

PERSPECTIVES IN COVENANT EDUCATION

ARTICLES

Protestant Reformed Teacher
Goes to Ulster

Equipping Our Children

Christian Primary School Curriculum
and Its Biblical Basis

My Philosophy of Education

Caring for Our World

FALL

1984

PERSPECTIVES IN COVENANT EDUCATION

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

Perspectives in Covenant Education is a journal regulated and published tri-annually, in September, January, and May by the Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute. The purpose of this magazine, in most general terms, is to advance the cause of distinctively Christian education as it is conceived in the Protestant Reformed community. More specifically, the magazine is intended to serve as an encouragement and an inducement toward individual scholarship, and a medium for the development of distinctive principles and methods of teaching. The journal is meant to be a vehicle of communication: a vehicle of communication, not only within the profession, but within the Protestant Reformed community and within the Christian community in general.

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Editorials

by Agatha Lubbers

THE PROTESTANT REFORMED TEACHERS' INSTITUTE CELEBRATES THE THIRTIETH YEAR

The Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute is an organization of professional educators teaching in Protestant Reformed Christian Schools in Michigan, Illinois, and Iowa. There also are Protestant Reformed Christian Schools in the states of Colorado, California, and Washington, but the teachers in these schools are not formally members of the P.R.T.I. We are certain that they have the same concerns as those who have banded together as educators with a common cause.

The origin of the P.R.T.I. can be traced to meetings of a group of teachers and prospective teachers beginning to meet in 1948 with the late Rev. George M. Ophoff, assisted by Professor H.C. Hoeksema in the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Here Rev. Ophoff and Prof. H.C. Hoeksema of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary met with teachers and prospective teachers so that they could more distinctively teach in the schools that already existed or were being planned.

The first convention of the faculties of the schools (Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School, Walker, Michigan, and Adams Street Protestant Reformed Christian School, Grand Rapids) met in Grand Rapids during the 1955-1956 school year.

October 24-26, 1984, the faculties of the member schools will meet in convention at the Adams Street Protestant Reformed Christian School, Grand Rapids, for the thirtieth time.

Special ceremonies have been planned for this 30th anniversary convention. A meeting held at the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Michigan on Wednesday, October 24, 8:00 P.M. was a special public meeting for all those interested in distinctive Protestant Reformed Christian education. Rev. Jason Kortering, pastor of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church, will give the inspirational

address. A future issue of the *Perspectives* will hopefully carry a copy of this message.

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We extol and celebrate the faithfulness of God, who preserves us in the truth, and we are thankful to God that today many men and women have been added to the ranks of those who are dedicated to the instruction of the Covenant seed in the Protestant Reformed Christian Schools.

We say with the psalmist in Psalm 90:16, 17:

Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of Jehovah our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

• • • • •

On June 14, 1956, the proposed constitution of the P.R.T.I. was formally approved. Eight teachers were present that evening to adopt the constitution. Of those eight teachers meeting nearly three decades ago, five are currently employed as Protestant Reformed teachers and are members of the Institute. Miss Ruth Dykstra teaches at Adams Street Protestant Reformed Christian School. Miss Jessie Dykstra is employed by the Protestant Reformed School for Special Education. Mr. Fred Hanko and Miss Winifred Koole now teach at the Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School. The writer is teaching-administrator at the Covenant Christian High School of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The basis of the P.R.T.I. is stated in the constitution adopted that June evening nearly thirty years ago. This basis has remained unchanged until the present, and we pray God that He will continue to preserve us in the truth of this basis, stated as follows:

The basis of this organization is the Word of God as interpreted by the Three Forms of Unity (the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dordrecht), and as these are applied in the educational principles of the Protestant Reformed Christian Schools.

The purpose of the P.R.T.I. has also remained unchanged during the

three decades of the existence of this organization. The constitution, as originally adopted, states the purpose of the P.R.T.I. as follows:

The purpose of this organization is:

1. To study materials related to the field of education in conjunction with the Word of God in order that we teachers may be better qualified to teach from a Protestant Reformed viewpoint.
2. To create a medium through which we may produce materials of a specific Protestant Reformed nature to be used in our own schools and thereby make our schools more distinctive.
3. To create a means through which we teachers may work towards unity and understanding among our Protestant Reformed Christian schools.

Requirements for membership in the P.R.T.I. are stated in Article IV of the Constitution and have likewise remained unchanged from the first. The article states the following:

Membership shall be limited to Protestant Reformed persons who are either teachers or prospective teachers.

Since that day of small beginnings, which the Scriptures tell us not to despise, the P.R.T.I. has grown under the blessing of God. At this time there are 30-40 teachers who actively participate in the meetings of the Institute three or four times each academic year. In addition, the P.R.T.I. sponsors annually, in the fall, the Convention of Protestant Reformed educators.

During one of the business meetings of the 20th P.R.T.I. Convention (October, 1974), a motion passed to have the president of the Institute, Mr. Darrel Huisken, appoint a committee to study the matter of the publication of a Protestant Reformed educational journal. A committee consisting of Mr. James Huizinga (chairman), Charles Bult, Calvin Kalsbeek, Harry Langerak, and Ignatio Quenga did the initial work which resulted in the decision of January 24, 1975, to publish the periodical, *Perspectives in Covenant Education*.

This year, 1984-1985, we begin the 10th year of this publishing effort. For this, too, we give God the praise.

The proposals of the original study committee were approved and adopted with a few minor changes. The grounds for the production of an educational journal were stated as follows in the proposal of the study committee:

1. We have a considerable number of people in our ranks who are capable of making significant written contributions.

2. We have previously prepared manuscripts that could be profitably published.

3. We have no magazine at the present time in our Protestant Reformed community that is devoted exclusively to the development of Protestant Reformed education.

4. Professional responsibility demands that we undertake the production of such a journal.

Perspectives in Covenant Education is described in the decision of the P.R.T.I. by the following five statements:

Perspectives in Covenant Education shall be:

1. a magazine produced and controlled by the Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute.

2. a magazine whose pages are open to all teachers, parents, and friends of Protestant Reformed Christian education.

3. a magazine that encourages a degree of parental participation in the areas of planning and actual writing.

4. a magazine intended to have a broad base of subscription.

5. a magazine devoted to development in the academic areas and to the discussion of more general subjects such as: teaching methods, discipline problems, and the relationship between the home and the school.

The purpose for *Perspectives in Covenant Education* is specifically stated on the inside of the front cover of each issue. The editorial policy of *Perspectives* is likewise stated on the inside of the front cover of each issue.

Considerable thought was given the naming of the journal. Faculties were contacted and asked to submit possible names for the journal. From an aggregate of approximately twelve different titles the name *Perspectives in Covenant Education* emerged as the choice. Because the magazine is designed to be a forum for both parents and teachers, the title is sufficiently inclusive for both of these. We believe that all instruction of Covenant children is controlled and regulated finally by the parents, even though individual parents give up some control when education is given through an association-controlled board and faculty.

Because Christian Covenant education should be parental education, we wish to have parents included in the studies and writings of the professional educators employed by Protestant Reformed Christian parents.* The journal is designed, therefore, to be a medium whereby teachers can talk to other teachers and parents, and parents, as the prime educators, can talk to other parents and teachers.

• • • • •

When we began to publish this periodical in October of 1975, we said that "this periodical cannot exist without the generous support of dedicated parents and without a faithful list of subscribers." This is still true. The number of subscribers has risen since that day from zero to approximately 400 subscribers. We are hoping that at this point in time many more will decide to become subscribers to the magazine.

• • • • •

In October, 1975, we said that we would employ the Word of God and its orthodox interpretation found in the Reformed confessions to give leadership and inspiration in the important work of teaching the youth of the Covenant. We continue with this as our motive. We also pray, as we did then, that we may be faithful in this important endeavor, not being weary in well-doing.

Except Jehovah God build the house, they labor in vain
that build it; except Jehovah God keep the city, the watch-
man waketh but in vain.

Psalm 127:1

■ ■

MEMORIAL BOOKLET BEING PUBLISHED

A memorial booklet will be available at a special public meeting being held at Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church, Wednesday, October 24. You will want this booklet of pictures and information about the Protestant Reformed Christian Schools. You can get it by writing to the *Perspectives* editorial office (see inside of front cover).

TWENTY-FIRST EDITION OF PERSPECTIVES
PUBLISHED FALL, 1984

The publication of Volume X, No. 1, marks the 21st mailing of *Perspectives in Covenant Education*.

Beginning with Volume VII, Fall, 1981, the goal of the Institute and the editorial staff was to increase the number of publications per year from two to three. You may have noticed that although we say that we will publish three times annually, we did not send you three issues of the magazine in the Volume IX publishing year. Had we done that this would have been our 22nd issue of the *Perspectives*.

