

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

by

Herman Hoeksema

And though 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

Beloved Saints of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois:

Over the years, many articles on Protestant Reformed Christian education have appeared in The Standard Bearer. It is our intention to publish certain of these articles by the Rev. Herman Hoeksema for the benefit of our own membership. We hope to publish selected articles in monthly installments. We suggest that you save the articles, as they come out, in a notebook, or folder, so that you keep them for future use.

We think that these writings, treating as they do of many aspects of the calling of Protestant Reformed people to provide Protestant Reformed Christian education for their children and youth, will not only be useful to promote Protestant Reformed secondary education, but also to remind us of basic truths that undergird our movement for primary education, indeed all of our instruction of the generations that follow us. Especially our younger married couples and our young people may profit from these writings, as to our distinctive calling in education.

Our hope and prayer are that the Lord will graciously bless these efforts, so that they produce increased understanding; healthy discussion; and renewed zeal regarding our covenant-calling: Instruct these children in the aforesaid doctrine to the utmost of your power (Baptism Formula).

The Board of the Association for
Protestant Reformed Secondary Education

A Word of Explanation

The sermon on Christian education by the Rev. Herman Hoeksema that follows was preached in September, 1916, when Hoeksema was still a minister in the Christian Reformed Church. It was published in the September 1, 1927 issue of The Standard Bearer (Vol. 3, pp. 532—536), several years after the forming of the Protestant Reformed Churches. The sermon is given here just as it appeared in The Standard Bearer, except that several of the longer paragraphs are shortened by added paragraphing.

Inasmuch as this sermon demonstrated the Biblical basis of Christian education, particularly of Christian education in the school, and sets forth the fundamental nature of such education, it serves as a fitting beginning of the series of articles on Protestant Reformed Christian education that is planned.

— Rev. David Engelsma

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Herman Hoeksema

Deut. 6: 7: "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."

That education of the child is one of the most important subjects that can possibly demand our consideration, is a truth that is clearly realized, not only by the Christian, but still more so by the children of the world. Especially is this true of our own age. Witness the many books that are published on the subject, the many magazines that see

the light and that are devoted particularly to educational problems, the large sums of money that are spent, the laws that are enacted, the edifices that are raised all in the interest of education. On the importance of education in general, therefore, we are entirely agreed.

.But there is more, and I may safely limit this statement. For I am entirely safe in saying that we also agree that our children ought to have a Christian education. There is no one that would deny this, apart now from the question as to the character this Christian education ought to assume. For as Christians we all agree that we are not satisfied to know that our children receive an education of the world and for this world, but we confess that we are pilgrims, that we are travelers to another city, and that, somehow, the education of our children must be related to that other city that is in heaven. I repeat, therefore, that as Christian parents we cannot be indifferent with regard to the religious instruction of our children. Religious instruction they certainly must have, and they must be brought up in the fear and admonition of the Lord, our covenant—God in Christ Jesus.

Once more I will limit this statement and maintain, that as Reformed Christians we will also insist that our children must receive a religious education of a very marked type. That we agree on this is evident from the confession we repeat every time we offer our children for Baptism. We promise to bring them up, in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein to the utmost of our power." Now this is very

significant. For this doctrine is the Reformed doctrine. And one of the characteristic features of the Reformed faith is, that it confesses that all things exist for the glory of God, that even our salvation is not the ultimate end of all things, but that it is a means to an end. It is, for the Christian of the Reformed type, not sufficient to know that his sins and the sins of his children have been washed away in the blood of Christ Jesus, and that now he and they are marching heavenward. On the contrary, his covenant—God did save him, in order that with His children he might be to the praise of His glory, here in the Church—militant and in the midst of the world, and presently in the glory of heavenly perfection. He must fight the good fight. He must walk in the precepts of His covenant—God. He must reveal himself as a child of light in every sphere of life. Now, this conviction has a definite influence upon his conception of the task of education. Were it different, it might be an irrelevant matter to him, as to what sort of education the child might receive to help him through this world, as long as he is saved. But entirely different it becomes if also the salvation of your child is in your view only the means to the highest aim: the glorification of the Most High. Then 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. And since for the Reformed Christian the subject of the education of his children is so highly important, we thought it very appropriate to devote our discussion to this topic this morning and in connection with the words of Deut. 6:7 to speak to you on:

THE LORD'S COMMAND
REGARDING THE INSTRUCTION OF
OUR CHILDREN

I. IN RESPECT TO THE MATERIAL OF
THAT INSTRUCTION

II. IN REGARD TO THE TIME FOR
THAT INSTRUCTION

III. IN REGARD TO THE BASIS OF
THAT INSTRUCTION

I. I think we will all agree if we define education, in the sense in which we are dealing with that subject this morning, as the impartation to the child of knowledge regarding his material and spiritual relation in the world. With this all education has to do. We bring children into the world. And when these children come to consciousness, that world is strange to them if they are not

in—formed about their relation to the same. But to the Christian this is not enough.

No, there is not only a world, but there is also a God, And the child must also learn to see his true relation to that God. In short, principally the education of the child must give him an answer to the question: Who am I? Who am I in relation to the world in which I live? Who am I in relation to my God? And thus education becomes the transmittance of such knowledge from generation to generation. But when our text says: "Thou shalt teach them unto thy children, it uses in the original a word for teaching that places the nature of education in a very peculiar light. The word really means in the first place "to sharpen, " and is used for instance to denote the sharpening of a sword. From this basic idea it further derives the meaning "to sharpen the tongue," and further to use pointed speech, to express oneself definitely and concisely, and in this sense it is finally used to denote the idea of teaching. To teach according to this idea is to sharpen in. *Inscherpen*, the Dutch would say. Education according to this conception must not be vague or indefinite, but sharp and concise. So definitely was this idea of conciseness conceived of as essential to education, that to the view of Scripture, to teach meant actually

the sane thing as to express something clearly and sharply to the understanding of the child.

The question, then, is, what must be taught according to the words of our text? What is the material of this instruction? And our text tells us: "Teach *them* unto thy children." In the words immediately preceding our text the man of God says to the people: "And *these words* which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart." In our text he refers, therefore, once more to *these words*, and he enjoins the children of his people that they shall also teach them to their children, to the seed of the covenant. Nor is it difficult to find out what is really meant by "these words". They simply refer to the law of the covenant—God, as has been delivered unto Israel before, and as is now repeated by the man of God summarily, as they are about to enter the promised land, and- as he is about to leave them. All the precepts of Jehovah the parent must teach definitely and concisely to his children. And these precepts are again expressed in principle in the fifth verse of our chapter where the prophet says to his people: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." In brief, Scripture, here as well as throughout, knows but of one kind of actual religion. It is the religion of obedience. And again the Word of God knows of but one

kind of obedience, it is the obedience from love. Obedience and love are for that very reason often used promiscuously in Scripture, seeing that they may signify the very same thing, and the one without the other is inconceivable.

For this reason, it is to the obedience of God's covenant—people, that the man of God refers in the text. The natural man does not know the love of God, for his mind is enmity against God, and he walks in darkness. But God's people, the people the man of God is here addressing, have been saved and redeemed by the power of His grace. They are once more His covenant—people. God cleansed them and forgave all their iniquities. God delivered them and formed them to be a people unto Himself. He spread abroad in their hearts a new love, the love of God in Christ Jesus. In that love they must obey the Lord their God and keep His precepts. This obedience must be an obedience from the love of their whole heart, with all their mind and soul and strength. For mark you, Scripture knows of no division of our life, one part for the exercise of this obedience in covenant—love and another part entirely separated from that love. The Christian possesses but one life. And that whole life must be consecrated to the Lord his God, who redeemed and delivered him. In

other words, all the time and everywhere in the midst of the world or in the Church, in the home or in society, he must reveal himself from the principle of the new life he received from his covenant—God by grace. Thus we promise and confess it in our Baptism—Form so beautifully and truly, when it says, that our part of the covenant is, that we love the Lord our God with all our mind and heart and soul and strength, and walk in new obedience before Him. To know, therefore, and to keep the precepts of the Lord our God and to acknowledge no other precepts than His, that is our covenant—religion.

But if this is true, then it is also clear, that we must teach these precepts and none other to our children. For the Lord established His covenant with us and our children in the line of generations. With us and our seed the God of our salvation raises His blessed covenant. We and our children are His covenant—people. And, therefore, very logically, the man of God comes to this injunction: "And thou shalt teach them unto thy children." In all our life, at home or at large, in the Church or in the world, we have to do with the precepts of our God and we acknowledge but one Lord. These precepts are the rule of our thinking and willing, of the life of the soul and of the body, our guide according to which we desire by the grace of

God to walk in every sphere of life. But then, it is evident, that also these precepts must constitute the subject—material of all our education, and that it is quite impossible to conceive of any sphere or branch of instruction from which these precepts of our God may or can be excluded. If, therefore, you ask: What, according to Scripture, must be the material in which our covenant—children are instructed? We answer without hesitation: The precepts of the Lord our covenant—God with relation to every sphere of life.

II. That such is actually the conception of the words of our text is evident. Let us ask the question: How much time must be devoted to this instruction in the law of the Lord? A few hours, say, every day? Or must this instruction in the precepts of Jehovah perhaps be limited to the Sabbath—day? Shall we transfer the burden of this injunction to the preaching in the church and to the Sunday—school? And is it sufficient, if in addition to all this the children receive an hour's instruction in the precepts of the Lord in catechism during the week? Listen. The text says: "thou shalt talk of them (these precepts) when thou sittest in thine house and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou risest up and when thou liest down." Now, this is expressing the thing figuratively,

but very concisely and unambiguously. It simply tells us that we must instruct our children in the precepts of the Lord all the time and everywhere, in the home and outside of the home, and that there is no education that has nothing to do with the law of the Lord. That is simply all. Always, in the home and out of the home, from morning till evening, Israel must instruct his seed in these precepts of Jehovah. There was nothing else for the young covenant—child to learn outside of that law of God. Nothing else might the parent—teacher have in his mind but to instruct the child in that law. And, therefore, it is perfectly clear, that our text deems the instruction in that law all—sufficient. That does not mean that the young Israelite might learn nothing but the law of the ten commandments, learn nothing but how to sing the songs of the fathers, how to celebrate the solemn feasts, and how to bring his sacrifices and tithes. No, the Jew of old did not know of such a narrow conception of religion and of the law of God. But it meant that the Israelite, always and everywhere, had to live according to the will of God, and that for every sphere of life he had to teach his children those same precepts.

Notice, in the second place that all this time, the parent is held responsible for the training of his children. Moses does not at all

address the congregation of the people of God in general, but emphatically he speaks in the singular. He addresses the individual parent. Thou shalt teach them unto thy children. Thou shalt talk of them, etc. Education is therefore, the duty of the parent and of no one else. And this stands to reason. In the first place there is no one that has more right, more God—given right to the child than the parent. Education determines to a large extent what the child shall be in the future. How it shall think and act. And surely there is no one that has more right to determine this than the parent. But especially is this so with the covenant—parents. They are the believers, and they are the ones that are held responsible, and that express the promise before God and His congregation time and again that they shall see to it that the children are educated according to the doctrine of the covenant. They, therefore, have the duty to educate their children, and no one else has that obligation as they have. The parent according to the words of our text must educate his children always and everywhere, in the home and outside, from morning till evening, in the commands of the most High.

It is, therefore, not true at all that the parent can educate his children at home in the precepts of the Lord, and that he can excuse

himself for the rest and say that he can do no more, that he has fulfilled his duty, and lived up to his promise. No, that does not at all finish his task. The parent must also educate his children outside of the home. In the catechism and in the school, on the street and in every other place, it is the parent whose duty it is to educate his children. He may perhaps perform that duty through someone else, that is his servant, but that does not make any difference. Not the teacher, private or public, has any duty regarding your children, the duty to educate them is yours, and it can only become- the duty of the teacher, by your employing him.

And from this follows in the second place that you are responsible for all that your child is taught. It is not thus, that you are responsible for what it learns directly in the home, and someone else for what it learns in the school, and again someone else for what it learns in the catechism and in the Sunday—school, but you are responsible always and everywhere. Not as if these other persons that teach your children have no responsibility. Surely they do. But their responsibility is entirely different from yours. You are responsible for all that your child is taught, responsible before God. Of course, we realize that this was far easier in the time of Moses and the children of Israel than in our

modern times. Life was so much more simple. The parent was not so busy from morning till night, that he could find no time to personally instruct his children in the precepts of God. And life was not so complicated, not so exacting, the child did not have to learn so much, all things were more simple than they are today. And for that reason the education in the home was either the only or the main education the child received: And the parent could realize directly his responsibility for the instruction of his children. But this is entirely different. The parent, at least the father, is not at home from the time he rises up till the time that he lies down, the mother is too busy or at least often makes herself too busy if she is not, and time for direct instruction by the parent is actually insufficient. Besides, if the parent did have just as much time as the Israelite of old, he would not be able to instruct his children in all the necessary branches of education. And the result is that we have now the school, the catechism, the Sunday—school, where one person systematically instructs many of our children at the same time.

Especially in the school the child receives the lion—share of his education. The school it is that trains the child, that practically shapes him, and the words of the

teacher have more authority for him than any other. And the result is that we begin to feel and to act more and more as if we were not responsible for that part of the education of our children. And that is a mistake. All these institutions are merely extensions of the home, the teacher is merely the servant of the parent, and even as the boss always remains responsible for the job his servants perform, so the parent is absolutely responsible for the education of his children by the teacher. The parent, also now, must instruct his children in the precepts of the most High, always and everywhere, for those precepts control our entire life. And if the teacher the parent employs cannot reasonably be expected to do this, it is the parent that is and remains responsible for that instruction. And thus it is with the entire system in which the child lives. From morning till night the parent is responsible. The literature the child reads, the places he visits, the friends he associates with, the recreation he enjoys, in a word, the entire sphere of his life, must be dominated by the law of the Lord, and the parent is responsible that in that sphere the child is trained and very definitely instructed in the commands of the Lord.

Let us apply this for a moment. How is our instruction in comparison with this injunction? How is it in our homes? Are we

obedient in this respect? Are we talking about the precepts of the Lord, when we rise and when we lie down, so that our children hear them? No, that does not mean, that we do as a certain doctor told us not long ago, his father always did, who said nothing to his boy but: "Johnnie, Johnnie, think of that never—ending eternity!" from morning till night. No, that is sickly. Surely, it good also that we early impress our children with the truth that time is short, and that eternity is coming, but the fear of eternity must not become the principle of their religion, for that is absolutely wrong. No, but do we speak of the precepts of the Lord in a good and healthy way, so that our children learn from us definitely, how they must walk in the way of the covenant? Do we ever talk with them about their baptism? Ever speak to them about the joy of the assurance that they are covenant—children, but also of the heavy responsibility that because of that covenant rests upon them, to walk in the way of the covenant? In a word, do your children receive the impression in your homes that the precepts of the Lord are dominating there? Or are material things predominating, perhaps the one thing that receives attention? Do you, when you are with your children, perhaps leave them alone and read the newspaper? Or talk about parties and picnics and outings and

automobile rides, and nice dresses, or about the homely face of the new neighbor lady, about the new hats you saw in church, and the faults of brother so and so. In a word: what is the sphere in which your children live in the home? What is the literature you allow them to read? Is also that literature based upon and permeated by the precepts of the Lord? Where are your children when they are not at home? Who are their friends? Is this entire sphere such, nay, I will not say that they gradually drift away from Christianity in general, but yet such that they become alienated from their own church circle? Remember, it is you that are responsible as parents, from morning till night, responsible that your children are instructed and brought up in the precepts of the Most High.

And how is it when you walk by the way? In other words, how is the education of your children outside of your home life? Do they come to catechism regularly? And when they come are they well prepared? Are you co—operating with us also in this respect? Especially in respect to our young people, and still more especially in respect to our young men, I would urge you: See to it that they are educated in the precepts of the Most High. And to some of you directly, I would come and remind you of the fact that Catechism again starts. Some of you, alas,

already are old enough to assure your own responsibilities, and still you have not confessed your God as your personal Lord. Remember, we expect you in the class. Do not withdraw yourselves from the influences of the precepts of God. And, finally, parents, how is the education of your children in the school? Oh, I hear many of you say, as you have also told me when we visited you in your home, the education in our public schools is good enough! According to what standard do you call it so, my brother and sister? According to the standard of the Word of God? God tells us that in the home, and without, the children must be instructed in the precepts of the Lord. And that no one but you is responsible for this education. That this education in the commands of the Lord must not be vague, but must be pointed and definite. I ask you this morning to go to your God and honestly tell Him, that you are living up to this respect, and that your child is educated, not once in a while, but from morning till evening, and everywhere, in the precepts of the Lord. No, we need not talk about our public schools. But this you know as well as I do, that they receive no covenant—education in those schools. And, your children must have a covenant—education and nothing less. For this is the injunction in the words of our text, that in the

home and without, from morning till evening the children must be brought up in the precepts of the Lord for every sphere of life.

III. But, I hear someone remark, this command was given to Israel of old and not to the people of the New Testament. Many laws and commands are given in the Old Testament that are obsolete, that are not at all applicable to the days of the new dispensation, and this is one of them. And we, of course, frankly admit that the first statement is true. There are, indeed, many laws given in the Old Testament that have no direct value, no binding force for our day. But it is not true, that commands as we have discussed one this morning also belong to that category. This temporal and passing character of the Old Testament is true only of those that applied to the particular dispensation of Israel, in their religious and civic life. There were laws regarding their religious life, laws regarding sacrifices and feasts, that have passed away with the coming of Christ, that have lost their binding force, when the Lamb of God was sacrificed on Golgotha, and the veil rent in twain. There were also laws that applied to the particular civic life of the theocracy of Israel, and also they have lost their particular force with the passing away of Israel as a nation. But this is not true of those laws that dealt with general

subjects, that gave precepts in regard to life in general. The education of our children is not something that applied to Israel alone but that is general in its character. And what is more, the basis of this command is not found in something that is applicable to Israel alone, but that holds as well for the people of God of all ages.

