

PERSPECTIVES IN COVENANT EDUCATION

ARTICLES

Excellence in Education

The Place of Doctrine
in the Christian School

Classroom Devotions
Make a Difference

Why Can't Johnny Spell or Read?

Objectives For Teaching Geography

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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

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF AGATHA LUBBERS RESIGNS

It has been a privilege and a joy for me to have been editor-in-chief of the journal *Perspectives in Covenant Education* for the first decade of its existence. This will be the last number of the journal in which my name will appear as editor-in-chief.

It is superfluous for me to write long about the past. The past and the origin of the magazine was reviewed in the fall, 1984 issue. Although the history of the Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute goes back thirty years, *Perspectives in Covenant Education* began to be published in the 20th year of the existence of P.R.T.I. We have published the magazine since the fall of 1975.

It is with some reluctance but also a sense of relief that I loose myself from the responsibilities of this position. It has been a rewarding and enriching experience for me.

I will continue to write articles for the magazine as I am given opportunity.

I am most happy to be able to transfer my responsibilities to my colleague and good friend, Mr. Don Doezema. Our readers should know that Don has been active in the activities and function of the P.R.T.I. for many years. Recently he served as one of the members of the editorial staff of this magazine. He is currently the administrator (Principal) of the Adams Street Christian School in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I am confident that he will give good leadership as he takes over the responsibilities for editing our journal.

God bless you, Don, in your work.

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GEOGRAPHIC ILLITERACY HAS BECOME A DISEASE OF EPIDEMIC PROPORTIONS!

Although I am always a bit suspicious of writings in the slick-looking *Plain Truth* magazine published by the Worldwide Church of God and edited by the leader of the cult, Herbert W. Armstrong, the May, 1985 issue contains an article that captured my attention. "Where in the World?" by Keith W. Strump (Keith W. Strump is instructor in geography at Ambassador College, Pasadena, California) decries the geographic illiteracy in the graduates of today's schools. The article captured my attention because certain members of the faculty at Covenant

Christian High School have been discussing recently a certain lack of geographic knowledge and understanding displayed by students who come to our school and graduate from our school. The articles captured my attention because we at Covenant Christian High School are currently conducting our annual evaluation of the courses we are offering and will offer for the 1985-1986 academic year. One of the courses that had been suggested for next year was a required World Geography course for all students. This course would particularly emphasize the geography of Latin America and the ever changing scene of Africa. Such a course was suggested because the last time students graduating from Covenant Christian High School, Grand Rapids, take a geography course is in the sixth or seventh grade (junior high school). This course that they take is the typical Eastern Hemisphere geography course. I am certain that students do receive some instruction in geography in the history courses that are taught in the junior high school and the high school but this is incidental and not the main purpose of the history courses.

The article by Keith W. Strump stated that the world of education is still reeling from the shock of a report released in December of 1984 by the Association of American Geographers and the National Council for Geographic Education which said that the United States is rapidly becoming a nation of "geographic illiterates."

The report cited a 1983 test in geography developed by prominent educators and administered by the Dallas *Times-Herald* to American twelve-year-olds.

- More than 20 percent of the students could not find the United States on a world map.
- Another 20 percent identified Brazil as the United States.

The report cited as well the American college-level survey of global understanding by the Educational Testing Service. The median score was an appalling 42.9 out of a possible 101.

Dr. Bob Aangeenburg, executive director of the Association of American Geographers, said, "There is a huge number of children and adults who haven't a clue about the relationship between geography and history or geography and anything else. We now have a generation that has a limited capacity to put those things together."

The article by Strump also indicated that the Gallup organization administered a nationwide test a few years ago on world geography. Following are a few of the incorrect answers supplied by 17-18-year olds.

The Sinai Desert is in Vietnam.

- Angola is in the Philippines.
- French and Latin are the most widely spoken languages in Latin America.
- Africa is the world's most popular nation.
- Mexico and Canada were the last two states admitted to the United States.

On the basis of these responses we can obviously conclude that many high school graduates are woefully confused or misinformed.

The Gallup study was also said to reveal the following:

- Only 23 percent had any idea of the distance between New York and San Francisco.
- Only 28 percent could guess close to the U.S. population.
- Only 15 percent could identify Ottawa as the capital of Canada.
- 59 percent know China is the world's most heavily populated nation.

The article by K.W. Strump indicates that other government studies and private articles have shown the following:

- Only one out of 25 could give the world's approximate population.
- More than half thought England is located on the European continent.
- More than one in four thought the Rocky Mountains lay east of the Mississippi River.
- More than one of three could not locate Alaska on a blank world map.
- Nearly half could not find Los Angeles.

Several other disturbing facts are included in this article by Strump:

- During the Vietnam War many American students could not come near to locating Vietnam on a world map. Many had not even heard of Laos.
- A government survey a few years ago showed an amazing 40 percent of American high school seniors thought Israel was an Arab country. They thought Golda Meier had been president of Egypt.
- A majority of students at a major university did not know that war-torn El Salvador is in Central America.

I am disappointed that the writer, K.W. Strump, did not include bibliographic information to document the statistics and studies he cited in his article. I will assume, however, that he has done his homework. On the basis of our contacts with students who graduate from our own schools the data cited seems plausible.

What is the reason for this desperate paucity of geographic knowledge?

- Geography was one of the first subjects to be relegated to a cellar position in American high schools and colleges. Nine out of ten graduating high school and college students have not been exposed to even one course in the subject during their years in high school and/or college.
- The average high school student in the United States takes thirty percent less geography than students a generation ago.
- The vast majority of high schools no longer teach world geography as a separate subject. Geography has either dropped out of the curriculum completely, or has been lumped in with “social studies” – an amalgam of history, economics, government, sociology, and related subjects. And even social studies as a whole are being slighted.
- Dr. Aangeenburg of the Association of American Geographers said, “Certainly, there are many reasons for this geographic illiteracy but the main reason is simply that geography is just not taught in the United States. This is the only major nation in the world where geography is not required in many curriculums. Many teachers are not well educated in geography.”

Author K.W. Strump indicated that educators formerly believed that a person was not educated if he was ignorant of the world in which he lives. Among questions asked in an 1875 U.S. high school entrance examination were:

1. Name the countries of Europe, Asia, and Africa that touch upon the Mediterranean Sea.
2. Name the states of the United States of America that border on the Atlantic Ocean, on the Gulf of Mexico, and on the Great Lakes.

How many young Americans entering high school today could answer these questions? How many high school graduates or college students and graduates could answer these questions?

Assuming that the data cited in the early part of this article is accurate, the answers to these questions are obvious.

The seriousness of this situation ought to be obvious to us because it is impossible for us properly and knowledgeably to evaluate a world event without an understanding of geographic relationships of countries.

We ought to take stock of our own situation and of the knowledge of our own students in this important study.

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NEARLY 1 SCHOOL IN 4 IN THE USA WAS PRIVATE IN 1983

Statistics released December 20, 1984, by the National Center of

Education Statistics became the reason for headlines in several of the nation's newspapers.

The *USA Today* carried an article in the December 20, 1984 issue under the headline "Private Schools Up 7.5%." Barbara Zigli wrote as follows:

- Over the past three years, enrollment at private schools rose from 5.3 million to 5.7 million — an increase of 7.5 percent — while public schools declined by 4.5 percent.
- Christian school experts say that the growth is caused by:
 - a. Drop in Catholic school enrollment of 5 percent.
 - b. Twenty-two percent rise in enrollment at schools affiliated with other denominations.

Barbara Zigli quotes James Carper, associate professor of education at Mississippi State University, and a Christian school specialist.

Many Christians believe the values transmitted by the schools are secularistic and do not complement the values taught at home and church. We're in a period of reawakened evangelical consciousness.

The *Baltimore Sun* reported in the December 20, 1984 issue as follows:

Enrollment in private schools has surged in the 1980s, with one in every eight American students now attending parochial, nonsectarian, or other schools outside the public system, the U.S. Department of Education reported yesterday.

The New York Times, February 3, 1985, reported the following concerning the growth of Christian schools.

- More and more families are choosing private education because of their dissatisfaction with the public schools. And many parents are turning to Protestant evangelical schools for the moral and religious grounding they want their children to have.
- While there are no figures available on total enrollment in these schools, the Association of Christian Schools International, the largest of the Protestant evangelical education groups, reports that the number of students in its affiliated schools grew from 186,000 in 1978 to 390,000 in 1984.

Note: The ACSI should not be confused with the Christian Schools International (CSI — formerly National Union of Christian Schools).

