

Scripture in the Schools

By David J. Engelsma

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The Bible is basic to Christian education; not simply as the most important subject of instruction but as the authoritative interpretation of all school subjects. This study of the place of the Bible in Christian education is the second chapter of Professor Engelsma's book *Reformed Education*, revised for separate publication here.

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” Psalm 119:105

Holy Scripture has a position in the Christian school of fundamental importance. The presence of Scripture makes a school Christian. Without Scripture education cannot be Christian. The exclusion of Scripture makes the public education of today not only non-Christian but also anti-Christian. This is the reason why God-fearing parents find the public schools unacceptable. With characteristic insight, Luther observed, “I greatly fear that the universities, unless they teach the Holy Scriptures diligently and impress them on the young students, are wide gates to hell.”¹

God is present in and works by the Word, Holy Scripture. To banish the Word is to banish God, and to banish God is to invite the devil. The necessity of Reformed, Christian schools is the necessity of Scripture's being present in the schools in its full, rich, uncorrupted power.

The presence of Scripture in the school is intimately related to the covenant basis of the school. The activity of rearing covenant children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord Christ is only done by means of Scripture. The precepts of Jehovah which Deuteronomy 6 requires us to teach our children are given in Scripture. The nurture of the Lord spoken of in Ephesians 6:4 is prescribed and defined by Scripture. The admonition of the Lord spoken of in the same text is found in Scripture. Our schools are an aspect of that which the Reformed Baptism Form calls “bringing the children up in the aforesaid

¹ Martin Luther, “To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate”, in *Luther's Works*, Volume 44, ed. James Atkinson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 207.

doctrine”, and this demands the use of the Bible. God, Whose work the rearing ultimately is, works through the Word and is the covenant Friend of the children in the Word. Therefore, for covenant education to take place the Word of God must be present everywhere and always, and it must be present as that which reigns supreme.

Scripture as the Authority in the School

Presupposed is the historic, confessional, orthodox, Reformed doctrine of Scripture. Scripture is God-breathed, inerrant in everything it contains, clear, sufficient, trustworthy, and authoritative. It is the written Word of God, graciously given to us to be “a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path” (Psalm 119:105). It is a lamp also to our educational feet and a light also on our path in the schools.

The orthodox, Reformed doctrine of Scripture is the *sine qua non* of Christian education, as it is of the preaching of the gospel, the Christian life, and, in fact, every Christian activity. Many nominally Christian schools today are shot through with scepticism, i.e., unbelief, regarding the doctrine of Scripture. By virtue of this fact, these schools are Christian only in name.

The very existence of the Christian school depends on Scripture. God-fearing parents read in the Bible the command to teach their children God's words and to rear their children in the truth of Jesus Christ (Psalm 78:1-7; Ephesians 6:4). Bowing to the authority of the Bible, they establish the Christian school. Since it is the mighty Word itself that works this parental obedience, Scripture itself establishes the Christian school, as it also establishes the Christian home, whence the school proceeds.

Scripture defines Christian education. I agree with the Dutch Reformed educator, Jan Waterink, that we may not define the Christian education of the school by quoting a certain text, e.g., II Timothy 3:17: “That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”.²

Nevertheless, we must be directed by Scripture in defining it, especially by those passages that explicitly treat of the upbringing of the covenant children. In light of these passages, we may define Christian education thus: Christian education is the rearing of covenant children to spiritual maturity by believing parents through a capable fellow-believer. This is done, in the Christian school, by instruction in all aspects of God's creation in light of the revelation of Holy Scripture. Thus, the children develop and grow, so that they are able to live all their lives in the world as faithful, responsible friend-servants of God in Christ Jesus, in obedience to God's will and to the end of God's glory.

