

PERSPECTIVES IN COVENANT EDUCATION

ARTICLES

Hitherto Hath the Lord
Helped Us

Preventive Discipline

Teaching in
Northern Ireland

How Do We Help
The Learning Disabled?

A Biblical View of the
Responsibility of Parents
in Education

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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

Resolved to Have Christian Education in 1985

Christian education has never really been “a take-it or leave-it option” for Reformed Christians.

Christian education is explicitly and implicitly required because of the promises believing parents make. Parents say that they will see to it that they to the best of their ability will provide Christian nurture and instruction for their baptized children.

As we begin the year A.D. 1985, we do so with godly resolve to provide an education for the seed of the Covenant, that is truly Christian.

Two articles included in this issue of *Perspectives in Covenant Education* emphasize the importance of the calling of the Christian parent in the educational enterprise. I refer particularly to the article of Rev. Kortering and the article of Mr. Sam Will of Dundee, Scotland. You will enjoy these articles. One is written by a minister who has long supported the cause of Christian education in the community of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Mr. Sam Will expresses the same basic concern as Rev. Kortering for parent involvement in Christian education in Scotland. I think it is safe to say that the cause of Christian education as we Protestant Reformed people have learned to know it and practice it is not as deeply rooted in Scotland.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Reformed Christians in America often do not completely appreciate the struggle that has resulted in the development of the parent-controlled Christian schools that have become such an important part of the instructional program. We believe in free Christian schools — schools that are free from the state and free from the church.

We do not know as well as we should some of the individuals who worked for this freedom — particularly in the Netherlands. The movement in the Netherlands has helped to develop the ideology that has led to the development of Christian schools here in the United States particularly after the Doleantie or Kuyper movement in the Netherlands, 1890ff.

We have perhaps heard the names of Abraham Kuyper and Groen Van Prinsterer in this connection but often know little more than that.

The January, 1985, issue of *Reformed Perspective* contains a very enlightening article entitled "The legacy of Groen van Prinsterer" by Mckendree R. Langley. I take the liberty to quote sections of this article. It gives an interesting review of the public career of Groen van Prinsterer and how he was led to help in the development of the Christian education movement in the Netherlands — a movement that eventually worked to be free from the state. His work was done in a country that was nominally Christian in the 19th century but had in reality fallen under the influence of the deism of the French revolution. In this sense he was Anti-Revolutionary.

Born into an aristocratic family in 1801, he lived a comfortable life in the Hague as far as personal wealth was concerned. After undergoing a lengthy conversion experience, he surrendered his life to the Lord in 1833. Then this young nobleman turned his back on the cultured frivolity of the leisured class and consecrated his considerable academic talents gained at Leiden University to the Lord's service in private and public life. . . .

Groen's public career included significant contributions as historian, statesman, and publicist. Advocacy of church confession-alism in the Reformed tradition formed yet another important aspect of his activities.

His beloved historical work involved the publication of a huge number of documents of the House of Orange-Nassau of the Reformation period in many volumes and a Reformed interpretation of modern Dutch history in the influential *Handbook of the History of the Fatherland* (1846). This serious historical work laid the foundations for scholarly research in national origins emphasizing the Reformed character of national development. The *Handbook* was the most widely circulated of his books during his lifetime. It was a standard text in Christian schools for several generations.

In making his entry into active politics in 1840 Groen published a lawyer's analysis of constitutional problems entitled *Contribution to Constitutional Revision in the Netherlandic Spirit*. In this manifesto the author called for a revision of the national Constitution to provide for governments to be responsible to parliament (and not merely to the king) as well as for the introduction of reforms insuring freedom of conscience, the press, worship, and education. A call was also made in this book for the infusion of Christian values in national life, including the reorganization of the public school along denominational lines of Reformed and Catholic.

The year 1857 marked a turning point in Groen's political career, for then he recognized by the turn of events that the state was no longer Christian but secular. The Primary Education Act of 1857 first proposed by his former colleague, Premier Justinus van der Brugghen, was passed by the Liberal parliament majority of 47 votes in favor and 13 votes opposed (including Groen). This act provided

for a secular public school based on an appeal to a vague deism disguised as Christianity that was supposedly offensive to no one and open to pupils of all beliefs. No longer would there be a public school which was in any clear sense Christian from an orthodox standpoint. The new religion of the public school was secular humanism. In effect, this legislation was a rejection of Groen's attempt to solve the school question by the introduction of denominational public schools. At this point Groen resigned his parliamentary seat, for he realized that the nation was no longer Christian. He was stunned. A few years later he was reelected to parliament, but this time as *the champion of private Christian schools as the alternative to the secular public school with a deceptive Christian facade* (emphasis A.L.).

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Hitherto Hath the Lord Helped Us

Rev. J. Kortering

Rev. Kortering gave this inspirational address at a public meeting of the P.R.T.I. Convention, October, 1984. He is pastor of the Grandville, Michigan Protestant Reformed Church.

Ebenezer! What a declaration!

According to I Samuel 7, Israel had good reason to cry out, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." The Philistine threat had just been overcome. During battle, the Lord had thundered upon them and discomfited them. The army of Israel had moved in for the kill. At last there was peace in the land.

This had been a long time in coming. For years the armies of the Philistines had plundered the fields of Israel. They had laid waste their cities. Even the ark of the covenant had been captured and for twenty years confined in Kirjathjearim. But, why? not because Israel was inferior in power or the Philistine better equipped for battle. Israel had walked in sin and Jehovah had raised up the Philistines against them. The heavy hand of Jehovah was against them.

Now, things were different. At Mizpeh they had repented before Jehovah. They had fasted, poured out the symbolic water in expression of their sorrow for sin and had asked Jehovah to forgive them.

And He delivered them.

Ebenezer, hitherto hath the Lord helped us!

Well may we say that this evening. The thirtieth anniversary of this teachers' convention is a testimony of Jehovah's love and care. The only reason we are here tonight is the faithful help which Jehovah gives us. Let's consider this subject and ask two questions. In what way has Jehovah helped us? and what is the significance of this for the future?

The first thing that comes to mind when we face the question, in what way has Jehovah helped us, is this: He has preserved for us the truth of His covenant, that He is a covenant God of believers and their children.

The truth of the covenant is the heartbeat of the Reformed faith. One hesitates to take any doctrine and exalt it over other truths. All truth is organic. Much like the plant — who can say the roots are more important than the stem, or the leaves, or the flower? Each part is important for the whole. The same applies to truth. Truth is living since it flows forth from the living God. In Him all truth is vital. The very nature of His Being, His attributes, His Persons and works are living in Him. He has manifested His truth in the Person of His own Son. Jesus Christ said of Himself, I am the way, the truth, and the life. He is the expressed image of the Godhead, full of glory and truth. This truth is revealed to us by the wonder of the Holy Spirit inspiring men to write the Word of God. That Word is the content of the preaching of the gospel and becomes alive in us as the Holy Spirit applies it unto our hearts.

This truth of the Living God has a heartbeat, it is the doctrine of the covenant. As a covenant God He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Within His own Being He enjoys covenant friendship. He expresses this friendship in His eternal decrees, the decrees of sovereign predestination and providence. He manifested His covenant friendship in the creation of Adam and Eve in the garden, all the wonders of creation were joined in friendship with the Creator through the heart of man. This covenant extended unto His fallen people through Jesus Christ, His Son. In Christ the covenant was sealed for eternity. By His Word and Spirit He gathers His covenant people unto Himself. At the end of the ages, that covenant will be perfectly manifest in heavenly glory.

What does this mean for us? Through the knowledge of this truth we are brought into covenant friendship with God. We know God as

our Father, His love beats in our hearts, all these truths about God move us to bow before the adorable God. We listen to Him and confess and believe what He says about Himself. We realize the importance of serving Him and conforming our will to His will. We become obedient before Him.

This covenant is with believers and their children. God establishes His covenant with them — not that all children of believers are in the covenant; the seed of the promise are counted as the seed. This gives an entirely different perspective to our dealing with children. They are the children of God. His friendship extends unto our children.