Several things made it seem inadvisable to publish the third issue of the Volume IX. The main consideration was the lack of manuscripts. *The crying need of every publication is manuscripts.* We ask, therefore, that if you have a desire to publish something in the field of education that you contact one of the members of the editorial staff.

■ ■

FROM OUR READERS IN SCOTLAND

It is a delight to hear from our readers especially when the response is so positive and especially when the response comes from those who are struggling to establish Christian schools in the British Isles. We produce in full a letter from Charles and Kathleen Webster. (We only wish that you could read the beautiful letter of Charlie in his own hand — calligraphy, not Zaner-Bloser.)

From Dundee and District Christian Education Association
16 Bath Street
Broughty Ferry
Dundee, Scotland DD5 2BY
10th March, 1984

Dear Miss Lubbers,

Greetings to you in the precious Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Once again the eagerly awaited issue of *Perspectives* has popped through our letter-box and has been read by us almost before it had

time to drop to the floor! We read it and pass it on to our friends in our Association who, like us, greatly appreciate all that it has to say. Not that we find it comfortable reading — far from it, because of the very high standard which you consistently set and expect. This, however, is the main reason why we like it, it challenges us to improve on our present position, and supplies us with good Biblical reasons and resources enabling us so to do. Our only complaint is that you publish *Perspectives* only three times a year. Monthly would be far better, and a concession to our impatience! May and September seem so long away.

I have enclosed a copy of our Constitution for your interest and comments, and some other material produced by us.

Trinity School has, since it began, been a struggling cause and continues to be so right up to the present. From the very start we have had to contend with hostility and indifference from many of the Lord's people in and around our city. We have no financial backing from any church or denomination and some of our bitterest opponents are "Reformed" people. This we find hard to bear. Despite all this the school is now 2½ years old and our roll has increased from 2 to 4. Are any of your schools so small or can they boast of a 100% increase in two years!!?

The Lord is our source of strength, it is He who provides for all our needs and to Him alone belongs all the praise, glory, and thanks.

Any literature that you think would be of help to us would be greatly appreciated if you were to send it. Please write to us for our encouragement and pray for strengthening.

Yours in the service of Christ,
w.s. Charlie and Kathleen Webster

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To my shame this letter disappeared for several months and I was going to include it with the materials for the spring issue that never was published. Its belated appearance does not diminish the importance of this letter. Our readers are encouraged to do as I have done, correspond with Charlie and Kathleen in their important work of training the children of the Covenant. To God be the praise for such a witness of the work of his grace in Dundee, Scotland.

■ ■

Protestant Reformed Teacher Goes to Ulster

by Jack Lenting

On August 14, 1984, Mr. and Mrs. Deane Wassink and their four small children left for Northern Ireland, where Mr. Wassink will teach the 1984-1985 school year in Covenant Christian School of Newtownabbey — about 15 miles from Belfast. The Wassinks arrived safely, by God's providence; and, at the time of this writing (September 29), Mr. Wassink has been teaching for almost a month.

The story behind Mr. Wassink's going to Ulster begins in September, 1983, when a small group of concerned Presbyterians in Northern Ireland started the first parental, Protestant, Christian school in that country. Traditionally, the schools in Ulster have been the parochial schools of the Roman Catholics and the State schools used by the Protestants. Covenant Christian School, as this new school was named, is governed by an association called "Association for Christian Education in Ireland" (ACEI), operating through a Board. Members of several Presbyterian churches cooperate in the association. One of the association's newsletters speaks of the carefulness of the Board regarding applicants for membership, "in order to maintain the confessionally reformed character of the organization."

In its first year, the school had 14 students; this year, there are 21 students — there is growth.

Because Christian education is new in Ulster, teachers are not available; and the association has needed help from other quarters in the form of a competent, Reformed teacher for the upper "grades." There is a teacher for the lower "grades." Because the group is yet quite small, it needs financial help in the form of partial support of the teacher obtained from abroad. The association does provide some of the support of this teacher.

In late spring of this year, the association learned that the school would not be receiving a teacher it had counted on for the 1984-1985 school year. Because members of the Bible Presbyterian Church of Larne, Northern Ireland, including her pastor, the Rev. George Hutton,

are members of the ACEI and because the Bible Presbyterian Church had recently come into close contact with the Protestant Reformed Churches, through our South Holland Church, the request for help came to the South Holland Church for a Protestant Reformed teacher. Already, in one of his earliest letters to the Evangelism Committee of South Holland, Rev. Hutton had written, "Some of us are very concerned about the schooling of our children and are determined to give them a Reformed Christian education. I know that the Protestant Reformed Churches have years of experience in this field and for this reason I am asking if there is possibly any material specially directed to parents dealing with this particular matter." (By this time, the Bible Presbyterian Church has asked our synodical Committee of Contact to pursue close church-relations with her; and our Synod has sent two ministers to her "in order to explore the possibility of establishing sister-church relationships with [her].)

The request was urgent: the school needed a teacher by September.

Several men in different areas of our denomination then undertook to discover whether a teacher was available and whether there was the readiness of our people to support the work financially. The results were gratifying in the extreme. Mr. Deane Wassink of our Holland, Michigan Church became convinced that the Lord called him to this work of Christian education. However, he had already signed a contract to teach in the Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School, where he had taught the year before. But Hope very graciously agreed to release Mr. Wassink from his contract and, at that late date, to find another teacher, thus cooperating on behalf of the school in Ulster.

No less gratifying was the response to the newsletter distributed throughout the churches of our denomination, asking for financial support. Our committee had hoped for \$5,000 by September. At the present time, \$14,000 has been given, mostly by members of the Protestant Reformed Churches, from all across the United States and Canada, in large amounts and in small. Some from outside our churches have also contributed; and their gifts have been gratefully received. The liberality of our people and their zeal for the cause of God's covenant are nothing short of amazing. May God bless the gifts and the givers! The diaconate of South Holland is administering this charity. Several thousand dollars are still needed for the work. Anyone who is willing to give should make his check payable to "Fund for Reformed Education in Ulster" and send it to:

Jack Lenting
17014 Wausau Avenue
South Holland, Illinois 60473

The address of Mr. and Mrs. Wassink is:

20 Hillmount Gardens
Larne, County Antrim
Northern Ireland BT40 1TF

The Wassinks will be encouraged by your letters. They need our prayers — remember them and the cause of Christian education in Ulster in your prayers.

Committee for Reformed Education in Ulster
Protestant Reformed Church
South Holland, Illinois 60473

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Equipping Our Children

by Rev. Meindert Joostens

This article is a slightly revised version of the sermon preached on September 9, 1984, by the Rev. M. Joostens, pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. It is the practice of many Protestant Reformed pastors to heed the directives of Article 21 of the Church Order by preaching a special sermon about Christian education near the beginning of the school year.

“That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”
II Timothy 3:17

You realize, beloved, that in taking this as my text this morning on the occasion of the beginning of the new school year and catechism season, I am forcing this text beyond the meaning of the immediate context. You realize, of course, that this is the instruction of the apostle Paul to his spiritual son, Timothy. He encourages, he admonishes this young preacher, that he must be thoroughly furnished unto all good works in the specific calling in which the Lord has called

him. That means that Paul admonishes him that he ought to make himself acquainted with the Word of God, which is profitable for doctrine, and for reproof, and for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. This will stand him in good stead in the ministry of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. So, in the first instance this "man of God," of which our text speaks, is Timothy the young preacher, Paul's spiritual son.

But we can certainly depart from that primary emphasis and meaning of our text and we can go beyond it in applying the principles generally. For even though we depart from Paul's words particularly to Timothy, the principle stands. The principle stands because not only Timothy but each and every one of us has a particular calling, a particular job, a particular vocation, a particular endeavor in this life at which we labor, which we have to perform to the glory of the living God. We too, in other words, must be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works" in the particular calling which God has placed before us.

All of us have such a calling and vocation. Sometimes in our midst there is the emphasis that only preachers have a calling. I dislike that emphasis. It is certainly true that a young man has to stand before the calling of serving the kingdom as a minister before the face of God, first of all. But it is true that God does not call every young man to the particular calling in which I find myself. Young men and women ought to see if the Lord calls them to work with the seed of the covenant as a teacher, to instruct our children. But that does not mean that these are the only vocations and the only callings there are. In fact, we know it is true that the Lord calls us to a variety of tasks, to a variety of jobs in the midst of this life and those things are no less a calling of God than is my calling or those who stand in the classroom teaching our children from day to day. When we talk about our obligation to educate our children today, we are not talking simply about the education of ministers-to-be or teachers-to-be, but we are talking about education as it pertains to each and every one of our children.

