COVENANT EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT
Covenant Education
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The role of the Church in Education has been to nurture the children of the covenant in the knowledge of the Lord. When the church aligns the spheres of the home, church and school, there is a unification of the educational experience of the child that allows the faith development of the child to perpetuate from one generation to the next. Therefore, Churches that employ a Christian School ministry should seek to further the education of children of believing families in their scope of ministry by aligning the experience of the child.

Many churches throughout history have taken on the responsibility of evangelizing young people through Christian Education, but evidence indicates that many Christian Schools are not able to perpetuate the Christian faith in young people through adulthood. Also, the children of believing families are significantly influenced by the non-believing students with whom they attend classes. This begs the question whether churches should be in the business of utilizing education as an evangelical ministry to the wider culture, and if so, what focus the Christian school should have according to Scripture in utilizing their young people in evangelical tools within the institution. There is an evident confusion and cross-purpose within the church. It is vital that the Church today have a clear vision Covenantal Education for the next generation of
young people to ensure that the promises of the Christian faith are passed on.
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CHAPTER ONE

THE SHIFTING SANDS OF EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE

Throughout history, the Gospel has been preached from generation to generation. In the Old Testament, it was articulated to God’s chosen people, the Israelites, through God’s constant provision and protection found in the promise of the Covenant. In the New Testament, the Covenant promises find fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ. From the time of Jesus, the church has preached this fulfillment and passed the Christian tradition from one generation to the next. Therefore, the church has focused on the primary goals of spreading the Gospel and deepening the faith of believers to ensure the Gospel transmission from parents to children. As the families of believers persevere under the pressure of the current culture, it is important that Covenant promises are transmitted to the next generation. The process of transmitting a deep understanding of the Gospel is called Covenant Education and it is vital that the church accent the primary need of perpetuating the Christian worldview to the children within the church. In order to do this, the church must create a distinct culture of antithesis in the spheres of the home and school to ensure that the faith of Christ is impressed deeply upon the hearts of young believers. The church should create a vibrant educational ministry for Covenant children through the establishment of a Christian school to create a distinct culture for a child’s faith development.
To encourage Covenant Education, some churches have undertaken the responsibility of evangelism through the establishment of Christian education by building Sunday school programs, vacation Bible schools, youth groups, college groups and Christian school ministries that serve the purpose of expanding the Kingdom. Many people have come to know the Lord through the great efforts of these educational ministries and have entered into the church. However, evidence indicates that many educational ministries within the church are not able to perpetuate the Christian faith in young people through adulthood, or even to create a Christian worldview in the mind of the child. As a result, churches have slowly compromised their theological integrity through watered down truth, in order to become culturally relevant to society. We see this process of theological secularization in the spheres of the church, family and school which form the primary pillars of a child’s development of identity in Christ. It would seem that the priorities of Covenant Education conflict with the emphasis on evangelism for the lost world in the functioning of the educational ministries of the church. The following research will reveal the great need for Covenant Education within the church and that the priority of improper evangelism that waters down the educational process, and weakens the overall impact of Covenant Education to perpetuate the faith of young Covenant children.

1 Barna p. 32-42 Barna presents compelling evidence that the church is not adequately teaching the youth of the church through the survey information that he presents throughout this chapter of the book.
The catalysis for secularization in Christian institutions has been the theme of much debate and scholarly endeavor, however, the discussion is far from a conclusion. Secularization is the slow and steady process of shifting away from the foundational mission, often times from strong theological roots, which first established the educational institution. The scope of this study will focus on the establishment of education within the church, and the process of education for the believer that flows from the ministry of the church. Therefore, the fundamental question for the church is to define the primary nature of Covenant Education in the educational endeavors of its ministry and determine the means by which the mission of the church can remain firmly fixed on theological truths within a culture of shifting theological sands. This firm foundation is built upon creating a distinct, vibrant, and uncompromising culture that flows from the church into the family and the school of Covenant children. From the study of Deuteronomy 6, it will be evident that the establishment of this distinct God-centered culture, which guards the internal and external influences of culture, will form the identity of the child to express faith in Christ.

The purpose and goals of education within the church must be clearly defined in relation to the role of the family, as they are the primary educators of their children. This begs

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1 Parks p. 206-221 Parks speaks of the whole culture impacting the faith development of a person as a type of mentor. Cultural impact on the soul guides the faith choices of the individual.

2 Baucham p. 7-8 Baucham makes the argument that the parents are the primary educators of their children, but that the family has asked the church to
the question whether churches should be in the business of Christian education at all, especially as an evangelical ministry to the wider culture, and if so, what focus Covenant Education should have, according to Scripture, in utilizing their ministry to grow the church. What is revealed is an evident confusion and possible cross-purpose within the ministry of the church. The primary purpose of the church ministry should be to establish a strong Christian culture that maintains the confessional truth of the church and supports the purpose of the Christian family, thereby providing the best culture to reinforce a child’s identity founded in Christ.¹ However, the church often wants to become culturally relevant in the name of evangelism to reach the lost. This impacts the educational depth of the church and does not initiate a strong enough worldview to sustain belief as children grow into adulthood. It is vital that the church today have a clear vision of Covenant Education for the next generation of young people to ensure that the promises of the Christian faith are passed on through the leadership within the family and the guidance of the church. Therefore, the church takes a primary role in the life of the family as a shaping influence through Covenant Education.

The Compromise of Mission

¹ Bonhoeffer p. 17-39  Bonhoeffer speaks throughout this chapter about the delight of being in Christian community with other believers and this community creates an identity for Christianity.
Covenant Education is defined as the Gospel going forth through the educational efforts of the church to ensure that the grace-filled faith of believers is passed on to the next generation. It is the perpetuation of faith in God through the family that engages in the counter-cultural ministry of the church. Covenant Education can come to the family through participation in the educational ministries of the church found in Sunday school, small groups, Bible studies, the preaching of the Word, and through the establishment of the Christian school. This is a vital portion of the work of the church for the deepening of the faith of church members and their children. Essentially, it is creating a cultural antithesis to the world in which we live to ensure that Covenant children mature into solid Christian adults with a firm worldview based in Scripture.

It is evident that the mission of the church must address Covenant Education as the discipleship of young believers and a service to the Christian family. However, the mission of a church is a convoluted matter in our day and age as it reacts to the pragmatic issues that life tends to present. This is especially true in a Christian school ministry where the market for students is smaller and the expectations of the constituents are diverse and at times confused with worldly expectations. Often this causes the mission to be very different in action than it is stated on paper. In the process of determining the best options for budgetary shortfalls, the

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5 Kienel p. 131-133
mission of the school becomes flexible and pliable to the needs of the immediate and practical. There arises a need for more students, thus a desire to allow more non-believing or nominal believers through the door of the school in the name of the evangelical mission. The rationalization for such a decision is that the mission is evangelism, and therefore, this is an opportunity for the teachers to minister. In this circumstance, it is evident that the mission is not the driving force behind the decision making process, but is the rationalization of the pragmatic decisions that were made. This is a constant issue that the church leadership faces as the philosophical mission of the church is sacrificed on the altar of the practical needs of the immediate. This process slowly dilutes the authenticity of the mission and erodes the cultural foundation necessary for building and shaping the identity of young believers. Thus, Covenant Education is compromised through the secularization of the values in the ministries of the church. Every educational ministry of the church is in danger of this pragmatic thought process and this necessitates the need for clarity in the formation of mission of the church.

The Process of Secularization

As this slow dilution of mission takes place within the ministry of the church, the essence of Covenant Education diminishes in the educational process. This places the mission of the church at an apparent cross-purpose. Is the education of children within the church to be a deep discipleship or an
opportunity for evangelism? Does the educational ministry of the church function as a funnel leading the children into the seats of the church or should the ministry of the church seek to take the children and nurture them further in the understanding of the Gospel, thus confirming their identity in Christ? Unfortunately, the church does not provide adequate educational ministries that deepen the faith of children and educational programs have moved away from the catechism training in the truth of Scripture. Instead, they offer a form of entertainment for children’s ministry that occupies the child while the parent attends church. The parents are often happy with this situation because the children enjoy church and continue to want to attend. Education in God’s Covenant promises is not the priority for these parents and the priority becomes the happiness, enjoyment and entertainment of the children. The process sets the bar for students as they progress through youth group and college level ministries to emphasize pleasure rather than education through discipleship and this is the impact of the wider culture on the church.

The State of Christian Education

According to George Barna, in his book, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*, nine out of ten children consider themselves to be Christian by the age of thirteen.

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5 Hunt p. 165 Hunt explains in this chapter the strategy for Christian education that involves the Scriptural training of children in obedience to God

6 Schlect p. 11

7 Bauerlein p. 71-86 Bauerlein makes the argument that teens are inundated with media to the point that the education has stagnated. We see this effect in the church although Bauerlein is not directly talking about the church itself.
This means that 93% of the nation’s youth would consider themselves Christians. However, only 34% of this group would indicate that they are “fully committed to Christianity.” This means that many young people today would consider themselves to be Christian simply because they are Americans. The name Christian does not hold within itself the meaning it once did which involves church attendance, Christ-like service, and adherence to Biblical standards. Barna goes on to state that out of this 34% that are “fully committed to Christianity,” only 4% of them can articulate a distinct understanding of Scriptural truth or an understanding of a grace-filled relationship with the Lord. The meaning of Christianity has changed in such a way that the youth of America cannot articulate the basic understanding of salvation as found in Scripture. How has the church found itself in this situation? How has the Christian society forgotten the God of Scripture so that our children who call themselves Christians cannot articulate faith? To a large degree the church has failed to emphasize Covenant Education and has sought to replace this deep standard of education with lighter programs emphasizing fellowship, fun and entertainment.

According to Michael Horton, in his book Christless Christianity, the majority of self-proclaimed Christians today have a very different vision of Christianity than thirty years ago. He states that the common understanding of Christianity today is found in the concept of moralistic, therapeutic,

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9 Barna p. 33
10 Ibid
The majority of young people that Barna researched would confirm this description as they equated their moralism with acceptance by God. In essence, if you acted in a basically good manner, you were blessed by God with a flourishing and easy life. This worldview exists within the church because Covenant Education has not perpetuated the Christian faith to the next generation of Covenant children. The church must ensure that young people know and understand the Scripture rather than missing the true salvation because of confusion over the dangers of moralism.

In addition to this research, Doug Wilson also shows in his book, The Case for Classical and Christian Schools, that the worldview formations of students in Christian schools were not substantially different from students attending other private and public schools. This indicates that Christian schools were not able to positively impact the thinking of students throughout their four years of high school. It is clear that educational ministries of the church have broken down and deteriorated into a moralistic education in goodness, niceness and tolerance. This is obviously not the gospel nor the foundation of the Covenant found in Christ. Christian schools have copied progressive education and sanitized the environment with deistic moralism to create a nice, safe place, but not a grace-based, Christ-centered ministry.

All of this evidence is important for the church to weigh and consider for the formation of Covenant Education. The
purpose of church education, from Sunday school to youth group, should be the confirmation of generational faith. A church serious about this endeavor should establish a multitude of educational ministries especially a Christian school ministry that creates a cultural antithesis. This begs the question, what makes a ministry Christian? Is it the students, teachers, curriculum, standards of conduct that guarantees the legitimacy of the Christian label? All of these things affect the culture of the church community and it is this community that impresses the heart of the child with a definition of what is valuable and trustworthy. In essence, it is the combination of the home, church and school, in the effort of Covenant Education that shapes and solidifies the identity of the student. So how do we ensure the distinct, vibrant, and uncompromising culture, while evangelizing a lost and confused nation of young people? How can the church be in the world but not of the world?

A Vision beyond the Dilemma

In order to appropriately place the mission of Covenant Education within the church at the forefront of decision making, a strong Biblical foundation must be articulated in order to drive the philosophy of the church forward. Deuteronomy 31 gives the Scriptural foundation for discipling the hearts of Covenant children when Covenant Education is applied in the spheres of the church and the family.

So Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the Levitical priests, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. Then Moses commanded them: “At the end of every seven years, in the year for canceling debts, during the Festival of Tabernacles, when
Moses is commanding that the Law of God establish the cultural values of the Israelite society, especially for the little ones in the community. The driving principle of this passage is applicable for the church today through the establishment of Covenant Education for the children of the church. This is seen distinctly in the choice of focusing the mission of the church on the process of discipleship inherent in Covenant Education. Churches that focus on merely evangelism are going to have a different educational approach to the ministries of the church in the classroom, curriculum decisions, and many other decisions as well. However, a church that understands the application of the Deuteronomy mandate sees evangelism as the beginning processes of discipleship. They will formulate a long-term vision for Covenant children that deepen the faith of the child with every step of the educational process in each sphere of experience. This vision moves beyond the dilemma to provide a solid foundation in a world of shifting sand because Covenant Education is the transmission of a worldview. The church must first provide a clear purpose for the educational ministry found in the desire to understand their Creator. Second, they must provide a distinct community for education,

13 Deuteronomy 31:9-13 NIV
found in establishing a clear love for God’s Law and His attributes. And thirdly, they must provide a distinct process of education, in building one’s identity upon Christ. This understanding of Covenant Education moves the church beyond simply education unto salvation, into a deep, coherent, and clear understanding of God.

Evangelism is not a onetime event in the life of a believer, but as a continual process, ever deepening their understanding of God and themselves. Just as Calvin says in the first pages of the *Institutes*,

> Our wisdom, insofar as it ought to be deemed true and solid wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and ourselves. But as these are connected together by many ties, it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes and gives birth to the other. For, in the first place, no man can survey himself without forthwith turning his thoughts toward the God in whom he lives and moves; because it is perfectly obvious, that the endowments which we possess cannot possibly be from ourselves; no, that our very being is nothing else than subsistence in God alone. In the second place, those blessings which unceasingly distill to us from heaven are like streams conducting us to the fountain.

Here Calvin clearly shows that the Christian life is a continual process of realization that starts with evangelism, but continues in a deepening understanding of sin and grace found in Christ Himself. The process of education should propel us as believers toward this realization through the study of all manner of subject areas. Within the constructs of math, science, history, and literature, we are able to understand the Creator in His created order. Therefore, we are able to understand ourselves in light of what He has done in
this world, and His greater plan for His world. Our salvation is not the only purpose, nor the point of education, but our full realization of His glory is the reason for our study.

**Covenant Education within the Church**

It is extremely important to have a clear understanding of mission in the life of the student so that the educational environment seeks to fulfill the stated mission. Covenant Education does this by focusing the process of learning, on understanding the Covenant which God established with Adam long ago, and following those promises through to our current day through the Covenant of grace found in Christ\(^\text{15}\). It is a process rooted in a distinct understanding of the Deuteronomy mandate found in Deuteronomy 6, which states the command that Covenant children should be taught the full measure of the promises of God. The purpose of Covenant Education seeks to glorify God in the process of learning by acknowledging a reverent fear of the Lord, providing a distinct community based on the laws which God set forth through Moses, and impressing upon the hearts of children and their need for God in all things. Because we cannot keep the law, Christ came and fulfilled the law for us and now Covenant Education produces humility, reverence, and service from those who carefully seek the face of God for guidance and direction for all of life. But it also seeks to understand all areas of life, whether it be science, history, literature, all in light of the Gospel of

\(^{15}\) Robertson p. 272
Christ. Through a study of Deuteronomy 6, Covenant Education becomes a primary objective for the church to accomplish in the life of the Christian family. The church has the responsibility to foster leadership in the heart of the parent, so that in turn, the parents will make a priority to impress the law of God upon the hearts of their children.
CHAPTER TWO

COVENANT EDUCATION

The Scripture is not silent on the topic of Covenant Education within the church. The passage of Scripture from Deuteronomy 6 is especially poignant on the topic of passing the law of God to the next generation and gives a clear directive to the church for providing instruction to the family about the Law of God and His Covenant promises. In Deuteronomy 6:4-9 Scripture states,

\[\text{Deuteronomy 6:4-9 NIV}\]

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.\(^1\)

Here we find that Moses has called the people of Israel together to talk with them about the nature and purpose of the Covenant which God had made. He lays out the clear parameters of how the people are to understand the law and perpetuate the obedience of the law from one generation to the next. The leadership of the nation of Israel is taking the responsibility to encourage and instruct the families to provide the knowledge of God to their children. This is articulated in Deuteronomy 31:9-13 as the command was given to the church leaders to also be involved in the education of the young of the community. Moses was passing the leadership of the people to Joshua and instructed the Levites to read the Law for all to hear.

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\(^1\) Deuteronomy 6:4-9 NIV
So Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. Then Moses commanded them: "At the end of every seven years, in the year for canceling debts, during the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose, you shall read this law before them in their hearing. Assemble the people—men, women and children, and the aliens living in your towns—so they can listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and follow carefully all the words of this law. Their children, who do not know this law, must hear it and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess."

Therefore, we see the covenantal design of education, the responsibility of the church leadership, and the centrality of the family within this command. Covenant Education is the transmission of worldview by creating a culture within Israel to teach and train children in the Word of God. This culture is designed to be separated and distinct from all the other nations.

Within this distinct culture the family is the primary educational force and is given a very clear message through the Deuteronomy mandate “to impress” the law of God upon the hearts of children. This is a valuable picture to visualize, as the idea of impression is a much sharper image than simply saying that they should teach them. The impression process is much like a wax seal that was once utilized to confirm that a letter was authentic. Wax was melted and the king’s seal would be impressed upon it, marking it as his own. This process is the same idea applied to the hearts of children. To impress values

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2 Deuteronomy 31:9-13
3 Dawn p. 47-50 Dawn spends the majority of the chapter talking about the need for a parallel society within the cultural context of our experience. This parallel society is found within the church and need for education within that society is the key to a child’s development in faith.
upon the heart means to apply a great deal of educational force upon the child who conforms to the image of that which was impressed. Once impressed, the child’s worldview becomes secure, immovable, and unchangeable. The mold is the Word of God and the wax is the experience of the child. The seal marks the heart of the child as belonging to God. This reflects the process of Covenant Education as we seek to provide this molding to the hearts of young people on behalf of their parents. This molding process takes force to apply and implies rigidity of image to ensure a sharp impression. The church that is serious about Covenant Education will provide a clear mold in the Word of God and deeply impress the heart of the child through the experience of the church.

The Hebrew word sanan\(^4\), meaning “to impress,” also has the connotation of “sharpening” or “piercing” which is used in relation to sharpening of swords or arrows, but in this connotation it is directed at the heart. From this perspective the duty for the parent is to pierce the heart of the child. It implies that the heart of the child is hard and calloused, in need of cutting or piercing, so that he might correctly acknowledge a posture of humility towards the Lord. Again this analogy works upon the idea of force and even pain being applied to gain the desired result of humility towards God in all areas of life.

There are three main points of application that we may take from this passage of Scripture to guide our presumptions

\(^4\) NIV Exhaustive Concordance
about Covenant Education within the church. First, the educational process is to originate from the family as the primary educational force in the home. Second, this process of education is marked by thankfulness for what God has done in the lives of believers through His Covenant promises. And third, the educational process is the formation of identity through the culture, just as the identity of the Israelites was built upon their understanding of the Law that God had given.

The Family Responsibility

Covenant Education is the responsibility of everyone in the church, but primarily rests on the parents for the care, protection, and upbringing of the child. It is interesting in our culture today that the job of child rearing, especially the young ones, has been largely abdicated to the role of the mother. Often the father is portrayed in our culture as the aloof and foolish version of an older child that the wife must chide in a similar fashion to the young. However, this role of education is charged to the father as well, and therefore, he is equally responsible for the activities of the family. Often the heart of the father is the guiding influence of the house, whether it be for good or for ill, and he sets the standard of what is to be valued for the young children. The role of the father is crucial in the process of Covenant Education for generational faith to continue throughout the family. However, the responsibility of raising children is not

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5 Murrow p. 1-11 Murrow talks about why men hate attending church and the lack of male leadership within the church as being symptomatic of the way that church is set up.
only upon the father but extends to the mother, and often includes the role of the extended family as well. These parents must work within the context of the church for Covenant Education to take place.

**Thankfulness for Covenant Promises**

At the root of Covenant Education is the motivation of gratitude for what our loving God has done through the fulfillment of His promises. The identity of the Israelites was based on a clear understanding of what had occurred in the past through God’s faithfulness to His covenant people. The faithfulness of God had been proven to them through the escape from bondage in Egypt, provision in the wilderness, and now the promise of a new land for their descendants. The covenant was based on understanding what God had done and having faith in what God will do in the future. This means that the identity of the Israelite was built upon the faithfulness in the promises that God had made and thankfulness for the establishment of His Covenant. The covenant was established by God with the Israelites and represents His solemn promise that they would be His people. This promise extended to all the generations of the nation of Israel and was expressed as a promise to preserve the people through the protection by God. The response of the people is to live out a great thankfulness for His faithfulness to them as a people. The Covenant was the promise that identified them as God’s people.

Today we find the fulfillment of these promises in the work of Christ on the cross. He was the ultimate expression of
God’s faithfulness to His people and the promises made to the Israelites are now real for us in the church today because of the sacrifice of Christ. Robertson again speaks of the generational nature of the Covenant by stating,

According to this Scripture (Ps 105:8-10), it is to a thousand generations that the covenant promise extends. This reference to a thousand generations implies an eternal covenant. But it suggests more. The genealogical emphasis contains the idea of eternal succession. Never will the line of the faithful be cut off completely. In every generation the line of God’s covenant people shall be maintained.

This was a great encouragement to the people that the covenant was given to their children. The task was to make sure their children would uphold the standard of Scripture through obedience and love the law of God given to them. The response was one of thankfulness for all that God had done in the past and faithfulness for the future obedience in light of the covenant.

**Realization of Grace Expressed by Obedience**

The expression of this thankfulness was found in obedience to the standard that had been laid out before them. This standard was summed up in the Ten Commandments set forth by God to Moses at Mt. Sinai. Obedience was the key for their formation of identity because that is where the essence of the identity was shaped and formed. The Israelite nation showed their values through their devotion to God’s Law and the process of impression in the Old Testament was understood.

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6 Robertson p. 37
through obedience to the Law of God. The goal of generational love and obedience to God and His law was upholding the standard of moral and ethical behavior, but it also was acknowledging a love for the standard that God had laid before the people. Families were to provide this example by adherence to, and love for, the Law of God. This example was a distinct form of impressing a standard upon the hearts of their children.

This is continued today in the church as Covenant Education holds the same standard of loving God’s law. However, we now understand the fulfillment of God’s law through Jesus Christ and Covenant Education becomes a deep discipleship in understanding the concept of the grace of Christ through faith we believe that Jesus kept the law for us because we could not and He became sin to pay for our transgressions. In Covenant Education the concepts of obedience and grace cannot be separated because that is the expression of our thankfulness for what He has done in paying for our sins. If I acknowledge the grace of Christ then my heart should desire to express that grace through my obedience to the One that freely gave that grace. Obedience is connected to the understanding of how grace has worked in the heart of the regenerate believer.

**The Pagan Influence in Israel**

The problem with the Deuteronomy mandate was the apparent lack of adherence to culture that Moses had been commanded to establish. The people were prone to follow the ways of the surrounding cultures. Moses commanded the people to remove the
pagan influence from the culture as that they would remain fully devoted to Him. This direction from Moses was highly important because Israel was consistently inundated with pagan influences from the neighboring countries. On a regular basis the children of Israel were intermarrying and interacting with the religious practices of the peoples around them and this lead the nation into compromises of their faith. In essence, there was the secularization of the Israelite identity through the failure to create a distinct culture. Through small and slow compromises from one generation to the next, Israel forgot the One True God.

The remedy for this pagan influence was creating a culture of antithesis which started with Covenant Education of the young with the law of God. This law needed to be written on the hearts of the people, meaning that it needed to become part of who they were. The issue of identity is crucial in the educational process for the people, and identity is derived from the community in which one exists. Communities are value laden and impress upon the heart desires and influence decisions. The Israelites were commanded to provide a distinct and pure community that upheld and followed the values laid forth in the Ten Commandments. This was the very fabric of their community and it was protected by God. Whenever a pagan influence was introduced, the fabric of these values began to fray, and the process of secularization would set in. God established separation as a way to protect the people from this process, which was a dilution of the values of their community,
and provide a distinct and concentrated worldview for the people. He was not tolerant of unbelief, polytheism, or synergism and commanded the sole worship of His people.