This doctrine, the heartbeat of the Reformed faith, has been preserved for these many generations. We do well to remind ourselves that these great truths did not originate with us. If that were true, we could well be concerned about the charge of our being sectarian. As churches we do not want to raise up new doctrines, our calling is not to be original in our thinking. No, rather we face the responsibility to hold to the truths of God's Word written centuries ago, truths which the church of the past confessed, truths which the Reformed churches expressed in their confessions. The study of history shows that these truths which we hold dear as churches and in our Christian schools have been handed down to us from our forefathers. The joy of this anniversary is that we still hold them dear and God has preserved them for us these many years.

We need but remind ourselves that the doctrine of the covenant was the heartbeat of all truth throughout history. Many times our forefathers did not use the term as such, yet their defense of the faith makes it plain that they loved the truth of God's friendship. Augustine fought Pelagius on the doctrine of man's innate natural depravity in order that He might preserve the truth of sovereign predestination and salvation by the blood of the cross. Our Reformers, Martin Luther and John Calvin, expressed this. Luther fought the dead church on the living truth of justification by faith not by works of righteousness we do. To triumph in this he had to deny decrees of the church and publically confess, "My heart is captive to the Word of God." John Calvin systematized these truths and centralized them in the sovereign good pleasure of God. Only a deep commitment to Holy Scripture and love of God could produce such a Reformation. The heartbeat of God's friendship was manifest. Our Dutch forefathers carried on this Reformed tradition. De Cock, Van Raalte, Scholte left the state church in the Netherlands because they despised the inroads of Arminianism, hierarchy, even dead orthodoxy. They came to America because they

loved the Sovereign God and rejoiced in His covenant. They saw that the covenant demanded spiritual separation from the influence of the ungodly world. Even a new country did not guarantee spiritual fidelity. In 1857 the Christian Reformed Church began since many in the Dutch Reformed Church in America departed from the truths which were dear to their hearts. The heartbeat of the Reformed faith was at stake. Similarly, our origin as Protestant Reformed Churches focused upon these very issues. The doctrine of common grace and the free offer of the gospel mitigated against God's sovereignty and the particular character of His love. In 1953 our churches faced the painful controversy once again: what of the doctrine of the covenant, is the promise for all on condition of faith or is it sovereignly realized by God because it is particular throughout?

The preservation of the great truths of God's sovereignty and His covenant of grace is a history written in controversy, church splits, persecution, even death. God has been good to us in that He has preserved these truths for us and our children. Surely, we say, Hitherto hath Jehovah helped us.

The second thing we wish to point out is that integrated throughout this glorious history is the fact that God has preserved for us Christian schools. Our forefathers who were committed to the truth of God's covenant, realized the need for Christian schools in which the children of the covenant might be instructed. They saw the need for a thorough education in languages, science, literature, philosophy, and theology. If God's cause was to prosper, ignorance had to be overcome, the issues of the day had to be faced and this required solid Christian instruction. They worked hard to organize Christian schools on all levels, the lower grades, academies, as well as university education. Martin Luther and John Calvin both labored hard and impressed upon the people the need for Christian schools. Our Dutch forefathers were the same. Abraham Kuyper saw the need for Christian schools in the Netherlands. We can thank God that our Christian Reformed forefathers in America carried on in this great work. Similarly, our Protestant Reformed fathers worked to have our Christian schools. The anniversary booklet is a chronicle of this history. Our Hope school in 1947, Adams and Edgerton in 1950, Loveland and Doon in the early 1960s followed by South Holland and Covenant Christian High in the later 1960s, Hull, Redlands, Lynden in the 1970s. Here we are tonight to remember this work of God. We have a Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools and this Institute in which our teachers can discuss ways to better themselves in the great task of instructing the youth of the

covenant. Indeed, hitherto hath the Lord helped us!

Finally, we like to limit this work a bit more — we may also say tonight that our heritage includes not only Christian schools, but parental Christian schools. The heritage of Reformed Christian schools is that these schools are not operated by the state, not the church, not by some private corporation, but by covenant parents. This too, has encountered opposition. Governments have not always allowed this. Many insist that to have an educated citizenry means that government does the educating. The church frequently stepped in and insisted that it is their duty to instruct in all these subjects. Historically the Roman Catholic, the Lutheran, and more recently the Baptist churches have done this. In some instances private corporations have been organized with boards of directors to take on this task. Yet, the position of the Reformed churches has been and is today, this is a parental duty. God has given this responsibility to parents, Ephesians 6:4. Such schools have the prayers, interest, and support of parents and family. These parents insist that the purpose of these schools is to teach their children all the formal subjects from the perspective of God's Word. Almost everywhere opposition arises when parents take this responsibility seriously and organize such Christian schools. It takes courage, willingness to be a separate people, and most of all a love for the God of the covenant.

The next question we face is this, what is the significance of all this as we face the future? From many points of view the future seems dark and foreboding. Think for a moment of the society in which our children must live. The effects of secularism and humanism are being felt on every side. The entire structure of our society is undergoing change. Gross immorality abounds on every side. Does the church of today hold forth any hope? In general the church has lost any significant effect for change. In fact the apostate church leads the way into the pit of modern day degradation. Can government help? Big government is reaching its greedy fingers into all areas of life and it is not for the common good, it is directing the state toward the world government of the anti-christ.

Does this mean that we are trapped in a hopeless situation? Do we bemoan our sad state of affairs? No, if this anniversary is going to glorify God we may well take this theme, Hitherto hath God helped us, and apply it to our future as well. While we look back we need a perspective for the future. In faithfulness to God's Word and continuing the great work our forefathers preserved for us, we will carry with us the guarantee that God will help us no matter what the future holds.

May I suggest that we renew our commitment in this way?

First, that we continue to champion the truth of God's covenant. Since it is the heartbeat of Reformed theology, giving it its proper place will keep us from two errors: doctrinal indifference and cold intellectualism. The Reformed faith is not heady scholasticism, it beats with the warmth and glow of God's sovereign good pleasure to accomplish our salvation and that of our children. Surely, we cry, "Let God be God" when our eternal security is at stake. Such doctrine is sweet to our taste and music to our ears. It draws us into a personal fellowship of friendship with God. Within such a covenant we love God, cherish His Word, grow in grace, and seek to conform our lives to His will. Then we know what it means that friendship with the world is enmity with God and we cannot sit at the table of the Lord and the table of devils. God's covenant friendship is an exclusive relationship.

We then have the spiritual impetus to see the importance of maintaining parental Christian schools. I have in mind maintaining them not so much over against the attempts of government to bribe us with federal aid and thereby to begin to control. This danger is real enough. But, I have in mind the need to work to preserve our parental schools from within. Unless our parents continue to work for them, they will cease to be parental Christian schools.

How is this?

First, parents must continue to be involved in the formal education of their children once we have our Christian schools. The great threat in this connection is parental indifference. When this happens other things begin to go wrong. Soon teachers develop an attitude of "professionalism" — we are the educated ones, we know what it takes to teach, parents keep your nose out of our business. Another way is "boardism" when the administration of the school, principal, school board members take the attitude — we know how to run a school, ignore parents. To my knowledge this is not present in our schools, but you can be sure it will become a real thing if parents become indifferent. The solution is obvious. Parents must continue to be involved with the school. They must attend all meetings in which they have opportunity to learn about the school, evaluate the instruction their children receive, or be busy in the government of the school. In this way, accountability is to the parents who are given this duty by God. The other thing is that if parents believe that the school is not fulfilling its commitment to teach, such dissatisfaction must be expressed in the proper way. It is so easy to destroy God's covenant work with careless criticism, faultfinding, running down the school. Any grievance must

be expressed to the teacher, principal, school board so that it can be considered in a proper way. Our involvement as parents must not be destructive but constructive and for the good of all God's children.

