

The Necessity of an Explicitly Christian Education

By: Brian Schwertley

The Bible is very specific regarding the manner in which Christian parents are to bring up covenant children. Paul tells Christian fathers, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). Deuteronomy 6:6-9 reads, “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

In the Old Testament (especially in Proverbs) there are a whole series of words that are directly used in the sphere of the biblical training of children. These words are translated as teaching, instruction, reproof, chastisement, correction and discipline. The most common Hebrew word is *musar* which is a comprehensive term that is translated as instruction, admonition, discipline and correction. The Septuagint usually translates this word as *paideia* which is the word used by Paul in Ephesians 6 translated as “nurture” (KJV), “training” (NKJV, NIV), “discipline” (RSV, NASB), “instruction” (NEB) and “correct” (JB). In Hebrews 12:5, 7 and 8, the same word is translated as “chastening.” Although the word is often used in the narrow sense of chastening or discipline for bad behavior, the term also has a very broad sense; that is, the overall general biblical education of a child and all that it entails (instruction, reproof, chastisement, etc.).

The general overall picture of godly child-rearing that is presented in Scripture is as follows. God has given Christian parents (in particular fathers) His divine revelation (or covenant law-word) which they are responsible to learn, believe and obey (Dt. 6:1-6). They in turn have a covenantal obligation to “diligently teach” the Bible to their children (Dt. 6:7). This teaching, however, is not merely an intellectual affair but is enforced, reinforced and habituated through example, verbal reproof, correction and admonition coupled with physical chastisement at appropriate times. This covenantal training process is used by God to justify and sanctify the children of believers. Further, this training process imparts true biblical wisdom. The children learn discretion, discernment, insight, practical wisdom or in modern slang terms “biblical street smarts.” Covenant children are prepared for a life of truly satisfying dominion work under Christ. Under the biblical leadership of a Christian father children are to develop Christian character. They are to be “cultured” in a distinctly Christian sense. The goal of teaching is “to know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion” (Prov. 1:2-4).

Before turning to specifics regarding discipline, one must consider the important role of teaching in the home. God commands all Christian parents to “diligently teach” their children (Dt. 6:7). Parents have the responsibility to teach their children to love the Lord with their whole heart. They are to teach the fear of the Lord, a total loving devotion and submission unto Him. Consequently, parents must teach their children the whole counsel of God. If parents focus on biblical ethics without teaching their children the many other important doctrines (e.g., God’s nature and character, creation, providence, regeneration, justification, sanctification, etc.) then

those children will often have a very distorted understanding of the faith. Such lopsided teaching can lead to Pharisaical self-righteousness or a secular “do-gooder” type of pragmatism.

There are a number of things that parents should do to insure a theological balance in the home. First, fathers should read straight through the Bible on a daily basis during family worship. When parents haphazardly pick and choose Bible readings for the family devotions there is a tendency to focus on certain portions of Scripture at the expense of others. Parents also should require all children who are capable of reading, to read systematically through the whole Bible in their personal devotions. Parents should ask their children questions regarding each day’s Scripture reading to encourage meditation and analysis of what was read. This will discourage a cursory reading where little scriptural knowledge is actually absorbed. Further, fathers should acquire Christian books and commentaries in order to answer questions from their wives and children regarding difficult portions of Scripture. (A good book on biblical interpretation is Louis Berkhof’s, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, Baker, 1950. Some recommended commentaries on the Bible are Matthew Henry’s, John Calvin’s, Matthew Poole’s, and John Gill’s. A good New Testament commentary set to start off with is William Hendriksen’s and Simon J. Kistemaker’s.) A father should encourage his wife and children to ask questions regarding the Bible. If the father cannot answer a particular question adequately from his own personal library he should call a friend or elder who can.

