

The Biblical Concept Of Discipline

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This is certainly a timely and worthwhile subject. We live in an undisciplined society. Anything and everything goes and there are no restrictions. Much of the church, sad to say, goes right along with this. In its preaching today there is nothing sinful anymore and church discipline in many denominations is a relic of the past. Anything is acceptable in the pursuit of happiness and pleasure which is to say anything is acceptable in the pursuit of the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. This is true in the sphere of education as well. The watchword in education today is "self expression". The child must be allowed to develop without correction or restraint or even guidance. The child must be free to express himself. All this has effected us too, I fear, perhaps more than we realize or care to admit. Our children today, or so it seems to me, are not as disciplined as they were a generation or two ago. The fault lies partly in the home (probably primarily) but partly in the school as well. We simply do not discipline our children as consistently and strictly as we ought. For these reasons it's good for us to examine the Scriptures and be reminded of what discipline is. Doing this we shall be able to apply the principles practically. Our covenant children and the schools will benefit immeasurably, and the name of God will be honored and praised on our account. We propose to do this under five headings:

- I. The Idea of Discipline
- II. The Necessity of Discipline
- III. The Authority of Discipline
- IV. The Motive and Characteristics of Discipline
- V. The Aim of Discipline

I. The Idea of Discipline

Scripture has a good deal to say about discipline and I wish to call your attention to several passages. The first is Proverbs 13:24: "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth betimes." Notice that the text prescribes the use of the rod. This is not to be taken figuratively but literally.

Chastening is not sparing the rod. Notice too, that discipline is motivated by love, the love of God. Sparing the rod is evidence of hatred. The one who loves his son will chasten him from time to time. And, note that discipline is not punishment, a negative reaction to wrongdoing. But discipline is correction or chastening.

The second passage we wish to examine is Proverbs 19:18: "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." The term, chasten, in this text is rather strong. It means to correct by blows or strikes, to chastise. It also has the meaning of "to correct by words". Hence, the idea conveyed is to admonish, exhort, instruct, teach by blows or words. There is hope for the child while he is young according to this verse. That means there is hope while he is yet under our care. That hope is based on the promise of God: "I will be thy God and the God of thy seed after thee." Therefore we must not spare for his crying, but must chasten him, correct him by both blows and words.

The third passage is Proverbs 22:15: "Foolishness is bound in the heart of the child; but the rod of correction will drive it far from him." This text speaks of the necessity of discipline: foolishness is bound in the heart of a child. This is not just a natural foolishness, a lack of experience, or simply immaturity. This is true enough. But the text means spiritual foolishness: the lack of ability to see and understand reality and live in harmony with reality and reality is God as revealed in Jesus Christ. And that is deep-seated and it affects the whole life of the child for it's bound in the heart of a child, the very core of his being out of which are all the issues of life. This is the depravity of the child's sinful nature. We must remember this too. Our children, the ones in our homes and classrooms have foolishness bound in their very heart. Discipline is spoken of in terms of the "rod of correction". And again, notice, discipline is not punishment, but correction. And it has the positive fruit that it drives that foolishness far from the child.

The fourth passage is Proverbs 23:13, 14: "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from hell." Again notice that discipline according to this text is correction and the use of the rod. This is not harmful to the child at all. Some people think it is. They think that the use of the rod will damage the child, harm his personality, or frustrate him. This simply is not true according to Scripture, not even when one beats his child with the rod. The plain word of God is: "withhold

not correction, use the rod." Positively, the proper application of discipline delivers the child's soul from hell, it saves him. Finally, let us note that here as elsewhere Scripture calls for the use of the rod, corporal chastisement.

The fifth passage is Proverbs 29:15, 17: "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame...Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul." Discipline is spoken of in terms of: "the rod", "reproof", and "correction". All three of these obviously imply sin as that which needs the correcting. The fruit of that correction is wisdom. Wisdom is the very opposite of foolishness. Wisdom is the knowledge of and adaption to reality, the knowledge of reality and the will and the ability to live in harmony with that reality. Reality is God in Jesus Christ as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. That is the fruit of the rod and reproof. The opposite is no rod or reproof: "leaving the child to himself." This is precisely what modern-day "self-expression" in education advocates. One cannot help but be impressed with the fact that Scripture is remarkably up-to-date. That yields shame to the child's mother. And note this is an unalterable rule of the Word of God. Leave a child to himself, fail to reprove and correct him with the rod and shame will be brought to his mother inevitably.

