

A History of Reformed (Presbyterian) Christian Education

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The Reformed Churches of Continental Europe and Scotland and England spoke of the Christian education of the youth of the Church. What did they mean by this qualification of the education of their covenant youth? They meant this: nothing less than the teaching of human knowledge within the context of God-centred Christianity. They did not mean schools only for the teaching of the Bible as such. Nor did they mean the teaching of human knowledge with some Christianity taught as an adjunct to that knowledge. Rather, they meant a study of human knowledge that was based upon, seen in the light of, and fully integrated with Divine knowledge. This perspective on knowledge, they believed, would equip students with the true tools of learning so they would be, as much as humanly possible, prepared for all that is to be faced in life and death.

Our fathers in the faith, when they thought of Christian education, had in mind a basically broad education where our children could be made "fit for everything". Ultimately, it meant the comprehensive study of human knowledge in all its branches within the context of Biblical revelation. In the words of the Psalmist, it was to see light in God's light. (Psalm 36:9).

There can be no doubt that our reformed fathers viewed Christian education as vitally important.
The Early Continental Reformers

Our reformed fathers from the outset laid considerable emphasis on the education of children. Martin Luther believed for example, that Christ was mightily concerned in the education of our children, and strongly advocated the education of the Christian youth of the nation. Philip Melancthon gave much time and effort to the cause of Christian education. The universities of central Europe owed much to him for their establishment, as well as a scheme of education he drew up for a gradation and correlation of schools - primary and secondary schools, leading to universities. This conviction of the early Lutherans was shared by our early Reformed fathers.

The Swiss reformers were deeply committed to Christian education. In Swiss cities there emerged under the reformed faith the arts college. In Geneva there was an emphasis on and development in Christian education taking place when Knox was minister of the Congregation of English exiles there. It is important to note also that in Geneva at that time there resided the educational reformer of Nimes, Claude Baduel, whose work did so much to further the ideas of Sturm of Strasbourg, among the Reformed Churches of France[1].

Historians have made the point that the Continental Reformers such as Calvin made a close connection between the health and advancement of the Reformed Faith with that of faithfully educating the youth of the church from a Biblical viewpoint of God, man, the creation and all aspects of life generally. Ultimate reality and the truth of life were to be found upon that basis. Calvin held that learning and the arts should always be found in the wake of the gospel. He held that theology was that queen of sciences and opened and lightened the way for all other knowledge. With these convictions, Calvin's Academy, established in 1559, was built, and became famous as a centre of learning, with all subjects and general knowledge built upon the basis of the knowledge of God. The key stone of the College held the inscription, 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.' The historian Fred Graham writes for example, "... the meeting of General Council on 21 May 1536, which abolished the mass and established the Reformation ... also include(d) a concern for education. ... There are ... very interesting items here: first that the tie between Reformation and education was so close that of all the institutions that might have been mentioned here - the church or the hospital, for instance - only the school is treated.'

'...Indeed, such was the importance of education in Geneva that the only major construction in the city during Calvin's life there - except for defensive fortifications and road building - was the college ...'[2]

The renowned historian Wylie also writes:

'In the wake of the Gospel, learning and the arts, Calvin held, should ever be found. Geneva had become, in the first place, a fountain of Divine knowledge to the surrounding countries; he would make it, in the second place, a fountain of science and civilization. ... In England, in Bohemia, in Germany, and now in Geneva, the Divine science opened the way, and letters and philosophy followed.'

'... the Academy of Geneva ... continued ... to send forth distinguished scholars, in every department of science, and to shed a glory on the little State in which it was planted, and where previous to the Reformation scarcely one distinguished man was known.'[3]

Dr. J. Chris Coetzee, Professor & Dean of Education, Potchefstroom University, South Africa, (1959), writing of Calvin and Christian education states:

'On January 12. 1538 Calvin issued... a very important document in regard to the public schools of Geneva.' 'This prospectus or program laid down that the school must ... study the first principles of theology and also of the arts and sciences, because only through a study of the arts and sciences as well as that of theology. The prospectus, therefore, clearly states that good training in secular subjects is just as essential as training in religion. But the Word of God is in fact the foundation of all learning and the liberal arts are aids to a full knowledge of the Word and may not be despised.'[4]

'... the (Ecclesiastical Ordonnances) were officially adopted on November 15, 1541 ... only the docteurs concern us here. The real task or office of the doctors is to instruct the faithful in the true doctrine so that the purity of the gospel be not corrupted either through ignorance or false opinions. ... in short this title should be classified under the school. The first step of the teacher is the instruction in theology (Old and New Testament). But such lessons will have no value unless the scholars are also instructed in languages and the humane sciences. It is necessary to sow seed for the future so that the church will not be deserted by our children, and therefore it is necessary to establish schools or colleges for the instruction of our children in order to prepare them in this way for ecclesiastical and civil government.'[5]

Coetzee further writes:

'In the program of the Genevan Gymnasium of 1538 Calvin stated that the Word of God indeed is the foundation of all leaning. The Word of God, therefore, forms the foundation of a Christian education. ... Calvin accepted the fundamental authority of the Bible in all spheres of human life and therefore also in the sphere of education.' 'It is unnecessary to add that it does not give us the full content and method of that education, because in addition to the special revelation of God in the Bible or Holy Scriptures, there is also a general revelation of God in nature itself, in the history of God's creation on earth and in the conscience of man himself.'[6]

A fulsome description of the functioning of Calvin's Academy is given by Coetzee in his essay.

Pierre Courthial, in his essay on 'The Golden Age of Calvinism in France 1533-1633', points out that such reformed scholars and divines as Pierre de la Ramee, or Ramus (1515-1572), gave expression with regard to Christian education, that which was close to the heart of those fathers in the faith. He writes:

'Ramus was astonished and dismayed that the (unreformed) Christian religion was being founded on a pagan philosophy; that Aristotle, rather than Holy Scripture, was the source of instruction ... and that the coherence of an argument was more highly esteemed than its faithfulness to the two books of God - the Bible and the created universe.' 'He defined an empirical method for approaching, examining, and understanding created realities, so that they might no longer be tied to the "hypotheses" of Scholasticism. In all this ... Ramus did effective work in epistemology in the Reformed tradition.

'Thus the man who defined physics as the science that studies "first the sky, then the meteorites, minerals, plants and trees, fish, birds, beasts, and men" discovered also the science that studies ... the Word of God. Ramus was killed in the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre.'[7]

Another outstanding reformed scholar and artisan of this era was Bernard Palissy (1510-1590). Of this man Courthial writes:

'Filled with wonder at the beauties, secrets, and manifold laws of Creation, Pallisy defined two unified goals of scientific research: the glory of God and the well-being of man.' 'He died in the Bastille in Paris where he had the honor of being imprisoned for his Reformed faith. He too replaced the reasonings of Scholasticism with a practical and living Christian faith. ... In his books Palissy expresses his praise for the works of God and tells of the scientific discoveries that God has permitted him to make.