Second, parents should take advantage of the theological works produced by the church for the purpose of balanced instruction. The greatest tool yet produced for the theological training of children (and new believers) is the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*. Not only is the *Shorter Catechism* theologically balanced, comprehensive and thoroughly biblical, it is specifically designed for children or those of “weaker capacity.” The *Shorter Catechism* should be used in family devotions, home schooling and Christian schools. Children should not only be required to progressively memorize the questions and answers to the catechism, they also need to be taught the meaning of the answers so that they can explain the various theological points in their own words. Most young children are not very excited about the study of theology. It is important that parents emphasize the necessity and importance of theology, that such training is something that pleases God. Also, fathers need to maintain discipline and teach in a patient, loving manner so that the children are not turned off by formal instruction. One should fervently pray that his children will love the Bible and theology so that they will have a deeper love of God and will be better able to serve man. Causing one’s children to hate devotions by acting like a mean tyrant is obviously counterproductive.

Parents should also incorporate Christian books into a child’s home schooling and “leisure” reading. There are biographies written for different reading levels on various Protestant Reformers and notable missionaries. There are also some excellent historical novels that are written from a Christian perspective (e.g., G. A. Henty). When children are old enough they should learn church history and should read some of the standard Reformed works on theology (e.g., L. Berkhof, Hodge, Calvin) and counseling (e.g., Jay Adams). Many children who were raised in Reformed homes and churches have apostatized and joined themselves to Arminian churches because they did not have a solid grasp of the Reformed faith. Their fathers did not do their job adequately as teacher and theologian of the family.

Formal Bible and theological instruction during family devotions and home schooling is not enough. Deuteronomy 6:7-9 indicates that biblical instruction is to permeate the whole of each and every day at each and every location. It reads, “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when

you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” This passage contains a very comprehensive view of Christian child-rearing. Its directions and implications for family religion are manifold.

American evangelicalism for the most part has a very compartmentalized view of a child’s education and training. For the so-called “secular subjects” (math, history, reading, writing, science, etc.) most professing Christian parents send their children to the public or state school. For “religious subjects” (e.g., creation, Noah’s ark, Daniel and lion’s den, etc.) there is Sunday school and the youth group. When serious disciplinary problems arise there is the school guidance counselor, the local psychologist or the youth pastor. The Bible presents a very different picture of child-rearing. It does not treat biblical religion as a little side compartment to life. It does not regard doctrine as a little sphere of spiritual material that is added on to the secular sphere. Deuteronomy 6:7ff says plainly that scriptural precepts and principles are to permeate every area of life. Christian parents have a responsibility to pass on to their children a comprehensive biblical world and life view. Therefore, God expects parents to integrate a study of His word into every sphere of a child’s life. Patrick D. Miller writes,

The picture is that of a family continually in lively conversation about the meaning of their experience with God and God’s expectations of them. Parental teaching of the children by conversation about “the words,” study of God’s instruction, and reflection on it (cf. Ps. 1:2 and Josh. 1:8) is to go on in the family and community. Whether at or away from home, “these words” are to be uppermost in mind and heart; parents should teach their children in such a way that their last thoughts before falling asleep and their first words upon getting up are about the Lord’s command. The text is clear that “these words” are not simply to be recited or repeated. They are to be talked about—that is discussed, studied, and learned. The practical implications for life are to be thought out and discussed with the children as much as they are in the Book of Deuteronomy itself.

Parents need to integrate biblical teaching into a household’s everyday activities. During meals the father should direct the conversation theologically. Current events, whether the news of the day or a recent fad, can be discussed from a biblical perspective. Questions can be asked regarding school or personal Bible reading. Husbands and wives can discuss doctrine and analyze current theological debates in the Christian community. The children should see a passion for God and theology on a daily basis. When gardening or doing outdoor chores, the wonders and beauty of God’s creation should be a frequent topic. It is also important to discuss the importance of the Christian work ethic. When the family watches a TV program or a movie, the parents can discuss the theme, message and world view presented in the particular program from a Christian perspective. If a parent is not used to integrating biblical teaching into everyday mundane activities (such as grocery shopping with the children) then one should think of discussions, comments and questions that can be used ahead of time. Parents need to work at this theological integration until it is both natural and habitual. If one is looking for ideas in this area the book of Proverbs is ideal. The Proverbs are full of applications and warnings from God’s law—in short, memorable sayings taken from nature and everyday life.