From the New Testament we cite Ephesians 6:4: "And ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The terms used in this text are important. The verb, "bring up", means to nourish up to maturity and it refers to the whole process of rearing the child from birth to maturity. "Nurture" is rather broad in scope. It too, refers to the entire process of training children, the cultivation of mind and morals and it employs for that purpose: commands, admonitions, reproof. It can also mean instruction which aims at the increase of virtue. Finally, it can also mean chastening or discipline or training by discipline. The term, "admonition", means to warn, reprove, exhort. And again this is necessitated by sin. The child must be warned against disobedience and an evil walk of life. When that child falls into sin he must be reproved. Discipline, therefore, according to this text involves chastening and admonition; it includes reproof and correction and that certainly involves the use of the rod. But discipline also involves positive "bringing up" and "nurture". This means that discipline is more than a negative reaction to wrongdoing. It is that, but it is more than that. Discipline, positively, is a process

that includes the molding and preparing of a child for his place in God's kingdom. Its opposite is provoking the child to wrath, which is, making him angry. (Cf. Colossians 3:21: "Fathers provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.") That is bad, very bad for then we discourage and frustrate the child and the implication is that we are unjust.

Finally we call attention to Hebrews 12:4-11: "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." It is perfectly clear that this passage does not refer to the chastening of children by parents, but to the chastening of the people of God by their heavenly Father. Nevertheless, even if only by implication, it has a good deal to say concerning our subject. In the way that our Father disciplines or chastens us we must discipline or chasten our children. God's chastening of His children is the pattern which we must follow in the discipline of our children. There are several important principles taught in this passage which must govern us in the discipline of our children. The Lord chastens those whom He loves. Chastening, therefore, is proof or evidence of sonship and the love of God. God does not chasten those whom He hates. He punishes these, but He does not chasten or discipline them. If, therefore, one is without chastisement he is illegitimate, he is not a true son of God. This certainly and emphatically means that the discipline of the children of the covenant must be motivated by the love of God. One must never discipline out of a desire of revenge or out of unholy anger and certainly not out of hatred of the child. We must chasten the children out of the love of God and that love of God always seeks the child's eternal welfare, his salvation. God

chastens us out of His love and for our profit. The purpose of that chastening is that we might be partakers (sharers) of His holiness. His chastening yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness. This must be our aim. We discipline the children in order that they might be righteous and holy. Holiness is separation from sin and consecration to God. Righteousness is meeting God's standard (law) and doing His will as expressed in His Word. With that in view, out of the love of God, we chasten the children in the same way that God chastens His spiritual children.

If we take these passages together we gain some kind of idea of what discipline is. But in order to do that we must first know who and what the child is. The child is first of all, an image-bearer of God. He has been created in the image and after the likeness of God so that he is able to bear that image and so that he possesses true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness. In the second place, as image-bearer, the child is also office bearer before God. He has been anointed a prophet to know God and to speak God's praises. He is priest consecrated in the service of God. And he is king appointed to rule over the works of God's hands. In the third place, as image-bearer, office bearer the child is fallen into sin. He has an evil nature, what the Bible calls the flesh or the old man of sin. According to that nature he is totally depraved and incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil. We must never forget that. Those children with whom we deal every day are depraved, and sinful. Foolishness is bound in their very hearts.

