

# PARENTAL OBLIGATIONS WITH RESPECT TO PROTESTANT REFORMED SECONDARY EDUCATION

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## A Word of Introduction

This article constitutes a summary of an address delivered last November at Southwest Church under the auspices of the Protestant Reformed High School Circle. Because it is a summary and because the staff has limited my space in *Beacon Lights*, I must needs be much more brief and consequently less thorough, than when I actually delivered this address. I hope, with a view to clarity, that I will not be too brief.

In my introduction remarks I tried to make three points clear, as follows:

1) That I spoke as one who is personally one hundred percent committed, for various reasons, to the principle of Protestant Reformed education.

2) That my very frank purpose was to *further* the local cause of Protestant Reformed secondary education. I have no sympathy with the notion that we can be or ought to be satisfied with less than Protestant Reformed education for Protestant Reformed children. And I am positively committed to the ideal that wherever and whenever the Lord opens the way, Protestant Reformed people should establish and maintain Protestant Reformed schools, whether at the primary or any other level.

3) That I believe that the success of this movement is not to be triggered by a superficial, “eager-beaver” type of enthusiasm, but by a deep-seated devotion and commitment and therefore by a thorough understanding of the principle and ideal, by a “catching of the vision” of Protestant Reformed education and by actions consistent therewith.

## The Idea of Protestant Reformed Education

At the risk of belaboring the obvious, I want to remind you, first of all, of what is *not* the idea of Protestant Reformed education.

1. It is not the idea of merely having a separate school which we can call “our own”. Being practically minded, we are easily inclined to think of the matter this way. We must have a separate school with the name “Protestant Reformed” on it, a school for our own children that is under our own control. And, of course, it follows from this viewpoint that the weight of emphasis is placed upon getting the physical plant of such a school completed. The danger of this viewpoint is that when the physical plant is complete, if you have nothing more, your victory is rather hallow, your enthusiasm will wane and your attitude toward the educational processes taking place in that plant will become one of complacency. We must not be separate merely for the sake of being separate. That is the spirit of separatism, the party spirit, the spirit of strife and vain glory.

2. Nor is the idea of Protestant Reformed education *negativistic*. The idea is not merely to cleanse the education of our children of some bad elements, some evil influences in the existing schools. There are indeed plenty of such “bad things”, both curricular and extra-curricular. As a parent who is having his first year’s experience with the existing high schools, I shudder to expose my children to such evil influences. Surely, in our own high school we must get rid of these bad elements and must rid the education of our children of all overt error. But

these concrete instances of evil and these overt errors are only the results and the symptoms of something deeper. And if we do nothing more in our own schools than get rid of these symptoms, then ultimately all these wrong elements in the instruction and life of the school will ultimately creep back into our own movement and that too, in worse form.

From a positive point of view, we must remember that our school movement, even as the movement of our churches, has its roots historically in 1924 and in the Reformed principles that were a stake in 1924. Let us not forget that! The philosophy of common grace, with its devastation of the whole idea of the antithesis and the Heynsian, Arminian view of the covenant, --these two spell the real doom, principally, of Christian education. And positively, our Reformed, our Protestant Reformed principles spell the only possibility and salvation of real Christian education at every level.

What is that positive principle in its simplest form? It is this: *a Christian school is a school that is founded on the Bible*. It is a school that proceeds in every branch of learning from Scripture's truth. It is a school that is built upon and that proceeds throughout from the principle of God's sovereign, particular grace. It is a school that is built upon and proceeds from the central truth that God is our covenant God, Who establishes and realizes His covenant in Christ with His elect people as a peculiar and regenerated people and with their seed in the line of generations. It is a school devoted to the idea that the seed of believers must be instructed in and according to this doctrine with all our power. It is a school that principally teaches nothing else than the precepts of the Lord in all branches of learning. It is a school founded for the sole purpose of instructing our children so that they may be equipped and prepared to live their life in the midst of this world from the principle of the new life, antithetically. That is the only goal! As a covenant people, we have but one calling: to glorify our God and keep His commandments all the days of our life and thus to show forth the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. To prepare and equip us for that calling in all our life in the world is the goal of the Christian school.

Permit me to spell this out in greater detail.

The practical purpose of all education is that the wise may walk in the fear of the Lord, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto every good work. Our children *are* wise principally. For the principle of all wisdom is the fear of Jehovah, Proverbs 9:10. And this principle of the fear of Jehovah our covenant children, organically considered, have in them by virtue of regeneration. This wisdom is a gift. It is the spiritual gift, power, grace, whereby a man is able to judge correctly, to love and to assume the right attitude toward reality, that is, toward the three-fold reality of God, the world, and self—with God Himself being the central, the sovereign Reality. The wise man stands in the right relation toward this reality. The fool stands and lives in the wrong relation. And the fear of the Lord is the principle, the seed of such wisdom. You cannot have wisdom, true wisdom, without it. You can have a certain counterfeit wisdom, the wisdom that is from below, earthly, carnal, devilish. But such wisdom is in reality folly! The fool hath said in his heart, "There is no God".