The Washington Post, February 3, 1985, carried the headline "Christian Schools Pray, Teach Bible, and Prosper." Barbara Vobejda wrote:

- Nationwide, the number of Christian schools has grown from several hundred in the 1960s to more than 10,000 today, with close to a million students enrolled. And the number of students is growing by nearly 80,000 a year.

Bruce S. Cooper of Fordham University and James S. Catterall of UCLA provide the following statistics.

Year	Schools
1965	1,000
1970-71	2,500
1980-81	7,500
1982-83	10,700
1984-85	13,000*

*Projected

These statistics are very impressive. However, I have heard recently that one of the Baptist Christian School systems in Grand Rapids will lose an estimated 200 students from K-12 in the 1985-86 school year. (During 1984-85 this system had nearly 1000 students in K-12.) A reduction of this kind can only result in teachers being pink-slipped. One wonders, of course, why such a reduction might occur. If you are from the Grand Rapids area, you obviously are aware of the attempts to strengthen academically the Grand Rapids Public School system. This is perhaps also true in many other localities. Many of the established Christian schools arose because of the moral and academic looseness of the public school system. Serious attempts to correct this situation, and the continued rising cost of private education may be reasons for this reduction in anticipated attendance in schools like the Baptist Academies. The commitment to Christian education in their homes and in their churches is not as strong as it has been in our Reformed communities. Few if any of the children who attend the evangelistical Christian school have been baptized, and therefore these parents have not made the same kinds of promises and vows to instruct the children that Reformed parents make when they have their children baptized.

The Reformed and Biblical truth of God's covenant of grace which He makes with believers and their seed, provides a strong incentive and a proper purpose for Christian school education.

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STANDARD BEARER ARTICLES ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION BY HERMAN HOEKSEMA REPRINTED

Articles written by Herman Hoeksema in the *Standard Bearer* between 1927 and 1944 have been reprinted and made available especially to members of the congregation of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois. These articles have been reprinted and published by the Board of the Association for Protestant Reformed Secondary Education, in South Holland, Illinois, 60473.

In an introductory letter that appears on the cover of each of the seven installments of this publishing effort, the board says:

Over the years, many articles on Protestant Reformed Christian education have appeared in *The Standard Bearer*. It is our intention to publish certain of these articles by the Rev. Herman Hoeksema for the benefit of our own membership. We hope to publish selected articles in monthly installments. We suggest that you save the articles as they come out, in a notebook, or folder so that you keep them for future use.

We think that these writings, treating as they do of many aspects of the calling of Protestant Reformed People to provide Protestant Reformed Christian education for their children and youth, will not only be useful to promote Protestant Reformed Secondary education, but also to remind us of basic truths that undergird our movement for primary education, indeed *all* of our instruction of the generations that follow us. Especially our younger married couples and our young people may profit from these writings, as to our distinctive calling in education.

Our hope and prayer are that the Lord will graciously bless these efforts, so that they produce increased understanding; healthy discussion; and renewed zeal regarding our covenant-calling: Instruct these children in the aforesaid doctrine to the utmost of your power (Baptism formula).

A brief listing of the seven sections of this useful publication will undoubtedly stimulate those who might like to do what the Board of the Association suggests — order additional copies by writing to the Board of the Association for Protestant Reformed Secondary Education, P.O. Box 284, South Holland, Illinois, 60473.

CONTENTS:

- I. *Christian Education*, (September 1, 1927)
- II. The Place of Doctrine in the Christian School, (December 15, 1935)
- III. The Christian School Movement: Why a Failure (I)
The Christian School Movement: Why a Failure (II)
The Christian School Movement: Why a Failure (III)
(series of Editorials from November, 1931 to August, 1932)
- IV. As to our Moral Obligation, (series of Editorials in 1944)
- V. Our Own Christian High School, (September 15, 1937 and December 15, 1941)

(These can be ordered in seven separate installments or complete as I have them.)

Introducing each one of the installments of this publishing effort are editorial and explanatory comments by the pastor of the church,

Rev. David Engelsma. Rev. Engelsma has been a frequent contributor of articles in this magazine and is the author of the book *Reformed Education*. (Cf. inside of back cover.)

The emphasis of the articles of the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema is throughout positive. He saw the need for Protestant Reformed Education not from the point of view of some kind of reactionary and radical movement but rather a need that is rooted in the same reason for the existence of the Protestant Reformed Churches as a denomination of churches distinct from the Christian Reformed Churches.

In the "Word of Explanation" that precedes the contents of the two editorials concerning "Our Own Christian High School" (September 15, 1937 and December 15, 1941), pastor Engelsma writes a very incisive and helpful paragraph.

From these, as from the preceding article by Herman Hoeksema, several things stand out that are of importance to us today, to whom the heritage and calling of Reformed education has come, through those who have gone before us. First, our fathers exercised *patience* in striving for our own schools. Second, in close connection with this, they were free from the divisive radicalism that has, now and then, troubled our cause in later years. Hoeksema was careful always to avoid leaving the impression that those who lacked enthusiasm for our own schools were not truly Protestant Reformed, or, what, is worse, not truly Christian. Also, he insisted, again and again, that our own schools should be established "*where this is possible*." In addition, he called our people to cooperate with the Christian Reformed, where our own schools were not possible, although he had little hope that we could have much influence. Third, what Hoeksema wanted with our own schools was *Reformed* education, in distinction from a bland, general Christian education, from which all distinctive Reformed truth is blotted out. This, to my mind, is the concern that must weigh most heavily upon us today, and that must impel us to do all in our power both to maintain our existing schools and to establish others. Fourth, Hoeksema was convinced that the basic theological differences between our churches and the Christian Reformed Church affected education, fundamentally so that our own schools are *required*, where this is possible. So strong was his conviction that he wrote, "I do not hesitate to predict that the Christian school in our land will disappear, unless our people continue to support it."

I recommend that our young people read these articles and that our school societies and associations make copies of these articles available to the families who support the Protestant Reformed Christian School movement.

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Excellence in Education

by Rev. David Engelsma

We welcome to the pages of our journal once again the writings of a man who is no stranger to us. Once again he stimulates us with a timely article in which he urges us to the kind of excellence for which we must strive in Christian education. We are happy that a stress of the Reformed faith and true Christian piety does not exclude from such education an opportunity to be truly excellent. Rev. Engelsma is the pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois. Recently he traveled to Ireland and England and has been helpful there in stimulating the struggling Christian School movement to continue.

There is sometimes among us an argument over the question, whether the Christian school should stress the Reformed faith, or whether it should stress excellence in the education. This is a false dilemma; it is not either-or, but both-and. Christian education that is true to its genius will be characterized by both truth and excellence.

The world itself recognizes the woeful weaknesses of the education of the State schools of our land. 23 million adult Americans are functionally illiterate — unable to read newspapers or fill out job-application forms. A high percentage of high-school students in the big cities cannot read or write. Many parents are abandoning the State schools, not because of any religious conviction, but because the schools do not educate. The problem is not only due to a lack of discipline in the schools, but also to incompetent, or lazy, teachers; bad teaching methods; and a “soft” curriculum. (I read recently of a school whose staff included a professor of recreation and outdoor education.)

Remarkably, there are some who see that the decline in the quality of education in our country is due to the forsaking of the Word of God. This came out in an interesting article that appeared on the editorial page of the *Chicago Tribune*, under the title, “We’ve lost reverence for values of literacy” (August 27, 1980). Anthony Brandt takes note of what he calls “the literacy crisis.” He points out the failures of the schools. Then he observes that the problem may have its cause in the changes in public values in our country. In the early days of our country, there was a very high level of literacy. John Adams wrote in

1765 that "a native of America who cannot read or write is as rare an appearance as . . . a comet or an earthquake." "This was due," says Brandt, to "Puritan ideology. The Puritans believed strongly in the value of access to the Bible, to the Word of God, and to that end went to great lengths to make sure that their children were literate." He goes on to say that "families were examined regularly by Puritan divines to see whether parents were teaching their children to read and write." There was a zeal for literacy in New England; and "historians attribute this zeal for literacy almost entirely to Puritanism; a Puritan had to be able to read to gain direct access to the Word. . . ."

The article concludes with the observation that "preserving literacy is not and never has been a function that belongs solely to the schools. A highly literate society evolves out of deeply held values, values that cannot be isolated in a school system but must permeate the whole society. Unless we recover those values, we put ourselves in serious danger."

