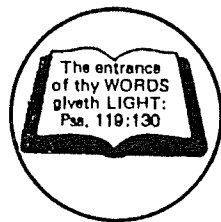


Perspectives

in Covenant Education



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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

Perspectives in Covenant Education is a journal regulated and published quarterly, in November, February, May, and August 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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SPECIAL FOCUS

Several of our schools have anniversaries this year. To focus on each one in a separate issue of our journal, which comes out quarterly, will mean that two of the schools will not appear till after their anniversary year is past. But we'd like to do that anyway. We'll start with Loveland's 25th Anniversary, and hope that you'll look forward to our summer and fall issues for the next two.

Loveland's school, as it is today, is pictured on the front cover. Not always have our people in Loveland enjoyed such nice facilities. When school opened for the first time in September of 1961, the students met in the basement of what used to be a school, but served then as Loveland's church building. As you'll learn from the article which follows, that old building still stands. It's pictured on the next page. Things have obviously changed much since the day when Miss Ruth Kuiper first opened the "school" doors to the seven enrolled students. "... who hath despised the day of small things?" (Zech. 4:10). Our God has truly blessed. We congratulate Loveland at the occasion of this anniversary, and wish them the continued favor of our covenant-keeping Father in heaven. (Please note that we're all invited to attend their special anniversary program, which is being planned for the 22nd of May. Maybe, if you don't live in Loveland, you can plan your vacation to coincide with that.) We thank Mr. Steve Ezinga, School Board secretary, for providing us with this brief informative and inspiring commemorative article.

Loveland Anniversary

Steve Ezinga

On March 23, 1959 the late Rev. H. H. Kuiper led in prayer and gave a short lecture on the necessity of our own Christian school. A question and answer session was entered into and afterward a motion was made, supported, and carried to organize a Christian School Society. A committee was elected to look into the possibility of organizing a Christian school and to gather ideas for a concept constitution.

April 20, 1959 the first School Society meeting was held. Roll call shows a total of 11 members; two more men joined the Society that night. The concept constitution was discussed and adopted and five men were elected from nominees from the Society to serve as the first functionary School Board.

Over the next three years much work was put into building sites or buildings that would be suitable for housing children and a teacher. There were buildings that could be erected, rented, or moved (even an army barracks was looked into), but each was found to be not feasible in one way or another. The work was hard, time-consuming, and at times frustrating. But there were the lectures by Rev. Kuiper, Rev. Lubbers, Rev. Veldman, and others who came into our area. These lectures kept the men fit for the task and made them zealous to have a Christian school here in Loveland.

Finally, after much work, many prayers, and by the grace of God we received a signed contract to teach grades 1-5 from Miss Ruth Kuiper (now Ruth Nobel) to teach in the 1961-1962 school year. Books were ordered (including some McGuffey Readers), and a budget and tuition scale was adopted and approved by the Society. On September 12, 1961 school began here in Loveland, Colorado.



The 1986-1987 school year marks 25 years of Christian education here in Loveland. With the review of the work of our school's founding fathers, the conviction that they held, their trust in the Lord, one can

FEATURE

not but marvel at how it all began some 25 years ago. Our school was held in the basement of what was our church building at the time. Our modest beginning still stands a half mile west of here. It is rundown and vacant (see picture on previous page), and is sort of a landmark for the residents of the Loveland area. To us it is a reminder of how God answered our prayers and gave us a start in the Christian education of our covenant seed.

Today much has changed. We have our own school building, grades K-9th, four teachers with a total of 52 students for the 1986-1987 school year. Truly, God has greatly blessed us and has given us much to be thankful for.

Proverbs 22:6 — "Train up a child in the way that he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it" is the theme that was chosen for the celebration of our 25th Anniversary. We would like to extend an invitation to all who can attend. The celebration date is set for May 22, 1987. Items planned are a 25th Anniversary Booklet, with a program and a supper to be held in the evening.

If anyone would like some additional information concerning the 25th anniversary celebration, contact either of the following Board members. Also anniversary booklets are available at a small fee, to cover the cost of printing and postage.

