

Our Children's Education: A Covenant Necessity (1)

I. Introduction

Dear Covenant Parents,

Few subjects deserve greater spiritual attention than the education of our children. As guardians of the sacred Reformed faith, we confess the blessed truth that Jehovah establishes his covenant with us and our seed. In a wonder of sovereign grace he purposed to save us and our children in their generations in Jesus Christ. These are “the children which God hath graciously given” ([Gen. 33:5](#)) to us his servants. In giving to us covenant seed the Lord entrusts us with the high calling to raise them up according to his ways. This is covenant privilege of the highest kind, for in raising covenant seed we proclaim together with the psalmist, “One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts” ([Ps. 145:4](#)).

Scarce attention has been given to the education our covenant children receive in Singapore. It has become a norm for most parents in our midst to send their children to government schools to receive a public education. On average a covenant child receives such an education the moment he reaches nursery age and continues all the way until he reaches university and beyond. This accounts for almost 20 years of his life. Thus the building blocks of a covenant child's life are in many ways established by the government.

The call to review and examine our children's education in the light of Scripture is desperately urgent. Many covenant parents are not sufficiently informed about the radically changing nature of education in Singapore. The public schools are no longer innocent places of learning where our children simply receive an education in the languages, arts and sciences. They have become more assertive and influential in the lives of our children, especially as they climb the education ladder. It is not groundless to say that we have allowed the education system here to shape the characters of our covenant children more than we would like to.

A generation of public education has done very substantial damage to the cause of God's covenant in Singapore. The education system has eroded much of the spirituality in our young people. Why has the world drowned the lives of our covenant seed? Why is doctrinal ignorance prevalent amongst the young people? Why are the youth meetings declining in attendance? Why are the young people indifferent to spiritual things? Why is there a lack of desire to serve in the church? Why are our

young people so engrossed in their academic and career pursuits that they have so little time for spiritual development? Why do our young choose their companions from the world rather than the church? Why do we occupy ourselves with temporal things and give little concern to matters of eternal weight?

These questions cannot be answered without admitting that our children's education in the public schools is largely responsible for the spiritual decline in our midst. We as covenant parents are fundamentally responsible for this, for God has given us charge over the education of our children. We have subjected them to an ungodly education that has sown ungodly seeds and produced ungodly fruits in them.

Since the institution of the Evangelical Reformed Churches in Singapore (ERCS) over 20 years ago, the churches have been on a steady spiritual decline. The Reformed faith has lost its distinction and vigor. Let us be very clear and honest about this. Let any who believes the contrary only examine the doctrinal controversy that destroyed our denomination a few years ago.

A serious call to reform the education our covenant children receive must be issued. It must be a call that has its basis in Scripture. It must be a call that is in harmony with our confessions. It is a call rooted in our covenant obligations as Reformed parents to raise covenant seed in the fear of the Lord. Scripture directs our attention to the truth that our children are an heritage from the Lord ([Ps 127:3](#)), entrusted to us for our utmost care and upbringing. As covenant parents we vow to teach our children the ways of the Lord, to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ([Eph 6:4](#)).

There is much for parents in CERC to learn from our brethren in the Protestant Reformed Churches in America (PRCA), who understand the critical call to raise up covenant seed. Many of their parents do this with great personal sacrifices, knowing that faithfulness to our Lord's calling will come at great costs. Their maturity in the faith is indeed remarkable, and they have a heritage from which we will greatly benefit to learn.

I am indebted to the PRCA for all that they have taught me on this subject through their literature and especially their schools. A trip to Grand Rapids in the winter of December 2006 opened insights for me to see what Reformed schools were really all about. Far more important were the spiritual lessons they taught me. If we are to be serious about our high calling to raise covenant seed for the Lord, it is imperative that we learn from them. I would rather the readers of this paper read Prof. David Engelsma's book *Reformed Education: The Christian School as Demand of the Covenant* (RFPA, 2000). It is a far better and thorough argument than this paper can provide. On this book I must rely extensively for the strength of this argument.

The idea of a Christian education has not been given much support in our midst. I think a chief reason for this is the fear of placing our children in a socially disadvantageous position. The government universities require qualifications from the government schools for enrollment. In many sectors of the job market employers give priority to those with government school qualifications. If we give our children a Christian education, they will suffer. Many will find it harder to find jobs. Career opportunities will be restricted. Promotions will be hard to come by. Incomes may be meager. From a social and material viewpoint, our children will suffer loss.

Persecution is also inevitable for our covenant seed if we place them on the path of a Christian education. Our children will suffer scorn from the world. They will be mocked at for studying in the school of Christ rather than enjoying the academic pleasures of this world. They will be ridiculed for wasting their talents to the cause of God's kingdom instead of developing them to gain the riches of this world.

Nevertheless, our covenant duty must stand firm. It is our most sacred obligation to raise up covenant seed in the ways of God, and Scripture is crystal clear that God's ways are often accompanied by suffering. All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer. Our children are not excluded, for they are also members of God's covenant as much as we are.

The subject of a Reformed education has weighed heavily on my soul throughout the years of my public schooling. The desperate wickedness of a public education and its sinful influences that threaten to destroy covenant young people struck me forcefully during these years. I am absolutely convinced that we in CERC shall have little to speak of the Reformed faith if we further subject our children to another generation of public education. The young people are the future of the church. For this reason the education they receive from infancy onwards ought to prepare them for God's kingdom. There is only one kind of education that covenant children must receive—a covenant education.

It is my prayerful hope that the covenant parents in CERC will realize that raising covenant seed demands covenant education. I am much encouraged by the present growing support in our midst to give our children such an education. Great will be their reward. May the Lord use these words to promote the cause of a covenant education to our parents to the end that they may see the wonders of Jehovah's blessings upon them and their children.

With love for God's everlasting covenant of grace, Aaron Lim.

The Lord willing, the remaining parts of this essay will be included in 6 subsequent installments.