His wide scientific interests led to a number of noteworthy achievements. In ceramics he improved the transparent lead glazes used in pottery and increased the quality and range of color. He produced polychrome works of pottery, covering them with designs of stones, shells, fish, and reptiles. His rustic figurines were imitated virtually everywhere in the centuries that followed. He launched the first course in geology at the Sorbonne with lessons on water, stone, and metals. In his study of hydrology, he gave a correct interpretation of the water cycle, especially in regard to the feeding of springs by rain. In paleontology he defied the whole Scholastic school by asserting that fossil shells were real shells and that real animals, including fish, had given their forms to fossil stones. In plant physiology he noted that plants do not absorb only water and humus from the soil but also "salts" and that some to these salts are beneficial to them. That was the first time that the mineral nutrition of plants was set forth.'[8]

Courthial gives some other heart-warming and instructive examples of the view of knowledge our father's held, and its basis on the Word of God. It is profitable reading. It was the conviction of the Reformed Churches from its commencement then, that the Christian (Biblical) faith is foundational to all schooling and learning. The promotion of the

knowledge of Christ and His doctrine and cause, was connected to the promotion of Christian schools.

Our Reformed fathers believed that our faith should be integrated into all subjects. They had a view of the unity of knowledge, and saw all things united in and founded upon the revelation of God in the Scriptures. It was the view of 'In Thy light we see light'.

Thus, it is important to realize that the Reformed Churches were deeply interested in, and committed to the Christian education of their youth. It is also important to note that their commitment was not to education as an end in itself, nor human knowledge in isolation. They did not simply want to have educated heathens or cultured pagans. Education and culture, much as they were appreciated, was not the root of the matter. The education they longed for, and worked so hard for was, as the historian A.R. MacEwen emphasizes, '-- not in any sense to be secular, but, on the contrary, impregnated with religion.'[9]

The Early And Ongoing Commitment Of The Reformed Church Of Scotland To Christian Education.

The view that the Continental Reformers had of education & knowledge is substantially that of the Scottish Reformers. It was also that of the English Puritans, most of whom were Presbyterians.[10]

This is seen for example in Scotland in 1709 and 1710 when the reformed church was earnestly exhorted by the General Assembly to promote the knowledge of Christ in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, and to give of their substance to assist this great cause. The way this great promotion of the knowledge of Christ was to be attempted, was not only the provision of sufficient preachers of the gospel, but also "to inquire what parishes --- want schools." Schools were seen as an important way to propagate Christian knowledge, and to build the Church. It is good to note that subsequently, there was ongoing support for both church and school in the Highlands of Scotland.[11]

The earlier Scottish Reformers were deeply committed to, and appreciative of education, and more especially Christian education. Dr. George Buchanan, one of the most famous classical scholars of Europe; an early moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and tutor of King James the VI of Scotland when a youth, was deeply involved in education and the reformation in Scotland. Knox's interest and commitment to Christian education is well known. It is seen for example, in the First Scots' Confession, and will be commented on later in this paper. Andrew Melville was an outstanding scholar and educationalist, as well as a most influential Scottish reformer, who also served as a moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and was also deeply involved in the matter of the Christian education of Scotland's youth.[12]

Knox and other reformers of the First Reformation, and the Church as a whole with them, obviously were committed to, and saw the matter of Christian education as very important. They were ardent educationalists, and all had a real zeal for the establishment of Christian schools and institutions of learning. They believed that superstition and ignorance were the allies of Rome and her errors. The Reformers of the Scottish Reformation were convinced that ignorance was the chief hindrance to their enterprise, and that systematic instruction in the truths of the Bible must be the foundation of all their work. They believed that one of the most practical ways they could serve the Lord and advance the Reformed faith, was if the people had the ability to read, and could read the Word of God for themselves. They saw the need to appreciate our faith intelligently! To serve the Lord with our mind, as well as our heart and soul was our privilege and calling.[13]

John Knox asserted the necessity of schools 'wherein youth may be trained in the knowledge and fear of God'[14]. He saw that education must be, 'most careful for the virtuous education and godly upbringing of the youth of this realm' for 'the advancement of Christ's glory'.[15]

The First Book of Discipline, drawn up in 1560 by six of the Reformers of that time, namely, John Winram, John Spottiswood, John Willock, John Douglass, John Row and John Knox, (the 'Six Johns'), was intended to be both a statement regarding the reformation of the Church in Scotland, as well as a form for the ordering of the life of the Church. Such was the importance the first godly reformers attached to Christian education, that at that time of first priorities, a Chapter was included in the Book which set out a scheme for Christian Education of the youth of Scotland from primary school to university.[16]

The First Book of Discipline, Chapter VII, V (5), states:

"1. Seeing that God hath determined that His kirk here in earth shall be taught not by angels but by men, and seeing that men are borne ignorant of God and of all godliness, and seeing also He ceases to illuminate men miraculously, suddenly changing them as He did the apostles and others in the primitive kirk: Of necessity it is that your honours be most careful

for the virtuous education and godly up-bringing of the youth of this realm, if either ye now thirst unfainedly the advancement of Christ's glory, or yet desire the continuance of His benefits to the generation following; for as the youth must succeed to us, so we ought to be careful that they have knowledge and erudition to profit and comfort that which ought to be most dear to us, to wit, the kirk and spouse of our Lord Jesus.

2. Of necessity therefore we judge it, that every several kirk have one schoolmaster appointed, such a one at least as is able to teach grammar and the Latin tongue, if the town be of any reputation. If it be upland (that is the country), where the people convene to the doctrine but once in the week, then must either the reader or the minister there appointed, take care of the children and youth of the parish, to instruct them in the first fundamentals, especially in the Catechism (at this date that is Calvin's Catechism - Ed.), as we have it now translated in the Book of the Common Order, called the Order of Geneva. And further, we think it expedient, that in every notable town, and especially in the town of the superintendent, there be erected a college, in which the arts, at least logic and rhetoric, together with the tongues, be read by sufficient masters, for whom honest stipends must be appointed. As also [that] provision [be made] for those that be poor, and not able by themselves nor by their friends to be sustained at letters, and in special these that come from landward.

3. The fruit and commodity hereof shall suddenly appear. For first, the youth-head and tender children shall be nourished and brought up in virtue, in presence of their friends, by whose good attendance many inconveniences may be avoided in which the youth commonly fall, either by over much liberty which they have in strange and unknown places, while they cannot rule themselves; or else for lack of good attendance, and [of] such necessaries as their tender age requires. Secondly, the exercise of children in every kirk shall be great instruction to the aged [and unlearned]. Last, the great schools called the universities shall be replenished with these that shall be apt to learning; for this must be carefully provided, that no father, of what estate or condition that ever he be, use his children at his own fantasies, especially in the youth-head; but all must be compelled to bring up their children in learning and virtue."[17]

The Second Book of Discipline was drawn up by a committee of the General Assembly to serve as a statement of polity for the Reformed Church of Scotland. It was approved by the Assembly without dissent, in 1578. The renowned Andrew Melville was very influential in the drawing up of this Book. The book, while primarily concerned for the ordering of the life of the Church and its welfare, nevertheless saw how important Christian education was by dealing with this subject as basic to the welfare of the Church of God. For example, in chapter five note how this document so highly esteems Christian school teachers, and saw them as playing an important role in the flock of Christ, as well as pastors.[18]

The matter of the Christian education of the Church's youth was constantly before the courts of the Reformed Church of Scotland from its inception. They constantly showed concern and interest in the subject, and were earnest in promoting and supervising a God-centred education. For example, in 1562 the General Assembly petitioned the queen (Mary of Scots), to maintain schools from ecclesiastical incomes. In 1595, the General Assembly ordained that Presbyteries take order for the visitation of congregations, and during visitation, they were to enquire into the state of the Christian education of the youth, that the Reformed faith was taught, that teachers were properly paid, and that local responsible citizens were reminded and encouraged in their duties to see to the Christian education of the youth of the area. In the 1600's, the Presbyteries in their regular visitation of congregations 'invariably asked about the local educational opportunities'.