We must understand how we are to prepare them in regard to the particular calling, in the midst of this life, to which the Lord calls them. Then each of us, whatever his calling may be, labors "thoroughly furnished unto all good works." That is the connection between this text and Christian education as I want to address it this morning.

The connection is very intimate. You may ask me, "What does this particular text and the whole idea of being 'thoroughly furnished unto

all good works' have to do with the education of my children?" It has everything to do with it, beloved. We have to teach our children and prepare them so that they may be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works" to the glory of God no matter where the Lord places them in this pilgrim's journey here below.

That means that we teach them the three "R's," as we call them, and endeavor to provide them with a full curriculum. This must always be in the light of what we read here in the Word of God. That curriculum must be presented from the viewpoint and the perspective of the obligation of God's Covenant. We do not simply throw in a Bible course with the rest of the curriculum, nor do we simply add prayer to the rest of the curriculum and call it Christian education. There is great controversy in the world round about us regarding this. Prayer in the schools or a Bible on the bookshelf does not make for Christian education. Christian education means that the parental obligation of the covenant pervades every subject! The glory of God pervades the whole curriculum. All things are taught with that one end in mind, that the child of God may be educated piously and religiously, "thoroughly furnished unto all good works," with regard to the calling in which the Lord will call him. In other words, the church, this congregation, as the church institute, and the schools that we as parents form and support have the awesome calling and obligation to equip our children in order that they may live to the glory of God in whatever calling they find themselves. Then, you have the principle of our text applied in the broadest sense of the word that each in his particular calling labor to the glory of God. We have the responsibility, therefore, to equip our children to that end.

I want to notice that with you this morning. I want you to understand three things with me. In the first place, Who must equip our children? In the second place, With what must they be equipped? And finally, Unto what end do we equip them?

I. Who must equip our children?

To answer that first question, "Who has the calling and the task to equip our children?" we must ask a fundamental question and that is this, "Who are our children?" That is the question that needs to be answered. Educators in the world spend a lot of time talking about the question, "Who are our children?" Who are the objects of our instruction?

If we and our children are the descendants of apes many millions of

years ago so that we find ourselves but a speck of history in the perpetual evolution of the species, then it stands to reason that we can give our children over to those who best perpetuate that species. Then we can give our children into the hands of the world so they become thoroughly indoctrinated in the selfish humanistic philosophy that stands for the betterment of mankind and for the evolution of the human being. If the end of a man is himself and his own glory, if there is no God and no salvation, then we might as well allow the state to educate our children. They can indeed teach them how to make a name for themselves, how to become famous in this world, and how to establish themselves so that they will be best served themselves. But that is not the case. Our children are Covenant children. When we answer the question, "Who are our children?", then we answer that by saying, "These children of ours are the Lord's heritage." They are in the first instance God's children and secondly, they are my children. God gives them unto me but for a short time. I must be faithful to my covenant obligation in bringing up His children, the seed of His covenant, to the utmost of my ability.

We and our children are not placed in the midst of this world to be found on an ego trip. We are not the most important consideration. There is but one purpose and one calling that pertains to man and that is this: To live to the glory of God in this life and eternally. If we think that our salvation is strictly for our benefit we are sadly mistaken. God gives unto us this heritage and this place in the midst of His covenant for the glory of His Name. He is to be worshipped, He is to be served.

Parents are responsible to give that kind of covenant training. That is the responsibility in God's Covenant. These children are the seed of His covenant. Believers and their children are the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is why I read this morning from Deuteronomy 6. There you have the principle clearly set forth, that *parents* teach their children. Parents must hold before their children in their rising up and in their sitting down, in their work and in their recreation, the wonders and the glories of Jehovah God. And when your children ask of you, "What mean these statutes?", "Why do you live this life-style, Mom and Dad?", "Why do you take those commandments so seriously?", "Why may we not do this, why do we do this?", then you set them down and you say to them, "It is because of Jehovah the God of our salvation, Who alone is to be praised and worshipped. This is His

demand. It is my obligation to teach you, so that you walk in that same heritage." We have to take that calling, that responsibility, very seriously. Understanding that calling and responsibility, we ought to see what the obligation of the church is. And what is the function of the school? The church, beloved, preaches the Gospel. That is her only function. The church is not a social organization. The church does not become involved in all manner of social functions. The church does but one thing, she preaches the Gospel. And that Gospel, you understand, so permeates the congregation and her life that it touches every part and every sphere of life. There is nothing that stands outside of the preaching of the Gospel. The Gospel permeates the whole of our life. To put that another way, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the King of His church, rules in the midst of His people, in the midst of His church, through the preaching of the Word and by His Spirit. That is central. That is fundamental.

And, to the preaching of the Word belongs Christian discipline. I want to emphasize that this morning. To the preaching of the Word belongs Christian discipline. When the elders come to you in your homes to examine your life-style, when they admonish you, (God forbid that this becomes necessary), they do that as an extension of the pulpit, as an extension of the preaching of the Word. It never goes beyond, the preaching never falls short of it. It is the same as the preaching. It is the concrete application of the preaching to your life and walk, especially when you walk in ways that deviate from the Word of God. In this way Christ, by His Word and by His Spirit, rules in our midst.

You understand then that when, according to the obligation of the Covenant as clearly set forth in the Scriptures, you and I come forward and we present our children for baptism, that vow is not empty but a concrete promise. And when you are not faithful to that promise, in neglecting your obligation, shying away from "to the utmost of your ability," then the elders quite naturally, according to their obligation, come to see you. They admonish you from God's Word, and remind you of your promise and obligation.

The preaching of the Word extends also to catechetical instruction. We as Reformed churches hold a very high view with regard to catechetical instruction. That stands opposed to those churches that have been brought up in a different heritage esteeming very highly the Sunday School. The emphasis in our midst is not upon Sunday School,

the emphasis is upon Catechism. Catechism is the preaching of the Word. I have to know that. I have to continually tell myself how serious classroom instruction in catechism is. I want you as children and as young people to know the seriousness of that. It is the same as this pulpit. It is the preaching of the Word. You children notice, that on Sunday mornings before we start the service, we don't ask you to file down into the basement so that you have a children's sermon administered by someone that is not in the office. We don't do that. That is wrong. The Word of God is addressed to the church of our Lord Jesus Christ: to believers and their seed. In that connection, don't ever underestimate what our children understand of the sermon. Quiz them sometime! So preaching extends into the classroom at the catechism class. That is why we have office bearers teaching catechism. There is a great departure from that today in Reformed circles. It is a shame when office bearers will not take upon themselves the responsibility to give catechetical instruction. That belongs to their office. In catechism the preaching of the Word is concretely applied to the needs of our children. That is where they become indoctrinated. That is where we equip them through systematic doctrinal instruction. That is why you children and young people have to learn those things. When you find yourself in "Essentials of Reformed Doctrine," memorize it, know it inside and out. Those things are the tools that you need. They are the equipment that you need in all your life and endeavors. So that whatever winds of doctrine blow, whatever they may be, you will know what is right and what is wrong.

And when we ask you to memorize the Heidelberg Catechism, then you must do that! You must know it, as do the older people who can recite it verbatim, in order that you may be strong in your faith and know how to walk to God's glory.

How can it be then, that some of us don't take catechism very seriously? And how can it be that some parents don't even see to it that their children show up for catechism or that they know their questions? I should not even have to ask them. I should not even have to keep roll. It is really a shame that I have to do these things.

It is within the sphere of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ and under the preaching of the Word, that you have parents under the obligation to train their children in the way of the Lord. That is the promise of Baptism. Parents are responsible, therefore, to teach their children. Now that is to be distinguished from the preaching of the

Word, you understand, in this way. When the church instructs our children in catechism, we are talking about doctrine. I do not make it my business in catechism to instruct children in mathematics, in biology, or whatever. When they bring it up I am glad to talk to them about it. That is no problem. But the emphasis of the church institute is to indoctrinate our children. The rest of the preparation that our children need for a life's calling belongs to you as parents. You have the obligation. That is Deuteronomy 6.

When presently Rev. Bruinsma goes to Jamaica and he teaches his own children, he will fulfill that obligation in the highest sense of the word. He will teach his children.

We have chosen to do this together as parents in joining and forming a society for Christian education. In our society we can hire teachers who stand in our stead, so that we collectively as parents in an association fulfill our covenant obligation. I hope you understand the importance of that. Sometimes the attendance at society meetings does not reflect that. We believe in parental education, that is Scriptural. We do not give our children to someone else to educate. We are responsible. It is our obligation. We hire teachers. And we ought never to forget that parents have the final and ultimate responsibility as to what is taught their children. When we stand before the judgment seat, we are not going to say to God, "but that teacher, he did it." God is going to say, "and you should have made it your business to know what was being taught your child."

