

Special Feature

Newsletter of the Christian Parent-Teacher League
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by David Silversides

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND THE COMMAND OF GOD

Why do we want to see distinctively Christian schools?

We do *not* want Christian schools because we believe that Christians should prevent their children from knowing what the real world is like. We believe that Christians *should* ensure that their children know what the world, even a fallen world, is like. Indeed, they should know not only the facts about the world, including the effects of sin, but also be taught to understand why these things are so. This makes teaching from a standpoint of Biblical Truth essential. An education given in the light of the Word of God is the best possible education to prepare a child for the real world. The child needs truth, not error, to prepare for reality. An education in which the God of the Bible is honoured is the best one. To say otherwise is to make light dependent upon darkness and is unthinkable. Neither do we want Christian schools because they are an innovation and we would like to experiment with this new idea. The desire for a distinctively Christian education is not new. In the 16th Century in Scotland John Knox sought the establishment of schools "for the virtuous education and godly upbringing of the youth of this realm". (*First Book of Discipline*). Since that time prominent exponents of the Reformed Faith have given expression to the need for Christian schools, and have sought their establishment.

Why then do we want Christian schools? Firstly, we do not believe that education is a neutral area. The words of C.H. Spurgeon in *The Sword and Trowel* back in August, 1866 are certainly of contemporary value—"the silly cry of 'nonsectarian' is duping many into the establishment of schools in which the most important part of wisdom, namely, the fear of the Lord, is altogether ignored". Secondly, we do not regard the school as

part of "the world" which children must be prepared to face, but as an extension of the home, with both home and school combining to give the best possible preparation to the child to live in the world. The standards of the school are to be the standards of the home. The teacher is to act on behalf of the parents, which is why we advocate not only Christian schools, but parent-controlled Christian schools. Thirdly, we believe that the responsibilities laid upon parents in Scripture (e.g. Eph. 6:4, Col. 3:21, Deut. 6:5-9) demand Christian education. The desire for Christian schools, then, is not an academic nicety without practical significance, but simply the outworking of the Reformed faith in one area of life, in fulfillment of the Word of God. We also believe that the wisdom of God is infinitely beyond man's wisdom and that the Christian parent need have no fear of harming his child in doing that which is right in the sight of God. Ultimately, then, the basis of Christian education is not expediency but the commandment of God.

"Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right: and I hate every false way". (Psalm 119:128).

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"For us, it is obviously important to familiarise our families with the history which God inspired the prophets and evangelists to write. But our obligation does not end there. We must also introduce them to the post-biblical history of the church, especially in Scotland itself. In the not too recent past it could be assumed that the state-schools would do this. But now, ecclesiastical history receives scant attention and where it is taught the approach is often secularist, Marxist or Roman Catholic. The result is that a generation is growing up utterly ignorant of the Reformers and Covenanters; or what is worse hopelessly prejudiced against them. Yet it is to these men that we owe in large measure, not only our religious and theological heritage, but many of our basic civil rights, and our contempt for their memories is a national disgrace". ("Parents and Religious Education" by Donald MacLeod in *The Monthly Record* of the Free Church of Scotland, February, 1979).

The horror that such observations regarding the glaring defects of the state educational system produces in the minds of Christians accounts, in part, for the growing awareness of the need for Christian schools. Such alarm is quite justified.

Complacency in the face of such an onslaught by the powers of darkness would be inexcusable. Nor is it enough to say that we must pray for the preservation of our children from such harmful influences when it is in our power to take practical steps. If a minister of the Gospel regularly allowed a man of heretical beliefs to preach to his congregation we would not accept that he had discharged his responsibility if he should say that he prays for the preservation of the flock from error. Nor would we feel any better about the situation if he should protest that God is sovereign and able to preserve them, and in any case he knows many who have heard erroneous sermons and not been led astray. No, as pastor of the flock, he is obliged to ensure that they are not exposed to error, when it is within his power to prevent it. In a similar way, Christian parents cannot abdicate their responsibility on the grounds of what either God can do or has done or because of what they pray that he will do. They are obligated so far as lies within them to ensure that their children's minds are not being filled with falsehood just as surely as they are to prevent their stomachs being filled with poison. In a day when state education is armed to the teeth against vital godliness this usually means education outside the state system.

The story, however, does not end there. Even schools which are free from such obvious errors as those referred to above, and which are staffed with Christian teachers are not enough. The whole of the school curriculum must point to the chief end of man which is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever. For this reason we are glad to be able to devote part of this Newsletter to the subject of curriculum. We hope to have more and more to report in the future of the development of curriculum material suitable for use in Christian schools, so that even in the educational field men might give unto the Lord the glory that is due to his name.

If we may quote Donald MacLeon again, "If we are more concerned that our children should be successful than that they should be spiritual we do not deserve the name of Christian parents at all". We believe that that priority order ought to govern not only by whom our children are to be taught, and what they are *not* to be taught, but also what they *are* to be taught.

In short, the curriculum of the Christian school must not only be free from negative falsehood and error, but must also positively reflect throughout the Biblical truth—"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11).