In 1638 the General Assembly passed Acts that once again sought to have a Christian school established in every congregation or parish, and that each Session seek to provide such able teachers who would truly contribute and help in various ways to the life and welfare of the local congregation.[19]

In 1616 and later, for example in 1633 and 1646 and 1696, the General Assembly particularly sought the support of the Privy Council to establish Christian Schools in every parish, and to maintain and improve such schools.

There were, as can be imagined, difficulties in establishing such schools, and on such a large scale, especially in the Highlands. This was because the Highlands were poorer and not so reformed in the earlier days, and there were thus economic, social and religious grounds for opposition. The Officers of the Church were most concerned however, that Christian education and schools were brought to the Highlands. For example, the Presbytery of Brechin in 1650 was most concerned that not a third of the parishes had schools. We can thus see that in spite of great and apparently insurmountable obstacles, the Reformed Church of Scotland had a deep commitment to, persevered in and laboured over the generations, for the establishment of Christian schools.

By the time of the Second Reformation in Scotland, circa 1638, the system of Christian congregational schools was at last secured, and it could be recorded that by 1649, Christian schools were in practically all congregations.[20]

It is simply a matter of historical record that the divines of the Westminster Assembly, which was basically a Presbyterian Assembly, were strong supporters of Christian education.[21]

Christian education for the believers of the Reformed Church of Scotland was not seen as a luxury. It was seen as a vital and important part of the responsibility of the parents to train up their children in the way it should go. It was seen as an integral part of the Church's ministry. To be faithful in their calling to build up the Church as a pillar and ground of truth, and to call in the lost sheep, they must of necessity labour mightily for the cause of the education of the covenant children in all of life from a consistent Biblical and reformed basis. Even in times of persecution and revolution, the Church kept this vision and calling before them.

The Schoolmaster & In Some Cases The Schoolmistress

Schoolmasters were seen as pivotal in the successful Christian education of the Covenant seed of the Church. Thus the Church ordained by its courts, that schoolmasters were to be examined regarding not only their competence, but also their faith.[22]

Sessions supervised schoolmasters, and were called on by the General Assembly to seek to provide able teachers. Before admission they were tried by some responsible officers of the Church, and from 1700 they had to subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith before they were entrusted with the teaching of the youth. Where a teacher was found unorthodox and /or not having a credible Christian walk, he was dismissed.[23]

The Church gave clear reasons as to why the teachers in the schools that taught the seed of the Church should be both sound in doctrine, ability and in a godly life. All the acts and supervisory authority given to the Church in the life of the school, and why the Church was concerned for these things was because, '... these seminaries of learning... tends to the increase of Christian knowledge and learning, and the advantage of true piety and religion.'[24]

In most cases, schoolteachers were exemplary persons. They were often elders or a licentiate (a man with the academic training to be a pastor, and who had passed Presbytery trials so that he was licensed to accept a call to be a minister if he was so moved, and a congregation called him), or a divinity student. They were thus generally zealous for the faith, as well as Christian education, and eager in the work.[25]

Speaking of the teachers of those earlier times, Dr. Norman Macleod has said:

'Take them all in all, they were a singular body of men; their humble homes and poor salaries and hard work, presented a remarkable contrast to their manners, abilities and literary culture. Scotland owes to them a debt of gratitude that never can be repaid. We should understand that the teachers as a whole saw their work as a calling, a calling from God, not simply as a mere means to obtain a living. It was a sacrifice of the things of this world in many ways for Christ and His cause'.[26]

The results of Christian education on the nation, let alone the Church were remarkable. Scotland at the commencement of the Reformation was in many ways the equivalent of a modern, educationally and culturally backward third world country. It was despised as a primitive nation. However, within a generation or two, it had become renowned as a nation of saints and scholars.

Responsibility For Christian Education

The Church believed that the basic responsibility for the Christian education of children was the parents. The Church where able, was to teach parents their calling in this regard, and to practically assist wherever it could. Parents, at the baptism of their children were seen to be making a solemn covenant commitment to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and part of that was seen by the Reformed Church of Scotland as meaning also the sending of the children to a Christian school.

Sessions were called upon to be diligent in teaching and Biblically supervising Church families in this matter. If parents were not faithful in giving their children a Christian education, they were seen as being in breach of their covenant vows to God concerning the upbringing of their children. Parents who neglected to send their children to a Christian school were debarred from Church privileges For example, in 1650 the elders at Aberdour in Fife, disciplined a man for not sending his boys to school. To not provide a Christian education was seen as 'perjury in breaking the oath made at the

baptism of their children.'

Basic responsibility for the establishment of local Christian schools would be that of Heritors in country areas, and Town Councils (committed to the reformed faith) in larger towns.

Responsibility for the establishment of higher education was from various revenues that the Church as a whole had, and the civil government, because it recognized that because schools were not only 'seminaries of the church', but also of the state, to help maintain such colleges and universities, would be to 'better their stocks', also assisted at a later date in costs.[27]

It should be born in mind that the Reformed Church originally did not seek or desire that state revenues should be used for the establishment and maintenance of Christian schools, but that the patrimony of the Church, inherited from the pre-reformation Church, should be applied to such things. The state however plundered these resources, and the Church, over a great length of time, pressed the State for the return and the use of some at least of these recourses for Christian education. This led in the end, for all practical purposes, with the state rendering 'state aid'. Thus, while the Church did not believe in 'state aid' as such, their seeking of the state that which they saw as theirs, came in time unfortunately for the Church, to be state aid, with the attendant claim of the state over the school. We say unfortunately, for in the end, it led to the state assuming complete control of all education, and making it humanistic, not Christian.

The record of the Church pressing the parliament, especially after 1633 for assistance in the establishment and maintenance of Christian Schools, must be seen in this light. There were six major acts of Parliament from 1646 to 1861 relative to such schools.[28]

It was not the state, but the Reformed Church of the Lord Jesus Christ that brought education to Scotland, as the Church has done almost everywhere it has spread. The state was quite slow to be involved in, and committed to, the education of the youth of the land. From the time of the First Reformation in 1560, until 1633, only the believing members of the Reformed Church advanced the cause of education, and specifically Christian education. This was not an accident, for the Church did not believe that the State should provide the education, only be supportive of the Church and family in providing it to their children. From 1633 to 1872, there was a development where the state became involved in, and increasingly saw it as its calling to educate the youth of the land, including the children of the Church. In the beginning the state was very supportive of the Church, and assisted in many ways. However, by 1872, the state had taken over practically all the schools of Scotland, most of which had been established by believers with the support of the Church for the Christian education of its youth.[29] Within a hundred years the Christian faith and the church were then practically excluded, and the nation educated in a humanistic religion, not the faith, hope and love of Almighty God in Chris Jesus.