From that point of view, we as parents have the obligation to teach our children in good Christian schools. The church takes an interest in this. That is why I may preach about the Christian schools and the elders may emphasize Christian education. At your leisure read Article 21 of the Church Order and there you will find the church's interest in good Christian education for the seed of the Covenant.

II. With what must we equip our children?

The context points us very clearly to the fact that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Primarily, our children are to be equipped with the Scriptures. You understand, that there is an absolute difference between ourselves and the world. That comes to light in this text. Paul says to Timothy, "you are to be thoroughly furnished unto all good works." That is possible only for

the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. The world works. We engage in good works. Oh, it may be that from an outward point of view there is absolutely no difference. In fact, it is possible that a man of the world is better qualified for his job and is able to execute that particular job better than you and I are able to do it. The difference is that the man of the world works and you and I are thoroughly furnished unto all good works. The man of the world takes his pride in that job and that is all there is to it. He is a man-pleaser. He is selfish in his work. He does it for the wrong motivation. But when you and I take upon ourselves a calling, whatever it may be, we do that, beloved, not as men-pleasers but as those who stand before the living God, "thoroughly furnished unto all good works." That is our goal, to equip ourselves and our children to that end. So that when we labor, we fulfill that one obligation, to the praise and the glory of God now and evermore. That is a spiritual, ethical difference. And it is that spiritual, ethical difference that concerns us when we talk about equipping our children.

Therefore we begin with the Scriptures. We have to equip our children with the Word of God. That is basic. And the Scripture, let me tell you, is not on a par with the rest of the sciences, or with the rest of the branches of knowledge in which we educate our children. But Scripture stands first and foremost. It is the queen of the sciences. It dictates how we see all other branches of knowledge, "the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord."

That is why we cannot just put a Bible on the shelf in our schools. We cannot just open and close with prayer and call it a Christian school. It is Scripture that dictates in every one of the branches of the curriculum, barring none. Because Scripture, we are told here, is "profitable for doctrine, and for reproof and instruction in righteousness."

Let me say just a few things about that. Do you want to find out what is true and what is right? Do you want to find out about God and about yourself? Scripture alone gives you the answer. It makes little difference to me, and it shouldn't make any difference to you, what man has to say about where we came from, who we are, or where we are going. Scripture speaks regarding all this clearly. Scripture is true, for it is God's Word. It is profitable for instructing us in these doctrines. And Scripture is profitable unto us because it instructs us in righteousness. That means that it instructs us with regard to every aspect of our life so we can be pleasing to God. Scripture dictates how you behave in your relationships, in your job, in your calling, whatever

you may do. It dictates whether you may have this calling or whether you ought to seek another one. It tells you what is righteous, that is, what is right and what is wrong according to God. Scripture does that! And Scripture rebukes. Don't forget that. When you find yourself in pursuit of the wrong goal, Scripture is going to say, "NO." When you become so absorbed in your earthly calling and work that you lose your perspective as far as the glory of God is concerned, then Scripture says, "Wait a minute." It is profitable for rebuke.

You understand then that when we are ready to prepare our children for their life's calling, in teaching them mathematics, biology, geography, history, etc., then the Word of God tells us what is true and what is the lie. The Word of God tells us what is pleasing to God and what is not. The Word of God reproves and rebuffs. The Word of God must shed its light on everything in the curriculum. You cannot teach these things except you look through the spectacles of Scripture. Otherwise, you are in the realm of darkness. The world doesn't understand anything about history, science, etc., because they don't know what happened in the fulness of time. They don't know the power of God in creation. The world doesn't know mathematics (though they may know much about it). Why? Because they don't have the wisdom of God in Christ. It is not science, biology, and archaeology that dictates concerning Scripture, beloved. That is the new Hermeneutics. That is the philosophy that says, "but this is what they believed at that time, don't take those words of the apostle Paul so seriously."

When you listen to the controversies that are going on in Reformed circles today, especially with regard to women in office, do you discern that there are conservatives who say, "No" and liberals who say, "Go right ahead"? How can they say this? What is their basis? Do they have a struggle with the Word of God? They have no struggle, beloved, simply because they view the Word of God as time conditioned. You want to talk about the place of women in the office of the church? The apostle Paul was talking about that many years ago. That is not relevant today. And so it is with regard to the beginning and origin of all things. The apostle Paul and the inspired writers of the Scriptures did not have the benefit of the archaeology and the developments of science and technology that we have today. We can look at those Scriptures and understand what is right and what is wrong, where they are normative and where they are not. It is just the other way around. The Scriptures dictate all the other branches of knowledge. The

Scriptures instruct. The Scriptures reprove. The Scriptures instruct in righteousness!

III. Unto what end do we equip them?

We give to our children, in as much as we are able, a full curriculum. It is our covenant obligation to prepare the seed of the covenant for their calling in the midst of this world. We may be second to none in this world in education. We must see to it that our children develop their talents to the best of their abilities. But more, in whatever sphere, it must always be emphasized that we are to be to God's glory. So if our children are physicians, let them heal to the glory of God. If they are teachers, let them teach to the glory of God. If they are going to dig ditches, let them dig those ditches to the glory of God. That is the emphasis of Christian education, that the man of God may be perfect.

You see, that has nothing to do with perfectionism, nothing at all. It is not our education that makes our children perfect. That is the philosophy of the world. They say that we have to have a good educational system in order to enhance our society. That is for the betterment of this country. You hear that all the time. That is the philosophy of the world. Teachers, preachers, and parents can never go beyond the work of the Spirit of the living God. I can preach and instruct in catechism until I am blue in my face, but, beloved, it is the Spirit Who applies that instruction. It is the Spirit that makes that absolute distinction between whether a man works or is engaged in good works. That proceeds only out of faith to the glory of the living God.

It is not higher education that makes a man go off the deep end. Such a man never knew Jehovah God. We are but means that God has purposed to use to instruct our children in the fear of His Name. That is our obligation. We are not the missionaries of our children. We are not obligated to save our children, beloved. You read that in so many "Christian" books today. That is not our function. We know that God gathers, preserves, and defends His church. What we must know is that He does that in the sphere of the Covenant, by and large. He purposes to use us (and that is our covenant obligation) in instructing our children so He can take His children from among ours. Woe unto us if we fall short of that instruction, because then the Lord cuts us off in our generations.

The child of God must be "thoroughly furnished unto all good

works," that he may be a pilgrim and stranger in this earth looking toward the eternal. Do you understand that? Do you see, it is not what you can give your child as far as the things of the earth are concerned. It is not how much money you can will to your children. It is not how good you have it here below or how well you educate them so that they can make a name and place for themselves. All these things are of the earth, earthy. Those things are not wrong in and of themselves. If the Lord gives us those things, let us be blessed in them. But our function is to teach our children (as pilgrims and strangers) to walk in the midst of this earth, which is nothing but a continual death. We train them in His fear so that they can sit with us in Father's House of many mansions. That is the viewpoint of covenant education.

We have to be mindful of that. Sometimes I wonder how mindful we are of that. You know that is stressed to us at the time of baptism. After our children are baptized, we hear in the prayer of thanksgiving (the last part of that prayer), "which thou hast shown to them and us and live in all righteousness under our only Teacher, King, and High Priest, Jesus Christ, and manfully fight against and overcome sin, the devil, and his whole dominion to the end that they may eternally praise and magnify Thee and Thy son, Jesus Christ, together with the Holy Ghost, the one only true God, Amen."

I say again, the emphasis is not on what we have or give them here below, but that they may eternally magnify the living God. I am afraid that that is where we fall far short. In our example and in our instruction we pay so much attention to the things of this earth and altogether too little attention to the things which remain unto all eternity. Let's teach them about the kingdom of heaven. Let's teach them that in whatever calling God calls them in this life, they must stand in the service of that eternal kingdom. Let's teach them their mathematics, their history, their geography, and their biology, so that they better understand the glory of God. Then they can be the best doctors, the best teachers, the best shop men, and the best mothers because they have their eyes heavenward! Amen.

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Christian Primary School Curriculum and its Biblical Basis

by Dr. Bruce McLennan

This article was part of a group of materials made available to me by Charles and Kathleen Webster. The contents of this article makes a fitting contribution to the continuing dialogue we need in the pursuit of excellence in Christian education. It also helps us to understand the sincerity of those in Scotland and other parts of the British Isles who seek to uncover a sound basis for the founding and development of Christian schools. The notes were added by the editor.

