

# Principles of Education

**YEAR:**

1955

**VOLUME/YEAR:**

31/1955

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**ISSUE:**

Issue: 18, 7/1/1955

**ARTICLE TYPE:**

All Around Us

In the editorial column of the Banner of June 10th we came upon an item which is appearing on the agenda of the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church which at the time of this writing is still in, session. The item referred to is: Principles of Education.

We have only one reason for calling attention to this article. From time to time we meet parents in our own Protestant Reformed Churches who still send their children to the Public School. The objection expressed by these parents to sending their children to the existing Christian School is that conditions in the local Christian School (mainly High School) are so bad that they felt it was safer to send their children to the Public School. They boldly say they have no obligation, either moral or financial, to support the existing Christian school where these evil conditions prevail. They also declare that if they had a Protestant Reformed Christian School to which they could send their children their objection would be removed. But since there is no such school nor the possibility for the present of obtaining such a school, they would rather send their children to the Public School than to the existing Christian School with all of its corruptions.

We have agreed with these parents that the ideal is, of course, our own Protestant Reformed Schools, and this not only in the primary grades but also and especially in the higher grades, both high school and ultimately college. It has been our privilege in the last school year to send our children to our own Protestant Reformed School. We can attest to it that there is nothing like it. And so long as our children are of school age, we will always feel reluctant to move into a community where Protestant Reformed instruction is impossible.

But what are those parents, who have no Prot. Ref. School and are complaining about conditions in the Christian School, doing about it? Are they attempting to arouse the interest of our Protestant Reformed people to organize a Prot. Ref. school society and eventually procure a Prot. Ref. School of their own? Are they seeking the advice and help of those Prot. Ref. communities where such school societies and such schools are already in existence? No! I fear they say they would like a Prot. Ref. School only to salve their conscience and to pacify their objectors who remonstrate with them for sending their children to the Public School. This may be too severe an indictment but it will stand until we see a different action than they are now taking. Some of these parents are not too interested in education in any form. They are compelled by

State law to send their children to school until certain age limits are reached. If the law did not demand it, they could easily take their children out of school entirely. Others openly state that they have no intention of paying Christian School tuition so long as the corrupt conditions in these schools persist. All of which seems to imply that they are not too interested morally or financially in Christian education.

That there are conditions in the existing Christian Schools which are bad and to which no Reformed Christian ought to subscribe there is plenty of evidence. This is especially true in the High Schools, but it is not without evidence also in primary grades. This I have found by personal experience.

We have severely criticized the philosophy of Christian Education as it has been adopted quite universally in the Christian Reformed communities and used predominantly in the Christian Schools. We did this for two years while serving on the Board of a local Christian High School and we did this on more than one occasion in the presence of Christian School teachers in a local Christian grade school. Our criticism is not only that their philosophy is based on another philosophy of common grace with which we whole-heartedly disagree, but we have found that the principles of Christian Education they have adopted also tend to modernism. In many instances they are both Pelagian and Arminian. Besides, there are many other principles and practices which we have thoroughly condemned.

Even the Principles of Education as set forth in the Banner article above referred to are not above criticism as I will make plain in a moment.

Nevertheless we have exhorted these Protestant Reformed parents to use the existing Christian Schools with all their corruptions in preference to sending their children to the Public School. Not to do so is to deny our covenantal vow we made when we presented our children in Baptism. Not to do so is to deny our whole covenant conception which insists that not the State but the parent is the proper instructor of the child. Not to do so is to deny that there are still children of God in the existing Christian Schools with whom we may and should cooperate in the matter of Christian education where it is impossible to have a school of our own. Not to do so is to lose our right and privilege to protest the corrupt conditions in the existing Christian School. On the other hand, to send our children to the Public School, which is never neutral in the matter of religion, is to send them to the world which hates God, His truth, and His Church. It is to send them to a school whose instruction is darkness and permeated with the lie. And please do not write me to inform me that there are Christians also in the Public School, both teachers and pupils. This is not the question. We are talking about principles. We claim that no Reformed Christian and much less a Prot. Ref. Christian has the right to send his children to the Public School. He is not Reformed and much less Prot. Reformed when he does so. And no Prot. Ref. Consistory may allow the constituency of the church and much less of the consistory itself to send their children to the Public School. Those who nevertheless persist in doing so should be disciplined after they refuse to submit to thorough Reformed instruction in this matter.