Another thing that is important is that we agree on a Biblical sense of morality, of right and wrong. Our schools must operate in a proper sphere of godliness. We parents have much to do with this. In fact it is on this score that our parental schools are vulnerable. If the majority of parents have a worldly attitude and care not for the antithetical walk of obedience by ourselves and our children, the school will reflect this. This happens in schools from time to time. The parents become successful in business and money begins to talk. The character of the school will reflect this, our kids must make money, the emphasis is placed on the physical building and its conveniences, not so much on its teaching. With luxury comes pleasure, the more money people have the more ways they spend it. Soon worldliness creeps into homes and school. Then you hear talk of parties, social dancing, movies, and this becomes acceptable. The school should include these functions as well. A little controversy follows, but soon the majority win out and if a parent goes to the principal to discuss this, his answer is, the majority of the parents approve, what can we do?

How can this be avoided? If we see these wrong values entering our homes, and that's where the trouble lies, not in the school itself, but in the homes, we must in obedience to God's Word go and show our brother (and sister) his fault between you and him alone, Matthew 18. The only way to root out worldliness is the proper application of Christian discipline, mutually among each other and formally by the church.

Finally, we must as parents do everything in our power to make sure our homes are covenant homes, where God is honored and from which our children go forth to school and enter into the world.

This involves three things. First, our homes must reflect the Lordship of Christ by honoring marriage. Nothing contributes more to the spiritual development of our children than providing them the atmosphere of a loving father and mother who honor God by accepting their God-given place in marriage. Such a home demonstrates covenant love by experiencing it first-hand through parental love. This furnishes spiritual security which children need in this hostile world. Secondly, we must motivate our children to be diligent in learning. This cannot be done by criticizing a teacher or talking about boring subjects. Covenant parents encourage their children to explore our Father's world and discuss with them their subjects and learn along with them.

Excited parents contribute much to motivated children. Finally, our homes must form a structured environment for learning respect for authority and the need for discipline. We owe it to our teachers to furnish them children who have respect for them for God's sake and realize that when they do wrong God is displeased and they must correct themselves and not take their anger out on the teacher. If we teach them this as parents, it is but natural for them to expect the same from the teacher. Only within an orderly classroom can the great learning process be advanced.

May God bless our homes so that our parental schools may remain Christian and thoroughly committed to the advancement of God's covenant in our day.

Looking back and looking ahead, let us humbly say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

■ ■

Preventive Discipline

Mr. Calvin Kalsbeek

Mr. Kalsbeek presented this paper at a convention sectional of the Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute 1984 Convention. Mr. Kalsbeek is on the faculty of Covenant Christian High School, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

"Eighty percent of the persons who quit after one year of teaching do so because they cannot handle discipline." So writes Professor Norman DeJong in the August 27, 1984 issue of *The Banner* in an article titled, "Good Discipline is Good Teaching." If Mr. DeJong's figures are correct, maybe what we are in part concerned with in our sectional this morning is what could be called a teacher conservation program. No teacher enters the profession planning to have difficulties maintaining a well-ordered classroom. However, it is clear from the quote above that many teachers do enter the profession who are unsuccessful in this endeavor. Why is this? Isn't it enough that one desires an orderly classroom, a classroom in which it is possible for good teaching to take place? Obviously more is necessary! For one thing,

I believe a teacher must have specific goals for discipline in the classroom. Do you have goals for classroom discipline? If you do, can you articulate them?

Allow me to expose you to some general goals of others. Examine them to see how they compare to your own.

1 Dayton Hobbs writes: "The ideal classroom is one in which the teacher has so established order and discipline that doing the right thing is the socially accepted thing and rule violators are the outcasts."

2 John Amos Comenius, a 17th century French educator, suggests as the end of discipline: "...not the punishment of a transgressor for a fault he has committed (the done cannot be undone), but the prevention of the recurrence of the fault."

3 Jan Waterink in his book *Basic Concepts in Christian Pedagogy* says of discipline, its purpose is "to bring the child to the point where he no longer requires discipline by others, and where self-discipline will enable the child to be his own guide. That is, of course, self-guidance according to the norms laid down in the Word of God."

4 Jack Fennema in his book *Nurturing Children in the Lord* writes, "The goal is self-discipline, or, if you will, Christ-discipline. Teachers and parents are to work themselves out of a job by allowing children as much freedom of choice as they can responsibly handle at each level of growth."

5 The apostle Paul by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit writes in Romans 12 verses one and two: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Well, what do you think of those for goals? Are they, perhaps, too idealistic? A teacher who goes into the teaching profession expecting to attain these goals is likely to be sadly disillusioned when he faces the reality of sinners in his classroom — sinners who in many cases are not at all interested in seeing their teacher meet these goals successfully. On the other hand, the pessimistic teacher, who completely discards goals for discipline because they cannot be attained, is flirting with disaster.

But maybe we're getting ahead of ourselves. Before we delve into the *how* of working toward our goal, we should closely examine *what* we mean by this "discipline" we would like to achieve. While I was reading some of the various goals of discipline, you may have noticed some distinct differences in those goals. Comenius, for example, had in

mind the exercise of *punishment* which would result in "the prevention of the recurrence of the fault." Fennema, on the other hand, seems to suggest a general method of *teaching* which will result in self-discipline on the part of the child. What then is this thing we call discipline? Dr. DeJong, in the earlier mentioned article, answers that question as follows:

Discipline is first of all "instruction" or "teaching." Second, discipline is defined as "any school subject or branch of knowledge used in teaching." We talk, for example, about the disciplines of math, history, music, literature, and biology. Third, discipline is defined as "any training that molds, corrects, strengthens, or perfects."

These first three meanings are unmistakably positive. Combining them, we discover that discipline means instructing by means of subject matter in order to mold and shape the student according to some desired pattern. If that three-dimensional effort is not successful, then we must go on to the fourth meaning, which is "punishment."

Dr. Fennema in his book *Nurturing Children in the Lord* (a book which by the way I used extensively in preparation for this presentation) concurs with these general thoughts of DeJong. Fennema, however, goes into a careful examination of Scripture, particularly Ephesians 6:4, to show that the Biblical concept of discipline includes the dual edges of *instruction* and *correction*. For the purposes of this sectional the instructional aspect of discipline will be considered to be synonymous with my topic "Preventive Discipline," and it is on this that we will focus our attention. Those interested in the corrective aspect of discipline might be helped by one or all of the following sources: *Nurturing Children in the Lord* (particularly chapter 4) by Jack Fennema, *Withhold Not Correction* by Bruce Ray and *Dare to Discipline* by Dr. James Dobson.

With DeJong we agree, "Discipline then is teaching; good teaching is good discipline." Now that we are clear as to *what* we mean by preventive or instructive discipline, we can address the question of *how* to carry it out in the day-to-day activity of teaching. The Scriptures are not silent in this respect. In many places God tells us in His Word *how* we are to teach our children. Proverbs 4:10-11 is a good example: "Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many. I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths." Please notice the two *means* of instruction suggested in this passage: words and actions. I submit that for a teacher to give good instruction, he must be consistent in his use of both these means.

Let me show this with a few examples. First, teachers in the Grand Rapids Public Schools who recently participated in an illegal strike against the authority of the state, might find it difficult to convince their students that they should submit to teacher's authority in the classroom. Secondly, teachers here at Adams who try to enforce the rule that students are not to walk on the bank, will find it difficult to obtain the respect of their students if they flagrantly violate that rule themselves. One final example: a teacher who expects his students to hand their assignments in on time must make it clear that he is committed to assignment deadlines as well. One of the best ways for a teacher to demonstrate this, I think, is to mark and return papers, particularly tests, soon after they are handed in, preferably the next day. It has been said, "Consistency thou art a jewel" and I believe that a teacher's instructive impact is directly related to the size and brightness of that jewel.

The Lebanese philosopher, Kahil Gibran, once wrote, "I have learned silence from the talkative, toleration from the intolerant, and kindness from the unkind: yet strange, I am ungrateful to these teachers." Obviously you and I would prefer to have a *positive* impact upon our students rather than the negative one here described by Gibran, but how? *What* can we teach and, *how* must we go about it if we are to obtain the desired result of a classroom conducive to the learning process?