In the first place, we find that this command is based upon and brought into direct connection with the covenant—relationship of the people of God. God has established a covenant with Israel as a nation, thus the man of God has told them in the chapter preceding ours. In that covenant God had promised to bless them and to give them Canaan for an everlasting possession. But He also had His demands. The people had received blessings from their covenant-God. He had delivered them from the house of bondage, and He would give them the land of the promise but there was also another side. The people were in duty bound to walk in the way of the covenant and to love the Lord their God with all their heart, and with all their mind, and with all their strength. And from this same covenant obligation follows also their duty to educate their children, always, in the fear of the Lord, so that also they may know His precepts, understand their covenant-relation, and learn to walk in

the way of that covenant that God has established with them.

In the second place, the general character of this covenant—education is based upon a general principle also. It might be remarked, as we have heard it so often that instruction in the law of the Lord is sufficient if it is given in the home and in the catechism, in the home and in the church, but that school education has nothing to do with it. And again upon the basis of Scripture this must be denied. The principle of such a statement is wrong. God told His people of old that they should educate their children from morning till night and every— where in the precepts of the Lord. And why? Because in the immediate context we read that 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. And this holds true

today as well as in the time of Israel. Because the Lord our God is one Lord.

Also we are a covenant people. Every time when we come with our babes before God and His congregation, we confess that we have an eternal covenant of grace with God. We confess, that in that covenant God gives to us and to our children all the blessings of salvation, we confess that also our children are really in that covenant of grace, that they are partakers of grace, that they are sanctified in Christ, that they are members of His body, that they are children of God, heirs of the kingdom and of the covenant. And every time we confess that it is our side of the covenant to walk in new obedience from true love of that covenant— God that has so richly blessed us. And every time you, therefore, promise that you will to the utmost of your power, teach your children the way of the covenant, and that you will help and cause them to be instructed therein. You see, that same basis still exists, the basis of the covenant, for we are a covenant—people. And upon that same basis we come to you with the same word of God and say: Ye shall teach them unto your children and talk of them in your home and outside of your home and everywhere. And since conditions are such that undoubtedly you will have to entrust a large part of your

education to others, there we again come to you and say: Send them there where you know that they receive a covenant—education, an education in the precepts of the Lord. Send them to our catechism regularly and do not neglect it, send them also to our Christian schools, where you know that they receive the education they must have.

And finally, also today, the Lord our God is one Lord. Also today He is Lord over all. Lord not only in the church, but Lord also in the state, Lord also in social life, Lord in our life, Lord in the life of our education. And for that very reason, also today His precepts are valid for every sphere of that life. But if this is so, then it is also clear, that the child must learn to see and honor those precepts, for all those spheres. And that those precepts must form the very basis of his education. Religion must not be something that is 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.

And, therefore, we come once more to you upon the basis that the Lord our God is one and only Lord over all. We come to you as your pastor, anxious about your spiritual welfare, anxious that also your children shall

be educated in the fear of the Lord, and enjoin you to be faithful, in the home and to talk of the precepts of the Lord to the children God has given unto you, from morning till night, definitely and sharply, to be faithful in regard to the catechism classes that are presently to begin again for the coming season, faithful in regard to the education the child receives in the school, and to send them to that school of which you are certain that they will receive a covenant—education. Then we have hope also for the future. For then we have the promises of God for His faithful covenant—people, that He will continue to bless us and our children, as His people, and we shall walk before Him in childlike obedience, subjects of His kingdom, in the home, in the church, in society, and in the great land in which God has given us a place, acknowledging His one and only Lordship.

II. THE PLACE OF DOCTRINE IN THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

by

Herman Hoeksema

Beloved Saints of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois:

Over the years, many articles on Protestant Reformed Christian education have appeared in The Standard Bearer. It is our intention to publish certain of these articles by the Rev. Herman Hoeksema for the benefit of our own membership. We hope to publish selected articles in monthly installments. We suggest that you save the articles, as they come out, in a notebook, or folder, so that you keep them for future use.

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The Board of the Association for
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A Word of Explanation

“The Place of Doctrine in the Christian School” was originally a lecture given by the Rev. Herman Hoeksema for the Christian School Benevolent Association of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids. It was published in the December 15, 1935 issue of The Standard Bearer (Volume 12, pp. 139—142).

Noteworthy in this piece are the distinguishing of the teaching of the school from that of the home and the church; the insistence on the inseparable connection of the natural and the spiritual in the life of the child of God; the emphasis upon the necessity of Reformed doctrine in the Christian School (a thing openly and unashamedly repudiated today, even to the extent that the Reformed Creeds are elided from the basis of the Christian School) ; the recognition of the benefit of experienced, Reformed teachers ; and the assertion that the essential requirement for Christian education is a people truly Reformed.

—Rev. David Engelsma

II. THE PLACE OF DOCTRINE IN THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

by

Herman Hoeksema

The home, the school and the Church have sometimes been called the triple alliance for the purpose of instructing and training the children of the covenant. And not improperly so. For, it cannot be denied that all three are of great importance in the education of our children. None of them can be missed, none of them can afford to be negligent in performing its part in this significant task, without causing a gap in the training of the child. Nor can it be gain— said that there should be unity and co—operation between these different agencies as each accomplishes its own part -in this work. The training of the child should be systematic, must be one in principle, especially from a religious viewpoint. And as each of the different agencies accomplishes its part the instruction of the child should be one whole, preparing him for life in all its different departments in a general and elementary way. For this reason it is not improper to designate home school and church as a triple alliance with a view to the education of the covenant children.

The question arises: in this important work of instructing our children what particular part must be assigned to each. It may be admitted that to a certain extent, their several callings are quite similar. All three aim, not only at instructing but also at training the child. The principle of instruction

is the same, whether the home, the school or the church is the agency; it must always be the fear of the Lord. Yet, it can easily be seen that although their calling is in general the same and the several parts, the home, the school and the church perform similar tasks, yet they are also distinct. They are related, but they are not identical. They may inevitably overlap somewhat, but they are not mere repetitions and reduplications of one another. Hence, the question: what is the calling of each of these agencies to educate the covenant—child?

It is not the purpose of this present lecture to answer this question in all its implications. Yet, my subject is related to it. In order to answer the question what may be the proper place of doctrine in the Christian School we must needs deal somewhat with the relation of the school to the Church as agencies for the training of our children. And I will try to develop especially three aspects of my subject.

1. The School and its calling.
2. The proper place of doctrine in it.
3. The way to afford doctrine its proper place.

The school is, no doubt, to be considered as an extension of the home as an agency for the training of its child. We are all

agreed that the duty of bringing up the children rests primarily and principally upon the shoulders of the parents. To them, Scripture assigns the task. They are the most natural educators of their own children. They are in a position to know them in their different characters and dispositions better than anyone else. They, especially the mother, are with their children from their very entrance into the world. And they love them as no others can possibly love them. They are the exclusive instructors of their children during the first few years of their life, and long before they go to school they have laid the foundation for their future training. And if we make a distinction between the task of the home and that of the school and the church, we may probably say, that the part of training the children, of bringing them up, of doing what is called in the Holland, very suggestive term, “opvoeding”, belongs especially to the home, while both school and church emphasize rather the part of instruction. The two cannot be separated, to be sure. All instruction must needs also be training. And training cannot be divorced from instruction. But if a distinction is made, we may surely say that the home is especially the institution for training; the school and the church are agencies for instructing the children of the covenant

The school is, undoubtedly, born out of practical necessity. It is not an institution that is given with creation as is the home; neither is it a specially instituted body as is the church; it is man—made. Yet, although this is true, it cannot be said that it was quite mechanically imposed on life. It rather arose quite spontaneously from the development of life in general. Time was, especially among Israel, when the parents shouldered the task of instructing and training their children alone. Life was still simple. And because of this fact few demands were made of the instruction of the young. And these demands could readily be met by the parents. But as life developed, became more complicated in its various departments, more was demanded of that training that was supposed to prepare the child to take his place in life. And the parents had neither the time nor the ability to finish the task of educating their children. It is out of such conditions that the school arose. Parents banded together, employed someone of ability and character to educate their children in the knowledge of those subjects which they could not possibly teach themselves, and which must nevertheless be taught to prepare the child for its place in society.

From which it follows, in the first place, that the school is an extension of the

home, an institution properly controlled by the parents. The state may be interested that its citizens do not remain illiterate but are properly instructed; the church may have the calling to watch that her children receive such instruction as is in harmony with the pledge made by the parents at the occasion of baptism; both may, therefore, have a certain interest in the school; but they do not control the school. The school is not an institution of the church, nor of the state, but of the parents. And the latter are primarily responsible before God for the instruction they receive even though it is not given by them personally. And, in the second place, it follows that the purpose of school— instruction is chiefly to instruct the children in those subjects the knowledge of which is essential to prepare them for their place in society in general. In this respect the calling and purpose of the school differs from those of the Church. The Church has its origin in grace, the school in nature; the Church is heavenly, the school is earthly; the Church is the guardian of spiritual things, the school is the custodian of temporal matters; the Church aims at the growth in the knowledge and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the school at the development in the knowledge of earthly relations; the Church purposes to prepare its seed for their place in the Kingdom of God,

the school has the calling to prepare its pupils for their place in this present world.

If this distinction is correct, we will also be ready to define what is really a Christian School in the true, reformed sense of the word. Indeed, the proper conception of the idea of the Christian School depends upon our view of life in general. If it is our view that things natural and spiritual, things heavenly and earthly, things of the kingdom of heaven and the affairs of this present world have nothing to do with each other, if we separate them, it is quite impossible to see the necessity of Christian instruction in the school; and if we still prefer the Christian School to the Public School it must be from the practical principle that our children can never receive too much instruction in the Scriptures and that the time which the Church is able to devote to the education of its seed is necessarily limited. In that case we will look upon the school, if not as an institution of the Church nevertheless as an institution that can be very helpful to the Church in indoctrinating the children of the covenant. And the school will naturally be an institution which is in every respect like the school of the state, except for the Christian atmosphere that is created by the opening and closing with prayer, the singing of a Christian hymn and the instruction in Biblical History,

perhaps, even in the catechism. The Christian School in that case is a school that has assumed part of the task that properly belongs to the Church.

Quite different, however, will be our conception of what a Christian School ought to be if we understand that the natural and the spiritual cannot and may never be separated, but that in every department of his life in the world the Christian has the calling of living from the subjective principle of the life of regeneration and according to the objective standard of the Word of God. Religion, the Christian religion, is not something that is added to life; but it is a power, a living power, a living power that purposes to permeate all of life. The Christian is called to be a Christian always and everywhere. It is his confession that with body and soul and in life and in death he is not his own, but belongs to his faithful Savior Jesus Christ. And, therefore, with body and soul, with mind and will, in society and the state, as well as in the Church, He serves the Lord. Personally and in the home, in the relation of parent and child, of man and wife, in business and industry, as servant or as master, or magistrate or as subject, it is his calling to serve the Lord Christ. But if this is true, it must also be evident that a Christian School is not merely a copy of the public school

except for the addition of some Biblical instruction, and religious exercises, but that it purposes to be Christian throughout, Christian in all its instruction and training of the child. The principle of the fear of the Lord must permeate all the instruction and discipline and life of the school that is really Christian. A Christian school must be Christian as a School!

2. If this view of the Christian school is correct, it should not be difficult to arrive at a correct conception of the proper place of doctrine in such a school. When I speak of doctrine I mean Reformed Doctrine, because I am speaking of our own Christian Schools. It is sometimes emphatically advocated that the Christian character of our schools must be made as general as possible. We should not really speak of Reformed Schools, but rather emphasize that our schools purpose to be generally Christian. But this is a mistake. It is quite impossible to be generally Christian, without sacrificing all the salient doctrines of Christianity. One cannot be an Arminian and a Reformed believer at the same time. He cannot be Reformed, Lutheran, Baptist and Methodist all at once. If he would, nevertheless, be generally Christian in his teaching in the sense that he would avoid all such points of doctrine that causes the different branches of the Christian Church to

differ from one—another, so that his Christian instruction would be the largest common denominator of all Christian beliefs, education would necessarily become quite vague and colorless. And, therefore, I cannot conceive of Christian doctrine that is not specific. And in the concrete a Christian School must be Christian in the specific sense of the word. Its Christian character must be representative of the specific belief of the parents that support and sponsor the school, that is, in our case, Reformed. When, therefore, I speak of doctrine in this connection I mean specifically Reformed doctrine.

And, then, I wish to say, first of all, that it cannot be conceived of as the proper task of the school, even of the Christian School, to teach Reformed doctrine, to include Reformed doctrine as one of the branches of its curriculum. This certainly is the task of the Church. To watch over the flock, to preserve soundness of doctrine, to develop the truth as it is revealed in Scripture, to establish what is to be considered as accepted truth, to express this in her confessions, to maintain it in opposition to all error, and to instruct all her members, believers and their children, in the truth as it is in Jesus, — that is the proper task of the Church as instituted, that is, through her

officebearers, particularly through the ministry of the Word. For this purpose Christ instituted the offices, for the well—being of the Church, for the upbuilding of the saints, for their growth in the knowledge of the truth, that they might not be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. This calling, therefore, is inseparably connected with the office. It cannot be delegated to the school, for our Christian School is no Church—school. The teacher is no officebearer, nor does he labor under the direct supervision of and as appointee of the Consistory. And not only is this calling connected with the office and, therefore, with the Church institute, but the latter is also the proper agency for instruction in doctrine from the viewpoint of ability to teach it. We believe in a thoroughly trained ministry, in order that our ministers may be able to instruct in all the counsel of God. Instruction in doctrine is the proper domain of the ministers of the Word. For they are specifically prepared. This is not true of the teacher in the school.

And, therefore, I maintain that the place of doctrine in the Christian School cannot be that of a subject in the curriculum. This, the Church does in preaching and teaching, from the pulpit and in Catechism. And never can the Christian School take the place of Catechetical instruction. There may

be no objection to the subject of Biblical History; there is surely no objection to the direct reading of Scripture in the Christian School. But its task cannot be, and should never be delegated to it, to instruct in doctrine directly. And if the Church offers proper catechetical instruction and the coming generation is nevertheless ignorant of the Reformed truth, the blame ought not to be laid at the door of the Christian School, but the accusing finger must be pointed at children or parents, at young men and women that have been negligent in attendance and in properly preparing for catechism— work.

However, this does not mean that doctrine, Reformed doctrine, has no place in the Christian School. On the contrary, it has properly a very important place. Its place is basic to all its instruction and training, to all its school—life and discipline. The school must not teach Reformed doctrine, but it must apply the principles of Reformed doctrine to all its teaching. All its instruction must be Reformed instruction. The school, therefore, receives its doctrinal principles, upon which all its instruction must be based, in harmony with which all its teaching must be offered, from the Church. It applies them. It stands to reason that there is difference of degree in which these principles can be applied to different subjects. But in a greater or smaller

degree these principles must be manifest in all the instruction given. How important this place of doctrine is will be evident if I only draw a few general lines and show with respect to some of the subjects taught what this application of Reformed principles would mean.

Let us take the subject of history. In the first place it will be very evident that it will make a world of difference whether this subject is taught according to the philosophy of evolution or in harmony with the Biblical doctrines of creation and the fall of man. The same historic facts appear in each instance in a wholly different light. But further it will also be evident that there is a wide difference between the Arminian view that man is the maker of his own destiny and the Reformed view that all things are but the unfolding of the eternal counsel of God, and that all creatures, even the rational moral beings, must certainly execute that counsel. It will make a world of difference whether the one or the other principle is applied to and permeates all the teaching of history.

Take another example, the subject of civics. It will be seen, that it makes an important difference, whether the subject of magistrates, the state and its power and calling, is taught from the viewpoint of revolutionary unbelief or from the Christian

viewpoint of authority and obedience for God's sake. But even apart from this general difference, it can easily be discerned that it is by no means indifferent, whether the subject is taught from the viewpoint of common grace or from the view— point of the antithesis. In the one case, one would consider a government consisting of godless magistrates Christian because they rule by the common grace of God; in the other, one would maintain that we must strive for Christian men to rule over us. Take the subject, social science. What a difference the application of Reformed doctrine makes for such important subjects as the relation of man and wife; parent and child; authority and obedience; divorce; birth control; employer and employee; labor conditions and relations; strikes and uprisings; and similar subjects. And thus it is with every subject taught in the school, physiology and geography, yea, even reading and writing and arithmetic.

And not only is this true of the subjects that are being taught in the Christian School, it is equally true of the life and discipline in the schoolroom. The opening and closing prayers certainly must be reformed. The songs that are sung and learned by heart may never be in conflict with the principles of the Reformed faith, but ought to be expressive of it. The teacher must

certainly consider his children as covenant children and in all his instruction, attitude and discipline it must become evident that he bears this in mind and that he aims at the development of the perfect man of God, thoroughly furnished unto all good works as far as his life in this world is concerned. And even in its programs, given outside of the schoolroom proper, the school must become manifest as based upon the reformed truth. In one word, the place of doctrine, of Reformed doctrine, in the Christian School is basic. It determines the religious character of all the instruction and life and discipline in the school!

3. If such is the ideal of Christian School, if that should be the place of doctrine in it, it is very evident that we have not reached the ideal as yet. Yet, that is not the saddest aspect of the whole situation. It is far worse, that cannot be said that there is a serious strife after the realization of that ideal. The present situation is that we have schools that offer some Biblical instruction, instruction in Biblical history that is largely doctrinal and belongs to the task of the Church. Special textbooks in mimeographed form have recently seen the light, guides for teachers and pupils that are based upon the common grace conception thruout. We have schools that open and close with prayer and

that are given to the singing of hymns, by no means always Reformed in contents. But we do not have schools that are based upon Reformed principles. There is room for the question: what ought to be done, what is necessary in order to strive for the ideal?