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FEATURE

We're always glad to have something from Rev. David Engelsma on the pages of our journal. He's a friend of Christian education and a writer of uncommon ability. This time, as you'll learn from his first footnote, we have from him the text of a speech delivered in another country. But, for all that, it's no less applicable to the supporters of our own schools; for he speaks of a war that is going on in every country where there is conflict between light and darkness. It's a war of ideas, and the main object of the enemy, he says, is our children. What does all this have to do with Christian education? Read on:

The Necessity of Good Christian Schools*

Rev. David J. Engelsma

Two deep concerns of Presbyterians lead naturally to a zeal for Christian schools. One is the insistence of Presbyterians, as good Protestant Christians, that all the people of God have good knowledge of God and of His will, inasmuch as all the saints are prophets, priests, and kings under the Lord Jesus Christ. God's people have the anointing of the Spirit of Christ, so that they know God's Word and confess it; consecrate themselves to God; and fight against God's enemies in this life with a view to reigning with Christ hereafter. Above all, they can, and must, know God's Word, Holy Scripture. They must have it, in their own language. They must be able to read and understand it. Then they can compare all teaching with the Word, receiving what is true and rejecting all that is not in agreement with the Word, as we read of the Jews in Berea that they received the

Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether the things preached by the apostle were so (Acts 17:11). Only if God's people have this knowledge are they able to serve God in all their earthly lives, as we are called by God to do. Presbyterians have always refused to allow the saints to be kept in

* This is the text of a public speech given in Ballyclare, Northern Ireland in October, 1984, under the auspices of the Association for Christian Education in Ireland — a fledgling movement on behalf of Christian education in Northern Ireland. The Association had established a grade school, Covenant Christian School, which many Protestant Reformed Christians supported by their financial support of Mr. Deane Wassink, when he taught in the school in 1984/1985. The purpose of the speech was the promotion of Christian education, especially among Presbyterians in Northern Ireland, for whom Christian education in private (non-State) schools is a new thing.

Rev. Engelsma is pastor of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church.

ignorance, as tyrants, both ecclesiastical and civil, would like.

A second concern of Presbyterians is that their children receive a good, godly upbringing, because these children, in the mercy of God, are special children. They are not, of course, naturally special. We Reformed do confess with sorrow that our children, like ourselves, are naturally conceived and born in sin, even as the others (cf. Ephesians 2:1-3). But God is pleased to deliver our children from the present evil world and to give them a place in the church of our Lord Jesus. The sign of this grace of God is the baptism of our infants; and the presentation of their children for baptism by the parents indicates their faith in this grace of God. As special children, these children must be specially reared and taught; and this every Presbyterian parent vows to do at baptism.*

When you combine these two important concerns of Presbyterians, namely, the concern that all the church-members have good knowledge and the concern that the children receive a good, godly upbringing, you have a strong interest in good Christian schools.

This interest is part of a long and honorable tradition. Quite early in the history of the church after the apostles, during the reign of the Roman emperor, Julian, known as the "apostate," the

Christians established their own Christian schools, when Julian decreed that the instruction in the schools of the empire would be pagan. The schools of the Middle Ages were Christian schools, although they became corrupt along with the increasingly corrupt church. The Reformation of the 16th century called for good Christian schools and worked to establish them. Luther wrote vigorously and often on behalf of Christian schools; and he and Melancthon actually started a system of Christian schools in Germany. Towards the end of

* The "Directory for the Public Worship of God," adopted by the Westminster Assembly of Divines in 1645, requires believing, Presbyterian parents to present their child for baptism, on which occasion the minister must exhort the parent "To consider the great mercy of God to him and his child; to bring up the child in the knowledge of the grounds of the Christian religion, and in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and to let him know the danger of God's wrath to himself and child, if he be negligent: requiring his solemn promise for the performance of his duty" (*The Confession of Faith*, etc. [Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood & Sons Ltd., 1969], pp. 149-152).

his life, John Calvin was successful in establishing the "Academy" in Geneva, where the children could be given Christian instruction. Since then, many Reformed people, in Europe, North America, and other places, have worked on behalf of good Christian education and have established good Christian schools. They have done this in the conviction that good Christian schools are necessary.