If parents are to play the key role in integrating biblical teaching in their children’s lives, then they have a responsibility to organize their lives in such a manner that they have adequate time to spend with their children. This means that one’s children take priority over material things such as owning a new car, expensive vacations, fancy clothes and so on. There is nothing

wrong with having nice things as long as one does not neglect one's own children to have them. A father who works two jobs and is never home in order to buy a fancy SUV is clearly violating Scripture. Also, under normal circumstances (in a two-parent household) mothers are to be home with the children. The modern feminist idea that mothers need to work outside the home in a shop, office or factory to have true fulfillment is satanic nonsense. Mothers who place their children in a day-care center for the sake of a career, or in order to maintain an upper class lifestyle are self-centered and materialistic. Further, when husbands are home from work, they are not to spend all their spare time with their buddies or in front of the television. They must spend time with their own children, discipling them. After a hard day's work the couch and TV are very inviting. However, fathers have a higher calling; that is, a God-given duty to engage their children in godly conversation. Many Christian fathers will have to answer to God for wasting years of opportunity to obey Deuteronomy 6:7ff.

Churches should support parents in their desire to practice theological integration by providing solid teaching and materials on the family (e.g., Jay Adams, Doug Wilson, Bruce A. Ray, etc.) as well as treating families as covenantal bodies instead of isolated individuals. Churches should encourage whole families to attend public worship together as was practiced in Scripture (cf. Ex. 10:9, Dt. 12:18; 29:10-13; 31:10-13; Josh. 8:35). Also, churches must avoid various programs that atomize the family. The trend of large Evangelical churches is to have a separate program for husbands, wives, girls, boys, teens and so on. Such a practice works at cross purposes to Deuteronomy 6:7ff. Christian children need solid leadership from their own fathers. They do not need youth pastors and silly gimmicks. Children need to see the godly interaction of their parents with other Christians. There are many Bible passages (e.g., Ex. 12:26-27; Dt. 6:20-21; 32:7; Josh. 4:6-7) that assume that children learn the meaning of biblical religion directly from their parents. Remember, the imperatives of Deuteronomy 6:7ff are given to fathers and parents and not to youth pastors or youth group leaders.

Deuteronomy 6:7ff and the Public School Question

There are some important applications of Deuteronomy 6:7ff that need to be considered. The first application regards the question of public or state schools. Do the commands of God in this portion of Scripture give parents the option of placing their children in a public school? There are a number of biblical reasons why the answer to this question is an emphatic no. One reason why this portion of Scripture rules out the use of public schools is that it requires the true Christian faith to be integrated into every area of life. Every subject under the sun (e.g., math, geography, economics, art, literature, science, medicine, agriculture, political science, etc.) must be taught from a distinctly Christian perspective. Deuteronomy 6:7ff tells fathers that every part of every day and in every place there must be a discussion of Jehovah and His word. If God requires theological discussion at home, outside in the garden or park, in the supermarket, in the car or even at the ball park then certainly He requires a discussion of God and His ways during the many hours of education at school. Deuteronomy 6:7ff simply assumes that there are no areas of life that are neutral or purely secular. Yet public schools as a distinct policy leave God, Christ and the Scriptures outside of the classroom. Schools that separate God and Christ from the classroom are schools that are founded upon anti-Christian, atheistic unbelief. Such schools are not designed to promote obedience to Christ and His law-word but are designed to produce allegiance to the state. The apostle Paul agrees with the teaching of Deuteronomy when he tells fathers to bring their children "up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). The

entire training process of a covenant child is to be “of the Lord.” Every bit of training, discipline, education and knowledge is to converge in total devotion and obedience to Jesus Christ as every beam of light leads to the sun.

According to Deuteronomy 6 the purpose and goal of education is love and obedience to God. The parents are not merely training children to make money but to be faithful to the covenant. The central command of Scripture is to love God with the whole heart (Dt. 6:5). That is the chief reason why theology is to permeate all other subjects. Any educational system that does not have a love of God through Jesus Christ as its chief goal is anti-Christian and implicitly satanic. Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Mt. 23:37). How can public schools promote the greatest commandment when they purposely keep God away from children’s minds?

Another reason why Christians should not send their children to public schools is that state schools violate the first commandment by adhering to the educational philosophy that no religion should be favored above another religion. In a nation of many diverse religions, the educational establishment believed the best policy was to establish religiously neutral schools. However, because religious neutrality is impossible, public schools opted for agnosticism, secular humanism, and naturalism all of which are religious beliefs that are antithetical to Christian theism. Indeed, many within the educational establishment waved the flag of neutrality and fairness as a guise to de-Christianize the schools in America. Sadly, most Christians have succumbed to the neutrality ploy.

