

David J. Engelsma

**REFORMED**

*Education*

*The Christian School  
as Demand of the Covenant*

# Reformed Education

The Christian School as Demand of the Covenant

David J. Engelsma

Revised Edition

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To my children and  
grandchildren:  
“heritage of Jehovah”

# Ora...

## **Prayer on Preparing to Go to School**

**by John Calvin**

*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.—Psalm 119:9*

O Lord, Who art the fountain of all wisdom and learning, since Thou of Thy special goodness hast granted that my youth is instructed in good arts which may assist me to honest and holy living, grant also, by enlightening my mind, which otherwise labors under blindness, that I may be fit to acquire knowledge; strengthen my memory faithfully to retain what I may have learned: and govern my heart, that I may be willing and even eager to profit, lest the opportunity which Thou now givest me be lost through my sluggishness. Be pleased therefore to infuse Thy Spirit into me, the Spirit of understanding, of truth, judgment, and prudence, lest my study be without success, and the labor of my teacher be in vain.

In whatever kind of study I engage, enable me to remember to keep its proper end in view, namely, to know Thee in Christ Jesus Thy Son; and may every thing that I learn assist me to observe the right rule of godliness. And seeing Thou promisest that Thou wilt bestow wisdom on babes, and such as are humble, and the knowledge of Thyself on the upright in heart, while Thou declarest that Thou wilt cast down the wicked and the proud, so that they will fade away in their ways, I entreat that Thou wouldst be pleased to turn me to true humility, that thus I may show myself teachable and obedient first of all to Thyself, and then to those also who by Thy authority are placed over me. Be pleased at the same time to root out all vicious desires from my heart, and inspire it with an earnest desire of seeking Thee. Finally, let the only end at which I aim be so to qualify myself in early life, that when I grow up I may serve Thee in whatever station Thou mayest assign me. Amen.

*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.—Psalm 25:14*

**...et labora**

**From Address at the Opening of the Remodeled  
College of Geneva, June 1559**

**by Theodore Beza**

Instructed in true religion and in the knowledge of good letters you are come in order to be able to work to the glory of God.

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# Preface

It has been over a quarter-century now that I taught the “mini-course” on Reformed, Christian education that resulted in this book. How long a time this is came home to me when I inserted “and grandchildren” into the dedication of this edition. Nothing has changed, however, regarding the nature or the necessity of Christian schools for the children of the covenant.

The decision by the Reformed Free Publishing Association to publish the book forced a thorough editing of the original publication (1977), which was nothing more than the placing of covers around the original lectures. The task of editing aroused a strong temptation to expand the treatment of the subject. How scanty, for example, is the explanation in chapter 1 of the covenant of grace with believers and their children! And how much more I could say today, positively and negatively, about a Reformed world-view in chapter 3! With some regret, I resisted the temptation. An expansion would have produced a book of such bulk as to detract from both the usefulness and the appeal of the work. I have tried to make up something of the lack by referring the reader to other writings, including my own, that flesh out this volume’s brief treatment of certain important truths.

There is some revision. The most significant is the addition of a section that analyzes the recent home-schooling movement. The analysis intends to give clear direction to the Reformed parents who wonder whether home-schooling is a valid option.

A word of explanation is necessary why the book speaks not only of “Christian” education and of “Reformed” education, but also of “Protestant Reformed” education. No doubt, exclusive reference to Christian education would broaden the book’s audience. And I do want to speak to as many as possible on this vital and timely subject of the godly, biblical rearing of covenant children at school. Nevertheless, the occasional use of Protestant Reformed is retained. The reason is not at all parochial and narrow. Although the scope of the book is the long tradition and full reality of Christian education, its specific context is the concrete effort to establish and maintain good Christian schools by members of the Protestant Reformed Churches. The mini-course was originally sponsored by the Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies for the benefit of a group of Protestant Reformed schoolteachers. In this specific, living, distinctive educational movement is something instructive for all who regard Christian schools as a calling. Certainly no Christian schoolteacher called of God to teach the children of the covenant will find himself or herself excluded in the chapter on “The Protestant Reformed Teacher.”

May the Lord Jesus Christ, who said that his kingdom includes the little children of the God-fearing, use this book to promote their Christian, Reformed, covenantal education.

DAVID J. ENGELSMA

# Chapter 1

## The Covenant Basis of Christian Education

*And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.—Deuteronomy 6:7*

In this opening chapter, I consider the basis of Christian day-school education. I answer the question, “Why do we maintain Christian schools?” At the same time, I answer the question, “What are we really doing in this education?” I want to show that the basis is God’s covenant, the one covenant of grace in both Old and New Testaments, and that, therefore, Christian education is, and must be, through and through, covenantal.

The entirety of Reformed, Christian education is really contained in this truth and can be subsumed under the heading of God’s covenant, just as all doctrine is really included in theology, and the entire Heidelberg Catechism is included in its first question. I must be careful here not to follow the example of the notorious Reformed preacher who preached some seventy sermons on Lord’s Day 1 of the Catechism, thus exhausting the Catechism—and himself—before he ever came to Lord’s Day 2. I will develop some of the implications of the covenantal basis of Christian education in this chapter and postpone the treatment of others to later chapters.

It may be well to note at the outset that I use the terms “Christian education,” “Reformed education,” and “Protestant Reformed education” interchangeably in this book since to me they are all one.

It is of the utmost importance that there be knowledge among us of the basis of Christian education. By “knowledge” is meant the knowledge of conviction. Parents and teachers alike should know the basis. The entire endeavor of Christian education depends on it! And a large endeavor it is in terms of time, money, energy, and struggle. Especially when the going gets tough, knowledge of the basis is crucial. It is crucial for parents who must sacrifice to pay tuition. It is crucial for teachers who may have heavy workloads, suffer thanklessness and criticism, and, in some cases, be paid little besides. It is crucial for school boards when they wrestle with knotty problems and become involved in painful conflicts.

Also, the basis determines the nature of the instruction of the Christian school. Indeed, it determines every aspect of the school. It must be allowed to shape everything. We must be true to the basis. We must be “radical,” defined as going back to the root. Associations, school boards, administrators, and teachers must answer all questions in the light of the basis and must make all decisions in accord with that basis. All instruction, from bodily exercise to geometry, must be founded on and shaped by that basis. Nor may we be averse to examining our entire system from the viewpoint of the basis: grades and grading, values and emphases, subjects, and teaching methods. To be Reformed is to be constantly reforming. We certainly may not uncritically accept “standard procedures” of education, either in the world or among other Christians.

Another reason it is necessary to know the basis of Christian education is that

other bases are being proposed today. This is done by fundamentalistic-evangelistic groups, by “Reformed” humanists, and by the movement in North America that today is associated with the Institute for Christian Studies (ICS) in Toronto, Canada, which formerly called itself the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship (AACCS). We must be able to resist these educational philosophies. We must have Reformed, Christian schools that are founded on another basis than those which these movements propose.

To many, the subject of the basis of Christian education in the covenant is familiar. This does not mean that our repeated study of it is unnecessary. The Dutch educator T. van der Kooy gives us a warning:

If in the welter of our routine studies and activities, we do not, even though it be only occasionally, devote ourselves to the consideration of educational principles, there is great danger that the enthusiasm which was at one time felt for the Reformed principles, will finally be extinguished. And then, too, the danger is no less real that we lose ourselves in a superficial Christianity; that we look with contempt on all argument about principles, and in practice sing the praises of a Christianity above all creeds. It is beyond question that then our Christian school movement would be dealt a mortal blow. Or there would result a cold and petrified conservatism, a subsisting on the capital acquired in the past, without renewed contact with contemporary life. [\[1\]](#)

## The Basis Explained

The covenant is the relationship of friendship between God and his people in Jesus Christ. It is a vibrant relationship of mutual knowledge and love, represented in Scripture not as a lifeless contract but as a marriage, or as a father-child relationship. For us men, women, and children, it is the enjoyment of salvation and life itself. It is the greatest good, the chief end of man, and the purpose both of creation and redemption.

In the covenant, God is our God, and we are his friend-servants. This implies that we have a calling in the covenant, that we have work to do. The calling is, Love Jehovah your God, serve him, and glorify him. This is not something arbitrarily added to the covenant, but is an integral part of the covenant itself, just as a wife's submitting to and helping her husband is an integral part of marriage and as a son's doing the will of his father is an integral part of the father-child relationship. Our performance of our calling, by grace, is the fulfillment of man, what it means to be truly and fully man. It is, according to the literal translation of Ecclesiastes 12:13, "the whole of man." This is delightful, joyful activity—the work for the sake of which we eat. "Blessed is the man... [whose] delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Ps. 1:1–2).

God's covenant is cosmic. It extends to, and brings into its compass, the entire creation of God and all creatures in the creation, organically considered. This is an aspect of the covenant that is of the greatest importance for Christian day-school education by virtue of the fact that the Christian school gives instruction concerning the whole of creation. The cosmic character of the covenant is a truth that is not sufficiently stressed, explained, or understood among us. Usually it comes up in an apologetic, negative way when we (rightly) argue that the "world" of John 3:16 is not "all men" and when we (rightly) argue that the covenant of Genesis 9 is not a covenant of "common grace." There is need for a positive development of the truth of the cosmic covenant in its own right and for an application of it to the Reformed life in general and to Christian education in particular.

God has established his covenant with Christ, not only (although chiefly) as head of the elect church, but also as head of creation. Christ is the one in whom, according to the mystery of the eternal will of God, all things in heaven and on earth are to be gathered together (Eph. 1:9–10). Christ is the one by whom and for whom all things were created and by whom all things consist (Col. 1:16–17; the literal translation is "and all things in him cohere"). In Christ, the covenant is established with the creation itself, or the universe, we might say. This is the explicit teaching of Genesis 9 and of Romans 8:18–22: God's covenant is with the earth and every living creature, and the creation itself shall share in the glorious liberty of the children of God. This is one solid reason a Reformed man may not renounce the created world in order exclusively to cultivate the life of his soul. Not only is the creation the sphere of operations for God's love and salvation of us, and for our love and service to God, but also there is a relation between God and the creation. God knows and loves His creation, and the creation knows and loves its God, not apart from man, but through *the* man, Jesus Christ, the last Adam.

Still another essential aspect of the covenant is that God graciously establishes his

covenant with believers and their children in the line of continued generations. This is a fundamental element of the covenant in both testaments. It is the divine “way of the covenant in history.” Like the covenant as a whole, this aspect is grounded in the being of God. The covenant, as a bond of fellowship, reflects the triune life of God: the living communion of knowledge and love of Father and Son in the Spirit. That the covenant runs in the line of generations reflects the fatherhood and sonship of God in himself. The fact that the covenant promise refers to the elect children of believers, and that not all their children are graciously received by God into the covenant, does not overthrow the truth itself, does not detract from the great significance of the truth, and does not affect the calling that parents have to teach *all* of their children. [\[2\]](#)

## The Place of the School in This Covenant

God commands believing parents to rear their children in the education and admonition of the Lord Jesus Christ, to teach “diligently” all the words that bring the children to a fear of the Lord (Eph. 6:4, Deut. 6:1–9). On the one hand, this instruction of their children is one of the outstanding covenantal responsibilities of parents, that is, one aspect of their calling as God’s friend-servants to love, serve, and glorify God. On the other hand, it is the means by which God brings the reborn covenant child to spiritual maturity so that he or she becomes a developed man or woman of God, capable of a life of good works.

The Christian school is an association of believing parents carrying out a significant part of this calling of God to rear the children through a like-minded believer who is both called of God to this vital task and capable of the instruction that specifically pertains to the school. Dr. H. Bouwman has described the origin of the school thus:

And according as humanity broadened out, and the need of intellectual development arose, the parents felt that they could not fulfill the task of rearing and instructing by themselves, and they looked for help. Before long, the parents formed an association in order jointly to appoint one to rear and instruct (een opvoeder en onderwijzer), and—with this the school was born.<sup>[3]</sup>

The Christian school, therefore, arises from the covenant of grace. It is, in fact, a *demand* of that covenant.

Both Scripture and the Reformed confessions express this covenantal demand. It is found in Deuteronomy 6: “And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children” (v. 7); in Psalm 78: “For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them”(vv. 5–6); and in Ephesians 6: “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (v. 4).

The vow of the [Reformed] Form for the Administration of Baptism binds parents “to see these children...instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of...[their] power.” The thanksgiving prayer beseeches God that the baptized children “may be piously and religiously educated.”<sup>[4]</sup>

Article 21 of the Church Order of Dordt requires consistories to see to it that there are “good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.”<sup>[5]</sup> Article 41 stipulates that one of the questions put to each consistory at every meeting of classis shall be: “Are the poor and the Christian schools cared for?”<sup>[6]</sup>

In its treatment of the parent-child relationship as taught in the fifth commandment, the Heidelberg Catechism speaks of the parents’ “good instruction and correction.”<sup>[7]</sup>

## The Covenant Basis Defended

The covenant basis of Christian education is attacked by attempts to put other bases under the Christian school. There are several such attempts. There is the basis of dissatisfaction with the public schools: opposition to integration; fear of the moral evils that infect the public schools, such as drugs, violence, swearing, and sexual filth; and the realization that the education is poor and the discipline almost nonexistent. It was wonderful to behold how many people suddenly “got religion” with regard to Christian education as soon as the government forced integration in its schools.

More significant is the basis of evangelism. The school exists to get the children saved. This is the basis of the schools of the fundamentalists and charismatics.

Another basis, usually closely associated with that of evangelism, is social reform. The school exists to improve or renew society. This has different forms. Before the collapse of communism, there were schools that existed to fight communism with right-wing politics. In those schools there was a heavy emphasis on patriotism. There are schools dominated by apostate, nominal Calvinists who have reduced Calvinism to a means of social improvement. They suppose that Reformed, Christian schools exist to produce men and women who will alleviate this world’s woes. Essentially, theirs is the position of humanism. There are also schools controlled by the dream of various postmillennialists (referred to by them as a “vision”). These schools rest on the foundation of the determination to make a grand, earthly kingdom.

Then there is the basis of inculcating church doctrine and retaining the children for the church. This has often been the motive behind parochial schools, for example, the Roman Catholic schools.

Rejection of these notions as bases of Christian education does not imply rejection of all the ideas that they contain. We certainly insist on separation of our children from the wicked friends and corrupt ways of life in the state schools. This is inherent in the covenant. Our children are distinguished from the children of the world by baptism, the sign of the covenant. We certainly require our children to walk uprightly in society, which includes that they submit to our government as a power that is ordained of God (Rom. 13). We certainly teach our children to abhor atheistic, materialistic communism. We certainly desire our children to have a good education, the best possible; to develop their abilities to the utmost; and to prepare themselves to take their place in life, according to their callings. It is simply part of the covenant that the children are God’s and must serve him with all they are and all they have. Certainly their education must be in accord with the doctrine of the Protestant Reformed Churches and will serve the welfare of these churches. Even though education should not evangelize the children as unregenerated little heathens, it certainly is not divorced from their salvation—not if it is covenantal education.

But none of these truths is the *basis* of Christian education. The Christian school is not founded on a negative: the evil of the state schools. The Christian school does not evangelize; only the church does. Christian schools do not exist to reform society; it is an A-B-C of Reformed religion that society is irreformably depraved, reserved for fiery destruction. Nor do Christian schools exist for the intellectually elite, to advance heady hubris.