As to a Good Christian School

What is a good Christian school?

It is certainly an institution for the teaching of children in all the various branches of earthly knowledge. A Christian school is not a school for the teaching of Bible and the Catechism, or for the teaching of Bible-history and Bible-doctrine. This is the task of the church.

The Christian school gives instruction of another sort: it teaches reading, writing, mathematics, history, and the other subjects that are also taught in the State schools. It is, and must be, sound academically; it must give the students a thorough education in the various aspects of human knowledge. It develops the natural intellectual powers and earthly abilities of the children. It is busy, in this way, to prepare the children for earthly life. Now this is not the only aim of the

Christian school, for it also prepares children for eternity; but it is certainly the task of the school to prepare children to live and work in this world. Indeed, the school must prepare the children to live in the particular country and society where God has put the children and where God calls the children to serve Him. In Ulster, the Christian school does not stress the history of China, but the history of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Northern Ireland. Here, it does not teach French, but the English language. This is in keeping with the view of the life of His people that comes out in Jesus' prayer in John 17:15: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." For the Christian school to accomplish its task, good, competent teachers are required; a good Christian school is staffed with qualified, hardworking teachers.

But the Christian school gives this instruction *in the light of the Word of God, Holy Scripture*; it prepares the children to live their earthly lives in a particular society *to the glory of God*; and it requires teachers whose qualifications include *that they are God-fearing*.

A good Christian school has its basis in Holy Scripture. The Bible is the foundation and rule of the entire school. All of the instruc-

tion is based on Scripture and is faithful to it. The behavior of teachers and students alike is controlled by Scripture. This is no small matter. In the State schools in the United States, there is wild disorder and gross immorality on the part of teachers and students alike. The Christian school is marked by discipline, the discipline of the Word of God. By His Word, God Himself, as revealed in Jesus Christ, is the foundation and authority of the Christian school and its work. Thus, Christ is the Lord over education. The education is Christian — subservient to Christ. Presbyterians have always been zealous for the crown-rights of King Jesus. It would be unworthy of them to ignore Christ's crown in the area of education, the mind, ideas, and the rearing of their own children.

The Bible is the foundation of the good Christian school, according to the understanding of the Bible that is set forth in the Presbyterian and Reformed Creeds. The Creedal basis of the schools should be written into the constitution of the school; it should never be elided; all involved in the school should be striving to implement this basis more and more. For there is a Presbyterian (or Reformed) view of Scripture; a Presbyterian view of the children; a Presbyterian view of education; a Presbyterian view of discipline; a Presbyterian view of every

branch of knowledge; and, most emphatically, a Presbyterian view of God, the Triune God revealed in Jesus Christ — His glory, His claims, His sovereignty, His worthiness to be praised by the child's every thought, word, and deed. The goodness of a Christian school will be in direct proportion to its faithfulness to the truth expressed in the Presbyterian Creeds.

The Christian school is based on Scripture also in the sense that the work of the school is done in obedience to a calling from God. In the great task of educating our children we must be found in the way of the Lord in the sense that what we are doing, we have a Divine call and warrant for doing. As a preacher, I must be sure that I have a calling to preach. I had better not be preaching without a call and mandate from God. I had better not even be found doing the work of a preacher in a congregation other than the one in which God has placed me. Similarly, those educating children must be certain that their work rests on and flows from a Divine call. I am convinced that a basic reason for the collapse of State education in my own country, at present, is simply that people are engaged in the business of education without any call from God. They are running in education, but God has not sent them. For God does not call the State to

educate. The children are not the State's, but the parents'. The State has neither the duty nor the competency to rear the children. The God-given task of the State is, to quote Edmund Burke, "the public peace, the public safety, the public order, the public prosperity."

In contrast, the Christian school is established in obedience to the call of God in His Word, Holy Scripture. This indicates the necessity of good Christian schools.