Public schools refuse to confess Christ before men (Mt. 10:22). They are teaching by precept and example that God, Jesus and the Bible have nothing to do with education. The word of God, however, says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Pr. 1:7), that human philosophies are not according to Christ (Col. 2:8). God has given Christ “all authority in heaven and on earth” (Mt. 28:18). There is no area of life that is outside of His control and domain. Public schools are in open rebellion against Jesus Christ for they reject His authority over the class room. Gordon Clark writes, “How does God judge the school system which says to him ‘O God, we neither deny nor assert thy existence; and O God, we neither obey nor disobey thy commands; we are strictly neutral.’ Let no one fail to the point: The school system that ignores God teaches its pupils to ignore God; and this is not neutrality. It is the worst form of antagonism, for it judges God to be unimportant and irrelevant in human affairs. This is atheism.” Jesus said, “He that is not with Me is against Me” (Mt. 12:30). Are public schools with Christ? Are they faithfully serving Him? No, they are against Him. When Christian parents send their children to public schools they are in essence handing their children over to the enemy (anti-Christ statist idolaters) to be indoctrinated in the modern state religion-secular humanism. That many such children reject the faith of their fathers and embrace the world spirit and heartily give themselves over to the lust of the flesh (fornication, adultery, drunkenness, drugs, etc.) should come as no surprise. Would any one be surprised if a child that spent several hours each day for several years at a Hindu school eventually converted to Hinduism as a teenager? No, of course not! Yet countless Christian fathers have bought into the myth that public schools are neutral and send their children to hell in the process.

A third reason why Christian parents should not send their children to public schools is that the purpose of educating covenant children is to promote obedience to Jesus Christ and His law. Christian parents have a responsibility to pass on to their children a distinctly Christian world and life view. A covenant child’s education must be permeated with Christian ethics or values. Every subject must be taught in accordance with the Christian world view and must be

“Christocentric.” Paul writes, “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...” (2 Cor. 10:4-5). In public schools every subject and discussion is an anti-Christian stronghold that needs to be pulled down.

Public schools teach that man evolved from pond scum. The Bible teaches that God created all things in six literal days. Is it proper for a Christian father to expose his seven or eight year old child to a dogmatic, organized attack against the foundational doctrine of creation? Public schools teach that ethics are evolving, that society or the majority determines what is acceptable behavior. The Bible says that the moral law is based on God’s nature and is unchanging, absolute and non-negotiable. Public schools teach that man is basically good and that many bad behaviors are the result of bad genetics, or environment, or disease (e.g., alcoholism, drug addiction). The Bible teaches that man is born with the guilt and pollution of sin and that every transgression of God’s law is evil. Public schools identify many evil activities as permissible and even virtuous (e.g., fornication, homosexuality, witchcraft, idolatry, rebellion against parents, etc.). They also strongly condemn many fundamental doctrines of Christianity such as Christ’s exclusive claim to be the way to God, the biblical view of the family and so on. Public schools have no real foundational basis for teaching ethics. Only the Bible gives sound, logical reasons why cheating, theft, rape, sexual immorality and murder are wrong. Public schools espouse a secular humanistic, naturalistic, pluralistic, relativistic anti-Christian philosophy that contradicts Scripture at every fundamental point. Parents simply cannot be faithful to the biblical commands to instill in their children a Christian world and life view if they send their children into the satanic lion’s den of public education. Every thought is to be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, not to the obedience of the heathen state.

A fourth reason why Christian parents should not send their children to public school is that “bad company corrupts good morals” (1 Cor. 15:33 NASB). The word translated as communications (KJV) or company “means a bringing together, companionship. It is contact, association with evil, that is declared to be corrupting.” It is totally irresponsible to send covenant children into a society of evil teachers and evil-doers. “Spiritual life is quenched in the atmosphere of carnal society, and a sort of intoxication quickly comes over him who frequents it.” Children are often very gullible and susceptible to peer pressure and to the influence of people in positions of authority (i.e. teachers). A covenant child in a public school is assaulted from every side by demonic doctrine, profane disputations, coarse jesting, satanic music, exaltation of fornication and rebellion, hatred of lawful authority and all sorts of deadly temptations. How many covenant children have had their minds polluted and their morals corrupted at the public school? Sad to say-multitudes!