These pagan influences lead the people to indulge in idol worship. This worship caused the hearts of the people of Israel to fully belong to another god, rather than acknowledging the one true God. This was an issue of identity, as they were choosing to engage in another value system that defined who they were and what they decided was important. In Deuteronomy 12:1-7, God, through Moses, specifically addressed this issue of idol worship and instructed the Israelites to remove these idols from their presence for the purpose of preserving the culture of the Israelites.

These are the decrees and laws you must be careful to follow in the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess—as long as you live in the land. Destroy completely all the places on the high mountains and on the hills and under every spreading tree where the nations you are dispossessing worship their gods. Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and burn their Asherah poles in the fire; cut down the idols of their gods and wipe out their names from those places.

You must not worship the LORD your God in their way. But you are to seek the place the LORD your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go; there bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. There, in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the LORD your God has blessed you.  

The wording in this passage is important as God was instructing the people the way in which He was to be worshipped. God says,

7 Deuteronomy 12:1-7
“You must not worship the LORD your God in their way,” meaning we are to follow the ways in which God has established to worship Him and not replicate the pagan forms of worship. God was clearly calling the people to a right relationship through creating a culture of antithesis. In so doing, He called them to destroy the idols and blot out the names of the foreign gods in order to worship God the way He has declared. The people sought out other forms of worship from other types of gods. God called the people back to a right relationship to Himself by dispelling the presence of any other influence in the life of the Israelites. He wanted the people to rid themselves of other pagan influence so that the people would not be owned by their culture. Covenant Education is teaching students that God does not accept the compromise of values, belief or faith.

Because we are able to step back and read hundreds of years of Israelite history at a time in Scripture, we are given a unique perspective on how the process of secularization occurs in the life of a group of people. It is a very slow process of small, seemingly inconsequential compromises that impact generation after generation of Israel. It was not the intention of the leadership of Israel to have the people move away from God’s Law, nevertheless, it occurred, and the children of Israel lost their identity in the True God of Heaven. This void of meaning and purpose was filled by the other cultural powers that existed, namely the pagan gods of the surrounding cultures. These gods captured the hearts of the Israelites and led them away one generation at a time.
New Testament Interpretations of the Deuteronomy Mandate

God’s instruction to continue this education of the youth extends into the early church through the instruction of the Apostle Paul. In Ephesians 6:1-4, we are again commanded to raise our children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise—"that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. In essence, this is the same command that Moses gave to the people of Israel. However, it now extends to the Gentiles, as well as those that are in the church. Paul is giving instruction to parents as they are primary instruments of education in the life of the child. Fathers are warned not to exasperate their children, meaning that they are not to simply berate their children with the rules, but again, they are to impress or prick the heart of the child to not only teach the standard, but inspire the child to love the standard before them. Just as in Matthew 5-6 Jesus taught the correct and full understanding of the Ten Commandments being kept in the heart of the believer, here again we see the heart being addressed in the parenting of children. The process goes beyond simply the application and keeping of the rules, rather it is the loving of, and therefore keeping of, the standard before them. This can only be done through faith in Christ. Also in Colossians 3:12-20, Scripture says,

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8 Ephesians 6:1-4 NIV
Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

Covenant Education only occurs when the Covenant of God is valued and the child sees the standard of God’s Law being upheld through obedience by the foundational pillars of formation found in the family and church. Covenant Education is taking the covenant that God established with the Israelites and seeing that Covenant culminated for us in the Covenant of grace. Only then will the process of impression truly affect the heart of the child, and therefore, perpetuate the Christian faith from one generation to the next. Again, Robertson encourages us to see the Covenant throughout the generations and through the progression up to the consummation in Christ Jesus.

Because of its unique role in gathering together the various strands of covenantal promise throughout history, this last of God’s covenants appropriately may be designated as the covenant of consummation. This covenant supersedes God’s pervious covenantal administrations. At the same time, it beings to focal realization the essence of the various covenant experienced by Israel throughout

Colossians 3:12-20
their history. Consummation characterizes the substance of this final covenant throughout. The heart of this consummative realization consists of a single person. As fulfiller of all the messianic promises, he achieves in himself the essence of the covenantal principle: “I shall be your God and, you shall be my people.”

Here we see that Covenant Education of our generation is focused on the finished work of Christ in the world. The impression process in the heart of the child instills a clear understanding of what Christ has done to them, in them and for them, in their faith development. Understanding this Covenant is essential for the child to grasp a sense of calling as given from God, just as He has done to generation after generation of Israelites. Only we now see the full extent of His love and understand the purpose of His grace.

Unfortunately, Covenant Education has received little emphasis in our churches today and has left our congregations short of their full calling in the Lord. Norman Harper speaks to this in his book, *Making Disciples*, when he states,

> The doctrine of the covenant of grace has received little emphasis in recent times even among those confessionally committed to covenant theology. This neglect of an invaluable part of our theological heritage has left the Reformed community in some measure theologically disoriented in the practical application of faith to life. Nowhere has this been more evident than in the dichotomy we have made between what we profess to believe in our creeds and what we actually do in the nurture of our children.

The culture within the church seems to embody a sense of disorientation towards the application of faith and falls short of fully engaging all areas of life for the believer. There is an evident hyper-individualism that encourages parents to be

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10 Robertson p. 272
11 Harper p. 34
timid towards treating their children with a special status before the Lord because they are a part of the Covenant relationship. Harper again states that,

The very fact that children of believing parents are members of the covenant and others are not suggests that there is something different about their status before God. But what the difference is the question, for quite obviously the answer we give will have a direct bearing on the way we educate our children. Unfortunately, the differences among Reformed theologians on this issue have tended to complicate the problem for those who are concerned with the Christian nurture of covenant children.  

Clearly the Covenantal relationship of God towards His people sets the children of believers apart with a special status before the Lord and they should be treated as such. The New Testament clearly follows the model set forth in the Old Testament, establishing a protected and intentional culture for the children of believers. We should acknowledge this protection and provide a clear and distinct experience for our children as they grow in the Lord.

**Deuteronomy Mandate in Today’s Church**

This historical understanding of Israel allows us to better understand and apply the principles from the Deuteronomy mandate to educate children. Ultimately, the direction that God gave to Moses was to infuse the values of God’s Law into the next generation of Israelites. In the New Testament, Covenant Education was taught throughout the church and found within Scripture as the fulfillment of the Law through the work

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12 Harper p. 38
of Christ on the cross. In the early church believers were instructed to teach this to their children so that the faith in Christ would continue throughout the generations. We can apply this principle to our current day by creating distinct institutions that focus on Covenant Education. We have been given the same command as the people of Israel to raise our children with an understanding of the Law of God and worship Him only. We must acknowledge the same issues that the Israelites faced are as real today as they were then. We must tear down the idols of our modern world as they affect our children and reach into our lives in all manner of subtle ways.

In our modern world, the educational model has continued a distinct separation from the role of the church, in which many institutions have taken on the calling to educate. Education has grown in the modern world to occupy its own sphere of influence, whereas before it was an extension of the home as the responsibility of parents. Today the school environment has separated completely from the home and church to become owned by the sphere of the government. Increasingly, the school became less interested the issues of God, and became clearly a study of secular humanism. There was a distinct shift in the worldview of the culture within the educational process. Previously, the purpose of education focused on the knowledge of God and the wisdom that flowed from that relationship. However, slowly the power of the empirical agenda explained away our dependence on God in many areas of life. The slow process of secularization was not purposeful but did lead to
the compromise of Christian beliefs from the rationalism found in the empirical sciences as a foundation for truth.

The state superintendents, secretaries of education and other central leaders did not set out to eliminate religion as such from the schools. They determined to eliminate sectarianism and keep religion. The resulting decline in all religious instruction was largely an unforeseen and unintended outcome, which, it seems, probably might not have happened if control had remained local, and did not happen as a result of a formal campaign of extermination by the central authorities.¹³

Through the years the sphere of the school has slowly diluted to become a celebration of mankind, rather than the Creator. The process of education was stripped of its Christian roots and the church was out of the scope of responsibility. Now it seems that some churches have gladly abdicated the role of Covenant Education altogether. This can no longer be the case as the church must regain the sphere of education to perpetuate the Christian faith in the covenant families of the church.

Reclaiming the Spheres

From this Deuteronomy mandate, which clearly states the responsibility of the church and family, research must determine the current practices of Christian schools. If the modern church as indeed stepped away from its responsibility to train the young Christian mind and the separation of church and school has led to a deficient education for believers then the church must take up the responsibility to impress the Law of God upon the hearts of children through the Christian school ministries with the partnership of the family. The church must reclaim the sphere of education and convince Christian families

¹³ Kienel p. 238
to invest in the educational needs of their children through the sphere of the school. Covenant Education will teach the full knowledge of God to impress upon the heart of child an identity in Christ. No longer can the church allow its Covenant children to be raised in the gods of another culture through public school education. Each sphere of the church, home and school must invest in Covenant Education to form the worldview of the child. We see this in the study of the spheres that make up the experience of life. Each sphere, whether it be education, worship, civil justice, marriage or the family, has its own responsibilities and biblically mandated behavior for the believer in society. It is imperative that we understand how each sphere of influence and responsibility interact, separate and overlap at differing times. The Deuteronomy mandate clearly shows the roles of the family and church, which find expression in the formation of the school.
CHAPTER THREE

SPHERE SOVEREIGNTY

The study of sphere sovereignty has been incredibly beneficial to the church and individual believers for the purpose of defining the roles of each area of influence in our experience of life. The purpose of sphere sovereignty is to determine the Biblical normative pattern for society in submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The sphere of the church should have a dominant role in the life of a believer, and to a degree, dictate and influence actions in other spheres of existence. The church should influence our actions towards others in all walks of life, and see our role as distinct within the created order, as we are living in a fallen world of rebellion towards God. The study of sphere sovereignty will provide clarity for the responsibilities of the church in Covenant Education as it establishes a pattern of life in the areas of the home and the school.

The Work of Abraham Kuyper

In the Stone Lectures, a series of lectures given at Princeton, Dr. Kuyper addresses the need for the modern believer to have a consistent world and life view that articulates clearly the Christian faith in all areas of life. He determined that Calvinism was the only comprehensive viewpoint that provided the believer with a consistent, cohesive, and comprehensive framework for understanding the world in which we live. He believed that all of life could be
clearly demonstrated in Scriptural understanding of the spheres.

A religion confined to the closet, the cell, or the church therefore Calvin abhors. With the psalmist, he calls upon heaven and earth, he calls upon all peoples and nations to give glory to God. God is present in all life, with the influence of his omnipresent and almighty power, and no sphere of human life is conceivable in which religion does not maintain its demands that God shall be praised, that God’s ordinances shall be observed, and that every labora shall be permeated with its ora in fervent and ceaseless prayer. Wherever man may stand, whatever he may do, to whatever he may apply his hand, in agriculture, in commerce, and in industry, or his mind, in the world of art, and science, he is, is whatsoever it may be, constantly standing before the face of his God, he is employed in the service of his God.¹

From this passage, Kuyper is proclaiming the prominent role of giving glory to God in all aspects of life. There is no portion of creation that Christ has not encompassed within His redemptive purposes, and therefore, He must be glorified in all areas of this life. The essence of sphere sovereignty rests in the acknowledgment of the Lordship of Christ in every arena of this world. This proclamation dispels the dualistic notion that there are areas of spiritual emphasis in which Christ is known, and areas of secular thought in which Christ is irrelevant. Nowhere in this world can the theology of Scripture be deemed irrelevant to the life of the believer, because the believer is commanded to uphold the Scriptural responsibility within each of the known spheres of our experience. Therefore, each sphere must be reclaimed and reoriented by the believers of the church. This includes the

¹ Kuyper p. 30
sphere of education which the church must recapture and recreate for the sake of Covenant children.