Firm, knowledgeable repudiation of the attacks on the covenant basis of Christian

education is necessary. It is necessary, first, in order that the people of God will continue to take hold of the cause of Christian education, support it zealously, and maintain it through thick and thin. The failure of Hodge, Machen, and other Presbyterians to see clearly that the basis of Christian education is the covenant may well have been the reason Christian education never got off the ground among Presbyterians. The Presbyterian leaders certainly advocated Christian schools. But they grounded Christian schools in a certain conflict with society, on the one hand, and in a certain help of society, on the other hand. This ground proved to be inadequate to maintain a vigorous Christian school movement among Presbyterians. Repudiation of the attacks is necessary, second, in order that we not be sidetracked from faithfully pursuing the real task of Christian education.

Not only is the covenant basis attacked indirectly by those who advocate another basis, but it is also attacked directly by those who are opposed to Christian education. There are the professing Christians who deny that the covenant requires Christian schools. How they are able to maintain their denial in the face of the obviously godless character of the teaching, discipline, and life in the state's schools today is a mystery, but maintain it they do. This denial of the necessity for Christian schools was explicitly, officially, and (presumably) unashamedly made by the Reformed Church of America (RCA) and by the Presbyterian Church in the USA at their synod and general assembly, respectively, in 1957. The antipathy of the RCA to Christian schools is notorious. This was brought home to me as I was preparing for the lectures that resulted in this book. As I was checking out some basic books on Christian education from a Christian college library in Western Michigan, the librarian asked me who I was. When I told her that I was a Protestant Reformed minister, she remarked, "I knew you were not a Reformed minister, because they would never read this kind of book."

Questioning of the covenant basis of the Christian school is not altogether unknown in our own circles. Some cannot see that Christian schools are necessary. They think that good training at home and good instruction by the church are enough and that these exhaust the demand of the covenant.

Our defense of Christian education takes the form, first, of pointing to the history of the zeal of Christian parents for Christian schools, especially the history of such zeal on the part of Reformed parents. All of the instruction of children, both in the Old and New Testaments—instruction not only in spiritual matters but also in earthly matters—was godly instruction. The early, postapostolic Christians insisted on Christian schools during the reign of Emperor Julian the Apostate, who attempted to paganize all of the schools in the Roman Empire. Edward Gibbon tells us that during the persecution by Emperor Julian, "The Christians were *directly* forbid to teach, they were *indirectly* forbid to learn; since they would not frequent the schools of the

Pagans."<sup>[8]</sup> The schools of the middle ages were Christian schools. The Reformation unanimously called for and established Christian schools.<sup>[9]</sup> From the very beginning of their history, the Dutch Reformed exerted themselves on behalf of Christian education. Already in 1574, a Reformed synod called on preachers to see to it that there were good Christian "*schoolmeesters*."<sup>[10]</sup>

The present willingness of Christian parents to permit their children to be educated



in nonchristian (in reality, antichristian) schools is a novelty. This was the judgment of the Presbyterian theologian Charles Hodge:

The whole system [of education in the public schools] is in the hands of men of the world, in many of our states, and is avowedly secular. Now with regard to this scheme it may be remarked that it is a novel and fearful experiment. The idea of giving an education to the children of a country from which religion is to be excluded, we believe to be peculiar to the nineteenth century. Again, it is obvious that education without religion, is irreligious. It cannot be neutral, and in fact is not neutral. The effort to keep out religion from all the books and all the instructions, gives them of necessity an irreligious and infidel character. [\[11\]](#)

Second, in defense of Christian education is the obvious fact of the ungodly, antichristian character of the education in the public schools. Not only is there a lawless environment, a lack of discipline, and false, demonic instruction—evolutionism, humanism, hedonism—but there is also a concerted effort to mold the children into a certain kind of man and woman and to build a certain kind of kingdom. This man is *not* the man of God thoroughly furnished unto all good works, and this kingdom is *not* the kingdom of God.

The third defense of Christian education is the command of the covenant itself. The covenant command is absolutely all-embracing: the one child is to be reared entirely in the education and admonition of the one Lord of all life. Implied is that all of truth is religious. Also the truths of creation must be taught and learned in light of Holy Scripture and in their relationship to God and his Christ. As Herman Hoeksema wrote, against the objection that Christian schools were unnecessary,

The Lord our God is one Lord. He is Lord, Lord over all, Lord over every sphere of life. His precepts cannot be excluded from any sphere. Therefore, Israel had to educate His children only in His precepts. Not in one part of life the precepts of the Lord, and in another part these precepts excluded, but in all life, these precepts acknowledged. And thus also with our preparation for that life. Not the precepts of the Lord in one part of the education and another part nothing to do with this law of God. But all our education permeated with the precepts of the Lord... Religion must not be something added to our life, but it must be the heart of our life. Religion must not be something that is added to our education, but it must be the heart of our education. The precepts of the Lord must be the basis from which our entire education must proceed. [\[12\]](#)

In this connection, we may consider the question that sometimes arises, whether the covenant requires Protestant Reformed schools. Can we be satisfied with the existing Christian schools, which, for the most part, as far as we are concerned, are the Christian Reformed schools? Do they adequately fulfill the demand of the covenant for us so that the admittedly heavy burden of establishing our own schools is not warranted?

The covenant requires of us that we establish Protestant Reformed schools to the utmost of our power. We must defend the covenantal basis of Protestant Reformed schools. There is, first, the obvious fact of the alarming deterioration of the Christian

Reformed schools, from the top (college) to the bottom (kindergarten). The instruction itself is corrupted by criticism of Holy Scripture and approval of theistic evolution; the ethical atmosphere is polluted by the promotion of movies and drama; and the very purpose of the education of our children is perverted by making them social reformers—and that of the “liberal” stripe—or ICS kingdom-people. Even if these evils were not present, the Christian Reformed schools would be unsatisfactory because of their lack of strong, sound, distinctive, positive, Reformed instruction. These schools seem to be embarrassed by the historic, Reformed principles set down in the Reformed creeds.

But our defense of the basis of our schools is *positive*. We have the calling to rear our children in “the aforesaid doctrine,” that is, the pure Reformed faith as handed down to the Protestant Reformed Churches and developed by them. Only Protestant Reformed teachers, under the oversight of a Protestant Reformed school board, can satisfactorily carry out this mandate.

The Christian Reformed Church has committed itself, in its doctrine of common grace, to principles that subvert Reformed, covenantal education. The sovereignty of God is compromised, both in the history of salvation and in the history of the world. The history of the world is viewed, not in terms of God’s grace (for the church) and God’s wrath (for the wicked world) but in terms of universal favor. The child of God is encouraged to live in the world on the basis of common grace, rather than on the basis of the grace of God in Christ. Thus, his life as a covenant-friend of God is undermined. The antithesis is abolished, and the culture of the ungodly swallows up the children of God. The doctrine of common grace is destructive of Christian education.

## Home-schooling

Home-schooling is not an option for parents who have access to a good Christian school or who are able, with others, to establish one. The very recent home-schooling movement in North America did not arise out of the covenant among Reformed saints, as did Christian schools. Its origin was the dissatisfaction of *unbelieving* parents with the education and physical security of the state schools. Evangelicals and fundamentalists, who had until then cheerfully used the state schools, were quick to follow suit.

With the rare exception, parents do not have the time to give a good, solid, thorough liberal arts education to their children. Supporting his family and the kingdom of Christ is full-time work for the husband and father. So also is the mother's carrying out of her calling to manage and care for the household.

Neither do most parents have the ability to teach their children the subjects of the grade school and high school curriculum. Reformed Christians have not been fools for the past hundreds of years when they required rigorous training of those who would be Christian schoolteachers. To teach the subjects that the children must know in order to live and work in North American society in the twenty-first century, one must know both the material and the right way of imparting the truth and content of the material to children. This demands formal, concentrated, disciplined study. In the Christian school, every child may benefit from the learning and ability of a number of teachers who have been thus trained—the learning of this one in math, the learning of that one in science, and the learning of another in history.

Lack of knowledge on the part of home-schooling parents of many, if not most, of the subjects taught at school results in their depending heavily upon educational materials, kits, and programs produced by various companies for this purpose. But these companies are seldom, if ever, Reformed in theology. They are certainly not Protestant Reformed. Now the danger becomes real that the children, in fact, receive a Baptist education, or a fundamentalist, dispensational education, or a reconstructionist (“Make America Christian”) education, or a politically right-wing education.

There is also a threat to the home-schooled children in the vital matter of their companionship. Children need friends. They will have friends. The only question is, “Whom will they have as friends?” The home-schooled child is removed from the good Christian school, which has always been a center of the godly friendships that believing parents ardently desire for their children. Then the home-schooled child is invariably thrown into close contact with other home-schooled children, for even the education of home-schooling calls for field trips, music, sports, and—often—classes in which many students study together under a teacher with competence in a certain field. There is fellowship with other children. But the principle of the child's fellowship is not mutual membership in the covenant, oneness in the Reformed faith, or common membership in the true church. Rather, the principle is agreement in home-schooling, regardless of the covenant, faith, and church. This is as intolerable as unreformed teaching.

Even though home-schooling of their children might be possible for a few, specially gifted parents whose circumstances provide the time that is needed, home-schooling is still not an option. In the covenant all ought to work together in

establishing and maintaining good Christian schools for the benefit of all the parents and children in the covenant community. To maintain these schools is a hard struggle. Our numbers are small. Our financial resources are limited. Our teachers still do not receive the wages that they should have. When some parents withdraw into home-schooling, the cause suffers. The question for parents should not be, “What can the two of us do for the teaching of our own children at the present time?” Instead, the question should be “What is good, not only for our children but also for the entire covenant community of which we are a part?” We must be concerned that there is good Christian education for *all* the children.

Covenantal thinking reckons with the future good of coming generations. Perhaps we can adequately educate our children at home. But will *they* be able to educate *their* children—our grandchildren—at home? Should we not do all in our power now to ensure that there will be good Christian schools for our children’s children in years to come?

Article 21 of the Church Order of Dordt is right, still today, when it insists that the covenantal *demand* of Christian education requires good Christian schools and the use of them by Reformed parents. And consistories shall see to it.

## The Covenant Basis Applied

If the basis of Christian education is the covenant, it follows that the Christian school is and must be parental. God's covenant is with believing parents and their children, and God's command to rear the children comes to parents. The state must be kept out entirely. It has neither the mandate nor the ability to carry out the mandate. The wedge, of course, by which the state always attempts to intrude itself into the school is financial support. To the state that offers aid, we ought to reply as Zerubbabel and Jeshua did to their sly foes in Ezra 4:3: "Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel." We do well to remember that it was dependence on the state that spelled the doom of Luther's noble movement for Christian education. By remaining free of the state, we may very well keep our schools right up to the time of Antichrist. From then on, the time will be short.

Parochialism is also to be avoided. The danger is not so much that an apostatizing church will also corrupt the schools, for inevitably a decaying church corrupts even the free schools of its members. But the danger is that the parents simply "let the instituted church do it." It is possible that parochialism contributed to the failure of the Christian school movement among orthodox Presbyterians in the 1800s and early 1900s.

This by no means implies that the total financial responsibility is allowed to fall on parents whose children happen to be in the schools at any given time. In the covenant, grandparents have a responsibility towards, and delight in, the covenant rearing of their grandchildren. Young married couples and even young people desire the school to be available when their children are of school age. Indeed, all of the covenant people should take an interest in this basic aspect of the covenant of God.

From the covenant basis, it also follows that the school is for covenant children. Children outside the covenant—children of unbelieving parents—are not to be accepted. In my judgment, we should accept children from outside the Protestant Reformed Churches, and even from outside the Reformed denominations, but only on the condition that the parents evidence true faith in Christ and are motivated by the desire that their child receives a Christian education.

The school is for *all* the covenant children. It is not for the bright or college-bound children only. The covenantal character of the school would demand that special attention be paid to the inferior student. In the kingdom the law is that we "bestow more abundant honour" on the "less honourable" members of the body (1 Cor. 12:23).

Are our schools for all the children? Or is the instruction, the pressure of assignments, the grading, and even the attitude of the teacher such that some—perhaps even a sizable percentage—are virtually excluded? In our standards and procedures, or perhaps in our adherence to the state's standards, are we true to the basis, the covenant of God, specifically his demand to rear *all* the children?

This is no plea for vocational education for some, say in high school, for I hold that all the children should have a thorough liberal arts education, at least through high school. In fact, I warn against watering down this education by giving in to the clamor for vocational training, either in the school or outside. Gordon H. Clark rightly excoriates many public high schools as "glorified vocational nurseries."<sup>[13]</sup>

In keeping with the fact that the schools are for covenant children, the teacher must view and approach the children as covenant children, that is, as those who are fallen in Adam but sanctified in Christ, although *imperfectly!*<sup>[14]</sup> That not all are sanctified does not weigh against this injunction. The difference that this view of the student makes for all of the education—in distinction from other views taken in education, such as Rousseau’s view of the child as inherently good, the modernist’s view of the child as religiously indifferent, and the fundamentalist’s view of the child as a heathen to be wooed to Christ—is simply incalculable. One important implication of this covenantal view of the student is that the teacher demands that the child *behave* as a covenant child; discipline is called for. In the case of older children, expulsion from school may be in order, which then must be followed by the discipline of the church. Laxity and disorder are out of the question.

A final application of the truth that the basis is the covenant, one to which we will return, is that the teacher is to rear the child in the education of Christ, teach the child diligently the words of love for God, and bring the child up in God’s fear. To be sure, the teacher does this in the manner appropriate to the sphere of the school. But he must do *this*, for the very basis of the school, and of his office, demands this work and nothing less: “And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children.”

## Chapter 2

# Scripture in the Schools

*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.—Psalm 119:105*

Holy Scripture has a fundamental position in the Christian school. The presence of Scripture makes a school Christian; without Scripture, education cannot be Christian. The exclusion of Scripture makes the public education of today not merely nonchristian but antichristian. This is the reason God-fearing parents find the public schools unacceptable. With characteristic insight, Luther observed, “I greatly fear that the universities are wide gates of hell, if they do not diligently teach the Holy

Scriptures and impress them on the youth.”<sup>[15]</sup> God is present in the Word, Holy Scripture. To banish the Word is to banish God, and to banish God is to invite the devil. The necessity of Reformed, Christian schools, and specifically Protestant Reformed Christian schools, is the necessity of the Scriptures being present in the schools in their full, rich, uncorrupted power.

The presence of Scripture in the school is intimately related to the covenant basis of the school. The activity of rearing covenant children in the nurture and admonition of Christ is only done by means of Scripture. The precepts of Jehovah that Deuteronomy 6 requires us to teach our children are given in Scripture. The nurture of the Lord spoken of in Ephesians 6:4 is prescribed and defined by Scripture, and the admonition of the Lord is found in Scripture. Our schools are an aspect of that activity described by the Reformed baptism form as bringing the children up “in the aforesaid doctrine,” and this activity demands the use of the Bible. God, whose work the rearing ultimately is, works through the Word and is the covenant-friend of the children in the Word. Therefore, for covenant education to take place, the Word must be present everywhere and always, and it must be present as that which reigns supreme.

## Scripture as the Authority in the School

Presupposed is the historic, orthodox, Reformed doctrine of Scripture. Scripture is God-breathed, inerrant in everything it contains, clear, sufficient, trustworthy, and authoritative. It is the Word of God, graciously given to us to be “a lamp” unto our feet, and “a light” unto our path (Ps. 119:105). It is a lamp also to our educational feet and a light on our path in the schools.