Still more, those children have a small beginning of the new obedience in Christ. By grace and on the basis of the shed blood of Jesus Christ they have been redeemed from sin and death. They have been made citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Thus they have a small beginning of the new obedience or of the life of Christ in them. Even though that remains a small beginning, the child does, according to the Heidelberg Catechism: "...with sincere resolution begin to live, not only according to some, but all the commandments of God." (Lord's Day 44). This factor is terribly important for the understanding of the child and with respect to the discipline of the child. There is a constant tension within the child, a struggle between the old and the new man. It is the same fierce battle so vividly described by the apostle in Romans 7. Apart from an understanding of that one simply cannot discipline the child effectively and properly. He needs

understanding; patient, consistent, loving correction and encouragement to walk in obedience to the will of God.

In sum, what all this means is the child is a child of God's covenant: "For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:39). He belongs to the heritage of the Lord according to Psalm 127. This means that that child is very precious in God's sight. He is bought with the precious blood of Christ. That child is a lamb of God's beloved flock. We must certainly never forget that. When we discipline, train, teach the children, we must remember they are *God's* children! They must be handled with extreme care.

This brings us to the question what is the discipline of the child according to Scripture? It is not merely a negative reaction to incidents of wrongdoing. It is not something which we occasionally apply as necessity arises. We tend to think of discipline in those terms. The child does something wrong so we react appropriately. He must write lines, remain after school, etc. That becomes discipline in our mind. That's part of it but there's much more to discipline than that. Neither is discipline punishment. That needs to be stressed. We rather commonly speak that way, but we must not talk of discipline as punishment. All of the punishment which we deserve for our sin was borne by our Lord Jesus Christ Who said on the cross: "It is finished." There is no more punishment for the child of God. God tries us and He chastens us (Hebrews 12) but God never punishes us. God punishes the wicked and that means He destroys them. We must not, therefore, punish the lambs of God's flock. We must discipline them or chasten them, apply the rod of correction to them, but we may not punish them.

Positively the Bible speaks of discipline in terms of: chastening, correction, nurture, admonition. And that certainly involves reacting to evil-doing on the part of the child. Scripture enjoins the use of the rod of correction to drive the foolishness out of the child's heart. But it's more than that. It is really a process which involves the child in the whole of his life. We may define discipline as: that process by which the child of God's covenant is molded and prepared to take his place in God's kingdom. This means that the child is molded according to the will of God. And the will of God is expressed in His Word and summed in His law. Discipline aims at bringing the child into conformity with the law of liberty so that he is free to love the Lord his God with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength and the

neighbor as himself. Hence, when the child transgresses that law he must be chastened, admonished and even corrected with the rod at times. He must be brought back from his evil way. At all times he must be admonished to live in obedience to the will of God as a citizen of His kingdom. He must be patiently instructed and carefully guided in the right way.

II. The Necessity of Discipline

The necessity of discipline is widely denied by the world's educators. There are various theories of child development set forth by the world. Two are worthy of note. There is the view of Rousseau. According to his view the child is predetermined by his very constitution, like plants and animals, to a progressive development quite independent of artificial aid. Rousseau, therefore, condemns the exercise of any discipline at all. Quite similar is the view which maintains that the child is autonomous, a law unto himself. There is no authority higher than man himself. This is the basic presupposition of American democracy with its "consent of the governed" and "will of the majority". Man is free, independent, he may direct his world (Microcosmos) according to his own will. Man is free to make his own decisions and choices and seek his own purposes and satisfy his own desires. All of this he does according to his own free will. The only qualification to this freedom is that no man may interfere with the rights and privileges of his fellow man. What a man does must not harm his fellows. Hence, it is wrong to cheat, steal, kill, etc. All this goes by various tags. Ethically it is the new morality or sexual revolution. Theologically it is essentially Pelagianism (man is not depraved but only becomes such by imitation or habit) and its child, Arminianism (free-willism). Or it is liberalism which teaches doing good to one's fellows by following the example of the good man Jesus.