At the outset let me say that I don't claim to have all the answers to the questions, and if you were to sit in my classroom that would become only too obvious. Nevertheless I believe there is much that you and I do, and/or should do in the area of preventive discipline that does work. In the rest of this sectional I will briefly address some of these. For the sake of convenience I will divide them into two main categories: first, we will address preventive discipline measures that are mostly incidental to the established curriculum and I will label those "informal." Secondly, we will briefly look at preventive discipline as taught in direct connection with the established curriculum which we will label, "formal."

Preventive Discipline by Means of Informal Instruction

Many discipline problems are avoided if students know themselves and are able to accept themselves for what they are. We have all experienced the difficulties that arise in our classrooms as a result of students who over-evaluate themselves as well as those who under-evaluate themselves. We see as a result inappropriate behavior that

varies from "showing off" to complete unresponsiveness. What is our goal with respect to these students? We must be careful that we not fall into teaching the "self esteem" idea of the worldly educator, the emphasis of which is the supposed goodness of man. Rather, we should seek the Biblical goal described in Romans 12:3, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." Obviously chapter three of our science text will not explain how we are to accomplish this goal. Neither will it work to say to your students, "Okay, kids, we're going to learn self-knowledge today." Rather it must be a continuing process. Classroom devotions and school chapels are possible means to this end. Scripture passages like Romans 12:3 and Isaiah 45:9-30 could be helpful in teaching who we are, and what is a proper relationship with God. In addition teachers must tune themselves in to the individual needs of students. It's so easy, you know, to teach the mass and ignore the individual. Without knowing the needs of our students it will be impossible to give them proper direction. Though knowledge of the problem is essential, more is needed; we must demonstrate in our dealing with these students that we care about them. If we are unable to convey a caring attitude, our efforts will appear to be selfishly motivated. The student will see that teacher as only interested in a class that is easy to manage.

Although I believe the idea of Biblical self-knowledge and acceptance is primarily taught incidentally to the established curriculum there are ways these ideas can be incorporated into various courses of study. Let me cite two examples. First, in the area of science the Christian school teacher cannot avoid the wonder of the creation's tremendous variety on the one hand and the beauty of each individual creature and its individual function as a part of the whole on the other. It would not be difficult to bring into this lesson the idea of the church and the individual believer's place in it. Secondly, in a history or geography course in connection with the diversity of the races and nations this same concept could be illustrated in connection with the Scriptural teaching of the church as the Body of Christ in I Corinthians 12.

Teaching students proper acceptance of others is another major area of preventive discipline that we can, and should, address primarily in an informal manner. The Biblical truth that we must get across is, of course, that of loving the neighbor for God's sake, or described a little differently, accepting others as God made them and in connection

with their God-given place in the church and/or world.

Many are the problems we face as a result of our student's missing this Biblical target. How many times haven't your methods been questioned by the student who responds to a certain prohibition by saying, "But Mr. — lets us do that!" or "Mrs. — doesn't do it that way!" Questions of this sort are, by the way, ideal opportunities for incidental instruction in proper acceptance of others. More serious is the sin of mistreating a fellow student because he is "different," and more difficult it is to be effective in our dealing with this error. But deal with this sin we must. Although it is impossible to assess its effectiveness, teacher empathy for the needs of others is one way of addressing this problem. Words of encouragement at appropriate times and petitions in our prayers for the specific needs of others are important. We must take advantage of specific opportunities or situations that arise. Take, for example, the special education students at our Hope School and the opportunity they afford to teach acceptance of others for what they are, as ordered by our Father in heaven. More must be done, however! A teacher's concern for others must be demonstrated by his willingness to give of his *time*. Mr. Lubbers mentioned in his sectional yesterday the positive fruit of spending time after school hours helping a student with his science project. Are we available for this? Do our students know it? Mr. Lubbers also suggested that from time to time we should provide activities in which students must work together to accomplish a desired goal. Activities such as this provide opportunities for students to practice acceptance of one another.

A third area that I would like to address this morning is that of student responsibility and accountability. Immediately particular students come to mind, and we all have seen them to one degree or another. Maybe it's the capable little girl in the back of the room who rushes through her geography questions so she will have time to involve herself in the latest mystery story she has been reading. Or it's the lad who can't seem to keep his gaze from wondering to those alluring windows and concentrate instead on those assignments that he never seems to be able to complete on time. Responsibility and accountability are tough! They are tough on students and they are tough on teachers! Let me use a few examples to illustrate this. First, this past summer I raised an acre of kale on some land that I have out back. Part of the responsibility of my older children was to keep the weeds out. After I told them what I would pay them for each row, out they went with great enthusiasm. Everything seemed to be going fine until I

checked on how good a job they were doing. I was able to see that someone had gone down the rows, but many of the weeds were still going about their usual business of growing. Naturally a change needed to be implemented. Before one of my weederers could get credit for a row and begin a new one, I would have to check it out. Suddenly things slowed down dramatically and interest in the project diminished considerably. Why? What had happened? Obviously the emphasis on responsibility and accountability made the job not only more difficult, but more time-consuming as well. Consequently it became considerably more distasteful. The second example I would like to use in this connection comes a little closer to each of us, namely, teacher accountability. Since the publication *A Nation at Risk*, there has been a great deal of discussion in board meetings and faculty rooms throughout the country about this topic. How many of *us* would not feel threatened to one degree or another by some form of state imposed competency test?

Hopefully we now have a feel for the problem with which we must concern ourselves. The real difficulty lies in dealing with it effectively. Let me submit a few of my ideas in this connection. First, it's important, I think, to set forth clearly our expectations for each particular class, and that, very early in the school year. In this connection I tried something a little different this year. In the past, on the first or second day of school, I would explain what I expected of students concerning assignments and tests, and their responsibility with regard to making up work they missed due to absenteeism. I found out an interesting thing; it seemed that what I had said meant something different to almost every student. To combat this, at the beginning of this school year I gave each student a handout listing explicitly what I expected concerning assignments and tests, and the consequences of failure to fulfill these responsibilities. No longer do I chase students around school for a week trying to get them to take a make-up test. All it took was my written list of expectations, and a demonstration as to how the procedure worked. No, my procedures aren't perfect, in fact, some changes are necessary, but for the most part, they have helped my students exercise responsibility and accountability. Of course, the age and maturity of the student will influence the method to be used, but at every level the general idea holds: let the students know what you expect and be consistent in applying the consequences if they fail to match up to those expectations.

In the second place, I believe it's important to encourage student *development* in this area of responsibility and accountability. We do

that too, I'm sure, but are we doing enough? Don't we all have opportunities in the classroom and/or around school to demonstrate our trust in students who have proven themselves responsible Christians? Using these opportunities exhibits, both to the student directly involved and those who need improvement, the advantages of responsible behavior. In this connection, Waterink in his book *Basic Concepts in Christian Pedagogy* has this to say:

Education in the family and school must constantly be directed toward giving the child no more and no less responsibility than he is able to bear. From earliest youth the child himself should do whatever he is capable of doing. As early as possible he should learn to dress himself, to polish his own shoes, to care for his own school books, and to keep his own room tidy, even though mother does the dusting and makes the bed. The little child who plays should put away his own toys. In brief, from the outset the child should learn to be responsible for his own things.

During the slide presentation we saw last evening, Mrs. Wassink expressed that same idea when she said, "Slowly I began untying the apron strings."

Thirdly, we must be realistic, and admit that preventive measures will not always prove successful in teaching accountability and responsibility. When that is the case, we must not hesitate to enroll our students in the "University of Hard Knocks." They must have occasion to experience the unpleasant results of their own inappropriate behavior. Maybe the home setting provides more opportunities for this instruction than the school, but regardless of where the opportunities arise, we do our children no favors by coming to their defense in every difficulty, or bailing them out of every self-inflicted trial. We live in a "no fault" world: no fault divorce, no fault insurance, etc. We are, in fact, close to no fault crime, where the criminal is merely a victim of circumstances; and our children seem quick to pick up on that idea. "No fault" is hardly the Biblical approach to sin, and therefore also hardly the approach we should use with respect to our children.