That this is the heartfelt conviction of an entire educational community—teachers as well as parents—indicates what strength there is in our Protestant Reformed Christian schools, how precious these schools ought to be to us, and how thankful we ought to be to God for them. Many “Christian” schools today are shot through with skepticism (unbelief) regarding the doctrine of Scripture. By virtue of this fact, they are Christian only in name.

The orthodox, Reformed doctrine of Scripture is the *sine qua non* for Christian education, as it is for the preaching of the gospel, the Christian life, and indeed every Christian activity.

The very existence of the school depends on Scripture. God-fearing parents read in the Bible the command to teach their children God’s words and to bow to the authority of the Bible. In fact, the mighty Word itself creates this submission and obedience in our hearts, and itself founds Christian schools, as it does also Christian homes and Christian churches.

Scripture also defines Christian education. Jan Waterink is right that we may not define the Christian education of the school by quoting a certain text, such as 2

[\[16\]](#) Timothy 3:17. Nevertheless, we must be directed by Scripture in defining it, especially by those passages that explicitly treat of the upbringing of the covenant children. In light of these passages, we may define Christian education thus: Christian education is the rearing of covenant children to spiritual maturity by believing parents through a capable fellow believer. This is done, in the Christian school, by instruction in all aspects of God’s creation in light of the revelation of Holy Scripture. Thus, the children develop and grow so that they are able to live all their lives in the world as faithful, responsible friend-servants of God in obedience to God’s will and to the end of God’s glory.

This accords with the description of Christian education by prominent Reformed thinkers. According to Herman Hoeksema, “You will aim in your education at the perfect man of God, knowing the will of his God for every sphere of life and for every step he takes upon the path of life...; we define education...as the impartation to the child of knowledge regarding his material and spiritual relation in the world.”[\[17\]](#)

Waterink gives this definition: “the guiding of human beings in such a manner that they with their talents will be able rightly to serve God, their Creator, in the society in which they have been placed.”[\[18\]](#)

Cornelius Jaarsma offers this definition: “Christian education is the covenantal task by which a child is brought up to maturity in the ‘new obedience’. This task is to be realized along the lines of child nature as ordained of God.”[\[19\]](#)



Scripture informs all the instruction given in the Christian school. By “informs” I mean, “gives essence to, is the characteristic quality of.” It is the light of God in which we see light. Nothing is taught that conflicts with the Scriptures; only that is taught which is in harmony with it. The Christian school will not teach evolution, including incipient evolution (the period theory and theistic evolution); will not teach Marxism; will not teach the inherent nobility and upward progression in the history of mankind; will not teach the “liberal” doctrines of the right of revolution and the evil of capital punishment; and will not teach the “conservative” identification of the kingdom of God with the USA

As the light of God, Scripture is the foundation of every subject, controlling it, directing it, and explaining it, thus making what is merely true, God’s truth. How can history be taught unless it is grounded in and illumined by the Word that teaches a sovereign God, the centrality of Christ, the great war of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world, the total depravity of man, and God’s judgments on sin? How can science be taught apart from the Word about creation, about the fall and the curse on man and his earth, about the flood, and about the wisdom and power of the creator?

In connection with his criticism of those who limit the divine inspiration of Scripture to the “religious-ethical” parts of the Bible, Herman Bavinck speaks of the relationship between Scripture and the other branches of knowledge:

From this, finally, the relationship in which Scripture stands to the other sciences becomes plain. There has been much misuse of the statement of Baronius, “Scripture does not tell us how it goes in heaven, but how we go to heaven.” Exactly as the book of the knowledge of God, Scripture has much to say also with regard to the other sciences. It is a light on the path and a lamp for the foot, also for science and art. It lays claim to authority in every area of life. Christ has all power in heaven and on earth. Objectively, the limitation of inspiration to the religious-ethical part of Scripture is untenable; and subjectively, the distinction between the religious [*godsdiensstige*] aspect of the life of man and the rest of his life cannot be maintained. Inspiration extends itself to all parts of Scripture, and religion is a matter of the entire man. Very much of that which is recorded in Scripture is of principal importance also for the other sciences. The creation and fall of man, the unity of the human race, the flood, the origin of the nations and languages, etc. are facts of the greatest importance also for the other sciences. Every moment science and art come into contact with Scripture; the principles for the whole of life are given in Scripture.

[20]

Nothing may be done to minimize this.

In this way, Scripture unifies all of Christian education. Materially this unity is the glory of the sovereign God. Bavinck refers to this vital function of Scripture in his *Paedagogische Beginselen*:

The Bible is the book that orients man also in the present world. This is evident if only one remembers that Scripture provides us with a view of nature whose equal is nowhere to be found; that it presents an explanation of the origin, the essence, and the destiny of men which is sought in vain from science and philosophy; that it gives us a guide to the history of the world and humanity without

which we wander in a chaos of events. And all of this Scripture presents to us in a form that is fitting for learned and unlearned, for old people and children. The one who is instructed in Scripture and is reared by it rises to a vantage point from which he surveys the great totality of things. His horizon extends itself to the ends of the earth. He encompasses in his thought the beginning and the end of history. He knows his own place in history, because he views himself and all things first of all in their relation to God, from whom, through whom, and unto whom they all are.

“Therefore,” Bavinck concludes, “the Bible is not only the book for the church, but also for the family and the school. Biblical instruction... is the soul of all instruction, the organizing power of all rearing.”<sup>[21]</sup>

The Word of God that we hold to be the authority in the school is not the “Word” of the ICS (formerly AACCS). The ICS pleads for Christian education ruled by the “Word of God” and criticizes almost all present and past Christian education for its being dominated by the church: “A church-controlled educational ideal has for centuries prevented scripturally directed Christian education from developing its own independent, distinctive manifestation.”<sup>[22]</sup> This criticism of Christian education prior to the arriving on the scene of the ICS is a manifestation of this group’s overweening arrogance—no doubt, they are the people, and wisdom will die with them. We could forgive this arrogance if it were only the obnoxious, personal trait of that school, but we must take it seriously because the root of it is their exaltation of themselves and their words above God’s Word, Holy Scripture, and, thereby, above God himself. By their emphasis on the Word, they fool the unwary. They do not mean Scripture when they speak so strongly of the Word of God in education.

According to the ICS itself, the Word of God that rules in the school is the “structuring and directing plan for creation.”<sup>[23]</sup> It is not the Scriptures, but a certain “Law-Word” that “holds for creation.” Really, the Bible has no place in the school at all. Its only role is a preliminary one: that of opening our eyes to the Word of God that holds for creation.<sup>[24]</sup>

In fact, the “Word” that the ICS has in mind is the judgment concerning a particular aspect of God’s creation by the ICS’s resident expert. This “Word” is final and authoritative, at least until the resident expert informs us that this judgment has been superseded by a later one. It is not subject to the testing and authority of sacred Scripture, and, therefore, the resident expert is above the reach of the parents. He is the sovereign in his sphere, the lord and god in education. This is a tyranny and hierarchy that is commensurate with the “Reformational” thrust of the ICS, indicating that “Reformational” has nothing in common with “Reformed.” On the contrary, “Reformational” is the sworn foe of “Reformed,” the watchword of which is *sola Scriptura*. Rejecting the authority of Scripture in the school, the ICS stands for lawlessness in education. Although they cry “Word of God, Word of God,” they are (as Barth said about the liberals) only saying “Word of Man” very loudly.

There is a revelation of God in creation: his glorious name and wonderful wisdom. Believing scholars can and should search out the creation. Covenant children ought to be taught the nature of the cosmos. However, this may not take place independently of Scripture, nor even alongside Scripture with a glance towards Scripture now and then.

But it must be done in strict subservience to the Bible.

## **The Authority of the Reformed Confessions in the School**

Granted that Scripture is the authority in Christian education, what about the Reformed creeds: the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dordt? Do they have any place in education? Is their place that of an authority? That these creeds have an authoritative place in the school is taken for granted in the Protestant Reformed Christian school movement. The constitution of the South Holland, Illinois, Protestant Reformed Christian School Association is representative of the constitutions of all the schools when it states: “This organization is based on the following principles: A. The Bible is the infallibly inspired, written Word of God, the doctrine of which is contained in the Three Forms of Unity, and as such forms the basis for administration, instruction, and discipline in the school” (Article 1, Basis).

This is being challenged today. It is worth noting that long ago, in a speech to a convention of the National Union of Christian Schools, Dr. Clarence Bouma challenged the place of the Reformed creeds in Christian education. He did so with reference to the basis of the Free University of Amsterdam, which speaks only of the instruction’s being grounded in “Reformed Principles.” Bouma asked the schools of the National Union to remove the three forms of unity and to be content with the authority of “Reformed principles”<sup>[25]</sup> But the question then arises, who determines “Reformed principles”? Kuyper? Bouma? Hoeksema? Van Til? Kuitert? Lever? A majority of nominally Reformed persons?

The ICS opposes the use of the creeds as the authority in the school:

The confession of the Church-institute [is] largely inadequate for the task of education.<sup>[26]</sup>

The confessions of a (denominational) institutional church should not take the place of a Christian educational confession since a school is a school and an institutional church is an institutional church... To act as if a church creed can be a school creed is to confuse and mislead.<sup>[27]</sup>

The ICS calls for the composition of an “educational creed” and, in fact, has made one.<sup>[28]</sup>

It is hardly surprising that the ICS desires to remove the Reformed creeds from the school, since it rejects them even for the church. Arnold de Graaff has written, “Our confessions clearly reflect the age-old spiritualizing and narrowing of the Christian life. They lack a clear Kingdom vision.”<sup>[29]</sup>

Other Reformed educators also have questioned the use of the creeds of the church as creeds for the school. Donald Oppewal wanted to take the reference to the “Reformed standards” in the constitution of the National Union of Christian Schools as only a reference to “Reformed principles” not to the creeds, and he suggested that the school and church ought to have different creeds.<sup>[30]</sup>

The reasons given for this opposition to the Reformed creeds are that the creeds are ecclesiastical, whereas the schools are not and must not be: “the schools must be free from the church!”; the creeds are too restrictive; and, as far as the ICS is concerned, the creeds are outdated and false.

Over against this challenge to the creeds, we insist that the creeds *must be retained* as authoritative for Christian education. To let them go would be to lose Reformed, covenantal education. The confessions are not an authority alongside Scripture, but they are the authoritative interpretation of Scripture for the Reformed faith. They are the Reformed interpretation of Scripture for all time. Submission to the creeds (need we be reminded?) is submission to Scripture. The creeds are not narrowly ecclesiastical, any more than the Bible is. Rather they are the truth for the redeemed, Reformed believer’s entire life. They bind him and ground him, not only in church on Sunday but also in his marriage and home, his labor and recreation, his life in the state, and in absolutely everything. They define and enlighten the Reformed world-and-life-view.

In the creeds are the “Reformed principles” that must permeate and control Christian education: the authority of Holy Scripture, the sovereignty of God, the creation and fall of man, the preeminence of the Christ, the antithesis, and much more. In them are vast riches for Christian education. What an impoverishment of education, to say nothing of the certain drift away from “Reformed principles,” must result if these creeds are set aside and replaced with a modern “educational creed.”

If Scripture is the authority in the schools, and under Scripture the Reformed confessions, then parents, school boards, and especially teachers must know Scripture and must know the creeds. The teachers must confess the creeds in a heartfelt way. Bouwman points out that the Synod of Dordt required schoolmasters to sign the

Formula of Subscription. <sup>[31]</sup> Without going in the direction of church control of the schools, the essence of that action is necessary today.

Reformed Christian education hereby distinguishes itself from non-Reformed Christian education, and it does so to its own salvation. We must not go in the direction of muting “Reformed” and trumpeting “Christian.” Insofar as we would go in this direction, the full Christianity of our education would be compromised.

There is a trend today to make what were Reformed schools colorless amalgams of many branches of Christendom. Especially are they changed into schools for “evangelical Christians” (fundamentalists, Arminians, neo-Pentecostals, and others). Inevitably, the Reformed principles are excised from the schools. This is not to say that we may not accept non-Reformed pupils—every request for admission being carefully considered by the board and every case being judged on its own merits—but it is to say that it must be clearly understood that the school is Reformed, through and through, and that every child will be receiving such an education. Certainly, there may be no non-Reformed teacher, board member, or association member.

The freedom of the teacher in his work is circumscribed here, not hampered but delineated. The binding authority of the creeds does not threaten genuine academic, pedagogical freedom. Law and liberty are not foes, but friends. There is freedom within the framework of the creeds *theoretically*, because freedom is the unhindered activity of a creature within the sphere marked out for it by God. There is freedom

*practically*, for within the area marked out by the creeds, the teacher has room for grand, exciting, exhausting labor. The creeds themselves free the teacher for this labor: free him from uncertainties, false directions, and toil for nought.

But there may be no transgressing these boundaries. This would be unfaithfulness to the parents who support and desire *Reformed* education. This would be a misleading of the children. Teachers who peddle intellectual contraband while flying the colors of the Reformed faith are wretches—in a class with dope peddlers. Worse still, this would be disobedience to God. Whoever is opposed to the creeds should be put out; whoever is doubtful about them should leave.

## Scripture as the Content of the Instruction

Scripture is the authority over the school. Is it also to be the content of the instruction?

Our answer must be a resounding “yes,” for this is required by the covenant basis of Christian education. That Scripture be the content of the instruction is the requirement of all the passages of Scripture that call for the teaching of their children by believing parents. Deuteronomy 6:6–9 requires parents to teach the children *the law* of God: “And *these words*... shall be in thine heart; And thou shalt teach *them* diligently unto thy children...” [emphasis added]. According to Psalm 78:1–8, fathers must teach their children *Jehovah’s praises*, his *strength*, and his *wonderful works*. Ephesians 6:4 says that the upbringing is to be entirely in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. 2 Timothy 3:14–17 indicates that the development of a child into a mature man of God occurs by means of Holy Scripture. In harmony with this teaching of Scripture, the vow made by parents at the baptism of their children requires of them that they “promise and intend to see these children... brought up in *the aforesaid doctrine*, or help or cause them to be instructed *therein*.”<sup>[32]</sup>

We may not adopt the covenant basis of education and then elide the content of the instruction stipulated in that basis as if covenant education would still be possible. There must be doctrine in the schools, not classes in “the essentials of Reformed doctrine,” but doctrine, nevertheless.

An important question remains: *How* is Scripture to be the content? In a devotional way? As a subject in the curriculum along with the other subjects? Or in another way?

The teaching of Bible in the school that I am contending for is not that devotions are held regularly or that Bible is a subject in the curriculum along with reading, writing, and arithmetic. This is not to say that the Bible should not be read for devotions, or even that it is forbidden to have Bible as a distinct subject. But it is to say that these forms of Bible in the schools do not *constitute* Christian education, are not the *idea* of Christian education. It is good to have devotions, Bible reading with some remarks by the teacher, as well as prayer, but it is a mistake to suppose that this is the hallmark of a Christian school and the difference between it and the public school. Some think so. Witness the hue and cry over the banning of the Bible and prayer from the world’s schools. Were the state schools to reinstate Bible reading, they would be as godless as ever, and our objections would not be one whit abated.