A Definition of Sphere Sovereignty

Sphere sovereignty is a system of thought that each sphere of life has its own distinct responsibility, authority and objectives. It is an all encompassing created order, designed and governed by God and includes societal communities (such as education, worship, civil justice, marriage and family), their historical development, and their abiding norms. Sphere sovereignty divides the experience of life into the societal sections and defines the responsibilities of each to ensure that theological alignment occurs for each area of life. Within each sphere, there is a clearly denoted Scripture and normative behavior that identifies the purpose and utility of each sphere under the authority of Christ.

Unfortunately, the spheres have operated in a segregated fashion without acknowledging what Kalsbeek referred to as enkapsis, which is the interlacing of processes and responsibilities. Often the spheres of the church, school and family function independently of one another. In a sense, the Christian school has developed a mindset to be all encompassing to the student’s existence excluding the other spheres. This narrowing of the world for the student through the encroachment of the educational sphere does not allow the family to have its proper or God-designed place, nor does it acknowledge the church for its centrality in the life of the believer. The

\[2\] Kalsbeek p. 272
Christian school does not acknowledge the enkapsis of the interrelated responsibilities, especially in regards to evangelism and discipleship. Rather, the Christian school expands its ministry to meet all the perceived needs of the student. For example, schools that seek a holistic education for the life of the child might provide numerous opportunities for chapel worship, biblical counseling, sexual education, etiquette training, athletics, youth group and other social opportunities. All of these things are good in and of themselves, but the effect is that the school reaches into areas that should be governed by other spheres of the student’s experience. Parents should be taking note of the role of education and determining the best ways to provide social living and learning opportunities through the influence of the family. The church as well should be major educational force in the life of the child, acknowledging and supporting the ministry of the family and school. Therefore, realignment must occur in the establishment of each sphere so that the centrality of the church is emphasized in the life of the believer.

The following diagram shows the overlapping responsibilities that exist in each sphere of influence in the life of the child. Covenant Education occurs when each area of experience overlaps in a consistent manner and align with Scriptural Truth in the Lordship of Christ. The church is central in aligning these key aspects of the child’s experience
just as the Deuteronomy mandate suggested in the lives of the Israelites.

The Role of the Family

It is evident that the primary culture of the family is the key to the proper development of the child. The essence of this familial bond is the communication of love, belonging and identity. The role of the family is to grow the child in the protective love of parents. This will provide a distinct understanding for children of who they are and what they should value.

In the first place then, Dooyeweerd teaches that the family, though it functions in all aspects, is qualified by the moral aspect. It is the relation of moral love and trust between parents and children which ought to dominate the whole of family life. This love acts as the family’s constant guiding structural function, determining its destination. We must remember that destination does not mean some exterior goal to which a family can aspire, such as a college education for all the children and secure retirement for the parents. Instead, the moral bond of love is the typical internal destination of the individual family community.³

Love is the essential bond of the family relationship, but also beyond this, the familial values are conveyed to the child.

³ Kalsbeek p. 206
The family has the primary educational responsibility of defining the guiding values that a child should hold. This is seen in the development of character, responsibility, and work ethic of the child as he grows to adulthood. This responsibility rests with the primary agents of the parents and is infused into the child through the cultural expectations and values. The child builds this identity through the transmission of values, practices and beliefs.

However, these responsibilities are often loaded entirely upon the Christian school in the name of holistic education. Parents pay good money to the school for character development, and that is indeed a stated outcome of the school, but it is a shared responsibility according to the Deuteronomy mandate. The true and proper identity of Christ is only impressed upon the heart of the child when the spheres of the family, church and school work together, saying the same things to the child in a consistent manner and respecting the boundaries of sphere of influence.

The Role of the Church

The role of the church is quite different than the family. The primary role of the church is to communicate the ongoing ministry of Christ to the all the nations. This is done through to the process of worship and expressed in the sacraments of Christ. Kalsbeek again sheds light on the purpose of the church.

Moreover, the visible church may not be identified with any particular church formation or denomination. It embraces much more. For the una sancta ecclesia, the Body of Christ, is manifested wherever the Christian faith
forms the basis for living and working – in worship, in political life, social endeavor, marriage and family, education, philanthropy, missionary work and evangelization, and so on. Therefore the visible church embraces the institutional, organized church along with all other manifestations of the invisible church. Nevertheless, the institutional church occupies an exceptional position among all the institutions are the instrument of God’s regenerating grace.\footnote{Kalsbeek p. 240}

The church has a very special responsibility of being the instrument of God’s regenerating grace.\footnote{Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 25} This means that the church is the normal means by which individuals come to know the Lord. Evangelism is at the root of the endeavor, but much more is conveyed with the life of the church as believers determine how to live in this world. The centrality of the church in the life of the believer is essential for understanding how to function in all the other spheres of life. The church has many responsibilities beyond simple evangelism and continues to communicate grace as the believer matures in the Lord. Ultimately, sanctification is the process by which the church moves the believer forward in his Christian life to come to a deeper knowledge of the Christ.

However, the church is often looked to for community. This fellowship and love is important for the church, but is not the primary responsibility. When fellowship as a family is overemphasized within the church, there is a danger of becoming an ingrown community that does not challenge the hearts of believers to change. Also the church is built upon the ministry of mercy and service that often requires the members to give more than they receive from the community in which they live.
worship. Fellowship is important, but the central work of the church is growth in knowledge of God found through Covenant Education.

**The Role of the School**

The function of the school is to provide an education for the mind and soul of the student. Unlike the family, the school is not a natural bond but a planned environment with the explicit purpose of educating the mind of a child with the ability to reason. The Christian school exists to support the life of the church and partner with the work of the family. It ultimately focuses on the sharpening of essential skills that are needed for the individual to become literate and knowledgeable about the whole of life in light of Scripture. These skills are essential for the day to day operations of life and provide a higher standard of enjoyment in life. But beyond this rudimentary purpose, the idea of education is to provide the training of the soul. It was meant to provide a sharpening of the mind in order to cultivate the intellectual virtues of the heart. Therefore, the Christian school is established as a sphere of service to the family and the church for the discipleship of Covenant children.

However, the Christian school has been developed as a distinct and separate sphere of influence from the church and home, and at times, has encroached upon the role of the family in the life of the child. Holistic education has encouraged the parents to hand over their influence to trained professionals that understand children and this has lead to the
further breakdown of the family unit. The church has stepped away from leading educational ministries and the Christian school has filled the vacuum left to become an all encompassing experience for the student.

The Confusion of the Church, School and Family

Ultimately, what has occurred in our culture is abdication of the role of the parents and the de-centralization of the church from the life of the child. This portion of the child’s life has been outsourced to the successful school which provides holistic education with a college prep degree, and the role of church has been downplayed in the life of the believer. From this vacuum, the Christian school has claimed these areas of life and declared that they are experts in an area of unwarranted jurisdiction. Therefore, it is important that we clarify what each sphere is responsible to do. In other words, we will discern their cultural norm based on the created order. The school can no longer eclipse the role of the church and home, and in turn, the church must take seriously their role of Covenant Education in the sphere of the home.

Inevitably, there is a danger for the Christian school to begin to function as a church in the life of a young believer. Since the students spend so much time at the school, the environment dictates chapels, bible classes, counseling, and other outside of class activities. Slowly the student’s world is eclipsed by the functions of the school and the family abdicates responsibility because of the holistic approach to education. There is a great danger in this because the role of
the school has been established to educate the mind and heart of the individual, but the church has been established for societal works of mercy, outreach, and evangelism. This process does not allow the church or the family to function their proper roles. The school must allow space for other church and family driven activities to occur for the full development of the child’s Christian identity, otherwise he will simply infer that the ecclesiastical activities are what we do at school and will separate this from the other activities of life. It is symptomatic of the school doing a good job and a family not valuing church participation. This process usurps the role of the father as leader and places the principal, teacher or chaplain at the helm of spiritual development. Parents back away, out of fear or inadequacy, but the school cannot assume a role outside its normative principle. The school must empower the role of the parents and emphasize the centrality of the church.

There is another great danger to be avoided by the Christian school. In this process, the family could be usurped by the institution of the school. As Christian parents, we believe that the school is a safe place for students to grow and enjoy good friends. This, however, is short sighted and misses the point of the primary learning environment. The identity of a child is produced through relationships and intentional communities. Therefore, the identity of the child is developed partially by the school, an intellectual and moral development, but this is by no means holistic, and there is a
distinct need for stability in the family. Within the school, there are such large numbers of students that the primary communities of development occur in the hallways and the bathrooms where students are impressed by the values of one another. They form their own type of family from their set of friends which is devoid of adult influences. The Christian school can address these issues to a degree, but ultimately the family is responsible.

From these dangers it is clear that the school must see its role as subservient to the role of church and family in the life of the believer. The school has been established to provide intellectual and moral growth, but not in a holistic fashion, and therefore, the family and the church must establish their roles once again in the development of the child. The local Christian school should seek to build a good relationship with the churches represented by their students and determine ways to ensure students are engaged in the centrality of the church. Also, the school should work to enhance the family through educating parents as well as students, rather than creating ways to further separate their children’s experience of life.

This understanding of spheres brings a great deal of clarity to the believer because we are able to distinguish the distinct roles of education, family and the church. Each of these spheres functions differently, yet with the singularity of purpose within the life of the child. Each is established to root the child in the nurture of the Lord and create a sense
of identity in Christ for the believer. Also, it encourages the theological cohesion and comprehensive necessity for formulating a worldview. Because of this alignment, one is able to be theologically consistent in all areas of life. Within this system the responsibilities of evangelism and discipleship are overlapping from sphere to sphere.

The Overlapping Purpose of the Spheres

The role of evangelism and discipleship cannot be placed upon one distinct sphere, but is a Biblical goal within each sphere as it exercises its own responsibilities in the life of the child. Each sphere of influence must be understood in light of the other spheres and not delve into areas that are the jurisdiction of the other. The church should take a prominent role and the student will avoid the compartmentalization of identity in other areas of life and begin to be consistent in Christian obedience and stature in all spheres of life. Evangelism can rightly move into discipleship in each of the spheres when there is an understanding of the overlapping purposes of each sphere. For this to occur properly, the church must take the role of leadership in providing Covenant Education throughout the ministry. But often the church stops short of a full educational ministry because of the theological confusion latent in the concepts of evangelism and discipleship.

From the clear understanding of sphere sovereignty, Covenant Education can be understood as the responsibility of each sphere, but central to the experience is the impact of the
church upon the spheres of the home and school. Just like the Israelites were commanded to ensure the cultural education of their children in the Law of God, we are commanded to create a culture distinct from the world through the ministry of the church. However, in today’s culture the endeavor of Covenant Education occurs independently of the church. Christian educational institutions acknowledge the need and benefit of the church but function outside the authority of it. Although the school is a distinct sphere of influence, the Christian school must recognize the overlapping responsibility it has towards the work of the church. There is a danger that the Christian school that operates separate from the church will shift the focus of education and Covenant Education will become diluted in the life of the Covenant child. The relationship of the church and the Christian School maintains a vital connection for the young believer to ensure a distinct culture is maintained through Covenant Education. The following research highlights the current educational trends in primary Christian accreditation companies that work with Christian schools. This research expresses the weakness of the connection between the church and Christian school which greatly impacts the growth of Christian young people.
CHAPTER FOUR
CURRENT VIEWS OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

There seems to be no end to the literature about the philosophy of education in Christian schools, but as the research will show, very few books seem to evaluate their ministry in relationship to the authority of the church and the primary role of the family. Christian schools tend to function independently; however, these schools do see their work as a Kingdom building activity. Therefore, attention should be given to the overlapping responsibilities of the church, school and home. The following research of literature has been narrowed by those who have shown a moderate regard for the interaction of the Christian school with the church and family. The focus of this research is to determine the current views of education in regards to the Deuteronomy mandate that instructs families to impress the values of God’s Law upon the hearts of children through their community. This impression comes through the development of identity and is produced through building a strong community that fosters change in the life of the child. Therefore, the literature of particular interest is the philosophical works of major Christian accreditation agencies that follow the commands of Scripture.