As to the Necessity of Good Christian Schools

The necessity is, first, the calling of believing parents to rear their children in the fear of the Lord, to the utmost of their power, because their children are members of God's covenant. The Christian school is a demand of the covenant. You could not have chosen a more fitting name for your school — Covenant Christian School. This calling is bound upon parents by the book of the old covenant: "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children..." (Deut. 6:7). It is renewed in the book of the new covenant: "And, ye fathers... bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

One vital aspect of God's covenant with His people is God's gracious inclusion of the children

of believers in the covenant. God revealed this in Genesis 17:7, in His promise to the father of believers: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." The apostle makes it indisputably plain that the children of believers are heirs of the new covenant when, in Ephesians 6:1ff., he addresses the children of believers as members of the church with their parents: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord..." His application to them of the commandment, "Honor your father and mother," proves that, in the new covenant as in the old, Jehovah is the God of the children of believers as well as of the adults and has delivered the children as well as the adults out of the land of bondage. The children, therefore, as well as their parents, must live the covenant-life.

Our children are God's chosen, redeemed, and renewed people, by His grace in Jesus Christ. They are the people of God's possession *as children*. Jesus impressed this upon His disciples in Luke 18:16: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." The little children were babes in arms, "infants" according to verse 15. Their coming to Jesus was not their own activity,

but the carrying of them to Jesus by their parents. Of these babes is the kingdom, i.e., the infants of believers are citizens of the kingdom.

Not every child of believers is a child of God. Romans 9:1ff. teaches that the true seed of Abraham in the old covenant and the true seed of believers in the new covenant are not all the natural offspring, but rather the children of the promise, according to God's sovereign election. Nevertheless, because God is pleased to gather His children out of our offspring and to continue His covenant in the line of our generations, we are to rear all our children in His fear and to teach them all His Word.

Nor is it necessary to suppose that every elect child of believers is born again in infancy. I believe with the Westminster Confession of Faith that the Spirit of Christ "worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth" (Chapter X). But Scripture requires us to understand that the rule is that elect children of believers are regenerated from infancy. The evidence is not so much the testimony of Scripture that John leaped for joy in his mother's womb at the presence of the Christ, thus manifesting regeneration (cf. Luke 1:41-44), as it is Scripture's testimony concerning the children of believers, both in the old covenant and in the new

covenant, that, as they grow up from youngest childhood, they can and do fear the Lord, keep His commandments, and serve Him — spiritual activity that is impossible without a regenerated heart. The experience of the Psalmist in Psalm 71:5b, 6 is not unique, but representative of multitudes born and raised in the covenant: "Thou art my trust from my youth. By Thee have I been holden up from the womb: Thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise shall be continually of Thee." He adds, in verse 17, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth; and hitherto have I declared Thy wondrous works."

The sign of this is baptism, as circumcision was the sign among Israel.

The children are God's. My children are God's; and this causes my wife and me more trembling than most other matters. This is exactly what God says about the children of His covenant-people in Ezekiel 16:20, 21. Rebuking Jerusalem for their enormous wickedness of sacrificing their children to the idols, Jehovah says, "thou hast taken thy sons and daughters, *whom thou hast borne unto me*, and these hast thou sacrificed.... Is this... a small matter, that thou hast slain *my children*...?"

Because the children are God's, they must be "piously and re-

ligiously educated,” to use the language of the historic Reformed “Form for the Administration of Baptism.” God’s children must be godly taught. This instruction is essential for it is the means of God to train up the children to godliness, to a mature man or woman of God. Such is the importance of this teaching that it is part of the vow at baptism: parents promise to give this teaching.

This required instruction includes schooling to the extent that parents are able to provide it. First, the command of the Lord, in Deuteronomy 6:6ff. and Ephesians 6:4, is simply all-embracing and all-comprehensive: “when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” To exclude from the command all the time spent at school, i.e., most of the child’s life between the ages of five and eighteen — the most crucial period!, would be arbitrary in the extreme. Second, the claim of God on our children is total. If anything, God claims their mind primarily: “Love the Lord . . . with all thy soul,” i.e., your mind. Third, the life of the child is one life — a unity; and the one, whole life is to be nurtured by the Word of Christ. Fourth, the Word of God must be the content and rule of all the instruction, and not only of the spiritual

part at church. All knowledge, to be true knowledge, and not the Lie, must be based on Scripture. In other words, all education is religious education. Either it glorifies God, or it dishonors Him; either it confesses and bows to His sovereign authority, or it rebels; either it promotes a godly life, or it hinders it.

