



We are the True Radicals

I suppose it's fair to say that many American evangelicals fear that education in America is being, or, perhaps, has been co-opted by a radical leftist agenda. I wouldn't disagree. Today we see leaders in the educational establishment promoting moral relativism, preaching the acceptance of immoral lifestyles, lowering academic standards in the name of fairness and blatantly fighting to eradicate any trace of Christianity.

There is some irony here. Many of those who now occupy positions of power and authority in education are the same ones who marched and protested in the 1960s and 70s against the establishment. We might think that the radicals are now running the show. Weren't they the ones who adorned their Volkswagen microbuses with bumper stickers that read: "Question Authority?" Indeed, as Francis Schaeffer pointed out, the angry youth of the Vietnam era asked some hard but fair questions of their modernist, materialist culture. Not getting answers to their questions—which was in many ways the fault of the church—hippies and anti-war protesters set aside their questioning, and went on to become, politicians, lawyers and educators. They are now educating our college students and running our school systems.

Thankfully, we might believe, did the social radicalism of the 60s fizzle out. The yuppies in power today are really not so radical. We detect only echoes of their former rhetoric in the recent anti-war protests and the nostalgic return of bell-bottom pants. But what we are left with is, I think, more insidious and more threatening to the church. Sixties radicalism has given way to a culture of acceptance and non-judgmentalism, a culture whose gods are personal affluence and freedom from all obligations, a society that lacks an ultimate purpose. And so it is in our schools. Our generation tends to have given up on the idea of education as a search for truth or a forum for honest inquiry. Education has come to be seen as a means to personal empowerment and prosperity.

How different are the goals of the educational establishment from those of evangelical establishment? I'm sorry to say that, for many, this is unclear. Christian education, all too often, looks just like non-Christian education with a few more rules and different labels. So, Christian colleges mimic the modernists in their education departments.

Isn't it here, at the presuppositional level, that the real battle lines of the culture wars in education should be drawn? Of course, we are concerned about the near utter failure of the state education system. But we are just as concerned about the presuppositions of popular culture which are so blithely accepted by popular Christianity? We can rail against the introduction of evolution or the elimination of phonics into the schools, but unless we address the purpose and methods of education in terms of our chief end and callings, we limit the lordship of Christ in our lives.

A Classical Christian education is truly radical. We have a rightful claim to the 60s dictum to "Question Authority." Not that we reject authority. Quite the contrary! By the grace of God, we know the source of all authority and so, like the Bereans, we measure all that we are taught by men against God's truth. A Classical Christian education asks ultimate questions in order to serve ultimate purposes.

Our method is likewise, radical. In all areas of learning our cry is, with the 16th-century reformers, *ad fontes*, "to the sources!" The sources of learning are found in Word of God (our only rule of faith and practice); in the creation itself and in the explorations of God's Word and natural revelation found in studies made by scholars from the ancient Mesopotamians to the present day. Throughout all of redemptive history, we search for and test the best authorities we can find. A Classical Christian education understands that the historical foundations of the very educational system that now rails against Christianity are, in fact, Christian. And so we call for Reformation, a return to authoritative sources.

David Gobel

Chairman of the Board, Veritas Academy