Mr. Brandt is correct. The Puritans of New England insisted on good education for all their children, because they wanted their children to be able to read the Bible. In his significant study, *The Puritan Family*, Edmund S. Morgan writes:

the Puritan insisted upon education in order to insure the religious welfare of their children. . . . It might be contended that the reading requirement arose from a pure love of knowledge in itself, but the reasons which the Puritans offered elsewhere in defense of reading make it plain that here again a religious motive was present. In 1647 the General Court of Massachusetts provided for the establishment of reading schools, because it was "*one chief project of that old deluder, Satan, to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures.*" Children were taught to read in order that they might gain a first-hand knowledge of the Bible. When John Cotton was urging parents to educate their children, he did not say, "Learn them to read," but "Learn them to read the Scriptures" (cf. chapter IV, "The Education of a Saint").

In this, the Puritans were taking the position of Martin Luther. Early on in the Reformation, Luther called for good Christian schools for all the children, girls as well as boys. His reason was that all the children of the church must be able to read the Bible, understand the preaching, and, in time, teach their own children. With reference to the Reformation's concern for education, J. D. Douglas writes, in the recent *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World*:

The seeds of an intellectual revolution were sown with the Reformers' zeal for education. They regarded education as vital, not

only because the young are most susceptible to learning, but also because the new system demanded literacy for the reading of the Word of God (cf. chapter 10, "Calvinism's Contribution to Scotland," p. 226).

This is also our position. We do not need a government to require us to educate our children; we do this because the Word of God commands us to do so.

The author of the article quoted above is also correct when he finds the cause of the breakdown of present American education in the loss of certain values in society at large. It is a mistake to blame only the teachers and schools for the "literacy crisis." The deterioration of the schools is a symptom of the decay of society.

The importance of words depends upon the importance of the Word, Holy Scripture. When men reject the Word of God, there will be disastrous consequences in education.

Reformed people who believe the Bible to be the Word of God will seek excellence in the education of their children.

It is wrong for anyone of us to say, "I want high academic standards in our school; and it is of no great concern to me that the instruction is thoroughly Reformed." It is equally in error that someone says, "I want the children taught Reformed truths; and it is not important to me what the academic standards are, whether the teachers are competent in their fields, or that the children are required to be good students — the very best that they can be."

Reformed, covenantal schools stand for faithful instruction in the truth of Scripture and for excellence in education. This is simply what it means to be a Reformed school.

Let us be sure that we are not confused as to what makes for excellence in education. Excellence in education is not produced by vast amounts of money. If this were so, the State schools of our land would be extraordinarily excellent. Excellence in education is not to be equated with large buildings, fine facilities, and a beautiful campus. It is certainly not the high-powered sports program and glorious athletic achievements of a school. The wilful disregard of even minimal educational standards by major colleges in the interest of the brutes representing the schools in the arenas is scandalous.

Excellence in education is, first and chiefly, instruction that is true to Holy Scripture, the Word of God. Scripture is the basis of all the teaching. The ultimate purpose of the teaching, therefore, is the glory of the God of Scripture, in that the children and young people are taught to fear Him and keep His commandments. Or, is that education excellent which teaches the children to deny God, to worship the State,

and to participate in the monstrous tyranny that is Communism, as is the case in the schools of Russia and China? Or, can we call education excellent that teaches the children to deny God, to worship Man, and to participate in the service of self and pleasure, as is the case in the State schools of our own country? Every school that sets aside, or departs from, the inspired Scriptures; every school that aims at something other than God, the Father of Jesus Christ; every school that is indifferent to the children's service of God, in obedience to His Law, has lost the right to claim excellence in education.

This is the excellence of our schools, by the covenant grace of God: they are true and faithful to Holy Scripture in their teaching.

Just because the foundation of the schools is Scripture, excellence is demanded in all the studies. The creation now is seen as God's world, showing forth the power, wisdom, beauty, and order of its Creator. We ought to know the creation; and we ought to know it truthfully and well. "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth" (Psalm 8:1). John Calvin wrote: "Because God has manifested Himself to us in His works, we must search for Him in them. . . . The world is like a mirror for us in which we can contemplate Him insofar as it is expedient for us to know Him." We Reformed Christians confess this in Article II of the Belgic Confession:

We know Him by two means: first, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to contemplate the invisible things of God. . . .

An important aspect of this excellence in education that consists of knowing God from His handiwork in creation is the instruction of the children, that nature praises God. Calvin wrote of this, as though he were speaking to little children:

The little singing birds are singing of God; the beasts cry unto Him; the elements are in awe of Him; the mountains echo His name; waves and fountains glance at Him; grass and flowers laugh out to Him.

We sing this in a version of Psalm 65: "The hills and vales, with verdure clad/Are girt with joy, the earth is glad,/New life is all abroad;/With feeding flocks the pastures teem,/With golden grain the valleys gleam;/All nature praises God."

The history of the world is the unfolding of the eternal counsel of God, adapted to the elect church and having its goal in Jesus Christ. "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according

to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance" (Deut. 32:8, 9). "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will. . . that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ. . ." (Eph. 1:9, 10). History, therefore, has meaning; and, apart from this, it is meaningless — a sheer absurdity. It is rich in meaning. It should be taught. It may not be falsified, including pious fictions intended to enhance the reputation of a church, or even the Church. As the French Calvinist historian, Theodore d'Agrippa d'Aubigne, strikingly put it, "When truth puts its dagger to our throat, we must kiss its white hand though it be stained with our blood." The children should know history well.

Communication by words is the God-ordained way of human praise to Him and fellowship with each other. Our children must respect words and language; they ought to be capable in reading, writing, speaking, and hearing. They must read the Bible and books that explain the Bible; they are to hear sermons; they must speak the Word of God, clearly and truthfully, to others. They are to read many other books, profitably, in the light of the Bible. Whenever they speak, they are to speak *reality*. Have you listened to the young people of the world, lately? Many of them cannot talk reality. Because of bad education — poor schools, parental neglect, television, rock music, and the drug culture, they talk like this: "Hey man, like, you know, like my old lady, man, like, she made me go, uh, like to the store." Only, the sentence is liberally sprinkled with profanity and obscenities, besides.

As children of the covenant, created and redeemed by God, our children are required to serve God by using all their faculties and abilities. Excellence in education is this, that the children learn, that they develop intellectually, that they exercise their personal abilities and talents. They are not animals that managed to crawl out of the slime and to stand erect, so that their highest purpose is to enjoy themselves and, perhaps, avoid hurting others. They are men and women, created originally in God's image. They are men and women, by covenant grace, restored to the image of God, so that they are servants of God in the covenant. As servants of God, they are to know and serve God with body and soul in this life on earth, as well as in the life to come. I ask you, "Does God deserve the best that we can give? Should the life of service to God be excellent?" Then there must be excellence in education. All laziness, all sloppiness, all mediocrity (i.e., settling for less than any student is capable of) is forbidden.

With such an education, our children are equipped for life and work in our society, all the while resisting the ungodliness and unrighteousness of society.

So far, we have spoken of the teaching at school. Excellence in education also demands good discipline, if for no other reason than that instruction is impossible without discipline and order. (There is, of course, another reason for discipline in the Christian school; and that is that, in the Christian school as in the Christian home, love for God takes the form of love for the children, which love cares enough to chasten, discipline, and bring order into the children's lives.) One, important reason for the breakdown of education today in our land is the loss of discipline. But discipline goes out the window, wherever the authority of the Word of God is rejected. The reason for the appalling disorder and violence in the State schools is the rejection of the sovereign God by school and home alike.

Our schools, grounded as they are in the Word, must have discipline and order — good discipline and order. It cannot be otherwise. It is the discipline and order of obedience required of the children for the sake of God Who redeemed them in Christ, and of obedience given by the children for the sake of God Whom they love. This is excellence in education. This is excellence in education, not alongside the Reformed nature of the school, but inherent in the Reformed nature of the school.

Much depends on the teachers. How can there be excellence in education in the school, if the teachers are unbelieving, immoral, incompetent, and unmotivated louts? What a telling commentary on the State schools, that the teachers strike! It is not so much that they thus teach the students to be greedy and rebellious, although this is the lesson that the pupils learn (what an example teachers on the picket-line set for their students!), as it is that they show that teaching is no calling for them, but merely a way to get a paycheck. They are perfectly willing to sacrifice education, students, parents, and country alike on the altar of their greed.

The teachers in our Reformed, covenantal schools regard teaching as a calling, as vital work in the Kingdom of Christ. They stand squarely on Holy Scripture. They see the children as baptized members of the covenant and church of God. They view themselves as occupying the place of parents for the rearing of the children unto men and women of God, thoroughly fitted to every good work (II Tim. 3:17). They must be faithful; they must be competent; they must be prepared; they must be zealous. This is the "must" of the impelling necessity that they themselves feel.

