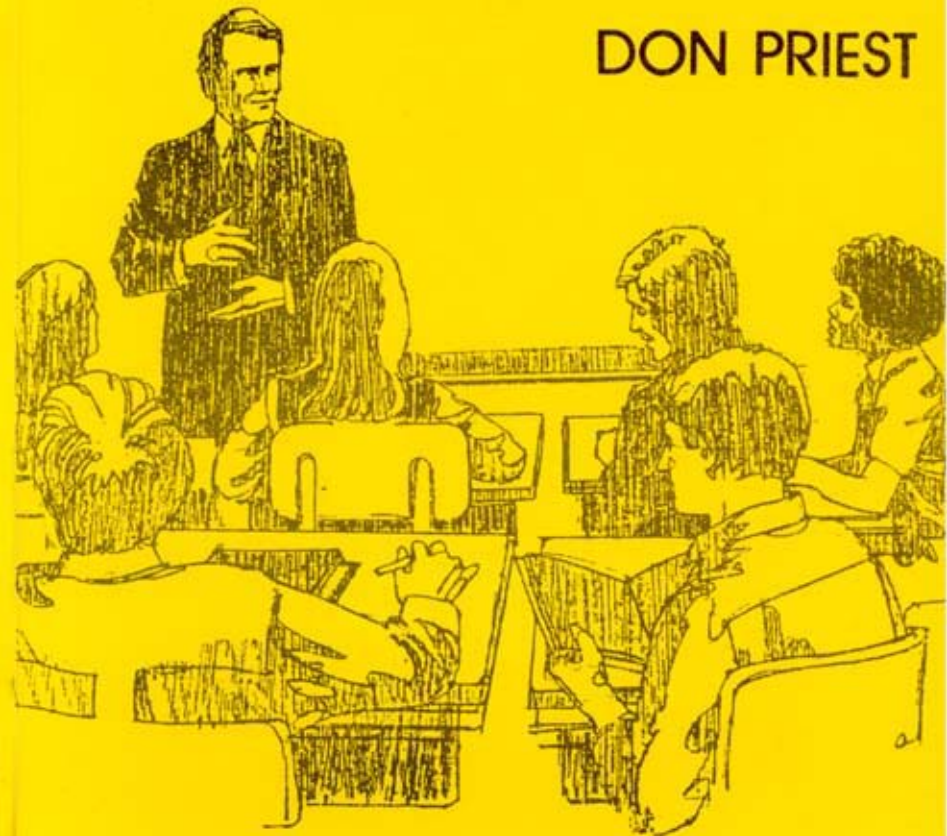


# The Pastor, The Teacher, and The School.

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new creation publications inc.

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First published by New Creation Publications Inc.  
Australia, 1987

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National Library of Australia Card Number and  
ISBN 0 86408 080 8

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*Cover design by Glenys Murdoch*

Published by

NEW CREATION PUBLICATIONS INC.  
PO Box 403, Blackwood, South Australia, 5051

Wholly set and printed at

New Creation Publications Inc.  
Coromandel East, South Australia

## **THE PASTOR, THE TEACHER, AND THE SCHOOL**

### **Secular Clergy?**

It may be helpful to consider the functions of the school-teacher alongside those of the Christian pastor-teacher. We may ask, for example, whether school-teachers are in some senses the clergy of a secular religion, and how the secular gospel parallels the Christian Gospel. What is the basis of the secular wisdom, and to whom or what does it witness?

Those who work in the classroom are increasingly finding welfare responsibilities taking a larger priority alongside the instructional. Are the modern clergy also operating more in their role as deacons than as pastor-teachers, and what implications does this have? What relationship does biblical counselling have with pastoring and teaching?

While the school teacher has a role that may in

some way be similar to that of the clergy, a number of school-teachers see clergy as private enterprise social workers. This perception may not be limited to chalkies! What does this mean for the pastoral-teaching ministry of the church?