We ought not to forget though, that in the earlier times when the church was true to the Word of God and its historical testimony, ministers were to see that part of their Scriptural calling was to exhort parents to be faithful in providing a Christian education for their children. Elders were to be diligent to raise this matter during home visitation.[30]

The gathering of the congregation on the Lord's Day for public worship, was also used to make notices relative to the life of the Christian School, such as the date the school would resume, and in this way, the local congregation also supported the schools.

The Presbytery and Synod were involved in, and concerned for, the laying down and the maintenance for the doctrinal and academic standards of teachers.[31]

Sessions were more immediately concerned and interested in the ability and usefulness of the teacher in contributing to the life and welfare of the local congregation.[32]

Local Sessions and local responsible (reformed Christian) citizens worked together to support and encourage education.

Local Sessions, where there was not sufficient incentive and support by the local people to establish and maintain a school, would give their support to a suitable local private Christian school. In other places, Sessions opposed any but congregational and Church connected schools.[33]

Sessions regularly visited the local schools to encourage and promote and evaluate its progress. For example, in 1652, the Aberdour elders reported having examined the school children, and the Session of Yester in 1674 records how it, 'visited the school according to the act of the Presbytery'.[34]

The Sessions were to see that schoolmasters received a just payment and material support, and even to subsidize his remuneration when necessary.[35]

Presbyteries took the supervisory responsibility for the grammar or regional schools, and visited them on a regular basis, though the local Session was also involved. Yet the General Assembly made it clear that while the Presbyteries were to see that the grammar schools (those above elementary level), were to be reformed, yet their involvement was only to help in the schools, and to assist the school-master in his work. The schools were not directly or immediately under the Church courts. They were not "Church schools" as such. They were Church connected, but administered by responsible Church members of the congregation.[36]

The Church's involvement in Christian education and its power's in the life of the schools were judicative, not legislative.[37] That is, the Church had a constitutional role to play in the functioning of the school, but the administration was left to Christian parents and fellow citizens in the faith.

Godly men and women left legacies for establishing and supporting Christian Schools. Some such privately endowed schools were on a large scale. For example, a very large school was established in the 1600's by George Heriot in Edinburgh, and in the 1700's by Robert Gordon in Aberdeen. In multitudes of parishes local godly benefices, deeply persuaded of the importance of such an education, aided and supported the establishment of such schools.[38]

Some ministers also built and endowed schools for their congregations. Some of the leaders of the Covenanters distinguished themselves by their zeal and activity in providing the means of instruction from a Christian perspective. For example, the justly famous Mr. Alexander Henderson, about the year 1630, liberally endowed a school in the Parish of Leuchars, where he was then minister, and another in his native Parish of Creich.[39]

Often the teacher was also a reader of a congregation. He also at times would serve as a clerk and precentor of the Session and the congregation. We thus find for example, when a teacher was appointed, the Session handing him a Bible, a Psalm Book, Knox's Liturgy and the Session Records.[40]

Teachers were appointed by heritors or the town council, together with the local minister and/or Session. We read for example, that in Kirkcaldy in 1619, how 'the elders and deacons being (agreed) anent the choosing of a master to teach their youth, they are content to agree with Mr. George Buchanan (the minister)...'[41]

Such was the importance attached to the Christian education of covenant youth, where there was a shortage of schoolmasters; the minister would help with the teaching. Where there was not sufficient local support, the local minister often kept his own school. For example, it is recorded that in the congregation (parish) of Loudoun, in the years 1597 to 1637, the minister, who was renowned for his zeal and ability in pastoral work and the preaching of the Word of God, yet also laboured to educate the people as a means of their growth in the knowledge and grace of God. During one winter he taught forty people all over forty years of age, to read, in order that they might profit from personal study of the Scriptures.[42]

Often there was not a house for schoolwork, and parents would keep the schoolmaster as part payment for fees. Fees were often in kind, such as oatmeal.[43]

It is important to note that the whole Scottish Reformed Church through its officers and courts, because of the importance it attached to Christian education, was a driving force in the establishment of Christian schools in Scotland. On a local level, Kirk Sessions were generally faithful throughout the land in their support and supervision of such schools.

Where parents were too poor to contribute to the costs of their children's education, the local deacons through their court (in the earlier days it was the Session, for Deacons sat in the Session and with the elders deliberated upon their work, and only left the court when all business that had any relevance to Deacons was finalized), paid for their education. For example, the Regulation of the Synod of Fife in 1641, was that, '... if parents be poor, the Kirk Session (elders and deacons) shall take order for paying the schoolmaster his due, either out of the poor's box, or else be a quarterly collection made for that purpose in the congregation before divine service ...'[44]

There are records, some as early as 1595, of many parishes frequently providing for the education of those members of the congregation unable to pay for it themselves. Those who could not afford to pay were to be helped by those who could afford to pay as part of Christians' bearing one another's burdens.

Until the mid-1800's the responsibility for establishing and maintaining Christian schools, which in effect was for much of the youth of Scotland, was seen even by the state, as the responsibility of local congregations, and that the Reformed Church would supervise and nurture this work. It was not seen as a part of the calling of the state to be involved in such a calling, for education was seen as a matter of passing on matters of faith and therefore the province of the family and Church, not the province of the civil magistrate. The government and laws of the land supported this notion.

In most cases, the supported education of the poor was a very basic education of things of the faith, and to read, write and calculate. There were however cases where gifted children of the poor, were assisted to higher education. For example, in Cambusland, towards the end of the 1600's, a special collection was taken up for the education of a boy who, 'hath a (gift) for learning but has not (the means) to maintain himself at school'. The General Assembly in its Acts of 1642 and 1705 in fact, ordained that gifted students of the poor of the church should be given scholarships.[45]

Even where the poor were reduced to begging for a livelihood, the local Session with the Deacons, not only provided a supply of food regularly, but also ordained that the children must be educated. With typical Scots practicalness and thriftiness, such children were to be educated for three hours every day at the expense of the local congregation, and then allowed to go about and beg![46]

In the earlier period, education was primarily for boys, but there were also schools for girls as early as 1661, and for lady teachers, with full Session support. For example, at Ceres in 1649 we hear of, 'the woman at Kininmonth that learns the bairns'. There was a schoolmistress at Dunglass in Oldhamstocks parish in 1698. And at Inverkeithing in the early eighteenth century the schoolmaster's widow carried on the school with the consent of the Session when her husband was murdered.[47] We must appreciate that just like today; there were the occasional problems, and disruptions in the life of the Christian School community!

The Substance Of What Was Taught In The Schools And Something Of School Life.