These ideas permeate the thinking and life of the world. They serve as the foundational principle of the world's education. They determine, moreover, the world's notion of discipline. Operating out of the presupposition of the inherent goodness of the child there really is no room for discipline. Teachers ought interfere as little as possible with the native tendencies and desires of the child. The teacher must consult his wishes, respect his rights, issue no commands, but only make kind requests. The teacher must require no obedience to external authority. He must strive to promote independent thought and action on the part of the child (self-expression). The teacher must reason with the

child, gently advise, provide a good environment for learning, and encourage the child to appreciate what is truly good, right, and beautiful. An example carried to the extreme of this kind of thinking is cited by Dr. James Dobson in his book, *Dare to Discipline*, pp. 100-102: "Not everyone recognizes the importance of control in the classroom. In a widely publicized book entitled *Summerhill*, the author, A.S. Neill describes his supervision of an English school where discipline is virtually non-existent. The resident students at Summerhill are not required to get out of bed in the morning, or attend classes, complete assignments, take baths, or even wear clothes. Neill's philosophy is the antithesis of everything I have found worthwhile in the training of children; his misunderstanding of discipline and authority is complete and absolute. His brand of permissive absurdity gave birth to the social disasters we now face with our young. Listed below are the elements of Neill's philosophy which are particularly incriminating.

"1. Adults, says Neill, have no right to insist on obedience from their children. Attempts to make the youngsters obey are merely designed to satisfy the adult's desire for power. There is no excuse for imposing parental wishes on children. They must be free. The best home situation is one where parents and children are perfect equals. A child should be required to do nothing until he *chooses* to do so. (This viewpoint is implemented at Summerhill, where the complete absence of authority is evident. Neill goes to great length to show the students that he is one of them — not their superior.)

"2. Children must not be asked to work at all until they reach 18 years of age. Parents should not even require them to help with small errands or assist with the chores. We insult them by making them do our menial tasks; Neill actually stressed the importance of withholding responsibility from the child.

"3. Religion should not be taught to children. The only reason religion exists in society is to release the false guilt it has generated over sexual matters. Our concept of God, heaven, hell, and sin are based on myths. Enlightened generations of the future will reject traditional religion.

"4. Punishment of any kind is strictly forbidden according to Neill's philosophy. A parent who spans his child actually hates him, and his desire to hurt the child results from his own unsatisfied sex life. At Summerhill, one student broke seventeen windows without receiving so much as a verbal reprimand.

"5. Adolescence should be told sexual promiscuity is not a

moral issue at all. At Summerhill, premarital intercourse is not sanctioned only because Neill fears the consequences of public indignation. He and members of his staff have gone nude to eliminate sexual curiosity. He predicted that the adolescents of tomorrow would find a more healthy existence through an unrestricted sex life.

"6. No pornographic books or material should be withheld from the child. Neill indicated that he would buy filthy literature for any of his students who wished to have it. This, he feels, would cure their prurient interest — without harming the child.

"7. Children should not be required to say "thank you" or "please" to their parents. Further, they should not even be *encouraged* to do so.

"8. Rewarding a child for good behavior is degrading and demoralizing practice. It is an unfair form of coercion.

"9. Neill considered books to be insignificant in a school. Education should consist largely of work with clay, paint, tools, and various forms of drama. Learning is not without value, but it should come after play.

"10. Even if a child fails in school, the matter should never be mentioned by his parents. The child's activities are strictly his business.

"11. Neill's philosophy, in brief, is as follows: eliminate all authority; let the child grow without outside interference; don't instruct him; don't force anything on him.

"If A.S. Neill had been the only proponent of this destructive viewpoint, it would not have been worthy of our concern. To the contrary, he represents an entire area, dominated by the neo-Freudians who reigned during the 1950's and early 1960's. The painful impact of those years will not soon fade. Most of the values held tightly by the 'now' generation were implanted during the period I have described. Please note how many of the following elements of the new morality can be traced to the permissive viewpoint represented by Neill: God is dead; immorality is wonderful; nudity is noble; irresponsibility is groovy; disrespect and irreverence are fashionable; unpopular laws are to be disobeyed; violence is an acceptable vehicle for bringing change (as were childhood tantrums); authority is evil; everyone over thirty is stupid, pleasure is paramount; diligence is distasteful. These beliefs have been the direct contribution of the anti-disciplinarians who delicately fused an enormous time bomb in the generation they controlled. The relationship between permissive philosophies and adolescent militancy is too striking