I will begin with the people that sponsor and control and support the school. They must first of all be Reformed, not only in name, but according to their deepest conviction. After all, the school is the institution of the parents. Its standard can hardly be expected to be higher than that of the parents themselves. If we do not remain a Reformed people, we shall not attain to the ideal of truly Christian Schools in which Reformed doctrine lies at the basis of all instruction. In that case the cause of Christian instruction is a hopeless one. And, therefore, we must have a truly Reformed people that support and control the school, a people that clearly understand what a Christian School ought to be and that want it, and wanting it, will not rest until the ideal is attained. This truly Reformed people must form the school society and must elect from its midst a school board that is in harmony with the principles and ideals of the society. This I consider the strength of the Christian School, its very backbone.

In the second place, we must have thoroughly Reformed teachers. The teacher is the heart of the school. It is he, not only, that must give the instruction, it is also he that must chiefly be instrumental in making the school what it ought to be, in causing us to reach the ideal. He must not merely be an able scholar and an accomplished teacher, so that he is thoroughly acquainted with the subjects he is required to teach, but he must also be able to apply Reformed truth to all the different subjects in which he instructs. He above all must be thoroughly convinced of its truth, must carry the truth in his heart and love it. Only love of the Reformed truth will inspire him not to be satisfied with conditions as they are but to strive for the ideal.

In the third place we are in need of teachers that will make it their life's task not only to teach, but to bring the Christian School to its proper level. Teaching has too often been looked upon as a stepping stone. Comparatively few have given their life to their profession thus far. Yet this is necessary. In the first place because the experienced teacher is certainly the best. Experience trains him for the task and all the while makes him more fit for the work. In the second place, because experience will cause him to become more thoroughly acquainted with the real needs of a truly

Christian School. In the third place, because it is not merely the work of a Christian School teacher to teach, but also to supply the school gradually with text books that can be used in the schoolroom, in which the principles of reformed truth are applied to the subjects to be taught. One who gives himself to teaching for a few years has neither the experience nor the ambition to accomplish this work. We are in need of men and women that will make teaching their life's work.

But once more, we must have a thoroughly Reformed people to strive for this ideal. Without them all the other factors cannot be had. And the doctrinal level of the school will not be higher than that of the people that support it. If, then, we are a truly Reformed people, it is possible to strive in the direction of the ideal Christian School; if not, the cause of Christian Instruction is utterly hopeless!

III. THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL MOVEMENT: WHY A FAILURE? (1)

by

Herman Hoeksema

Beloved Saints of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois:

Over the years, many articles on Protestant Reformed Christian education have appeared in The Standard Bearer. It is our intention to publish certain of these articles by the Rev. Herman Hoeksema for the benefit of our own membership. We hope to publish selected articles in monthly installments. We suggest that you save the articles, as they come out, in a notebook, or folder, so that you keep them for future use.

We think that these writings, treating as they do of many aspects of the calling of Protestant Reformed people to provide Protestant Reformed Christian education for their children and youth, will not only be useful to promote Protestant Reformed secondary education, but also to remind us of basic truths that undergird our movement for primary education, indeed all of our instruction of the generations that follow us. Especially our younger married couples and our young people may profit from these writings, as to our distinctive calling in education.

Our hope and prayer are that the Lord will graciously bless these efforts, so that they produce increased understanding; healthy discussion; and renewed zeal regarding our covenant-calling: Instruct these children in the aforesaid doctrine to the utmost of your power (Baptism Formula).

The Board of the Association for
Protestant Reformed Secondary Education
P. O. Box 621
South Holland, IL 60473

A Word of Explanation

In a series of editorials running from November, 1931 to August, 1932, the Rev. Herman Hoeksema subjected the existing Christian School movement to a thorough examination, judging it to be a “failure.”

The occasion for the series was a speech by the well—known R. B. Kuiper, then president of Calvin College, reported in the Grand Rapids newspaper under the heading, "Kuiper Points to New Peril: Says Christian Schools are Facing Moral and Financial Crisis. " The heart of the series is Hoeksema's criticism of a platform of principles for the Christian schools, "Basic Principles of the Christian Schools of America, 'f drawn up and adopted by the National Union of Christian Schools (NUCS), forerunner of the present—day Christian Schools International (CSI).

The purpose of the articles, however, is not negative, but positive. Hoeksema insists that Protestant Reformed people should use the existing Christian Schools "as long as we have nothing more ideal. " He desires that we try to reform the present system. But if this proves impossible, the obligation is upon us to begin an independent movement on fundamentally sound principles. In keeping with his positive purpose, Hoeksema lays down six "Specific Principles" of sound, Reformed, Christian education, which indicate the Protestant Reformed "vision" in Christian education and point the way for us in our day.

This series will appear in several installments. I have done some editing, e.g. , omitting the repetition that is necessary in a series of magazine—articles; it does not affect the content. The original articles are found in *The Standard Bearer* Volume 8, pp. 76ff.

—Rev. David Engelsma

III. THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL MOVEMENT: WHY A FAILURE? (1)

by

Herman Hoeksema

A few introductory remarks, before I expostulate with you and myself on the superscribed subject, may not be superfluous.

First of all, let me emphasize that the remarks I am about to make in these articles are rooted in, and proceed from, a deeply seated conviction that we must, indeed, have true Christian instruction, higher and lower, for our covenant—children. This conviction on my part was no secret as long as I was tolerated in the Christian Reformed Churches; it has not changed in the least, now that I have been expelled from the fellowship of those churches. Although, therefore, it will be already evident from the superscription above this article, and will become clearer still from the article itself, that I am not at all satisfied with the present condition of the Christian School and am deeply concerned about the future, when I consider the basic principles that control the Christian School movement and the direction in which it is rapidly developing; yet, it is not my purpose to destroy, but to build up.

Secondly, my remarks are not made for the comfort and consolation of those who loudly bewail the present status of our Christian Schools, elaborate upon their faults and shortcomings, and really secretly rejoice in the fact that they may so lament and criticize, because they find in it convenient

excuse to save a few pennies and send their children to the public school. Such an attitude cannot be assumed by those who are really convinced of the necessity of Christian Instruction. If these people were convinced of the principle of Christian education, they would not follow the way of least resistance; but the dangers that threaten the Christian School as it now exists, its weaknesses and faults, would only be an incentive to greater effort and would urge upon them the question: what can we do to save our Christian School and to put it on a firm and proper basis? Fear of encouraging such people in their attitude and of probably increasing their number has long restrained me from expressing my opinion with respect to the present condition of our schools. However, I will no longer keep silent. Only, let me emphasize that it is my conviction, that as long as we have nothing more ideal than the Christian School as it actually exists today, it is certainly the place where all our children ought to be instructed.

Finally, it is my conviction that there is something fundamentally wrong with our present Christian School system and movement, that it is based upon wrong principles, and that it is developing in a wrong direction. Therefore, we may not rest satisfied with the present condition and status

of what is called Christian education; but we must put forth all our efforts to approximate the ideal of true Christian instruction. If this is possible by a method of reforming the present system, I would deem this the more desirable way; if this proves to be impossible, the obligation is upon us to begin an independent movement on fundamentally sound principles.

Recently, my attention was attracted by a rather glaring caption of an article in the *Grand Rapids Press*: "KUIPER POINTS TO NEW PERIL: Says Christian Schools are Facing Moral and Financial Crisis."

Naturally, the headline aroused my curiosity. What new peril could threaten our Christian Schools now? The article contained a partial report of an address delivered by Mr. R. B. Kuiper, president of Calvin College, before a meeting Of the Michigan Christian Teacher's Institute, held in Grand Rapids. According to the report the speaker stated that the moral peril threatening the Christian School consisted in the fact that our people are losing conviction that the Christian School is necessary for Christian education. Among the causes of. this decline in the interest our people evince in the cause of Christian instruction, the speaker enumerated the following:

1. The attempt to introduce religious education in the public schools, which would seem to make the separate Christian School superfluous and only cause unnecessary expense.
2. A tendency in the churches to place all emphasis on missions at the expense of Christian education at home.
3. An inferiority complex in the hearts and minds of many of our people caused by the superiority in equipment and buildings of the public schools.
4. A failure to realize the greatness of the threatening danger of modernism.
5. A growing desire to conform to the world in the realm of education.

The speaker also offered some suggestions as to what ought to be done to face and counteract this new peril. He emphasized that there is a need of some straight thinking, especially in order that our people might see the patent distinction between religious and Christian education. All religious education, the speaker meant to emphasize, is not Christian instruction; it may as well be modernistic. In the second place, the speaker asserted that there must be a new emphasis on the necessity of distinctiveness. Our Christian Schools must

become more distinctive, for in their distinctive character they have their only reason for existence. And so he finally suggested that in our Christian Schools all instruction ought to be given from the viewpoint of its relation to God; every subject that is taught must be viewed in that relation.

No doubt, the speaker said many things that are true, so true, in fact, that they lie on the very surface of the situation.

But it may be remarked, that his remarks pointed to no new peril, whatsoever. The peril is very old. I know not, whether the speaker presented his remarks as indicating a recently arising danger, or whether the caption must be laid at the door of the Press' responsibility. Neither does this make any difference. The fact is that the danger is a very old one. I do not exaggerate the matter if I state that the rather general interest of our people in the cause of Christian education, that is already on the decline, according to the speaker, is itself of a rather recent date. When I became minister in Holland, Michigan, sixteen years ago, to mention the cause of Christian instruction from the pulpit was considered similar to lighting a match in a powder magazine. And well I remember how it was considered an act of special courage, when I devoted an entire sermon to the subject. But the cause of Christian education

became more popular. The trouble is that the increasing interest in the cause of Christian instruction on the part of many people was no indication of a spreading conviction of the necessity and understanding of the principle of the Christian Schools; but it must largely be attributed to the fact that the Christian School itself assumed a more popular aspect. While at first these schools had very poor equipment and not infrequently were conducted in basements of churches, the school apparatus was gradually perfected and buildings arose that need not necessarily discourage people with an inferiority complex; or, stating it more correctly, one does not have to bear the reproach of Christ any more to send his children to a Christian school. It need cause no surprise that this wave of superficial interest is of brief duration.

However, there always were, and there still are, a number of people that stand for Christian instruction from principle and deeply rooted conviction. This nucleus must wake up. The rest may be converted to the principle and unite with them; or they may not be converted and refuse to co—operate, whether they be among the common people or among the leaders. But the men that understand the principles of Christian instruction and are convinced of its necessity

must gain control of the movement and insist upon instruction that is really Christian. And let all that are fearful and trembling return from Mount Gilead, even though they be two—thirds of our small army. It shall not worry us. The cause of Cod's covenant is one of principle, not of pounds or numbers.

Nevertheless, many of the remarks that were made by Mr. R. B. Kuiper were, no doubt, to the point. When he enumerated the causes for what he considered the new peril threatening the Christian Schools he pointed to some actually existing conditions.

It is true, no doubt, that many people do not any longer distinguish between *religious* education and *Christian* instruction. Some have revealed a warm enthusiasm for the introduction of the Bible in the public schools; and there are many that would evidently be satisfied with public school instruction for their children, if only the Bible would be read in those schools. They would consider it a useless sacrifice to maintain Christian schools of our own in that case.

Now, abstractly considered, it is difficult to see what arguments anyone could adduce to oppose the introduction of the Word of God in the public schools, if this really were possible. Even if the sound principle could be realized on a large scale, or generally, that education of the children is

the task of the parents, and that the State must only intervene in cases of neglect on the part of the parents, it is quite impossible to argue that such State education may not introduce the Bible, or even that such State instruction must not be Christian. The Christian citizen would undoubtedly have to demand of the State that also its education be Christian in principle and character.

But, although in the abstract it is quite impossible to see what objections one could have against a sound Christian, State—education, the cold fact is that it is quite impossible to introduce the Bible into the public schools as they exist today. For, first, although the public school may be nominally under the control of the State, it is actually in the power of every individual community; and it depends entirely upon the spiritual constituency of each community, what shall be the religious character of the education offered in its schools. It depends on them which teachers shall be appointed in their own schools; and it depends on the teacher primarily, how the Bible shall be read in case it should become a State law to introduce Bible reading in the public schools. Even if the Bible should actually be read in all the schools, this could only mean that certain selected portions would be offered, while others would be systematically eliminated. In

other words, although there would be nominal Bible reading, it would actually be nothing but a corruption of Scripture. And thus the result would be a non—Christian Bible reading, a religious education, indeed, that is thoroughly un—Christian, that, in most cases, would be wholly modernistic. Even if the legislature should pass a law introducing the Bible into the public school to the extent that it would have to be read from Genesis to Revelation, which is practically unthink— able, too much would still have to be left to the manner in which the individual teacher would choose to read it; and no guarantee could be given that the Word of God were read properly. It requires a Christian teacher to read the Bible as it should be read. A law to read the Bible in the public schools would be paramount to a law excluding all un—Christian teachers - - all modernists, agnostics, atheists, which is impossible. Hence, I consider the slogan, “the Bible in the public schools,” a dangerous one.

When Kuiper, therefore, pointed to the danger of mistaking a religious education for a Christian education, he certainly was right. Religious education in the public schools I consider more dangerous still than the intentional avoidance of all mention of religion as far as this is possible.

He was right, too, when he emphasized that our Christian schools must be distinctive, and that we must not be satisfied with a little Biblical instruction added to the curriculum, which in other respects is entirely like the instruction given in the public schools. The principles of the Word of God must permeate all the instruction, as well as the whole of school— life. Naturally, it is true, that this distinctiveness of Christian education will appear more emphatically in some branches than in others. There is, in this respect, a great difference between arithmetic and mathematics on the one hand, and history and general science on the other. But it remains true, nevertheless, that the whole of education must be based on and permeated by the principles of the Word of God.

And it may also be observed that our Christian Schools have hardly begun to realize this idea. I have great respect and am very thankful for the heroic efforts of some Christian School teachers to base their instruction on the Word of God throughout. But it depends almost entirely on the efforts of the individual teachers, whether their instruction shall be distinctive or not. There are as yet no Christian readers, no Christian textbooks even on the most important subjects. I know of examples of so—called

Christian instruction in the field of history, for instance, which show, not only that the rankest textbooks are employed, based entirely on the theory of evolution, but also that the teacher was either totally incapable or unwilling to offer anything positive instead of her textbook; and the notes she gave in her classroom proceeded upon the evolutionistic scheme of history as much as the textbook. Although, therefore, I am always ready to express my appreciation of the efforts of individual teachers in this direction, the fact remains, that there is something fundamentally wrong with the system as such.

The same is true of school—life. This is often reflected in various programs, whether in connection with graduation exercises or otherwise. I hardly ever attend them anymore, for the simple reason that my heart is usually filled with grief and disgust, at the end of such meetings, at the silly attempt to apologize to the world for the distinctive character of the Christian School. A large part of these programs is usually devoted to silly jokes, not frequently bordering on profanity. Usually a play or drama or pageant must help to obliterate the distinctive character these programs should evince. And the whole is smeared over with a little Christian varnish, consisting of opening

and closing with prayer and the sad attempt of some minister in a fifteen—minute talk to make the people believe that they ought to be thankful for such Christian education!

Do not imagine that I write these things to induce our people to send their children to the public school. My eyes are open to the good elements there undoubtedly are in the instruction that is offered in the Christian Schools even as they are. I would rather warn our people that they should not abandon the principle of Christian Instruction, nor remove their children from the Christian School, even as it is today.

My purpose is not negative, but positive.

I point to these evils, because they cannot be denied, because they are developing fast, and because they point to a deeper evil, to the fact that there is something fundamentally wrong with the system of Christian Instruction as we have it today and with the very principles upon which it is based.

Kuiper pointed to some evils and dangers that are undoubtedly existing.

He did not point out, however, the real underlying cause of these evils.

Neither could he, as will become evident.

Once again I must emphasize two things before I proceed.

The first is, as I stated more than once before, that these articles do not all aim at the destruction of the Christian School, but at its upbuilding. I would consider it a day of great calamity when our people should forsake the principles that all our education, primary and secondary, must be positively Christian.

The second is that I do not have in mind any particular school, but deal with the Christian School movement in general. The several schools naturally differ greatly with respect to the religious quality of the instruction that is offered. This depends on the teachers' staff, the board, and the constituency of the society supporting a certain school. It is not my purpose to criticize any particular school or schools. Neither would I consider our paper the proper medium to voice such criticism. And, therefore, it must be borne in mind that the school movement in general is the subject of these articles and that I purpose to point out that its development has been in a decidedly wrong direction.

Neither am I, when I blow this trumpet, producing a sound that is altogether strange to those who are acquainted with the real condition and development of our Christian Schools and of the Christian

education in general. Even apart from the speech of Mr. Kuiper to which we referred earlier, others have expressed the fear that our Christian School—ship would be crushed on the rocks. In an address delivered before the Educational Convention of the National Union of Christian Schools, held at Holland, Michigan, August 26—27, 1930, on the subject, *How Should We Seek to Guarantee for the Future the Distinctive Character of Our Christian Schools?*, the speaker, Dr. Herman Kuiper, informed his audience that to prepare himself for his speech he sent a questionnaire to some of the leading men of the teaching profession, who might be thoroughly acquainted with the present status of the Christian School movement. And here are some of the answers he received and quoted in his address:

“If one of our leading men would have the courage to tell our people that in the matter of Christian rearing we have been in error in stressing Christian school training, at least seventy-five percent of our people would rejoice and shout: ‘Praise the Lord’.”

Another wrote: “There seems to be a slackening of interest and enthusiasm in the last four or five years.”

A third said: “We are today facing the sad fact that a great proportion of our people, and among them a large number of graduates

of our Christian schools, exhibit a noticeable lack of interest, not to speak of enthusiasm, for Christian instruction.”