The conviction that the Reformed faith was the most consistent expression of Biblical Christianity, and of the Christian faith, was deeply felt by the elders and deacons of Reformed congregations. The Session at Tynninghame (East Lothian), for example, in 1703 gives a list of the schoolmaster's duties, and all the emphasis is upon instruction in the Christian faith, morning and evening prayers, catechisms, churchgoing, and summarizing of sermons. The Song Schools (as at Old Aberdeen) made a feature of instruction in the Psalms; but everywhere Bible and Shorter Catechism were the main school books. Just before the Disruption of 1843, Dalserf in Lanarkshire reported that, 'in the parish (congregational) schools the Bible is the standard book and the Assembly's Catechism is regularly taught and explained.' In 1835 the minister at Eskdalemuir (Dumfries) states that when he makes his regular visits round the parish, 'the children bring their Bibles to read a portion, on which they are examined after Gall's method, repeat their catechisms, and psalms ... commonly with great accuracy', as instructed in school. The Session at Inveraray in 1654 and again in 1679 arranged with the school master to have boys two by two repeating catechism in church between second and third bell for the edification of their seniors. The same applied at Dunfermline in 1653 and Lochwinnoch (Renfrewshire) in 1691.[48]

The Acts of Assembly for 1642 inform us that the basic subjects were reading and writing, and the, 'Reformed religion according to the Holy Scriptures, our Confession of Faith, or such books as are entirely agreeable thereto.'[49]

The academic standard of some of these early schools were very good. The historian, the Rev. J. Cunningham, quoting from the "Diary" of James Melville, gives the following interesting account of something of the life of a Scottish Christian School of the sixteenth century. Note how, that in spite of the commonly held view that children were treated rather harshly in schools in earlier times, there was care and understanding of children and their needs in the Scottish Christian

schools. Cunningham writes:

" 'There,' says he, was a good number of gentle and honest men's bairns (children), of the country about, well trained up, both in letters, godliness, and exercise of honest games. There we learned to read the Catechism, Prayers, and Scripture; to rehearse the Catechism and Prayers par Coeur (by heart); also (explain) Scripture, after the reading thereof.' ... 'We learned there the rudiments of the Latin grammar, with the vocabulary in Latin and French; also divers speeches in French, with the reading and right pronunciation of that tongue. We proceeded forward to the "Etymology" of Lilius and his "Syntax", as also a little of the "Syntax" of Linacer; therewith was joined Hunter's "Nomenclature," the "Monora Colloquia" of Erasmus, the sum of the "Eclogs" of Virgill and "Epistles" of Horace; also Cicero, his "Epistles ad Terentiam".'

It is refreshing to read too that boys ... had their play.

"'There also,' continues Melville, 'we had the good (fresh) air, and fields reasonable; and (by) our schoolmaster were taught to handle the bow for archery, the club for golf, the batons for fencing; also to run, to leap, to swim, to wrestle, to prove pratteiks (tumble?), every one having his match and antagonist ... in our lessons and play. A happy and golden time!' says the good man, as the dream of his school-boy days rose up before him. (Melville's Diary, page 14)."[50]

Music was much appreciated, though the formal worship of the Church was without musical accompaniment. There were many 'sang schoolis' scattered over the country. The Scottish Reformers were anxious to encourage sacred music. This is evident from the fact that the first editions of the Scottish Liturgy have the Psalm-tunes then sung attached to the Psalms, and curiously reversed, so that two persons standing opposite to each other might sing from the same book.[51]

Something Of The Schools

There were basically two types of pre-university schools. There were the local or parish schools, which were attached to a congregation, and were a part of its life. These schools taught the elementary basics of the faith as well as reading and writing and arithmetic.

Then there were schools that were called 'grammar schools'. The grammar school was above elementary level, and generally found in the larger towns which were more important socially, economically and geographically. The grammar schools provided a more detailed and advanced schooling not only in the basics, but also in history, the languages, and the more classical subjects.[52]

Generally the buildings were quite basic and even primitive. Congregations had difficulties providing suitable buildings for schooling, just as the people of God do today. There were other problems we today have in common with our fathers in the past, with establishing Christian schools. We learn from the historical records of the Church of between the years 1657 to 1731 of such things. For example, there was the lack of sufficient funds, the lack of sufficient support and commitment in the local congregations, and in some cases lack of conviction of the necessity for such schools, and the resultant indifference and the lack of suitable school teachers as well as buildings.[53]

There were also problems of maintenance, and of finding sufficient numbers for working bees. The problems, whilst similar to today, had their own slight special time zone character. For example, at Inveraray in 1652, the school was not watertight, and men had to search for straw for thatching! In 1703 at Falkirk, the seating forms in the schoolhouse were 'ruinous', and men had to cut the trees down in the churchyard to make new ones![54]

The Puritans

Our reformed fathers in England, the Puritans (most of whom were Presbyterian) were also deeply committed to Christian Education. Ryken writes:

'(an) ... historical sketch will show that Puritan zeal for education was one of the most noteworthy aspects of the movement'.[55]

The Puritan Richard Baxter believed that:

'education is God's ordinary way for the conveyance of His grace, and ought no more to be set in opposition to the Spirit than the preaching of the Word'.[56]

The renowned John Flavel wrote,

'I know education and regeneration are two things; but I also know one is frequently made the instrument of working the other and that the favour of what first seasons our youth generally abides to old age, Proverbs 22:6'[57]

The rule of one of the Puritan Colleges was:

'Let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well the main end of his life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life, John 17:3, and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom, as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning.'[58]

Ryken writes:

'The Puritans aim in the classroom was to measure all human knowledge by the standard of Biblical truth. ... Thomas Hall wrote that, "we must... bring human learning home to divinity to be pruned and pared with spiritual wisdom.'[59]
Developments Since The Mid 1800's

Sadly, since the mid 1880's, the Presbyterian Churches generally, not only in Scotland, but worldwide, gave way to the state on the matter of the Christian education of its youth. The denominations that descended from the Reformed Church of Scotland, even its most true daughter Churches, appear to have lost the understanding and convictions the earlier reformers and fathers and mothers in the faith had on the education of its youth. There were various reasons for this tragic development.

There was increasingly an intrusive state, (seen in the matter of 'The Disruption'); the Church no longer appreciated the place of the Bible and the doctrines of the reformed faith as the basis for all of life. 'Common Sense' philosophy[60] gained ground and men and women increasingly saw Christianity as only one department of knowledge, instead of the basis for all knowledge. There was a change from the earlier world and life view of the Scottish reformers, so that the boundaries of Christianity retreated to the matter of the new birth, personal piety, and the life of the church organized etc. Matters such as education, the civil magistrate etc., were often seen as worldly matters. The antithesis and the need of God's people to be a separate covenant people from the world of unbelief around them were blurred.

There were those however, who could see what was happening, and their excellent and penetrating writings on the matter deserved to be well known and appreciated. See for example, A.A. Hodge's article, 'Religion in the Public Schools' (1887), and J. Gresham Machen's article, written in 1926, 'Shall We Have a Federal Department of Education?'[61] See also 'Education, Christianity, and the State', Essays by J. Gresham Machen.