This accords with the description of Christian education by prominent Reformed thinkers. According to Herman Hoeksema, “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

² Cf. Jan Waterink, *Basic Concepts in Christian Pedagogy*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 37ff.

the path of life; we define education as the impartation to the child of knowledge regarding his material and spiritual relation in the world”.³

Jan Waterink gives this definition: “the guiding of human beings in such a manner that they with their talents will be able rightly to serve God, their Creator, in the society in which they have been placed”.⁴

Cornelius Jaarsma offers this definition: “Christian education is the covenant task by which a child is brought up to maturity in the ‘new obedience’. This task is to be realized along the lines of child nature as ordained of God”.⁵

Scripture informs all the instruction given in the Christian school (by “informs” I mean: gives essence to, is the characteristic quality of). Scripture is the light of God in which we see light. Nothing will be taught that conflicts with the Scriptures. The Christian school will not teach evolution, whether atheistic or theistic; the natural goodness and upward progression in history of (fallen) mankind; communism; feminism; homosexuality as an alternate life-style; or the identification of the kingdom of God with the United States.

As the light and truth of God, Scripture is the foundation and standard of every subject, controlling, ordering, and explaining every subject. In this way, Scripture makes what is merely true, the truth. How can history be taught unless it is grounded in and illumined by the Word that teaches a sovereign God; the centrality of Christ (“the fullness of time”—Galatians 4:4!); the total depravity and rebellion against God of the natural man; the great war of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world; and God's judgment in history upon men and nations?

How can science be taught apart from the Word about creation: about the fall and the curse on man and his earth; about the flood; and about the wisdom and power of the Creator?

In connection with his criticism of the limitation of inspiration to the “religious-ethical” parts of Scripture, Reformed theologian, Herman Bavinck, speaks of the relationship between Scripture and the other branches of knowledge:

From this, finally, the relationship in which Scripture stands to the other sciences becomes plain. There has been much misuse of the statement of Baronius, “Scripture does not tell us, how it goes in heaven, but how we go to heaven.” Exactly as the book of the knowledge of God, Scripture has much to say also with regard to the other sciences. It is a light on the path and a lamp for the foot, also for science and art. It lays claim to authority in every area of life. Christ has all power in heaven and on earth. Objectively, the limitation of

3 Herman Hoeksema, “Christian Education”, *Standard Bearer*, 3, (September 1, 1927): 532-536.

4 Waterink, *Basic Concepts*, 100.

5 Cornelius Jaarsma and John DeBeer, *Toward a Philosophy of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 9.

inspiration to the religious-ethical part of Scripture is untenable; and subjectively, the distinction between the religious (*godsdiensstige*) aspect of the life of man and the rest of his life cannot be maintained. Inspiration extends itself to all parts of Scripture, and religion is a matter of the entire man. Very much of that which is recorded in Scripture is of principal importance also for the other sciences. The creation and fall of man, the unity of the human race, the flood, the origin of the nations and languages, etc. are facts of the greatest importance also for the other sciences. Every moment, science and art come into contact with Scripture; the principles for the whole of life are given in Scripture. Nothing may be done to minimize this (my translation of the Dutch—DJE).⁶

In this way, Scripture unifies all of Christian education. Materially, this unity is the glory of the sovereign God. Bavinck refers to this vital function of Scripture in his *Paedagogische Beginselen (Educational Principles)*:

Holy Scripture, a book whose worth for instruction and rearing can never be valued too highly. For not only does that Scripture acquaint us with the way that leads to eternal life, but also, exactly because it does this, it points out to us the way in which we have to walk in this life.

The Bible is the book that orients man also in this present life. One needs only to keep in mind that Scripture gets for us a view of nature whose equal is found nowhere; that Scripture presents an explanation of the origin, the being, and the destination of man which is sought in vain in science and philosophy; that Scripture places in our hands an introduction to the history of the world and of mankind without which we wander about in a chaos of happenings.

And Scripture presents us with all this in a form which is suitable for the educated and the uneducated, for old people and children.

The man who is instructed in Scripture, and reared by it, comes to stand at the vantage-point from which he surveys the great totality of things. His horizon extends to the ends of the earth. He embraces in his thought the origin and the goal of history. He knows his own place because he views himself and all things first of all in relation to God, of Whom, through Whom, and to Whom all things are.