A fourth: “We lack in our teaching staffs too much the first essential of Christian personalities.”

A fifth: “Most Christian school teachers do not know what it is all about. The best that most of our teachers have in the way of an educational philosophy is a tender and lovely feeling, evangelical in nature, that our children should have a Christian training. But what this consists of, what the methodology should be, they do not know.”

A sixth: “The principal defect is lack of the right kind, the distinctive kind of teaching. And the reason for that is that there is present in our faculties a good percentage of persons who don’t belong there. I don’t say that they are not Christian, but they aren’t in our schools from any great degree of conviction.”

A seventh: “A good many of our teachers don’t know the real difference between a public school and a Christian school. Many of our teachers cannot apply the Christian principle as they should, i.e., permeate all instruction with Christian principles. Too many of our teachers do not grow in the right direction. If they take courses, they get them

at the wrong place. All extension work is full of Dewey’s, Thorndike’s and Kilpatrick’s principles.

An eighth: “The majority of our teachers have not sufficiently grasped Calvinism as a world and life view. For them religion is too much a thing - apart. They do not see its basic significance for all knowledge imparted in school. ”

So you see that I do not stand alone, when I claim that there is something fundamentally wrong with the movement of our Christian Education and its development at the present time .

But I claim, not only that the teaching staff hitherto was characterized by a notable weakness and ignorance regarding true Christian Instruction, but no less emphatically that there has been developing among us a world and life view that usurps the name of being Reformed and Calvinistic, but is fundamentally as remote from true Calvinism as Calvin’s views were from those of Servetus. And I maintain, not only that this would—be Calvinism has been widely influencing the Reformed Churches, but also that the control of the Christian school movement of late years has been in the hands of those who are addicted to this Pseudo—Calvinistic conception. This is not the first time I point

to this fact. Years ago I wrote short articles on Pseudo—Calvinism in The Banner, till the Board of Publication prevented me from publishing more of them. I claim that this Pseudo—Calvinistic view has been inculcated into our people for years by the ministry, from the pulpit and in the Catechism—room. I claim that its principles have been inculcated in Calvin College. I claim that this evil was greatly aggravated by the fact that many students took post—graduate work in the big universities of the world, in order to obtain a degree and recognition by the world. I claim that many of these are not at all fit to be Christian school teachers, whether in the lower or in the higher grades; but they are. And I claim that the Christian school movement has been under the control, to a large extent, of men of that caliber.

The result is that an attempt is made to base our whole Christian school system upon a foundation on which it cannot possibly stand.

I have before me a booklet entitled: "Basic Principles of the Christian Schools of America. It contains a platform of principles drawn up for and adopted by the National Union of Christian Schools. From it I quote:

"SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES"

"The following is an attempt to interpret the more specific religious principles basic to education to which orthodox Christian School communities are committed:

a. The Bible is the Book of books. By virtue of its divine organic inspiration (11 Peter 1:21) it is unique among all books. The Bible is not only the infallible rule of faith and conduct, but also the infallible guide of truth and righteousness. All school administration, instruction, and discipline should be motivated by Biblical principles.

b. God is triune (Matt. 3:16, 17). He is the Creator of all that is, the Sustainer of all that exists, and the ultimate end of all things (Rom, 11 :36). God who is transcendent (Isaiah 40) and immanent (Ps. 139), is the absolute loving Sovereign over all (Daniel 4:31); men should seek to do His will on earth as it is done in heaven.

c. Man is a fallen creature (Genesis 3). Though depraved, man is nevertheless an image bearer of God (Eph. 2: 5); and through restraining grace he is able to do civil good

(Romans 2:14) Though lost in sin, man can be saved through faith in Christ (John 3 : 16) ; and through restoring grace, in principle, is able to do spiritual good (I John 3:9) .

d. The world is steeped in sin. All aspects of life, individual and family, social and political , industrial and economic, even the animal world, nature and things inanimate, show the marks and scars , the subversions and perversions of sin (Romans 8: 22). The virtue, order and beauty which is still present in the world is a manifestation of God's goodness (Matthew 5:45) .

e. The all—embracing objective of the school is to promote the glory of our covenant God: (a) by seeking in humble dependence upon God to equip the pupil for his supreme task, namely, to realize him— self as God's image—bearer (11 Tim. 3:17) ; and (b) by seeking in the same dependence upon God to reconstitute the sin—perverted world by realizing God' s Kingdom in all spheres and phases of life (Matt. 6:33) . This is possible at least in principle through Christ, who is not only the Creator (as

the Logos) but also the re—creator (John 1) .

f. In determining the Course of Study to be offered, in preparing the lesson material, in giving the daily instruction, the above purpose should be consciously present as the all—embracing objective . To accomplish this great task, the teacher must have the fear of God in his heart and the determination to live it out in his profession; and he must utilize to the full whatever light God's Special Revelation sheds upon the various realms of human knowledge.”

Purposely, I quoted the entire platform of principles to intercept the possible indictment of doing injustice to it.

I do not know who are the original authors of this statement of principles.

And I do not care to know. It will save me from another possible accusation of a personal attack. It is not at all the purpose of these articles to fight persons. The cause of Christian Instruction is at stake and nothing else.

The platform of principles quoted above is certainly unfit to serve as a basis of Christian education. On such a basis our Christian School must totter into ruins.

Partly, it is altogether too vague and colorless. Partly, it is characterized by omission of most vital elements. Partly, it enunciates principles that are positively erroneous, modernistic rather than Calvinistic.

(to be continued)

III. THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL MOVEMENT: WHY A FAILURE? (2)

by

Herman Hoeksema

Beloved Saints of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois:

Over the years, many articles on Protestant Reformed Christian education have appeared in The Standard Bearer. It is our intention to publish certain of these articles by the Rev. Herman Hoeksema for the benefit of our own membership. We hope to publish selected articles in monthly installments. We suggest that you save the articles, as they come out, in a notebook, or folder, so that you keep them for future use.

We think that these writings, treating as they do of many aspects of the calling of Protestant Reformed people to provide Protestant Reformed Christian education for their children and youth, will not only be useful to promote Protestant Reformed secondary education, but also to remind us of basic truths that undergird our movement for primary education, indeed all of our instruction of the generations that follow us. Especially our younger married couples and our young people may profit from these writings, as to our distinctive calling in education.

Our hope and prayer are that the Lord will graciously bless these efforts, so that they produce increased understanding; healthy discussion; and renewed zeal regarding our covenant-calling: Instruct these children in the aforesaid doctrine to the utmost of your power (Baptism Formula).

The Board of the Association for
Protestant Reformed Secondary Education
P. O. Box 621
South Holland, IL 60473

A Word of Explanation

This installment in our series on Christian education continues the criticism by Herman Hoeksema of a platform of basic principles for the Christian Schools, adopted by the (then) National Union of Christian Schools.

Having quoted the six principles put forward as the basis of Christian education, Hoeksema wrote:

The platform of principles quoted above is certainly unfit to serve as a basis of Christian education. On such a basis our Christian School must totter into ruins. Partly, it is altogether too vague and colorless. Partly, it is characterized by omission of most vital elements. Partly it enunciates principles that are positively erroneous, modernistic rather than Calvinistic.

This, he proceeded to demonstrate.

Written in 1931-1932, this judgment of the existing Christian Schools can be seen today to have been prophetic, e.g., in its warning that the basic principles are “generally Christian,” not specifically Reformed, and that they attempt “to present our Christian Schools as generally acceptable to the whole world.”

Of great importance and worth is the distinctively Reformed principle of education that Hoeksema proposes, in the stead of each of the principles criticized.

- Rev. David Engelsma

III. THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL MOVEMENT: WHY A FAILURE? (2)

By

Herman Hoeksema

The platform adopted by the National Union of Christian Schools to which I referred in a previous article offers itself emphatically as a declaration of *basic principles*. This it announces on the cover of the little book from which I quoted; it is

expressed in the heading of the platform proper; and it is emphasized once more in the very first paragraph under this heading: “The following is an attempt to interpret the more *specific* religious principles *basic* to education.” (I underscore, H. H.) It presents

itself to us, therefore, as the best, the most specific the Union has to offer. And as such it wants to be criticized.

These “specific” principles are, briefly expressed, the following:

- a. The Bible is the book of books.
- b. God is Triune, transcendent and immanent, Creator and Sustainer, the loving Sovereign over all.
- c. Man is fallen but can be saved through faith in Christ; fallen, he is still God’s image bearer and able to do civil good; saved, he can do spiritual good.
- d. The world is steeped in sin; the beauty, order and virtue in the world is a manifestation of God’s goodness.
- e. The task of the school is to enable the pupil to realize himself as God’s image bearer; to equip him for this calling; and to reconstitute a sin-perverted world by realizing the kingdom of God.

Now, I made the remark in a previous article that the basis, upon which our Christian Schools are supposed to stand, is altogether too vague, too colorless. These principles are supposed to be specific. The fact is, however, that they are not specific at all.

Let me point this out.

The first declaration has it that the Bible is the book of books. Perhaps it is, although it is never quite clear to me what is meant by the expression. Does it imply a comparison with other books? Does it mean that it is superior to all other books? Does it place the Bible on the shelf with other books, only to mark it as the best among them all? The authors of this platform would, perhaps, reply, that they added to this definition of the Bible, that it is unique among all books by virtue of its divine organic inspiration. That sounds very good. And a platform of specific principles, let me add, *must* sound good, for, if it does not, it is in danger of being repudiated. Yet, it may not be as good as its sounds. What I want to know, in order to be very specific, is whether *the Bible is from beginning to end the inspired Word of God*. You say: that is exactly what we mean? Splendid! Let us express ourselves just in that way, then! Let us say: *We believe that the Bible is given by plenary inspiration, and that it, therefore, is from beginning to end the Word of God*. There are many that would subscribe to the statement, that the Bible is the book of books, that they believe in organic inspiration, that it is the infallible rule for faith and life, and that yet agree with the higher critics to a large extent and have no

scruples to reject large and small portions of this book of books as not so organically inspired. I know not, whether the authors of this platform expressed themselves intentionally in this indefinite manner. Fact is, of course, that the expression: *the Bible is the written Word of God*, is common enough among us and was known also to the writers of these “specific principles.” However this may be, especially in our time, it is better to be specific on this point. The expression: *the Bible is the book of books*, is not definite and leaves plenty of room for many heresies, even though you add that it is given by organic inspiration. In the form suggested by the platform the definition frankly smacks of Janssenism. (the denial of the infallible inspiration of Scripture – D. E.)

Neither is it very definite when this first declaration continues to say: “The Bible is not only the infallible rule of faith and conduct, but also the infallible guide of truth and righteousness.” This: “not only...but also” I fail to understand. Perhaps the writers could elucidate this statement. A guide of truth? A guide of righteousness? In distinction from being a rule of faith and life? Not only the latter...but also the former? Frankly, I do not understand what this means. It surely is not very specific.

Probably, what the writers of this basis for Christian instruction intended to convey is the idea, that all the instruction that is given in the Christian Schools should be based on the Scriptures and should be permeated with the truth of the Word of God; that Scripture should absolutely be the criterion of all that is taught, so that no instruction shall either be “neutral” or in conflict with the Word of God. This must not only be the case with the instruction that is given in the Bible as such, with the Bible-lesson, but as much as possible with all other subjects taught in the Christian School. History, for instance, not only sacred, but secular as well, is, according to Scripture, the realization of the eternal counsel of God: and its course tends to the ultimate realization of the Kingdom of God. In a Christian School it must emphatically be taught in this light. It surely cannot use the material that is offered in our modern text-books, which are all based on and proceeding from the theory of evolution. And the same holds for civics, physiology, physical geography, and whatever other subjects may be taught in our schools. And as it is with the instruction proper, so it is with the management of the school, the relation of teacher to pupil, discipline. The appearance and conduct of the teacher, the language he or she employs,

and the attitude assumed should all be in harmony with the Word of God. A teacher must not appear in front of her class as a painted picture, with a rich application of rouge and lipstick and powder, or as the exemplification of the latest fads in style. And school discipline should not follow every whim and fancy of modern pedagogy. The fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom and which is objectively revealed in the Bible, should reign supreme and dominate in the instruction and life of the Christian School.

Perhaps, it was the intention of the authors of “specific principles” to express this.

But why not be definite? Why this studied attempt to be vague and general? Why say: The Bible is the book of books, is unique among all books by virtue of its divine organic inspiration, is the infallible rule of faith and conduct and also the infallible guide of truth and righteousness?

In our day this language may mean most anything.

Under cover of this language the historicity of the first three chapters of the book of Genesis is denied, the narrative of creation is harmonized with the theory of evolution, the history of Adam and Eve, Paradise, the fall, etc., receives a new

meaning. Yet, we still speak of the Bible as given by organic inspiration and as the infallible rule of faith and life!

I do not accuse the writers of this basis for Christian Instruction of such intentions.

I repeat, I do not know the authors. Not a single one of them.

But as far as the terminology is concerned, they may have been Janssen-men.

And why not express ourselves definitely and in a much simpler form?

Why not simply say:

The Bible is from beginning to end the written Word of God, given by infallible inspiration. All school administration, instruction and discipline shall be based on it and permeated by its teaching, for we acknowledge that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...?

The second of the “specific” principles declared by the Union in its “Basic Principles of the Christian Schools in America,” read as follows:

“God is Triune (Matt. 3:16, 17). He is the Creator of all that is, Sustainer of all that exists, and the ultimate end of all things (Rom. 11:36). God who is transcendent (Isaiah 40) and immanent (Ps 139), is the absolute loving Sovereign over all (Dan.

4:31); men should seek to do His will on earth as it is done in heaven.”

This is indeed a weighty article. But another question is, whether it is specific.

It expresses many of the great dogmas of Christendom concerning God; and by doing so, it eliminates many erroneous, unbiblical, modern views of the Most High, such as Unitarianism, Pantheism, Deism, and, to a certain extent, at least, also Evolutionism. The article would fit nicely in a general, Christian Confession of faith.

But as an element in a specific declaration of principles upon which our Christian Schools are founded, it is too general and quite worthless.

There is nothing “specific in it, unless the Union means by specific the same as *generally* Christian.

For all creed can unite on this basis. Roman Catholics, Methodists, Lutherans, Baptists, Pre’s, Posts, A’s, -- all will be quite ready to subscribe to this article of faith.

It is, however, peculiar that the only class of believers that might have scruples to sign their name so to it are those of the Reformed type. He certainly would raise a question or two before he would express agreement with this declaration of faith concerning God. He would, undoubtedly, ask an explanation of the statement, that God

is the *loving* Sovereign over *all*. He would first inquire into the exact meaning of “all” in this connection. Does that mean “all men”? If not, what does it signify, If it does signify all men, is it the prose of the statement to convey the thought is it the purpose of the statement to convey the thought that the sovereignty of God is a sovereignty of love with relation to all men? If this is the meaning of the statement no true Reformed believer will subscribe to it; and I consider a “Christian School” that is based on such principles as these positively dangerous to the maintenance of our Reformed faith. Then, too, he would ask a question or two about the last statement: men should seek to do His will on earth as it is in heaven. Father general and vague, is it not? To be sure, no one will deny that statement as it is there, provided it merely intends to express that all men are responsible before God to live according to His will, to serve and glorify Him. But does it simply mean to convey this idea? Is it not strange that the terminology here is derived from the third petition of the Lord’s prayer? And, considered in that light, is it not, to say the least, somewhat suspicious that it is predicated of *men* in general, that they should seek to do God’s will in this world; that by doing so we will establish the kingdom of God in the world; and that this is

entirely possible because of man's inherent goodness?

Personally, I am afraid of these statements to which any modernist will gladly subscribe.

And why, we would ask the authors of these "specific" principles and the Union that adopted them, while speaking of God and declaring such important things of the doctrine concerning Him, did you not insert a word or two about the equally important truth of God's sovereign counsel, about the surely "specific" truth of election and reprobation? This truth is more closely related to "specific" Christian education, leads more directly to a sound basis for the maintenance of separate Christian Schools than any other truth declared in this second article. Should not a platform of principles, of "specific" principles of Christian education, show, at least, why it is the duty of Christian parents to maintain separate Christian Schools? Surely, the doctrine of the Trinity, of transcendence and immanence of God, of the loving sovereignty of God over all, -- these truths do not necessitate the maintenance of separate Christian Schools. Why, then, while declaring truths about God, did not the Union also declare our faith in the eternal counsel of God? And why did it choose to cover up this truth in ambiguous and very general and

vague statements, that may easily be interpreted as being contrary to our Reformed faith, such as the declaration that God is "the *loving Sovereign over all*" and that "*men should seek to do His will on earth as it is done in heaven*"?

It appears to me that in these declaration of "specific" principles there is a studied attempt to be as vague and general as possible. It seems as if the Union proceed from the notion that the existence of our Christian Schools has nothing to do with the more specific truths of sin and grace, of election and reprobation, of the fact that God's people are a peculiar people in the world, and that, after all, the existence of separate Christian Schools is entirely due to the fact that Christian parents cannot make a common cause with the world, especially in the sphere of education. The same impression we receive from an article written by the general secretary of the Union in *Christianity Today* of Dec. 1931. There we read for instance: "What we are really concerned with in education is the meaning and the purpose of that which has been created. This meaning and purpose has been unalterable fixed by the thought of God. The untutored child, now, is innocent of all divine intelligence in creation. It sees naught but things, objects in the rough. To give creation

its God-implied interpretation and have it serve its God intended purpose - - this is the business of all true education. To educate a child implies that we lead the child to think God's thoughts after Him. Education is an attempt to make the God-glorifying purpose of creation real to the thought life of the child. To crown God-consciousness with a godly life is education's goal. In and through the life of the child, God must become all in all. In so far as this situation obtains, in so far as the child is educated, in so far the man of God is 'thoroughly furnished unto all good works' (II Tim. 3:17). The divine intelligence and divine purpose which lies back of, and in, all which God has created is divinely good. In so far as education fails to interpret correctly divine thought in creation, in so far education is a mere pretense, a beating of the air."