Basic to all of the excellence in education is the home. The school cannot rise higher than the homes of the students. Though there may be many incompetent or lazy teachers in the State schools, the main cause of all the educational problems there is the home. The home does not discipline; the home is not interested in the education of the child; the home does not see to it that the child does his homework and does it well; the home allows the child to watch 30 hours of television, i.e., 30 hours of spiritual and intellectual garbage, a week; the home does not fear God or reverence His Holy Word.

Excellence in education comes out of the home. The very structure of the school is parental — parents establish the school; parents support the school; parents govern the school. The importance of this structure becomes evident in the tottering and collapse of the State schools, despite the backing and resources of the State. In large part, this is due to the simple fact that the State tries to operate the schools, instead of the parents. Keep in mind that the parental structure of our schools is an aspect of the Reformed, covenantal nature of the schools.

The homes that run the schools have “values,” values that are deeply held, values that the homes demand shall be passed on to the children. For our homes are covenant homes — homes founded on the Word of God, homes living in communion with God, homes consecrated to the glory of God. Indeed, such homes have values: “My children, reverence the Word of God; the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge; fear the Lord and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man; honor the laws of God in all of earthly life, whether in labor, economics, government, marriage, or any other area of human life; and whatever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord.” These values of the home create excellence in education.

To this excellence, all of us are exhorted, who may be busy in the great work of education. Teachers, the task is worthy of your best efforts and your finest abilities. Children and young people, learning at school is your work, your work from God your Maker and Savior; listen! study! learn! Parents, let us carry out the work. It is our work. Scripture tells us to do it with diligence. We are privileged also to do it with confidence, for we do it in the Lord Jesus; and we know that our work is not in vain in the risen Lord. We expect good results: children trained up to fear and serve God.

What shall we have then, a school thoroughly Reformed, or a school with high academic standards? We may be thankful that we need not choose between the two. What we must have is a school soundly Reformed and, therefore, academically excellent. ■■■

The Place of Doctrine in the Christian School

Herman Hoeksema

A Word of Explanation

"The Place of Doctrine in the Christian School" was originally a lecture given by the Rev. Herman Hoeksema for the Christian School Benevolent Association of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids. It was published in the December 15, 1935 issue of The Standard Bearer (Volume 12, pp. 139-142).

Noteworthy in this piece are the distinguishing of the teaching of the school from that of the home and the church; the insistence on the inseparable connection of the natural and the spiritual in the life of the child of God; the emphasis upon the necessity of Reformed doctrine in the Christian School (a thing openly and unashamedly repudiated today, even to the extent that the Reformed Creeds are elided from the basis of the Christian School); the recognition of the benefit of experienced, Reformed teachers; and the assertion that the essential requirement for Christian education is a people truly Reformed.

— Rev. David Engelsma

The home, the school, and the Church have sometimes been called the triple alliance for the purpose of instructing and training the children of the covenant. And not improperly so. For, it cannot be denied that all three are of great importance in the education of our children. None of them can be missed, none of them can afford to be negligent in performing its part in this significant task, without causing a gap in the training of the child. Nor can it be gainsaid that there should be unity and co-operation between these different agencies as each accomplishes its own part in this work. The training of the child should be systematic, must be one in principle, especially from a religious viewpoint. And as each of the different agencies accomplishes its part the instruction of the child should be one whole, preparing him for life in all its different departments in a general and elementary way. For this reason it is not improper to designate home, school, and church as a triple alliance with a view to the education of the covenant children.

The question arises: in this important work of instructing our children what particular part must be assigned to each? It may be admitted that to a certain extent, their several callings are quite similar. All three aim, not only at instructing but also at training the child. The principle of instruction is the same, whether the home, the school, or the church is the agency; it must always be the fear of the Lord. Yet, it can easily be seen that although their calling is in general the same and the several parts, the home, the school, and the church perform similar tasks, yet they are also distinct. They are related, but they are not identical. They may inevitably overlap somewhat, but they are not mere repetitions and reduplications of one another. Hence, the question: what is the calling of each of these agencies to educate the covenant-child?

It is not the purpose of this present lecture to answer this question in all its implications. Yet, my subject is related to it. In order to answer the question what may be the proper place of doctrine in the Christian School we must needs deal somewhat with the relation of the school to the Church as agencies for the training of our children. And I will try to develop especially three aspects of my subject.

1. THE SCHOOL AND ITS CALLING

The school is, no doubt, to be considered as an extension of the home as an agency for the training of its child. We are all agreed that the duty of bringing up the children rests primarily and principally upon the shoulders of the parents. To them, Scripture assigns the task. They are the most natural educators of their own children. They are in a position to know them in their different characters and dispositions better than anyone else. They, especially the mother, are with their children from their very entrance into the world. And they love them as no others can possibly love them. They are the exclusive instructors of their children during the first few years of their life, and long before they go to school they have laid the foundation for their future training. And if we make a distinction between the task of the home and that of the school and the church, we may probably say, that the part of training the children, of bringing them up, of doing what is called in the Holland, very suggestive term, "opvoeding," belongs especially to the home, while both school and church emphasize rather the part of instruction. The two cannot be separated, to be sure. All instruction must needs also be training. And training cannot be divorced from instruction. But if a distinction is made, we may surely say that the home is especially the institution for training; the school

and the church are agencies for instructing the children of the covenant.

The school is, undoubtedly, born out of practical necessity. It is not an institution that is given with creation as is the home; neither is it a specially instituted body as is the church; it is man-made. Yet, although this is true, it cannot be said that it was quite mechanically imposed on life. It rather arose quite spontaneously from the development of life in general. Time was, especially among Israel, when the parents shouldered the task of instructing and training their children alone. Life was still simple. And because of this fact few demands were made of the instruction of the young. And these demands could readily be met by the parents. But as life developed, became more complicated in its various departments, more was demanded of that training that was supposed to prepare the child to take his place in life. And the parents had neither the time nor the ability to finish the task of educating their children. It is out of such conditions that the school arose. Parents banded together, employed someone of ability and character to educate their children in the knowledge of those subjects which they could not possibly teach themselves, and which must nevertheless be taught to prepare the child for its place in society.

From which it follows, in the first place, that the school is an extension of the home, an institution properly controlled by the parents. The state may be interested that its citizens do not remain illiterate but are properly instructed; the church may have the calling to watch that her children receive such instruction as is in harmony with the pledge made by the parents at the occasion of baptism; both may, therefore, have a certain interest in the school; but they do not control the school. The school is not an institution of the church, nor of the state, but of the parents. And the latter are primarily responsible before God for the instruction they receive even though it is not given by them personally. And, in the second place, it follows that the purpose of school-instruction is chiefly to instruct the children in those subjects the knowledge of which is essential to prepare them for their place in society in general. In this respect the calling and purpose of the school differs from those of the Church. The Church has its origin in grace, the school in nature; the Church is heavenly, the school is earthly; the Church is the guardian of spiritual things, the school is the custodian of temporal matters; the Church aims at the growth in the knowledge and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the school at the development in the knowledge of earthly relations; the Church purposes to prepare its seed for their place in the Kingdom of God, the school has the calling to prepare its pupils for their place in this present world.

If this distinction is correct, we will also be ready to define what is really a Christian School in the true, Reformed sense of the word. Indeed, the proper conception of the idea of the Christian School depends upon our view of life in general. If it is our view that things natural and spiritual, things heavenly and earthly, things of the kingdom of heaven and the affairs of this present world have nothing to do with each other, if we separate them, it is quite impossible to see the necessity of Christian instruction in the school; and if we still prefer the Christian School to the Public School it must be from the practical principle that our children can never receive too much instruction in the Scriptures and that the time which the Church is able to devote to the education of its seed is necessarily limited. In that case we will look upon the school, if not as an institution of the Church, nevertheless as an institution that can be very helpful to the Church in indoctrinating the children of the covenant. And the school will naturally be an institution which is in every respect like the school of the State, except for the Christian atmosphere that is created by the opening and closing with prayer, the singing of a Christian hymn and the instruction in Biblical History, perhaps, even in the catechism. The Christian School in that case is a school that has assumed part of the task that properly belongs to the Church.

Quite different, however, will be our conception of what a Christian School ought to be if we understand that the natural and the spiritual cannot and may never be separated, but that in every department of his life in the world the Christian has the calling of living from the subjective standard of the Word of God. Religion, the Christian religion, is not something that is added to life; but it is a power, a living power, a living power that purposes to permeate all of life. The Christian is called to be a Christian always and everywhere. It is his confession that with body and soul and in life and in death he is not his own, but belongs to his faithful Savior Jesus Christ. And, therefore, with body and soul, with mind and will, in society and the state, as well as in the Church, He serves the Lord. Personally and in the home, in the relation of parent and child, of man and wife, in business and industry, as servant or as master, as magistrate or as subject, it is his calling to serve the Lord Christ. But if this be true, it must also be evident that a Christian School is not merely a copy of the public school except for the addition of some Biblical instruction, and religious exercises, but that it purposes to be Christian throughout, Christian in all its instruction and training of the child. The principle of the fear of the Lord must permeate all the instruction and discipline and life of the school

that is really Christian. A Christian School must be Christian as a School!