Regarding Bible as a subject, even though tradition weighs heavily against doing so, it would be in keeping with the idea of the Christian day school to drop Bible as a separate subject in the curriculum. Teaching Bible is not something that parents cannot do themselves, or ever may be unable to do themselves. It is, in fact, something that they should do themselves. It might be beneficial for parental exercise of their calling that parents knew that they, not the school, would have to perform this task. The teaching of Bible, as a distinct subject now, is not the reason for establishing Christian schools and may hinder the accomplishing of the real purpose for the school with regard to Scripture. The danger is that parent and teacher alike may be satisfied with the teaching of Bible as the fulfillment of the school’s mandate to engage in biblical teaching. Does this not express itself in the statement, “The most important mark on

the report card is the mark in Bible”? It is also a danger that preparation of the Bible lesson and the actual teaching of Bible may curtail the time and effort that should be expended in the difficult task of biblically teaching all the subjects in the curriculum.

However, we might as well be realistic. Historically the Christian schools have always taught Bible. The medieval schools did. The schools of the Reformation did. The schools in the Netherlands did. Our schools do. I have little expectation that Bible will be dropped. If it would be dropped, not only parents but also the church would have to do more in the way of instructing in Scripture. If we continue the present practice, someone should work at coordinating the teaching of Bible with the teaching of it in catechism and Sunday school. Let it be remembered, however, that the teaching of Bible in the Christian school does not exhaust the calling of the school to provide biblical teaching and, in fact, does not yet touch the heart of this calling.

Scripture must be taught thus: as the foundation, light, and center of every subject. Scripture is to be worked into every subject, naturally and matter-of-factly, as the ground on which that aspect of reality solidly stands. It must be the light that illumines not only the particular aspect of creation so as to give it meaning, but also the student himself, in regard to his knowledge and use of that aspect of creation. And it must be taught as the core, or center, of every subject. Thus it unifies all the subjects. The teaching of Scripture in this way must not be conceived apart from the *content* of Scripture: the glorious God, who must be feared and served by the redeemed man in the totality of man’s life. Biblically, the creation *is*—essentially and centrally and absolutely in every respect *is*—the revelation of the excellent name of God, and the whole duty of man is to fear and obey him!

This should be illustrated. Take, first, the subjects that have to do with reading and writing, including grammar, literature, spelling, speech, and the like. They are grounded in the Word of the first chapter of John’s gospel. This is the Word who is eternally with God and who is eternally God, the Word who lights every man who comes into the world, the Word who became flesh in the Lord Jesus. Human words are not an interesting, useful, but accidental phenomenon; they are the reflection in God’s creation of the Word in God. At the center of these subjects is the reality of fellowship through communication, just as the eternal Word in God is the Word of fellowship in the Godhead. This leads on to the notion of truth in literature and the notion of beauty in speech. In teaching these subjects, the instructor must be guided by the biblical doctrine concerning the *Logos* (Word) in God, concerning fellowship through words, and concerning truth and beauty in man’s speech and writing, in which God is praised and the neighbor is loved. According to the capabilities of the children, they must be shown these things. I dare say, the effect of such teaching will be a powerful strengthening of the children’s abhorrence of the filthy, violent, senseless pulp coming off the presses today and a powerful strengthening of their understanding of what words are for in the church, sweet communion, not bitter strife, as well as the encouragement and preparation of the children to use and enjoy their gifts of reading and writing.

As for history, the ground, the meaning, and the center of that important subject are the biblical doctrines of creation, providence, the fall, Christ and the church, the rise and fall of nations by the direct hand of God, the temporal judgments of God, and the titanic, global struggle of the *Civitas Dei* (the City of God) and the *Civitas Mundi*



(the City of the World). The meaning of history is Jesus the Christ, and the future of history is the kingdom of Christ.

With regard to science, Scripture's teachings of creation by divine fiat, the fall and subsequent curse on the earth, the catastrophic destruction of the world that then was by a universal flood, and God's orderly government of his creation ("laws of nature") are essential to the truth of science.

Such teaching of Scripture in the schools makes the instruction *the truth*, both in each subject and overall, and keeps the instruction from being *the lie*. Such teaching makes the instruction Christian—not only godly but Christian. Our schools are Christian: having to do with Christ, with Christ Jesus. They are centered around Christ. They are devoted to Christ! There is nothing there that is unrelated to Christ, or that is related in some other way than being on its knees to him, for the message of Scripture is God glorified in Christ! Man's whole duty, according to the same Scripture, is to fear God by believing on Christ and to obey God by bowing the knee to the Lord Jesus.

Such teaching is the task of the Christian schoolteacher. It is work, hard work by the sweat of his face. God demands it. The creeds demand it. The Church Order demands it. The school boards demand it. The parents demand it. The work of the teacher is not so much marking papers as it is teaching Scripture in this way.

But what exciting work! To see the truth, even though in glimpses and in a glass darkly; to teach others the name of God above all other names, that is, Jesus Christ; to do this by the covenant grace of God so that those so taught know God, bow to him, and serve him—this is work for a prophet, a priest, and a king: the Christian schoolteacher.

This is a work of faith.

We must believe that the world is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. We must become like a little child to see the excellent name of the Lord in all the earth and to see the Spirit of God giving life and breath to every creature. It is good to read the Psalms as part of our preparation for teaching. The Israelite was not so naive as to be ignorant of the physical explanation of birth, but he was so full of faith that he knew conception and birth to be the marvelous work of Jehovah (Ps. 139).

We must believe that Jesus the Christ is not only the savior of souls for the world to come, but also the one preeminent among all things and the Lord whom it is wisdom to kiss in thinking, in working, in marrying, in history, in physical science, and in music.

We must believe that that most elegant book, "the creation, preservation, and government of the universe," can be read rightly only through the spectacles of Holy Scripture. [\[33\]](#)

*Lord, increase our faith.*

## **Implications for Everyday Instruction**

Since this is the place of Scripture in the schools, Scripture will be brought in openly, unashamedly, and often. There will not merely be passing references to the Bible, or even quotations of a text now and then; rather, the teacher will get the Bibles out, read a passage or passages, and teach the passage, showing how the passage applies to the subject at hand.

Included on the tests will be questions that require the students to demonstrate their grasp of the relation of a subject, or aspect of a subject, to the Word, that is, to God and his Christ.

The history class will probably begin with the reading and explanation of Genesis 1–3, Galatians 4:4, Ephesians 1:10, and Revelation 21. Throughout the course, the teacher will read and explain Daniel’s prophecy on the rise and fall of nations, Ecclesiastes on the vanity of human life and culture apart from the one grace of God in Jesus Christ, and Revelation on the significance of war.

Romans 13 will be the heart of the civics course.

Ephesians 4:28, Matthew 6:19–34, and Luke 16:1–13 will be woven into the economics course.

Psalm 104 and Psalm 139 will be central in biology.

Even the athletics at school will be grounded in and directed by the Word. “Gym” and other forms of physical exercise will begin with a class of instruction on the body of the Christian. This class will teach the children that the body is redeemed and sanctified by Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit, not the despicable prison of the soul of Greek philosophy. There will be instruction on the need for and benefit of exercise. There certainly will be instruction on the danger of the glorification of the body—the beauty of the female, and the strength and prowess of the male—in light of such idolatry in our age. There will also be instruction concerning the demand of God that competition in sports, as elsewhere, be tempered by love for the neighbor.

The danger that sound explanation of Scripture replaces thorough instruction of the material must be guarded against. It is not either/or, the one at the expense of the other, but good, solid, thorough teaching of the subject in light of Scripture.

To do this, the teacher needs to think biblically, needs to be God-centered (Reformed) to the marrow of his bones. He must be biblically and theologically competent. To paraphrase Paul, the teacher must be determined to know nothing except God in Christ. No more in the teacher’s case than in Paul’s does this mean the exclusion of all else. Rather, it means that everything is taught as God’s creature and that every thought is brought into captivity to Christ.

This kind of school will bear fruit in young men and young women who fear the Lord and keep his commandments in their earthly lives and with their position and talents. And this is what God and we are after.

## Chapter 3

# Reformed Education and Culture

*I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth... the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.—Genesis 9:13, 16*

The subject of this chapter is the possibility of, and justification for, a Reformed school's teaching the various courses that make up a liberal arts education, using the works of unbelievers, such as histories, geometry, novels and plays, and symphonies. It is a defense of preparing covenant children to live in this world, really *in this world*, in all its different spheres.

The Christian school as we have it, like the Christian schools of the past, teaches not only and not even *mainly* the Bible and Reformed doctrine, but also the subjects that the state schools teach. Through this instruction the Christian school, like the state school, enables the child to live his earthly life in his own particular society. We teach the child United States history, the English language, and—if the United States adopts the metric system—meters and grams.

How is the interest of the Christian school in a full-blown liberal arts education to be explained?

This is a problem in Christian education. It is the problem of being in the world but not of the world, the problem of using the world without abusing it. There are dangers on every side. Here we must sail on a narrow strip of sea between Scylla and Charybdis. There is the danger of world-conformity, as in the case of Demas, who loved this present world and forsook Christ. There is the danger, on the other hand, of world-flight. This is the mentality that really fears education, doubts the necessity and worth of liberal arts education, and labels all interest in and use of Shakespeare, Thucydides, and Beethoven as “worldliness.” In addition, there is the danger of blissful ignorance of the problem: simply leaving the problem unresolved and even unexamined. We must know what we are doing and on what basis. To leave this matter in the dark is to permit the school to go to ruin, either on the rock or in the whirlpool.

The problem is especially crucial for Protestant Reformed Christians. This is not a reflection on the Protestant Reformed faith; on the contrary, it is an indication that in the Protestant Reformed faith and life the pure stream of Christianity flows and the sound Reformed faith is found. Instruction of the children in all the subjects of a liberal arts education is no problem for a church that has made its peace with the world and that is now no more than the beast's whore. Nor is it a problem for Simon Stylites roosting on his pole in the wilderness.

It is widely accepted in Reformed and evangelical circles that the solution of the problem is the doctrine of common grace. We deny common grace, root and branch. Where does this leave us?

We are not free altogether from the temptation of the world-flight mentality. This is not inherent in our theology, nor is this the meaning of our denial of common grace, as the enemy alleges. “Anabaptist!” wrote J. K. van Baalen at the beginning of the history of the Protestant Reformed Churches. To this, Henry Danhof and Herman Hoeksema

replied, *Niet Dooperscb Maar Gereformeed* (Not Anabaptist but Reformed). But world-flight is one of the main errors that always threatens the church in history. There are voices, now and again, in our school movement that, no doubt sincerely, are really crying “world-flight.”

In my judgment, we have not so clearly and sharply spelled out *positively* the basis for a Reformed life in the world in all areas of life as we have negatively refuted the proposed basis of common grace.

I am concerned here to show why Reformed education busies itself with “culture,” to show that this follows from the covenantal basis of Christian education. I must take pains to make clear what I mean, and what the reader should understand, by *culture*. I have no particular affection for this word. In fact, Reformed theology and Christian education might be better off without it. The word has been so misused, and so much contraband has been smuggled into the Reformed kingdom by it, especially by the phrase “cultural mandate,” that it might be better to purge it from our vocabulary.

In addition, the Scriptures condemn the culture on which so many—even in Reformed circles—place a high premium: the style of life, the wealth, the beauty, the entertainment, and the educated thinking of the ungodly world. It originates with Cain’s line. It all consists of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. It all goes under when God arises in His wrath to overthrow Babylon the Great (see Gen. 4, 1 John 2, and Rev. 18).

A school that teaches children to appreciate and enter into “culture” *in this sense* teaches them to love the world and the things of the world and, thereby, sends them on the broad way to hell. We are not interested to establish schools that, as Luther said in “An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility,” are “places for training youth in Greek glory, in which loose living prevails, the Holy Scripture and the Christian faith are little taught, and the blind, heathen master Aristotle rules alone, even more than Christ.”<sup>[34]</sup> To Luther’s “blind, heathen master Aristotle,” we should add such blind, heathen masters in nominally Christian schools today as Darwin, Freud, Marx, and the latest purveyor of sexual perversity.

What I mean by culture is this: the active life of the child of God in any and all areas of the creation and in every human ordinance, using and enjoying every creature of God (1 Pet. 2, 1 Tim. 4). This includes thorough knowledge of every facet of creation and of the history of men and nations, the development of all one’s talents and capabilities, and the active, energetic taking of one’s place and using of his abilities in the world. It includes our use and enjoyment of the productions and inventions of unbelieving men: Jubal’s organ, Tubal-cain’s plow, Byron’s poetry, Mozart’s symphonies, and Euclid’s geometry. Included are these aspects of Webster’s definition of culture: “the art of developing intellectual and moral faculties,” “acquaintance with and taste in fine arts, humanities, and broad aspects of science as distinguished from vocational and technical skills.” In short, by culture I mean living earthly, human life fully and actively in the way that our Lord Jesus Christ calls us to live it.

## An Examination of the Problem

Common grace offers a solution to the problem of the Christian's life in the world; gives an explanation of the interest of the Christian school in all branches of knowledge, in earthly life, and in the productions of the wicked; and provides a basis for the Christian to stand on and a goal for him to aim at in living in society, whether as a philosopher, a politician, or a common laborer. Its teaching is that there is a work of the Holy Spirit in the ungodly world that results in a morally good life on the part of the world, in a positively good development of society, and in the production of many achievements by the world that are ethically good. Because of this grace, the Christian can join in with the culture of the ungodly world. Because of this grace, he has *carte blanche* to appropriate, use, and enjoy the world's cultural productions.

It is standard in Reformed and evangelical treatments of Christian education to justify the work of the Christian school by appealing to common grace and, in fact, at the crucial juncture to *base* on common grace the work of the Christian school regarding both the teaching of the subjects and the rearing of children for life in the world. [\[35\]](#)

Abraham Kuyper writes that one of the important relationships in which every man stands, along with his relationships to God and other men, is his relationship to the world. Calvinism, says Kuyper, honors "the world as a Divine creation, and has at once placed to the front the great principle that there is a *particular grace* which works Salvation, and also a *common grace* by which God, maintaining the life of the world, relaxes the curse which rests upon it, arrests its process of corruption, and thus allows the untrammelled development of our life in which to glorify Himself as Creator." Common grace is the basic element of our relation to the world: "[The] starting-point... for our relation *to the world* [is] the recognition that in the whole world the curse is restrained by grace, that the life of the world is to be honored in its independence." All of the Calvinist's investigation of the creation, of the sciences, of history, and of the philosophy, art, and justice of ancient Greece and Rome is due to "the glorious dogma of common grace." We have common grace to thank for the removal of "the interdict, under which secular life had laid bound." [\[36\]](#)

Taking his lead from Kuyper, the evangelical Bernard Ramm grounds in common grace both the Christian life in the world and the Christian university.

The doctrine of common grace enables the Christian to appreciate art, culture, and education... to proclaim the goodness of the world... to honor the gifts of God in the sinner... to use the world with all that was wrought into it by God at creation... A university... is grounded in the doctrine of creation and in the doctrine of common grace.