The first of these is the American Association of Christian Schools (AACS) which primarily holds to an evangelical model of education. AACS believes that the child will come to know the Lord through the educational process. The second group is the Association of Classical Christian...
Schools (ACCS) which would form the antithetical viewpoint stating that education is primarily focused on the discipleship of believing families. This is not to the exclusion of non-believers, but neither do they cater to the non-believer in the educational mission of their school. Their mission has a deep theological significance for the covenant children of believers. The third group is the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) and the Christian Schools International (CSI). Both organizations hold a moderate view of balance in the educational culture. ACSI and CSI emphasize that balance is needed in the admissions process, but not to so narrowly as to close the mission to Christian families. They hold a clear stance that the Christian environment should acknowledge the residual effect of pagan influences and the call to make disciples of all men.

The Approach of AACS: Evangelism

From the study of literature, the approach of some schools is to provide environments within the school setting that foster evangelism. The mission of the school is to share the gospel with unbelieving families and build up the church. Essentially, it is the evangelism for the parents, through the ministry to the children, by what their children are studying in school. This is a very powerful model and has led many to the faith. It is a way to grow the church and meets the felt needs of the family through education, while providing education for the real spiritual needs of the heart. However,
these schools tend to lack a theological integration and adopt a progressive model of education that focuses on the individual as a newcomer to the faith.

**Kienel, Gibbs and Berry: Philosophy of Christian Education**

The book, *Philosophy of Christian Education*, is a comprehensive study which establishes a clear philosophical approach to education that is based in worldview development, Scriptural application, and moral character building. It begins with defining several of these concepts in the first five chapters and then turns towards the sharpening of a personal understanding of educational philosophy in specific areas of lesson planning, in-class management, and discipline. Their approach is clearly articulated in the interpretation of Ephesians 4:11-13. This quote from the book articulates the authors understanding of the mission of the school.

So the purpose of education can be summarized. Given who humans are, the goal of acquiring knowledge is moral growth: becoming like Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13). Within an educational setting, students must learn both the individual and the social implications of moral or ethical behavior (Colossians 2:18). They must also see that this means both initial salvation, as well as, subsequent progress in ethics: the achieving of character.

From this small section of the book one can see that the author understands the educational endeavor to primarily be character development starting with the initial process of salvation through the teaching of the school and end result being a morally astute individual. Throughout the book, the content of the education is not much different from what traditional educational models would adapt except the extensive training in

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1 Kienel, Gibbs and Berry p. 107
Scripture. This tends to be a common progressive education layered or coated with a Christian exterior.

**Horton: Christian Education Its Mandate and Mission**

Again, here in the book, *Christian Education, Its Mandate and Mission*, the mission of evangelism is proposed as a clear outcome of the Christian school educational process. Also Horton stresses with clarity that the purpose of Christian education is to create moral sensibilities within the student. This approach is focused on the issues of obedience, conformity, and submission.

The purpose of Christian education is the directing of the process of human development toward God’s objective for man: godliness of character and action. It bends its efforts to the end that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (II Tim 3:17). This goal of godliness presupposes the experience of regeneration. As education in general begins with physical birth, Christian education proper begins with spiritual birth, when the life of God is communicated to the soul. To say that Christian education proper begins with the new birth is not, however to say that it is pointless before regeneration. The student can be provided with necessary awareness of God and responses to His Word so that when the Holy Spirit brings conviction of sin he will readily and with full understanding accept Christ as his Savior.

Clearly Horton emphasizes the need and expression of holiness in the life of the graduate. Also he states that the non-believer can greatly benefit from experience of the Christian educational process even if he is never converted. The moral training is beneficial for life even without regeneration of the soul.

The belief in principles implanted by Christian education leads to the imitation of God by the Christian student. The imitation of God’s nature results in godly character;

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2 Horton p. 4
the imitation of God’s works result in Christian service. Thus knowledge precedes but is fulfilled by imitation; godly character precedes but is fulfilled by the service of God.  

The end goal that Horton proclaims is the imitation of God through the knowledge gained by the process of education. Within the book, Horton promotes the careful control of the educational environment with a whole chapter dedicated to the censorship of curriculum and works of literature. The students that enter the school greatly influence the culture and careful consideration must be made in the admission process. However, according to Horton, the non-Christian is not prevented from attendance, but rather required to conform to the standards of the school culture. Within this context, rules are essential and the reinforcement of rules set the standard for the school. Although the church is mentioned throughout these works, the Christian school functions independently from the ministry of the church in relation to these educational endeavors.

The Approach of ACCS: Discipleship

The antithesis of this approach is articulated by the ACCS schools which are established for the families of believers. The ACCS schools take the meaning of Deuteronomy mandate very literally, creating an environment that is composed of only individuals that have expressed faith in Christ. They hold the opposite belief, stating that the church brings people into the fold, and the school exists to educate Covenant children. Evangelism is part of the process for the school, but only for

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3 Ibid p. 18
the evangelism of the children of the church and evangelism is seen as part of the continuum of discipleship. This creates a very intentional and purposeful mission that focuses on the deepening of knowledge in the life of the students and this curriculum focuses on the Liberal Arts, rebelling against the progressive tendencies of modern education. Typically, a non-believing student has difficulty entering this culture because of the intense discipleship process.

Veith and Kern: *Classical Education Towards a Revival of American Schooling*

Veith and Kern have written an overview of the landscape of classical schools that are in existence. They articulate that there are four forms of classical schools that have developed, each having a different take on the educational philosophy of the classical vision. This study is specifically interested in the Christian version of Classical education, which Veith and Kern state has arisen because families began to take their role in the educational process very seriously.

Recently, aroused by the aggressive and hostile secularism of public education, Christians have been opening their own schools by the hundreds. Even churches that have not had a tradition of parochial education are establishing Christian schools, as are groups of concerned parents and alliances of cultural conservatives. Some of these schools seem more dedicated to insulating children from the temptations of the world than to offering them a comprehensive education. But other Christian schools are rediscovering their rich educational heritage, and these have become major catalyst for the classical revival.

Here we see that Christians are in the process of reclaiming a sphere of influence formerly lost to the secular world. The purpose of this movement has a clear emphasis on the children

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*Veith and Kern p. 17*
of believers and seeks to provide a distinctly Covenant Education for their young.

**Wilson: A Case for Classical and Christian Schools**

The clearest articulation of this position within the ACCS approach is the foundational work of Doug Wilson. In this study, Wilson articulates that the purpose of Christian education cannot merely mimic popular educational approaches while adding Bible classes for the purpose of evangelism and discipleship, but that the entire system of education must be reworked based on the proven methods of Classical education. This education should focus on the Covenant children of the church.

Mere reaction is not good enough. Believing parents must come to see Christian education as a demand of the covenant. Children of Christian parents belong to God. They are His by virtue of the covenant God made with His people.  

Wilson makes a bold and clear statement that the children of believers should be brought in the culture of the Covenant, as stated by the Deuteronomy mandate. The implication of this statement is the evident belief that the Christian school is a culture established to be separate from the world in both content and methodology and latent with Scriptures at all levels. He goes on to state that,

Before we can win the children of the world, we have to stop losing our children to that world. And as we teach them their identity in Christ in such a way that they embrace that identity and the terms of the covenant that define it, they will provide the kind of contrast with our postmodern culture's lost children that will make evangelism truly potent. Before we invite non-believers

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5 Wilson p. 57
to participate in our believing culture, we have to have one.”

Wilson is clearly reacting to the evangelical mission of many Christian schools that try to create a culture in which the unbelieving child will be won to Christ. He understands that there is an impact upon the school culture by the presence of that child and family within the school. If a school truly desires to make an impact upon culture then it must become that antithesis to the culture, so that when their graduates move out into the world they will have a clear distinction of identity. He states the problem clearly in the Christian school, “the problem here is that the antithesis is being blurred.” Without a clear antithesis the children of believers will be confused and misguided. Wilson also states in his book *Standing on the Promises* that,

Christian parents are morally obligated to keep their children out of government schools because the Scriptures expressly require a non-agnostic form of education. Consider the passage in Deuteronomy on the instruction of children...We should remember that this required instruction in the law of God was not limited to spiritual truths. It involved agriculture, economics, history, sex education, etc. - what we call education today. The biblical mind is not compartmentalized into two distinct areas of thought: secular and sacred. All of life is under the authority of God’s revealed Word, and children were to be taught in terms of this comprehensive authority all the time...In the Deuteronomy passage the requirement is that children live in an environment pervaded by Scripture. A thorough and biblical instruction can only be provided successfully if it is happening all the time...Nothing could be clearer - God wants the children of His people to live in an environment conditioned by His Word.

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5 Ibid p. 71-72
6 Ibid p. 150
7 Wilson p. 94-95
Wilson is consistent in his treatment of the Deuteronomy mandate, stating that a child must be in a culture pervaded by Scripture, whether it be in the home, school, or church, no sphere of life can be excluded.

**Littlejohn and Evans: *Wisdom and Eloquence***

Wilson is not alone in his perspective of discipleship. Robert Littlejohn and Charles Evans state in their book, *Wisdom and Eloquence* that,

> If we are to exhibit a Christian worldview before our students, it must include them. Our theology needs to extend to our notions of children, and especially of children as students. This mind-set recognizes each student’s value as one who is created in the image of God, and it encourages the creative energy that stems from each child’s image-bearing quality. This world view mind-set engages each student as a child of God in need of discipleship. 

Here the authors explicitly state that every child is in need of discipleship and this formulates the mission of the school. They go on to say that evangelism is not the role of the school, but is a function of the church, and therefore, the school is not functioning as a church.

> The mission of the school, in short, is not to evangelize, not parent, not to generate revenue, but to educate. As such, every school exists as a community of people who gather to pursue the twin purposes of teaching and learning; so schools are communities of teaching and learning. When this mission is pursued in the context of the Christian life of faith, a higher purpose is achieved – that of discipleship. 

The authors are linking the mission of the Christian school directly to the process of discipleship and articulating that the art of teaching is discipleship. This type of Christian

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9 Littlejohn and Evans p. 45
10 Ibid p. 52
school seeks to create a very concentrated Christian culture that focuses on the integration of faith into all aspects of learning, no matter what the subject matter. Classical schools redefine education in both form and content, providing a distinct educational effect upon the heart of the child.

However, this type of education is not for everyone. The non-believer would have difficulty feeling at home in a culture so distinct and would struggle finding a reason to stay. Some would say this is not an inviting or hospitable place for the lost, and therefore, is not open to the process of evangelism.

Bolt: *The Christian Story and the Christian School*

The boldest statement about the dangers of making evangelism the primary purpose of an educational system comes from Bolt in his book, *The Christian Story and the Christian School*. Within this work, Bolt states that the issue for many Christian schools is that they focus merely on the evangelism, which is inappropriate for children of believers as they are a part of the Covenant, and therefore have a special status before God, and in need of special attention from the church and Christian school.

Having emphasized one part of the equation (Christian schools that want to be Christian do have an evangelical role), we must now stress the other side. When evangelism is the primary reason for the Christian school, it becomes a threat to the school as school. In addition to the fact that indoctrination, understood as explicitly teaching the confessions or doctrines of a particular church, is not the task of the school, three other observations must be made here. In the first place, evangelism as the rationale for Christian education runs contrary to a Reformed understanding of children as members of the covenant community. Reformed people do not regard their children as lost pagans, outside the family of God. On the contrary - they believe that their children, though
sinful by nature, are received by God in Christ as members of his covenant.\textsuperscript{11}

Without doubt, Bolt is stating that the mission focus of evangelism is detrimental to the Christian school and should be eliminated from the vision of the school curriculum.

Secondly, life is more than evangelism. Being saved is not all that there is to Christian discipleship. Here a Trinitarian vision of perspective is helpful and needed. God is our Redeemer in Jesus Christ. Yet redemption is in some sense the means to a greater end. Salvation is the restoration of humanity and creation to the ordered purpose intended by the Creator God. For Reformed people in particular, the most important question in life is not what must I do to be saved? But how can I glorify God?\textsuperscript{12}

By focusing on evangelism, the Christian school misses the greater purpose of life, which is to glorify God. The purpose of the school is not simply to provide the path to salvation for the child, but to provide a way of life as part of the church. This clearly articulates the main point that ACCS schools stress. The mission is driven by discipleship, a deep and ongoing relationship with Lord, which focuses on the heart of the believer, to glorify God in all things. In the ACCS model, there is a very close adherence to the Deuteronomy 6 passages that encourages the creation of a distinct culture from the surrounding world.