2. THE PROPER PLACE OF DOCTRINE IN IT

If this view of the Christian School is correct, it should not be difficult to arrive at a correct conception of the proper place of doctrine in such a school. When I speak of doctrine I mean Reformed Doctrine, because I am speaking of our own Christian Schools. It is sometimes emphatically advocated that the Christian character of our schools must be made as general as possible. We should not really speak of Reformed Schools, but rather emphasize that our schools purpose to be generally Christian. But this is a mistake. It is quite impossible to be generally Christian, without sacrificing all the salient doctrines of Christianity. One cannot be an Arminian and a Reformed believer at the same time. He cannot be Reformed, Lutheran, Baptist, and Methodist all at once. If he would, nevertheless, be generally Christian in his teaching in the sense that he would avoid all such points of doctrine that causes the different branches of the Christian Church to differ from one-another, so that his Christian instruction would be the largest common denominator of all Christian beliefs, education would necessarily become quite vague and colorless. And, therefore, I cannot conceive of Christian doctrine that is not specific. And in the concrete, a Christian School must be Christian in the specific sense of the word. Its Christian character must be representative of the specific belief of the parents that support and sponsor the school, that is, in our case, Reformed. When, therefore, I speak of doctrine in this connection I mean specifically Reformed doctrine.

And, then, I wish to say, first of all, that it cannot be conceived of as the proper task of the school, even of the Christian School, to teach Reformed doctrine, to include Reformed doctrine as one of the branches of its curriculum. This certainly is the task of the Church. To watch over the flock, to preserve soundness of doctrine, to develop the truth as it is revealed in Scripture, to establish what is to be considered as accepted truth, to express this in her confessions, to maintain it in opposition to all error, and to instruct all her members, believers and their children, in the truth as it is in Jesus — that is the proper task of the Church as instituted, that is, through her officebearers, particularly through the ministry of the Word. For this purpose Christ instituted the offices, for the well-being of the Church, for the upbuilding of the saints, for their growth in the knowledge of the truth, that they might not be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. This calling,

therefore, is inseparably connected with the office. It cannot be delegated to the school, for our Christian School is no Church-school. The teacher is no officebearer, nor does he labor under the direct supervision of and as appointee of the Consistory. And not only is this calling connected with the office and, therefore, with the Church institute, but the latter is also the proper agency for instruction in doctrine from the viewpoint of ability to teach it. We believe in a thoroughly trained ministry, in order that our ministers may be able to instruct in all the counsel of God. Instruction in doctrine is the proper domain of the ministers of the Word. For they are specifically prepared. This is not true of the teacher in the school.

And, therefore, I maintain that the place of doctrine in the Christian School cannot be that of a subject in the curriculum. This, the Church does in preaching and teaching, from the pulpit and in Catechism. And never can the Christian School take the place of Catechetical instruction. There may be no objection to the subject of Biblical History; there is surely no objection to the direct reading of Scripture in the Christian School. But its task cannot be, and should never be delegated to it, to instruct in doctrine directly. And if the Church offers proper catechetical instruction and the coming generation is nevertheless ignorant of the Reformed truth, the blame ought not to be laid at the door of the Christian School, but the accusing finger must be pointed at children or parents, at young men and women that have been negligent in attendance and in properly preparing for catechism-work.

However, this does not mean that doctrine, Reformed doctrine, has no place in the Christian School. On the contrary, it has properly a very important place. Its place is basic to all its instruction and training, to all its school-life and discipline. The school must not teach Reformed doctrine, but it must apply the principles of Reformed doctrine to all its teaching. All its instruction must be Reformed instruction. The school, therefore, receives its doctrinal principles, upon which all its instruction must be based, in harmony with which all its teaching must be offered, from the Church. It applies them. It stands to reason that there is a difference of degree in which these principles can be applied to different subjects. But in the greater or smaller degree these principles must be manifest in all the instruction given. How important this place of doctrine is will be evident if I only draw a few general lines and show with respect to some of the subjects taught what this application of Reformed principles would mean.

Let us take the subject of history. In the first place it will be very

evident that it will make a world of difference whether this subject is taught according to the philosophy of evolution or in harmony with the Biblical doctrines of creation and the fall of man. The same historic facts appear in each instance in a wholly different light. But further it will also be evident that there is a wide difference between the Arminian view that man is the maker of his own destiny and the Reformed view that all things are but the unfolding of the eternal counsel of God, and that all creatures, even the rational moral beings, must certainly execute that counsel. It will make a world of difference whether the one or the other principle is applied to and permeates all the teaching of history.

Take another example, the subject of civics. It will be seen, that it makes an important difference, whether the subject of magistrates, the state and its power and calling, is taught from the viewpoint of revolutionary unbelief or from the Christian viewpoint of authority and obedience for God's sake. But even apart from this general difference, it can easily be discerned that it is by no means indifferent, whether the subject is taught from the viewpoint of common grace or from the viewpoint of the antithesis. In the one case, one would consider a government consisting of godless magistrates Christian because they rule by the common grace of God; in the other, one would maintain that we must strive for Christian rule over us.

Take the subject, social science. What a difference the application of Reformed doctrine makes for such important subjects as the relation of man and wife; parent and child; authority and obedience; divorce; birth control; employer and employee; labor conditions and relations; strikes and uprisings; and similar subjects. And thus it is with every subject taught in the school, physiology and geography, yea, even reading and writing and arithmetic.

And not only is this true of the subjects that are being taught in the Christian School, it is equally true of the life and discipline in the schoolroom. The opening and closing prayers certainly must be Reformed. The songs that are sung and learned by heart may never be in conflict with the principles of the Reformed faith, but ought to be expressive of it. The teacher must certainly consider his children as covenant children and in all his instruction, attitude, and discipline it must become evident that he bears this in mind and that he aims at the development of the perfect man of God, thoroughly furnished unto all good works as far as his life in this world is concerned. And even in its programs, given outside of the schoolroom proper, the school must become manifest as based upon the Reformed truth. In one word, the

place of doctrine, of Reformed doctrine, in the Christian School is basic. It determines the religious character of all the instruction and life and discipline in the school!

3. THE WAY TO AFFORD DOCTRINE ITS PROPER PLACE

If such is the ideal of Christian School, if that should be the place of doctrine in it, it is very evident that we have not reached the ideal as yet. Yet, that is not the saddest aspect of the whole situation. It is far worse, that it cannot be said that there is a serious strife after the realization of that ideal. The present situation is that we have schools that offer some Biblical instruction, instruction in Biblical history that is largely doctrinal and belongs to the task of the Church. Special textbooks in mimeographed form have recently seen the light, guides for teachers and pupils that are based upon the common grace conception throughout. We have schools that open and close with prayer and that are given to the singing of hymns, by no means always Reformed in contents. But we do not have schools that are based upon Reformed principles. There is room for the question: what ought to be done, what is necessary in order to strive for the ideal?

I will begin with the people that sponsor and control and support the school. They must first of all be Reformed, not only in name, but according to their deepest conviction. After all, the school is the institution of the parents. Its standard can hardly be expected to be higher than that of the parents themselves. If we do not remain a Reformed people, we shall not attain to the ideal of truly Christian Schools in which Reformed doctrine lies at the basis of all instruction. In that case the cause of Christian instruction is a hopeless one. And, therefore, we must have a truly Reformed people that support and control the school, a people that clearly understand what a Christian School ought to be and that want it, and wanting it, will not rest until the ideal is attained. This truly Reformed people must form the school society and must elect from its midst a school board that is in harmony with the principles and ideals of the society. This I consider the strength of the Christian School, its very backbone.

In the second place, we must have thoroughly Reformed teachers. The teacher is the heart of the school. It is he, not only, that must give the instruction, it is also he that must chiefly be instrumental in making the school what it ought to be, in causing us to reach the ideal. He must not merely be an able scholar and an accomplished teacher, so that he is thoroughly acquainted with the subjects he is required to

In the third place, we are in need of teachers that will make it their life's task not only to teach, but to bring the Christian School to its proper level. Teaching has too often been looked upon as a stepping stone. Comparatively few have given their life to their profession thus far. Yet this is necessary. In the first place, because the experienced teacher is certainly the best. Experience trains him for the task and all the while makes him more fit for the work. In the second place, because experience will cause him to become more thoroughly acquainted with the real needs of a truly Christian School. In the third place, because it is not merely the work of a Christian School teacher to teach, but also to supply the school gradually with textbooks that can be used in the schoolroom, in which the principles of Reformed truth are applied to the subjects to be taught. One who gives himself to teaching for a few years has neither the experience nor the ambition to accomplish this work. We are in need of men and women that will make teaching their life's work.