And I add: in so far as Christian education is based upon such principles, in so far it is mere modernism.

For, we must not imagine that it is even Christianity to think the thoughts of God after Him as revealed in creation, neither that an education that aims at this as its goal will thoroughly furnish the man of God unto all good works. This is mere philosophy. The apostle Paul does not write to Timothy that by thinking the thoughts of God in creation after Him the man of God will be thoroughly

furnished unto all good works, neither do you find this in Scripture at all. What the apostle does write is: "*And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.* All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." This is quite different from the language of the secretary of the Union. Not to think the thoughts of God in creation after Him, but to know the truth of God in Christ Jesus from the holy scriptures and to receive grace to apply and live this truth of God, this is, for the man of God, to be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. And to instruct the child in this wisdom, the beginning of which is the fear of the Lord, that is education. Let us not assume an apologetic attitude with respect to our Christian Schools. They mean to be specifically Christian. Let us not make attempt to present our Christian Schools as generally acceptable to the whole world. They are not and never will be!

I offer to rewrite this second article in some such form as here follows:

"God, Who created and sustains all things and governs them according to His

sovereign counsel; Who is Triune and, as such, lives an eternal covenant-life of friendship in infinite perfection; from eternity chose and in time forms a people unto Him in Christ Jesus their Lord, that they might walk in all good works which He ordained for them and in all their life in the world should be to the praise of His glory, children of light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.”

Is this too “specific” to suit your taste?

Let me call your attention to one fact, at least: that it is thoroughly Scriptural.

However general and vague the “specific principles” may be in all other respects, in this one respect they are very specific, indeed, that the authors of this platform have taken pains to incorporate in them the errors and corruptions of the Reformed doctrine that they have adopted by the Christian Reformed Churches in 1924.

This is evident from the third of these declarations by the Union of Christian Schools in America:

“Man is fallen creature (Gen. 3). Though depraved, man is nevertheless an image bearer of God (Eph. 2:5), and through restraining grace he is able to do civil good (Rom. 2:14). Though lost in sin, man can be saved through faith in Christ (John 3:16); and

through restoring grace, in principle, is able to do spiritual good (I John 3:9).”

We must give the authors of this declaration credit, that they surely succeeded to crowd all the errors of the Three Points of 1924 into one brief article. This article makes it absolutely impossible for any true member of the Protestant Reformed Churches to be a member of the Union or to support its movement. It is also the death-blow to all specific Christian instruction. For, if a Protestant Reformed person would subscribe to this declaration, he would thereby most emphatically deny the confession of his own Church and disavow the very principles for the maintenance of which we were expelled from the fellowship of the Christian Reformed Churches. And, if this were true, if this second declaration were in harmony with Scripture and the Confessions, there would be absolutely no reason for the costly separate maintenance of our Christian Schools.

Let us pay a little closer attention to this travesty of Reformed truth.

The first part is an apology for the Reformed doctrine of total depravity: Man is a fallen creature. Though depraved, man is nevertheless an image-bearer of God, and through restraining grace is able to do civil good.

In the first place, let us notice, that in this article we are not specifically told *how* deeply man has fallen, *how* depraved he is. We are merely told that he is a fallen creature and it is conceded that he is depraved. This is all the more a striking weakness in the article, in the first place, because it hastens to add *in what sense he is not totally depraved*, and secondly, because the term “*totally depraved*” is so generally known and used in Reformed circles, that I am rather safe in concluding, that it is intentionally avoided here. Were the authors afraid? Were they ashamed of their own principles? Or do they not believe in total depravity? Or, perhaps, did they feel that the general public would immediately feel the contradiction, if they were speak of a totally depraved man that is still an image-bearer of God and is able to do good in civil matters?

But is the statement true?

Is it true, without further elucidation, that man is still an image-bearer of God?

I admit, of course, that man through the fall is not deprived of his rational and moral nature, and that one can see very plainly that according to his nature he *should be* God’s image-bearer. I can also admit, that it may be possible to call this rational-moral nature of man “the image of God in a wider sense,” although I maintain at the same time

that it is better not to use that terminology. It is better to distinguish between the image of God in a *formal* and *material* sense. By the former, I then mean that peculiar and distinct nature of man, according to which he is so constituted as to be able to bear God’s image, that is, knowledge of God, righteousness and holiness.

Now, the case is this, that man has retained a few remains of his natural gifts. He has not ceased to be the creature that *ought to be* the image-bearer of God. He is still a moral-rational creature, through wholly corrupt. He became no animal.

But he does not actually bear God’s name, but the very opposite, the image of the devil. It is not correct to say, that man lost God’s image only partly, while partly he retained it. Nowhere do you read such philosophy, either in Scripture or in the Reformed Confessions. It is not even sufficient to say that *he merely lost* the image of God; if I lose something I have nothing of that something left; the result is zero. It is correct to say, that the image of God in man is changed into its very opposite; image of God in man is changed into its very opposite; the result is not zero but *minus*. That operation of the image of God whereby man stood in righteousness, holiness, and knowledge of God was wholly perverted. He

did not merely lose his knowledge, but his knowledge became darkness; he did not merely lose his righteousness, but his righteousness changed into unrighteousness; after the fall he was not merely without holiness but he was filled with corruption and enmity of God. Because of the image of God in the purely formal sense, man is so constituted that he must be either righteous or perverse, holy or corrupt, a lover of the truth of God or a lover of the lie. He must be God's friend or His enemy. If you please, he must be God's image-bearer or the image-bearer of the devil. He cannot be a zero. He cannot be neutral. That is the truth. And it is the truth, too, that he absolutely lost all his knowledge and became wholly darkness; that he lost all his righteousness and became wholly perverse; that he lost all his holiness and became entirely corrupt. There are absolutely no remains of his knowledge, righteousness and holiness left in him. If the authors of this third specific principle are ashamed of the doctrine of total depravity, let them cease to pose as leaders of the Christian School movement. Why should they corrupt even that?

Yet they do.

When they say, that man is still an image-bearer of God, they mean, that there is something left in him, some knowledge,

some righteousness, some holiness, which, under the influence of the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit is preserved and is able to bear fruit in so-called civil good.

And this is contradictory to Scripture and to the Reformed Confessions.

This declaration is specific only in the sense that it embodies all the errors of the "three points" of 1924. It stands very specifically on the platform of the Christian Reformed Church. There is, in fact, no other Reformed Church, in our country or elsewhere, that adopted these principles. The declaration, therefore, is very narrow. It certainly excludes the possibility of any Protestant Reformed man's signing it.

This is not the place to show that this third declaration, as to its contents, is contrary to Scripture and in conflict with the Reformed Standards. I am trying to find an answer to the question, why the Christian School movement in our country is, as yet, a failure. And here is part of the answer: *the movement cannot stand on the basis that by the operation of a common grace upon a fallen creature that is still the image-bearer of God is able to do civil good.*

To do civil good can only mean, that the natural man is able to do good before God in every sphere of civil life, the home, the society, the state, the school. He is, therefore,

able to do good before God in the sphere of education, not merely *formally* as far as the methods of education are concerned, but also *materially* as far as the contents of the instruction are concerned, and this also in an *ethical, moral sense*. The conclusion is that public education is well able to prepare the child for a *good life in this world*.

But that is exactly what the school ought to do. It is not the purpose of the school to prepare the child for confession of faith in the Church, to enable him to appropriate consciously the blessing of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ, for this belongs specifically to the domain of the Church. But the purpose of the school is to prepare him for a life in the world that is good before God, to give him sound instruction in the various subjects he must know to assume his place in the different domains of this present life. Is it not the distinctive Reformed, Calvinistic conception of life, that it belongs to God in its entirety, that nothing may be excluded from the service of the living God, that His glory is the chief purpose of all? And is it not exactly on this basis that the need is felt for an education that may prepare the child for such a life?

But if the world by the power of common grace can perform this good too, and if, therefore, she can do good also in the

sphere of education, what is the use of separating from her in the maintenance of special schools to instruct our children and youth?

Perhaps you will answer that the Christian is able to do spiritual good, while the world is incapable of doing this. Very well: but if the Christian and the natural man have a common grace, by the power of which they can both do good in civil matters, also in education, then by all means let them unite their efforts to establish common schools on the basis of common grace, and let the Christian use his influence to make the good of this common education as good as possible!

But you refuse to reach this conclusion, which is so clearly inevitable? Nevertheless, I assure you, that this principle of common grace, wiping out the antithesis between the Christian and the world in regard to civil matters, will bear fruit, will obliterate the practical difference between Christian and public instruction, and thus will prove to be the real cause of the failure of the Christian School Movement.

That we dare no longer to be distinctive as a Reformed people in the declaration of the truth certainly implies that we do not want to be really distinctive in the practical life.

How the authors of the “Specific principles” loathe to be distinct in their declaration of the truth is clear, too, from the second half of this third statement: “Though lost in sin man can be saved through faith in Christ; and through restoring grace is able to do spiritual good.”

Notice: *man* has a *chance*, is *capable* of salvation!

What shall we build on this basis? An organization like the Salvation Army? Or shall we start a City Rescue Mission? It seems to be the only kind of institution one can build on it. Sure it is, that you cannot come to the conclusion that we must have distinctive and separate Christian Schools from the statement that man is capable of being saved. Let us start some movement to save souls; and let us preach that *man* has a chance to become regenerated “through a personal acceptance of Christ,” as the relation between regeneration and acceptance of Christ was explained by one of our Christian High School teaches recently (see *The Banner* of March 25).

Neither can you build a Christian School on the basis of the statement that “man through restoring grace is able to do spiritual good.” For, first, this possibility is left universal: *man* may come to the state in which he can do spiritual good. Secondly,

spiritual good, according to the interpretation of the “common grace” adherents is limited to such things as faith, hope, love, etc. What does this have to do with reading, writing, arithmetic, civics, history, physical geography, etc., etc.?

Why this lame, vague statement, that is far from the central line of truth as the poles are from the equator? Because we don’t want to be distinct!

For if we wanted to be distinct in principle and practice, this third declaration would have to be rewritten in some fashion as here follows:

From a fallen and wholly depraved human race and in the midst of a world that lieth in darkness, a crooked and perverse generation, God saves His elect, establishing His covenant with them and their children in the line of continued generation, forming them by His sovereign grace in Christ into a people of Himself, that they might be His friends, and living in every sphere of life from the principle of regeneration through faith, they should sow forth His praises and walk as children of light in the world.

(to be continued)

III. THE CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT: WHY A FAILURE? (3)

by

Herman Hoeksema

Beloved Saints of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois:

Over the years, many articles on Protestant Reformed Christian education have appeared in The Standard Bearer. It is our intention to publish certain of these articles by the Rev. Herman Hoeksema for the benefit of our own membership. We hope to publish selected articles in monthly installments. We suggest that you save the articles, as they come out, in a notebook, or folder, so that you keep them for future use.

We think that these writings, treating as they do of many aspects of the calling of Protestant Reformed people to provide Protestant Reformed Christian education for their children and youth, will not only be useful to promote Protestant Reformed secondary education, but also to remind us of basic truths that undergird our movement for primary education, indeed all of our instruction of the generations that follow us. Especially our younger married couples and our young people may profit from these writings, as to our distinctive calling in education.

Our hope and prayer are that the Lord will graciously bless these efforts, so that they produce increased understanding; healthy discussion; and renewed zeal regarding our covenant-calling: Instruct these children in the aforesaid doctrine to the utmost of your power (Baptism Formula).

The Board of the Association for
Protestant Reformed Secondary Education
P. O. Box 621
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A Word of Explanation

This issue concludes Herman Hoeksema's criticism of a platform of basic principles for the Christian Schools and, thus, of Christian education based on these principles.

Hoeksema shows that the "basic principles" are permeated with the theory of common grace – the belief that God, in His love for all men without exception, performs a gracious work upon the hearts of the unbelieving world, that restrains sin in them, so that they are not totally depraved, and that enables them to do good works, so that they develop a good life and culture, in history. He insists that this theory of common grace destroys genuinely Christian, i.e., Reformed, education. This is why the Christian School movement is a "failure."

In the place of principles reflections the theory of common grace, Hoeksema proposes a platform of basic principles for the Christian School that is founded on the confessionally Reformed doctrine of particular, sovereign grace. The entire list of these Reformed principles of education is given at the end of this installment.

- Rev. David Engelsma

III. THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL MOVEMENT: WHY A FAILURE? (3)

by

Herman Hoeksema

That the "Specific Principles" were composed under the influence of the spirit that became manifest in 1924 and that attempted to express itself in the fourth plank in the platform that was adopted by the Christian School Union in 1925:

"The world is steeped in sin. All aspects of life, individual and family, social and political, industrial and economic, even the animal world, nature and things

inanimate, show the mars and scars, the subversions and perversions of sin. (Romans 8:22). The virtue, order, and beauty which is still present in the world is a manifestation of God's goodness. (Matthew 5:45)."

The first part of this article sounds rather positive. It speaks of a world that is steeped in sin, of the mars and scars, the subversions and perversions of sin. It seems

to teach that, in all phases and aspects of life, sin becomes manifest and corrupts all things.

And yet, even this first part is ambiguous and not very specific. It is characterized by a certain verbosity that is deceiving. And after all, it leaves room for the second part of the statement, which speaks of the virtue, order and beauty that is still present in the world.

It is difficult to conceive how this last part could still speak of virtue in the world, of a virtue, that is a manifestation of the goodness of God, if the first part actually teaches what it appears to express at first sight. If the world is actually steeped in sin, if every aspect of the life of that world reveals the subversions and perversions of sin, how could anyone still find room for the assertion, that alongside of this perversity and subversion there is also virtue in the world?

What is virtue? It is moral goodness and excellency. It is integrity of heart and mind. It is purity of soul. It is the power, the ethical power, to perform deeds that are good, that can carry God's own approval. And the article quoted above simply states, without further proof, as a thing that is tacitly assumed, that is not to be contradicted, that is evident to everybody, that there is such virtue, such moral excellency and purity of soul, such integrity of heart and mind in the

world, that is otherwise steeped in sin. I say, that this is assumed tacitly and without further proof. For the authors of this platform certainly cannot have meant the reference from Matthew 5 to apply to this statement. It speaks of rain and sunshine upon the just and unjust promiscuously, but it does not mention one world of a certain virtue of the natural man, that is supposed to be a manifestation of the goodness of God. Nor do the authors adduce any other passage from Scripture as evidence of what they here state. Neither could they. For the Word of God never speaks of the virtue and moral excellency of the natural man, that is dead in sin and trespasses. On the contrary, it constantly teaches that he is wholly corrupt and perverse in all his ways. Nor could the authors appeal to the Reformed Confessions, for they do not teach that there is virtue in the world of sinful men, but that the natural man, by virtue of the remnants of natural light, can have some *regard* for virtue, which is quite different from the statement that he is actually virtuous. The authors, therefore, tacitly assume that there is such a virtue in the world. I suppose that they observe this and that it is a conclusion they draw from their own perception of the different aspects of life, even though the conclusion is quite in

conflict with the judgment of the Word of God.

Now, surely, the authors of this platform do not express themselves correctly, when they ascribe this virtue in the world to a certain goodness of God. It must be due to a goodness of man, a goodness that remained in him and that is preserved in him by the “restraining grace” that is mentioned in the preceding article of these “specific principles.” We may safely assume that this is just what the statement implies.

But, to return to our question, how is it conceivable that the authors could speak of a certain virtue in the world, in the light of the first part of the statement, in which they emphasize that the world is steeped in sin? The answer to this question is, undoubtedly, that also this first part to the article is not as specific as it might sound. In the first place, it may be pointed out, that the term “world” in the article is ambiguous. It is not quite clear, whether by it the authors mean “the evil world of ungodly men” or “the organic world of creation,” for in the rest of the article they speak of both, including animals, nature and inanimate things. In the second place, it cannot escape our attention, that the article merely states that the aspects of life *show* the subversions and perversions of sin. This may mean, and in this article it does mean, as is

evident from the last part of the article, that in every aspect of life, the family, society, the state, political, economic, industrial (and it may be regarded as strange that the authors did not add: *ecclesiastical*, for this phase is certainly not excluded as far as the miasms and scars, subversions and perversions of sin are concerned. It this omission intentional?), it reveals itself more or less that man is depraved.

Thus we can understand that in these same aspects of life, alongside of these manifestations of sin and depravity, there is still room left for a manifestation of virtue, of integrity of heart, of purity of soul, of moral excellence. In the world, in every phase and aspect of life, you behold manifestations of sin and of virtue side by side.

But, I ask, why Christian Schools if this is the truth?

Is the line of demarcation between God’s people and the world not entirely obliterated in this statement?

Is not this description of the ethical condition of “the world” exactly applicable to the Church as well? Again I ask: why did the authors omit the mention of the ecclesiastical aspect of life? We are not Roman Catholics are we, so that we divide the world into different aspects and call one “aspect” holy? And is it not true, that as the Christian lives

in these different aspects of life, the subversions and perversions of sin become manifest in all these phases as well as goodness and virtue that is due to the grace of God? And thus the distinction between God's people and the world is clearly denied. And with the denial of this and the world is clearly denied. And with the denial of this distinction there is no conceivable *raison d'être* (reason for existing – D.E.) for separate Christian Schools.

Hence, if there is any need of a separate article of this kind after what we suggested as a possible platform in the preceding, we suggest the following:

In the midst of and in distinction from the evil world that lieth in darkness and is perverse in all its ways because of sin, it is the calling of the people of God to live by grace from the principle of regeneration according to the will of God in every sphere of life, individual, family, social, industrial, political and ecclesiastical, so that they may be children of light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Hence, they insist that all education, that must prepare their children for such an all-sided Christian walk in the world, shall be adapted to this purpose.