A fifth reason why a covenant child should not attend public school is that a Christian child’s education must always be accompanied by biblical discipline. Biblical education is never purely an intellectual affair. It is always to be accompanied with verbal reproof, correction and admonition and physical chastisement when necessary. The fact that children need admonition presupposes that children have violated some ethical standard and therefore need to be confronted verbally regarding “bad” behavior or speech. It also presupposes that the goal of such admonition or correction is an acknowledgment of wrong-doing and a change of behavior in a right direction. That is, there is to be repentance leading to a personality and behavioral change. This point raises a few questions regarding public schools. First, are public schools including discipline with a child’s education? Second, if public schools are using discipline, what is their

standard? It is common knowledge that discipline in public schools is very lax if not virtually non-existent. This fact should come as no surprise for four reasons. First, the spanking of children is now regarded as child abuse. Second, rebellious behavior (especially in teenagers) is considered a normal and even a beneficial aspect of growing up. Three, state schools are not really interested in instilling “old-fashioned values” but are primarily interested in producing young adults who are in love with statism. One must keep in mind that state schools are an establishment of religion (secular humanism) and their main job is not education but the promotion of that religion. Fourth, many modern public school teachers do not regard misbehavior as an ethical problem but as a problem of environment. Rambunctious children are medicated with Ritalin®, and when children and young adults commit murder we are often told that such persons were themselves victims of society.

However, the main reason why covenant children should never attend a public school is that the discipline that occurs in a state school is not based on Scripture or biblical ethics but on secular humanism. Therefore, covenant children who are in a public school will receive satanic admonition. For example, they will receive rebuke, correction and chastisement for godly behavior (e.g., starting prayer groups, speaking up for Christ in class, witnessing to others, telling the truth regarding premarital sex and homosexuality, warning others of false religions, etc.) and they will receive praise for ungodly speech (e.g., speech that accepts and promotes human autonomy, relativism, cross-dressing and homosexuality, evolution, polytheism, racism [e.g., affirmative action], multiculturalism, feminism, statism, etc.). The satanic admonition that children receive in public schools is designed to promote a personality and behavioral change in an explicitly anti-Christian direction. Furthermore, even if a public school teacher or administrator disciplines a child for something that is truly unethical (e.g., lying, stealing, name-calling, fighting, etc.) they (as a set policy) cannot give biblical reasons for discipline but must rely on pragmatism, or some concept of loyalty to humanity or the state. To say to a child “do not lie because you need to be a good citizen” or “do not steal because it violates the brotherhood of man” tells a child something far different than, “do not lie or steal because such behavior is a violation of God’s moral law and displeases Him,” or “John, do you know that the Bible says that liars will not enter the kingdom of heaven?” Public school discipline is given in terms of utility to the state rather than in biblical terms of service and glorification to God.

A sixth reason why covenant children should not attend public school is that God has not given the civil government the authority or biblical right to establish a tax-financed public school system. The Bible gives the civil magistrate a limited authority under God. The civil government has been given the task of protecting society by bringing negative sanctions against public evil. The civil magistrate is a minister of God “to execute wrath on him who practices evil” (Rom. 13:4). The civil government has every right to collect taxes in order to fulfill its negative role of protection. It, however, does not have biblical warrant to intrude upon the God-ordained covenantal institutions of the church or the family unless a crime (biblically defined) has been committed. Few professing Christians would argue that the civil magistrate has the right to administer the sacraments or exercise church discipline. Most professing Christians, however, do not have a problem with the state collecting taxes by means of coercion in order to do something that Scripture explicitly says belongs to fathers (Dt. 6:4-9; Eph. 6:4). The state has no more biblical right to collect taxes for public education than it does to set up Buddhist temples or Hindu shrines. The only people that God has given authority to set up schools for children are parents. “The Christian school, properly seen, is an extension of the Christian home. The school exists for no other purpose than to supplement and not replace a parent’s instruction at home.

