

Editorials

by Agatha Lubbers

Resolved to Have Christian Education in 1985

Christian education has never really been “a take-it or leave-it option” for Reformed Christians.

Christian education is explicitly and implicitly required because of the promises believing parents make. Parents say that they will see to it that they to the best of their ability will provide Christian nurture and instruction for their baptized children.

As we begin the year A.D. 1985, we do so with godly resolve to provide an education for the seed of the Covenant, that is truly Christian.

Two articles included in this issue of *Perspectives in Covenant Education* emphasize the importance of the calling of the Christian parent in the educational enterprise. I refer particularly to the article of Rev. Kortering and the article of Mr. Sam Will of Dundee, Scotland. You will enjoy these articles. One is written by a minister who has long supported the cause of Christian education in the community of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Mr. Sam Will expresses the same basic concern as Rev. Kortering for parent involvement in Christian education in Scotland. I think it is safe to say that the cause of Christian education as we Protestant Reformed people have learned to know it and practice it is not as deeply rooted in Scotland.

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Reformed Christians in America often do not completely appreciate the struggle that has resulted in the development of the parent-controlled Christian schools that have become such an important part of the instructional program. We believe in free Christian schools — schools that are free from the state and free from the church.

We do not know as well as we should some of the individuals who worked for this freedom — particularly in the Netherlands. The movement in the Netherlands has helped to develop the ideology that has led to the development of Christian schools here in the United States particularly after the Doleantie or Kuyper movement in the Netherlands, 1890ff.

We have perhaps heard the names of Abraham Kuyper and Groen Van Prinsterer in this connection but often know little more than that.

The January, 1985, issue of *Reformed Perspective* contains a very enlightening article entitled "The legacy of Groen van Prinsterer" by Mckendree R. Langley. I take the liberty to quote sections of this article. It gives an interesting review of the public career of Groen van Prinsterer and how he was led to help in the development of the Christian education movement in the Netherlands — a movement that eventually worked to be free from the state. His work was done in a country that was nominally Christian in the 19th century but had in reality fallen under the influence of the deism of the French revolution. In this sense he was Anti-Revolutionary.

Born into an aristocratic family in 1801, he lived a comfortable life in the Hague as far as personal wealth was concerned. After undergoing a lengthy conversion experience, he surrendered his life to the Lord in 1833. Then this young nobleman turned his back on the cultured frivolity of the leisured class and consecrated his considerable academic talents gained at Leiden University to the Lord's service in private and public life. . . .

Groen's public career included significant contributions as historian, statesman, and publicist. Advocacy of church confession-alism in the Reformed tradition formed yet another important aspect of his activities.

His beloved historical work involved the publication of a huge number of documents of the House of Orange-Nassau of the Reformation period in many volumes and a Reformed interpretation of modern Dutch history in the influential *Handbook of the History of the Fatherland* (1846). This serious historical work laid the foundations for scholarly research in national origins emphasizing the Reformed character of national development. The *Handbook* was the most widely circulated of his books during his lifetime. It was a standard text in Christian schools for several generations.

In making his entry into active politics in 1840 Groen published a lawyer's analysis of constitutional problems entitled *Contribution to Constitutional Revision in the Netherlandic Spirit*. In this manifesto the author called for a revision of the national Constitution to provide for governments to be responsible to parliament (and not merely to the king) as well as for the introduction of reforms insuring freedom of conscience, the press, worship, and education. A call was also made in this book for the infusion of Christian values in national life, including the reorganization of the public school along denominational lines of Reformed and Catholic.

The year 1857 marked a turning point in Groen's political career, for then he recognized by the turn of events that the state was no longer Christian but secular. The Primary Education Act of 1857 first proposed by his former colleague, Premier Justinus van der Brugghen, was passed by the Liberal parliament majority of 47 votes in favor and 13 votes opposed (including Groen). This act provided

for a secular public school based on an appeal to a vague deism disguised as Christianity that was supposedly offensive to no one and open to pupils of all beliefs. No longer would there be a public school which was in any clear sense Christian from an orthodox standpoint. The new religion of the public school was secular humanism. In effect, this legislation was a rejection of Groen's attempt to solve the school question by the introduction of denominational public schools. At this point Groen resigned his parliamentary seat, for he realized that the nation was no longer Christian. He was stunned. A few years later he was reelected to parliament, but this time as *the champion of private Christian schools as the alternative to the secular public school with a deceptive Christian facade* (emphasis A.L.).

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Hitherto Hath the Lord Helped Us

Rev. J. Kortering

Rev. Kortering gave this inspirational address at a public meeting of the P.R.T.I. Convention, October, 1984. He is pastor of the Grandville, Michigan Protestant Reformed Church.

Ebenezer! What a declaration!

According to I Samuel 7, Israel had good reason to cry out, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." The Philistine threat had just been overcome. During battle, the Lord had thundered upon them and discomfited them. The army of Israel had moved in for the kill. At last there was peace in the land.

This had been a long time in coming. For years the armies of the Philistines had plundered the fields of Israel. They had laid waste their cities. Even the ark of the covenant had been captured and for twenty years confined in Kirjathjearim. But, why? not because Israel was inferior in power or the Philistine better equipped for battle. Israel had walked in sin and Jehovah had raised up the Philistines against them. The heavy hand of Jehovah was against them.