The fifth of the "Specific Principles" adopted by the Union of Christ Schools

outline the purpose of Christian Education as follows:

"The all-embracing objective of the school is to promote the glory of our covenant God: (a) by seeking in humble dependence upon God to equip the pupil for his supreme task, namely, to realize himself as God's image-bearer (2 Tim. 3:17); and (b) by seeking in that same dependence upon God to re-constitute the sin-perverted world by realizing God's Kingdom in all spheres and phases of life (Matt. 6:33). This is possible at least in principle through Christ, who is not only the Creator (as the Logos) but also the re-creator (John 1)."

With all respect for the ability of the authors of these specific principles (for, though I know not who they are, I presume that they were leaders, men of outstanding ability in the Christian School Movement), I nevertheless, maintain, that it would be difficult to compose anything more bombastic than this fifth declaration. It is characterized by high-sounding phraseology that, however, are lacking of specific content altogether. I am confident that the authors themselves could not possibly define what exactly they mean by their statement. Still less, I think, would it be possible for them to tell us how a school could attain to the ideal and reach the purpose, or even approximate

it, that is here set forth as the objective of Christian education. Enable the pupil to realize himself as God's image-bearer? Re-constitute a sin-perverted world? Realize the Kingdom of God in all spheres and phases of life? If these phases mean what they express, if they are not mere hollow sounds, how could that which is here proposed possibly be realized? What is done by the Christian School as it actually exists today to approximate this objective? Or, what is even proposed as the way of its approximation?

But let me call your attention to some of the high phrases here used. Let me examine them with you to see what meaning they must convey and how they err.

"The all-embracing objective of the school is to promote the glory of our covenant God."

This may pass. In Calvinistic circles we have heard so often that the purpose of all things is the glory of God, that the expression has become hackneyed. It stands for a fundamental truth, no doubt, though by its frequent use, and that without further definition, it has developed a somewhat hollow sound. But it cannot be gainsaid that the purpose of all things, hence, also of the Christian School is the glory of God. Besides, in what follows the authors specify this general statement and inform us about

the specific way in which the school may "promote" the glory of God.

This the school must do, first of all, by seeking to equip the pupil for his supreme task, and that supreme task is *that he realize himself as image-bearer of God.*

Now, it is not at all clear, what the authors mean by this strange expression, nor is it clear what the school must do to equip the pupil for this task.

Do the authors here refer to the regenerated covenant-child, in whom the image of God has been restored by grace? Or do they have in mind any pupil, natural or spiritual, and must the school make of all the children men that realize themselves as image-bearers of God? If I consider the expression in the light of the context, I come to the conclusion that the latter is meant, though I hardly dare to believe this. The fact is, that the only time the expression "image-bearer of God" is used in these "specific principles" it is applied to fallen man! We read it in the third of these declarations: "Though depraved, man is nevertheless an image-bearer of God! But if this should be the actual meaning of the authors, I maintain (1) That the task is an impossible one, for the natural man has not the image of God. (2) That this whole conception is contrary both to Scripture and to our Reformed

Confessions. (3) That the reference to II Tim. 3:17 certainly is a mistake, for it speaks of “the man of God” and not of any man. If this is not the meaning which the authors intended to convey, if they should have in mind God’s covenant child, I call their attention (1) To the fact, that in all these “specific principles” they have not been specific enough to even speak of the covenant-children. (2) That the only other time they speak of “image-bearer of God,” they apply the expression to the natural man. (3) So that, if they do not mean the natural man here, if they do not intend to express that the Christian School exists for the purpose of causing any pupil to realize the image of God, they and their “specific principles” are to blame for the fact that one is hopelessly incapable of find any “specific” meaning in their declarations.

But the more I examine these “specific principles” the more firmly I become convinced that the authors very really intended to convey the idea that the Christian School has its objective in this, that it equip all the pupils (whether they be covenant-children or children of the world, this makes absolutely no difference, because “man, though depraved, is nevertheless a image-bearer of God”) to realize themselves as God’s image-bearer!

And what, then, may it mean, that one realize himself as an image-bearer of God? A strange expression, indeed! It is neither Scriptural nor Reformed. It is rather philosophical. Literally it must, no doubt, mean that one must make himself real as God’s image-bearer. And I suppose that that the real intention of the authors is to say, that the pupil must learn to manifest himself in the world as such an image-bearer. But how?

The authors stated in the third declaration that man, though depraved, is, nevertheless, an image-bearer of God, and that, therefore, by restraining grace he is able to do civil good. The authors, therefore, proceed from these principles: (1) The natural man is still an image-bearer of God. (2) As such he is able to do civil good. (3) This doing of civil good is the self-realization of the natural man as an image-bearer of God!

The first part of the fifth of the “Specific Principles,” which pretends to state the objective of the Christian School, is bad enough. The school must equip the pupil for this supreme task, to realize himself as the image-bearer of God! For, in the light of all that precedes in these principles, this can only mean that the Christian School must enable the pupil to do civil good!

In the light of such statements one can understand the language often heard from

would-be leaders of the Christian School Movement, whenever they are called upon to make a speech in public, either at graduation exercises or at other public occasions connected with the Christian School, and which is chiefly characterized by its lack of all specifically Reformed, or even Christian sound.

But the statement, that the school must seek to equip the pupil for his supreme task, namely, to realize himself as the image-bearer of God, certainly cannot rest on the basis of the text given as reference in this connection, II Tim. 3:17: "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." For, this text knows nothing of the image of God in all men, of which the "Specific Principles" speak. It speaks of the man of God, the regenerated and sanctified Christian. Neither does this text know anything of the supreme task of this man of God as consisting in this that he realize himself as God's image-bearer. It merely holds before him as the purpose whereunto God has called him, that he must be perfect in the midst of the world, without blame and rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. And for this end the man of God must have Scripture, the inspired Word of God, as a constant guide and light in the darkness, for it is profitable for doctrine,

for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

And the second part of this fifth "specific" principle is equally bad and corrupt: "by seeking I that same dependence upon God to re-constitute the sin-perverted world by realizing God's Kingdom in all spheres and phases of life."

Unless the language of this statement is incorrect, it expresses that this is the objective of the Christian School. I suppose, however, that the authors did not exactly express their meaning. No doubt, they intended to declare that the school must seek to equip the pupil for this task of reconstituting a sin-perverted world by realizing God's Kingdom in all spheres of life.

But this makes very little difference.

The point is that the authors of the principles, in holding this ideal before us, as the objective of the Christian School, are shooting at the moon and the moon placidly smiles back, quite undisturbed by the ridiculous attempt. The fact is, too, that, nevertheless, they make an impression by this flighty language (the proud Pelagianism of which is somewhat covered up by the deceiving "in humble dependence upon God") that it is altogether within the domain of human power to "re-constitute a sin-

perverted world and to realize the Kingdom of God in all spheres and phases of life.” The language of this fifth principle one may hear frequently in our day. And, finally, the fact is, too, that such lofty and flighty language about high ideals makes the very devil laugh, for he realizes quite well, how harmless a pastime it is for the Christian School thus to direct its missiles at the moon.

Let us take this language seriously for a moment and analyze it.

What is the “sin-perverted world”?

In its connection, the phrase here must mean the world of ungodly men, as they live out their life of sin in every sphere, and pervert all things, the world as living from the principle of sin, it corrupts every phases of life, -- the family, the state, society, business, industry, science and art. Such is the “sin-perverted world.”

To re-constitute cannot mean anything else than to set up again, to put on a new basis, to establish on a new and better foundation. It signifies, therefore, so to reform the whole ungodly world, that it no more lives from the principles of sin, but from a new principles, in all spheres and domains of life.

From what principle you ask?

The authors of this “specific principle” are ready with their answer: we

must realize the Kingdom of God in all spheres of life!

Now, this “reconstituting of the sin-perverted world,” this realization of the Kingdom of God in the world, must mean either of two things: that it is the objective of the Christian School to convert all, or the great majority of ungodly men into citizens of the Kingdom of God; or that it aims at realizing the Kingdom of God and reconstituting a sin-perverted world by way of social reform. In the first instance this “specific principle” is most thoroughly Pelagian. If the authors had in mind the second possibility, which is far more probable (if, at least, they had anything definite in mind at all), they here proclaim nothing but the modern gospel of social Christianity.

And in both cases they are shooting at the moon. For, neither in the one way, nor in the other, can man, can a group of men, can the Christian School or, for that matter, the whole Christian Church, reconstitute the sin-perverted world or realize the Kingdom of God on earth!

Nor does Scripture ever speak such language. It does, indeed, admonish the children of God, that they shall be without rebuke and blameless in the midst of the world, that they shall walk worthy of the

vocation wherewith they are called, that they shall walk as children of light in darkness, that they shall be witnesses of God and His Christ and His covenant in the world, that for this they shall be willing to suffer with Christ and consider it grace that they may believe in Him and suffer with Him. But nowhere does it assign to the people of God the task of reconstituting a sin-perverted world and of realizing the Kingdom of God on earth!

That is *God's* work, not ours.

That is not, that cannot be, and that may no longer be presented as if it could possibly be, the objective of the Christian School.

A school that is inculcating these principles is simply instilling the principles of modernism into the hearts and minds of its pupils. And this is all the more dangerous because it is done in the name of Christianity, if not of Calvinism.

Instead of this fifth declaration I offer the following:

It is the objective of the Christian School to furnish the pupil with an education which in all its branches is rooted in the principle of the fear of god as the beginning of wisdom; and thus to co-labor, in its own proper domain, alongside of and in distinction from the home and the church, to equip the pupil with that knowledge and

wisdom which is necessary in order that he may be able to walk in the midst of the world worthy of the vocation wherewith God calls His people, and that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

In the last part of the fifth of the “specific principles,” the authors declare why and how it is possible for man to realize himself as the image-bearer of God to reconstitute the sin-perverted world into the Kingdom of God. It reads as follows: “This is possible, at least in principle, through Christ, who is not only the Creator (as the Logos), but also the recreator.”

I want to call attention to this, apparently so profound language, only in passing. Its nonsense is glaringly apparent. It is not clear whether the authors intended, in this last sentence, to adduce two separate grounds, one for each statement made in the fifth “specific principle,” or whether the whole sentence is to be understood as one double ground for the possibility of both preceding statements. In the first instance their meaning is, that it is left in him after the fall and by common grace, through Christ as the Creator or Logos; while it is possible to reconstitute the sin-perverted world through Christ as the re-creator. In the second instance, they intend to say that both are

possible for both reasons. But whatever they intend to declare, the nonsense of it remains and is very apparent. For, no more than it is possible for man to realize the image of God through the Logos, or to constitute or establish the world through the Creator, no more is it possible for him to realize the image of God through Christ, or to re-establish the world through the re-creator. *We* do not realize the image of God, neither do *we* constitute, or re-constitute, the world. Both are absolutely the work of God through Christ. The authors here are not only shooting at the moon, but they are also flattering themselves, that it is possible to hit it.

But we must still call attention to the closing paragraph of these “specific principles.” It reads as follows: “In determining the Course of Study to be offered, in preparing the lesson material, in giving the daily instruction, the above purpose should be consciously present as the all-embracing objective. To accomplish this great task, the teach must have the fear of God in his heart and the determination to live it out in his profession; and he must utilize to the full whatever light God’s Special Revelation sheds upon the various realms of human knowledge.”

The last part of this paragraph, describing the requisite qualifications of the teacher, does, indeed, point to something very desirable, that, namely, the teacher must have the fear of God in his heart and the determination to live it out in his profession. But, in the first place, it may be doubted, however desirable it may be, however necessary such spiritual qualifications may be from the viewpoint of the teacher, whether it is strictly necessary in order to carry out the Course of Study. The authors become somewhat pietistic in this paragraph. But, in the second place, this circumscription of the qualifications of the teacher cannot possibly serve as a working-principle for the School boards in the appointment of teachers. If I may apply an old phrase, well-known in ecclesiastical spheres, to the members of school-boards: *de intimis no njudicant curatores scholae grammaticae* (i.e., school boards do not judge the secret things of the heart – D. E.). It is quite impossible for members of the school-boards, when they confront the task of appointing teachers, to determine whether or not a certain applicant has the fear of God in his heart and the determination to live it out in his profession.

I, therefore, suggest something of a more objective nature in the following paragraph:

In determining the Course of Study of the Christian School the principles heretofore set forth should be adopted as a basis for the entire curriculum. And of the teaches, upon whom rests the responsible task of carrying out this Course of Study, it shall be required, that he present a testimonial from a consistory of a Reformed Church and a diploma from a Reformed Normal School (i.e., a Reformed college for training teaches - - D. E.). It shall also be required of him that he express full and whole-hearted agreement with the basic principles heretofore set forth and that he declare his purpose to make of the teaching-profession no stepping-stone, but his life-task.

In closing this series of articles let me present now the entire platform of principles as we suggested that it should be rewritten:

SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES

1. The Bible is from the beginning to end the written Word of God, given by infallible inspiration. All school administration, instruction, and discipline shall be based on it and permeated by its teaching, for we acknowledge that

the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.

2. God, Who created and sustains all things and governs them according to His sovereign counsel, who is Triune and, as such, lives an eternal covenant-life of friendship in infinite perfection, from eternity chose, and in time forms, a people unto Himself, to stand in covenant-relationship unto Him in Christ Jesus their Lord, that they might walk in all good works which He ordained for them and in all their life in the world should be to the praise of His glory, children of light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.
3. From a fallen and wholly depraved human race, and in the midst of a world that lieth in darkness, a crooked and perverse generation, God saves His elect, establishing His covenant with them and their children in the line of continued generations, forming them by His sovereign grace in Christ into a people of Himself, that they might be His friends, and, living in every sphere of life

from the principle of regeneration through faith, they should show forth His praises and walk as children of light in the world.

4. In the midst of and in distinction from the evil world that lieth in darkness and is perverse in all its ways because of sin, it is the calling of the people of God to live by grace from the principle of regeneration according to the will of God in every sphere of life, -- individual, family, social, industrial, political and ecclesiastical so that they may be children of light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Hence, they insist that all education, that must prepare their children for such an all-sided Christian walk in the world, shall be adopted to this purpose.
5. It is the objective of the Christian School to furnish the pupil with an education which in all its branches is rooted in the principle of the fear of god as the beginning of wisdom; and thus to co-labor, in its own proper domain, alongside of and in distinction from the home and the church, to

equip the pupil with that knowledge and wisdom which is necessary in order that he may be able to walk in the midst of the world worthy of the vocation wherewith God calls His people, and that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

6. *In determining the Course of Study of the Christian School the principles heretofore set forth should be adopted as a basis for the entire curriculum. And of the teaches, upon whom rests the responsible task of carrying out this Course of Study, it shall be required, that he present a testimonial from a consistory of a Reformed Church and a diploma from a Reformed Normal School. It shall also be required of him that he express full and whole-hearted agreement with the basic principles heretofore set forth and that he declare his purpose to make of the teaching-profession no stepping-stone, but his life-task.*

IV. AS TO OUR MORAL OBLIGATION

by

Herman Hoeksema

Beloved Saints of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois:

Over the years, many articles on Protestant Reformed Christian education have appeared in The Standard Bearer. It is our intention to publish certain of these articles by the Rev. Herman Hoeksema for the benefit of our own membership. We hope to publish selected articles in monthly installments. We suggest that you save the articles, as they come out, in a notebook, or folder, so that you keep them for future use.

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Our hope and prayer are that the Lord will graciously bless these efforts, so that they produce increased understanding; healthy discussion; and renewed zeal regarding our covenant-calling: Instruct these children in the aforesaid doctrine to the utmost of your power (Baptism Formula).

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Protestant Reformed Secondary Education
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A Word of Explanation

In a series of editorials, published in The Standard Bearer in 1944, Herman Hoeksema refuted an argument against the establishment of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools that he described as follows: “We have no moral right to organize our own school movement and to establish our own schools as Protestant Reformed people, until we have done our utmost, and exhausted every means at our command, to improve the existing schools.” If the refutation of this argument were the only benefit of these articles, there would be no purpose in reprinting the articles, for this argument is not found among us.

But these articles will reward our reading of them in other ways. They caution us against a foolish, rash forcing of our own schools, when they are not possible. They encourage us to use, and co-operate in, the best Christian schools available to us, when our own are impossible. And they call us to our covenant obligation, to strive to have Protestant Reformed Christian Schools, to the utmost of our power, not so much because of the evils in the existing schools, but because of the distinctive doctrine of the Protestant Reformed churches - - doctrine that bears powerfully on the Christian education of our children. We do well to listen to Hoeksema, in these articles.

- Rev. David Engelsma

IV. AS TO OUR MORAL OBLIGATION

By

Herman Hoeksema

Of all the arguments and would-be arguments the opponents of the movement for schools of our own wherever possible, adduce for their position, that concerning the moral obligation to the existing schools is the weakest of all.

As far as I can see, it is in this argument that they reveal that they are not interested in school education of our

children along strictly Protestant Reformed lines. They do not admit the necessity of Protestant Reformed instruction also in the schools. They cannot see that the school has anything to do with Protestant Reformed principles. That the principles adopted by the Christina Reformed Churches, because of which adoption and consequent action against us we have become separated, are so

serious that they affect the basis of education, they do not see. Whatever may separate us as churches, in the sphere of education we may unit again, which means that we can safely submit our children to the influence of a Christian Reformed education in the schools.

That the opposing brethren are not Protestant Reformed, I do not state here at all.

That they are not interested in strictly Protestant Reformed instruction for our children and youth also in and through the medium of the school, and that, therefore, they do not see the seriousness of the difference and separation caused by the "Three Points" with respect to education, - this, as I see it, is the clear implication of their argument of our moral obligation to the existing schools.

Consider the argument for a moment.