Therefore, the Bible is not only the book for the church, but also for the home and the school. Biblical instruction, provided that it be given as it should, not in a rationalistic or pietistic way, but according to its own unique sense and purpose, is the soul of all instruction, the organizing power of all rearing (my

6 Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, 4. vols. (Kampen: J.H. Bos, 1906), 1:472.

translation of the Dutch—DJE).⁷

The Word of God which we hold to be the authority in the school is not the “Word” of that educational organization in Reformed circles in North America formerly known as the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship (AACS) and now functioning in Toronto, Canada as the Institute for Christian Studies (ICS). The ICS pleads for Christian education ruled by the “Word of God” and criticizes almost all present and past Christian education for its being dominated by the church: “A church-controlled educational ideal has for centuries prevented scripturally directed Christian education from developing its own independent, distinctive manifestation”.⁸

The emphasis of the ICS upon the “Word of God” in Christian education is deceptive. By the “Word of God”, the ICS does not mean holy Scripture, but the “structuring and directing plan for creation”.⁹

“Word of God” is not Scripture, but a certain “Law-Word” that “holds for creation”. In fact, the Bible has no place in the Christian school at all as far as the ICS is concerned. Its only role is a preliminary one, that of opening our eyes to the “Word of God” that holds for creation.¹⁰

The “Word” that the ICS has in mind is, in reality, the judgment concerning a particular aspect of God's creation by the ICS's resident scholar. This “Word” is final and authoritative, at least until the Toronto scholar informs us that this judgment has been superseded by a later one. This is a “Word of God” that is not subject to the testing and authority of sacred Scripture. The ICS scholar and teacher is the sovereign in his sphere. He is the lord and god in Christian education.

This usurpation of the authority of Scripture, i.e., of God Himself in Jesus Christ, proves that the “Reformational” thrust of the ICS has nothing in common with the Reformation or with being Reformed in education. Basic to the 16th century Reformation was the confession, “*sola Scriptura*”. Reformed, Christian education is education that applies this confession to the training of covenant children in the school.

There is a revelation of God in creation. Creation and history make known the glorious Name and wonderful wisdom of the Triune God.¹¹

Believing scholars and teachers can and should search out the creation. Covenant children ought to be taught the nature of the world in which they live and are called to serve God. This may not take place, however, independently of Scripture, or even alongside

7 Herman Bavinck, *Pædagogische Beginselen* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1904) 171.

8 John C. VanderStelt, “The Struggle for Christian Education in Western History”, in *To Prod the ‘Slumbering Giant’*, (Toronto: Wedge, 1972), 56.

9 James H. Olthuis and Bernard Zylstra, “An Educational Creed”, in *To Prod*, 167-170.

10 James H. Olthuis, “To Prod the ‘Slumbering Giant’”, in *To Prod*, 30-33.

11 Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.1-6; Belgic Confession, Art. 2; Westminster Confession, 1.1.

Scripture, with a glance toward Scripture now and then. Scripture must be the glasses through which teacher and student see all of created reality, to use the figure of John Calvin in Book 1 of the *Institutes*. And Scripture must be the acknowledged authority of the entire educational enterprise, to which everything in the Christian school is subservient.

The Authority of the Reformed Confessions in the School

Granted now that Scripture is the authority in Christian education, what about the Reformed and Presbyterian creeds, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort and the Westminster Standards? Do they have any place in education? Is their place that of an authority?

That these creeds have an authoritative place in the Christian school is taken for granted in the extensive system of Christian schools established and maintained by members of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. The constitution of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Christian School Association in South Holland, Illinois is representative when it states:

This organization is based on the following principles: A. The Bible is the infallibly inspired, written Word of God, the doctrine of which is contained in the Three Forms of Unity (Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and Canons of Dort—DJE), and as such forms the basis for administration, instruction, and discipline in the school (Article I, “Basis”).

But this is being challenged today.

It is worth noting that Christian Reformed theologian, Clarence Bouma, challenged the place of the Reformed creeds in Christian education long ago in a speech to a convention of the National Union of Christian Schools (NUCS; the organization is now Christian Schools International, or CSI). He appealed to the basis of the Free University of Amsterdam, founded by Abraham Kuyper, which speaks only of the instruction's being grounded in “Reformed principles”. Bouma asked the schools to remove the “Three Forms of Unity” as their basis and to be content with the authority of “Reformed principles”.¹²

The question immediately arises, who determines the “Reformed principles”? Abraham Kuyper? Clarence Bouma? Herman Hoeksema? Cornelius Van Til? Karl Barth? Harry Kuitert? Hendrikus Berkhof? A majority vote of nominally Reformed and Presbyterian church members?