In the present day, far from heeding the challenging command of the apostle Paul, to “Be not conformed to this world” (Rom. xii:2), the sad truth is that the Christian church has, by refusing to put into practice the admonition “that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3), allowed her ranks to be infiltrated by the false views of the scientist and the philosopher (against which we are warned in Scripture, I Tim. vi:20; Col. ii:8; Acts xvii:18, 21, 32, 33). At a time when our modern world is sick unto death for want of a dependable authority, the church also is now deeply divided over the question of the authority of Scripture. For, as well as having to contend with the Relativist thinking of men such as John Dewey (John Dewey, pioneer of American educational theory, and one of the founders of the false philosophy of Pragmatism, which says something is true if it works, said “absolutely no absolutes,” and everything today is being regarded as relative, and nothing as absolute), the church has also within its ranks today many exponents of Rationalism, which makes reason the ultimate test or norm of truth, and of Mysticism, which regards feelings, intuitions, mysterious experiences, conscience, etc. as the test of truth. Both Rationalism and Mysticism are *subjective* in the concept of authority. A further danger to the church, and a growing one, is the increasing acceptance, particularly in Reformed

circles, of a school of thought known as the Amsterdam Philosophy, which not only has four forms of the Word of God, but also goes outside of Scripture to science and philosophy to get a key for understanding the Bible.

In the face of the welter of conflicting opinion both in the world and in the church over such questions as “what is truth?”, “what is dependable authority?”, we make bold to affirm our adherence to a God-given, fully inspired, wholly reliable, infallible, inerrant, and authoritative Bible for all matters of faith and practice. The historic Christian view of the authority of the Bible is: it is *objective*. Its authority does not come from inside of us, it is outside of us. We are subject to it, we are the recipients of it, but we do not contribute anything toward making it what it is. Scripture is authoritative because it is God-breathed, inspired of God. The first chapter of the Westminster Confession deals with questions such as these: what is true, what is right, what should we believe and how should we live? All the answers to these questions relate to the Bible as supreme authority. Later in the Confession, there is a section on the Bible as a means of grace. But only because the Bible is authority, and is true, can it be effective as a means of grace, in converting, in building up, and so on.

The Christian believer who holds to the sole authority of Scripture will most readily see the need to hold to, over against the false systems of men, a Biblical world-and-life view. And this is the basis upon which all education, whether in the home or in the school, should be founded. Three broad themes form the basis for the Biblical doctrine of education: 1) All things, as originally created by God were good, and were ideally and completely organized for their intended purpose, in perfect harmony with all the rest of God’s creation (Gen. i:31). A primary aim of true education, therefore, must be the instruction of children in the knowledge of the true world God created, and wisdom to comprehend and apply that knowledge. 2) All things are now under the divine curse as a result of the Fall, so that there is a universal law of decay and death operating throughout the world (Rom. v:12; viii:22). 3) All things are yet the objects of Christ’s redemptive work. Christ became man in order to redeem men and the entire creation (Col. i:21; Eph. i:10; Rom. viii:21; 2 Pet. iii:7; Heb. i:3; Acts xvii:28). Thus we find the Trinity involved in the realm of truth — God as Creator of all Truth, Christ as Sustainer and Redeemer of all Truth, and the Holy Spirit as the Revealer of all Truth.

With the above three principles as the foundation of all true education, the following observations will naturally meet with agreement: we must first erase from our minds the prevalent dichotomy that we tend to entertain between physical truth and religious truth; it is now possible to proceed with a curriculum of integrated studies, in which various matters and subjects not only bear relation to each other, but also to a central focal point; that centre of focus is, and must be, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom all true knowledge and true wisdom dwell (John xiv:6; Col. ii:3). And with such wonderful passages as Colossians i:16-20 and Romans xi:33-36, showing Christ as Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer of all things, and the inexhaustible greatness and variety of God's knowledge and wisdom, to encourage us, the challenge is before us to structure the educational curriculum of our children that they may truly learn to understand and appreciate the world about them, and come to love and adore their Creator. It is interesting that in the first reference to teaching in Scripture (Gen. xviii:19), God's commendation to Abraham indicates that the primary purpose of his instruction to his son was moral and spiritual, rather than vocational or cultural. (This is emphasized repeatedly throughout Scripture, e.g., Deuteronomy vi:6, 7; II Timothy iii:15; Ephesians vi:4.) In a day in which there is no true understanding of what truth is in educational circles, and where situation ethics has become the ruling moral philosophy, Christian parents ought the more to appreciate that the foundation of education must lie in the recognition of God and His purposes, as revealed in the Scriptures of Truth.

How are we then to begin upon such an enterprise? The most sensible place to begin with children of early primary school age, whether they are to be taught at home, or in a Christian school, is with a study of origins; for the foundation of a Christian world-view must necessarily be its concept of origins. Here we may refer to one of the principles which should guide the Christian teacher in seeking to lead the pupils into the truth of any subject — the principle of carefully selecting material and facts which stand the test of Scripture. For while the children certainly ought to be aware of the errors of evolutionary teaching, etc., only sufficient should be taught them to show how erroneous the whole evolutionary system is. Let it be clearly understood that our approach is a positive one, in that we are seeking to instruct our children in that which is in accord with the revealed Work of God. But the problem of selecting materials is a major one, less so

perhaps in the realm of the natural sciences, more so with the social sciences, and increasingly so in the realm of fine arts. And since Christian wisdom is necessary here, it follows of necessity that only a mature Christian teacher could perform such a task, assisted by other willing helpers.

How does this work out in practice? By taking the first three chapters of Genesis, and breaking it down into its natural divisions, it is possible to present a learning programme, such as Mr. W.R. Mohan¹ has recently prepared, in which there would be lessons with titles such as "The Beginning," "Let there be Light," "Day and Night," "The Air," "Water," "Lights in the Sky," "Light-bearers," "Animal Life," "What is Man?" "Sabbath," "The Fall," etc. These lessons would take several hours to complete. If we take "Water" as an illustration of how things could be done — we would start by looking at what the Genesis account has to say about water, and establish a main theme, such, for example, as used in the *Joy in Learning* integrated curriculum, p. 100².

God created the water for the benefit of all the living creatures. All the water in the creation works together in a continuous pattern that cannot be broken (water cycle). On the earth, water is found in many different places (bodies of water). Water is one of the essential things man needs with which to live. Part of man's task is to have dominion over the water: to enjoy, to care for, to use, and to develop water for the benefit of all people.

It would then be possible to proceed with the following topics: God's Plan for Water — the water cycle, division of water, water bodies. The Flood — before the Flood an even temperature on the earth; the changes after the Flood. Using Water for Living — for drinking, cooking, cleaning, washing, etc.; reservoirs. Food from Water — fishing, the work of fishermen. Minerals from Oceans — the riches to be found in the sea. Sailors — a brief history of sailing through the ages; a look at some of the famous lives here. Conserving and Misusing — the growing problem of pollution. Water for Pleasure — swimming, pleasure sailing, etc.

Interwoven into such a learning pack on water, and here is where some spade work must be done, would be sufficient Biblical references for pupils to establish from our sole authority, whatever Scripture has to say on the matter. (While the Bible is not a scientific textbook, we

ought to follow its teaching wherever God has been pleased to speak, e.g., Ecclesiastes i:7, on water.) And since we wish pupils to “experience” the truths, a vital part of such a course would necessarily involve some, if not all, of the following — visits to local rivers, reservoirs, experiments and calculations with water, the use of poetry, songs and stories dealing with aspects of water (here good use could be made of relevant Bible stories as well as other sources). A natural conclusion to such a core of work would then be to observe how in the Old Testament water is often used as a symbol of God’s blessing and spiritual refreshment, and in the New Testament as a symbol for eternal life, God’s supreme blessing.

The advantage of beginning a learning curriculum with a strong creationist emphasis lies in the fact that we will be providing a core of truth which can not only be interpreted in a way consistent with the Scriptures, but around which material relating to the very necessary skills of reading, writing, and numeracy can be arranged. The most important advantage of such a curriculum, however, is that it will set certain definite goals or objectives for the pupil, viz., that they may learn to appreciate the wonderful earth as part of God’s divine creation, grasp something of the perfections of God as displayed in that creation, and learn to see the earth in relation to the different parts of the universe. Further, that they may understand that the present chaos and disorder in the world is the result of the Fall and the Flood (everything was once “very good”), and that they may learn how to conduct themselves in a still wonderful, though now marred society and environment.