It runs as follows: *We have no moral right to organize our own school movement and to establish our own school as Protestant Reformed people, until we have done our utmost, and exhausted every means at our command, to improve the existing schools.*

According to this argument, let it be noted, we not only have a moral obligation to the existing Christian schools, but this

obligation makes it impossible for us in the meantime to establish our own schools, or even to make preparations for the establishment of our own schools. Until the situation for the establishment of our own schools. Until the situation has proved to be absolutely hopeless, we must continue to cooperate, and refrain from organizing our own school societies. And until the hopelessness of the attempt has become quite plain, our children must continue to attend the existing schools.

Now, I deny this entire argument.

I deny that, apart from the question whether the existing schools can be improved or not, a Protestant Reformed group of people does not have the moral right to establish schools of their own, or that there can possibly rest upon them any moral obligation to the existing schools that must restrain them from organizing their own movement.

Why may not the Protestant Reformed people, pray, have their own system of education from top to bottom, something for which the undersigned has argued almost from the very beginning of our separate existence as churches?

What moral obligation to any existing schools could restrain them from striving for this idea, at least?

But to this I hope to come back later.

The point I want to make now is that, apart from all other considerations, the above argument of the opponents of the movement to establish schools of our own wherever possible tacitly denies that our Protestant Reformed principles have any real significance for school education, and proceeds on the assumption that a Protestant Reformed school education is not necessary.

Cooperation as long as possible, is their slogan.

But what does this cooperation mean, as far as we, Protestant Reformed people, are concerned?

It means that we may, perhaps, protest against certain evils found in the existing schools, such as the singing of Arminian hymns, the introduction of plays and drama, the teaching of evolutionistic conceptions, or of grossly teaching of evolutionistic conceptions, or of grossly Arminian tenets, encouragement of movie attendance, etc. Perhaps, if we are strong enough, we may even demand that the doctrine of common grace shall not be taught or mentioned in the particular school with which we cooperate and to which our children are sent. We may request that the "Three Points" shall be carefully avoided.

But granted that all this might be done, and might be done successfully, which in by far the majority of cases would be impossible, this would surely be the limit of the influence we might exert on the existing schools.

It is plain that we could not possibly ask that the instruction in the existing schools shall follow Protestant Reformed lines.

And this is impossible, not merely because we are usually but few in number, and must suffer defeat if the matter were brought to a vote, but because we have no right to make such demand. It would be contrary to the idea of cooperation.

This is quite important.

It means not only that in Biblical instruction all questions concerning particular and common grace, concerning total depravity and the ability or inability of man to do any good before God, must be carefully avoided; but it also implies that the same attitude of neutrality be assumed in the instruction in many other subjects that pertain to our view of the world, history, civil government, the unions, and other matters.

It should be quite plain from all this, that the opponents of the movement to establish schools of our own, by their

argument as to our moral obligation to cooperate with the existing schools, do not care for, are not interested in, and do not see the need of specific Protestant Reformed education for our children.

This is the very least that can be said.

At the very best they consider the schools institutions that may be satisfied with some general Christian instruction.

As soon as we are not satisfied with this, but look upon the school as a matter of specific principle, the sole conclusion anyone can possibly draw is that we must establish our own schools.

The contention of those that oppose the movement to establish our own schools is that such a movement is morally wrong, as long as we have not done all that is in our power to keep and support and improve the existing schools. In other words, they claim that we are morally obliged: 1. To join an existing school society, and to support an existing Christian school, wherever there is one; 2. To remain member of that society, and continue to support that existing school, even in cases where it is possible and preferable to organize a separate society; 3. To continue to send our children to that school, even though we know that they do not receive the education they should receive, and though it is possible to provide

for them the education that is in harmony with our own convictions.

Now, I have never read or heard any sound argument in support of this contention. As far as I know it is a mere contention. We are simply told that this is our moral obligation, but on what basis this obligation rests, by what principles it is motivated, or by what moral standard or rules it is governed, has never been demonstrated. And I am afraid that, if the brethren that make this contention, would attempt to prove it, they would discover that this would be quite impossible.

That a man has a moral obligation in respect to a society of which he is a member, and as long as he is a member of it, we all grant. His obligation rests in his membership. But that he must remain a member of such a society, even if he can serve more effectively the *cause* represented by that society by establishing a separate society, - that would seem incapable of being proved. And we deny it most emphatically.

That Christian parents are morally obligated to provide a Christian school education for their children, and, therefore, to work to the utmost of their power for the cause of Christian instruction, may be taken for granted among us. But that parents are

morally obliged to support and further this cause only through concrete, existing societies and schools, even when they can more effectively advance this cause by organizing their own schools, - that has never been demonstrated and is incapable of proof.

Suppose that in a certain place the only existing school was Lutheran. And suppose that in the same place there were a small number of Reformed families, too small to establish their own Christian school. Suppose further for the time being these Reformed parents sent their children to this Lutheran school, in order to provide for them a Christian education "to the utmost of their power." And, finally, suppose that this number of Reformed families gradually increased, and became strong enough to organize their own society. Would they now be morally obliged to continue to send their children to the Lutheran school, and make the best of it?

You say, perhaps, that this is different, because we have no parochial or denomination, but free Christian schools.

Nominally, this is true; actually however, the existing schools are Christian Reformed, even though they are supported by societies. They are entirely controlled by the Christian Reformed Church, and based

on Christian Reformed principles. Where do the Protestant Reformed people have any influence, except in as far as they can let their voice be heard in a few local societies? The Union of Christian Schools is wholly controlled by Christian Reformed leaders; the Christian Home and School Magazine is a Christian Reformed publication; and, last but not least, the normal training of prospective teaches is furnished by a department of Calvin, and is, therefore, officially under the control of the Christian Reformed Church. And what is a school really but a staff of teaches?

Do not misunderstand me. I do not blame the Christian Reformed people for making their school education conform to their own convictions. I merely state a fact, and a very patent one. And I claim that their principles are not ours, and that, although I believe that our parents should send their children to the existing Christian schools where there is not other possibility, rather than send them to the public schools, they cannot possibly have the moral obligation to do so wherever they are strong enough to establish their own schools, and to educate their children in harmony with their own and to educate their children in harmony with their own convictions. On the contrary, I

maintain that it is their sacred obligation to take the latter course, wherever possible.

And I am sure that no Christian Reformed man or group can blame us for taking this course.

We do not even have to point to certain evils existing in the Christian schools as we know them, as if they must be the reason why we should organize our own movement. This has been done too much, I think, with the result that the main issue has been lost sight of. If the situation were such that we could work on a common basis, and were fundamentally agreed as to what our children should be taught, but that, in spite of this fundamental agreement that there were certain evils to be fought and removed, I would agree that we must attempt to our utmost to remove these evils.

But this is not the case.

There is a fundamental difference between the Christian Reformed and the Protestant Reformed Churches since 1924; and this fundamental difference, as officially expressed in the "Three Points," profoundly affects the education in the schools. And this is the reason why we should have our own schools wherever possible, in order that our children may be "brought up in the aforesaid doctrine," and that we may case of

help them to be brought up in that doctrine to the utmost of our power.

But let us try to analyze this question of our moral obligation a little more in detail.

It may not be superfluous, first of all, to ask the general question: what is meant by moral obligation, and what is our moral obligation in regard to the education of our children in the schools?

Surely, it must be agreed that moral obligation consists in obedience to the will of God both in respect to our relation to Him, and to our relation to our fellowmen. If one talks to me about my moral obligation in a certain case, he must be able to point out to me that what he considers my moral obligation is the will of God. If he cannot do this, he should refrain from insisting on it.

Now, with respect to education, what is the primary relation in which the will of God must be known and obeyed, and concerning which we may, therefore, speak of moral obligation?

The answer is plain: *it is the relation of parents to their children.*

Education is the duty of parents.

On this we are all agreed.

And the moral obligation of the parents is rather clearly expressed in Deut.

6:4-7: “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart: 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.”

One dare not say that this injunction was given to Israel of the old dispensation, and that it was concerned with the Old Testament law.

For the very form of this injunction is such that it applies to the people of God of all times. Still the Lord our God is one Lord, and still it is our “part” of the covenant of God to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our mind, and with all our soul, and with all our power. And, therefore, it is still our moral obligation as parents to teach these words to our children, when we sit in our house, or walk by the way, when we lie down, and when we rise up.

Besides, this is the same injunction as comes to parents in the New Testament: “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Ephesians 6:4.

This is the moral obligation of which we are reminded in the Form for the

Administration of Baptism. There, too, we are reminded that our “part” in the covenant is, “that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost; that we trust in him, and love him with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life.”

And we are made to assume this moral obligation with respect to the education of our children, when we are required to answer affirmatively two questions. The first is this: “Whether you acknowledge the doctrine which is contained in the Old and New Testament, and in the articles of the Christian faith, and which is taught here in this Christian School, to be the true and perfect doctrine of salvation?” And the second follows: “Whether you promise and intend to see these children, when come to the years of discretion, instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of your power?”

Don’t overlook that little but significant phrase: “here in this Christian Church,” in the first of these two questions. Our fathers inserted that phrase quite intentionally. In fact, in the past there has been a rather heated controversy about these words, and repeated attempts were made,

either to eliminate them, or to ascribe to them a meaning different from their intended significance. But in spite of it all they were retained.

And they mean just what they state.

When in a Protestant Reformed Church a child is baptized, the whole congregation confesses, and the parents of the children that are presented for baptism expressly state, that they believe the doctrine of the Protestant Reformed Churches to be the true and perfect doctrine of salvation.

And it is in that connection that the second of these two questions must be read: the parents, in answering this question affirmatively, promise that they will bring up their children in the “aforesaid,” that is, in the Protestant Reformed, doctrine, and that they will help or cause them to be instructed in that doctrine to the utmost of their power!

This, then, is our primary and most sacred moral obligation with respect to the education of our children.

On this we are all agreed.

And as we speak of our moral obligation to the existing schools, this primary and basic obligation must constantly be borne in mind.

I take it for granted that all our readers, even those that thus far have

revealed little or no enthusiasm for a school of our own, and among these even those who definitely opposed it especially by “moral obligation” argument, will have to agree with me, that our obligation to the existing schools and school societies can be none other than, and is rooted in, the obligation of the parents with regard to the education of their children.

These school societies are, with respect to the instruction of our children, only a means to an end.

If parents were in a position to give their children all the education they need, personally at home there would be no need of these societies. In fact, in that case it would be their sacred calling to provide such instruction themselves. Apart from the Church to which the ministry of the Word is entrusted, they are the only responsible party before God with respect to this instruction.

Or even, if all could afford to employ a private tutor to educate their children, the school society might be discarded.

However, this is impossible.

Parents lack the time and ability to give their children a complete education according to the requirements and demands of modern life. And they lack the means to employ private teaches. Hence, they band together, organize societies, in order that

together and with united efforts they may accomplish what individually they are not able to do. And these societies establish schools, determine the character of the education their children shall receive, and employ the teaches that shall furnish such education as the parents determine that their children shall have.

It should be plain then, that the moral obligation of these societies can be none other than that of the parents individually.

Nor can the obligation of the parent to the society of which he is a member be any other than to cooperate and put forth all his efforts to fulfill his obligation with respect to the education of his children.

That obligation, as we have seen, is that he shall instruct them “in the aforesaid” doctrine to “the utmost of his power,” or “help or cause them to be instructed there.”

This latter phrase includes the instruction they receive in the school.

This part of the obligation he fulfills through the means of the school society.

For the parent that is Protestant Reformed, this obligation, which he solemnly and very definitely assumes by covenant-vow before God and the Church, means that he will work to the utmost of his power, also through the school society, to provide for his children an education that is

in harmony with Protestant Reformed doctrines and principles.

It follows, then, that this is his moral obligation with respect to the society of which he is a member.

He must seek the good of that society.

That surely is his moral obligation.

And because the society exists for the purpose of so serious a matter as the education of covenant children, he certainly has the moral obligation to seek the very best of it.

Hence, he must work to the utmost of his power to make the society an efficient means unto the end of providing a Protestant Reformed education for his children and the children of his fellow members.

Other obligations he may have toward the society and toward the school certainly follow from and are subservient to this one fundamental obligation. With a view to this great calling he pays his dues and school tuition, he takes part in the activities of the society, watches over the school and over the appointment of teaches.

All his effort must be directed to that one end: that the society may be a means to help him to instruct his children in “the aforesaid doctrine to the utmost of his power.”

Is it possible for the Protestant Reformed parent to do this through the existing schools and school – societies?

Yes, if there is no opportunity for him to send his children to a school of Protestant Reformed parents, or to organize a society for the establishment of such a school. In that case he meets his assumed obligation with a view to the education of his children in the “aforesaid doctrine” *to the utmost of his power*, by sending his children to one of the existing Christian schools, or to a Lutheran school, if necessary, to the best school he can find, and by supplementing and correcting such instruction at home in as far as it may be necessary.

No parent dare send his children to the public school on the pretext that the existing schools are not Protestant Reformed.

And in that case he has the moral obligation to work to the utmost of his power for the good of the society to which he belongs, and of the school to which he sends his children. And as far as cooperation on the basis of the constitution of such a society permits him, he will try to make that society and school a means to instruct his children according to Protestant Reformed principles.

But the above question must be answered with an unqualified *No* if he is strong enough, has the means and the opportunity, to establish a school of his own choice in cooperation with other Protestant Reformed parents.

For in that case he does not “help or cause them to be instructed in the aforesaid doctrine *to the utmost of his power*”.

He is satisfied with the line of least resistance.

For he knows very well that, whatever efforts he may put forth *to improve* the school to which he sends his children, it is a foregone conclusion that he can never make it the means to instruct his children according to the Protestant Reformed conception of the truth.

He may remove certain evils, protest against the presentation of all kinds of drama and moving pictures in the schools, against the singing of a few Arminian hymns, or even against the direct inculcation of the theory of common grace, perhaps; but he will never be able to make the school a means for the instruction of the children along Protestant Reformed lines.

This is impossible, first of all, because his influence is very limited. The Christian Reformed parents control the existing schools. They permit the Protestant

Reformed parent to send his children to their schools, and to support their cause financially; but for the rest they pay very little attention to him as soon as he insists on positive, Reformed principles. This I could easily prove, if it should be required.

But this is impossible, especially, because of the very principle of cooperation. By joining an existing society he waives the right to insist on positive, Protestant Reformed education. He has no right to demand such education of the existing schools.

And if he had the right, it would be physically impossible to realize it, even in any local school where he might be represented in substantial numbers of members, for the simple reason that the whole school system, as to teachers, books, propaganda, etc. is under Christian Reformed control.

Nor can an instance be mentioned where this was ever attempted even by those who insist that it is our moral obligation to cooperate with the existing schools as long as possible.

Hence, I maintain, that in such cases, i.e., wherever there are a sufficient number of Protestant Reformed parents, and they have the means and power, their sacred moral obligation with respect to the existing

societies is to leave them, and to establish societies and schools of their own, where they may instruct their children "in the aforesaid doctrine to the utmost of their power."

And why, pray, should they not do this?

There is nothing separatistic in a movement to establish our own school.

Is not, after all, a Christian school strictly local affair? Does not each school society exist by itself? It is true that there is a Union of Christian Schools, and that many local schools, perhaps most of them, are members of this union. But this does not bring all the schools under one board, or unite them into one body. Each society has authority in its own domain and is strictly autonomous. The Christian school is a local matter.

But if this is so, what would be more natural, in places where there are a sufficient number of Protestant Reformed parents, than to band together, organize their own local society, and establish their own local schools, where their children can be instructed along Protestant Reformed lines?

There is then, absolutely no reason why, for instance, in a city like Grand Rapids, where some six hundred families are

found belonging to the four Protestant Reformed Churches in that city, we should not have two or three schools of our own.

By establishing such schools we would simply fulfill our obligation before God.

We would only be doing what the Christian Reformed people have done before us.

We would do the very same thing the Reformed (Gereformeerde) people in the Netherlands did years ago, when they separated from the existing Christian school, and established schools of their own.

We would do no harm to the existing schools in any sense. They can very well get along without us, as far as the financial support of their school is concerned.

And we could be of real influence by doing so.

As matters stand now, we have no influence at all. We are divided. We are scattered over several societies and schools. We have no power. We cannot let our voices be heard. We develop nothing. And we deliver our children to Christian Reformed schools and teachers to instruct them according to their view.

If, however, we would unite as one people, loving the cause of definite Christian instruction according to “the aforesaid

doctrine”, and strive for the realization of the ideal to establish and complete our system of education, higher and lower, we could, with God’ blessing, be a power for good even for the existing schools and for the cause of Christian instruction in general.

From whatever angle one considers this matter, therefore, the conclusion is always that it is our moral obligation, both with respect to our children before God, and with respect to the Christian School Movement, that we organize our own societies, and establish our own schools.

Those who harp on our “moral obligation” as an argument against a separate school movement, have no ground to stand on.

V. OUR OWN CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL

by

Herman Hoeksema

Beloved Saints of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois:

Over the years, many articles on Protestant Reformed Christian education have appeared in The Standard Bearer. It is our intention to publish certain of these articles by the Rev. Herman Hoeksema for the benefit of our own membership. We hope to publish selected articles in monthly installments. We suggest that you save the articles, as they come out, in a notebook, or folder, so that you keep them for future use.

We think that these writings, treating as they do of many aspects of the calling of Protestant Reformed people to provide Protestant Reformed Christian education for their children and youth, will not only be useful to promote Protestant Reformed secondary education, but also to remind us of basic truths that undergird our movement for primary education, indeed all of our instruction of the generations that follow us. Especially our younger married couples and our young people may profit from these writings, as to our distinctive calling in education.

Our hope and prayer are that the Lord will graciously bless these efforts, so that they produce increased understanding; healthy discussion; and renewed zeal regarding our covenant-calling: Instruct these children in the aforesaid doctrine to the utmost of your power (Baptism Formula).