In Scotland after 1861, some Presbyterian churches set up purely Church controlled schools, in an attempt to stop the slide of the education of its youth from a Christian and reformed perspective to a secular and humanistic view found in many ways in the state schools. Many of these schools though, both in Scotland and in the countries where it had daughter churches, such as Australia, became more social schools for the elite of society. They became, under the influence of non-Christian and reformed humanism, quality secular schools with a thin veneer of Christian dressing.

By 1872 in Scotland, the State had taken complete charge of education. Many in the Reformed Church presumed that the reformed spiritual and scriptural basis would remain in education, but in time this proved not to be the case, but a powerful tool in the destruction of the reformed faith in Scotland.[62]

After the mid 1850's, the principles that were behind the Scottish reformer's views on the education of the Church's covenant youth, and the commitment of Presbyterians of a Scottish background, did continue to exist though. It found expression, not only in Scotland but in those countries where that expression of the Reformed faith was planted. In spite of the overall loss, both of the original world and life view of the Reformers, and the intrusion of the state, some continued to hold fast to this precious heritage. For example, in the United States of America in 1873, Dr. Charles Hodge notes his Presbyterian Denomination's Assembly receiving the following report on congregational schools. He writes:

"The report closed with the following resolutions, viz:

'Resolved, 1st. That in the judgment of the General Assembly, any scheme of education is incomplete which does not include instruction in the Scriptures, and in those doctrines of grace which are employed by the Holy Spirit in the renewal and sanctification of the soul.'

'Resolved, 2nd. That in consideration of the blessings derived to us, through our forefathers, from the method of mingling the doctrines of our Church with the daily teachings of the school, the Assembly earnestly desire as near an approach to this method as may comport with the circumstances of this country'.

'Resolved, 3rd. That the Assembly regards with great approval, the attempt of such churches as have undertaken schools under their proper direction; as well as the zeal which has led individual friends of the truth to add to the same cause.'

'Resolved, 4th. That the Assembly recommends the whole subject of Parochial Education to the serious attention of the Church - counseling all concerned to regard the maintenance of gospel faith and order, in the founding of new schools, the appointment of teachers, and the selection of places of education.'

The whole report was finally adopted ..."[63]

It should be noted that the occasion of the adoption of the report led to some objections being raised with the views of the report. They were really views which objected to the historic position for the Reformed Church of Scotland with regard to education and knowledge. For example, some felt that the whole spirit of the age and of the country could not be resisted, and that there was really no place for schools with a distinctive doctrinal base. It was thought best to form community schools and try to give them a general Christian character. It was supposed that the Church must enter into a common enterprise with a secular state to establish schools.

The above objections were answered and opposed on the ground that the Church should not be countenancing 'natural religion' in schools, for its calling is to faithfully teach Christianity, and not merely Christianity in general, but in the definite form in which we believe it has been revealed by God for the salvation of men.

The Church did not believe that family instruction and 'Sunday Schools' would suffice to give a Christian education to the rising generation of the Church. They believed they were inadequate. The point was made that: 'In all ages of the Church and in every part of Christendom it has been considered a first principle that religious teaching should be incorporated with the common schools system.'[64]

The historic view of the reformed churches of Britain and the Continent with regard to general knowledge, was that it should be taught within the framework of the doctrines of the Word of God. It should not be divorced, so that Christian parents would send their children to be educated in general subjects from a purely secular perspective and the pastor for an hour here or there, or the parents at home, or the Church at 'Sunday School' from a religious perspective. They believed an education without religion will not be neutral. It would become irreligious and the bias will be of unbelief. They recognized that separating the secular from the divine would create a dichotomy in life. Christianity would no longer be seen as a reality for all of life. It is only 'Church'. Hodge believed that:

'Under the plea and guise of liberty and equality, this system is in fact in the highest degree tyrannical. ... (T)he common school system is rapidly assuming not a mere negative, but a positively anti-Christian character; and that in self-defense, and in the discharge of their highest duty to God and their country, they (Christians) must set themselves against it, and adopt the system of parochial (congregational) schools; schools in which each Church shall teach fully, fairly and earnestly what it believes to be the truth of God.'[65]

Hodge appeals to the Free Church of Scotland. He says:

'But the Free Church of Scotland has taught us that it is not only in established churches that the system of parochial schools is feasible. The devoted men who are laying the foundation of the new system in Scotland, never imagined that their duty would be done if they planted a pastor and a church in every parish. They at once, and with equal strength of conviction and purpose, set about establishing a school in connection with every church. It is as much a part of their system as having minister or elders. And it should be ours also.'[66]

Christian Education In Australia

In Australia, as in Scotland and in the United States of America, those Presbyterians who adhered most faithfully to the beliefs and practices of the Reformed Church of Scotland, also followed its convictions about Christian Education. They were diligent in the establishing of Christian schools. It is simply a matter of historical record that the earlier Australian Presbyterians saw the matter of establishing reformed Christian schools as near important as the establishing of reformed Christian churches.

Again, bear in mind that the purpose of establishing Christian schools was not simply that their children would have a general secular education. It was that their children would be educated from a Christian perspective. Some of the schools were not specifically established by the Presbyterian denominations, but were nevertheless through those who did establish them, and from the support they received, an outgrowth of the Presbyterian faith, and their view on Christian education. For example, in the 1850's, Mr. Alex Ireland, an elder of the 'Chalmers' Presbyterian congregation in Hobart,

Tasmania, though considering training for the ministry of the Word and Sacrament, was encouraged by the minister Dr. Nicolson to take up teaching and help in this vital work, and accordingly established a day school.

The Irish/Australian historian Alexander Barkley, in an essay on, 'The Impact of Calvinism on Australia', wrote: 'The census taken in 1861 showed that about 16 percent of the population belonged to the Presbyterian church and smaller churches adhering to the Westminster standards.' 'Perhaps it was in the realm of education that Presbyterianism made its greatest mark in Australia during the second half of the nineteenth century. In true Calvinistic fashion there was concern for the education of children. John Knox sought to erect an educational ladder that stretched from every parish to the university, a ladder to which every member of the parish should have access. That spirit prevailed among the Scottish settlers and their descendants on Australia. The oldest Presbyterian church building in Australia, Ebenezer, near Portland Head on the Hawkesbury River, bears silent tribute to the faith and aspiration of the pioneers. This building was originally divided into two, one part being the school and the other the place of worship. Schools were established in all states, and the standard of education was high.' [67]

In Australia, as in Scotland and elsewhere, the inroads of theological liberalism, the blurring of the lines of difference, and the antithesis between Biblical theology and humanistic philosophy, compromise with worldliness, the assertiveness of the state, the loss of an understanding of and a willingness to support with life and possessions, the great truths in all their height and breath, of the reformation, led to the gradual abandonment by Presbyterians, in practically all continents, of Christian education. We would say the mentality behind some species of 'Common Grace' was deeply involved in this declension. It is true some schools continued to exist however, as earlier observed, many of them now became schools for the elite of the land, and not for the common Church member. They were more concerned for purely academic and social standards. Where there was a Christian content, it was really a 'sprinkling' of some truths where evangelical men were found or moral platitudes where liberal chaplains taught some classes on religion and conducted an occasional 'chapel service'.