The ICS opposes the use of the creeds as the authority in the school.

¹² Clarence Bouma, “Propagating Christian Education”, in *The Bible and Christian Education* (Chicago: The National Union of Christian Schools, 1925), 107-127.

the confession of the Church-institute (is) largely inadequate for the task of education.¹³

The confessions of a (denominational) institutional church should not take the place of a Christian educational confession since a school is a school and an institutional church is an institutional church. To act as if a church creed can be a school creed is to confuse and mislead.¹⁴

It calls for the composition of an “educational creed” and, in fact, has made one.¹⁵

It is not surprising that the ICS desires to remove the Reformed creeds from the school, since it rejects them even for the church.¹⁶

The objection of the ICS to the Reformed confessions serving as the basis of Christian education has been influential. It is now widespread among Reformed educators to challenge the tradition of founding the Christian school upon the Reformed confessions. Calvin College education professor, Donald Oppewal, interpreted the reference to the “Reformed standards” in the constitution of the NUCS as only a reference to “Reformed principles” and suggested that the school and the church ought to have different creeds.¹⁷

The result has been that, with the approval of the parents, the Christian school authorities have stripped the Reformed confessions from the basis of most Christian schools.

The reasons given for this opposition to the Reformed creeds as basis of the Christian school are that the creeds are ecclesiastical, whereas the schools are not and must not be ecclesiastical; that the creeds are too restrictive; and, for many, including the ICS, that the creeds are out-dated and false.

Against this challenge to the place of the creeds in Christian education, I insist that the creeds must be retained as authoritative for Christian education. To let them go is to lose Reformed, covenantal education. The confessions are not an authority alongside Scripture but the authoritative interpretation of Scripture for the Reformed faith and for Reformed people. They are the Reformed interpretation of Scripture for all time. Submission to the creeds (need we be reminded?) is submission to Scripture.

13 H. DeJongste and J.M. van Krimpen, *The Bible and the Life of the Christian* (Grand Rapids: Groen Van Prinsterer Society, n.d.), 109.

14 Olthuis, *To Prod*, 26.

15 For this educational creed, cf. Olthuis and Zylstra, *To Prod*, 167-170; cf. also Hendrik VanReissen, *The University and Its Basis* (St. Catherines, Ontario: The Association for Reformed Scientific Studies, 1963), 53-61.

16 Cf. Arnold DeGraff, *Will All the King's Men* (Toronto: Wedge, 1972), 95-111: “Our confessions clearly reflect the age-old spiritualizing and narrowing of the Christian life. They lack a clear Kingdom vision. And if this were not enough, they also reflect the theologically conditioned, ecclesiastical controversies of their time of origin. As a result we are greatly in need of a new confession.”

17 Donald Oppewal, “The Roots of the Calvinistic Day School Movement” (Grand Rapids: Calvin College Monograph Series, 1963), 27-29.

The creeds are not narrowly ecclesiastical any more than the Bible is narrowly ecclesiastical but are the truth for the redeemed, Reformed believer's entire life in the world. They bind him, ground him, and guide him not only in church on the Lord's Day but also in his marriage and home; in his labor and recreation; in his life in the State; and in the arts and sciences. The Reformed confessions define and illumine the Reformed world-and-life view.

In the creeds are the “Reformed principles” that must permeate and control Christian education: the authority of Holy Scripture; the sovereignty of God; the creation and fall of man; the pre-eminence of the Christ; the antithesis; and the rest. In them are vast riches for Christian education. What an impoverishment of education, to say nothing of the certain drift away from “Reformed principles”, results when these creeds are set aside and replaced with a modern “educational creed”.

If Scripture as interpreted by the Reformed creeds is the authority in the schools, parents, boards, and especially teachers must know Scripture and the creeds. The teachers must confess the creeds in a heartfelt way. In his important article on Christian schools in the Dutch Reformed tradition, H. Bouwman points out that the Synod of Dordt required schoolmasters to sign the Formula of Subscription, binding them to the Reformed confessions.¹⁸

Without going in the direction of making the school a church-school, something like this is necessary in the Christian school today. Teachers must express commitment to the Reformed confessions.