Ramm raises a paean of praise to common grace:

It is the source of moral good in the unregenerate as well as of the true, the beautiful, and the good in his culture. It is the ground and the preservative of the family, of the state, of science, and of education. It is the basis of the Christian concern for art, culture, and civilization and the condemnation of all those

Christians who wish to flee the world... It is the reason why Christians ought to honor science among unbelievers, to see the gift of God in the unregenerate, to esteem a Socrates, a Plato, or an Aristotle [whom Luther esteemed as “this damned, conceited, rascally heathen”]. Common grace is a mandate to Christians to commit themselves to the common cultural tasks of their society. [37]

This foundation of the Christian life in general and of Christian education in particular, I repudiate. Common grace is in conflict with Scripture and the Reformed confessions. As everyone is forced to acknowledge, there is not one word about this common grace, supposedly so important for the Reformed faith and life, in the Reformed confessions. Not one word, except that the Canons of Dort explicitly ascribe the false doctrine of “common grace” to the *Arminians!* [38] There is no grace of God for the reprobate. There is no restraint of sin in the unregenerated. There is no performance of good works by unbelievers. [39]

It should be remarked that the effects of common grace, according to its advocates, are most significant in the important areas of education and everyday life in the world. Common grace is simply fundamental for the Reformed, Christian world-and-life-view. In fact, after one reads of all the amazing feats of common grace, he wonders what place is left for *special* grace? Certainly, special grace is only a poor sister, compared to common grace. Common grace makes the culture, life, and labor of the world good. Upon the world’s culture rests divine favor. Grace causes the world to develop itself in a positive, admirable, praiseworthy manner. It compels the people of God to join with the world in their development, to make a contribution. These are hardly incidental features of life, and every one of them is in diametrical opposition to Scripture.

These are the evils of the common grace conception of Christian education. First, it neglects, or minimizes, the fall. It has no eye for the radical effects of sin. This blithe disregard for the fall always appears when the defenders of common grace speak of the “cultural mandate.” Fallen men are still supposed to be capable of fulfilling God’s command in Genesis 1:28.

Second, the common grace conception of education breaks down the antithesis. There are two cultures in the world, two ways of life on earth in every sphere, and they are opposites. They clash in all-out war with no quarter asked or given. Common grace does not see this. Worse, it denies this. [40]

Third, this view is forever calling Christians to cooperate with all humanity to build up society. This is the purpose of the Christian school: to produce men and women who can and will pitch in to improve human society.

The explanation of the activity of the Christian school given by common grace manifests the most glaring weaknesses. Really, on the view of common grace, why should there *be* Christian schools? If their work is grounded in common grace, and if the world shares this common grace, why should there be Christian schools at all? Common grace is the *death* of the Christian school movement. If common grace men do give a defense of Christian education, it runs along these lines: the Christian

student with common *and special* grace can make a bigger contribution, can put the frosting on the world's cake.

Most serious of all is this defect: that an activity rooted in the covenant of (special) grace between Jehovah and His elect people in Christ suddenly *operates* by *common* grace. The activity of Christian education is no longer true to its basis.

We insist that if Christian education is grounded in the covenant, it must be true to the covenant throughout. It must draw its program, its right-to-work, its impetus, its power, its goal, its all, from that covenant of grace. The ICS, for all its errors, have seen this weakness of common grace. They especially have noticed that the result of common grace is sheer American worldliness. Therefore, they have called common grace somewhat into question. The trouble is that after one devil has been exorcised by the ICS, seven other and worse devils have flown back into the school, so that the last state is worse than the first.

## World-flight

World-flight would also like to determine the Christian's life in the world and the activity within the school. World-flight is sharply outlined in monasticism and Anabaptism. It considers the physical world and its institutions an evil and concludes that a Christian must get out of the world as much as possible. It advocates physical separation from the world, shunning normal, earthly life. Its view of the Christian life is that expressed in the Dutch proverb: *met een boekje in een hoekje* (literally: with a little book in a little corner).

The mind of world-flight shows itself in education in certain ways. For one thing, it has little use for the teaching of literature, secular history, and the other subjects of the liberal arts education. All its emphasis is on the teaching of Bible and Reformed doctrine. It is really suspicious of education as a threat to faith. Since the state demands some education, this mentality may send the children to the state schools. Or it may pull the children out of school as quickly as possible so that they can work. Or it may stress vocational education.

For another thing, world-flight, secretly or openly, esteems the Christian school mainly because it keeps the children separate from the public school children.

Yet another manifestation of world-flight is its warning to covenant children: "No Christian may be a doctor!" "or a lawyer!" "or a politician!" "or an artist!"

It is worthwhile to point out that world-flight is neither the biblical view of the Christian life nor historically Reformed. It is not biblical. The book of Proverbs shows that the teaching of the covenant child, according to the demand of Deuteronomy 6, was not narrowly conceived in the Old Testament. Rather, it was understood to be the instruction of the child in all of human life in every earthly sphere: work and play, courtship and marriage, eating and drinking, conduct before the ruler—everything. The divine wisdom of Proverbs does not spurn human life or narrow it down; instead, it guides covenant children to live human life fully in the fear of Jehovah.

Solomon's gift of wisdom was not confined to spiritual, religious, theological things—to the cultivation only of the soul—but extended to the whole range of created reality: trees, hyssop, beasts, fowl, creeping things, and fish.

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much... And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men... And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon" (1 Kings 4:29–34).

What is so striking is not even that the divine wisdom, that is, Christ, legitimately extends to hyssop and creeping things, but that obviously these things are *important* to the divine wisdom. World-flight would say, "Why waste time on those mundane things?" Solomon was a one-man, liberal arts Christian school, and his pupils were—and still are—people from all nations.

The God-fearing Israelite of the Old Testament did not turn his back on creation



but contemplated it, knew it, and delighted in it (see Psalms 8, 19, and 104). He saw the name of God in it, and he saw the parables in it.

The New Testament is full of doctrine about the creation and about the Christian's walking rightly in the world, here and now, in all kinds of earthly activities: eating and drinking, working, exercising the body, and the like. The New Testament indicates that Paul knew the heathen writers and did not hesitate to use their philosophical and poetical statements (see Acts 17:28 and Titus 1:12–13).

The New Testament explicitly denies that world-flight is the proper life of the saint and affirms that the child of God may and must live the Christian life in all the human ordinances that the creator has made. Jesus' prayer for us was "not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15). Peter teaches that an excellent walk for spiritual strangers and pilgrims consists of activity, albeit *righteous* activity, in the area of government, labor, marriage, and fellowship among the saints (1 Pet. 2:11–3:17). So far is Christianity from being a doctrine of asceticism that it damns asceticism as "doctrines of devils" and calls its own ministers "good" if they warn against that error and teach God's people that "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving." Godliness does not despise and renounce the present life; rather, it is "profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:1–8).

World-flight is not historically Reformed, specifically now as regards education. Luther's educational vision and system is proof of this. The Luther who raged against the synthesizing of the medieval church (their imposition of the philosophy of that "damned, rascally, heathen Aristotle" upon Christianity), and who consigned schools devoted to Greek glory to the abyss, was the same Luther who opposed the world-flight spiritualism of the Anabaptists and the anti-intellectual materialism of the German peasants. Luther advocated Christian education to prepare the Christian children to live as Christians in the world, including their being officers in the state, doctors, musicians, writers, and the like. <sup>[41]</sup>

John Calvin was an educated man who could and did quote the philosophers. He knew the scientists and their theories. He set up a university in which there was a thorough education in the liberal arts. And he expressly condemned the know-nothings of his time:

Yes! you would drive away all men from the liberal and useful arts and sciences, and would boast among your fellows that all study and learning are useless and all the time spent in vain which is devoted to philosophy, to grammar, to logic, and even to divinity itself. You would thus cry down, I say, all useful learning for this very reason, that you might procure to yourself ignorant disciples, and make yourself great among them. And you say they that followed Christ were such. Just as if the Christian faith were a matter standing contrary to, and inconsistent with, learning! But let Christian readers here mark the difference which exists between you and me. I ever affirm that the wisest among men, until they become fools, and bidding farewell to all their own wisdom, give themselves up humbly and meekly to the obedience of Christ, are blinded by their own pride, and remain utterly unable to taste one drop of

heavenly doctrine. For all human reason is tasteless in the mysteries of God, and all human perspicacity blind. I maintain, therefore, that the beginning and essence of all divine wisdom is humility. This strips us of all the wisdom of the flesh, and prepares us to enter upon the mysteries of God with reverence and faith. You, on the contrary, bid ignorant and untaught men to come forth into public; men who, despising all learning and inflated with pride alone, rashly attempt to pass their judgment on divine things. Nor will you acknowledge any to be legitimate judges in divine matters, but those who, content with the opinion of reason and commonsense, unceremoniously reject all which does not just suit their own mind and taste. [\[42\]](#)

The Dutch Reformed wanted a good, liberal arts education for all their children. The original Article 21 of the Church Order of Dordt read:

The consistories shall everywhere see to it that there are good schoolmasters, who not only teach the children to read, to write, to speak, and the liberal arts (*vrije Consten*), but also instruct them in godliness and in the Catechism. [\[43\]](#)

The world-flight mentality has two possible effects. The one is that we reject our God-given calling to be in the world, glorifying God in all of earthly life and using and enjoying every creature of God. The other is that we become thoroughly worldly, paradoxical as this may sound. Live in the world we *must*, even the Anabaptist, but now we do so without the principle of living in the world to the glory of God and out of the new life of Christ. The result is that on Sunday we are pious, but on Monday we scrabble with the ungodly in the pursuit of the dollar and the enjoyment of sinful pleasures. World-conformity is not the *only* threat, or the only really *bad* threat, as regards life in the world. World-flight is a doctrine of devils, a departure from the faith, and opposition to God as creator and as redeemer.

## The Reformed World-and-Life-View

The alternatives are not world-conformity or world-flight, common grace or Anabaptism. There is the walk of sanctification of the elect, redeemed, and regenerated child of God. There is the *Reformed* life.

I sketch the world-and-life-view of a Reformed man.

This world is God's creation. God made the world and still upholds it by his providence. The material world is not intrinsically evil so that we despise it. It is not the devil's world. That he is god of this world refers to his wicked seizure of the earthly creation, through his temptation of Adam, and his control of it from a spiritual-ethical viewpoint through the unregenerated mass of men. God's purpose with the creation is that it reveals the glory of its maker and that it glorifies God through the good service of man.

This creation, plunged under the curse by man's fall, has been redeemed by Christ. We hold *cosmic* redemption. God loves his creation. This is the meaning of John 3:16: "For God so loved the *world*." "World" is not every single human being, but the creation, organically considered, with the elect humanity in Christ at its center.

In his providence, God cares for the creation as a good Father. It is most significant that the Heidelberg Catechism treats the doctrine of providence under the subject of the Fatherhood of God (Q&A 26–28). As a Father, God gave existence to the world. Now, as a good Father, God takes care of the world that he made. He feeds the sparrows, clothes the lilies, gives homes to the wild goats and conies, and satisfies the desire of every living thing. Jehovah rejoices in his works in creation. Leviathan is his pet, playing in the sea. This is not due to some incidental, ephemeral covenant of common grace, but is part of his covenant of grace in Jesus Christ.

God's covenant of grace in Christ extends to the brute creation. God establishes his covenant with the earth and every living creature of all flesh. This is the meaning of the covenant with Noah in Genesis 9. After the flood, as redeemed mankind stepped into the new world, God revealed the amazing scope and extent of his covenant with his people in Jesus. Accordingly, Christ died for the creation. Therefore, the creation has the right to be renewed in the regeneration on the great day of Christ and to be gathered together in one head (Matt. 19:28, Eph. 1:10). All things were made for Jesus Christ, and all things were reconciled to God through the blood of Jesus' cross (Col. 1:13–20). The creation now groans for deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom. 8:19–22).

Therefore, the creation is ours. We may use it and enjoy it, that is, we may live in it and work with it in such a way that we rule it, under Christ, to the glory of God.

It is the will of God for his covenant-friend that he serve God with his whole being—soul (mind) and strength (body, skills, and labor)—by living in every area of legitimate earthly life in consecration to God. Every thought is made captive to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). Family life is devoted to God. Work is done for God's sake. The study of science is devoted to God. Nothing is independent of God in Christ. Thus there is a beginning already of the realization of the covenant of God with the earth: the creation is consecrated to God through the heart of the believer. It is exactly this will of God for us, his friends, which requires excellence, diligence, faithfulness, responsibility, and stewardship—from the first grader in his reading book as from the housewife at her

ironing. It is exactly this will of God that outlaws carelessness, sloppiness, and laziness (the sluggard)—in scholarship, as in farming.

Redeemed man, wake up! You work before the face of God in God's world with God's talents!

No, a Reformed man does not flee to the *hoekje* with his *boekje*. The world wickedly *forces* him out of earthly life, but that is something quite different from his fleeing it of his own accord.

## The Antithesis

In the world, the Reformed man lives the antithesis. God has established the antithesis between his people, chosen out of the world, and the reprobate wicked. God calls his people to live antithetically. This is the deathblow to the theory of common grace.

The antithesis comes to sharp expression in the very existence of our Christian schools. They, their learning, their children, and their rearing for life, stand in separation from and opposition to the schools, learning, children, and rearing of the world. The Reformed school must teach the antithesis and thus rear the children to live the antithesis in the world.

Spiritual-ethical in nature, the antithesis is the opposition, the *total* opposition, between the way of life of the covenant-friend of God, who fears God and seeks him with his whole being in every area of life, and the way of life of the ungodly, the enemy of God, who hates God and denies him with his whole being in every area of life. Both the covenant-friend of God and the enemy of God live the same earthly life, in the same body and soul, in the same world, in the same ordinances, and with the same creatures. But their lives arise out of different sources and are directed by different powers.

The life in the world of the regenerated elect has its source in the new life of Christ and is directed by the power of God's grace in Christ. It is a living and walking in the Holy Spirit. This is fundamental. Without this, there is no Christian life in the world. Advising God's people to find the source and power of life *elsewhere*, as, for example, in common grace, is intolerable, is attempted murder of the Christian life. It is exactly the struggle, day in and day out, of the child of God to think, will, feel, speak, and act out of Christ Jesus by the power of the grace of the Spirit.

The life of the unregenerated unbeliever, in contrast, has its source in the flesh, that is, depraved human nature, and is directed by the power of sin. It is a living and walking in sin.

Therefore, the life of the believer and the life of the unbeliever are in opposition. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other" (Gal. 5:17).

This radical, spiritual difference shows itself in all of life. First, the life of the believer is subject to the Word of God, whereas the unbeliever's life is independent of the Word and in rebellion against it. Second, the goal of life is different. The believer directs his life towards God. His life is God-centered. The unbeliever leaves God out. His life is man-centered.

Christian education cannot function, cannot endure, not as *Christian* education, without a clear, sound view of the antithesis.

Mention of the antithesis in education raises the question concerning the cultural productions of the wicked and the possibility of the use of them by the Christian school. Common grace explains the philosophy, poetry, and music of the wicked as fruits of the favor of God on the wicked and of the power of the Holy Spirit working good in them and through them. These deeds of the ungodly are extolled as positively good. Common grace, then, is the basis of our use of them. Does the rejection of common grace imply our turning our back on the productions of the wicked and our

putting them out of the Christian school? Tension over this question is not unknown in our schools.

No work of the unregenerate is good. Every deed is sin. But this refers to the activity itself of the wicked: his marrying, his farming, his composing music, or his writing a book. The source of his activity is not faith in Christ. In doing it, he is not

subject to the law of God. His goal is not God's glory. [\[44\]](#)

It is not implied, however, that the *product* of the activity of the wicked is evil. Things themselves are not sinful or worldly any more than they are morally good, for example, a car, a wine, a radio, a mathematical insight into the order of the universe, a discovery of how God upholds and governs creation, a poem, a novel, or a symphony.