Such an introductory curriculum would serve as a springboard from which to launch into further areas of study, such as a more detailed study of the earth-man’s home, plant and animal life, the history of man, and human relationships and government.

NOTES BY EDITOR:

1) W.R. Mohan (A.I.B., M. Inst. A.M.), is a graduate of the University of Manchester with a teacher’s certificate. He has prepared *A Primary Curriculum* and a Biblically based learning pack (called “In the Beginning”) relating ourselves and the world around us to our glorious creator.

2) *Joy In Learning* is described as an integrated curriculum for the elementary school by the editors Arnold H. DeGraff and Jean Otthuis. This was produced in 1973 and 1975 by the Curriculum Development

Center associated with the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, Ontario Canada. The expressed viewpoint of the work is stated in the Preface. “. . . we have attempted to rewrite the textbooks themselves, or to put it plainly, to describe the facts from a Biblical point of view. It is our conviction that facts do not exist by themselves but are always humanly known facts, revealing our view of life. As Christians, therefore, we are bound to look ever at the common things of life like butterflies and flowers, leaves and snow, fire engines and subways, quite differently. In keeping with this view, our aim has been to reformulate the contents of children’s learning experiences themselves so that they might learn to look at life from a Biblical perspective.”



My Philosophy of Education

by Deane Wassink

Mr. Deane Wassink is now teaching at Covenant Christian School of Newtownabbey, North Ireland. (Cf. article about “Protestant Reformed Teacher Goes to Ulster,” p. 9.)

(This paper was written for a senior class at Hope College just before I did student teaching under supervising teacher John Kalsbeek. I must admit that I have learned much since I wrote this paper. Nevertheless, I still believe what I wrote here and have implemented most of my ideas in the classroom. The paper is divided according to the answers I was required to give to three questions given by the professors.)

I. Personal Commitment

My commitment to education stems from a more basic commitment, my love of God and desire to serve Him. Because of the wonder of grace that God has accomplished in me, in thankfulness I seek to live my whole life in such a way that it brings glory and honor to Him. All my wants, all my hopes, all my conduct is subservient to that one purpose. Out of that basic commitment arises my desire to serve the cause of God in this world, His church. All my talents and abilities are His to command. I purpose to use them in ways that will build up

my fellow saints and enable me to witness to others for the truth. Thus I must use my abilities first in my own home where God has called me to have a godly marriage with my wife and raise up the children God has given me in the fear of His name. After my home I must serve the church as far as I am able and called to do.

Out of my basic commitment to God arises my commitment to education. Though I will discuss it later in more detail, I must point out here, that I am restricting my comments to Christian education in parental schools. I consider Christian education to be one of the primary means godly parents use to help their children grow into spiritually mature members of the church. I thus believe it to be a very important aspect of service in the church. I feel that God has given me talents that will be very useful and beneficial in the education of covenant children. Also, God has so guided my steps by opening and closing different doors in my life that I have been prepared for teaching in many unique ways. I refer to the fact that I spent nearly eight and one-half years pursuing the ministry of the Word. In more than one way that door was closed, at least for a time. Now, within one and one-half years, from when I terminated my seminary studies, I can be certified as a teacher. For that work and calling my seminary training has specially qualified me. My wide variety of life experiences from traveling to blueberry farming to work in construction have also lent an appreciation for the many facets of life that is very helpful as a teacher. Two things then, my talents and the guidance I have received, make my desire to teach very sure; and they make my commitment to teaching very strong.

On a less spiritual note, though indeed it receives its direction and impetus from the previous aspects of my commitment, is my personal love for teaching. I find great joy and happiness in helping another human being learn. If I can contribute in any way to another person's mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual maturity, I find a great sense of personal satisfaction. I love people. I want to help them in any way that I can. I seek personally to obey Christ's command to seek first of all not my own good but the good of others (Luke 6:27). For that same reason my interest has been growing in the area of special education. I have done some work in the area and enjoyed it immensely. At present I plan to seek an endorsement with my certificate in that area. Perhaps in that way I can help the children with special needs in the Christian schools which I hope to serve.

II. School in Community / Change Agent

The application of this point concerning the role of the school must be changed from the public schools to parental Christian schools. These are schools organized by confessing Christian parents for the instruction of their children. Even more particularly, I am addressing the role of the schools organized by parents who belong to the Protestant Reformed Churches. I do so because I hope to teach within that particular group of schools. These schools have a sure basis upon which they are founded. They are founded upon the Scriptures. And they hold the Word of God as the sole authority for doctrine and life. Further, these schools hold to the three forms of unity of the Reformed churches. Finally, these schools maintain the doctrinal heritage of the Protestant Reformed Churches. A very significant part of the belief of the Protestant Reformed Churches is the Biblical emphasis on the Covenant. This doctrine I will delineate briefly because it is the principal motivating force behind the establishment of the Protestant Reformed schools. Here are the main points: First, the essence of the covenant is a relationship of friendship and communion. It is not an agreement or pact. Secondly, God as a triune God has a covenant life of fellowship in Himself. Together, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit exist in perfect fellowship and harmony. Thirdly, God establishes His covenant with His elect people through Jesus Christ. Therefore each believer experiences the covenant fellowship of God through Jesus Christ. Fourthly, God establishes His covenant with His people usually in the way of continued generations by means of the instruction of covenant children by their godly parents. Fifthly, not all covenant children will be saved. Rather, the Christian parent has the promise of God that He will take His children out of their children. Sixthly, in heaven the child of God will experience the perfect bliss of covenant fellowship with God. It is this beautiful idea of the covenant that forms the doctrinal perimeter of my concept of my role and the role of the school with respect to the status quo.

The purpose of the school is to prepare the covenant children God has given to the church for their place in the earthly manifestation of the kingdom. How is it that such a high purpose belongs to the school? It is because the teachers in the school stand *in loco parentis*. Scripture emphasizes again and again that the parents of covenant children are to instruct their children in the way of godliness. For example, we read in Ephesians 6:4b that the fathers are to bring up their children

“...in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Critics might consider this goal to be cold and formal indoctrination of the children in a particular religion. Nothing could be further from the truth. The purpose of this education is to develop the *whole* person so that each individual’s talents blossom. Further, there is included in this purpose the preparation of each child to be an independent thinker. Such a child when mature will not blindly follow dynamic persons, tradition, or social practice. Instead, he will independently examine the Scriptures and guide his steps according to it. In an article for *Perspectives in Covenant Education*, the journal of the Protestant Reformed teachers, Jon Huiskens writes that the independent thinker is “one of the central purposes, if not the most important objective, of Christian education.” Because covenant instruction does not purpose to develop blind followers but independently thinking, well-rounded individuals, their education should be a liberal arts education as opposed to a technically oriented vocational education. A liberal arts education prepares children for life, not just for making a living. In that form of education individuals are able to develop their particular talents. By doing so the glory of God in Christ is reflected in many different ways. With respect to the church, the people of God are able to contribute in manifold ways. They are able to give a clear and rich witness of their faith. They are more able then to rear their own families. They are able to support the causes of the kingdom in many ways. Reverend David Engelsma, a Protestant Reformed minister in South Holland, Illinois, summed up the purpose of Covenant instruction in a series of lectures entitled *Reformed Education*. He said, “the goal of Reformed, covenantal education is a mature man or woman of God who lives in this life, in every area of life, with all his powers, as God’s friend-servant, loving God and serving God in all of his earthly life with all his abilities (which are developed and exercised as fully as possible), *and* who lives in the world to come as king under Christ, ruling creation to the praise of God his Maker and Savior.”

Having laid the basic principles and goals of Protestant Reformed education, I can now address the question of whether or not the teacher or the school is an agent of change. The answer is an emphatic *no!* The teacher is called to maintain the status quo as established by the parents whose children he instructs. He is bound by the doctrinal framework of the schools. He may not try to change the principles of Scripture which form the framework in which he fulfills his calling. It

is true, of course, that the teacher is called to build on the existing foundations. He must seek to teach the children in his care in such a way that they might more clearly understand themselves, their calling, and their faith so that they will be strengthened to walk as Christians in the world. This role of the teacher is that of encouraging growth and development in the church, not change. He works in the sphere of the faith of the parents who have collectively established the school in which he labors. He fails if he undermines, changes or in any way opposes the faith of the parents.

III. Classroom Management

In this section of the paper I will direct my remarks to the grade levels I hope to teach, 3-5.