Now education does not and cannot *impart* wisdom. As such, wisdom is a gift, a quality. It cannot be learned. It can be developed and exercised and practiced. The wise can be trained in wisdom's way. But you cannot *teach* wisdom as such; and you cannot *learn* wisdom.

But necessary for and basic to such a walk in wisdom's way is *knowledge*. Knowledge is the mental apprehension, the conception, of reality. Knowledge is therefore concerned with the answer to these questions: Who is God? What is His Being? What are His virtues? What is His will? What is God's work? What is the world? Whence is the world? What is the condition of

the world? What is the destiny of the world? Who am I? What is my nature? What is my calling? What is my purpose? What is my history? What is my relation to God? What should I be? What am I? How can I be what I ought to be?

And also of this knowledge, both objectively and subjectively considered, the fear of the Lord is the deepest principle. Proverbs 1:7 teaches this literally. This means, therefore, that knowledge can be gained in the deepest sense only from God Himself. I cannot find out God; nor can I find out God's work with respect to the world and with respect to myself; nor can I determine my own calling with respect to God and the world and self. Hence, as far as the objective content of all true knowledge is concerned, *revelation* is the source. And revelation is God speaking concerning Himself and concerning His own work. That revelation we have in God's own Book, the Scriptures. And that revelation we possess in God's book of creation and history, which can be read only with eyes enlightened by the fear of the Lord and which can be understood and interpreted only in the light of the revelation of God in Christ, i.e., Scripture.

Here, therefore, we must draw the line. There is not any other knowledge than the true, living, spiritual knowledge of the fear of the Lord. And education, when distinguished as Christian or worldly (ungodly), is not a matter of more knowledge or less knowledge, is not a matter of knowledge as over against mere natural, intellectual ignorance. It is always a spiritual matter! Apart from the fear of the Lord there is no real knowledge. Just as fools, sinners, hate wisdom and instruction, so they do not love knowledge, but they love deception, error, the lie! The latter is the Scriptural characterization of all the great knowledge of the world. There is no fear of the Lord in it; and therefore it really is not knowledge at all!

#### Test Questions

Surely, the world and modern education will be offended at this. They are proud of their "learning" and of their "science". But just put this to a test once by asking some crucial questions. Who is God? The world says: "There is no God. Man is God. God is the great Unknowable. God is a universal Father and all men are brothers." What is this? Knowledge? No: it is the greatest ignorance. It is deception, the lie! Ask at the world's institutions this question: whence is the world? You will get the answer: "The world had no beginning. It is eternal. It developed by itself. It evolved through billions of years." Is that knowledge? No! What then? Natural and intellectual ignorance? No! It is deception, the lie! Ask the world: who am I? They will tell you that you are the son of a monkey or that you descended from an amoeba. Ignorance? Lack of learning? No; this is error, the lie! There is no fear of God in it!

And thus you can go on and ask all the crucial questions that are at stake in various branches of education. What is history? What is sin? Who is Jesus Christ? What is His cross, His resurrection? What is heaven? What is eternal life? What is the family and marriage? What is government? Such questions you can multiply. And to all of these questions there are but two possible answers fundamentally: a true and a false, the answer of knowledge and the answer of the lie, the answer which proceeds from the fear of the Lord and the answer in which there is no fear of the Lord!

Now education is the process of instruction and discipline. It is the process of imparting *knowledge*. In the light of what I have already laid down, it is obvious that in this sense genuine education is possible only on a Christian basis, the basis of the Word of God. All other so-called education is the misrepresentation of reality. It is not instruction, but deception, a leading astray.

Exactly at this point our distinctive Protestant Reformed point of view is of crucial importance. The theory of common grace fundamentally compromises the position I have outlined above. It makes room for concord between light and darkness, between church and

world, between the truth and the lie, between knowledge and deception. Common grace is hailed as a glorious truth at an educational institution such as Calvin College. And I make bold to say that there is probably no area where common grace has had more devastating—and more influential—effects than in that of the whole realm of education.

Here, therefore, is the deepest reason for our own Protestant Reformed educational system. We want *knowledge!* We want knowledge in the fear of the Lord! We want knowledge unadulterated by the synthesizing influences of common grace!

(to be continued)

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