

REFORMED PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATION

(I) Christian Reformed Church

Church Order, Article 71

The consistory shall diligently encourage the members of the congregation to establish and maintain good Christian schools, and shall urge parents to have their children instructed in these schools according to the demands of the covenant.

The following is an excerpt from page 276 of the 1980 edition of the Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government by William L. Brink and Richard R. De Ridder (Grand Rapids: CRC Publications).

The Christian Reformed Church shares a strong commitment to the necessity of covenantal, Christian education with Reformed churches throughout the world. It is noted that the Church Order does not require the consistory itself to establish Christian schools. Rather, the consistory's responsibility is to encourage the members of the congregation to do so. Such schools are, therefore, private and not ecclesiastical schools."

Excerpts from Chapter 6, *Christian and Reformed Today* by John Bolt, Paideia Press, Jordan Station, Ontario, 1984:

While support for Christian day school education is not an additional requirement for church membership in the Christian Reformed Church, and its members are not censured for failure to send their children to such schools, the church order would seem to imply that support for such is a requirement for office-bearers.

a) Covenant

In 1914 and 1965 revisions of the church order, in contrast to the Dort order, the covenant of grace is cited as the primary theological reason for Christian day school education. The covenant serves as motivation for continuing, outside the home, the nurture of one's children in the fear of the Lord. Vision of life and practice of nurture should be consistent with that of the Christian home.

b) Kingdom of God

A shift from covenant to kingdom in the Christian school movement in North America came from the followers of Abraham Kuyper. Education equips students for a life of service in the kingdom of God. The Kingship of Christ demands Christian education.

c) Transformation

This view of education is a move away from the Christian's posture of perpetual opposition to and conflict with the existing culture. "The goal of Christian education is not simply the affirmation of culture as a gift from God, nor merely the interpretation of Christian faith with the human cultural enterprise, but rather the transformation of cultural society."

d) Trinitarian Framework

It is the school's primary responsibility to equip students for socio-cultural obedience to the triune God, Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier ... The Christian school must in the power of the Spirit, guide its students toward spiritual discernment.

(11) Reformed Church of America

Article XXI, Rules of Church Government established in the National Synod, held in Dordrecht, in the years 1618 and 1619:

The consistories in every congregation shall be careful to provide good Schoolmasters, who are able, not only to instruct children in reading, writing, grammar, and the liberal sciences; but also to teach them catechism, and the first principles of religion.

Comment from D. J. Meeter (1993). *Meeting each other in doctrine, liturgy, and government. The bicentennial of the celebration of the constitution of the Reformed Church in America.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans):

This rule requires each consistory to sponsor a parochial school ... So the view is obviously a recent one that the Reformed church does not support Christian day schools, as over against the Christian Reformed, which does. (pp. 68f.)

(111) Netherlands Reformed Congregation of the United States and Canada

The U.S./Canadian branch of this Dutch denomination has its origin in the Reformed Church Under the Cross and churches who followed the teachings of Rev. G.C. Ledebor (1808-1863). In 1907 these two groups merged into the Netherlands Reformed Congregations. Their first congregation was established in 1950. They stress the experiential and the necessity of a verifiable spiritual regeneration as a requirement for true membership in the church of Jesus Christ. They tend to be mystical and support their own denominational schools.

(IV) Canadian Reformed Church

This denomination is a direct result of the 1944 "liberation" from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN). The first Canadian Reformed Church was instituted in Lethbridge, Alberta, in 1950. The Canadian Reformed Church believes that "the liberation was not a break with the past but its legitimate continuation." (Van Oene, W. W. J. (1975). *Inheritance preserved: The Canadian Reformed Christian in historical perspective.* Winnipeg: Premier Publishing.)

The Canadian Reformed Church stresses the visibility and the purity of the true Church of Jesus Christ.

Faber, J. The challenge of church union. *Speeches and discussions on Reformed identity and ecumenicity.* C. Van Dam (Ed.). (Winnipeg: Premier):

Let first things be first. First the unity of faith expressed in coming under one pulpit, and out of that unity of faith celebrating the Lord's Supper together. Let us work together as well as we can, but first things first. (p. 165)

Cornelis Van Dam:

If things go wrong in the church, will this not inevitably have its impact in the schools? ...The school as a venture of parents who find their unity in Christ in common worship and service, will deform if the church which nurtures the parents first deforms. (p. 80)

J. Faber:

The most desirable situation is that in a Reformed congregation there is a Reformed elementary school. Children then read the Bible in school in the translation that is used in church. They sing the same psalms and hymns in home, church, and school. They see their teacher and their parents sit under the same pulpit and at the same table of the Lord's Supper. They acquire knowledge to serve God and their neighbour according to the Reformed religion. School instruction and catechism teaching do not clash, etc. (p. 200)

Church Order, Article 58

The consistory shall ensure that the parents, to the best of their ability, have their children attend a school where the instruction given is in harmony with the Word of God as the Church has summarized in her Confessions.

(VI) Free Reformed Church

Church Order, Article 54

The Consistories shall see to it that the parents, in harmony with the promises made at the baptism of their children, have them taught at schools where the instruction is in accordance with the Word of God and the Three Forms of Unity.

Rev. Neil Pronk, Free Reformed Church:

When Church Visitation is made, each consistory is asked the following questions in regard to the Christian education of their children:

"Do the parents endeavour to send their children as much as possible to the schools that harmonize with the principles of the Free Reformed Church?" "Are the parents that are neglectful in this admonished by the Consistory?"

The Free Reformed denomination operates a school sponsored by Free Reformed churches and parents. The school is in Copetown near Dundas and is attended by children from the Dundas, Hamilton, and Brantford congregations. This school is also attended by children from several other Reformed churches.

In the Vineland-St. Catharines area, most of the parents send their children to the new Heritage Christians school which was started together with the Independent CRCs. In other congregations parents make use of local Christian schools.

These may be either OACS schools, but also schools operated by the Netherlands Reformed Congregation, Canadian Reformed Churches or even Baptist academies. A number of parents home school and there are still a small number who send their children to the public schools because of the distance or lack of finances. As far as high school education is concerned, the public schools are used more than Christian schools, because of distance, finances and also dissatisfaction with some of the Christian high schools, especially OACS operated. (letter not dated)

(V) Independent Reformed Churches Within the Alliance of Reformed Churches

There does not seem to be a consensus as far as educational philosophy is concerned. Their situation is still fluid. The Creation Science movement seems to have some influence.