My relationship to my students in the classroom is one of my chief considerations. In educational psychology terms, I consider my relationship to be that of an interventionist rather than an interactionist or non-interventionist. I purposely consider this relationship to be my calling because Scripture speaks of the fact that a father is called to actively direct and discipline his children. Scripture uses words such as "instruction," "training," "correction" to describe the calling of the father. Also, the sin that characterizes even a regenerated child means he cannot be left to develop on his own. As a teacher, therefore, I must lead the class by directing their activities, determining the rules for conduct, disciplining when the rules are broken. Further, as the father is called to do, I must give them spiritual instruction in all the various subjects that I teach them. My attitude must be that of spiritual love and concern for each child as a covenant child.

The classroom that I envision as my own will include the following elements:

- 1) The format will be rather traditional with much of the instruction being led by the teacher with a variety of teaching aids. However, the children will have individual and group projects in which they will do their own research, development, and organization in order to develop their ability to discover, interact, and think independently. The desks, probably more often than not, will be arranged in rows. As the activities demand, they will be moved to a circle for discussion or in separate groups for team work.

- 2) The discipline in the classroom will be strictly enforced. The basis will be the guidelines of the Word of God. The rules of the class-

room as well as the disciplinary action that will be taken if the rules are broken will be posted and discussed so that they are clearly understood. I consider such posting to be important for my consistency and fairness. I will certainly spank if I feel it is needed. However, I consider it to be a last resort. I also intend to work closely with the parents if there are any discipline problems. I intend to include prayer with my discipline if there appears to be a more serious spiritual problem with the behavior. This prayer would of course be with the problem student only. This aspect of discipline fits in with my calling to be a spiritual leader and counselor of the children I am given the responsibility to teach.

3) The grading system I intend to use is the traditional letter grades. I will assign my grades by the standard of criterion reference. I will not use a norm reference standard. I take that position for principle reasons. God says in Galatians 6:4, "But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." In applying this text to grading, I believe it means that a child's work must not be graded by its relationship to the work of his neighbor, but by its achievement of a pre-set goal.

4) As much as possible I intend to keep the parents very actively involved with the work their children are doing in school. I do not want to leave the impression that I am the professional who cannot be helped by the parents because they are unable to understand or contribute. I *want* the parents to help in the classroom. I hope to use them as aides as well as for instructing in the areas of their expertise. I want the parents to understand what is happening in the classroom and why I am doing what I am doing with their child.

5) My method of teaching must be geared to help the student grow in knowledge as well as the ability to do critical and logical thinking. In educational terms that twofold goal is called product and process. To achieve that goal I intend to use a variety of techniques. I intend to use memorizing, lecturing, discovering, discussing, and questioning in order to develop the ability to acquire knowledge as well as analyze it, understand it, and apply it to something else. This method is derived from the purpose of covenant instruction which is the development of an independently thinking person. By all the techniques I use, I hope to encourage in the children a love of learning as well as a sense of adventure and excitement in the study of this creation as it reflects the wonder and glory of God. My own love and excitement will help

them in this I am sure.

6) The atmosphere of the classroom will be that of love and concern for each individual. One would expect nothing less from an education that has as its motivating force the fellowship and friendship of covenant life with God. Just as God loves each of His children as individuals so that He sent Christ to die for their sins, so also the father in his family must love each of his children. Because I represent the parent in the classroom I must love each child. In doing so I will seek their highest good. In doing so I will help each one develop as an individual. May God give me grace to implement this philosophy.

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Caring for Our World

by Mr. Doug DeBoer

This article submitted by Mr. Doug DeBoer, faculty member of the Protestant Reformed Christian School of Hull, Iowa, was presented originally as a speech at the P.R.T.I. convention of 1983.

Taking care of our world is a popular subject. All one has to do is pick up the newspaper or turn on the radio or television to read or hear of an ecological issue. Management of resources was really brought into the limelight during the tenure of Interior Secretary James Watt. Organizations such as the Sierra Club never saw so much money and support headed their way. Many such organizations were sad to see him resign because they wanted land and resource issues to remain in the spotlight. The whole country still seems to be focused on environmental issues. I was able to gather information from sources ranging from the *National Geographic* to *Sports Illustrated*, from local news to national news, from pamphlets to full length books such as *Earthkeeping: Christian Stewardship of Natural Resources*. These issues are faced by Christian and non-Christian alike. How to teach and what to teach students regarding these issues are questions faced by public school teachers, Christian school teachers, and Protestant Reformed school teachers. This topic could be discussed at any teacher's convention.

Why discuss it here? Just because everyone else is interested in discussing it? That shouldn't be the only reason because Christians always should have been interested in such a topic. Hopefully, Christians were thinking about and dealing with these issues long before ecology became so popular in the late sixties and seventies, and now into the eighties. Waste and needless destruction should never be approved by the Christian. Taking care of our world must always be an issue with us.

However, because everyone is discussing the topic it is on our minds. Whatever the world is greatly concerned with is also a concern for us. Certainly, Christians have spent more time and effort writing and thinking about the creation of the world after Darwin than before him. People are greatly concerned about caring for the world's resources. We should spend time thinking about where we stand on this issue of caring for our world.

In order to understand what our view should be we will first look at the way Christian and non-Christian have viewed our world in the past and present. Most men have looked on their world as exactly that — *their* world. It belongs to us they say. Man's world is his own world and thus man is responsible to only himself. Man rules the world for his own glory. Everything that is done on earth is done to make his life "better." Man says — and this includes Christians — that the world is here to provide me with what I need. The Bible does teach that we are given dominion. The only problem with this is man's sinful nature; greed gets in the way. Man has no idea or loses sight of what his true needs really are. When we pray for our daily bread we have things mixed up. Our daily needs are food, clothing, and shelter. Our needs are not fine cars, single-dwelling homes, and fine coats. I am not saying there is anything wrong with these things in and of themselves, but think a moment, man has exploited the earth because he wants these things and more.

But you say, "If farmers have bumper crops and developers keep developing, will not the schools and churches be in better condition? Is it not good to wish for these things to happen? Am I not supposed to wish for a healthy economy?" What if the farmer can only increase his crop yield by using great amounts of pesticide? I know that these great amounts are harmful not only to the pests but also to the birds that eat the pests and other animals which are considered important to the balance of nature. I know that poisonous chemicals don't just dis-

appear off the face of the earth. Do I condone the use of more and more pesticide because it will help the farmer with his crop? But what about the rest of God's creation? What about the intricate balances in nature? Once we throw those off we simply have more and more problems in trying to restore balance. I must talk to the farmer's sons and daughters in school concerning pesticides. If greater and greater amounts of poison are needed for a tremendous crop, we ought to examine closely what we are doing to God's creation.

One of the biggest environmental issues today is the tremendous loss of cropland each year to development. Once things are built on farmland the land cannot be used for agriculture. This development puts more pressure on the fields that remain — thus depleting the soil more quickly. Should I talk about such things with my students? Should I approve all these developments without some serious thought? Again, if this all-out development is what it takes for a healthy economy, maybe I had better not wish for the kind of economy I think I need. The dollar should not be my only consideration.

It is true that a fuel, such as coal, is in the earth to be used by man. The problems enter in when we take the coal out of the earth. Sometimes the coal is so close to the surface that the earth is scraped away and the coal is taken up. Obviously this is going to upset the habitat of the living things above the mine. Any animals which dwell there are forced to move, and as for the plants, it is all over. Remember, this does not need a second thought because the earth is here to make my life as pleasant as possible. However, in almost all states where coal is mined there are laws that say the earth must be replaced once the mining is done. The problem is that many mining companies do not obey the laws. The soil that is near the mine erodes or is leached; soon the area is void of vegetation and the drinking water of nearby homes becomes very poor, if not harmful. But we have laws. In an eastern coal-mining state a lawyer prepared to take some of the companies to court who were not following proper procedure in repairing the areas upset by the mining. The U.S. government would not help him in his prosecutions. It seems the government does not wish to prosecute because it will cost the coal companies too much money. The economy will suffer.

Man has also looked on the world's resources as limitless, which I think is easy to understand. One can read stories of how a squirrel was once able to go from the southern border of Michigan to the Straits of

Mackinac without ever touching the ground, simply jumping from limb to limb. When the white man first came to North America the forests probably did look to be without end. It certainly helps explain why so much chopping was done.

This idea of unlimitedness (even though today many are seeing things differently) has led to some of the problems that we face today. I believe that one of the reasons why we don't re-cycle very many things is because we believe that there is plenty more of whatever we need. Certainly there is plenty — more ore out there to make more cans and other steel things. We say, "Why use it over if you don't have to?" What do ideas like this lead to? They lead to landfills with iron contents higher than our mines of iron ore have. Is it using our earth wisely when we dump whatever we used because there seems to be plenty more? Is the value of things only in their scarcity? States such as Michigan, Iowa, and Oregon have encouraged re-cycling of bottled and canned beverages by requiring a deposit on bottles and cans. So people in these states dutifully return their bottles and cans to be re-cycled due to the might of the dollar. Should we need the dollar to motivate us?