to be coincidental. Passive young people did not suddenly become violent. Self-centered petulance did not erupt spontaneously in America's young adults; it was cultivated and nurtured through the excesses and indulgences of the tender years. Selfishness, greed, impatience, and irresponsibility were allowed to flower and bloom in the name of childhood 'freedom'. This great misguided movement was perhaps the most unsuccessful social experiment in history, and yet its influence is still far from dead in our schools and homes." This, as Dobson points out, has had a devastating effect on American education for such evil roots as these are bound to bear evil fruit. It produced the chaos of the 60's, the rebellious youth, the hippy, and the unbelievable immorality. So devastating are these results that there are some even in the world who are beginning to call for some kind of discipline.

Scripture is perfectly clear on the necessity of discipline. In the first place, God commands it! God says: correct the child, bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; God says: spare not the rod. For that reason we must discipline the children of God's covenant. We may not allow them to follow their own heads, so to speak. We must correct them when they transgress God's law. And we must keep them in the way of obedience. We must do that simply because God commands us to do it.

In the second place, the necessity lies in the child, in his depravity. As we have already noted the child has foolishness bound in his heart. By nature he is totally depraved. According to his sinful flesh he cannot do the good and is inclined to all evil. He has but a small beginning of the new obedience in Christ. We must recognize, therefore, two facts about our children. The child does not have this obedience by nature: "The profoundly tragic element is that true faith is not by nature present." (T. Vander Kooy, *The Distinctive Features of the Christian School*, p. 68). The natural inclination is to transgress God's law. The child is by nature prone to hate God and the neighbor. (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 2). But there is the principle of regeneration in the heart of the child. God has performed His work of grace in the child and this means there is a God-created receptivity within the child for the Word of God. This remains, however, always a *small* beginning. Therefore in our children there remains daily sin. In fact, there are sins peculiar to children. David prayed: "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions." (Psalm 25:7) The Apostle Paul warned

Timothy to "flee youthful lusts." (II Timothy 2:22) Then, too, children are particularly vulnerable to temptation just because they are immature in the faith. They lack experience in the battle of faith.

Parents and teachers must recognize these facts. Our children are depraved and have but a small beginning and for that reason need discipline, strictly and consistently applied. They do not need to be evangelized for they are God's children. But they must be disciplined in the Lord's service, nurtured and admonished in the fear of God. They need to learn how to serve their King and walk in the way of His ordinances. And that small beginning at the same time is reason for hope! That's the point of contact, that God created receptivity for the Word. We have every right to believe that our discipline will bear fruit, yielding obedience in the child to the glory of God.

III. The Authority of Discipline

The authority of discipline does not lie in the church. That is the position of Rome and the Lutherans. Our schools are not parochial. Nor does authority reside in the state as in public education in America. In public education the state determines who shall be taught, when they shall be taught, by whom they shall be taught, how they shall be taught, and what they shall be taught. This is obviously a radical departure from the Word of God. As we have already seen this is founded on the principle that man is autonomous, a law unto himself. There is no higher authority than man. Out of this flow the principles: "the consent of the governed" and "the will of the majority." Man is free, independent, he may direct his own world and make his own choices according to his own free will. The only qualification is that he may not interfere with the right and privileges of his fellows. All of this stands in defiance of God's sovereign authority.

The authority to discipline is God's! God gives to covenant parents the authority to govern their children. God gives them those children, His heritage, in His mercy. God calls those parents, assigns them the task and awesome responsibility of training those children in His fear. God also qualifies covenant parents to do that. God gives the grace, the wisdom, the understanding, the love, the patience to discipline those children in harmony with His Word. God therefore, commands parents whom He calls and qualified: train those children, correct them, nurture them and admonish them in My fear and in the way of

My commandments. This means parents may not discipline their children arbitrarily or according to whim or fancy. They are responsible to God for all the discipline of their children and must correct them according to the Word of God.