Teaching students how to work within the structure of the school and classroom is the last major area of informal preventive discipline that we will address this morning. Although there is here bound to be some overlap with the three major ideas before discussed, let's limit ourselves to student response to school and classroom rules: Student behavior, if you will, in the classroom. It probably does not need to be said here, but understood must be the existence of *structure* in our classrooms. That's important! Consider the orderly creation in which God has placed us. In all of life there is a God-ordained structure in

which every creature must live, and that same principle must be maintained in our classrooms. The tough part is holding to the structure, or rules, we set up. Students have a way of wearing down one's resolve. To avoid this it's important, I think, to have rules that are clear and understood by all. A set of classroom rules might include one or all of the following:

1. We raise our hands before talking.
2. We work quietly at our desks.
3. We avoid talking when it is not necessary.
4. We listen when the teacher is talking to us.
5. We wait until a person has finished talking before we say something.
6. We walk in the room at all times.
7. We sharpen our pencils only at recess time.
8. We are courteous and considerate of others.
9. We make good use of our extra time.

Of course, the number and kind of rules will vary considerably depending upon the age of the students involved, but whatever they are the teacher should be sure they have their basis in the law of God. A word of caution might be appropriate here: It's easy to go overboard with rules. Woe is me if ever I'm heard saying, "Oh, Johnny, remember Section IX, Rule 7: Peach pits must be wrapped in baggies before being deposited in the wastepaper basket." Much better, and my preference with high school students, is the all-comprehensive, simple, Biblical command to love God and the neighbor.

It's easy to make rules, but quite another thing to keep students from breaking them. However, I believe, there are some things that we can do that will help. In the first place, if we desire our students to be orderly in our classrooms, we must help by giving them an orderly environment in which to work. The classroom itself should tell the students that decency and order prevail. Secondly, the *teacher* must play a major role here. How a teacher dresses, I believe, has an impact on how the students react to him and the rules he implements in the classroom. More important, however, is the teacher's presence in the classroom. I have difficulty feeling sorry for the teacher who complains about the student who causes all the disruption while he is out of the room. We don't excuse the student, of course, but where is the teacher? I don't hesitate to say that the teacher's *presence* is by far the greatest single factor in preventing disobedience of school and classroom rules. It's incumbent upon us to put that preventive measure to constant and effective use.

Preventive Discipline by Means of Formal Instruction

There is much more that could be said, and has been said, about preventive discipline as it is administered informally, but before I let you go this morning, I would like to say just a few things about what I will call preventive discipline by means of formal instruction, that is, discipline primarily preventive in nature but administered in direct connection with the teaching itself. Although this would be a good area for broader coverage in a future sectional, I would like to expose you briefly to two areas, namely, content and method. Comenius, the 17th century educator, had something to say about this:

If subjects of study are rightly arranged and taught, they themselves attract and allure all save very exceptional natures; and if they are not rightly taught, the fault is in the teacher, not the pupil. Moreover, if we do not know how to allure to study by skill, we shall certainly not succeed by the application of mere force. There is no power in stripes and blows to excite a love of literature, but a great power, on the contrary, of generating weariness and disgust. A musician does not dash his instrument against a wall, or give it blows and cuffs, because he cannot draw music from it, but continues to apply his skill till he extracts a melody. So by our skill we have to bring the minds of the young into harmony, and to the love of studies.

Though the words of Comenius might seem a bit idealistic, we all know from experience the importance of meaningful content. Much has been said in recent years concerning the need for relevancy in subject matter. Of course, what this world's educators consider relevant might be quite different from what you or I would consider relevant, but we would agree, I think, that no one more than the Christian teacher has at his disposal content that is relevant to his students. We have the light of the Scriptures to expose the truth! The Psalmist expresses that in Psalm 36:9: "In Thy light shall we see light."

This means that we may not simply come to our students with a lot of cold, hard facts for them to memorize. Rather we are responsible to incubate those cold, hard facts with the warm light of Scripture, with the result that what is taught has real meaning, relevancy if you will, for the students. Let me illustrate. A teacher could do an excellent presentation on Henry VIII's quest for a male heir, and how that resulted in England's break with the Roman Catholic Church. Interesting though that presentation might be, the student could legitimately say after class, "So what? What does that have to do with me?" Now let's take those same facts and examine them in light of the idea taught in Isaiah 45:4, "For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I

have even called thee (the reference here is to Cyrus) by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.” Now the Christian school teacher has something to talk about! Like Cyrus, Henry VIII was but a tool in the hand of God, and though Henry’s goals were sinful, certainly not the good of the church of Jesus Christ, nevertheless he was a means God used to promote the cause of the Reformation in England. The cause of Christ’s church was at stake here, the very church of which your students are members. Now the student has something worth thinking about! Now there’s a *reason* to learn about Henry VIII! Consider, too, that now the teacher has something to present that is cause for inspiration, and inspired teachers often result in inspired students. I suggest, therefore, that meaningful content will reduce the potential for inappropriate student behavior. But, we all know that’s hard work! This is the “nitty gritty” of Christian education! And it’s here where teacher growth and development must take place. Federation-sponsored projects have done much to help us in this work. More of us could, and should participate.

The second and last area of formal instruction with regard to preventive discipline that I will address this morning is that of sound teaching methods. We don’t have time to say much about this, but let me suggest that we use a variety of methods. Let’s have our students coming to class with an air of expectancy about them, “What are we going to do today?” Also, and this involves variety in methods, we must come to class *prepared*, prepared not only with meaningful content, but also with the means we are going to use to present it. A rather humorous story from the book *We Do Not Throw Rocks at the Teacher* by Katherine C. LaMancusa will serve to illustrate the importance of being prepared:

4 Has Anyone Seen My Keys?

Miss Daftly is demonstrating a papier-mâché technique to her second grade class. She begins to crush the newspaper in order to create her basic armature form. “See how I am doing this, children?” she asks. “Do you see how I made the two little ears for my bunny rabbit?”

The children nodded.

“Boy, Miss Daftly,” says one little tot, “that’s really *neat!*”

“Of course,” says another, “our teacher is an *artist!*”

Miss Daftly smiles with satisfaction. There is no doubt in her mind but that *this* is her lucky day, for, you see, it is sometimes difficult for her to make bunny ears that look like bunny ears. Sometimes her bunny ears look like elephant ears. “You see what I am doing, children? I am going to tie these bunny ears to the head of my bunny rabbit. Wait until I get my string. Where is my string?”

Children, did any of you see my string?"

"Nooooooo, Misssss Daftlyyyyyy," the children chorus.

"But, that is impossible! I always have string when I make my bunny rabbits. I—."

Yes, it *is* possible. In cold retrospect, Miss Daftly remembers. She forgot to put the string on the table with the rest of the materials. Now she will have to unlock the cabinet in order to get some. Where are her keys? "Children, has anyone seen my keys?"

"Nooooooo, Misssss Daftlyyyyyy," the second graders chorus again.

"Oh dear," she sighs. "Tommy, will you go to Miss Green's room and ask her if I may borrow some of her string?"

Tommy arises and steadfastly makes his way to the door. He opens it, walks out, and closes the door softly behind him.

But lo! A moment later, the door opens again, and there stands Tommy. "What room is she in?" he asks.

Miss Daftly appears somewhat exasperated, and there is a slight edge to her voice as she responds, "Miss Green is in Room 2!—No, wait Tommy, I believe she is in Room 3—no—! Children, do you know Miss Green's room number?"

"She is in Room 5," says one little moppet.

"No," says another, shaking his head from side to side, "she is in room eleven-teen."

"No, silly, that's *our* room!"

"Oh dear," Miss Daftly says, "I will have to look it up!" She puts down the bunny rabbit and the two bunny ears and pulls the school directory from her desk drawer. "Miss Green is in Room 4," she says wearily.

Again Tommy opens the door, walks out, and closes the door softly behind him.

Miss Daftly picks up her crumpled newspaper rabbit and the two crumpled newspaper rabbit ears, and attempts to place them in approximately the same position that she had them in before. But alas, the crumpled newspaper rabbit has begun to uncrumple and the crumpled newspaper rabbit ears have begun to assume forms which are quite un-rabbit-ear-looking.