Reformed, Christian education hereby distinguishes itself from non-Reformed, Christian education. In their work on behalf of Christian education, Reformed and Presbyterian believers must not downplay “Reformed” and play up “Christian”. To do this would be to compromise the full, robust Christianity of their schools.

There is a trend today to make what once were Reformed schools colorless amalgams of many branches of Christendom. Especially are they changed into schools of “evangelical Christians”, i.e., fundamentalists; Arminians; neo-Pentecostals; and others. Inevitably, the Reformed principles are excised from the schools. This is not to say that the schools refuse non-Reformed pupils, every request for admission being carefully considered by the board and every case being judged on its own merits. But it is to say that all must understand that the school is Reformed, through and through, and that every child will be receiving a Reformed, Christian education.

The freedom of the teacher in his or her work is circumscribed by the authoritative place in the school of the Reformed confessions. The binding authority of the creeds does not threaten genuine academic, scholarly, pedagogical freedom. Law and liberty are not foes but friends. There is freedom within the framework of the creeds theoretically: Freedom

18 H. Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*, 2 vols. (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1928), 1:518-519.

is the unhindered activity of a creature within the sphere marked out for it by God. There is freedom practically: Within the area marked out by the creeds, the teacher has room for grand, exciting, exhausting labor. The creeds themselves free the teacher for this labor. They liberate him from uncertainties, from false directions, from the lie in education, and from toil for nought.

But there may be no transgressing the boundaries fixed by the confessions. This would be unfaithfulness to the parents, who support and desire *Reformed* education. This would be a misleading of the children. Teachers who peddle intellectual contraband while flying the colors of the Reformed faith are wretches, in a class with dope peddlers. Worse still, this would be disobedience to God. Whoever is opposed to the creeds, or doubtful about them, must be forbidden to teach in the Reformed, Christian school.

Scripture as the Content of the Instruction

Scripture is the authority over the school, but is it also to be the content of the instruction?

Our answer must be a resounding “Yes” for this is required by the covenant basis of Christian education. That Scripture be the content of the instruction is the requirement of all the passages of Scripture that call parents to teach their children. Deuteronomy 6:6-9 requires parents to teach the children *the law of God*: “And *these words* shall be in thine heart; And thou shalt teach *them* diligently unto thy children”, etc. According to Psalm 78:1-8, fathers must teach their children *Jehovah's praises*, His *strength*, and His *wonderful works*. Ephesians 6:4 says that the upbringing is to be an upbringing entirely in *the nurture and admonition of the Lord*. II Timothy 3:14-17 indicates that the development of a child into a mature man of God occurs by means of *Holy Scripture*.

In harmony with this requirement of Scripture, the vow made by Reformed parents at the baptism of their children demands of them that they “promise and intend to see these children brought up in *the aforesaid doctrine*, or help or cause them to be instructed *therein*” .

We may not adopt the covenant basis of Christian education and then elide the content of the instruction stipulated in that basis, as if covenant education would still be possible. There must be doctrine in the schools, not classes in “the essentials of Reformed doctrine”, but doctrine nevertheless.

An important question remains: *How* is Scripture to be the content? In a devotional way in that there are regular chapel exercises and in that the teachers cry out, “Praise the Lord”, occasionally? As a subject in the curriculum along with the other subjects? Or in some other way?

The teaching of the Bible in the school that I am contending for is not that devotions are

held regularly or that Bible is a subject in the curriculum along with reading, writing, and arithmetic. This is not to say that the Bible should not be read for devotions or even that Bible should not be a distinct subject in the curriculum. But it is to say that these forms of having Bible in the schools do not *constitute* Christian education, are not the *idea* of Christian education.

It is good and necessary to have devotions in the Christian school, the reading of the Bible with some appropriate remarks by the teacher and daily prayer. But it is a mistake to suppose that this is the hallmark of the Christian school and the main difference between it and the state school. Some think so. Witness the hue-and-cry over the banning of the Bible and prayer from the state's schools. Were every public school to reinstate Bible-reading and generic prayer, the public school would be as godless as ever, and just as unacceptable to the Christian parents as it was before.