Teachers exercise that same authority. They do so by virtue of the fact that they stand *in loco parentis*, in the place of the parent. What is true of the parent is true of the teachers. God calls them to the task and qualifies them for the work. The teacher, therefore, as the servant of the parents has the right to discipline and demand compliance to the will of God from God Himself through the parents. In one word, the teacher has divine authority in the classroom. This most certainly means the teacher together with the parents is responsible to God for the care and discipline of those children. He may not discipline according to whim or fancy. He may not demand compliance with his own desires. But he must demand obedience to the will of God as expressed in His Word and law. But, standing in the place of the parents with divine authority the teacher has the right to expect obedience and the children must obey for God's sake.

IV. The Motive and Characteristics of Discipline

The motive of discipline is not just a desire for good control. The teacher must have this and I sometimes fear it is somewhat lacking. But there is much more. Nor is the motive just to create the proper environment for learning. Again, this is highly necessary, but there is more. Nor is it merely to form proper behavior patterns.

The Christian teacher must be motivated by *the love of God*, he disciplines out of the love of God. This is absolutely necessary. The Dutch educator, Jan Waterink, put it well when he said, "Without this inner tie (love) authority becomes tyranny! Consequently, no sooner does parental authority become disassociated from parental love in the consciousness of the child, or separated from the love which the child has for the parent, then the authority begins to miscarry. And the parents will have to understand and put this into practice every day... Conversely love can never be detached from authority, if so authority becomes coddling, indulging the whims and wishes of the child." (*Basic Concepts in Christian Pedagogy*, pp. 58, 59) This is Scriptural. Hebrews 12 teaches that God chastens (disciplines) those whom He loves and scourges every son whom He receives. That pattern we must follow. Out of that same love we must discipline the children of God's covenant. This means we seek the child's

welfare in our discipline, his eternal salvation. We seek to deliver his soul from hell and to drive foolishness out of his heart. As a beloved child of God's covenant, precious in God's sight, we seek to lead him in the way of God's commandments. Failure to discipline according to the Word, to admonish and correct, to apply the rod can only lead to the child's detriment and can only be an evidence of hatred, not love.

The first characteristic of true discipline must be a cheerful, pleasant atmosphere or environment in the classroom. In this connection Vander Kooy emphasizes that all one-sided severity must be avoided. All frigid, rigid, codes must be avoided. The teacher must not add rule upon rule, precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little. The point is the child must not be forced or coerced into proper behavior. All of this is not to say there must be no rules. God's law which is *the rule* for Christian's life of gratitude must be strictly enforced. But that must be within a pleasant, cheerful, relaxed environment. The child will respond obediently to one-sided severity, but out of fear. This is only outward obedience and this must not be in the Christian school for God requires obedience from the heart. The difference between one-sided severity and proper discipline in the right environment lies along the fine line of the difference between compulsion and impulsion. The child after all, is a lamb of Jesus. That lamb must be led, not driven. He must be gently borne not forced. He must be talked with not shouted at. In this connection Vander Kooy offers this warning to the Christian teacher: "Especially let him not resort to crude sarcasm and cruel unfeeling ridicule; amongst Christians in the sphere of the covenant and when dealing with the lambs of Christ's flock these qualities are altogether out of place." (*The Distinctive Features of the Christian School*, p. 75) This is not just private opinion or theory. This is Biblical. Scripture teaches us that it is joy to do the will of God. In fact there is no greater joy than in doing God's will. And that is not fear of reprisal nor mere outward conformity to external authority, but the joy of obedience from the heart to the will of God. That joy must be clearly evident in the covenant teacher, for this provides the pleasant, cheerful environment so necessary for the classroom.

The second characteristic of the discipline must be the godly example of the teacher. The teacher must himself be an example of godliness both within and outside the classroom. A certain Nicolas Beets (quoted by Vander Kooy in his, *The Distinctive Features of the Christian School*, p. 72) captured the sense

perfectly when he said: "If you want your children to be good, be no hypocrite." This means all intentional and forced unnaturalness must be avoided. The teacher must not with holy whine and haughty tone lord it over the children. Rather the righteousness, holiness, and obedience of Jesus Christ must be exemplified by the teacher. The implications of this are very serious. Children, perhaps more quickly than adults, are perceptive of inconsistency. They quickly spot inconsistencies in the lives of their parents and superiors. The inevitable result is that children lose respect for and confidence in that parent or teacher. And once the parent or teacher has lost that it is very, very difficult, if not impossible, to win it back.

