

# So You Want To Go To College

Jon Huisken

That is a good thing — wanting to go to college. Education has always had a high place in the value system of the Christian and that high place ought to be maintained. The 16th century reformers — both Luther and Calvin — speak highly of education. (Cf. Rev. D. Engelsma's excellent series of articles entitled "The Concern of the Reformation for Education," beginning in the October 1, 1970 edition of the *Standard Bearer*.) Knowledge is not a thing to be despised but a thing to be diligently sought after. The Scriptures, as far as I know and I stand to be corrected, do not speak disparagingly of knowledge or wisdom properly conceived and defined but rather condemn the wisdom of the world.

This point, that knowledge is a thing to be desired, needs emphasis in our day. There is in educational circles a gradual move toward (in reality a return to) romanticism. The romantics, you know, loved to commune with nature, they sought to become one with her; but they communed with her at the gut level, the level of the emotions and the feelings. They were a sharp contrast to the classical and neoclassical personages who preceded them. The classical emphasis was upon the intellect and reason. The romantic emphasis was upon the emotions and the feelings. The romantics relied upon intuition and were fond of mysticism.

There is, I believe, a return to this romantic view of life today and I think that we can point to the rise of pentecostalism and to the rise of youth movements such as the Jesus People as evidence of this return. The emphasis is upon love, as an emotion. The emphasis is upon human relations and one determines what is right by whether the "vibes" are right. And, in religion, the pentecostals want to have an intuitional mystical relation with God. The result of all this is that there is an insidious anti-intellectualism creeping across our country today. The scientific age, the age of "The Analyzer" fostered by the Sputnik scare, is beginning to fade and the age of "The Feeler" is taking its place.

The Christian does right, I believe, when he fights against this move toward romanticism and expresses his view that the intellect ought not be neglected but should be actively built. This does not mean, however, that he suddenly becomes an advocate of the supremacy of reason and the intellect because then he falls into the error of rationalism. The Christian views man as an organic whole. Intellect and emotion must be harmonized rather than abstracted and elevated as is the case in both romanticism and rationalism. But the point must be made, nonetheless, that in view of the present emphasis upon emotion, the Christian must be doubly careful that he is not swept along with this move toward romanticism but rather insists that the intellect may not be neglected.

I might add that I feel that there is also some feeling on the part of many of our young people that education, especially post-secondary education, has little or no value. I am not concluding now that this feeling arises from the influence of the current "return to romanticism" but this may be for other reasons. We tend to associate education with earning power and this, too, is not a correct view. I say again that education should have high value for the Christian and one ought not put earning power as the first reason for desiring it.

The intellect, then, may not be neglected for any reason and I call attention to the "return to romanticism" because it is becoming a prevalent philosophy in our day. What I hope that you will do is that you give serious consideration to whether it is being neglected in your own individual case.

We have been talking until now of education as being a good thing, that knowledge is to be desired, that the intellect should be built — not at the expense of the emotions or vice versa — but it ought to be abundantly clear that I am speaking not of education for education's sake nor knowledge for knowledge's sake but that I am speaking of Christian education and knowledge that is ultimately defined to be the knowledge of God. So the question becomes, then, for those that desire to go to college, "Where to? Where should I go?" This is a question, a problem, that ought not be minimized. There is not as yet a Protestant Reformed college. So, what do I do? The principle that has been followed is that you must go to an institution that is the closest in its philosophy, in its world and life view, to yours. It grieves me that this principle is not always followed. Too many Protestant Reformed young people end up in the completely secular institutions of the world, the public college or university. But, you counter, what is the difference? Is not all rotten in Denmark? I do not believe so. This is not to say that I wholeheartedly support the educational philosophies of such institutions as Calvin, Hope, Trinity and Dordt but I do believe that they are to be preferred above the public university and the reason I give is the principle stated above. But, in light of what we do know about the present Christian colleges, it makes one think does it not, that maybe the time is right for us to begin to think very seriously about Protestant Reformed higher education.

We must however, deal with the reality of our situation. And then, the point must be made that it is crucial to those who are intending to go to college that you be prepared to attend. This puts great responsibility not only upon our existing elementary schools and high school but also puts great responsibility upon you and your parents. You know pretty much what to expect. You cannot expect, for example, Calvin College professors to teach Protestant Reformed theology. So, be prepared! Give close attention to what your teachers teach and what your preachers preach from the pulpit and teach in their catechism classes. Spend much time studying and reading. You must expect that you are going to be put to the test. It is completely foolhardy to enter your college career knowing what to expect but yet being unprepared.

There is one other thing that I might suggest. Our seminary with both its pre-seminary and seminary programs is a resource that is far too little considered by our young people as an educational institution. You need not, I am sure, intend to be a minister to take advantage of its distinctively Protestant Reformed education. Investigate its possibilities.

By all means, then, consider going to college. And, once you are there and problems arise, seek out those that can help you. Teachers, ministers, seminary professors, and elders are very willing and able to help.

Originally Published in:  
Vol. 33a No. 1 March 1973