

# The Antithesis and Christian Education

**YEAR:**

1986

**VOLUME/YEAR:**

62/1986

**AUTHOR:**

Engelsma David

**ISSUE:**

Issue: 5, 12/1/1985

**ARTICLE TYPE:**

Article

Scripture References

**Book:**

II Corinthians

**Chapter:**

6

**Verse:**

17

**Book:**

Ephesians

**Chapter:**

5

**Verse:**

11

**Book:**

Colossians

**Chapter:**

1

**Verse:**

16

**Book:**

Proverbs

**Chapter:**

1

**Verse:**

7

**Book:**

Jeremiah

**Chapter:**

10

**Verse:**

2

**Book:**

Deuteronomy

**Chapter:**

6

**Book:**

Galatians

**Chapter:**

1

**Verse:**

4

**Book:**

Genesis

**Chapter:**

3

**Verse:**

15

**Book:**

Ephesians

**Chapter:**

6

**Verse:**

4

**Book:**

Revelation

**Chapter:**

12

**Verse:**

17

David J. Engelsma is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois, and is a guest writer in this issue.

Fundamental to all of Christian life, inasmuch as the whole of Christian life is obedience to the call of God, "come out from among them, and be ye separate" (II Cor. 6:17 <sup>[1]</sup>), the antithesis is especially crucial for sound, Christian education. Good Christian schools are a singularly clear expression of the antithesis in the lives of the covenant people of God; and the instruction that such schools give is controlled by the antithesis.

Not a Biblical word (or, for that matter, a word found in the Reformed creeds), the antithesis is nevertheless a vital Biblical truth: the spiritual separation and opposition that God has put between His holy church and the ungodly world, and between the individual saint and the children of the Devil (cf. Gen. 3:15 <sup>[2]</sup>). In the life of the believer, this separation from the world, and hatred of it, is an essential aspect of his devotion to, and love of, God: "know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" [James 4:4). For this reason, one of the main attacks of "our ancient foe" upon the church of God has always been the attempt to breach the wall of separation that God has built between the church and the world.

Reformed education, with a long and honorable history that goes back to the Reformation, represents one, outstanding way in which Reformed believers honor the antithesis, in life and practice, both as regards a positive service of God, Who calls us to rear our children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4 <sup>[3]</sup>), and as regards resistance of the Devil, who makes war with the remnant of the church's seed in education (Rev. 12:17 <sup>[4]</sup>).

## ***The Antithesis and the Origin of the Christian School***

The Christian school is *born* of the antithesis. In covenant grace, God redeems the children of believing parents from this present evil world (Gal. 1:4 <sup>[5]</sup>) and renews them, already in childhood, with the new life of Jesus Christ (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 74). Thus, He separates them, with their parents, from the world and makes a difference between our children and the world's children. The sign of this separation and difference is Baptism: "by which we are . . . separated from all other people and strange religions, that we may wholly belong to Him, Whose ensign and banner we bear" (Belgic Confession, Article 34). The children of believers, in the elect among our offspring, are covenant friends of God and enemies of the world, by the mercy of God.

Because they are God's children, the children of believers must be taught and reared in a manner befitting their special position: they must learn the fear of Jehovah God (Prov. 1:7 <sup>[6]</sup>); and they may not learn the way of the heathen (Jer. 10:2 <sup>[7]</sup>). This calling of parents towards their children is all-embracing, according to Deuteronomy 6 <sup>[8]</sup>, to be carried out when parents sit in their house and when they walk by the way, so that it extends to day-school instruction in the truths of the creation, which prepares the child for life and work on earth. Good, Christian schools are demanded by the covenant.

It is destructive of good, Christian education, because it is a violation of the antithesis, that Christian schools are opened up to all the children of the neighborhood, or to children of strange religions.

Nor is the Christian school, thus viewed, an anabaptistic flight from the world—an attempt to separate from the world in a physical way. As is to be expected, the world hates Christian schools, as it hates every aspect of the covenant of God in its midst. It condemns them as "divisive." But there are also opponents of Christian education within the church. They criticize Christian schools for an unhealthy isolation of the children of the church and advocate sending

the children to the schools of the world, so that our children may early learn what the world is and, in this way, become strong in their Christian convictions. Criticizing Christian parents for rearing their children in their own schools is as foolish as it would be to criticize these parents for rearing their children in the "isolated" confines of their own homes, apart from ungodly children and apart from ungodly instruction. As regards the notion that the children of believers ought to be sent off to rub mental and spiritual shoulders with the world, in their education, Abraham Kuyper has written well:

Christ has certainly declared, that between His followers and the world there is a difference as of sheep and wolves . . . . Consider . . . what is implied in that sharp antithesis, which Jesus makes between sheep and wolves . . . the people of the world are fanatical in their zeal for the world, and are bent upon inspiring your child, who now still resists with the spirit of the world. They cannot rest, until your child is become part of the world. For this reason Jesus calls them wolves. They want to make your child like unto themselves, identify him with themselves, and thus spiritually devour him . . . . And so the lesson is this. First keep your children with Jesus and under the shadow of His wings educate them until they are ready. And when they are ready, send them out into the world, let them out among wolves, but as sheep, i.e., as young people, whose shield is the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

Arising as it does out of God's covenant, the Christian school is strictly and exclusively controlled by the parents and other like-minded members of the covenant of God. They make up the governing board and association. Their authority assures that the antithesis will be maintained in the school—in the appointment of the teachers; in the admittance of students; in the actual teaching; and in the life of the school, generally.

The authority of the State must be kept out. To this end, all financial aid from the State must be refused.