Regarding Bible as a distinct subject in the curriculum, even though tradition weighs heavily against it and even though the present practice has good results, it would be in keeping with the idea of the Christian day school to drop Bible as a distinct subject. Teaching Bible is not something that parents cannot do themselves. On the contrary, all Christian parents are called by God to teach their children the Bible themselves. It might be beneficial for the exercise of their calling that parents knew that the school was not teaching Bible.

The teaching of Bible, as a distinct subject now, simply is not the reason for establishing Christian schools and may even hinder the accomplishing of the real purpose of the school. The danger is that parents and teacher alike may be satisfied with the teaching of Bible as the fulfillment of the school's mandate. Does this not express itself in the statement that is sometimes heard, "The most important mark on the report card is the mark in Bible", and the statement that is even worse, "The only mark on our child's report card that is important to us is the mark in Bible"? It is also a danger that preparation of the Bible lesson and the actual teaching of Bible may curtail the time and effort that the teacher should be expending in the difficult task of biblically teaching all the subjects in the curriculum.

Besides, the church has the calling to teach the Bible to the children.

It is realistic, however, to expect that the Christian school will continue to teach Bible. Historically, the Christian schools have always taught Bible as a distinct subject - the medieval schools, the schools of the Reformation, the schools in The Netherlands, and the Christian schools in North America today. This also has the good result that the children taught in the Christian school know thoroughly the history, doctrine, and commandments of Scripture. But it must be remembered that the teaching of Bible as a distinct subject does not exhaust the calling of the Christian school to provide biblical teaching. In fact, this does not yet touch the heart of the calling.

Scripture must be taught thus: as the foundation, light, and heart of every subject.

Scripture is to be worked into every subject, naturally and matter-of-factly, as the ground on which that aspect of reality solidly stands; as the light that illumines both the particular aspect of creation that is being studied, so as to give it meaning, and the student himself who is studying, as regards his knowledge and use of that aspect of creation; and as the heart, or core, of the subject, thus unifying all the subjects.

The teaching of Scripture in this way must not be conceived apart from the *content* of Scripture. This content is the glorious Triune God, Father of Jesus Christ, Who must be loved, feared, and served by the redeemed man and woman in the totality of their life. Biblically, the creation that is studied in the school is the revelation of the excellent Name of God. Biblically, the whole duty of the child who studies at school is to fear Jehovah and keep His commandments.

This kind of teaching of the Bible in the Christian school should be illustrated. Take, first, the subjects that have to do with reading and writing, including grammar, literature, spelling, and speech. They are grounded in the Word of John 1, the Word Who is eternally with God and Who is eternally God, the Word Who enlightens every man who comes into the world, the Word Who became flesh in our Lord Jesus. Human words are not an interesting, useful, but accidental phenomenon. They are rather the reflection in His creation of the Word in God. At the heart of the subjects that have to do with words is the reality of fellowship through communication, just as the eternal Word in God is the Word of fellowship within the Godhead and the Word of fellowship to God's elect church. This leads on to the notion of truth in literature and to the notion of beauty in speech.

In her teaching of these subjects, the teacher must be guided by the biblical doctrine concerning the Word in God; concerning fellowship through words; and concerning truth and beauty in man's speech and writing. According to the capabilities of the children, they must be shown these things. I dare say that the effect of such teaching will be a powerful strengthening of the children's abhorrence of the filthy, violent, senseless pulp coming off the presses today and a powerful strengthening of their understanding of what words are for in the church, as well as the encouragement and preparation of the children to use and enjoy their gifts of reading and writing.

As for history, the ground, the meaning, and the center of that important subject are the biblical doctrines of creation; providence; the fall; Christ and the church; the rise and fall of nations by the direct hand of God; the temporal judgments of God; and the titanic, global struggle of the *Civitas Dei* and the *Civitas Mundi*. The meaning of history is Jesus the Christ, and the future of history is the kingdom of Christ.

With regard to science, Scripture's teachings of fiat creation, the creation of man in God's image, the fall and subsequent curse on the earth, the catastrophic destruction of the world that then was by a universal flood, and God's orderly government of His creation ("laws of nature") are essential to the truth of science.