### **Some Popular World-Views**

There are at least four philosophies that prevail among school-teachers. Firstly, the secular humanist argues that any discussion of the transcendental or the theistic does not belong to the secular and must be removed from the state school's curriculum and libraries. Not only must sexism and racism be censored, but anything that is seen to be religious must be treated with ignore and contempt—particularly if it is Judaeo-Christian. At worst, from this viewpoint, some kind of equality must operate, meaning an emphasis on other religions to counterbalance the perceived dominant Christian influence.

Secondly, the secular materialist argues that as long as there is minimal conflict in the system and the 'creative' therapies and curricula are given a go, all is satisfactory. These folk are annoyed by the doctrinaire, be it atheistic, feminist, or fundamentalist. After all, hedonism via materialism is the 'obvious way' to live, preferably in the context of us being caring and considerate people.

Thirdly, the Christian humanist often finds modern research into human behaviour and its modification as providing the equipment to fulfil the appropriate aims and objectives. Christianity is seen as a high point of human development, but is best understood in the light of this modern scientific research and also of other religions. The school and the local church are often seen as co-agents working to improve the human situation, with little perceived difference in goals or objectives. The difference is in their source materials and language.

Lastly, the small numbers of Christians who remain in the state system who are fundamentalist in their beliefs and fervent in their application, often find themselves increasingly isolated and at odds with their teaching colleagues.

While Christian/church schools relate to those in these last two categories, and have evoked enormous human and material resources from both the state and the church, few people (if any) have ever been employed by the established church to assist those who work in the state system. When the church has found the school environment unattractive, withdrawal has been the popular response.

Society has come to expect that its educators will initiate its children into the prevailing cultural ethos. Depending on one's philosophy, this process may be oriented towards change or stability. It may emphasise the technological or the language arts. The

'initiation' is begun at playgroup or preschool and is 'confirmed' by the student's results at the end of secondary or tertiary education.

Where family and other networks supporting the student are weak and fail then the state's diaconate of social workers are relied on to assist. But it is the school-teachers who are usually expected to mediate society to the students.

### Some Popular Myths

(i) 'The *secular is not religious*.' It must be noted that any discussion of human failure, weakness, and their management, deals with moral questions. Any hypothesis or lifestyle that arises from this is therefore religious, even if not theistic. All people are essentially religious, though their rituals are not always readily apparent. The atheist conceives of a god—naturally unlike any Christian deity. Certainly all people have a gospel of some kind which provides an agenda for human hope and deliverance. This gospel will focus on the same issues as the Christian Gospel.

(ii) 'There is a *value-free stance*.' Much of this thinking comes as a pseudo-science. Although many reject the notion of objectivity, they still accept this theorem. Of course the value-free stance is considered most valuable! To declare that all things are

relative. However, while scientific facts may be verified, which scientific facts we have discerned and what paradigms we have adopted are not so objective. For example, scientific research is often dictated largely by military and economic motives, with these determined by the ruling social class.

(iii) '*Aggregating data brings understanding*.' As Christians we are a congregation, a 'holy people', yet science has emphasised that truth is the accumulation and analysis of data. Its inherent reductionism is all too easily ignored. Hence we are seen as nothing but that which science and pseudo-science can analyse, predict and modify. Related to this is the current view of democracy and discussion. Many groups attempt to gain truth by pooling their insights, only to end up feeling that they may be pooling ignorances.

(iv) '*Knowledge is essentially mechanical*.' Our lot is seen to be determined by impersonal fate, economic forces, historical processes, scientific cause-and-effect, leaving little regard for the relational. Even in the human study disciplines, the descriptions are often mechanical. Although doing this seems to escape the moral and the religious, we are increasingly finding otherwise. Science is raising ethical issues of considerable substance. Of course the former prophets, among others, never recorded life in this mechanical way. In response to this comes a focus on the existential rather than the classical,

(v) *'Human autonomy is achieved by statism.'* Although many argue for smaller government, few argue for no regulation. The state fulfils its mandate by overseeing and, to various degrees, helping in the areas of health, education and welfare. The church is encouraged to operate side-by-side with the state and within the state's context. But let it not be prophetic. or preach the supernatural! Love (licence, tolerance) will do! Careful thought will show that no autonomy is created, only dependence on society's institutions. If mirroring this world-view, our churches will emphasise programmes not proclamation, techniques not truth..