This belief in unlimitedness has also contributed to needless soil erosion. When farmers first started working the fields of Iowa there was on the average three feet of top soil; now there is eight inches. This is within a little over one hundred years. You don't need to be a mathematician to compute that this doesn't project out to very many more years. Farmers have begun to be more careful for they know that if their soil is gone their land is worthless. They have cut down considerably on soil erosion. The end is good, but what about the motive?

The struggle of man with the taking care of the world always comes down to money. Even Christians seem to fall into the trap of always trying to earn more money, get a bigger profit, and have more and more of this world's goods. To serve God and to love our neighbor does not always stay at the forefront when it comes to business. With this type of philosophy, resources and good care for our world go down together.

In contrast to man's erroneous view we must teach the Biblical view of our world. Our world is God's world. We are only stewards, caretakers of this creation. We must care for the earth. We must keep it healthy for as John Muir said, "Only a healthy earth can provide for us and so we must guard, not destroy, its delicate cycles and balances." But should we be concerned with only man's benefit? If one reads

scripture passages such as Psalm 104:10-11, 16-18, 20-22 and Job 38:25-27, 39-41 the picture is broader than many seem to think it is. These passages teach that God provides and is watching over all things. If God provides for animals then shouldn't we attempt to provide for them also. Not just the ones that benefit us directly, but all the animals. I think that it has been proved that the best way to provide for wild living things is to preserve some of their natural habitat. Saving one endangered animal that may have had a fin clipped or wing severed, through such means as surgery may make national news, but it is not really providing and caring for the creation as we should. We must think about other living things even when it isn't so convenient for us to do so. Wouldn't it have been more convenient for Noah if he had taken only domesticated animals? God's care extends to all His creatures, shouldn't ours? As caretakers we must balance human versus non-human needs. This is not to say that non-human is more important than human, but non-human is still important.

We can now understand why ecology is important for our schools. The only way we can properly care for God's creation is if we understand His creation. We must have a knowledge of living things and their interactions with each other and their environment. If we don't know that the burning of coal and oil produce oxides which mix with water and other materials in the air to produce acid rain, and do not understand that acid rain can affect wildlife, plants, and soil in an adverse way, we are going to have great difficulties in the future with our environment. Ignorance is not bliss. Things on this earth are interdependent.

Before I talk about specific things to do in the classroom, I want to re-emphasize our reason for action in the taking care of our world. We must act out of obedience to our calling as stewards; we must not act simply on the basis of more or less money. We must make students aware that they are responsible to God in their caring for the earth just as much as they are responsible to God in their relationship to others. We teach them to love our neighbor for God's sake; we must teach them to care for the world because it is God's world.

In trying to find specific things I found a great deal of help in *Earthkeeping*. Although I could not agree with many things in this book, it does have some very good ideas for individual action in caring for our world in appendix A entitled, "What You Can Do." The first thing that we as teachers must do is be open to the wonders of creation.

We must see, understand, and point out to our students the seasons and the effect they have on wildlife, the growth of plants, insects in the grass and on the window, changes in weather, ponds, rivers, and lakes — not just their beauty, but the life that is in and around each one. This is not done merely by mouthing these things. Students can tell a “fake” without any trouble. We as teachers must truly see the wonder of God in these things. We must pass this wonder to our students.

One activity which would deepen their awareness and appreciation for nature would be to take them to wild places where man has not heavily intruded. However, you do not have to go far to show them that other living creatures abound. Go through the school yard. Have the students take soil samples right at school and see what they can find. It has been estimated that there are 200-1,000 pounds of earthworms per acre. Show them that life abounds. Ordering magazines such as *Ranger Rick* also helps to create more knowledge of and respect for God’s creation.

Discussion should take place in the classroom on the use of resources. Possible topics could be: insulating and car-pooling. Discuss re-cycling tin cans and glass bottles. Should we bring them back even if we are not paid for them? What about shoes? Do you throw away the whole shoe just because the soles are shot? Is it wise to use things like plastic silverware, paper towels, or paper plates? Is this a justifiable waste of resources just for a matter of convenience? We should also discuss who is responsible for the care of resources? Is it only about individual responsibility that we should worry? The United States government owns over half of the land in our country with their greatest holdings being in the West. Obviously, they have responsibility. How much must we be concerned with their problems? If the administration’s initial stand on acid rain is any indication, our government needs a great deal of help. We encourage writing to Congress on other issues. What about writing on ecological issues? Certainly we have a distinct view.

Another suggestion for the classroom is to send for materials put out by the U.S. government (even though this seems contrary to what I just wrote). Some of these are very worthwhile and are made specifically for use in the classroom. One that I found worthwhile is *Conserving Soil* by the U.S.D.A. Included in the book are transparencies, duplicating masters, and a sixteen-page teacher’s guide. Something like this is ideal for an interdisciplinary unit on ecology. History, English,

science, geography, Bible, and math could all be studied from this book. Even a short week of ecology taught in this way would be very beneficial. Very effective units could be set up using such diverse disciplines as history and science.

I would like to sum up by paraphrasing a story entitled "The Web of Life" from Joanne E. De Jonge's book *God's Wonderful World*. The story tells of life on the tropical island of Borneo. She tells of her house being made of palm fronds woven together and the caterpillars which would occasionally eat through the roof or wall. This did not cause big problems because there were always more fronds. The rats lived upstairs in the attic and pretty much stayed away from living areas because everyone had cats. They also struggled with cockroaches and lived with lizards who consumed tremendous amounts of mosquitoes and caterpillars. They kept their food in special screened cabinets which had legs that were set in bowls filled with water. Nothing that flew or crawled could get at it. Every week they swept out dead cockroaches that had been killed by small cockroach tablets, and every night they burned a mosquito coil whose smell kept mosquitoes and malaria away. Everything was living in balance.

Scientists had a better idea. They decided to spray DDT to rid the island of mosquitoes. They rained DDT over the entire island and it affected more than mosquitoes because besides killing them it slowed down the cockroaches. The lizards were now fast enough to catch cockroaches. They ate and ate; each feeding adding a little more DDT to their bodies. Soon the lizards couldn't stay on the wall and the ceiling and they fell to the floor. The cats decided they could feed on lizards as well as rats. Slowly the cats were poisoned by the poisoned lizards. Soon cats were dying all over the island. The rats never had it so good. They came from everywhere and nothing could stop them. The handy little food cabinets didn't work against rats. The worst part was that rats bring the plague. The rats became more and more brave; some of them began biting. To make matters worse, the roofs, walls, and supports of the houses were falling apart faster than anyone could fix them. Unaffected by DDT and with not enough lizards around to eat them the caterpillars had gone unchecked. The scientists had made things worse instead of better. The only solution was to try to return things back to the way they were before DDT.

This time scientists dropped cats instead of poison. Each cat had been given its own little parachute and dropped from a helicopter.

They flourished. They never had so many rats to eat. The surviving lizards multiplied, most of the poisoned ones were dead. They began eating the caterpillars. The cockroaches also multiplied, now being held in check only by tablets. People got more cats to keep the rats down and once again kept mosquitoes away with coils. The balance was restored.

“And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.”

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...it is enough to say that the regenerate mind, taught by the Spirit of God is a far more trustworthy and efficient instrument than the greatest human intellect submerged in the darkness of unbelief.

Mr. Sam Will,
Dundee, Scotland
from “A Biblical View
of the Responsibilities of Parents in Education,”
March, 1981.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

The following is a list of the manuals for teachers that have been produced by teachers at summer workshops and through personal study. These educational helps have been funded in part or totally by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools. Copies of these are available:

Biblical Perspectives in the Social Sciences (1971)

A Writing Program for the Covenant Child (1972)

Suffer Little Children (Bible manuals 1, 2, & 3), at cost

Workbooks for *Suffer Little Children*, at cost

Teachers' Manual for Ancient World History (1977)

History Units on Medieval World History (1979) on the following topics:

Unit I. The Barbarian Migrations

Unit II. The Eastern or Byzantine Empire

Unit III. The Rise and Spread of Islam

Unit IV. England and the Middle Ages

Unit V. France in the Middle Ages

Unit VI. The Crusades

Unit VII. Feudalism and the Manor

Reformed Education by Rev. D. Engelsma. (Orders should be sent to Reformed Education, 4190 Burton S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49506. Send \$1.50 plus \$.60 for postage and handling.)

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Freeborn Sons of Sarah, An Exposition of Galatians, by Rev. George C. Lubbers, \$5.00

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