatest single factor is the neglect of the Word of God. Here again we come face to face with the basic meaning of "truth" and here again we must leave it stating only that the Bible insists that true knowledge, understanding of, and obedience to the "truth" are essential for real

Christian life (John viii 30-32). Job averred that "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than necessary food"; David, that (they) "are more to be desired than gold... sweeter than honey and the honeycomb." And Jeremiah, "Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart."

These are not figures of speech implying that the Word is rather important amongst other things in life, the writers are not indulging in romantic exaggeration or flowery speech, they are stating the bare, essential truth and unless we join with them — and excel because of our greater privilege in Christ — then we do not know the truth as we ought nor do we really know the Lord as we should (Jer. ix 24). Until the Word of God possesses our minds and dominates our thinking we are but babes, children, immature, not fit to take our place in the family or in the church (I Cor. iii 1-4; Heb. v 12-14). The challenge of spiritual maturity and effective witness has been neglected in too many churches.

Most of my readers will be unwilling to follow me thus far and even if they do they will say that we shall just have to do our best for the children at home since we can never change the system. This sort of compromise will not do if we are to be true Christians who recognise the Bible as the only rule of faith and conduct. We must do what the Scriptures indicate by direct command and by example — and that is, teach our children ourselves, first in the home and then, aided by the church until they are converted and completely equipped to face any arguments that are brought against them. That such a plan is viable will not readily be realised by people accustomed to state education.

There is a very relevant point here that ought to be raised. In the present situation a child frequently finds that the teacher and the parents are at variance on many points (especially religious matters). The child is afraid to mention the subject at home and so confidence between parent and child suffers. Often a parent when challenged on a point of knowledge, defers to the teacher, disclaiming competence — "I am not a teacher." In the end the child accepts the teachers' competence and authority in most questions and tragically so when the tenets of the Christian faith are in question. It is wrong that such a tension should be introduced into the child's mind and even worse that confidence in a parent should be undermined. This situation becomes more acute in Secondary School because of specialist subjects and so the pupil suffers a mental dichotomy — home, parents, and church on one side and a secular, anti-Christian thinking on the other.

Christian schools have a particular appeal but they are few and far