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taken from *Christian School Comment*

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Classroom Devotions Make a Difference

by John Kalsbeek

Mr. John Kalsbeek is an elementary school teacher at the Adams Street Protestant Reformed Christian School, Grand Rapids, Michigan. He has served as one of the editors for the Journal. We are happy to have him write on an important aspect of the life of those who engage in Christian education.

In order for us to consider what difference classroom devotions make, it's important that we are clear at the outset what our goals are in regard to Christian instruction. Once we have these goals clearly before our consciences, then, and only then, will it be possible to show how classroom devotions make a difference in achieving these goals.

As teachers we are fully aware of the importance of goals and objectives. Once these are established, we have something to aim at. In the education classes all of us took in college, and especially in our practice-teaching activities, the one thing that was persistently drummed into us was the need for objectives. In fact, on the daily lesson plan sheet, that was the first item that needed to be completed. When the supervising teacher visited the class, invariably that was his chief concern — What was your goal for teaching that material? What did you hope to achieve?

Objectives are important. I do not think anyone here will argue that point. All of us are governed by objectives. Sometimes they are objectives that we are consciously striving to attain — specific goals or specific concepts in a particular subject. Other times our objectives may be of a more general nature. They may be objectives we unwittingly strive for, like improving attitudes or implanting certain values. These objectives are real but dwell in the inner recesses of our subconscious.

Objectives, goals, aims, whatever we might like to call them, are helpful and in many cases needful. Without them we would indeed flounder about like a drowning person. We would become confused and lose our sense of direction like a lost hiker in a wilderness area. Our work would become an embarrassment.

But I'm not concerned tonight about the many secondary goals that

help us provide intelligent instruction in a specific subject area. My concern is the primary goal or objective of Christian instruction.

What is the chief goal of Christian education? What is the goal to which all other goals must be subordinate?

Some, no doubt, will at moment's notice declare that all education has to be God-glorifying. Who would dare to argue with that? They would insist that any instruction that does not meet this primary objective is wasted effort and not worthy of the name Christian education. Who of us would dare to deny this? To clinch their case they say that if our instruction is not God-centered then it must of necessity be man-centered and humanistic. There is no middle of the road. It's one or the other — God-glorifying or man-glorifying. Who of us is ready to dispute that?

Surely, though it may seem to be an old and trite saying, a shopworn cliché, it's important that God be glorified in all of our instruction. But the problem with this is that it is too general a goal to be of great value. Somehow we need to be more specific.

In order to achieve this goal of the glory of God we should carefully consider what Paul wrote to Timothy:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.
II Timothy 3:16, 17

I'm afraid that our use of II Timothy 3:16, 17 to support the important doctrine of the inspiration of scripture sometimes causes us to overlook the real and maybe even more important message of these verses. Scripture is to be our guide in regard to doctrine. Scripture must be used to reprove a wayward sinner. Scripture is an important guide in the matter of correction. Scripture is the authority that must underlie all of our instruction. All of this is necessary that the man of God (the children we instruct) may be perfect and thoroughly furnished unto all good works. They have to be equipped to live godly lives. They have to be taught not only the rudiments of the three R's but also that their calling in life is a calling of service to God. It's of utmost importance that our students know who God is, who they are, and what their relationship is to God and to their neighbor. We as teachers have to supply a great deal of input in these areas.

Such instruction helps the man of God — our students — make correct choices, know the difference between right and wrong, and to walk in all righteousness. God-centered Christian education focuses its attention on the man of God that God may be glorified. That man of

God has been chosen by God from eternity “to be conformed to the image of His son” (Romans 8:29).

Rev. David Engelsma writes in *Reformed Education*:

Our goal is a mature man, or woman, of God who lives in this world, in every area of life, with all his powers, as God's friend servant, loving God and serving God in all his earthly life with all his abilities, and who lives in the world to come as a king under Christ ruling creation to the praise of God, His maker and Redeemer.

That's our goal. To achieve that goal I believe classroom devotions do make a difference.

What are we talking about when we use the term devotions?

Devotions are supplications and prayers designed for private worship. Oftentimes we conduct these devotions in the privacy of our homes but they can also be held in small groups.

Devotional activities are not limited to the Christian community. People of other religious faiths are also devotional. The apostle Paul speaks of this when he visited Mars Hill in Athens. At that time he said, “For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription ‘To the Unknown God.’” About that God Paul then began to teach them. Their devotions, of course, were their acts of worship.

The ardor, the zeal, the fervor that many people show in their religions toward their false gods puts us to shame. Maybe it's our old staid, Dutch background that encourages solemn and almost joyless worship that's at the root of our lack of ardor, zeal, and fervor. The truth is, that we tend to look down our long noses on anyone who shows even a little outward piety and devotion. His or her motives are immediately brought into question. We are embarrassed and tend to shun such a one. The devil knows the power of true piety and devotion, and since the beginning of time has tried in every way possible to discourage it in the people of God.

We have many outstanding examples of people in Scripture who were devout in life and walk. They were not afraid to be seen in their devotional activities by others. One of the best examples is Daniel. He had made it a practice to pray three times a day toward Jerusalem. When this became a life-threatening situation, he refused to stop but continued the practice as before. Another saint that comes to my mind is Jephthah. In his devotions before an important battle, he promised to give to the Lord the first thing that came out of his house to meet him when the battle was over, and the Lord had given Israel the victory. Jephthah didn't expect a dog or a lamb or some other kind of animal

to come out to meet him. He fully expected his daughter would be the one to greet him. He was willing to give his daughter to the Lord for the rest of her life. In this connection we would be remiss if we failed to mention Hannah, the mother of Samuel. She, too, promised to give the fruit of her womb to the Lord and she faithfully kept her devotional promise. How zealous are *we* in our personal devotions?

Although our topic tonight is "classroom devotions," I'd like to take a moment of your time to encourage you in your own personal devotions. Take time to meet with the Lord at least once a day in the privacy of your own person. To do so twice a day is even more profitable. We are inclined to think that if one diet pill is good for losing weight, then two diet pills would help us reach the desired goal even faster. Or if the doctor prescribes five vitamin pills a day, then if we take ten a day we'd be twice as healthy. With medicine, such thinking is wrong; but with devotions properly conducted the result is that it is certainly even more profitable. We are so quick to cut ourselves short in this important activity. So easily we skip devotions because we are too busy or just don't have time. With urgency, I press upon you, "take time." It's of utmost importance that we give ourselves over to diligent study and prayer in order to seek out "the mind of the Spirit."

J. C. Ryle in his book *Holiness* writes:

The immense importance of "adorning the doctrine of God our Savior" and making it lovely and beautiful by our daily habits and tempers, has been far too much overlooked.

Devotions, then, are an act of worship. Our life of sanctification is the reason, the prime motivation, for our devotions. Rev. Herman Hoeksema writes, "Sanctification is the work of God upon the regenerated, justified sinner, whereby He delivers them from the pollution of sin and enables them to walk in holiness and all good works." Throughout Scripture God enjoins us: "Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." We are duly called upon to live a life of holiness. This perfection is granted to us in principle in this life. Although we sin, we hate those sins and earnestly seek the Lord's forgiveness. It's now our inmost desire to be pleasing to God. Thus sanctification is the motivation for all true piety and devotional activities. Devotional thoughts, activities, and prayers are the work of the spirit and arise out of a true faith. This faith constrains the man of God to live unto the Lord out of gratitude for all the Lord has done for him. Jesus tells His disciples in the upper room, "He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit" (John 15:5).

These personal devotions which you are encouraged to consider on a

daily basis can be the springboard that helps to launch you out into the waters of classroom devotions.

When I speak about classroom devotions it's devotions that are conducted by the teacher with the students on a regular every-day basis. They include Bible reading, a short but pertinent message, prayer, and singing.

Since I'm not the most original person alive, and being original takes more time, I find it helpful to use the work of others for a guide. In the past, I've used *Standard Bearer* meditations written by our ministers; a book on *Proverbs: Studies in Proverbs* by William Arnot; two books, *Holiness* and *Practical Religion*, by J. C. Ryle, an Anglican divine near the turn of the century. Other materials that could be used are *Mysteries of the Kingdom* by Prof. H. Hanko; *The Promise and Deliverance*, a 4-volume set by S. G. DeGraff; and many others that are no doubt out there ready for use.