Reasons For The Decline Of Christian Education

It cannot be denied that one of the great reasons for the collapse of the Presbyterian Christian school movement in Scotland, Australia and elsewhere, was that the schools had become dependent upon state financial and material aid. The state (often humanistic and unbelieving bureaucrats), demanded more and more say in the running of the school, and the Church and believing parents, sadly and grievously, over time, surrendered their beliefs and commitment to Christian education to the control to the state.

In the end, it came to the point that the state demanded the full control of the schools, or there would be no money. Many parents and the Churches could not imagine paying for what they in many ways had previously been receiving free, so the cost of establishing Christian schools free of state control, was not attractive to them. Also, the State made suitable 'window dressing' concessions as to how the Church could have access to their students to teach them their faith from time to time. However, it ended up with a half hour of Christian teaching per week, and hours upon hours of secular, humanistic teaching. It is no wonder then that students came to sense and see the Christian faith as an irrelevancy to life or else, simply a cultural or personal interest on the periphery of one's life. Real life was seen as secular! There was the loss of the faith as our fathers understood it, and as we believe the Word of God calls us to live it. The faith, and Christ and His doctrine are foundational for all of life. Now it was man and his doctrines that became foundational for all of life.

This drift in Australia, was what also occurred in the U.S.A. as seen for example, in A. A. Hodge's article referred to previously. But it is seen also in the thinking of the Synod report of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia in 1861. This Synod report conceded the ground and distinctive reformed Christian schools to the state in the following motion: 'That it is the duty of the State to establish an efficient system of public education, and in doing so to make provision, as far as may be possible, for the imparting of sound religious instruction...' [68]

By 1880, in Scotland secular education had triumphed, and a great blow had been struck against the Church of God and its growth. By the 1900's secular education had triumphed over the Christian schools.

Today, sadly, and to the cost of the faith, many Presbyterian denominations in Britain, the U.S.A. Australia and elsewhere, some otherwise faithful in so much to the godly heritage we have received from the fathers of old, are indifferent to, or even opposed to the historic reformed concept of Christian education and the establishment of Christian Schools. This is seen, not only from the fact that so many quite willingly send without qualms, the children of God's Church, covenant children, to the secular schools for instruction in much of life. They are quite ignorant of the fact that historically Christian schools were seen as vital to the welfare and perpetuity of the Church.

Some more modern day Presbyterian and professing reformed churches have even written and opposed the support and establishment of Christian schools. Some professing Presbyterians have become 'pietistical', and see Christian schools, and the saints and Church being concerned about such things as 'worldly'. Christian education is viewed by such as the church being sidetracked from the preaching of the gospel. That Christian education is foreign to our faith, in spite of the clear testimony of our reformed fathers to the contrary. For example, the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia, at one time suggested Christian schools is a 'Dutch' import, and was 'invented' by Abraham Kuyper![69] Among other things this church publication stated:

'A subtle movement has arisen in the modern Christian world, especially amongst those of Reformed persuasion towards the establishing of Christian Schools as a basic commission of the Church ...' and concluded among other things that, 'Moreover there is no real indication from Scripture that secular education should have religious ...'[70]

Pietism displaced in many places in the Presbyterian Church throughout the world, doctrinal teaching, catechisms and serious, solidly Biblical preaching. The rule of Christ the King over all of life, and the body of doctrine of God's Word as the basis of our whole world and life view, gave way to an insistence on a mere restricted view of the faith, limited to subjective, private, personal thoughts and feelings. Thus Christianity was reduced from its universal meaning to an enclave of one's private life, not a robust, all-encompassing view of faith and life.

Liberalism in the Presbyterian church, a child of the secular so called "Enlightenment", was not able to be counteracted by pietism, and the unifying factor for life was no longer the faith, hope and love of the Eternal God as He has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, but a 'new world order', in which man and his intellect ruled. The things of God and the Church became peripheral to life, and secularism took up the lost ground, including education.

A New Awareness Of The Importance Of Christian Education

Though there has been a tragic loss of vision and appreciation over the importance and place of Christian education in Presbyterian circles, it does not mean that the historic reformed view of Christian education and the vital importance of Christian schools have been lost altogether. There is in fact a renewal of interest in Christian education, and more importantly, of concrete action in establishing Christian schools, in various Presbyterian denominations today. The subject is once again being written about in a most sympathetic way by Presbyterian theologians. Professor John Murray for example wrote a sympathetic article advocating Christian education, and it appears in his collected works. Other Presbyterians and Reformed men have also written strong apologies for Christian education, such as Noel Weeks, David B. Cummings, Jay E. Adams, Rousas J. Rushdoony, Simon Kistemaker and Gordon Clark.[71]

Various denominations advocate and have and are establishing Christian schools in the footsteps of the fathers of old. Such denominations as the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, though only a small denomination, have established congregational Christian schools, and have adopted reports embodying the historical views of our reformed forefathers. They have supported in their courts, the importance and necessity of Christian education. Other reformed and evangelical churches are also increasingly sympathetic towards Christian education.

It is remarkable though, that in Britain there hardly exists a Christian school established by Presbyterians. In the United States of America, various conservative Presbyterians are committed to Christian education. For example, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church has expressed itself in this matter in the tradition of the Scottish and Continental Reformed Faith. In a history of that denomination, we read of their second General Assembly adopting a report that reads:

'In presenting its report, the Committee on Christian Education wishes to express its conviction that the triumph of unbelief in the old organizations was due in no small measure to the prostitution of existing educational agencies through compromise with unbelief on the one hand, and to the lack of a full-orbed and consistent system of Christian education on the other. Consequently, if the Presbyterian Church of America is to be a truly reformed church, activities in the sphere of education, however humble, cannot be initiated too soon. Certain truly evangelical and reformed publications and projects which are already available can be utilized, but it will be necessary also to take steps toward the development of a comprehensive program of Christian education.'

The Assembly went on to exhort congregations to support the establishment of day Christian schools.[72]

It should be recognized that while the Presbyterian Churches throughout the world can be said to have generally lost the concept of the Biblical and Reformed rationale on Christian education, and while it was held on to here and there, it has been through contact with the Reformed denominations arising out of the Netherlands that interest in the historic view of education has been revived in Presbyterian circles. For example, in Australia after the Second World War there was a great influx of immigrants from the Netherlands. Many of these immigrants came from such denominations in the

Netherlands as the Gereformeerde Kerken, Abraham Kuiper's denomination, and the Liberated Churches, (called Free Reformed in Australia), associated with Dr. K. Schilder. These Churches, at least in the time of, and just after World War 2, still had a clear grasp on, and commitment to, the historic reformed understanding of the great importance of Christian education and establishing Christian schools. In other countries also where the descendants of the reformed faith in the Netherlands settled, such as the United States of America and Canada, there was also a deep commitment to Christian education.

Previously, in the mid to late 1800's there had been contact between the conservatives of the Reformed Church of the Netherlands with the Free (Presbyterian) Church of Thomas Chalmers of Scotland. They had much in common. The views and convictions of the justly famous Dutch Christian and reformed educationalist, Groen van Prinsterer, were essentially the views we find in the thinking of the conservative Presbyterian Churches of Scotland at that time.