**The Approach of ACSI or CSI: Moderate or Middle Ground**

Within the extremes of the two opposing viewpoints is the perspective of ACSI and CSI schools, in which a great deal of caution is taken in the development of school culture. These

\textsuperscript{11} Bolt p. 111-112  
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid p. 112
schools primarily emphasize discipleship, however, they create room for evangelism, or the inculcation of unbelieving students into the classroom in a monitored fashion. They utilize the power of a culture to change the heart and mind of the unbelieving student. This is a very powerful form of evangelism and protects the Christian students from the influence of a non-Christian culture.

Schultz: *Kingdom Education*

A key work from the ACSI training is the book, *Kingdom Education*, by Glen Schultz. The author creates a clear picture of the way in which a child can be surrounded by the three pillars of cultural formation found in the home, school and church for the purpose of leading a child to Christ. He calls this concept “Kingdom Education” in an effort to bind the purposes of all three institutions in the life of the child. The job of education is to fill their pillar with a strong influence and proper, Christ-centered content.

From these passages of Scripture, I see kingdom education as, a life-long, Bible-based, Christ-centered process of leading a child to Christ, building a child up in Christ, and equipping a child to serve Christ!  

From this definition, he goes on to show the relationship of each of these pillars to the others, forming for the reader a clear picture of holistic education for the child. In Chapter 12, he exhorts the leadership of the church and the school to put aside personal agendas and allow the principles of “Kingdom Education...”

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13 Schultz p. 25
Education” reign over their purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission, which earlier in the book he described, not only as evangelism, but also discipleship.

**Gaebelein: Christian Education in Democracy**

Another key work for ACSI and CSI schools has been, *Christian Education in Democracy*, by Frank Gaebelein. Gaebelein states that the process of Christian education starts with evangelism but continues on in the life of the student into discipleship.

The first aim of Christian Education may be defined in terms of evangelism, remembering that evangelism includes more than public meetings in which appeals for decisions are made. So considered, evangelism is a continuing function of Christian School just as it is a continuing function of the home and church.14

He goes on to state that,

In light of these facts, one of the continuing obligations of the Christian college or school is to control its enrollment in relation to the spiritual ends being sought. This is not to say that such a school may accept only those candidates who give evidence of being regenerated believers. Granted that practically all of a student body were already believers, such a situation would stultify the usefulness of Christian education by curtailing its evangelistic function. Experience has proved that the college of school which presents the Gospel to its students does not fail to reap a harvest in genuine conversions as well as to strengthen those who are already Christian. On the other hand, the opposite extreme must be avoided. Christian Schools are not rescue missions. Evangelistic zeal must not lead to an admission policy that deliberately prefers the pagan to the Christian candidate.15

Gaebelein does well to articulate the balance needed in the culture of the school to maintain the environment of discipleship but provide the needed hospitality for true

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14 Gaebelein p. 45
15 Ibid p. 82
conversion to take place. A clear caution is articulated in the approach of this educational philosophy as the culture of a school would hit a tipping point of negative influence upon the believing children. However, he does not articulate the dividing line in his caution. Schools cannot become rescue missions but neither can they become closed to the outside culture of the lost. The author leaves this discernment to the articulation of the administration of the school.

**Graham: Teaching Redemptively**

Donovan Graham has articulated the vision of Christian education in terms of redemption for the classroom. He states that purpose of education is to develop knowledge and commune with God.

The task of true education is to develop knowledge of God and His created reality and to use that knowledge in exercising a creative-redemptive dominion over the world in which we live. Such an outcome can be attained only by loving God and communing with Him, resulting in the wholehearted worship of God.\(^{16}\)

He continues with this theme of educating the heart by saying,

The heart then is at the root of learning. Since learning eventuates in behavior, the mind and actions are also involved - a person’s whole being participates in the learning process. In the Bible, we see learning as a dynamic, personal process that involves the heart’s commitment to something as truth, as evidenced by an active response. Therefore, our definition of learning can be based on implications drawn from the Bible: accepting (at a heart level) something as the truth that has an impact on subsequent behavior.\(^{15}\)

There is a calling present within his definition of education that focuses on the impression of the heart with the educational creativity. This impression is articulated by the

\(^{16}\) Graham p. 57

\(^{17}\) Ibid p. 147
student through their behavior and is seen in their obedience to their calling. Graham clearly understands the message of the Deuteronomy mandate and its relation to the school environment. He does not simply focus on outward behavior and conformity, but rather seeks to see a heart level commitment to the learning that has occurred. However, he sees the classroom as an opportunity to serve those that do not know the Lord, and therefore, he articulates a moderate view of the issues involving discipleship and evangelism.

Drexler: *Schools as Communities*

A compelling series of articles has been collected and edited by James Drexler in the book, *Schools as Communities*. Within in this book, several authors have written on the topic of Christian education both at the high school and college level. Despite the diversity of writers within the book, there is a great deal of unity on the topic of community in the process of education. Each author seems to acknowledge the need for and positive impact of the learning community upon the heart of the student. The desire of the learning community is to create a place of belonging and meaning for the student to encourage the deepest educational impact.

It is an important task of the church and the Christian school to turn nomads into pilgrims. A nomad’s restless spirit calls him or her to leave and move on to a new adventure; a pilgrim’s restlessness is for the paradise that was lost and can be regained only in heaven. Pilgrims have a destination and a passion for getting there. In their wandering, nomads turn to other for moments of pleasure and fellowship, but only for a time and a season. The nomadic life is a life alone, with all the attendant pathologies. Pilgrims are on the road together, supported in their struggles and challenges by other pilgrims, rejoicing together in their common goal.
and sustained by their fellowship around the table of grace.\textsuperscript{18} P. 7-8

Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon put it this way: ‘Christian community, life in the colony, is not primarily about togetherness. It is about the way of Jesus Christ with those whom he calls to himself. It is about disciplining our wants and needs incongruence with a true story, which gives us the resources to live truthful lives. In living out the story together, togetherness happens, but only as a by-product of the man project of trying to be faithful to Jesus.’\textsuperscript{19} P. 9-10

Both of these sections from the book articulate that the learning community is the essential element to enhance the experience of the learning. This is accented by the understanding that mankind has been created in a relational fashion and is in need of intimate interaction for education to occur. In this way, the Christian school functions in some ways as a church, providing for the student a primary and central community of belonging. It is the goal of the Christian school to provide this context for learning so that students can be further impacted through mutual accountability, challenging interactions, and intimate discussions.

But there is a balance to this approach. Learning communities cannot simply be a group of peers, set on deepening their knowledge base and looking inward to the needs of the group. On the contrary, education must reach out to the oppressed, lost, and destitute.

What is the purpose of a Christian Education? Consistent with the earlier discussion, philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff (2004) argues that the central concern of both the Old and New Testament writers is that the kingdom of God has burst onto the earthly scene in the person of Jesus Christ. The primary benefit of this kingdom for

\textsuperscript{18} Drexler p. 7-8
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid p. 9-10
redeemed individuals is that they experience shalom, the human flourishing that come from living according to God’s design. In particular, God has established four key relationships for each individual: with God, with others, with creation, and with oneself. When humans take delight in the proper functioning of these relationships, they experience the shalom that God intends. Wolterstorff asserts that since Jesus revealed His shalom primarily among the despised, so Christian education must include an emphasis on justice for the poor and oppressed, a justice that cries out for these four foundational relationships to be reconciled. The shalom-based educational model is concerned with movement. Success is not achieved when students simply accumulate knowledge. Rather the entire educational endeavor is geared toward equipping and motivating students to become ministers of reconciliation, transforming agents who passionately promote shalom.

Educating for shalom has the end result of schools moving out into oppressed areas of the world and sharing the gospel through education. Educators should be providing this type of education through evangelism and creating graduates that have the mentality and heart to serve the oppressed through education in this way. It is the embodiment of the great commission through the educational process and, within this model, evangelism is the point of the school. The culture is reached through the education provided, which is a deep and meaningful form of evangelism.

Conclusion

These authors formulate the major philosophical viewpoints of the mainstream Christian school education. It is clear from the literature that the Deuteronomy mandate has been used as a justification for education; however, it has not been fully articulated in relation to the church or the family. Schultz provides the closest explanation of the relationship, but he

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20 Ibid p. 366-367
does not express the centrality or authority of the church and its impact upon identity development. Therefore, it is imperative that further study be articulated in the role of the school in relation to the authority of the church and in the life of the family. Educational institutions are not properly acknowledging the Deuteronomy mandate if they function independently of and eclipse the role of the other spheres that shape identity. Schools must articulate their philosophy of evangelism, discipleship and kingdom work in light of the authority of the church; otherwise they are in danger of the secularization process in order to be culturally relevant. In essence, the school cannot be short-sighted in regards to their full mission to generation after generation unless they rightly acknowledge the centrality of the church and the role of the family in the life of the believer.

To adequately understand this need, the study of sphere sovereignty must be applied to the Christian school. The literature has revealed that schools tend to see themselves independent from the church and home, however, further study of biblical philosophy will enable a clearer view of the issues at hand. Covenant Education must bridge the connections between the home and the Christian school through the work of the church to provide a consistent worldview development for the faith of the child.
CHAPTER FIVE
COVENANT EDUCATION THROUGH THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

It has been stated thus far that the pillars of Covenant Education in the life of a child are the church, home, and school. The church must take a primary role in relation to the family by providing Covenant Education for all members and their children. The Christian school should provide a deep theological education in line with the church and operate with a submissive mission to the church to show a natural connection of the educational ministry. The study of sphere sovereignty has shown that the Christian school is a natural extension of the theological ministry of the church but does have a specific role to educate the mind of the child. However, there has been a clear misapplication of theology within school, and therefore, a re-calibration of mission must occur for the Christian school to be properly aligned with the church and home. Through the study of sphere sovereignty, it is evident that each institution has a distinct role to play and the Christian school is to provide an extension of Covenant Education from the church to the family. This Covenant Education in the Christian school should hold theological study as the primary focus and seek the integration of theological study in all aspects of the school environment. This mission of the Christian school should focus on the development of the mind in submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, which includes the mission of evangelism, but only as the beginning of the process of discipleship. Evangelism is not the goal
here, but rather the starting point, with discipleship as the end goal. When evangelism is the main and only focus, it short changes the student by not adequately providing a full world and life view through Scripture.

The Theological Integration of Thinking

In educational circles, the word integration has been overused, especially in relation to faith and learning. It is a word that has fought the onslaught of theological dualism in the educational culture in an effort to eliminate the categories of what is sacred and what is secular. Through the lens of Scripture, all things have a spiritual nature, and are within the scope of spiritual study. However, as we have applied this term to curriculums, mission statements, and objectives, the dualistic thinking is still evident in our culture. The application of Covenant Education overcomes this dualism of the sacred/secular split by integrating faith into all areas of study. Just as Kuyper was quoted earlier, there is no part of creation that is not subject to the sovereign rule of God and we must acknowledge this truth. George Marsden has said this very clearly in his work, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, that,

> Mobilizing Christian academics is not first of all an intellectual matter. The prior questions are always spiritual. In order to have Christians who take seriously their callings as Christian scholars, we must first have scholars shaped by deep spiritual commitments.¹

An educational institution can only be distinctively Christian when the people involved are serious Christian academics.

¹ Marsden p. 107
These are people that seek to fully integrate their faith into every aspect of life and study. The church should be creating people with this level of knowledge and care through the ministry of theological education. Theological integration of thinking is key in the development of the Christian school. All subjects must be understood as part of God’s world, and therefore, under His sovereign care. All aspects of nature are revealing the character of God and all human inventions of culture should be analyzed and critiqued through the lens of Scripture. Faith must be integrated into all areas of the educational experience so that all can be claimed by Christ. This is the essence of Covenant Education as we acknowledge that “we are His people” by the way we study, learn, and by the community we create.