"You're ruining it, Miss Daftly," warns a child.

"My dear Anastasia," says Miss Daftly authoritatively, "your teacher *knows* what she is doing. Be patient now, and I will make the bunny rabbit look nice again."

"Miss Daftly!" a child's voice calls out "Billy hit me!"

"Billy, did *you* hit Marcia?"

"No, I did not, Marcia is a liar."

"I am not a liar! You did *too* hit me!" So saying, Marcia lets fly a smart crack to the boy's cranium area.

The teacher's muffled voice comes from under sheaves of crumpled newspapers, "Stop it! Stop it, I say! If you children are not going to pay attention, I will have to stop making this bunny rabbit!"

"Who cares?" says the classroom sycophant in a moment of madness and/or high reprieve. "It looks dumb anyhow!"

"What did you say?" asks the teacher. "What did *you* say?"

The boy smiles.

"Repeat what you just said," Miss Daftly demands, looking at him from around the crumpled newspapers.

The boy continues smiling.

General unrest develops. Children begin to poke at one another. Someone says, "Let's take a vote." There is much giggling. Someone begins to whimper. It is Marcia. "Billy hit me *again!*" she wails.

The door opens. It is Tommy. He has returned.

With the last gasp of a dying duck, Miss Daftly calls out, "Bring me *that string!*"

Tommy steadfastly walks toward his teacher and says, "Miss Green says to tell you that she don't gots any string."

Possibly the most basic of tenets in the establishment of classroom control is P&O, or the ability to *plan and to organize*.

For some of the more fortunate of teachers, this presents little in the way of a problem, for they learned to plan and to organize very early in their lives, and the transfer of this ability into the classroom is a smooth and easy operation.

Other teachers represent the late bloomers or those who learned P&O through experiences in trial and error.

So there you have it. If you carry out all the preventive measures I've suggested this morning, more than likely you will be able to say with Julius Caesar, "*Veni, Vidi, Vici,*" and teach again next year. However, if some of your students still misbehave, you may have to introduce them to some corrective measures. That is, after all, what most people think of when you talk about discipline anyway.

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Teaching in Northern Ireland

Mr. Deane Wassink

Mr. Deane Wassink is no stranger to the readers of Perspectives in Covenant Education. The last issue of Perspectives contained an article from his pen. He writes about his work as a teacher in Covenant Christian School in Newtonabbey, North Ireland.

Teaching in North Ireland.

The very thought was enough to bring to our minds ideas of ad-

venture, exotic places, and chances to serve Christ in a special way. These thoughts that were ours when we set out on our trip to Ireland have proven true, and then some.

After our arrival in August, 1984, there has never been a dull day. We began to settle into our home on the seacoast of North Ireland near Larne one week after we arrived. We are still settling. There is much to do to get things in shape for two adults, four children, and one puppy that found its way here a couple of weeks ago (for the children, of course). I think we are beginning to win.

The school consists of twenty-three students and three teachers. Mrs. Di Whitter teaches P1 and P2 four days a week. My wife, Donna, teaches the same class two mornings a week including music. I teach P3-P7. We meet in a classroom of a church. We divide the one large room into two smaller ones by means of a heavy curtain.

There are many unique aspects to the work out here. The heavy curtain is only minor. In addition, everything in the classrooms must be moveable so that every Friday everything can be stacked out of the way for the church to use the room for its Sabbath School classes. Also, the number of children in my class varies between 10 and 13. You see, I have three children who are home taught. They visit the class three days a week for the experience. The family is here for a year from England while the father is going to seminary.

There is also the "primary" system of grade levels. The children start school when they are four (something my second daughter Kristin enjoys greatly). Then they are called P1s. Year two they are P2s, and so on. This continues until they are eleven years old. Exams are then given which determine whether they go into a vocational or grammar school track. Our own school is planning to enter the secondary level next year with two twelve-year old boys. If it seems confusing and different to you, don't feel bad. I'm just getting a handle on it.

They call me the headmaster of the school. I take care of the day-to-day running of the school. I must give reports to the board every month to explain what we are doing. I take care of the discipline. The board has given me a cane for this purpose. It works very well. I also take the daily devotions and singing. Finally, I am a teacher. My full-time class is made up of nine boys and one girl, ages six to eleven. As you would expect, the age difference is a challenge. I often get the feeling that I am teaching in an old-time one-room schoolhouse.

We have received much support for the Protestant Reformed principles by which we work here. We have had many opportunities to witness for the truth. We seek to help the saints here to develop in

the truth. Specifically, we work toward an understanding of the wonderful work of Christian covenant instruction. Certainly, this experience has been a great opportunity for us to grow as well. We learn every day. We are convinced that God is using our work here. We are grateful to Him for His mercies to us.

I would love to tell you about the communion of the saints we experience with the Bible Presbyterian Church in Larne. Space permits me to say only that we have been able to strengthen each other as fellow Reformed believers. Our stay here would be nearly impossible without the care and love of these saints.

Our work here has been an adventure. But, it is much more. It is an opportunity to help God's people in another part of the world. We pray that God may continue to use us.

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How Do We Help the Learning Disabled?

Mrs. Jeanette VanEgdom

Mrs. VanEgdom is an elementary teacher in the Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed Christian School, Doon, Iowa. This paper was prepared for a faculty meeting program at the school.

The major responsibility for learning disabled children lies with the classroom teacher. The classroom teacher will evaluate and develop an educational program for the learning disabled child by developing a classroom strategy that will make it possible for him to be successful.

I. What is a Learning Disability?

Learning disability can include defects in specific skills necessary for reading, spelling, or calculating. Learning disability can also include a collection of maladaptive behaviors such as hyperactivity, impulsivity, distractibility, and poor concentration. It is a disability that interferes with the child's capacity to learn.

Learning disability excludes children who have learning problems that result from poor vision, faulty hearing, motor handicaps, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or environmental disadvantage.

Learning disabled children can have an average or better than average intelligence, i.e., an IQ of 90 or above.

Learning disabled children exhibit great variability in their performance from task to task and from day to day. They excel at some activities and fail at others. Often a skill that seems solid one day is gone the next.

Some children with learning disabilities appear to progress quite normally through their early development. They may have difficulties with academic work and function well in other areas. Other children may lack readiness for kindergarten. They may have slowly developing language skills, have a high or low level of activity, have a short attention span, be less mature than others their age, be distractible, or be impulsive and disorganized. They also experience difficulty interacting with their peers.

II. How Can We Diagnose a Disability?

We must learn where the learning process breaks down for each child. A child may have poor auditory processing skills. He may have weak visual skills. He may have trouble organizing.

Some researchers attribute many learning disabilities to a defect in the way the information received through the senses is perceived and interpreted. Children with faulty visual discrimination do not observe fine distinctions between letters such as b/d or n/h. They skip words and lines when reading. They lose their place easily and omit questions on tests. With auditory problems the child has difficulty hearing differences between such letters and sounds as f/v or p/b, or words such as mat/map or sat/set. They omit letters in blends, and have difficulty distinguishing between short vowel sounds. They are poor listeners and find it hard to concentrate, especially when someone is talking nearby.

A disabled learner has difficulty with closure which permits one to synthesize sounds or visual symbols, i.e., to use the parts to make a whole. C-A-T should be perceived and read as cat. Capital A is not merely unrelated lines.

Memory plays an essential part in learning. Many children with learning problems have difficulty recalling. They forget a math concept if it is in a different format. They read a word correctly; then fail to recognize it three lines later.

Learning disabled children often have language disorders as well. They may not comprehend word meanings, vocabulary usage, and sentence formation. They say "the thing you cut with" for *knife*, or "a story you say with clues to make people guess" instead of *riddle*.