Once you decide the direction you wish to go, you may find you'll feel more comfortable if you write down your devotions in a notebook. I do, and find I'm not nearly as forgetful. I use the materials as a guide. Often I condense the materials in my own words and use my own applications. Much of the material is passed by.

The book, *Studies in Proverbs*, by William Arnot is an excellent aid when and if you use Proverbs. These proverbs are easy to understand and can be applied in so many ways to a student's life in school and at home. They are also an excellent guide for later life. I don't hesitate to talk about marriage, or vocations, or using money wisely when these subjects come up. They may not always seem pertinent to fourth or fifth graders but it's my firm conviction that already at this young age, their thoughts should be turned and molded in the proper directions.

The procedure I usually follow is to announce to the students the title of the morning's devotion. Then we read seven to ten verses together out loud and they try to decide which verse or verses we'll consider that morning. Most of them are eager to guess. Sometimes it's very obvious which verse will be used but at other times it's rather obscure. For example when we considered Proverbs 10:26, "As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him." The title was "The Greatness of Little Things." The message that morning, in a very condensed form, was that God is concerned not only with great sins — such a murder, robbery, adultery, etc., but also with the little sins like laziness, carelessness, messiness. After spending from eight to ten minutes talking about the verse we open with prayer and sing a couple of *Psalter* numbers.

I believe successful devotions could also be achieved by using a question and answer format. This has certain drawbacks, however. Some students willingly participate and others say nothing at all. Some students who are willing to express themselves speak so quietly that the others cannot hear them. There is little opportunity for a student to prepare himself. At times I've told them what we were going to cover a day ahead of time but few of them took the time to consider the material.

Some areas you could profitably spend time on in your morning devotions would include the following: prayer, Bible reading and study, holiness, need for devotions, holy men of God, the attributes of God, the ten commandments, parables, work or study habits, loving one another, friends and friendship, or a particular book of the Bible. The list is endless. Problems that arise in the classroom in the course of a week or month could be handled in a group situation in your devotions. I've had opportunity to do this on occasion and believe that it does help the situation.

It does take time and effort on your part to prepare for these devotions. They do not come about without effort. It takes me about thirty minutes for each devotion. I hope this doesn't discourage you. It's a worthwhile endeavor. Anything worth doing is bound to demand a little effort.

I'm firmly convinced that classroom devotions make a difference. If I wasn't, I guess I wouldn't have agreed to address you on this subject.

Sometimes it's a difference that is so nebulous that we do not even see and recognize it. It's a difference that we never even become aware of. Occasionally a concrete case arises that shows us that they really do make a difference. I had the following experience which is a case to the point.

In one of our devotions we talked about the importance and blessedness of having God-fearing parents. It was brought out what a difficult work it is to be a parent, and that that work included the disagreeable task of disciplining their children. No parent enjoys that part of his responsibility. But our students have parents who love them enough to spank them or to discipline them when they needed it. I mentioned that they should be thankful for parents who disciplined them.

Some months later, at a Parent/Teacher conference, one of the mothers told me about an incident that happened at home. Her fourth grade daughter had misbehaved and the mother had to discipline the child. The nature of the misbehavior and the discipline escapes me but the discipline must have fit the situation. Later in the evening the

daughter came to the mother and told her that she wanted to thank her for punishing her because she really had it coming, and Mr. Kalsbeek said they should be thankful for parents who loved them enough to discipline them.

Another example or case in point happened after we spent a number of mornings talking about the importance of Bible reading. I pointed out that it was true that they, even though they were young, could profit from daily reading God's Word and that they should make it a habit to do so. A couple of months later, two sets of parents told me that their children were setting aside a certain amount of time to read the Bible privately to themselves each day. I don't know if they have continued the practice but I hope they have.

In Ecclesiastes 11:1 Solomon tells us, "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days." Such is also true of any work you put into daily devotions in the classroom for the students. God will use them to furnish thoroughly the man of God (the child in this case) to all good works.

We must not doubt that the Spirit can and does work through our feeble efforts to conduct daily devotions with our students. Even younger children, I suspect, will benefit. Younger children are more easily molded, more ready to listen than are older children, and certainly as apt to remember.

I'm convinced these devotions make a difference in my own life as a teacher. They speak to me as well as to the students. They help me face the many different problems that arise each day in a more patient and understanding way. I feel more confident that my work is an important work. I'm more concerned that it's a God-glorifying work. Even if none of the students benefit — and I don't believe *that* happens — it's still good for me.

I'm convinced that it helps build up in the students reverence for God and respect for their teacher. They know that the teacher is concerned not only about their everyday subjects but also their spiritual welfare. Many important matters can be brought to light in these periods of devotions that cannot be brought up in any other subject area. I believe these devotions help to build up a godly rapport between students and their teacher.

Finally, I believe devotions make a difference in the classroom situation. They set the tone for the day. They can impress the students with the seriousness of their calling as students, with their worth as individuals, with the importance of serving God responsibly.

God uses these devotions to further His Kingdom and cause. They

should not be neglected. They should be an important aspect of our instruction. Let them be the frosting on the cake.

Before I finish I'd like to encourage you to consider the possibility of teachers' devotions. Perhaps you do have teachers' devotions at Hope and Covenant. If you do, let me encourage you to continue. If you don't, I wish to encourage you to begin. We have them every morning at Adams and I cannot think of a better way to start each day or time being spent in a better way. It has drawn us together as a staff. We pray for each other's needs. We show our concern regarding our calling as teachers. It helps us to work together as a team. We know that we are not in this business alone. Here again, it takes some work, some individual effort, but the payoff more than compensates for the effort.

Since our aim, our goal, is that the students entrusted to our care be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, consider using classroom devotions. They add a new and significant dimension to our instruction. Such classroom devotions do and will make a difference.

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Why Can't Johnny Spell or Read?

by Doug Boone

Mr. Doug Boone spent the first few years of his active teaching career as a member of the faculty of the Western Christian High School in Hull, Iowa. Since that time he has returned to school and has taken courses in helping the learning disabled. Doug is presently working at Pine Rest with special children, and is setting up the special education program for 1985-1986 at Heritage Protestant Reformed Christian School, Hudsonville, Michigan.

The term "learning disability" seems to be rather popular in the field of education lately as resource rooms and other special helps are set up to combat this new educational enemy. The problem is not new, but the names have been changed over the years to protect anyone from sounding old-fashioned by calling it dyslexia, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, developmental aphasia, dyssymbolia, or perceptual handicaps. Seriously, the term "learning disability" (LD) is used to try

to label all the ways this problem manifests itself in a child's educational development.

So what is a Learning Disability? The federally approved definition I know is as follows: "LD is a severe deficit in the acquisition and use of symbols, used in reading, writing, calculating, and thinking; which deficit is due to the interaction between developmental dysfunction and environmental conditions which make the person vulnerable to those dysfunctions." By the time we finish, I hope that such a definition will make some sense.

Let's take a look at typical, true LD students. First, what sets them apart from all other special educational students is their IQ. The LD have normal IQ or intelligence. This needs to be emphasized, repeated, and written in stone. The LD are smart or "average" students as far as intelligence is concerned. This fact alone separates them as a group from all special education students who have lower IQ ratios and are labeled according to degrees of mental retardation.

I think this is especially important from a teacher's point of view. This means I will strive to get grade level performance out of these students so they don't forever remain two to six grade levels behind their classmates in a given subject. Fortunately this also makes sense. The LD's problems are with the symbols. They may read at the 3rd grade level even though they are in 6th grade, but their speaking vocabulary and their thinking skills are at a 6th grade level. Since they have normal intelligence, I do them no favors by teaching them 3rd grade reading. Reading is not as sequential as math, so once someone knows "how" to read, we build on vocabulary and sentence structure. (But I'm getting off the track.)

The second important reason we must remember that the LD have normal intelligence is for the children's sake. They must know that they are not dumb children. They must know that they are not stupid but that they have a problem and it's not their fault. I even want to give them a nice fancy term such as "dyssymbolia." Then, when they are having problems, it is that "dyssymbolia" again that we have to work on, thus allowing the children to save face and not feel stupid.

You may ask, "If the LD have normal intelligence, how can we tell them apart from non-LD students?" There are basically two directions we go in now. We look at what we can observe—test scores, behavior—and at what we believe is going on inside neurologically.