This integration sets into motion a very different set of values within the Christian school culture. It redefines the mission, the curriculum, the type of student, the impact upon the student, the standards of conduct, and the enforcement of rules on the school campus. This vibrant culture is marked by respect, humility, joy, compassion, curiosity, and purpose for the student. The most valuable process occurring in the school is the educational process itself, both in and outside of the classroom. Therefore, in all subjects and with all teachers, regardless of subject, the process of discipleship is at work. At first with the presentation of the gospel, but followed through the continual encouragement to realize God’s grace and live in submission to Him.
Just as the Israelites were commanded to create a culture of antithesis, the church must work with the Christian school to create a cultural distinction in the educational process. From the literature review the Association of Classical Christian Schools has determined to make a distinct Christian culture with discipleship as a central tenant of their mission. Discipleship is the key to the educational process and they seek to bring all areas of study into submission under the Lordship of Christ. They have understood the theological application of sanctification in the life of the Covenant child. In many ways, the Association of Classical Christian Schools has reacted against the American Association of Christian Schools that has struggled with theological confusion and has promoted a subtle form of moralism inherent in the progressive form of education. In the theological concept of sanctification, the American Association of Christian Schools has replaced sanctification with moralism that emphasizes the feeble efforts of man to please God. However, it would seem that Association of Classical Christian Schools has missed the theological connection and submission to the church. They have operated separately from the ministry of the church and in many respects have not allowed room for evangelism. The Association of Christian Schools International and Christian Schools International have allowed room for evangelism and promoted a form of balance in the development of the Christian culture but their descriptions have been vague in the formation of this culture. None of these schools provide a clear example for the
proper implementation of Covenant Education but have attempted varying degrees of cultural antithesis. Covenant Education involves the authority of the church in the life of the school in partnership with the family.

With this in mindset, the church must move forward and create a school that upholds theological study through discipleship and includes the structure of the family in the educational process. It would seem from my experience that very few schools hold a proper balance on the inclusion of the church and family into the scope of the school. The identity of a student is shaped by the process of integration into a community of believers. True change occurs in the life of the student through the truth in the context of a relationship. The best setting for change to occur is in a community of believers that hold to the standard of righteous living. The Christian school should establish a distinct and vibrant Christ-centered community that engages parents, as well as students. This culture must be marked by a deep understanding of grace. A large amount of time must be dedicated to the process of conversations about the heart level motivations for actions, and the reasons behind actions, so that students are led towards reflection and their sin is confronted at a heart level.

In Covenant Education, as a culture established on grace, there will be three main aspects embedded in the day to day process of the school. First, there will be a clear understanding of calling as the student’s primary
responsibility. Second, the educational process will be for the glory of God and the not the glorification of self. And third, there must be an intimate connection between our understanding of grace and our obedience to God. All this is articulated through relational interactions with students and an emphasis upon the centrality of church worship. Grace is conveyed through teachers who have been touched by grace and have a clear understanding of justification and sanctification. The grace filled classroom does not lower the standard of conduct, but rather, through a different mode of conveying the standard, brings a higher standard of conduct to the heart of the student.

The grace based culture is an intentional approach to the campus and is established in every corner of the environment. Everything is a factor in creating a context that upholds the standard of the Deuteronomy mandate. It is not simply the teachers teaching or the clarity of the curriculum guides, or the cleanliness of the campus. Rather it is dictated, in part, by the students themselves through their interactions in the hallways and bathrooms that impact the ethos of the school. The headmaster cannot reach these subversive areas of the campus through the sheer declaration of the rules. This must be accomplished through approaching the heart of the student and opening a world of sin found in fear, unbelief, or pride that must be uncovered and discussed with the student. This intentional approach to the students takes into account the unknown areas and seeks to reach the heart of the student.
Another aspect of a grace filled culture is the depth of character development by the academic process. When our theology aligns correctly, and our understanding of sanctification by grace motivates the heart level, the student is empowered to fully realize their potential because of their heart level application to the subject matter at hand. Then the process of education becomes character building for the right reasons. Character is built upon thankfulness for the work of Christ, just like the original Deuteronomy mandate. Thankfulness is the driving reason of why a student tries so hard in the educational endeavor and faithfulness defines success as obedience to their calling as a student. Our theological clarity drives everything at this point in our school. It is vital we correctly understand our theological motivation; otherwise, character will be built upon the faulty foundation of moralism and self-centeredness. Moralism declares that one can earn God’s favor by diligence, rather than being in God’s favor, and therefore, acting diligently. Covenant Education trains the heart to learn from the purpose of serving.

This depth of character is seen through a student’s reaction to failure. A student is not marked by their ability to be perfect, but rather his response to imperfection inherent within the soul. Failure is part of what it means to be human and the process of failure drives us to a need for Christ, which is God’s design for humanity. Failure often highlights our areas of sin and presents an opportunity for discipleship.
These moments are the key times to apply Covenant Education to the heart of the student and should drive the student back to the ministry of the church.

**Education to the Glory of God**

In this type of Christian School, students understand their education to be a calling from God, worthy of their full effort, and seek adherence to this calling in full obedience. This obedience is an expression of their glorification of God and understood in light of their justification, sanctification and future glorification through the finished work of Christ. These concepts are articulated by the ministry of the church and only when taught in concert with the church can the Christian school function as an agent of Covenant Education.

Therefore, the Christian school student seeks to fully engage the educational process of their schooling with an energetic spirit, an alert mind, and humble disposition. The essence of this attitude is found in Proverbs 1:7 when Scripture says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and understanding.” The Christian school student seeks knowledge with a proper and reverent fear of the Lord which leads to Christ-like wisdom. This motivation is an extension of the Sunday morning liturgy of the church. Christian education is misunderstood without the ministry of the church in the life of believer.

Students in a Christian School are encouraged to take on this identity rather than the typical definition of the American teenager. The Christian school seeks to encourage
students to be counter cultural to the pressures that pervade the teen culture of our day and age. The school addresses these basic issues at a heart level and seeks to change the affections of the student. The church service acts as the primary agent in removing the student’s self-centered ways.

The purpose, therefore, of all the effort in school, is the glorification of God, which is an extension of the church worship. The educational process is an act of worship before the Lord. This drastically changes all the reasons a school exists. The job of the school is not to supply a means to a selfish end, whether that be college, a job, security, recognition, but rather the school exists to glorify God and the work He has done. The Christian school studies all the ways He has declared Himself in nature and our role in this endeavor is to know him more and more. A grace filled education takes students out of the center stage and places them as a supporting character in the divine drama, with Christ at the center. They are placed properly in response to the whole of history, not being asked to their meaning in the multicultural roles, but being taught they are citizens of heaven first and of the world second. Students must acknowledge the role of humility and the intimate connection between humility and learning. Only the humble truly learn because they approach the educational purpose with a teachable spirit. The self-esteem movement has taken the world of education as hostage, and has stagnated the entire process of
education by creating students that have great personal esteem, but have very little content of character.

Covenant Education establishes a culture of discipleship within the classroom that seeks to uplift the ministry of church and to involve the parents. In this environment, parents are invited into the classroom on a regular basis to understand the nature of their child’s education. Student discipline works with the parents to determine appropriate forms of disciplinary action and seeks the redemption of the student’s behavior before a sovereign Lord. This demonstrates the appropriate overlapping of the spheres in which each sphere has respected boundaries, but also distinct purposes and focal points.

Within the classroom of the Christian school there are three types of student attitudes at work. There are wise students, naïve students, and foolish students. The foolish students are one that despises mocks or neglects their God-given calling as a student. They are openly difficult, abundantly chattering during class, and maintain a scoffing disposition towards others. The naïve students are one that follows. This student could go either way, but often determines their values based on the popular viewpoints of the accepted crowd. Their desire is to be socially accepted above all else and education is not their calling. The wise students seek to please the Lord in all things. Their purpose is to glorify God through their diligence in schoolwork.

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2 I have quoted a talk from Matt Whitling at the ACCS conference in 2010
exposes one of the key reasons the Christian school must protect the culture of the Christian school. When we open the school for the purpose of evangelism to the foolish student, then there is a crucial impact upon the naïve and the wise student. First, the wise student becomes the object of mocking by the foolish student. The wisdom of the wise is despised and hated because it highlights the foolishness of the fool. Second, the naïve student is swayed and possibly led away to the foolish standard. Third, the fool requires the most work from the faculty, and therefore, impacts the culture of the classroom. In all areas of their education, the Christian school seeks to develop wisdom in the heart of the student.

Let me put these points in a slightly different way. The ultimate goal of all education, as Christians see it, is that those who are taught shall live in such a way as to carry out their responsibilities to God and find joy and delight in so doing. The Christian parent and teacher seeks to do what he or she thinks all parents and teachers should seek to do. A philosophy of education which has this as the proper ultimate goal of education may be called responsibility theory of education. Wolterstorff correctly identifies the purpose of education as being a calling to responsible action in the Christian life. Again this highlights the need of educational institutions to provide a culture within which the wise student is uplifted. If the fool is allowed to persist in this culture and is tolerated, then the wise student is not protected and the naïve is led away from responsible actions before the Lord.

**Discipleship in Education**

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3 Wolterstorff p. 14
Because of the need of church presence in the Christian school and roles evident in sphere sovereignty, it is clear that the church empowers the Christian school to be a place of deep discipleship. The Christian school should seek to develop a culture as described in the Old Testament in which the pagan gods were thrown out, the people were told to be protective of their identity and the nation remained pure from cultural influences of pagan communities. To create an environment that does this, the church must uphold a mission that emphasizes a deep and intentional discipleship through Covenant Education.
CHAPTER SIX
COVENANT EDUCATION IN THE CHURCH

With a clear understanding of sphere sovereignty, we can readdress the issue raised in Deuteronomy mandate which charges the church with Covenant Education. It is through a theological community that understands the proper place of each sphere that allows the best possible impression to occur for identity development within the heart of the child. This happens best when a church takes the lead in developing Covenant Education within the home and through the establishment of a Christian school for the children of believers in the congregation. It also comes from a vibrant understanding of education that should take place within the church through intentional and meaningful educational programs that enhance the role of parents in the life of their children. Just as the leaders of Israel were instructed to read the law aloud to the people in Deuteronomy, so too, the church is responsible to develop Covenant Education for the membership of the church through the established educational ministries.

Unfortunately, many churches have not adequately staffed or trained the church administration to properly educate the children of the congregation. Sunday school teachers are all volunteers and rarely mentored within the ministry of the church. George Barna laments this fact in showing that the church does not budget enough money to the education of the
children.¹ In the modern world, the church has relinquished their hold on the educational process and has created a culture of fun and fellowship through Sunday schools, youth groups, and children’s programs within the church. Theological education is often downplayed, creating an anti-educational environment in which a therapeutic culture emphasizes belonging, togetherness and fellowship. Covenant Education is not emphasized to the detriment of the faith development of Covenant children.

However, the church can no longer stand idly by and allow the secular culture to own the education of Covenant children in the development of their identity. There is a correlation to the Israelites allowing their children to be led astray by the gods of the foreign countries. This is a compromise that can no longer be tolerated in the church. Therefore, the church must make the responsibility of Covenant Education as a primary objective of their mission. It is a central concern of the church leadership to ensure that the next generation is adequately educated thoroughly, but often the church stops short of this endeavor. They are content to provide education unto salvation, and then provide Christian fellowship, but fail to provide deep and meaningful processes of discipleship in each sphere of influence over the child.

Since this culture exists in the church, we must analyze the reasons it is occurring. Why is it that our church today does not emphasize the theological education of the children?

¹ Barna p. 48
Why are the spheres separated and compartmentalized in the life of believers? It is very important to understand the theological misunderstanding that resides underneath the assumptions of educational ministries in the church. The presumption in the misapplication of evangelism is a misunderstanding of justification and sanctification. Often the church educates unto salvation but they employ a form of moralism in the future spiritual development of their students. As defined by Louis Berkoff in his systematic theology book, justification is understood in the following manner.