The school and home work closely together in educating the child.” When the civil government sets up public schools it sets itself up as the father of all children. Such a civil government views all the children as property of the state. “This view is basic to the philosophies of statist education. It is especially pronounced in all forms of Marxism, national and international socialism alike. The child is a state resource, to be developed and used for the welfare of the state.” When parents put their children in a state school they in essence are supporting the state’s messianic claim of total jurisdiction over the family. Such parents are contributing to the Molech-state’s power religion. They also are guilty of stealing from their neighbor, for taxation without divine authorization is theft. Their children are going to school at the taxpayer’s expense. Many of these taxpayers are elderly people who do not have any children and are on fixed incomes. Benefiting from the civil government’s unlawful collection of property taxes for state schools is sinful. If all professing Christians pulled their children out of the public schools the public school system would collapse. Then the greatest institution of statist control and the spread of irreligion, socialism, atheism and nihilism would be put out of business. Why don’t professing Christians take the leading role in shutting down the public school system? The answer probably is a love of mammon. How many professing Christians have sent their children straight to hell to save money?

Common Arguments for Public School Use Refuted

Christian parents who send their children to public schools have a number of arguments that are used to justify their practice. One argument is that covenant children can avoid evil peer groups and spend their time with other Christians. Parents should simply instruct their children regarding proper companionship at school. There are a number of problems with this type of thinking. First, even if a child was extremely careful regarding forming friendships with others at school he still cannot avoid the evil influence of the teacher. Second, a covenant child may not seek out the pierced, tattooed, pot-smoking, fornicating crowd. However, there is nothing stopping the heathen from seeking out a covenant child in order to attempt to influence, corrupt or tease that child. Why place a child in harm’s way when it is not necessary? Are not Christians told by Christ to avoid temptation (cf. Mt. 6:13; 26:41)? Third, even if a covenant child does attempt to form a bond with other professing Christians at school, it is almost certain that in modern America such children will be Arminian, charismatic heretics who deny some of the essentials of the faith. Parents need to heed the words of the Proverbs. “The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray” (Prov. 12:26). “He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed” (Prov. 13:30). “Thorns and snares are in the way of the perverse; he who guards his soul will be far from them” (Prov. 22:5). “Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul” (Prov. 22:24-25). “Do not be envious of evil men, nor desire to be with them; for their heart devises violence, and their lips talk of trouble-making” (Prov. 24:1-2).

Christian parents must never forget that public schools by law are required to teach every subject from an autonomous satanic perspective. Every school hour of every day, public school teachers spout forth lies. Furthermore, public schools are cesspools of immorality. Children in public schools have a virtual smorgasbord of wickedness available to them every day. Virtually any drug, any form of sexual perversion, every form of religious Satanism and so on is readily available. Christian parents have a covenantal obligation to protect their children from such an

anti-Christian environment. Sending one's children to a propaganda center for atheism and nihilism is not the proper, wise or loving thing to do. Even when Christian adults (who are spiritually mature and ready to do battle) spend time with the wicked, they are to do so on their own terms, not on the terms set by the wicked. Hodge writes, "It is only when men associate with the wicked with the desire and purpose to do them good, that they can rely on the protection of God to preserve them from contamination."

Another argument that is often used to justify public school use is as follows: "Well, Pastor Dave's children all went to public school and they turned out just fine." Although one can point to many examples of covenant children who attended public school without going apostate such an argument is fallacious for the following reasons. First, the fact some children who are placed in unbiblical, dangerous situations and escape without serious harm does not prove that public schools are virtuous or biblical. It merely proves that God is merciful when Christian parents do stupid, unbiblical things. If a soldier in Vietnam makes his way through a deadly mine field without serious injury, it does not prove that mine fields are safe. It does not mean that one should recommend walking through mine fields to others. Second, although many covenant children make it through public school without rejecting the faith, it does not mean that such children did not miss the superior opportunity of an explicitly Christian school or home education. There are many professing Christians that have been partially corrupted and negatively influenced by the propaganda they received in state schools as a child. The influence of feminism, statism, evolution, ethical relativism, existentialism, anti-intellectualism and so on are strongly evidenced in churches where children have attended public schools. A non-Christian education is a bad education. When Christian parents put their children in public schools they are missing a one-time opportunity to give their own children a good Christian education. No one who takes the Bible seriously can argue that a Christ-less education, or an agnostic-atheistic education is a good education. From a biblical standpoint it can't be.