Chalmers and the Church of his day were strong advocates of Christian education and schools, and the Free Church of his day did much to establish such schools, but with the shocking, sudden decline of that denomination in the later 1800's, and the inroads of that dreadful unbelief and liberalism that blighted the Free Church in the latter part of the 1800's, interest in Christian education also declined.

Interest in and commitment to Christian education declined on one hand because of the liberal's lack of interest in the distinctive nature of the historic Biblical faith and having schools that reflected such a faith.

On the other hand, it declined because otherwise sincere committed conservative Christians, in fighting for their very existence, forfeited the ground on Christian education to the state. They 'retreated' into a dichotomy view of life that divorced Biblical revelation from secular life and study. They 'retreated' in the face of 'the enemy' because they felt it had to give its energies to keeping the 'bare bones' of the evangelical faith. Of course, it was necessary to keep the bones, but it is a great shame and compromise of the historic faith that the importance of Christian education for strengthening the rising generation was not kept in mind. It is a great shame that education was seen as less important than 'theological matters'. That loss has not essentially been regained to this day in Scotland and Britain generally.[73]

Conclusion

Obviously, there are some collieries and applications that can be drawn by us today from the practices and principles of our fathers in the faith's attitude to and practice of Christian Education. A further study into what may be learnt with regard to these matters could profitably be undertaken. There are, for example, applications that could be made concerning such things as State Aid, Parental Control of Schools verses Church Control and Home Schooling.

Generally, it was thought appropriate that State Aid may be received, (because of the 'Establishment' principle), but that to become so dependent upon State aid would be a most unwise thing to do. The schools were not 'church' schools as such, though the visible, organized church had a role to play via teaching and some oversight, in the establishing and administration of the schools to guarantee their orthodoxy and soundness. Basically, the schools were set up and administered by parents, and those of the church who, in their private capacity, had the resources and commitment to do so. There was home schooling, but it was more often via tutors, not the parents. And home schooling was generally only practiced where there was no established Christian community school. The local 'covenant' community of believers, saw the need for co-operation and helping one another in this great task of equipping all the children of the reformed community in secular subjects from a reformed understanding of the Word of God.

One thing is very clear from the history of our fathers and mothers in the faith's attitude to education. It is that they were deeply persuaded out of God's Word and from experience, of the vital need to establish and maintain schools of quality education where Almighty God and His revealed truths of how what we should believe and how we should live, was taken as the bedrock upon which all other knowledge should rest and develop. An education where the full-orbed Christian reformed faith was integrated into all that was taught, was thought necessary for the glory of God as well as the welfare of the church in its generations, as well as for a true grasp of reality and life. To-day, we need to remember these things, and recapture this vision and understanding, for the education of our children. We too, who today profess the reformed faith need, for God's glory and the welfare and effective service of our people and churches, to work seriously, sincerely, and sacrificially for the establishment and maintaining of Christian schools and Christian education.

Chris Coleborn
Launceston, November, 2010
The Evangelical Presbyterian, January 2011...

FOOTNOTES

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26. Henderson, G.D. op cit. pages 158-159.
27. 'A Copious and Comprehensive Summary of the Laws and Regulations of the Church of Scotland From A.D. 1560 to A.D. 1850', op cit. Title XI, No 5, page 300.
28. 'The Second Book of Discipline', Ed. J. Kirk, op cit. page 45 and 122ff; See also 'The Second Book of Discipline', Ch IX, Of the Patrimony of the Church, and the Distribution thereof; Edgar, Andrew, op cit., page 69 ff; Cunningham, J. 'The Church History of Scotland', 2 Vol., Adam & Charles Black, Edinburgh, 1859, page 59 & 62; Hetherington, W. 'History of The Church of Scotland', op cit. page 30.
29. Edgar, Andrew, op cit. page 63-64; Hetherington W. 'History of the Church of Scotland', op cit. page 30, 199 and 188.
30. Henderson, G.D. op cit. page 154-155.
31. 'Compendium of Church Laws, Acts of Assembly', op cit. page 279; Calderwood, David, 'The History of the Kirk of Scotland', 8 Vol. Wodrow Society, Edinburgh, 1842, Vol 6, page 245.
32. Henderson, G.D. op cit. page 155.

33. Henderson, G.D. op cit. page 151.
34. Henderson, G.D. op cit. page 155.
35. Henderson, G.D. op cit. page 152-153.
36. 'A Copious and Comprehensive Summary of the Laws and Regulations of the Church of Scotland From A.D. 1560 to A.D. 1850', op cit. Title XVII, No 4 & 5, page 249-250; Calderwood, David, op cit, Vol 5, page 379.
37. 'A Copious and Comprehensive Summary of the Laws and Regulations of the Church of Scotland From A.D. 1560 to A.D. 1850', op cit. Title XVII, No 2, page 249.
38. All the above, from Henderson, G.D. op cit. pages 146 to 152.
39. Edgar, Andrew, op cit. page 68, fn.
40. Henderson, G.D. op cit. page 152.
41. Henderson, G.D. op cit. page 152.
42. Henderson, G.D. op cit. page 150; Edgar, Andrew, op cit. page 66-67.
43. Henderson, G.D. op cit. page 150 & 153.
44. Henderson, G.D. op cit. page 151; See also for example, 'Compendium of Church Laws, Acts of Assembly', op cit. page such Acts as page 281 and Acts page 361 ff.
45. 'Compendium of Church Laws, Acts of Assembly', op cit. Acts page 275 & 276.
46. Cunningham, J. 'The Church History of Scotland', 2 Vol., op cit., page 62
47. Henderson, C.D. op cit. page 151 and 156
48. Henderson, C.D. op cit. pages 155-156; Acts 1794, page 279
49. 'Compendium of Church Laws, Acts of Assembly', op cit. page 274 & 276.
50. Cunningham, J. 'The Church History of Scot', Vol II, page 59-60.
51. Cunningham, J. op cit, Vol II, page 60.
52. 'A Copious and Comprehensive Summary of the Laws and Regulations of the Church of Scotland From A.D. 1560 to A.D. 1850', op cit. Title V, No 2. Pages 206-207.
53. Henderson, C.D. op cit. page 148-149.
54. Henderson, C.D. op cit. page 153-154.
55. Ryken, op cit. page 157.
56. Ryken, op cit. page 159.
57. Flavel, John, The First Way to Hell Discovered.
58. Ryken, op cit. page 159
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64. Ibid
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69. See 'Reformation Applied', A Collection of Definite Papers published by the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia, Covenanters Press, Strathpine North, 1983, Chapter 4, 'Innovations - Old and New, Christian Education, Page 137. See also the original article as published September 1978 in the magazine of the Presbyterian Reformed Church, 'The Protestant Review', for the claim Christian Education is a 'Dutch' thing.
70. Ibid, Page 137 & 148.
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72. John Murray, 'Collected Writings', op cit. Vol I, Ch., 48, page 356; 'Orthodox Presbyterian Church 1936-1986', The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, 1986, O.P.C. page 35 ff.
73. Ward, R.S. 'The Making Of An Australian Church', Tasmania, 1978, page 128.

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