The Board of the Association for
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A Word of Explanation

In its earliest stages, the movement for our own Protestant Reformed Christian Schools took the form of an effort to establish a high school. It was the thinking of Herman Hoeksema that it was more important to establish a high school than a grade school. As it turned out, however, the grade schools came first.

The two editorials in The Standard Bearer by Hoeksema contained in this installment in the series of articles on Protestant Reformed Christian education show the early concern for a high school and later shift to beginning with the grade school. The first editorial, published in the September 15, 1937 issue of The Standard Bearer (Vol. 13, pp. 508-510), pleads for a Protestant Reformed high school in Grand Rapids, urging that the presence in Grand Rapids of some 600 Protestant Reformed families makes this possible. As a matter of fact, this goal would not be realized for more than 30 years.

The second editorial, consisting of three parts, appeared four years later, in the December 15, 1941 issue of The Standard Bearer (Vol. 18, pp. 124-126). By this time, it had become evident that the people desired to begin with a grade school; and Hoeksema yielded to the will of the people – a grade school, it would be. Even this goal, a grade school in Grand Rapids, was not to be realized for another nine years, for the Adams St. School begin in 1950. (It was preceded by a Protestant Reformed grade school in Redlands, California in 1934 and by the Hope School in the Riverbend, Michigan area in 1947.)

This latter, three-fold article was written in Dutch; the translation into English given here is mine.

From these as from the preceding articles by Herman Hoeksema, several things and out that are of importance to us today, to whom the heritage and calling of Reformed education has come, through those who have gone before us. First, our fathers exercised patience in striving for our own schools. Second, in close connection with this, they were free from the divisive radicalism that has, now and then, troubled our cause in later years. Hoeksema was careful always to avoid even leaving the impression that those who lacked enthusiasm for our own schools were not truly Protestant Reformed, or, what is worse, not truly Christian. Also, he insisted, again and again, that our own schools should be established “where this is possible.” In addition, he called our people to co-operate with the Christian Reformed, where our own school were not possible, although he had little hope that we could have much influence. Third, what Hoeksema wanted with our own

schools was Reformed education, in distinction from a bland, general Christian education, from which all distinctive Reformed truth is blotted out. This, to my mind, is the concern that must weigh most heavily upon us today, and that must impel us to do all in our power both to maintain our existing schools and to establish others. Fourth, Hoeksema was convinced that the basic theological differences between our churches and the Christian Reformed Church affected education, fundamentally, so that our own schools are required, where this is possible. So strong was his conviction that he wrote, "I do not hesitate to predict that the Christian school in our land will disappear, unless our people continue to support it."

- Rev. David Engelsma

V. OUR OWN CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL

by

Herman Hoeksema

Time was, when Reformed Christians in our country all agreed that high school education must be based on specifically Christian principles.

Many there were in those days that could not concede the necessity of separate Christian schools for primary education and that strenuously opposed the movement for such an institution. But generally even those would agree that with respect to high education the matter stood different; and few there were that would send their sons and daughters to a public institution to receive their secondary and higher education.

In those days comparatively few had the privilege to enjoy a high school education. The law did not compel anyone to

pursue the path of learning beyond the stage of eighth grade; and in general it was those that intended to prepare themselves for one of the professions that entered high school.

It was natural, considering that the ministry was the chief profession for which young men prepared themselves, that these special high schools were denominational in character. They were church schools. And the instruction was based on, or supposed to be based on, the confession of the church that supported the school.

But the situation was changed radically as far as high school education was concerned.

First of all, the law is no longer satisfied with an eight-grade education for

our boys and girls, but compels them all to attend the high school, at least up to a certain age. It is no longer a question for the parents to decide whether or not the graduate from the grade school shall continue his studies. It is a matter of compulsion. In this respect the high school now stands on a level with the primary school; and the number of high school pupils is greatly increased.

A second important change, resulting from the first, is that the church felt no longer obliged to furnish this education for boys and girls of high school age; and, like the schools for primary instruction, the high school became a society-school. The curriculum was expanded and, besides the various academic courses, commercial courses were offered to those that looked forward to a place in some office or in a business-world in general.

And again, the schools lost a good deal of their specifically denominational character and became just *Christian* high schools.

Members of churches of different denominations could join the society that supported the school.

Thus, at least, it was nominally.

And thus it must also be explained, that in Grand Rapids, when our people had been expelled from the fellowship of the

Christian Reformed Churches, because they were convinced that these churches had departed from the Reformed truth by adopting the Three points, and when they had organized the Protestant Reformed denomination, they continued to support the existing Christian High School in that city, to belong to the society that supported it, and to send their children there.

Such is the situation at the present time.

It is at least ten years ago that we pointed out that this situation is by no means ideal and pleaded for a Christian High School of our own.

In the course of these years, our conviction that as a Protestant Reformed people in Grand Rapids and vicinity we need our own institution for secondary and, the Lord willing, for higher education, was gradually confirmed.

More than ever I am convinced that we should put forth all our efforts to establish such a school, and that, with God's help and blessing we shall surely see such efforts crowned with success.

Last spring, a society was organized for this purpose; surely, a step in the right direction.

But the society hardly counts on hundred members; and the cause is not only worthy of the united efforts of all our people, but need it.

To bring this important matter to your attention and bind it upon your heart, to solicit your support and your prayers for this cause, we make this plea.

Why is it of great important that we establish a high school of our own?

First of all, because Christian instruction must be as specific as possible, if it is to be a power for good. This is especially true of secondary education. We do not mean to convey the notion that in the primary grades the instruction may be less specific, can safely assume a more general character. Far be it from us to suggest such a fallacious notion! But the age when our boys and girls attend high school is the period in their life when they begin to reflect, to think for themselves, when, more than in the years of their childhood, they are able to imbibe and understand definite principles and doctrines, when it is of utmost importance that, both with respect to their thinking and to their conduct they are guided in the right direction.

It is true, that the instruction and guidance they receive or ought to receive in the home, in church, in the catechetical classes, are of great influence.

But this does not mean that the instruction offered to them in the high school can be less specific.

A so-called *Christian* instruction in the general sense of the word, without emphasis on specific principle is not sufficient.

The instruction must be *Reformed*.

And for us this means *Protestant Reformed*.

Specific this instruction must be, not only with application to those courses that deal directly with Bible-knowledge and doctrine or with the history of the Church, but the principles that are dear to us must permeate as much as possible all the branches of study, such as history, civil government, physics, chemistry, physiology, etc.

And if we cannot be satisfied with a little general Christianity, if the instruction of our boys and girls of high school age is to be of a specifically Reformed character, it cannot be denied that the question of common grace must enter in immediately. It certainly constitutes a fundamental difference in the basis of your education whether you proceed from the principle of common grace or from the tenet that God is gracious to His people only; whether you believe that there is a general influence of grace through the Spirit of God restraining

sin and improving men, or whether you insist that the natural man as being able to perform much good in this world, or whether you adhere to the truth that all his works are at all times only sin outside of the regenerating grace of the Spirit of Christ.

Now we certainly agree on this, *that we do not want the principles of common grace inculcated into our own boys and girls!*

And we do not want a high school education that is based upon and permeated by these principles!

Our ideal, our purpose is specific instruction!

But if we are serious about this and want to reach this ideal, strive for it, realize this purpose, there is only one way: a school of our own.

This article is not written to criticize the existing Christian High School in Grand Rapids. Mere opposition to an existing institution is negative and cannot very well constitute the basis for a new movement. We wish to be positive.

But so much must be said, that in as far as the Christian High School of Grand Rapids is specific, it is Christian Reformed and it is based on the principle of common grace.

We could easily prove this statement, not only from personal contact with

catechumens that attend this school, but also by quotations from text-books used.

The theory of common grace is certainly upheld and inculcated there.

We do not write this as an indictment against the school.

The overwhelming majority of the society-membership that support the school is Christian Reformed.

The membership of the Board is almost entirely Christian Reformed.

And the same is true of the teaching-staff.

How could such a school be blamed for teaching specifically Christian Reformed tenets? And how could it be asked to refrain from inculcating the theory of common grace, a doctrine considered so important by the Christian Reformed Churches that because of its denial they expelled their brethren of the Protestant Reformed Churches from their fellowship?

In the light of these facts one hardly feels justified to protest when these principles are inculcated also into our boys and girls that attend the school.

Once more, in this we do not blame the school. The more specific it will be on its own basis, the more we will respect it for the courage of its conviction.

But on our part we are convinced that no specific Christian instruction can stand on the basis of the theory of Common Grace.

There is only one way, only one course for us to pursue, if we would strive for the ideal: a Christian High School of our own!

Besides, if we will unite our efforts to realize this purpose, it will create a new interest in the cause of Christian Instruction among us.

There are not a few of us, who send their children to the Christian Primary School, but when graduation day is past, do not hesitate to entrust them to the instruction of the public high school. The reason given is frequently that the Christian High is little better and that they refuse to have the teaching of common grace inculcated into their children. Whether or not this is always the real motive we leave to their own conscience. We never did, and we do not now, justify this course of procedure. We believe that as long as we have no school of our own, the existing Christian High is the institution they should attend.

But surely the reason given cannot be gainsaid. And this paralyzes our action in favor of Christian High School instruction as such. Who feels like fighting for a cause and speak of principle, when he knows in his

heart that there is little or no specific principle at stake?

A Christian High of our own, a school based on specifically Protestant Reformed principles, is worth fighting for, deserves our enthusiasm, will create a new interest in the cause of Christian Instruction among us.

But why start with a Christian *High* School, you probably ask.

First of all, because both in view of the important period of the high school age in the life of our boys and girls and with a view to existing conditions, I think that the need of a Christian High School is most urgent.

Secondly, there is no reason why, in a city like Grand Rapids, there should be only one Christian High School. There are thousands of families perhaps that do or could support this school. The school is crowded. Before long, more room will have to be created, new buildings erected. But there is no reason why in a city like Grand Rapids there should not be more than one high school, just as there are several grade schools. Why, then, not build a school of our own?

Thirdly, a high school, where all the children of Protestant Reformed parents of high school age from Grand Rapids and vicinity can attend is more easily realized than a grade school. There will be fewer

children, we will need fewer teachers, and the children are of such an age that they can easily travel a few miles to attend a centrally located high school of our own.

You object that it will prove to be impossible?

To this I answer:

First, that there are some six hundred Protestant Reformed families in Grand Rapids only. If we unite and put our shoulder to the wheel, there is no reason why we could not establish and support on high school.

Secondly, if you are agreed on the principle, you will surely also agree that it is worth all our effort to try.

No attempt was ever made.

Join our society.

And let us have your much needed support!

An Encouraging Beginning

The movement to have our own Christian school, where our children can be instructed in harmony with the "aforesaid," i.e., the Reformed, doctrine, which was begun already several years ago in Grand Rapids, is making progress.

In the beginning of this movement, men tried to establish our own high school. Especially the undersigned was of the opinion that this was the greatest need, for

various reason. It soon became evident, that there was not enough interest for this goal. Many were of the judgment, that we had to begin differently. Above all, the number of our people who themselves had children in the high school here in Grand Rapids and who, therefore, had direct interest in our own institution of this nature, was not great, not nearly as great as the number of those who had children in the grade school. For this reason, the movement gradually began to die out. Finally, only a few attended the meetings that were called for that purpose.

Then, it was decided to tackle the matter in another way.

The same association was reconstituted as an association for the promotion of our own Christian *grade school* instruction and for the realization of the concrete goal of establishing our own Reformed school. That seemed more desirable. There was, at once, more interest. The meetings were better attended. The association added members. A constitution was adopted. And finally, it was decided to conduct a survey in our congregations here in Grand Rapids, in order to find out how many of our people will co-operate to reach the proposed goal, and how many children we could count on, if we would begin our own school.

This was carried out; and the outcome was rather joyous.

And official report has not yet been given. But from a completely reliable source, I have it that, on the basis of the survey that was made in the First Protestant Reformed Church, it can be announced that the association now numbers almost 200 members and that, if we begin our own school, we must at once count on 175 students.

These numbers, obviously, point out that there is nowhere near a universal co-operation. There are some who hesitate; and there are others who do not believe in a movement for our own grade school.

Nevertheless, this outcome exceeds my expectation. If we take into consideration that every beginning is difficult and that, if only a school come into existence, many other people will follow, then we may certainly state that the movement makes good progress and that the outcome may be called encouraging.

There is Everything in Favor

Except now for the very practical consideration that it is much easier (and also cheaper, at least as far as starting a school is concerned) to keep on sending our children to the existing schools, there is certainly nothing

against our trying to establish our own Christian, i.e., specifically *Reformed*, schools, where this is possible.

There is everything in favor of it.

I distinctly remember that our Reformed people began with a similar movement in the Netherlands. The Christian schools that existed at the time were the product of the co-operation of the people of the State Church (*Hervormden*) and the people of the Reformed Church (*Gerformeerden*). And, even as children who received the instruction, one could pretty well see and feel the result of this co-operation, plainly. There were, of course, people of the State Church who taught, as well as people of the Reformed Church; and the difference between them did not remain hidden in the instruction. Each week, we learned a Psalter number; but we also learned the hymns, which were condemned by the Secession of 1834. Besides, the people of the State Church gradually got control in many schools. I remember that, at that time, three-fourths of the members of the school board in our city were people of the State Church.

The situation gradually became worse, until a movement began on behalf of separate Reformed schools. In the Netherlands, separate Reformed schools have become a reality.

In many respects, our circumstances here, as Protestant Reformed people, are the same as those of the Reformed people in the Netherlands, as regards education.

In the field of Christian education, we work together with the Christian Reformed; and, wherever it can not be otherwise, this certainly required. We may not use the difference between our churches and the Christian Reformed Church as a pretext to send our children to the public school. Ultimately, this would mean that the very principle of the necessity of Christian instruction is lost over this difference between us. This may not happen. Where our own school is not possible, we must work together as much as possible.

But, in the first place, this will only mean, in most cases, that the influence of the Christian Reformed element is dominant. Usually, our membership has very little, or no, representation on the school board and also has little say-so and control over the instruction. The co-operation frequently means little more than that our people may help, when there is need for money.

In the second place, at its best, co-operation means, as concerns the instruction, that men from both sides are somewhat indulgent; that there is a little give-and-take; and that the distinctiveness of the

instruction is sacrificed. From the side of the Christian Reformed, as well as from our side, men avoid, as much as possible, the questions of our difference.

Now, certainly, our difference with the Christian Reformed is profound, also insofar as it bears on the instruction of the school. Really, from the standpoint of the Christian Reformed, from the viewpoint of principle, there is no place for the Christian school. One may be zealous for the private school out of practical considerations, e.g., because one does not want to entrust his children to the public school, or because one prefers to see his children in the company of his own people; but, in principle, from the standpoint of the Christian Reformed Church, taken in 1924 (the doctrine of common grace – DE), there is no place for separate, Christian schools. If it is true, that there is an operation of grace in the world of the undegenerated, by which they are able to do good in natural matters, and if, as is the case, the school has reference exactly to the preparation of the children with a view to those natural and civil things, then the distinguished gentleman from Holland, Michigan was perfectly correct, not long ago, when he said that the school belonged to the sphere of common grace. But then it lies in the nature of the case that, in this sphere, we

do not live out of the principle of “special grace,” but out of the principle of “common grace”; and, according to that principle, we must co-operate with the world. We must not separate ourselves, then, in our own schools; but we must let the influence of common grace assert itself, as much as possible, in the public school.

It is my firm conviction that the Christian Reformed Synod of Kalamazoo in 1924 (in adopting the doctrine of common grace – DE) has given the death-blow to the Christian school.

Because principles work through, it is also my conviction that the interest in Christian education on the part of the Christian Reformed constituency will gradually disappear, unless they repent of their error. As little as there is place, from the standpoint of 1924, for the maintenance of the antithesis in the sphere of labor, so that one can no longer find any support for a struggle of principle in that sphere (just think, how radically Professor Louis Berkhof has changed in this respect!), so little is there, from that same standpoint, room for a Christian school.

I do not hesitate to predict that the Christian school in our land will disappear, unless our people continue to support it.

For this reason, where this is possible, everything is in favor of our starting our own schools, where the instruction can be distinctively Reformed- schools which do not exist merely because of practical considerations, but which are a matter of principle.

That possibility certainly exists here in Grand Rapids. As concerns our numerical strength, we should be able to establish more than one school here. Although, at this moment, we probably would not be able to designate a complete number of teachers out of our own circles for such a comprehensive school, we must not forget that different young people in our own school would have an incentive to be trained for the work of teaching.

There is, therefore, everything in favor of our beginning our own school.

The Hand to the Plow

In the meantime, it is opportune to give a word of warning.

We spoke earlier of a joyous result. This is certainly what it may be called, that we may number 200 members as an association and that we may count on at least 175 children. But this also requires that we all put our hand to the plow and not look back (cf. Luke 9:62—DE). If we call meetings of

our school association, then all must feel their responsibility to be present and to take part in the deliberations. All of us must cooperate with all our might. For members who merely pay their dues, we really do not have much use.

But also those parents who promised that they would send their children to our own school must understand well, that such a school can only come into existence, if they themselves put their hand to the plow. If the promise to send their children would only mean that from now on they will watch, until there is a school of our own, then we can at once assure them, that nothing will come of it. They are, first of all, responsible to do what they can to realize our goal.

Schools do not fall out of the sky.

We must not, therefore, wait for a school; we must ourselves establish a school. This demands putting forth effort. This demands the co-operation of all. It will require sacrifice. It will cost money.

Let us, therefore, indeed count the cost before we begin to build the tower (cf. Luke 14:28ff. – DE), not so that, at the end of the counting, we draw back, for that is certainly not necessary—the tower can indeed be built!; but so that we are prepared and, with God’s help and by His grace, are up and building.

The hand to the plow!