A third argument that is used to justify sending covenant children to public schools is that the Christian schools are no better than public schools. While there are many mediocre Christian schools in America, there are some excellent Christian schools as well. People who are unwilling to home school their children need to be willing to either form a solid Christian school with other Christian parents or they should be willing to move to an area where a good Christian school exists. A good Christian school must: be Reformed in doctrine; have high academic standards; be strict in the area of discipline; and, must integrate the Christian world and life views into every subject. Schools that call themselves Christian yet use secular public school textbooks, or teach Arminianism, or lack academic rigor and moral discipline, or regard the Christian faith as an add-on to the "secular" fields of study must be avoided. They are Christian in name only.

A fourth argument is that covenant children need to be exposed to the ways of the world in order to be properly prepared for adulthood. In other words Christian fathers should not overly shelter their children, for a time will come when they will be sent out in the world. There are a number of problems with this argument. First, this argument assumes (without any biblical proof) that children need to spend a lot of time among the wicked in order to learn to function in society. The biblical method of preparation for adulthood is not to send covenant children over to Canaanite villages to spend time with the heathen, but rather for parents to diligently instruct their children regarding life and the temptations of the world so that they can deal with all contingencies of life, identify sinful foolish behavior and avoid it. The biblical method of preparing covenant children for life is a training in biblical wisdom. This is achieved by teaching them the Scriptures and praying to God for wisdom. Proverbs chapter 2 says,

My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path. When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you, to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things, from those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness; who rejoice in doing evil, and delight in the perversity of the wicked; whose ways are crooked, and who are devious in their paths (vs. 1-15).

There is nothing in Scripture regarding the necessity of having one's covenant children hang out with pagans. The book of Proverbs is full of instructions that are specifically designed to prepare young people for life out in the world. There are instructions and warnings regarding drunkenness (20:1; 23:20, 21, 29, 31, 32, 35), adultery (2:16, 5:3, 20; 6:29; 22:14; 30:20), the immoral seductress (2:16ff.), anger and self-control (14:16, 17; 15:1, 18; 29:11), prostitutes (6:20-35; 7:6-27; 23:36-27; 29:3) and so on.

Second, the "children need to mingle with pagans" argument assumes that children have a spiritual maturity level that is capable of sustaining repeated attacks and temptations. Children, especially young children, are very susceptible to satanic assaults. There will come a time when the children move out of the house and live and work among pagans. However, this will occur when they are no longer young or naive. They will establish their own household after they are thoroughly trained, spiritually mature adults. This will occur after they have been taught knowledge, wisdom, discretion, understanding and Christian discernment. Third, it assumes that parents will be able to counteract all the false, unethical nonsense that children are taught in public schools. But how we ask can Christian parents counteract teaching of which they are for the most part unaware? The fact that many Christian parents recognize that their children need to be deprogrammed or depaganized everyday after school is a tacit admission of the danger that public schools pose to Christian children.

A fifth argument that is used to justify sending covenant children to public schools is that Christian children need to be in the public schools in order to witness to young unbelievers. This argument is refuted by two points. First, there is no biblical warrant for the concept of child evangelism. There are no biblical commands or examples in Scripture regarding little children witnessing to unbelievers. Jesus did say "Let the little children come to Me" (Mt. 19:14). However, the context indicates that these children were brought to Christ by adults (Mt. 19:13), who were very likely their own parents. The normal pattern of evangelistic ministry that one encounters in the Bible is for churches to send out adequately trained mature adult male believers. If Christians want to reach children with the gospel, then they should witness to whole families instead of sending young covenant children into spiritually dangerous situations. Fathers can train their children in apologetics and evangelism by personal instruction and having a child come along when tracts are passed out, or door to door discussion takes place. Covenant children are young disciples of their own parents. They are not yet adequately trained or spiritually equipped to debate with the heathen or to disciple others. Second, a Christian child at a public school is not in a position where he can witness effectively anyway. Since public schools are

officially agnostic, pluralistic and anti-Christian, covenant children are forbidden to discuss God, the law, sin and salvation in class. Public schools do not even allow Bible study or prayer groups at the facilities during school hours. Therefore, even if one accepts the premise that covenant children should be little evangelists the public school environment is not conducive to effective ministry. The “covenant child as an evangelist” argument is a transparent excuse for an unbiblical decision.