The ungodly man remains *man*, with glimmerings of natural light and vestiges of his kingly abilities. Therefore, he can uncover many facts, invent, compose, and do many astounding things in medicine and science. This is not due to grace, nor are these deeds pleasing to God. But we may not react to the erroneous description of them by the advocates of common grace by denying the Christian's right to use what unbelievers produce. Many are God's good gifts *to us* through wicked men. Augustine compared this to the Israelites' borrowing the jewels of the Egyptians for use in the building of God's temple.

We must, however, be on our guard here, and teachers must put the children on guard. Israel also used the Egyptian jewels to make an Egyptian calf! We must never suppose that the culture of the unregenerate delights God. It is an abomination to him. Nor may we suppose that there is some extraordinary worth in poems and symphonies as far as God is concerned, or even that a Christian's use of such cultural products has some special importance before the face of God. Thinking on the true, the honest, the just, the pure, the lovely, and the things of good report is something quite different (Phil. 4:8). It is one thing to hold that a Christian may read, enjoy, profit from, and use a play of Shakespeare and even that all covenant children should be taught some Shakespeare in the course of their Christian education. It is another thing to hold that reading Shakespeare is a much more glorious Christian activity than, say, reading the *Standard Bearer*.

We ought also to remain critical so that we discern what can be used and what is so defiled that it cannot be used by the holy people of God.

## Reformed Culture

A Reformed school teaches the children the antithesis of the two cultures. It points out the two, great, opposing ways of life: in literature, in music, in history, and in other courses. It teaches discrimination between them. It instructs the covenant child to pursue the one way and to reject the other.

The Reformed school is instrumental in producing a Reformed culture. This is not the carnal kingdom of the ICS. This is not the improved earthly society of common grace. This is not the dream of men like Henry Zylstra: a circle of Reformed writers, a select group of Reformed politicians, some Reformed musicians, etc. [\[45\]](#)

But it is the everyday lives of *all* covenant men and women, lives lived in obedience to the law of God and to God's glory, using to the utmost of their power the abilities that God has given. Reformed writers, politicians, and musicians may very well be included, but they do not define, much less exhaust, Reformed culture. Reformed culture is the holy life that the saints have ever lived in the world, but not of it.

This was Herman Hoeksema's view of it:

Also Calvinism, holding the original goodness of the world, and still professing that the world as kosmos is not essentially bad but good, being the product of an Almighty and Allwise God, infinite in perfection, strongly repudiates the erroneous separation of nature and grace, and always maintained that the power of redemption through grace is not destined to remain a foreign element in the life of the world, but much rather to redeem that life in all its abundance and in every sphere. Calvinism has always sent its worshippers, equipped with a complete view of life and the world, into all the complex relationships of human existence to claim it for Christ our Lord. The truly Calvinistic Christian is a Christian everywhere and always. In the home and in the church, in society and in the state, in shop and office, in art and in science, in trade and industry, always and everywhere is the Calvinist a Christian, would he be consistent and in harmony with his own confession. All life and all relations of life he claims must be based on and permeated by Christian principles. In a word I know of no view that is broader in its vision, that is more kosmological in its application, that is more all embracing in its powerful grasp, that is more truly liberating in its power than the Calvinistic view of life and the world; and it may safely be said that, if an indictment is brought against the Christianity of former ages, as if it meant to be an anabaptistic separation from the world, Calvinism should straightway be acquitted and may, indeed, go with a free conscience. [\[46\]](#)

This is the only realization of the "cultural mandate" possible today. There can be nothing more. There may be nothing less.

## Chapter 4

# The Protestant Reformed Teacher

*Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old. Buy the truth, and sell it not.—Proverbs 23:22–23*

In this chapter, we come to the heart of our subject. For we treat here not only what the Protestant Reformed teacher is to be, but also what the position of the Protestant Reformed teacher is and what he or she does. We will take up the truth that the teacher stands in place of the parents and that this necessarily implies that the work of the teacher is essentially the work of rearing covenant children. From this follow important practical considerations concerning the credentials of a teacher, as well as certain considerations pertinent to parents.

It is fitting that we treat the heart of the subject of Reformed Christian education in connection with the teacher. Although it is a slight exaggeration to say that the school is its teachers (for God has blessed and used schools that suffered for a time with poor teachers), the thrust of the exaggeration is correct: Christian education is Christian teachers teaching covenant children.

After the building is up, the principles printed, and the teacher training completed, Christian education begins—the mystery of teaching. It is a mystery. It is more than a good lesson plan. It is more than a brilliant scholar before children. It is a gift. A good Christian teacher and good Christian instruction are great gifts of the Holy Spirit. There was good reason that the original twenty-first article of the Church Order of Dordt called for good schoolmasters: “The consistories shall everywhere see to it that there are good schoolmasters.”



## **The Teacher Stands “in the Place of the Parents”**

It is an integral part of the covenantal conception of the school to view the teacher as standing in the place of the parents. The day school is a demand of the covenant, an aspect of the parents’ calling in the covenant. Therefore, the school is an extension of the home, a parental school, and the teacher’s status is that he stands in the parents’ place, or office.

This defines the authority of the teacher with regard to the students: it is nothing less than the authority of the parent, nothing less than God’s authority given to parents, nothing less than the authority referred to in the fifth commandment: “Honour thy father and thy mother.” (Exod. 20:12). This must be preached to the children by the pastor in sermons on the fifth commandment. It must be inculcated upon the children by the parents. It must be insisted on by the teacher himself.

For parents to connive at their children’s disrespect for any teacher, much more to foster disrespect, is for parents to assist in making rebels whom God will cut off from the land, and is for parents to cut their own throats. It is the parents’ own authority in the teacher that they are undermining. There may no more be disparagement of teachers in the presence of the children than a disparagement of each other by parents. With regard to the teacher’s weaknesses and faults, parents and students alike must always keep in mind the instruction of the Heidelberg Catechism as to how God requires us to respond to the “infirmities” of those in authority: “bear patiently with their infirmities, since it is God’s will to govern us by their hand.”<sup>[47]</sup>

That the teacher stands in place of the parents is the historic Reformed conception of Christian education.

Dr. H. Bouwman wrote:

The rule ought to be, that the school originate with the parents. According to the ordinance of God, the full task of rearing rests first of all upon the parents. To the many aids which serve to assist the parents in this rearing belongs especially the school. The school takes over a part of the task of the parents. It follows from this, that the school must stand on the same foundation as the Christian family, that is to say, on the ground of the covenant.<sup>[48]</sup>

When Bouwman sums up what he has said about Christian schools, his first point is this “that according to Reformed principle, the schools must originate from the parents.” As biblical basis for this position, he appeals to Deuteronomy 4:9–10; Deuteronomy 6:7, 20; Ephesians 6:4; and Colossians 3:20–21.<sup>1</sup>

The Dutch educator, T. van der Kooy, wrote:

Considering the Christian school in its nature, we find as its distinctive feature that it pretends to be nothing further than a school; that is to say, an institution auxiliary to the family in the education of the children for their position in life. It is content with this supplementary function.<sup>[49]</sup>

It is necessary for us to maintain this view of the school over against a challenge to it. The challenge is that the school must be viewed as an independent, sovereign

sphere, so that the teacher is independent of the parents. The school then becomes a teachers' school instead of a parental school, and the students become the pupils of the teacher rather than the children of the parents.

This challenge is raised by the ICS. This becomes apparent in the educational creed of Olthuis and Zylstra, which speaks of a free, sovereign teaching office, apart from parents.<sup>[50]</sup>

But this is always an incipient threat within the Reformed setup. It was a threat in the Netherlands in the 1800s, so much so that the watchword of many Reformed believers became, "The school belongs to the parents." The implication was: not to the teachers!<sup>[51]</sup>

A sovereign school with independent teachers was suggested in discussion at the convention of the National Union of Christian Schools in 1930. After a lecture on "The Relationship between Parent and Teacher," there was a discussion that centered on the speaker's assertion that the relationship between teacher and parent was that of employer and employee. Someone suggested that the teacher's position is "something like sovereignty within a certain, particular sphere of action."<sup>[52]</sup>

Where this notion creeps in, the teachers regard themselves and their work as independent, resent parental "intrusion," and fail to view themselves as servants of the parents.

The justification for this view is that the teachers are competent in the field of education, whereas generally the parents are not. In fact, in many cases, the parents are not even well-educated. It is supposed that sovereign educators, unhindered by blundering parents, will make for a better school and better education.

It is essential that we turn down the challenge and retain parental schools, both in theory and in practice. An educator's school will not be better but will spell the doom of the Christian school, because it cuts itself off from the root of Christian education, from its own life source: the covenant of God with parents and the Word of God to parents. It will either lose support—the zeal of the parents and then inevitably their money—or it will lose its Reformed covenantal character. The Christian school must fully and wholeheartedly show itself—to the parents, too—as the home's extension. There is something seriously wrong when teachers and parents begin to think of each other as "us and them." The fact is that "we are they, and they are we."

Since teachers stand in the place of the parents, they are servants. We must avoid the endless wrangling whether teachers are professionals, or sovereigns, or employees. Christian teachers are servants. They are servants of snot-nosed children, of uneducated parents, and of God; and they are servants of God by being servants of parents and children. Therefore, teachers are lowly, very lowly. But according to the law of the kingdom, exactly in this lowliness they are very great, so great that sufficient honor cannot be given them. He who would be great in the kingdom, let him be the servant; not the lord, but the servant of all, according to the example of him who washes our feet and died for us.

The Christian teacher must be humble, not puffed up over his degrees, knowledge, and abilities, but lowly on account of his sins. He lives in this consciousness: What do I have that I have not received? As a minister, I am not unaware of what may be a sore

temptation for the teacher: exposure to the constant scrutiny and criticism of everybody, including those who are less qualified in the field in which they offer criticism. One reason so many men avoid or leave the pastorate is that in the pastorate a man is subject to the judgment and criticism of every member of the congregation. Sunday after Sunday, schoolboys, housewives, and ditch diggers weigh his sermons and do not hesitate to find them wanting. This is a blow to pride. It is similar with the teacher. The answer for the teacher is humility.

That the teacher is a servant does not mean that every whim of every parent is simply carried out by the teacher. This is impossible anyway. There is a school board and an association. But it does mean that the teacher is to *listen* to every whim of every parent and to listen in such a spirit as indicates that he knows the parent's right to speak on the matter of his child's education and as indicates that he is ready to give account of his teaching or discipline.

The servant position of the teacher does not mean that the teacher is allowed no liberty in the sphere of his labor, that he becomes a mere puppet of the parents. This is a warning to parents to let the teachers teach and not to be looking over the teacher's shoulder at every move he makes, as I look over the shoulder of the mechanic working on my car—to his great harassment and absolutely no advantage to myself. Within the framework of parental authority there is ample room for the free, unhampered labor of the teacher. It is impossible to spell this out in exact detail, to formulate a codebook. Love, trust, and responsibility always run the risk of meddling on the one hand and overstepping bounds on the other hand.

The general relationship between parent and teacher has been pointed out. Abraham Kuyper wrote:

The father decides in what spirit his child will be educated. The church decides concerning the principle by which that spirit can be purely preserved in the instruction. The state decides the educational standards and requirements. But the way now in which the child shall meet those standards and requirements in that spirit and according to the demand of that principle is for the instructors to decide, the teachers and professors themselves. <sup>[53]</sup>

According to Dr. Bouwman, “As to the manner of instruction, the school itself decides, but the parents prescribe what must be taught and in what spirit.” <sup>[54]</sup>

But the servant position of the teacher does mean that “the Christian school... is content with its relation to the home. It respects the rights of the family. It does not usurp any prerogatives of the home... It never undermines the home.” <sup>[55]</sup>

## The Teacher's Work Is Covenantal Rearing

If the teacher stands in the place of the parents, his task is thereby set forth as the rearing, or upbringing, of the covenant child. For this is the task given to the parents by God. The parents may not and cannot assign to the teachers anything else than this task. Even if the parents set certain limits on the task of the school, the work remaining is, at its heart, the rearing of covenant children.

By rearing is meant the work with the covenant child that directs, guides, and nourishes his growth unto a mature (or “perfect,” as is often the rendering of the King James Version) man of God. It is the upbringing of Ephesians 6:4: “And, ye fathers... bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” The way in which the covenant God brings to spiritual maturity the reborn child of the covenant is the oversight, direction, and guidance of others, namely, parents. Parents do this by instruction, discipline, and example. The work of a teacher is to assist in this labor, to be busy in *this* task. The teacher's work is not only to impart facts, to give head knowledge, to educate intellects, to teach subjects capably, or to develop fully God-given abilities, although he may not do less than this or something entirely different from this. But he must, in all of this, *rear the covenant child*. As the Dutch educators put it: *Alle onderwijs moet opvoedkundig tewerk gaan* (All instruction should have nurture as its purpose). [\[56\]](#)

Covenant education is, supremely and always, spiritual- ethical-practical labor. This is the message of every text in which the call to Christian education is given: Deuteronomy 6, Psalm 78, Ephesians 6:4, and all the others. We certainly may not maintain the covenant basis of education, but then construe the education differently than that prescribed in this basis. The one child must, in the totality of his nature and in the development of every aspect of his nature, be spiritually nurtured. Parent and teacher alike must know this and labor in this consciousness and never for one moment lose this consciousness. When covenant parents send their child to school, they do not say, “Teach our child to read and write,” but they say, “Carry out Deuteronomy 6 and Ephesians 6:4 in and through teaching our child to read and write.”

This ethical-practical concern has ever been the heartbeat and power of the Reformed movement of Christian education. Not that it is uniquely a characteristic of Reformed *education*, for this characterizes the Reformed faith and life throughout. But it is true also of Reformed education. Here we had better be all ears to the common man, the uneducated parent, the man who stammers and stutters when it comes to educational theory but who speaks ever so clearly and powerfully when it concerns the essence and heart of Reformed Christian education. We will rue the day that we shut him up or cut education loose from his spiritual-ethical concern, for that will be the day that Christian education dies. He knows why he wants good Christian schools and why he gives liberally of his precious time (time that he has far less of than the scholar) and of his money (got through sweat and blood) for those schools. God's children must be godly taught; covenant children must be taught to fear God; children separated unto God must be kept apart from wicked teachers and wicked children; sanctified children must be taught and disciplined to be holy.

Down through the ages, believing parents speak with one voice. You hear it in the father of the book of Proverbs: My son, the beginning of wisdom and knowledge is the fear of Jehovah. Fear Jehovah, and keep his commandments! You hear it in Luther, who raged against existing schools—Christian in name—for a practical reason: they corrupted the youth of the church in mind and manners. It is heard in our Dutch forebears of the Synod of Dordt when, in the original twenty-first article of the Church Order, it called for “good schoolmasters who shall not only instruct the children in reading, writing, languages and the liberal arts, but likewise in godliness and in the Catechism.” It is heard in the early Dutch settlers in America. At the first meeting of classis Holland in 1848, the ministers and elders faced the question, “What shall we do about schools for our children?” The classis’ answer was, “We judge that the congregations should make sure that their children are trained in schools where the influence is definitely Christian.”<sup>[57]</sup> We have heard the same voice in our own parents and grandparents. They have plainly expressed that our schools were born of their spiritual-ethical-practical concern that their children be reared in the fear of God. So much was this the case that there is some truth to the observation that the schools preceded the theoretical basis of the schools. Covenant life often precedes theoretical reflection on covenant life.