Justification is a judicial act of God, in which He declares, on the basis of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, that all the claims of the law are satisfied with respect to the sinner. It is unique in the application of the work of redemption in that it is a judicial act of God, a declaration respecting the sinner and to an act or process of renewal, such as regeneration, conversion and sanctification.²

This means that the act of declaring the Christian righteous by the work of Christ is outside the powers of the individual. We cannot declare ourselves to be righteous through our efforts. Rather it is declared on our behalf by the One who stands for us before the Father. Justification is a legal statement that brands us with an identity that we have been given. This is a free gift of grace given to us through faith in Jesus Christ. We may not claim that salvation came through our efforts; rather we receive it by faith as a free gift of grace from the Father.

Given this definition of justification, sanctification is articulated as a different theological concept. Sanctification

² Berkoff p. 513
is the continued work of Christ in our experience of life. The work of the Holy Spirit makes us more like Christ and by faith we believe that the Lord will carry on this process until our final glorification. The role of sanctification in the life of a believer is defined by Berkoff in the following terms.

Sanctification may be defined as the gracious and continuous operation of the Holy Spirit, by which He delivers the justified sinner from the pollution of sin, renews his whole nature in the image of God, and enables him to perform good works. It is the supernatural work of God. Some have the mistaken notion that sanctification consists merely in the drawing out of the new life, implanted in the soul by regeneration, in a persuasive way by presenting motives to the will. But this is not true. It consists fundamentally and primarily in a divine operation of the soul, whereby the holy disposition born in regeneration is strengthened and its holy exercises are increased. It is essentially a work of God, though in so far as He employs means, man can and is expected to co-operate by the proper use of these means.

Unlike justification, sanctification is an on-going process in which we are in a constant state of being humbled by God. It is a slow and steady process of becoming more Christ-like, by the continued work of the Father in the life of the believer. It is a process by which the believer co-operates with the work that the Holy Spirit is already performing. Often there is a theological misunderstanding about the nature of sanctification. Sanctification is misunderstood as the moral duty of the regenerated individual to be perfect. In essence, the misunderstanding resides in the presumption that justification is the work of God and sanctification is the work of man.

3 Ibid p. 532
Since this misunderstanding occurs, it misleads the church to go about the process of education in an improper fashion. Evangelism is the sharing of the forgiveness of God from the sins we have committed and a faith that Christ has saved us from our sins. Essentially, it is the communication of the theological concept of justification for the lost individual. But once that prayer is prayed, and justification is accomplished, the educational programs of the church have simply encouraged the new believer to be good, be nice and not to offend anyone. There is an obvious moralism taught through the misunderstanding of sanctification in the educational ministries of the church, especially at the younger ages in the Sunday school programs. This is a dangerous moralism, as it encourages the young believer to stop short of understanding deeper implications of grace in their life which leads to humility, and to focus on their perceived goodness through behavior.

Additionally, given the special relationship that a Covenant child enjoys under the authority of the church we should not evangelize to them in the same way we approach the pagan unbeliever. The Covenant child is taught the truth of Scripture throughout their maturation to adulthood for the purpose of generational perpetuation of the Christian faith. Ultimately, the Covenant child is indoctrinated with an understanding of grace, redemption, forgiveness and the full work of Christ on their behalf. Therefore, we teach the call of salvation to our Covenant children, and acknowledge the work
that Christ has already accomplished. The church must carefully approach Covenant Education guarding the ministry for the development of Covenant faith in the children of believers.

This correction of theology within the church drastically changes our current concepts of evangelism and discipleship. Rather than two separate theological concepts, they become the same process, with a deep sense of reflection, submission and repentance at their root. Covenant Education emphasizes discipleship as the continued process of sanctification in the life of Covenant children. The misunderstanding of sanctification places our hearts in the posture of moralism, searching for a way to earn God’s favor. But when this theology is corrected, the believer finds that he is as close to God as he possibly can be, because Christ declared him to be righteous. Our Covenant children need a distinct vision of these at all levels of the church and in the development of educational ministries.

**The Theological Ministry of the Church**

The correction of this theological misunderstanding readdresses Covenant Education in the church as a deep sense of theological study for the purpose of continued sanctification. Practically speaking, the church must institute several goals and objectives to protect and nurture the faith development of Covenant children. First, the church must create a renewed love for theological education to ensure that Covenant children value the educational process. Second, the church must utilize Covenant Education as means to transmit the Christian worldview
to Covenant children in order that they may live all of life under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Third, the church must emphasize the educational programs of the church to involve the family. Fourth, the church must develop a Christ-centered school ministry. Fifth, the church must prepare Covenant children with the wisdom and eloquence to defend their faith. Sixth, the church must fulfill the vow of infant baptism by educating the Covenant children within the church. In short, the church must institute Covenant Education to create a culture of deep and meaningful discipleship in order for the Christian faith to be perpetuated from one generation to the next.

Renewed Love for Theological Education

Within the church the study of theology has become a concern to some because of the dissention that it stirs and the division of fellowship that it creates. Instead of entering into these divisive topics, some churches have decided to simply teach Jesus and leave the rest of theological study alone. Theology has become a perceived problem that affects community and fellowship. However, without the deep study and application of theology, the realization of grace will not continue in the life of the believer. The church will simply remain at the infantile level of knowing merely salvation, but nothing deeper in the implications of His grace to all other areas of life. The sphere of the church must recognize its role to provide theological training to their congregation in all aspects of Scripture for the continued purpose of
sanctification, especially to Covenant children. When theological education is the focus, the Covenant children will grow in their appreciation and understanding of the Gospel. This can be accomplished through the teaching of catechism, creeds, confession, and the systematic theology of Scripture. However, it is essential that the programs of the church, whether it is Sunday school, youth group, VBS, etc., hold up the value of Covenant Education as the primary purpose of the program and lead students to a vibrant faith.

**Transmission of the Worldview of the Church**

Through theological training the church is transmitting a Christian worldview which is the comprehensive application of theology to all areas of life for the individual. It is not simply the sharing of the Gospel, rather the idea of Christian worldview is lived, mimicked, copied, watched, practiced and largely infused into the congregation through experience and life together. Therefore, theological education is a relational process at its root. There is a fear that theological study leads the Christian to an ivory tower of meaningless and futile questioning without real answers. But on the contrary, proper theological study, understood from the responsibility of sphere sovereignty, should lead the believer into community based on the bond of Christ. Since the church provides a Christian environment with preaching, the sacraments, and further theological study, the primary audience should be the Christian family. The focus of the Christian community should be to understand their Savior and the Covenant
He has made with His people. The church provides a clear message to the Christian family that God is real and can be understood, His Law should be followed, and His provision is to generation after generation. However, if the church setting cannot move beyond rudimentary conversations about faith, then the Christian young person will not be challenged in a deep and meaningful way. This type of culture arises when Covenant Education is promoted and implemented at all levels of the ministry, but more importantly, worldview is transmitted when the ethos of the community believes the teaching of Scripture and deeply loves the God of our salvation.

**The Educational Ministry of the Church within the Family**

When the church begins to take the role of Covenant Education seriously, the depth of theological study will strengthen the community of the church. The primary unit of this community is the family. The church should seek out ways to enable the parents to be intimately involved in the educational process of their programs for children. There needs to be a process of continued education when the parents are at home with the child to ensure that the theological concepts of the teaching are clear in the mind of the child. This is why the children’s sermon during the service is so important as the parents are able to watch the pastor teach their children and later are able to follow up with that teaching around the dinner table or while playing in the yard. Sunday school teachers, youth group leaders, and children’s ministers should hold regular parent meetings to inform parents
about educational nature of your programs and provide information so that the education can continue at home. Parents are the primary educators in the home and their worldview is transmitted to their children each and every day. Therefore, the church should offer regular parent training seminars in theology, child rearing, and marriage. These programs will bridge the gap between the family and the church to ensure that the process of Covenant Education is coherent and consistent for the experience of the child.

The Educational Ministry of the School within the Family

As the educational ministry of the church grows, the church must undertake the development of a Christian school as a natural outworking of the mission of Covenant Education. Through the study of sphere sovereignty, the church has a responsibility to reclaim the sphere of education that has been taken by the secular world. A Christian school is the natural expression of a church taking the Deuteronomy mandate and applying it to the needs of the congregation. A distinct, vibrant educational culture must be established for the children of the church to ensure the transmission of the Christian worldview from one generation to the next.

Preparation for a Life of Apologetics

Within the church, the end goal for Covenant Education is to create students that have a clear wisdom and eloquence in regard to Scripture. The child that has experienced Covenant Education has been consistently prepared for a life of apologetics because the law of God has been so well impressed
upon their heart. Finding a defense for what they believe is not difficult, and confidently they approach the synergy of religious beliefs that exist in our world with uncompromising resolve. They are able to ask the hard questions of opposing worldviews instead of fearing those questions of their own worldview. They are able to handle the culture with care and thoughtfully begin to transform the culture in which they live by applying their biblical understanding of life to the circumstances of difficultly. Evangelism becomes much more than talking about their faith, but it flows from their personality, because it is so much a part of their identity. Once Covenant Education establishes fruition in the soul of the young believer, evangelism becomes a natural outworking of the identity of the graduate. People will be drawn to a young person that knows what they believe and why they believe it. Covenant Education that fosters discipleship in the student will find expression in a way of life that looks very different because the graduate will live out their faith in a consistent, coherent way that place the centrality of the church first in their life. This student will attract others to their confidence and eloquence in their articulation of the faith, as it will be more than simply feelings towards or about God. Rather it will be a reasonable faith that is deeply understood and rationally defended.

**Fulfilling the Vow of Infant Baptism**

The outworking of this theology is expressed fully in the sacrament of infant baptism. Within this sacrament, the church
is called upon by the church leadership to fulfill the role of impressing the love of God upon the heart of the children of the congregation. In many ways, it is the vow of education, especially theological education, which is charged upon the community of believers. To disregard this sacrament would be to treat our children as if they were pagans, outside the church, until they are able to choose salvation. In our hyper-individualistic culture we have left the children of the church to make up their own mind in regards to their faith, desiring that they have an authentic experience of God, rather than impressing a belief of God upon their hearts. This is a neglect of the Covenant children that God has entrusted to us and the church must regain the educational process for this young section of the congregation. Covenant Education is a vital portion of the work of the church leadership and can no longer be ignored as a community responsibility within the church. Church members should see every one of the little children as a part of their Christian duty before the Lord. Jesus demonstrates this to us clearly in Matthew 19:13-15 as He made time for the little ones. Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” We should follow this example and as a church make the time necessary to raise up the next generation of believers to be stronger than we are in the Lord.
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

1. Community: It is a group of people leading a common life according to a rule, specifically the rule of Scripture, for the establishment of their way of life.

2. Covenant Education: The familial process of transmitting the Christian worldview and faith in Christ onto the next generation of Covenant children within the church.

3. Covenant Children: Children born to at least one believing parent and raised under the ministry of the church.

4. Covenant: the unilateral agreement between God and the ancient Israelites, in which God promised to protect the people and the commandment to keep His law and to be faithful to Him.

5. Covenant of Grace: The fulfillment of God’s unilateral promise to the people found in the person and work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

6. Church: The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to us the beliefs of redemption are, his ordinances especially the Word, sacraments, prayer all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.

7. Deuteronomy Mandate: The command laid out in Deuteronomy by God for the leadership of Israel to impress the Law of God upon the hearts of the children within Israel.

8. Discipleship: The relational process of training an individual to follow the doctrines of a teacher or specific school of thought.

9. Enkapsis: The intertwining relation between two or more distinct entities which possess an internal structural principle of their own and an independent internal leading function.

10. Evangelism: The preaching or promulgation of the Gospel

11. Infant Baptism: Baptism is a sacrament, where in the washing with water in the name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ and partaking in the benefits of the covenant of grace and our engagement to be the Lord’s.

12. Justification: It is an act of God’s free grace, wherein he pardons all our sins and accepts us as righteous in his
sight only by the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone.

13. **Sanctification:** It is the work of God’s free grace whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness.

14. **Secularization:** It is the slow and steady process of shifting way from the theological foundation of mission established in an institution.

15. **Sphere Sovereignty:** A system of thought that each sphere of life has its own distinct responsibility, authority and objectives laid out in an all encompassing created order, designed and governed by God, and include societal communities, their historical development, and their abiding norms.

16. **Theology:** the systematic study of Scriptural revelation concerning God's nature and purpose through the teaching of the Church
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Journal Articles