A sixth argument for sending covenant children to public schools is: “I am not able to home school my children and cannot afford a Christian school. I simply have no other choice.” There are situations with single mothers and poor two-parent households where a Christian school is not an option (financially) and where home schooling would be very difficult if not impossible. In these types of situations the church should step in and assist the parent or parents. Families could volunteer to assist in home schooling or money could be raised by the church to help pay for a Christian education. This is an oversight and diaconal matter that Reformed churches need to work out. The church should make a concerted effort to keep all covenant children that are part of that particular community out of public schools. Churches need to make Christian education a priority.

Conclusion

The Bible teaches that the overall training of covenant children which includes education and discipline is the responsibility of Christian parents (in particular Christian fathers). This includes both formal and informal instruction. A biblical world and life view is to permeate a covenant child’s existence. The biblical passages that speak to the issue of a child’s education and training (e.g., Dt. 6:6-9; Eph. 6:4) teach that an explicitly Christian education is mandatory. It is not an optional issue or a matter of preference. This teaching requires Christian parents to keep covenant children out of public schools. Public schools must be avoided for the following reasons. (1) They do not integrate the Christian faith into every area of life or every academic discipline. (2) They violate the first commandment by adhering to political polytheism, secular humanism and agnosticism or “polite” atheism. (3) They do not promote obedience to Jesus Christ and His laws but to the pagan state. (4) They corrupt the morals of covenant children by false, dangerous teaching and contact with a wicked student body. (5) They do not have biblical discipline. Their discipline is lax and founded upon anti-Christian principles. (6) They violate the biblical principle that places a child’s education in the hands of parents and not the state. (Further, they violate the eighth commandment because they are financed by state theft.)

Churches should help Christian parents be faithful to the child-rearing imperatives of Scripture. Parents need to be told the truth regarding their many responsibilities. They also need training and guidance. As churches implement biblical policies regarding Christian education they should keep in mind that new believers and most professing Christians have been influenced by years of statist propaganda and years of unbiblical instruction from the evangelical community on this issue. Therefore, when a church repents and sets in progress a transition from being a church where many or most church members have their children in public schools to a church where no children are in state schools, the transition should be achieved with careful instruction and patient, loving admonition. Once a faithful Christian parent has a solid grasp of all the biblical arguments and issues involved in the debate regarding Christian education he will gladly obey God’s word in this area.

Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy* (Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 107-108.

R. J. Rushdoony writes, "If education is in any sense a preparation for life, then its concern is religious. If education is at all concerned with truth, it is again religious. If education is vocational, then it deals with calling, a basically religious concept. It would be absurd to reduce preparation for life, truth and calling to an exclusively religious meaning in any parochial sense, but it is obvious that these and other aspects of education are inescapably religious. As Whitehead observed, 'The essence of education is that it be religious.' The public or state schools have thus been inescapably religious. Their 'common faith' has been described as 'made up of elements provided by Rousseau, Jefferson, August Comte, and John Dewey. "Civil religion" is an apt designation for this faith.' As one educator observed, 'America's faith in education has been called by a European visitor the "national religion of America..."'" (*The Messianic Character of American Education* [Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1963], 315-316).

Gordon H. Clark, *A Christian Philosophy of Education* (Jefferson, MD: The Trinity Foundation, 1988 [1946]), 73.

Charles Hodge, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1974 [1857, 59]), 240.

Frederic Louise Godet, *Commentary on First Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977 [1889]), 824.

John M. Otis, "The Necessity for the Christian School" in *Journal of Christian Reconstruction: Symposium on the Education of the Core Group* (Vallecito, CA: Chalcedon, 1987), Vol. II, no. 2, 29.

Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Philosophy of the Christian Curriculum* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House, 1985), 141-142.

Charles Hodge, *1 and II Corinthians*, 340.