But to return to the article in the *Banner*. Here is set forth seven principles not much different than those adopted thirty years ago by the National Union of Christian Schools, and not much different from those expressed in the book *Philosophy of Christian Education* published a few years ago by the Union. I believe the book is called: *The Course of Study*. Nevertheless they are to be preferred to the principles of education in the Public School system.

A committee was appointed by the Synod of 1953 "to analyze and appraise the principles of

education formulated by the Ecumenical Synod of Amsterdam (1949)." This committee now comes to the Synod of 1955 with its report. They propose certain principles of education which are prefaced by a Preamble. We have not the space to quote the entire Preamble. But here are a few excerpts that will suffice. "While modern education seeks to give light, it has -no light within itself to give. Its face is turned from the light, which is the Word of God. Teachers who believe in the current educational theory and practice cannot help children to lay hold on a biblical interpretation of life." "Christian education only has the true goal, the true standard, and the true motivation. The true goal is the forming of personality as the image of God. The true standard is the truth of God's Word. The true motivation is the 'new obedience' which is the obedience of faith."

Under the Principles set forth by the Committee, we quote the following:

- "1. Christian education has its foundation in the Creator-creature relationship. Man was created in the image of God and must use creation for God's praise. He can know the truth and explore the world properly because God has spoken to him.
2. Man has lost the true knowledge of God, righteousness and holiness. He holds down the true knowledge of God in unrighteousness. However, by receiving the gospel through faith he receives light. Christian education is education in Christ.
3. God gathers from the human race, groping in darkness, a chosen people. As his children they do his will, according to the truth of his Word. Christian education is education of the man in Christ.
4. Since man is a religious being, his deepest needs are spiritual. Education divorced from the truth results in commitment to manmade, idolatrous substitutes for the truth. Christian education is education of the religious being in the truth and for the truth.
5. True education has its conception in the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom. This leaves no room for the dualism between religious education and secular education. All true education is religious.
6. Education is the nurture or bringing up of the whole man and comprises all of life: man's body and soul and all the functions of the soul—his thinking, feeling, and willing. The human intellect cannot be parceled out for instruction independently of the emotional life or the life of the body. Human volitions cannot be educated apart from the intellect and the emotions. To bring all activities under the discipline of God's will, education should be of one piece in which a person's earthly relations and functions, as well as his relations to heaven, are centered in and directed by the norm or standard of God's Word.
7. Children born of Christian parents are members of the church of Christ. They are children of promise. God calls them His own. Their education must be in keeping with their covenant relationship. Christian education is education in Christ for those who in God's providence are placed in relationship to Christ."

As was said, these principles are surely not above criticism. Briefly, they scrupulously avoid the supralapsarian conception of God's decrees. They are thoroughly *infra*. Also the committee has not clearly intimated what it understands by the "church." Besides the committee plainly goes out from the viewpoint of "presupposed regeneration." And nowhere does it reckon with the truth of

reprobation.

Perhaps many more criticisms could be raised against these principles of education, and many more criticisms could be raised against the practices in the Christian Schools. Where we have had opportunity we have raised our voice to both criticize their principles and practice. And generally speaking our criticism landed on deaf ears and was received very ungraciously. But, what of it? Does that mean that we should therefore send our children to the Public School? God forbid! Though these Christian Schools are controlled mostly by Christian Reformed parents and leaders, and though I am convinced that the Christian Reformed Churches walk in error, there are children of God among them. There is a remnant in that church whom I will seek, praying that they will see the light and condemn the error both in doctrine and practice. And with them I will even cooperate in the matter of education so long as they will allow me to be a member of their association, and so long as it is physically impossible for me to send my children to a Protestant Reformed School.

Never could I, nor should any other Protestant Reformed parent for that matter, send our children to the world that does not and cannot reckon with God's Word, which does not seek to train its pupils to become citizens of the kingdom of heaven, which is so fast developing in sin and corruption that many who before had no scruples about sending their children to these schools are now organizing Christian Schools to separate their children from their atheistic and demoniacal influence. It is not true that we must choose between two evils, the Public School and the Christian School with its corruptions. The Public School is out!

M.S.

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