In my judgment, our schools have a weakness here. I do not have in mind the school’s failures *in practice* in the rearing of the children. Certainly these are no greater or more numerous than the failures of the home. But I refer to the idea itself of the school that prevails among us. There is an unhealthy intellectualism, a notion that the business of the schools is not only primarily academic, but even exclusively academic. There is a hesitancy, a fear, to assert and boldly to implement that the main task of the Christian school is spiritual-ethical *rearing*. We do well to listen to the warning of the Dutch educator Jan Waterink against what he calls “a one-sided rational approach in education.” He suggests that this is an area “of fundamental importance in the practice of education.” He gives the example of a child of limited intellectual abilities who is nevertheless hounded in school to learn and to get better grades and who, as a result, becomes “peevish, surly, tiresome and later perhaps untrustworthy.” What is forgotten in such an education of this child, says Waterink, is “the unity of life.” Then he goes on to give this warning:

And thus we naturally come to the conclusion that there is a *danger* to life itself in a *one-sided rational* approach. The human intellect, which dissects everything, analyzes everything, counts everything and measures everything, is itself a product of a life-dissolving activity. Therefore any science and any pedagogy which arises merely from this isolated *ratio* is doomed to death; for though the man who tells you exactly how many sepals, and petals, how many stamens and what pistil he has picked from the flower you gave him may speak very accurately and very scientifically, he is not speaking of the *flower* which God has caused to grow. For in nature, stamens and pistils, petals and sepals do not grow: God has made *flowers*.

And he who understands this, who is able to attain the harmony between head and heart, who learns to know with his heart and to love with his intellect

—this is the knowing and loving repeatedly mentioned in the Scriptures—he will also experience the unity of life in education. He will not today be engaged in religious education and tomorrow in intellectual education, nor will he be occupied now in morally educating the child, and then in esthetically training him. He will understand that life is one, and that both in himself, the educator, and in the child which he is educating, this one life must express itself and develop according to the rule given by the Creator, in order that he may be, and the child may become, a man of God. [\[58\]](#)

How ought the Christian school to work at this calling to rear the children?

Not by periodic excursions into mysticism along the lines of neo-Pentecostalism, and not by injections of the emotionalism and superficial piety of fundamentalism (“Children, put your history books away now, and let us sing ‘Throw out the lifeline’”)!

The Christian school rears simply by being true to the covenantal basis of the school, by being true to the Reformed faith. It rears by instructing the mind in the various subjects in the light of and on the basis of the Word, Holy Scripture, and thereby relating the subject to God and relating the student to God in his knowledge and use of the subject. The teacher can and should be detailed and explicit if he is not merely to impart knowledge but, above all, rear the covenant child. In science, for example, the teacher ought to show that evolutionistic science is rooted in unbelief, thus bringing home to the student that in confessing creation he takes a stand for the truth against the lie and is involved in the great battle of all ages. He ought to point out the dark shadow of despair that evolution casts over all of human life: man is without God and without hope in the world. If he does not quote Bertrand Russell to the class, he will at least make plain to them the implications of the theory that now has educational, scientific, and indeed all human life by the throat in our society, as those implications were acknowledged by Russell, who himself, of course, embraced evolution:

That man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labors of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noon-day brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of man’s achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet nearly so certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul’s habitation henceforth be safely built... Brief and powerless is man’s life; on him and all his race the slow sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little days... proudly defiant of the

irresistible forces that tolerate for a moment his knowledge and his condemnation, to sustain alone, a weary but unyielding Atlas, the world that his own ideals have fashioned despite the trampling march of unconscious power.  
[59]

The teacher ought to indicate that evolution produces lawlessness, existentialism (“Eat, drink, and be merry—*this moment*—for tomorrow we die”), and the hippie life of irresponsibility. Then he can contrast the doctrine of creation, showing how the call to the people of God to a life of trust, hope, and good works is based on it. Good, thorough, biblical teaching of the subjects will itself rear the children, by the blessing of the Spirit. If I may make a comparison for a moment with preaching, in the Reformed faith doctrine itself is ethical, that is, the doctrine itself sweetly inclines the believer to holiness of life. Holiness is not tacked on later, is not a “second blessing.”

Second, the school accomplishes rearing by the teacher’s concerning himself with other aspects of the child than his mind. No covenant parent sends a brain to school. He sends the one, entire covenant child. Teachers may counsel. They must. It is impossible not to. Teachers are derelict if they do not. This is an aspect of discipline, and discipline is part of the covenant calling of parents that they pass on to the teachers who stand in their place. Discipline is an important part of the calling of parents and, therefore, an important part of the teacher’s calling. The importance of discipline is indicated by the fact that the word for child rearing in the New Testament, the word *paideia*, is sometimes used to refer strictly to discipline. In Hebrews 12, for example, “chastening” is the word *paideia*, in other words, the rearing of a child.

Discipline is much broader than “spank” or “write lines” or “stay in at recess.” It is the structuring, or ordering, of the child and the life of the child. This is done partly by the inflicting of some pain when the child sins, but it is done largely by the *words* of parents and teachers, whether in praise or reproof or exhortation, which words are the law of God applied to the child.

The teacher must deal with laziness, irresponsibility, sullenness, anger, disrespect, pride, cruelty, and mob-spirit. As a parent, I beseech, I command the teacher, “Help me here! Stand with me, here! Stand for me and my wife, here! Admonish! Discipline! That is, rear our child!” Foolishness is in the heart of our covenant child, but the teacher’s rod and rebuke will drive it far from him.

Third, the Christian school rears a child by the teacher’s direction of the child in his use of his knowledge and abilities. The school is concerned that the child have a critical, discerning mind for such questions as how to use time, what kind of books and magazines to read, what kind of music to listen to, how to use the money he will make through his knowledge of math and the other subjects. If my son uses his knowledge of history to help set up the kingdom of Antichrist, or if my daughter uses her ability to communicate to deceive others and aggrandize herself, my one, great purpose with my children’s education has not been realized, even though my son may be a Ph.D. in history and my daughter the most highly acclaimed author in society.

The rearing of covenant children is the responsibility of the teacher’s office. For this service, he is given his authority. To do this, the teacher must *love* the children. He must love them as the parents do and carry out all the instruction in love. It is true, when we take our child to school, we say nothing less than this: “Rear him!” But we

say this also, and we say it first: “Love him, as a covenant child of God!”



## The Teacher's Credentials

If the work of the teacher is rearing children of the covenant, the teacher must have spiritual credentials. He must be full of the Spirit and grace of God. The man or woman to whom we entrust our child—not merely our money or our property or even our bodily health and life, but our *child!*—must be worthy, must be trustworthy. Luther saw this long ago and spoke of “honest, upright, virtuous school masters and teachers offered by God.” He also warned those who rejected good, Christian schoolteachers, in a Christian school, that they would “get in their place incompetent substitutes, ignorant louts... who at great cost and expense will teach the children nothing but how to be utter asses, and beyond that will dishonor men’s wives and daughters and maid-servants, taking over their homes and property”—a prophecy fulfilled with a vengeance in our day. [\[60\]](#)

The teacher in our Reformed Christian schools must be Reformed—knowledgeably, soundly, and thoroughly Reformed, that is, Protestant Reformed. He may not be merely Christian in a broad sense, a sense in which he has distaste for the Reformed faith. He may not be loosely Reformed, having no eye or concern for the maintenance and development of the Reformed faith in the Protestant Reformed Churches. He must, on the contrary, be confessionally Reformed, with a love for the Reformed truth and principles as we know them and confess them and with an eagerness to teach them and apply them in every area.

Whether or not a teacher has these credentials must be determined. Some have proposed that a consistory have a committee of elders for school surveillance, to see to it that the teachers are soundly Reformed as well as capable and to see to it that the instruction in the schools has a Reformed character. Bouwman suggests this:

The church leaves the matters of the instruction entirely up to the school association, and asks for herself only the right of inspection of the instruction... The consistories must try to exercise surveillance (*toezicht*) both over the ability of the teachers and over the religious character (*gehalte*) of the instruction... Surveillance of the church over the instruction is desirable for these three reasons: a. because the foundation of the school is the Word of God and the confession of the church, and the church has the calling to see to it whether the school is faithful to this foundation; b. because the parents have bound themselves at baptism to instruct their children in the doctrine of the church, and it is the calling of the church to make certain that the parents fulfill their baptismal vow; c. because parents with their children are always subject to the surveillance and discipline of the church, not least as concerns instruction... This surveillance does not have to do with the instruction as such, that is, with the lesson plan, etc., but with the Christian character of the instruction... The manner in which the surveillance is exercised is determined by mutual agreement. To that end the consistory might be given the right to appoint one or two members to the board of the school or to appoint a special committee of surveillance. [\[61\]](#)

This goes in the direction of parochialism and hierarchy. Not the church, but the parents have the responsibility of determining the credentials of the teachers and the

character of their instruction. The parents carry out this responsibility through an association and a school board.

This means that there is a heavy responsibility on the board and on the association. The board must make the spiritual qualifications of the applicant their concern. In their oversight of the instruction in the classroom, they must make the Reformed character of the instruction their concern. This requires Reformed board members, men elected to the board because of their spiritual qualifications, as well as their educational abilities. Since boards rely heavily on administrators, sensitive Reformed administrators are called for.

The teacher's credentials also include his ability to teach. Not every good, Reformed, well-meaning man or woman can teach. The teacher must know his stuff, must be able to work with children, and must be able to get the stuff he knows through to the child.

The possession of these credentials demands training. The ideal is our own college for the teaching of teachers. In the meantime, prospective teachers should use the best Christian colleges available. In addition, our most experienced and best qualified teachers could give instruction to aspiring teachers during the summer months. Ongoing training is in order for all our teachers. There should be constant study. Gordon H. Clark's suggestion that there be frequent faculty meetings to discuss the Reformed world-and-life-view is worth pursuing.

## Some Implications

Some important, practical implications should be drawn from the teacher's standing in the place of the parents and from the teacher's calling to rear the children.

There must be the closest intimacy and cooperation between parents and teachers. This will be expressed and effected by meetings and conversations, not more public meetings but private meetings as the need indicates. In my experience, we parents have the greater fault on this score. We often operate under the notion that the teacher replaces us. We abdicate in favor of the teacher. We regard the school as a substitute for the home. Then we do not even avail ourselves of the ordinary means of cooperation with the teachers: PTA, conferences, and association meetings. As far as the teacher is concerned, he ought to call the parents regarding problems and consult with the parents regarding moral flaws (sins), and he ought to do this early.

Cooperation is the normal way. I echo, with all my heart, van der Kooy's remark:

It is my fervent hope that we may be spared the unfortunate conflict between parents and teachers which has sometimes been predicted. These ought by all means to stand shoulder to shoulder in the fulfilling of the sacred calling to educate. [\[62\]](#)

Essential is the unity of home and school, of parent and teacher, as regards the child and his rearing. The home and the school must be one in mind, one in will, and above all, one in heart as to who the child is, what the required instruction and discipline are, and who God is. At this point, the church's work is crucial: to preach to home and school alike the mind and will of Jesus Christ. The unity of our homes and schools is a rare thing today. Pray God that we not lose it!

It is also implied that the teacher must be awestruck with his calling, just as the parent is. He should feel that he would not accept such a position for a million dollars, and that he could not leave it for two million. Having this attitude, he will depend on God for the ability to do the work and will pray for grace constantly. He will also be diligent. He will give it all he has. If ever there were a calling that warranted sacrifice and effort beyond the call of bare duty, teaching covenant children is this calling.

Finally, teachers are to be highly honored. They should be paid well. They should be respected. Luther said it in his inimitable way:

I will simply say briefly that a diligent and upright school-master or teacher, or anyone who faithfully trains and teaches boys [and girls!], can never be adequately rewarded or repaid with any amount of money, as even the heathen Aristotle says. Nevertheless, this work is as shamefully despised among us as if it amounted to nothing at all. And still we call ourselves Christians! If I could leave the preaching office and my other duties, or had to do so, there is no other office I would rather have than that of schoolmaster or teacher of boys; for I know that next to that of preaching, this is the best, greatest, and most useful office there is. Indeed, I scarcely know which of the two is the better. For it is hard to make old dogs obedient and old rascals pious; yet that is the work at which the preacher must labor, and often in vain. Young saplings are more easily bent and trained, even though some may break in the process. It surely

has to be one of the supreme virtues on earth faithfully to train other people's children. [\[63\]](#)

# Chapter 5

## The Goal of Reformed Education

*That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.—2 Timothy 3:17*

What is our goal, our aim, our objective with our Christian schools?

This is the question that we must answer now. It is an important question. It is necessary to have the goal of Christian education clearly in mind from the very outset of the instruction and not to forget it for a moment in the course of educating. Aimlessness renders the whole work futile. The pursuit of wrong goals will subvert the education that is given. On the other hand, the goal single-mindedly striven for determines the nature of the entire work of Christian education and makes that education good, worthwhile, and profitable. Not only the parent and the teacher, but also the student, should know what the purpose is and remember it throughout his education. This requires parents and teachers to tell him the goal and to remind him of it repeatedly. The student must know the answer to his questions: “Why must I go to school? Why must I study? What am I doing here? Why do my parents put up our own schools?”

The goal gives sense and meaning to the activity of educating. “What is all this good for?” is a valid question, and there had better be an answer. The goal kept in mind is the incentive to the teacher to teach, to the student to learn, and to the parent to maintain the school where this teaching and learning go on. Especially for the student, this amounts to something like, “Eat your spinach, so that you can become a strong, husky man like your father.” The goal unifies and directs the mass of material that makes up the instruction and, in fact, everything that has a place in the Christian school. The goal will also serve as a criterion by which to judge that which has no place in Christian education. Besides, the goal of Christian education is simply an end in itself, vital in Christian education not only because of what it does, but also because of what it is in its own right.

It becomes increasingly urgent that we know the goal because other goals are proposed and fought for vigorously. This is true concerning education in the world, but it is also true concerning education among Reformed Christians. There is an effort to *redirect* Christian education. If that effort is successful, it will deflect our aim from heaven to earth, from God to man, from the *Civitas Dei* to the *Civitas Mundi*; and the whole of education will be spoiled. In this case it would be better for us that a millstone were hanged about our collective neck and we were drowned in the depth of the sea, for we would be a stumblingstone to multitudes of Christ’s little ones.

We must derive our goal from our basis of Christian education: the covenant of God with believers and their children. The foundation determines the completed structure that stands on that foundation. On the foundation of the Sears Tower you do not build a chicken coop. Our aim in Christian education must be that contained in and expressed by the covenant command of Jehovah to believing parents.

We must not begin in the Spirit and end in our flesh, begin with the covenant of grace and end in the goals of the Greeks, of the humanists, of the American

pragmatists, or of our own proud, carnal ambitions for our children. This is easily done. Christian education, too, is constantly beset by the temptation to be conformed to this world. Today, in addition, there are enemies within the gates of the Reformed camp. They are deceitful. Evil men and seducers wax worse in the realm of Christian education, deceiving and being deceived. They speak of the covenant to get the parents' children and money, then labor for an end that has nothing to do with the covenant. They become more cunning still and disguise their noncovenantal goal as "the Reformed world-and-life-view" or "the kingdom of God."

In asserting this goal from the covenantal basis of education, and especially in pursuing it in our schools, we must willingly expose ourselves to ridicule. Why should we suppose that Christian education is exempt from the law of the kingdom that the wisdom of God is folly to man, especially to the wise among men, to the "Greeks"? All that will live godly in Christ Jesus in education shall suffer persecution. We have heard, and still do hear, the jeers, "Anabaptists!" "Narrow, dogmatic, denominational schools!" "Schools without any kingdom-vision!"