III. Some Teaching Strategies That Work

1. Identify the child's strong learning channel. Children who have difficulty processing what they hear benefit from seeing. Write on the board. If they have visual problems, they need to have it told to them.
2. Provide structure. Help children to approach tasks in an organized sequential way. State expectation clearly.
3. Teach children to monitor their work — proofread.
4. Help children to focus on the problem. Make directions simple and short; specific and precise. Say, "Listen." Have children repeat what you have said.
5. Give children concrete objects to count and measure.
6. Keep it simple. Teach step by step. If 20 spelling words are too many, use fewer. Simplify your language and speak slowly.
7. Build self-esteem. Show children their progress. Give them different and special materials so their lag is not so obvious.
8. Give frequent reinforcement. Verbal reinforcement as well as a smile, nod, etc.
9. Modify requirements and make adjustments.
10. Help the child to decipher multi-meaning words.
11. Give the child additional language experience. Example: A child reads a sentence, *The dog's coat was yellow*. He might picture a mutt with a yellow raincoat. He laughs hilariously, disturbs the class, is scolded and thought to be the class clown. You could make picture cards with different meanings to help him choose what makes sense.
12. Give clues. Example: In mathematics have cards with key words for subtraction, such as "difference," "remaining," "decrease," "how much left?" etc.
13. Motivate learning disabled students.

Summary

Often what is thought to be impossible turns out to be very possible. All too often parents and teachers have little or no expectations for learning disabled children, and as a result, these children give us what we expect — often nothing.

We as Christian teachers must be aware that each individual child entrusted to us for instruction is "God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works," Ephesians 2:10. Each covenant child is conceived and born in sin, yet redeemed by Christ's death and born again as a new creature in Christ. He has his own personality, character, and talents. We are called to prepare the individual child with all his weaknesses and disabilities for his own place in God's church and kingdom.

The disabled child must be taught to put his trust in God, to rely on Him, and to serve Him so that to God may be all the glory.

This is no small task. We must pray for wisdom and patience in dealing with these children of God.

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A Biblical View of the Responsibility of Parents in Education

Mr. Sam Will
Dundee, Scotland

Recently the "Great Debate" has drawn attention to the parlous state of education in our country but, despite the contributions of politicians, educators, industry, the universities and colleges, etc., no clear policy has emerged. Anyone and everyone is prepared to speak and write at length on the subject for all have participated in one way or another and have their pennyworth to add. Acquisition of the basic skills (the three R's), vocational training, preparation for leisure and citizenship are glibly offered as educational aims and the very glibness of the presentation deceives many. But these are not educational aims: they are simply a recognition of the various facets of existence in a modern society; a passive acceptance of the status quo but taking no cognisance whatever of a meaning and purpose in life. They are descriptive not formative. We shall look in vain to the philosophers, the educational theorists, psychologists, curriculum builders, and government appointed committees; there are reams of educational jargon and hundreds of "in" words to confuse and repel any parent who may wish to find out what is happening to his children, but no one can define "education" for no one can tell us what is the meaning and purpose of life.

No one, that is, except the Author of Life Himself, Who simply and clearly stated, "This is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Even more succinctly He declared, "I am . . . the Life." And speaking of the purpose of His incarnation, "I am come that ye might have life and that ye might have

it more abundantly.” What more can we ask? We are born into this world that we might have a personal encounter with God and so true education (a “leading out”) is that which will lead us to God.

It follows that state education as practised today is completely worthless in this respect and is even dangerous for not only will it not lead us to God, it will lead our children away from Him. There is no subject in the curriculum which will point to God as Creator and Upholder of the Universe: rather they are taught that the universe is the result of blind chance and that man is the end product of a “fortuitous concourse of atoms.” There is no mention of God’s righteousness and absolute holiness nor are the pupils ever taught that they will be brought to judgment at the last day and will have to give account “of every idle word that they shall speak.” When is the love of Christ’s atonement ever mentioned? Let us say that all is ignored to the point of extinction, and so the very stuff of life is missing from the curriculum. Whenever “origins” are mentioned in history, biology or even general literature (English) evolutionism is overtly taught or tacitly assumed and creationism is not even mentioned as a credible alternative.

It is a fond hope that RE (Religious Education) will somehow act as a corrective. The RE departments in the College of Education are liberal in the extreme and only in the rare cases where a convinced evangelical takes an RE class is there a chance of the truth being taught, “a pelican in the wilderness” (Ps. cii 6)! Let parents not be deceived, the whole weight of the consensus is against the Christian faith. The great majority of teachers are unconverted men and women; pleasant, decent, hard-working and altruistic though many of them are, the Bible and the Author of the Bible calls them “blind leaders of the blind.” We must not water down the truth and we cannot afford to be squeamish when the salvation of our children is at stake. Paul writes, “If our gospel be hid it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not. . . .” We dare not trust the education of our children to unbelievers who are blind, who will lead them “until both fall into the ditch.”

I can almost hear some of my readers exclaiming, But that means “spiritually” blind and refers only to spiritual matters, to the teaching of RE and so on. “These teachers are quite fit to teach math, French, physics, and so on!” On the face of it the argument sounds very convincing, but it is not biblical. There is no separation of knowledge into secular and religious categories. The truth is one and indivisible and so also must be the knowledge of the truth or to use a more biblical term,

the understanding of the truth. This dichotomy between sacred and secular which we Christians are wont to practise is nowhere more dangerous than in the field of knowledge. The Christian has a unique understanding of life, of *all* life (excluding nothing) and we forget this at our peril. If you are in doubt about this assertion, read the first three chapters of I Corinthians, perhaps better in the GNB; because of the freshness of the language it will have a greater impact, especially in the closing verses (18-23) of the third chapter. This whole subject of the nature of truth, the knowledge and understanding of the truth and the application of it to our daily living (wisdom) is one which requires a more detailed treatment than can be given in this article. At this juncture it is enough to say that the regenerate mind, taught by the Spirit of God is far more trustworthy and efficient instrument than the greatest human intellect submerged in the darkness of unbelief.

To whom then can we entrust the education of our children? The answer is obvious and is stated unequivocally in the Scriptures. When God called out a people for Himself and set a pattern for their national life the focal point emerged in these memorable words: "Hear, O, Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children. . ." (Deut. vi 4-7). Psalm lxxviii 1-6, sets out at greater length the continuity and importance of true education: "That they might set their hope in God and not forget the works of God but keep his commandments."

Many will say that this type of education is not practicable, but history contradicts them.

In his home and daily life the Jew constantly reminds himself of his duties and his obligations towards God. . . . From 1500-1000 BC certain Hebrew Semetic tribes developed a remarkable democratic educational system. . . the Hebrews required boys of every social class to attend school. . . the Hebrew schools were religious schools. . . they taught the boys to read sacred writings. . . Hebrew girls were taught at home by their mothers. (and later on in history) A synagogue may sponsor study groups and education. . . it usually has a school where Jewish children study Jewish religion, literature, history, language. . . . (Quotations from "World Books" vol. 6, p. 67 and vol. 11, p. 143.)

The people of God under the old covenant could do it, should the people of God under the new covenant do less?

Over the last fifty years education in Scotland has changed com-

pletely in nature, changed because the underlying philosophy and understanding of the educational process has changed radically. In 1872 the churches handed over to the state the responsibility of educating the children of the nation, fondly believing that the ethos of educational thinking would remain Christian. They trusted that the agreement making the teaching of religion legally binding upon the civil authorities would be sufficient to ensure a truly Christian education. How sadly their confidence was misplaced is only too evident today. Not only is the teaching of the Christian faith sadly neglected but the philosophy of education is now humanistic and definitely anti-Christian. The pupil brought up in a Christian home finds himself (or herself) in an alien atmosphere which becomes more clearly and aggressively so as they grow older. Even in primary school however there are teachers who challenge and even mock the faith of the Christian pupil.

Up till now Christian parents have been so apathetic or so blind to the reality of the situation that they have done little or nothing even to inform themselves on what their children are being taught in school. The following appeared in the *Scotsman* (12.5.78):

Parents are taken to task by a Committee of the Church of Scotland for adopting a laissez-faire attitude and for failing to nurture their children in the Christian faith. . . . It is time to recognise anew that the prevalent mood among so many parents of "Let's leave it to the children," simply does not square with the baptismal promise of parents to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

It is a complete contradiction that parents who make these vows should hand their children over to unbelievers to be indoctrinated in a humanistic and anti-Christian philosophy.

