Christian Business Education

by Rick Noorman

After thirteen years of covenant instruction in our Protestant Reformed Christian schools, the majority of the graduates will drop their roles as students to take up their life's calling. Each person must prayerfully ask the question, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" The Lord's answer and guidance may lead the graduates down many different paths. One may be led to work in a factory while another is led to the farm, or to the office. Some may be led to manual labor, while others are called to direct the labors of others. Some may be called to work outside the home, while others must dedicate themselves to a family. No matter the path of life on which we find ourselves, we are commanded to walk in a way that is pleasing in the sight of the Lord. As Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Matt. 22:37-39. These are the principles which govern our whole life and must be followed in every aspect of life.

The Protestant Reformed educational system is set up to ingrain these principles of Christian living into the student so that he may direct the use of his knowledge and talents toward the coming of the Kingdom of Christ. We cannot teach any subject matter without also showing the student how to use the skill or information which we have given him to the honor and glory of God's holy name.

Business education in the Christian school should have the objective of producing efficient stewards of the economic resources which each person receives from God. This objective
considers the economic life of the person from two points of view. Each person, first, has the resource of time and an ability to perform some service or work in this time. This resource is given up for compensation, usually money. This person we can call the producer. Once the person has been compensated for his productive resource, he now has money and he becomes a consumer. He must use his monetary resources to purchase the things which he needs.

Let's first consider the education of the person as a producer. I do not feel it is the place of the Christian high school to teach a specific job. The trend toward vocational education today may be very harmful to the American economic system in the long run. The high school student should be learning in a variety of areas so that he may be able to develop all of his talents. This is especially true of the Christian student. In order to fully appreciate God and His creation and to live a life that is totally dedicated to Him, we must learn as much as we can about Him. A vocational program which is too specific will not accomplish this for the student. The skills and knowledge gained in a vocational program may be of little value to the student if he finds that he isn't fitted for the job. In this case, the amount of time spent learning the specific skill is a tragic loss. It is a loss because this time might have been better spent in other classes. For these reasons, I cannot advocate high school vocational education. Even if a student is very sure of his calling, a well-rounded education will generally be more valuable to him in the long run. It is often very difficult to get the student, and sometimes the parents, to understand this. The student may be tired of the classroom, while the parents are anxious to see their child get a job. High school is not the only place where a job can be learned. There are many post high school vocational opportunities. Many businesses prefer people with a broad educational background. These businesses usually like to teach the job themselves through an on-the-job training program. Vocational training, generally, is not an efficient use of the high school years.

A better way to educate the consumer may be to teach general skills and principles so that the student is able to fit into a variety of occupational areas. A broad understanding of the basic principles involved in a job or a business will mean that the person will be more adaptable to occupational change. Today's
fast paced, highly technical world is changing every day. New jobs arise as fast as the old ones become obsolete. A person with a more general education will find it easier to fit into the new jobs. A promotion may also mean an occupational change. A person with a broad background is often the first one considered for promotion. His education may serve as a background for further study and advancement which the employer may have to offer.

A general business education will be important in helping the person as producer make decisions. He needs to understand the significance that certain courses of action will have on his work. It is important that he have some command of the vocabulary used in the business world so that he can communicate his needs to other people involved in the decision making process. He should know what is involved in keeping financial records and what type of information is available from the study of them. Note that we should not teach them how to get this detailed information because this is a specific skill learned by accountants. The student should realize, however, that such information is available from the accountant. Basic principles of organization will help a person in any job, and even in home, school, and church work. Typing is a skill that may be used in many jobs and for many reasons; therefore it is a valuable skill to be learned. Some knowledge of money is useful, especially how, where, and when it is needed in a business and where and how it may be obtained. These are the general types of ideas and skills that should be taught the student, as a producer in the business education program.

The student should see that he, as a producer, is a servant of God. He must act as a proper steward of the time and talents which the Lord in His mercy has given him. If he is at the "bottom of the totem pole," he should see it as his duty to work diligently, always doing his best and obeying those in authority, not to his own glory, but to the glory of God and the coming of His kingdom. Those who have authority over others must see that their authority is from God and that they must treat those who labor for them in a way that is pleasing to the Lord.

Business education is also intended to educate the person as a consumer. Everyone is a consumer. We all go out into the market place and buy goods and services with the money we receive as compensation for our work. Just as our time and
efforts should not be wasted, so also we should learn to use our monetary resources in the most efficient way. This most efficient way is the way that will best fulfill our basic needs in life. These needs include taking care of our physical bodies with food, clothing, and housing, and taking care of our spiritual needs by supporting the church and the schools. The church and school must be taught as a basic need, not something that we support if there is anything left over. Priorities must be stressed.

There are many things for which we can spend our money. The aim of Christian business education is to produce a consumer who gets as much as possible out of his money. This is our duty as stewards of the resources that God has given us. This doesn't mean that the student is taught to buy the cheapest products, but to find out what his needs are and which product will best fulfill those needs at the optimum price. In our world today it is very difficult to buy efficiently, yet we should try to learn as much as we can about the products that we buy. Educating to help the students make choices about how and where to spend their money is important.

Educating the students as consumers should also be done in a general way. We would not want to teach that one brand-name product is better than another; we may teach that one food product is better than another if it contains less water or that a certain type of metal is more durable than another. There is also a vocabulary that the consumer must master. It is important to know what some of the terms used with credit, insurance, and real estate mean to the consumer. Many major economic decisions will be made by the students shortly after they leave high school. These decisions can be made much easier through some preparation in the business education program.

In educating the consumer, we want the student to realize again that he is a steward, that his monetary resources must be used to further the Kingdom of Christ. Let us teach that no matter how much money we have or how we manage it, we must never place our trust in it. Let us remember the words of Proverbs 11:28, "He that trusteth in his riches shall fall; but the righteous shall flourish as a branch". The Lord gives us all things and calls us to use them in ways pleasing in his sight. 1 Timothy 6:17, "Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who has given us all things to enjoy."