## Regarding the Covenant Child Who Is Educated

Many false goals are proposed for education. There is even a popular view that in education there is not, and may not be, a goal for the child. The child must simply be allowed to develop without hindrance. The work of the educator is to remove whatever might hinder the child's free development and to enhance the possibility of this development. On this view, it is educational heresy to speak of directing a child, much less all the children, to one, specific goal. This is radical aimlessness in education. But it is true, after all, to the principles of evolution, the theory of the goodness and centrality of man, and the conviction of the nonexistence—or irrelevance—of God. Goalless education becomes apparent in many ways, both in the education itself and in the lives of the children so educated.

There are many outrightly man-centered, earthly goals of education. There is the goal of the cultured gentleman; the goal of the well-adapted citizen in American society; and the goal of the successful man: wealthy, powerful, well-positioned, famous, and happy. In a totalitarian state, such as China, the goal is well-functioning cogs in the machinery of the state.

There are various false, religious goals. One is the saving of the child's soul in a school that practices evangelism. Another is the goal of the school dominated by fundamentalism: that there be some religion in the soul as well as knowledge in the mind. Educators committed to the social gospel, including the "Reformed" humanists of our day, aim at the betterment of society. ICS men and women work zealously to produce kingdom-visionaries and activists and, thus, their kingdom.

Radically different is the goal of Reformed, covenantal education. We have a goal. Our goal is a mature man of God, who lives in this world in every area of life with all his powers as God's friend-servant, loving God and serving God in all of his earthly life with all his abilities and who lives in the world to come as a king under Christ, ruling creation to the praise of God, his maker and redeemer.

This is the goal proposed by Scripture, particularly in those passages that call parents to the Christian rearing of covenant children. To say that we derive our goal from the covenantal basis of education is to say that we derive it from Scripture. Scripture sets forth the goal of the rearing of children; Scripture sets forth the end of man. In the Christian school movement, we must shut our ears to all the clamor of man and must listen only to the Word.

According to Deuteronomy 6, the goal of the diligent teaching of the children is that they love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, and might. Negatively, the purpose is that they not forget the Lord, forget him when they inhabit great and good cities, forget him in houses full of good things, forget him when they eat and are full. Negatively, the goal is that they "not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you" (v. 14). These gods are named Baal, Mammon, Pleasure, and Self.

The goal is not children growing up to fear Jehovah *as well as* to live earthly life. Nor is it children growing up to fear Jehovah by *avoiding* earthly life. But the goal is children growing up to fear Jehovah *in* earthly life, that is, children growing up to live all earthly life unto Jehovah.

Psalm 78:1–8 teaches that the purpose of fathers' showing God's praises to the

generation to come is that those children “set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: And... not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation.”

Second Timothy 3:14–17 is an especially clear, pertinent passage. The covenant child, instructed by his grandmother and mother, becomes a man of God, a *mature* man of God (“perfect” is not “sinless,” but “mature”), whose maturity manifests itself in that he is thoroughly furnished unto every good work. He is prepared for a life of good works here and now in the world. Such a life of good works does not consist of running around distributing tracts or making an occasional visit to the jail to sing Arminian hymns, but of loving and being faithful to his wife, providing for his family, patiently submitting to a froward foreman, paying his taxes, and the like. The goal is holiness: the consecration of oneself and the totality of one’s life to God in thankfulness.

There is no need to list more texts; every passage of Scripture that reveals God’s purpose in creating man and in redeeming the new humanity in Christ teaches the same thing.

However, we should recall the message of Ecclesiastes. That message is not the vanity of earthly life absolutely. Ecclesiastes is not the shaken cry of the pessimist, who then kills himself. It is not the doleful dirge of the monk, who forthwith betakes himself to the monastery. But the message is the vanity of all earthly life, absolutely *all* earthly life—kingship, farming, learning, bookmaking—*apart from fearing Jehovah and keeping his commandments*. Knowledge apart from knowing God, all activity not motivated by the love of God and directed to him, and life itself lived apart from God and away from God are vain. The application of this message, therefore, is: Know, be king, write books, drink wine, and farm in the fear of Jehovah! And teach the children to do this!

This goal of Christian education accords with that proposed by Reformed thinkers. Herman Bavinck suggests this:

True piety organically combined with sound knowledge and genuine culture.  
Thus we form men *of God*, equipped unto *every good work, completely*  
equipped unto every good work. [64]

Herman Hoeksema gives this as the goal:

You will aim in your education at the perfect man of God, knowing the will of his God for every sphere of life and for every step he takes upon the path of life, and you will take care that in his life he is well equipped with a clear and concise knowledge of all the precepts of the Most High. [65]

Jan Waterink states,

If I were asked to give a single-sentence statement of the aim of education, I should prefer to formulate the definition as follows: “The forming of man into an independent personality serving God according to his Word, able and willing to employ all his God-given talents to the honor of God and for the well-being of his fellow-creatures, in every area of life in which man is placed by



God.”<sup>[66]</sup>

Our goal has two aspects. First, our goal in the rearing of the covenant child is that child’s praise of God *in eternity*. This is not sufficiently remembered. But it is expressed in the prayer after baptism in the Form for the Administration of Baptism: “that they may be piously and religiously educated... to the end that they may

*eternally* praise and magnify Thee.”<sup>[67]</sup> Our children’s praise of God in eternity is related to and realized through our rearing of them, also in the Christian school. I will not speculate on this, but I maintain that Christian education, in the schools, is serviceable for the child’s life and reign with Christ in the new world. No genuinely Christian education is wasted or lost.

Implied is the teacher’s inability to see all of the fruit of his labor in this life. Like the husbandman, he must have long patience for the precious fruit. In education we live and work by faith in the unseen things that are eternal.

This eternal aspect of the goal ought to be the motivation of the parent and the teacher. If we are mightily moved by the pleasure we now have in “stalwart sons and daughters fair,” what pleasure will we someday have when that which does not now appear shall appear fully in our children and students?

The second aspect of our goal is definitely the child’s godly life on earth, here and now. We have a temporal goal. Its place, its inseparable connection with the eternal goal, and its subservience to the eternal goal, are all excellently brought out in the prayer of the baptism form: “that they may be piously and religiously educated... and live in all righteousness under our only Teacher, King, and High Priest, Jesus Christ... to the end that they may eternally praise and magnify Thee.” They must live a God-centered (holy), obedient, responsible life in the world, living before the face of God in their station, as prophets, priests, and kings, and doing this out of gratitude for gracious salvation.

In this connection, we must remember that the one, great danger in the last days, according to Scripture—and present experience bears this out—is earthlimindedness (secularism, materialism). There is a deadly divorce of holiness from everyday life in the world: God on Sunday and mammon on Monday. The evil of those who will go under when God arises to judge the world in righteousness is not that they are grossly immoral, but “merely” that they are eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and building houses. The Christian school is, in its very existence, the denial of earthlimindedness, for it stands for the truth that God is at the center of all knowledge and reality and for the truth that men must seek God in all of life. But it must also exert itself to teach the children these truths and thus rear them to live so.

Therefore, Christian education is useful, in the highest degree useful, fitting the child to live life as life ought to be lived and, I may add, with an eye on the book of Proverbs, preparing the child to live a life that is blessed and happy. Pursuing its goal, Christian education, and it alone, escapes the condemnation that Alfred North Whitehead passed upon modern education:

The solution which I am urging, is to eradicate the fatal disconnection of subjects which kills the vitality of our modern curriculum. There is only one subject-matter for education, and that is Life in all its manifestations. Instead of

this single unity, we offer children—Algebra, from which nothing follows; Geometry, from which nothing follows; Science, from which nothing follows; History, from which nothing follows; a couple of Languages, never mastered; and lastly, most dreary of all, Literature, represented by plays of Shakespeare, with philological notes and short analyses of plot and character to be in substance committed to memory. Can such a list be said to represent Life, as it is known in the midst of the living of it? The best that can be said of it is, that it is a rapid table of contents which a deity might run over in his mind while he was thinking of creating a world, and had not yet determined how to put it together. [\[68\]](#)

Astoundingly, Whitehead concludes that “we can be content with no less than the old summary of education ideal which has been current at any time from the dawn of our civilisation. *The essence of education is that it be religious.*” [\[69\]](#) But, alas, “religion” for Whitehead does not include God. So close, and yet so far away!

Not only Proverbs, but also the New Testament tells us that godliness is *profitable*, that is, *useful*. It is useful for all things, “having promise of the life that now is,” as well as of that which is to come (1 Tim. 4:8).

## Regarding the Kingdom of God

Does our goal in education have anything to do with the kingdom of God? Is the kingdom an important aspect of the goal? Even if we were of a mind to ignore this aspect of our goal, consideration of this question is forced on us by educational theories within the Reformed sphere that emphasize the conception of the kingdom of God. There are two main groups: those who yearn for social reform and the ICS.

The goal of the social reformers is men and women who will enter into society, joining the associations of the ungodly, in order to help in the effort to improve the human condition: solve the racial problem, assist the poor, improve working conditions, and even allay international tensions. In Reformed circles, it is wonderful to behold how John Calvin is made to fit the Procrustean bed of social improvement. One is convinced that Calvin had no other purpose for theology, preaching, or church than the improvement of man's earthly lot—until one takes the trouble to read Calvin himself, anywhere. The evangelicals also embrace this goal of education. Shimmering in the distance is the mirage of an unbelieving and unrighteous world of peace and prosperity, which is named “kingdom of God.”

The goal of the ICS is the fulfillment of the cultural mandate of Genesis 1 and thus a grand, peaceful, glorious, earthly society dominated by evangelical Christians (read ICS men: Plato's philosopher-kings in the flesh). To this end, they are educating boys and girls to become organizers of Christian (read ICS) institutions in all the land. Again, shimmering in the distance is the mirage of the “kingdom of God.”

Our rejection of these kingdom-visions is as radical as can be: the kingdom envisioned is not the kingdom established by Christ, the kingdom revealed in the gospel, and the kingdom into which we believers have already been translated. The kingdoms of the social reformers and of the ICS are carnal kingdoms, earthly kingdoms, kingdoms erected by men, kingdoms based on the natural desire of men for earthly peace and pleasure. God's kingdom is spiritual, heavenly, building by the Son of God through the gospel, grounded in the righteousness of the cross of Jesus.

Since both the social reformers and the ICS have the same kingdom in mind, their occasional sparring is friendly sparring. Sooner or later they will find each other. Then, because all roads lead to Rome, they will also find Rome, who had this kingdom-vision long, long ago.

But this may not lead us to overlook, or minimize, that we seek the kingdom of God in education. Least of all may we hide this from our children. The ICS has a powerful appeal to the young: “You may have a place in the ‘kingdom,’ may be active on behalf of the ‘kingdom,’ and may go marching on to victory with the ‘kingdom,’ if only you will adopt our vision of the ‘kingdom.’” We are foolish, we are poor Christian teachers, if we neglect to teach our children, “You are citizens of the kingdom of God. You are reared for life in this kingdom. You are called to be active in the kingdom on its behalf.” Christian schools are kingdom-schools; Christian education is kingdom-education. Listen once more to the baptism form: “... live in all righteousness under our only... King... Jesus Christ; and manfully fight against and overcome sin, the devil, and his whole dominion.”<sup>[70]</sup>

Indeed, we seek the kingdom in education, and we seek it first, seek it primarily, as

is our plain duty according to Matthew 6:33. We do this in two ways. First, the activity of giving our children Christian education is, for us parents, itself an activity of seeking first the kingdom, trusting that God will add bread, clothes, and other earthly needs to us. Second, we so educate the children that they may live the life of the kingdom in the world.

Concerning this latter, we must be plain. We reject the carnal conception of the kingdom, and we do not allow our children to suffer the delusion or to chase the unsubstantial mirage of the social reformers and the ICS. We know what the earthly future of the people of God is. We know what kingdom will rear itself up on the earth in these last days. We must teach the youth this.

We and our covenant children live the life of the kingdom in this way. We believe and obey the gospel of Christ in all our earthly life. We live in the world out of the new life of Christ. We faithfully and obediently serve Christ as Lord in government, labor, home, and church by doing his will in these institutions. We live the life of Matthew 5–7. This is what we aim at in the instruction of our children. It is obvious that this is the same as living the covenant life, the life of the friend-servant of God.

The goal of the life of the kingdom is emphatically not “full-time kingdom service,” as we used to hear over and over in chapel, as if the goal were only reached in preachers and Christian schoolteachers. This is not Calvinism. This is not covenantal thinking. On the contrary, every child is to live a life of “full-time kingdom service,” whether the child be scientist, mother, janitor, or lawyer.

Such rearing, like the life of the kingdom itself, is exhausting work. We confess that we do it, as we live the life of the kingdom, only in principle. We have but a very small beginning of the new obedience. Therefore, in our work of Christian education, we ought to be characterized by humility and repentance.

Yet it is glorious work. Work that aims at young men and young women living the life of the kingdom of God in the world is glorious. But even this is more believed than seen. The coming of the kingdom through Christian education is not spectacular, glamorous, and showy. The kingdom comes not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! Nevertheless, it comes. Therefore, Christian education is worthy of our finest efforts, by grace.

## Regarding the Glory of God

We aim at mature men and women of the covenant. We aim, in this way, at the kingdom of God. Our ultimate goal in Christian education, therefore, is the glory of God. In having God's glory as our goal, we are true to the covenantal basis of Christian education, for in the covenant God must be God, and the covenant with us must end in him.

The goal of God's glory underlies our goal concerning the child, namely, that the child shall be a man who serves God in this world and in that which is to come. Since the goal is God's glory, covenant education cannot merely end in the child's being saved, much less in the child's earthly success. This would make *man* the goal of education. But the goal of covenant education must be the child's active service of God. Only then is *God* the goal.

To miss the mark of God and his glory is sin in education, as it is everywhere else. This makes education vain. Gigantic campuses are built at enormous cost, and staggering energy is expended—for nothing! Upon it falls the judgment of God, in time as well as in eternity. There is no alternative to covenant education ruled by and permeated with the Word, carried out by believing parents through God-fearing teachers, and directed to the glory of the triune God. The attempt either falls apart in a chaos of uproar, ignorance, and sensuality—as is the case in many schools today—or the whole of creation and the lives of the students are bent and twisted and distorted, with ruin for creation and misery for men, towards the establishment of the kingdom of man, that is, the kingdom of the beast. This will fall apart, too.

The goal of the glory of God is achieved *through* our rearing of the children; God is glorified in Christian education *through* the children's loving and serving and not forgetting him.

This is *accomplished* in Christian education by parents and teachers. The children *are* reared to maturity. God uses, really uses, our education to bring his covenant child to become the man of God, fitted to a life of good works. There is power in education. Christian education is most significant: it is a demand of the covenant. What zeal, what carefulness, what faithfulness does this not call for?

But it is God's work. Here, Christian teachers and Christian parents rest. The covenant is God's. The covenant and the covenant promise are gracious. They depend on no man. God makes covenant children. God brings them to spiritual manhood. God works in them to will and to do the life and labor of the kingdom.

Therefore, Christian teachers, like the parents in whose place they stand, ought to pray, ought to work praying, nothing doubting.

*Jehovah, God of the covenant in the Lord Jesus, save the covenant children, and glorify thy name through them.*

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The Sixteenth-Century Reformation of the Church

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