Such teaching of Scripture in the schools makes the instruction the truth, both in each subject and overall, and keeps it from being the lie. Such teaching makes the instruction Christian—not only “godly”, but Christian. The schools of confessing Reformed and Presbyterian believers must be Christian, i.e., having to do with Christ Jesus. They must be centered in Christ. They must be devoted to Christ. There may be nothing in the school that is unrelated to Christ or that is related in some other way than being on its knees to Him. For the message of Scripture is the glory of God in Jesus Christ. Man's whole duty, according to the same Scripture, is to fear God by believing on Christ and to obey God by bowing the knee to the Lord Jesus.

Such teaching is the task of the Christian schoolteacher. It is work. It is hard work. It is work by the sweat of the teacher's brow. God demands it. The parents expect it. The children deserve it. The work of the teacher is not so much marking papers (although it is this too), as it is teaching Scripture in this way.

But what exciting work! To see the truth, even though in glimpses and in a glass darkly; to teach others the Name of God above all other names, i.e., Jesus Christ; and to do this, by the covenant grace of God, so that those so taught know God and serve Him, why, this is work for a prophet, a priest, and a king—the Christian schoolteacher.

This is a work of faith.

We must believe that the world is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. We must become like a little child to see the excellent Name of the Lord in all the earth, to see the Spirit of God giving life and breath to every creature, to see the universe as made for Christ and His people.

It is good to read the Psalms as part of the preparation for teaching in the Christian school. The Israelite was not so naive as to be ignorant of the physical explanation of birth, but he was so full of faith that he knew conception and birth to be the marvelous work of Jehovah (Psalm 139). The alternative is approval of abortion.

We must believe that Jesus the Christ is not only the Savior of souls for the world to come, but also the One preeminent in all things and the exalted, living Lord Whom it is wisdom to kiss in thinking, in working, in marrying, in history, in physical science, and in music.

We must believe that that most elegant book, “the creation, preservation, and government of the universe”, can be read rightly only through the spectacles of Holy Scripture.

“Lord, increase our faith.”

Implications for Everyday Instruction

Since this is the place of Scripture in the schools, Scripture will be brought into the teaching, openly, unashamedly, and often. There will not merely be passing references to the Bible or even quotations of a text now and then. Rather, the teacher will get the Bibles out, read a passage or passages, and teach the passage, showing how the passage applies to the subject at hand.

Included on the tests will be questions that require the students to demonstrate their grasp of the relation of a subject, or aspect of a subject, to the Word, i.e., to God and His Christ.

The history class will probably begin with the reading and explanation of Genesis 1-3; Galatians 4:4; Ephesians 1:10; and Revelation 21. As the course develops, the teacher will read and explain Daniel's prophecy on the rise and fall of nations; Ecclesiastes on the vanity of human life and culture apart from the one grace of God in Jesus Christ; and Revelation on the significance of war.

Romans 13 will be the heart of the civics course.

Ephesians 4:28, Matthew 6:19-34, and Luke 16:1-13 will be woven into the economics course.

Psalms 104 and 139 will be central in biology.

Even the athletics at school will be grounded in and directed by the Word. "Gym" and other forms of physical exercise will begin with a class of instruction on the body of the Christian. From I Corinthians 6:9-20, the teacher will show that the body of the covenant child is redeemed by Christ and sanctified by the Spirit so that it is to be devoted to God's glory. It is not the despicable prison of the soul as Greek philosophy supposed. The teacher will go on to speak of the slight profit of bodily exercise. He will warn against the evil of glorifying the body, rather than glorifying God with the body, in light of the idolatry in our culture of worshipping the strength and agility of the man and the beauty of the woman. There will also be instruction in the command of God that competition be tempered by love for the neighbor.

The danger that sound explanation of Scripture replaces thorough instruction of the material must be resisted. It is not either/or, the one at the expense of the other, but good, solid, thorough teaching of the subject in light of Scripture.

To do this, the teacher needs to think biblically, needs to be God-centered, i.e., Reformed, to the marrow of his bones. He must be biblically and theologically competent. To paraphrase Paul, the teacher must be determined to know nothing except God in Christ. No more in the teacher's case than in Paul's does this mean the exclusion of all else. Rather, it means that everything is taught as God's creation and that every thought is

brought into captivity to Christ.

This kind of school will bear fruit in young men and young women who fear the Lord and keep His commandments in their earthly lives and with their position and talents.

This is what we Reformed parents want.

So does God