(vii) *'Relevance is primary.'* Skills-based curricula, alongside improved and more numerous professional human care courses, are the accepted means for the achievement of 'ednocracy's' goals. The liberal arts have failed. Science has failed. Traditional values have failed. However, it is easily forgotten that relevance today is usually irrelevance tomorrow. Education will not solve the latest problem!

### **Pastors and Teachers**

The relationships between social welfare, health and theology seem more often discussed than those of the educator and the Christian pastor. Certainly the church has rewritten many educational theories from

time to time, and has adapted its theology—rightly or wrongly—to the current paradigms. But Christian education does not often appear to be thoroughly integrated from biblical principles. The question of the need for a coherent philosophy of Christian education is ignored. Similarly, Christian teachers may integrate their faith and their work at the immediate moral level, but little beyond.

There is a need to re-examine the teaching and pastoral roles of the clergy and the school-teacher in both the school environment and the local church. No doubt the issues are complex, but the implications of the changed expectations of clergy and teachers in an increasingly secular society, and of the apparent security and status of the professional educator, need fresh consideration. The popular perceptions of the learned, paid, full-time professional clergy, and of the unpaid enthusiastic volunteer raise, issues of authority, security and perspective.

What is the Gospel, who are its proclaimers, and who its deacons, are frequently confused. Research has shown that the rules used for mathematics in the work-place are usually quite different to those taught in school. Ethno-mathematics has a cutting edge that may be lacking in formal-mathematics. The less elegant and less profound may, however, be no less accurate or mathematical. In fact, those who understand its uses in the everyday context could seem more 'prophetic', relevant and powerful in their

teaching, if they were given opportunities in the classrooms.

What is clear is that the clergy are not the major educational elite they were in earlier centuries. Tertiary institutions are not influenced by the dominant church's formulations as they once were. It is unsurprising that difficulties might arise in clarifying the role of the clergy and the school teacher in both the school and the local church.

### **Some Current Issues**

#### **STATE SCHOOLS**

Right of access for RE seminars/Gideons. Role of Christian voluntary groups. Coping with increasing pluralism.

Coping with apparent conflicts, eg. occultic themes, evolution, social education.

#### **CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS**

The dangers Roland Allen highlighted for missionary groups.

Wallpaper curriculum or radically different? eg. social world-views, sexism.

False microcosm or missionaries to state system?

Use of human resources: number of pastors and number of teachers; teacher support ministries?

Role of legal requirements.

#### **THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION**

Lay (ethnic) and professional ministries, including the role of the informal home-group.

Sunday schools: their curriculum and the morning worship.

Itinerant and settled ministries, eg. the approach of Nettleton.

### **What Gospel?**

The Cross is not simply the greatest story, it is the essential story. All else is only truly sensible in its light. No theodicy can have any validity other than as it derives from the Cross.

Our perceptions of the Trinity, of God's actions in human history, ultimately determine the nature and flavour of our churches and our society. These perceptions, for all the brilliance of our grasp of the sacramental (incarnational), the charismatic (pentecostal), and the biblical (evangelical), have their true source in the Cross.

Human anger always relates to a threat to a love relationship in the context of a perceived holiness or

**purity. There can be no true adoption into God's family outside of His propitious coming to us. As someone wrote recently, 'coming to judgement is coming home'. A reflection on the seven utterances from the Cross highlights our liberation:**

- (i) Not being justice people, i.e. not pursuing self-justification or perceived social justice. (*Forgiveness.*)
- (ii) Not being kingdom builders: no authority problem. (*To the thief.*)
- (iii) Not bound by -isms and institutions. (*Behold your son!*)
- (iv) Not content with forbearance/evasion. (*Forsaken.*)
- (v) No Arminian panic; not 'of/from ourselves'. (*Thirsting.*)
- (vi) Not goal-obsessed but calling-led. (*It is finished!*)
- (vii) Not angry with human failure. (*Into your hands.*)