That this is the truth of the situation cannot be denied. Why then do so-called Christian parents flagrantly disobey the vows they have made before God? The answer to this question is complex for many contributory factors are present to a greater or lesser degree. Complacency, ignorance, wilful blindness, laziness, the pressure of daily living, the demands of a materialistic society, giving in to the general consensus for fear of man, unlawful deference paid to human intellect and academic prowess, and so the list could go on. However the greatest single factor is the neglect of the Word of God. Here again we come face to face with the basic meaning of "truth" and here again we must leave it stating only that the Bible insists that true knowledge, understanding of, and obedience to the "truth" are essential for real

Christian life (John viii 30-32). Job averred that "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than necessary food"; David, that (they) "are more to be desired than gold... sweeter than honey and the honeycomb." And Jeremiah, "Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart."

These are not figures of speech implying that the Word is rather important amongst other things in life, the writers are not indulging in romantic exaggeration or flowery speech, they are stating the bare, essential truth and unless we join with them — and excel because of our greater privilege in Christ — then we do not know the truth as we ought nor do we really know the Lord as we should (Jer. ix 24). Until the Word of God possesses our minds and dominates our thinking we are but babes, children, immature, not fit to take our place in the family or in the church (I Cor. iii 1-4; Heb. v 12-14). The challenge of spiritual maturity and effective witness has been neglected in too many churches.

Most of my readers will be unwilling to follow me thus far and even if they do they will say that we shall just have to do our best for the children at home since we can never change the system. This sort of compromise will not do if we are to be true Christians who recognise the Bible as the only rule of faith and conduct. We must do what the Scriptures indicate by direct command and by example — and that is, teach our children ourselves, first in the home and then, aided by the church until they are converted and completely equipped to face any arguments that are brought against them. That such a plan is viable will not readily be realised by people accustomed to state education.

There is a very relevant point here that ought to be raised. In the present situation a child frequently finds that the teacher and the parents are at variance on many points (especially religious matters). The child is afraid to mention the subject at home and so confidence between parent and child suffers. Often a parent when challenged on a point of knowledge, defers to the teacher, disclaiming competence — "I am not a teacher." In the end the child accepts the teachers' competence and authority in most questions and tragically so when the tenets of the Christian faith are in question. It is wrong that such a tension should be introduced into the child's mind and even worse that confidence in a parent should be undermined. This situation becomes more acute in Secondary School because of specialist subjects and so the pupil suffers a mental dichotomy — home, parents, and church on one side and a secular, anti-Christian thinking on the other.

Christian schools have a particular appeal but they are few and far

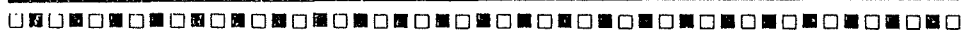
between and unless there is a great movement amongst Christians to support such schools, many will have to seek another way. Here I believe the church, like the synagogue, should step in and provide specialist help, particularly in the later stages. Finance is an obvious problem but then it is a well-known fact that if we want anything enough, the money will always be forthcoming. The church would then become far more meaningful and far more important in the life of the young folks.

This brings us to the final consideration in this brief survey of the biblical view of the parent's responsibility in education — and that is the content. The Old Testament reference already mentioned indicates clearly that the content is essentially religious and that the principle textbook will be the Bible. Reading, writing, history, language, will find their themes and examples in the Scriptures and the great aim will be that the children should know the Bible from cover to cover. There is a wealth of knowledge in God's Word — knowledge that leads to life and liberty — "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free!"

Much of what has been written here is hurried and ill-arranged; many points demanding thorough treatment have been dealt with only cursorily and much has been left out altogether, but what has been said is vital to the survival of our Christian heritage and to an effective witness to a perishing world. How can salt be other than biting and incisive? If not, it has lost its savor and is fit only to be cast out and trodden under foot — as they are doing to us today.

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March, 1981.

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Christian education is thus not the curriculum with the Bible added to it, but a curriculum in which the word of God governs and informs every subject. Only the Christian School, when it is faithful to Scripture, can have a truly liberal arts curriculum.

The Philosophy of the Christian Curriculum
by Rousas John Rushdoony



William McGuffey and John Dewey- Two Very Different Educators

by Dr. Paul A. Kienel

This article is quoted from the Christian School Comment, volume 13, number 3, published by the Association of Christian Schools International.

Abraham Lincoln said, "The philosophy of the classroom is the philosophy of the government in the next generation." The philosophy of the classroom not only affects the government in the next generation but the home, the church, and society in general.

America's public schools were first established by Horace Mann in 1837. The curriculum of the early public schools was Bible-oriented, largely because of one outstanding American educator. His name was William Holmes McGuffey, compiler of the famous McGuffey Readers. Modern liberal historians have purposely ignored William McGuffey in American history books because to do so would require acknowledgment of the remarkable religious and academic impact McGuffey made on the first half century of American public education. In his book, *McGuffey and His Readers*, John H. Westerhoff III writes, "It is estimated that at least 120 million copies of McGuffey's Readers were sold between 1836 and 1920, placing their sales in a class with the Bible and Webster's Dictionary." In 1929 historian Mark Sullivan chastised other American historians and scholars for ignoring McGuffey, the "most popular, most affectionately remembered person in the nineteenth century, a national giant to be ranked with George Washington and Abraham Lincoln."

William McGuffey, born in 1800 on the Ohio frontier to Scottish Presbyterian parents, was known in his day as "the schoolmaster of the nation!" He was a popular minister of the Gospel, a Christian college professor and a Christian college president. As an education reformer he introduced a graded reading series (McGuffey Eclectic Readers — four levels), pictures in elementary textbooks, study

questions to insure comprehension and more parent involvement in the education of children. His famous readers were filled with stories that had a moral point. Some were actual Bible stories. To McGuffey, the Bible was not on trial. He believed the Bible was God's Word and deserved the central place in American education. In the preface to his third reader he wrote, "The time has gone by, when any sensible man will be found to object to the Bible as a school book, in a Christian country."

While William McGuffey pointed children *toward God* in the first half century of public education, another American educator in the second half century turned children *away from God*. His name was John Dewey. Born in 1859, John Dewey became the head of the Education Department at Columbia University in New York. He is regarded as the most significant philosophic touchstone of American public education in the last fifty years. He was the originator and promoter of what he called "progressive education." Dewey's Department of Education at Columbia University became the model for teacher education departments at colleges and universities across America. His teachings continue to be held in high regard.

Professor John Dewey was an atheist. He was the first president of the American Humanist Association. In 1933 he wrote *Humanist Manifesto I* and openly referred to humanism as a religion. The first point of his famous manifesto reads, "Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing (evolution) and not created." Elsewhere Dewey wrote, "There is no God and there is no soul. There is no room for fixed, natural law or moral absolutes."

In 1973, forty years after Dewey's *Humanist Manifesto I*, the American Humanist Association published an additional "doctrinal statement" called *Humanist Manifesto II*. A concluding statement reads: "...the Manifesto has provoked world-wide debate over humanist recommendations for mankind in the areas of religion, civil liberties, the right to suicide, abortion, divorce, euthanasia, sexual freedom and the building of world community."

In the absence of no moral absolutes, no Bible, no God, and no soul, Dewey believed students are left to clarify in their minds their own moral code of ethics. They can make it up as they go! His atheistic, humanistic ideas led American education step by step into the frightening era of "Values Clarification" where like the children of Israel, "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Deut. 12:8). The result is an academic and moral decline on a scale never possible in the days of William McGuffey. Dewey's humanism has

1. More than 250,000 students and 5,000 teachers in public schools are physically assaulted in a typical school month.
2. One student in nine will have something stolen in a month.
3. One student in eighty will be physically attacked in a month.
4. The risk of violence to teenagers is greater in school than out.
5. Each year taxpayers pay one billion dollars for school vandalism. In California last year the cost of textbooks was \$42 million. California's bill for school vandalism last year was \$90 million.



A “Word to the Wise” Regarding your School’s Written Policies

from *Legal/Legislative Update*
December, 1984



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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