Also, membership in the governing association and board must be limited to those who are in agreement with the covenantal-antithetical nature of Christian education. Reformed, Christian education is threatened in our day by giving the direction of the schools over to those who dissent from the very basis of covenant education, i.e., non-Reformed men

## ***The Antithesis and the Instruction of the School***

Reformed, parental control safeguards antithetical instruction in the classroom. A good, Christian school teaches the truth and exposes the lie. All instruction is based on and faithful to Holy Scripture, the inspired, infallible Word of God, as the doctrines of Scripture are set forth and explained in the Reformed Confessions. The Word of God in creation is the subject of the teaching in the Christian school—science, history, math, and all the other areas of knowledge; but this Word is seen in the light of Scripture and is taught in harmony with Scripture. This is essential.

The school teaches the wonderful works of God in creation and history. Because all things were created by Christ and for Christ, because all things consist by Christ (Col. 1:16, 17 <sup>[9]</sup>), and because God's plan is to gather together all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10 <sup>[10]</sup>), the Christian school exalts the risen Jesus Christ in all its teaching. In its own way, it makes the confession: Jesus Christ is Lord!

Every supposedly scientific theory, every philosophy, every system of thought that exalts itself against the knowledge of God and that is disobedient to the Lord Jesus is cast down in Christian education (II Cor. 10:4, 5 <sup>[11]</sup>).

It is not that the theories and works of the ungodly world are kept out of the Christian school. On the contrary, Christian education studies the theory of evolution; learns Communism's theory of economy and history; reads the plays of Shakespeare; listens to the music of Mozart; and analyzes—thoroughly and honestly—the psychological, sociological, ethical, and historical views of man by scholars who are without God and without hope in the world. This is necessary preparation of the children of the covenant to live *in the world*, in our own particular society and age. But all is examined in the light of Scripture; and whatever appears as conflicting with the written Word of God is condemned as falsehood and lie.<sup>2</sup>

The students are taught the antithesis. They are taught that there *is* a separation and hostility on earth between two kinds of men and two ways of life—mankind is not united, is not a solidarity, is not a brotherhood. They are taught *what* the antithesis is—not a struggle between white and black, nor a struggle between rich and poor, nor a struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie; but a struggle between those who believe in Jesus Christ and infidels (II Cor. 6:15 <sup>[12]</sup>). The Christian school teaches the children of the covenant, how the enemies of God press every aspect of human culture into their revolt against their Maker—allegedly scientific theory; literature; music; athletics; all. Thus, the children of believers are trained to have their own, unique, Christian mind; to live in every sphere of human life out of the new life of Christ, according to Scripture; to think critically, discerning truth and lie (whether in reading Hemingway or the *Chicago Tribune*); and to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11 <sup>[13]</sup>).

The school teaches the antithesis also by pointing out, in every subject, that God, the Sovereign of history and the Judge of all mankind, curses the unrighteous wicked and blesses His righteous people, in time and history. In this way, the school, in its own manner, reinforces the call to the children: "come out from among them; and be ye separate" (II Cor. 6:17 <sup>[11]</sup>).

Fatal to this important task of the Christian school is the theory of common grace, which denies the antithesis and affirms the oneness of the children of God and the children of the world *under the grace of God and in the doing of works that please God*. The results of having pulled this "Trojan horse" into the Reformed City of God are devastating in our day. Teachers and scholars have a "mind" that has been formed in the world, to such an extent that this "mind" knows nothing of any antithesis between covenant children and the world's children, or of any essential difference between a Christian knowledge and a knowledge of the world, and to such an extent that this "common-grace mind" is as bold as brass to deny the infallible inspiration and Divine authority of Holy Scripture. Schools assent to, and peddle as God's own truth, demonic doctrines that are among the most dangerous teachings ever to be launched from Satan's mind against the cause of God's covenant, e.g., the assent to evolution in "theistic evolution." Administration, professors, and students alike enthusiastically respond to the world's call to arms against the sovereign authority of the God and Father of Jesus Christ in a revolution that now runs the gamut of human life—the revolt of wives against husbands (the feminist movement) and the revolt of citizens against government (the revolution of certain black citizens in South Africa against their God-ordained rulers, aided and abetted by Christian scholars and schools in our land).

If we maintain and practice the antithesis in our education of our children, God will bless us; and His blessing will be sweet—nothing less than the continuation of His covenant with our sons and

daughters, graced by Him to be stalwart in the truth and beautiful with holiness.

If we repudiate the antithesis, God will judge us; and His judgment will be bitter—a generation of carnal, skeptical, unspiritual, pleasure-mad worldlings, and the end of the covenant in our lines.

---

<sup>1</sup> When Thou Sittest in Thine House (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1929), "Sheep in the Midst of Wolves," pp. 171 ff.

<sup>2</sup> For a more full treatment of Christian education's avoidance of world-flight than is possible in this article, see the chapter, "Reformed Education and Culture," in the present writer's book, "Reformed Education. This book also treats of the unique goal of Christian education, which is not possible in the short compass of this article.

**Source URL:** <http://standardbearer.rfpa.org/articles/antithesis-and-christian-education>

**Links:**

- [1] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=9&search=II+Cor.+6:17>
- [2] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=9&search=Gen.+3:15>
- [3] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=9&search=Eph.+6:4>
- [4] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=9&search=Rev.+12:17>
- [5] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=9&search=Gal.+1:4>
- [6] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=9&search=Prov.+1:7>
- [7] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=9&search=Jer.+10:2>
- [8] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=9&search=Deuteronomy+6>
- [9] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=9&search=Col.+1:16,+17>
- [10] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=9&search=Eph.+1:10>
- [11] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=9&search=II+Cor.+10:4,+5>
- [12] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=9&search=II+Cor.+6:15>
- [13] <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?version=9&search=Eph.+5:11>