We said that intelligence is normal; but unfortunately the LD's achievement in specific areas shows up significantly low. This is known as the discrepancy formula. The LD may also exhibit any combination

of typical behaviors, such as the following: hyperactivity, impulsivity, poor coordination, poor attention, poor organization, and others. Also, to be labeled as LD, the student's primary problem may not be mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or physical handicaps. "Who's left?" you ask. Estimates range from 5% to 15% of every normal classroom's students could be labeled as LD and in need of special services.

For a closer look at what goes on neurologically and behaviorally, I must refer to the critical stage theory taught to me by Dr. Corrine Kass at Calvin College — lest anyone think I'm smart enough to figure this out on my own. She has traced the impact of learning disabilities in connection with what she calls age-related functions in the LD. I believe this theory ties in well with what is known about brain growth spurts and educational development in children, as taught by Piaget, Erikson, Kohlberg, Havinghurst, and Freud.

The first stage, Sensory Orientation, is the functional readiness to study the environment, to use the senses. This stage covers ages birth to 18 months. At this age the LD seem to have problems with visual pursuit, the ability to follow stimuli with their eyes. They also don't seem to discriminate between sounds such as a familiar voice and a stranger's voice. Behaviorally we say they have a problem attending. What's worse is that they don't grow out of this failure to attend. The problem is, rather, compounded by other deficits at later stages.

The second stage, Memory, is the ability to recall and imitate what we see and hear. This stage covers ages 18 months to eight years. The LD seem to have hyper-excitability, almost an extreme inner noise or stimulation that interferes with their ability to process what is happening around them. They also have problems with rehearsal, the ability to practice input for later recall. They don't listen to themselves and don't give themselves feedback. Now we say they have a problem with labeling: memorizing names, words, or math tables.

The third stage, Re-cognition, is the process by which the child attaches personal meaning, or understanding of concepts underlying learning tasks. A simple example would be answering a comprehension question and not just repeating the facts of a story. This stage covers ages eight to eleven years old. The LD seem to have problems in three areas. The first, haptic discrimination, is the ability to note differences in touch and muscle sensation. This deficit ties in with learning spelling by the process of writing it out. The second deficit deals with visualization — the ability to recognize whole from parts. One example would be, being able to note likenesses and differences in words or things. The third deficit deals with figure-ground discrimination, which

is the ability to sift the relevant from the irrelevant. The LD seem to see everything but they do not distinguish. They must be taught what to look for. Can you imagine the problem they have with a blackboard covered with notes, some of which they have to copy? To summarize, we can see that the LD just don't seem to understand what is being taught.

The fourth stage, Synthesis, is defined as the process by which the previous functions are unified and become automatic. This stage covers ages 12 to 14 years old. The LD have a problem with the coordination of the senses (hearing, seeing, touching) and therefore extreme difficulty in making habitual that which they have already learned. Their monitoring skills (the ability to note and correct errors when they occur) seem almost non-existent. We can see that dictation, or giving notes orally, can be very difficult for the LD because they have trouble putting it all together.

The last stage, Communication, is defined as the process by which meaning is expressed. This stage covers ages 14 and older. The ability to communicate requires more than memorized sentence formulas. The LD show deficits in reading comprehension, mathematical comprehension, and writing. These deficits are easily seen in their work.

I briefly explained these stages, not to impress, but to help you see that the learning disability affects different abilities at different ages and that it is a continuing, compounding process. What teachers seem to complain the most about is that these children don't pay attention. We can see this identifies the first stage problem of attending and how that ties in with the rest of the problem cycle: attending, labeling, understanding, integrating, and expressing. If we don't get their attention, it seems impossible that they will be able to complete higher tasks, such as understanding or expressing.

If we look at a task, say a ninth grade algebra problem, we can trace how each of the age-related functions ties in. First the child must attend and look at the problem. Next he must know the labels as numbers and signs. Then he must understand what the numbers and signs mean. Now he must integrate all the knowledge of computation and put it together automatically in order to solve the problem. Finally he must solve the problem and express or communicate the answer in the proper terms. We see how each stage is involved in the learning process and can guess how deficits in these stages can really make learning difficult.

Well, what is to be done? I think we can see that the problem is more complex than to be solved by tutoring or just helping the LD with

Objectives For Teaching Geography

During the summer of 1972, the Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian School Societies and Boards sponsored a workshop that discussed the biblical perspectives in the social sciences. The result of this workshop was the publication of a series of papers in a manual which is still available, i.e., Biblical Perspectives in the Social Sciences. One of the inclusions in this manual was a set of objectives for teaching geography, which I include in this issue for your consideration.

Definition of geography: Geography is the study of any phenomena of distribution and interrelationship on the earth that God created.

Basic approach questions:

1. Where are things?
2. Why are they there?
3. How do they interrelate with their environment?

The child should be instructed to understand that:

1. The existence of the earth is the result of the work of God in His six days of creation (Genesis 1, Hebrews 3:11).
2. The earth is the setting prepared by God for man to glorify God or, negatively, to fill his measure of iniquity.
3. Basically little is known about distributions and interrelationships before the flood. However, Genesis 4-6 suggest that a fairly complex civilization existed.
4. The earth after the flood is basically different from the earth as it existed before the flood (II Peter 3:5-6).
5. Physical features do not preclude a particular type of civilization. An outstandingly beautiful example is the provision of God to Israel in Canaan (Judges, II Chronicles).
6. Physical features are sometimes used as a means to deliver or devour a people (I Kings 20:23, 29).
7. God has given resources for man to use to the best of his ability in thanksgiving (II Kings 6:5, 6; Genesis 4:22; I Timothy 4:4).

8. Man in unfaithfulness pollutes his habitat, thereby stealing and ultimately destroying the resources needed for his earthly existence.

9. Catastrophic phenomena portray the work of God in His judgments against sin and in His preserving His people as a sign of our final deliverance (Exodus 9:28; I Kings 19:11b-19; Acts 16:26-30).

10. The final catastrophic climax of the cosmos is to destroy the wicked and to give His Church everlasting life.

11. Most cultural phenomena exist in hierarchical form. Jerusalem portrays this nationally and religiously, but more than that: God said He would establish His Name; therefore, Jerusalem was a unique capital.

12. Urban developments accommodate human agglomerations (Genesis 4:17; Genesis 10:10-11).

13. God controls the laying of national boundaries. He did this uniquely for Israel in the Old Testament.

14. Cultural phenomena are sometimes used and referred to as a means of the preaching and spreading of the gospel (Acts 16:26-30).

15. Transportation developments function as socio-economic threads. They are also importantly used to go to worship and to transport those who are instrumental in preaching and spreading the gospel (Acts 28:14-16).

16. The political age of a country influences the economic affairs therein. This was uniquely true of Israel as portrayed mainly in her spiritual life.

17. All cultures of history still exist in some form and place on the earth today.

18. Technology tends to redistribute.

19. Many factors of change redistribute:

a. Rebellion — Jonah 1:3-4; Genesis 11:8.

b. Captivities

1) Ten tribes in 722 B.C.

2) Two tribes in 586 B.C.

c. Persecution

d. Utilization of resources

e. Depletion of resources

f. War.

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INTERESTING QUOTATION:

THE SOCIAL SECURITY CASE MOVES FORWARD

A suit was filed on November 26 in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania challenging the taxing of church employees under new amendments to the federal Social Security Act of 1984. In the lawsuit (understood to constitute a national test case), Bethel Baptist Church, Reading, PA; its pastor, Dr. Richard A. Harris; and 14 other individuals claimed that the Social Security Act as now written violates their constitutional liberties under the First Amendment.

The church, the pastor, parents who have children at the church's school, and various employees of the church claim that, while the Congress's 1984 amendments to the Social Security Act relieved churches of the duty to pay the tax by shifting the total tax burden to employees of churches, it really kept the tax burden on the churches.

As the complaint states, the church "is bound both by a religious principle of justice to its employees and by the need to retain its employees in its ministry, to increase its employees' wages commensurately with the tax imposed upon them."

But the heart of the complaint's position focuses less on economics than on questions of conscience, religious liberty and church-state separation. Expressing views which they say were "historically held by their religious forbears," the plaintiffs lay down four points of belief that they consider based on Scripture:

- (1) Christians must provide for their own financial security; (2) to the extent that they are unable so to provide, the responsibility to aid them is that of their Church; (3) the freedom to choose the means by which this responsibility to its own people is exercised must remain with the Church and must not be taken away by government; and (4) the Church (including its members) may not participate in, or collaborate in, any effort of government to assume or preempt that responsibility.

ACSI attorney William Ball, chief counsel for the case, believes the matter will go to trial this spring. This is a major religious liberty issue. Pray earnestly about it.

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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