In close connection with the above, fairness must prevail in all the teacher's handling of the children. All arbitrariness must be avoided. This means that the teacher must treat all his pupils alike. He may show no favoritism for there is no room for partiality in the covenant school. This too, is founded on solid Biblical principle. God is no respecter of persons. He is absolutely and perfectly just in all His dealings with us. This same impartiality, fairness, must be reflected in the teacher especially in his classroom. Secondly, this means the teacher must be fair in the chastening of the child. The child must know that the chastening is deserved, made necessary by his sinful behavior. He must be told what he did wrong, how he transgressed God's law, and why the chastisement. The discipline must fit both the crime and the criminal. It is terribly important but difficult to circumscribe this point. One must know the child involved and be blessed with a goodly measure of sanctified common sense.

V. The Aim of Christian Discipline

The aim of Christian discipline differs radically from the world's aim. American education is governed by pragmatism. Waterink correctly observes: "This radically effects the aim or goal of education. Obviously, the doctrine of pragmatism in the United States, the essential character of which is expressed by the statement that the only good education is the one which is useful, and that the only useful thing is for a man to make himself useful in society both to himself and the community, also fails to recognize a normative education in principle." (*Basic Concepts in Christian Pedagogy*, p. 11) Education must be useful and useful is that which benefits the individual and the community. Hence the aim of the world's education is the

production of useful citizens, useful to themselves and to the community, for the common good or the public welfare. There is, therefore, no normative education. There is no discipline, no forming, molding, shaping, correcting. Education consists of guiding the child in the development of his natural tendencies. Education must remove the obstacles to the effective development of these tendencies. The child must be inspired to free, uninhibited self-expression. That some of this pragmatism has rubbed off on our children is evident from such questions as: "Why do I have to take this course? What good will it do me?" or "I'll never use this."

The aim of discipline according to Scripture is quite different. Hebrews 12 speaks of the Lord's chastening us. That chastening as we have seen is discipline. The fruit of that chastening is righteousness. God chastens us, moreover, to make us partakers of His holiness. This must be the aim or purpose of the discipline of the children of God's covenant. That they may be righteous, i.e., conform to the standard of God's law. That they may be holy, i.e., separated from sin and consecrated in all of life to the service of God.

Therefore our aim is not just outward obedience, a mere conformity to certain rules, a kind of coerced response. Our aim is a mature child of God who walks in new obedience. This obligation is placed upon the child by his baptism: "Whereas in all covenants there are contained two parts, therefore, are we by God through baptism admonished of and obliged unto new obedience; namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; that we trust in Him and love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and godly life." (*Form for Baptism*) The teacher *in loco parentis* must hold this sacred obligation before the covenant child. This must live in his consciousness. The child is obligated to submit to the will of God in school, at home, in all of his life. He must recognize God's will and law as it affects every sphere of life and human endeavor. He must be disciplined in order to regulate his higher life, work, recreation, church, marriage, and home according to the Word of God. In this the child must be taught to recognize his own sin and sinful nature which renders everything impossible apart from the grace of God in Christ Jesus. This is the life of new obedience, the life of faith. All of our discipline must aim at this goal. The fruit of this will be the mature man of God thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

This must govern us in all of our teachings. Teachers must make the child aware of this truth, conscious of his calling.

Finally, this new obedience must be obvious in the life of the teacher himself. It is incumbent upon us that as teachers we be examples to the covenant children entrusted to our care. Our lives must be worthy of emulation by the children. This is our lofty calling, our high privilege, our awesome responsibility. Let us, therefore, humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, implore His grace, for by that grace alone can we perform this holy task. To this end may God be with us and help us for the blessing of the cause of His covenant and the glory of His Name!