Such instruction is the responsibility of parents. Friends of the covenant may and will support the work, as covenant-work; but the parents have the calling: “And, ye fathers. . .” (Eph. 6:4). The setup of a good Christian school honors this reality: it is an extension of the home; it is parental; the teachers stand in the place of the parents.

Implied is that the Christian school is for covenant children only, to rear them to maturity. It is not an institution for the children of unbelievers, to evangelize them. One important, practical consideration here is that our children are not to have friendship with the children of the world. I cannot see how I can keep my children from friendship with bad companions if I send them to a school where the world attends.

The rearing that God requires is done by the teaching of the Truth; and this is the second reason why good Christian schools are necessary.

God requires that covenant

children be taught the Truth. In Deuteronomy 6:6ff., the parents in Israel are commanded to teach "them" diligently to their children. The reference is to the content of the teaching. This content is "these words," according to verse 6. Verses 4 and 5 show "these words" to be two great Words of God. First, there is the Word that Jehovah our God is one Lord. Second, there is the Word that we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and might. We must, therefore, teach our children Who and What God is and how they are to praise and serve Him. We must teach the Truth; and Jesus has answered the question, "What is Truth?" "Thy Word is Truth" (John 17:17); "I am... the Truth" (John 14:6).

This demands a good Christian school, for teaching the Truth is not only beginning the day with prayer and Bible-reading, nor even having a class in Bible; but it is the teaching of all the subjects — reading, math, history, science, and the others — in the light of the Word of God. It is a mistake to suppose that in the Christian school all the subjects are taught just as in the State schools, but that the Christian school is different inasmuch as it also teaches Bible, or Christian doctrine. The principle of Christian education is that we can see light only in God's light, as we read in Psalm 36:9. Scripture shines its light on every

branch of knowledge; on all the aspects of creation; on all the ordinances of God that children learn about in school. Only regenerated teachers and children can see this light and want to see this light, teachers and students into whose hearts the light of the Gospel has shined (II Cor. 4:6). Apart from Scripture, man is groping and stumbling about in the darkness. Indeed, this is what he chooses to do, because of the depravity of his wicked heart. The unregenerated hates the light and does all in his power to extinguish the light, because his deeds are evil (John 3:19, 20).

If I am working in a factory at night, with parts and pieces, with machinery, and with fellow workers, I need light to shine on everything; so that I can see everything as it really is, put the parts and pieces together, and cooperate with the other laborers. Without light, I stumble about helplessly. I feel a few parts, but cannot put them together. I botch up everything.

God's Word is the Light, as it is the rule and authority, in the classroom. Nothing is taught as Truth that conflicts with the Word, e.g., evolution. Nor does the instruction ignore the Word, as though God and His Word have nothing to do with the creation, learning, or earthly life. This is no better than outrightly contradicting the Word. One of the

monstrous evils of our time is the banishment of God's Word from earthly life, in order to confine it, safely, to the church services on the Lord's Day, or to the Sabbath-school. If anything has characterized Presbyterian, or Reformed, people in past ages, it is the conviction that the Word of God governs all of life; the insistence that we are to live our entire life in the world *coram Deo* (before the face of God); and the confession that Jesus is Lord over all. Only when our children learn the correct facts in the light of Scripture, only when teachers teach the subjects in the light of Scripture, are the facts Truth; and if our children learn correct facts, apart from the Word of God, they learn the Lie.

If my child gets knowledge of the human body that is scientifically correct, but learns that the human body is merely an animal-body, like that of the brutes, because it evolved, and that, therefore, she may use and gratify her body as she pleases, she has been taught the Lie. It is just as bad, really, if she is taught all about the body, without a word being said concerning the body's being a creation of God, whose chief purpose is to glorify God. The Truth about the body of the covenant child, in the science classes at school, is this, and nothing less: the body is all the wonderful things that science dis-

covers it to be, *as fearfully and wonderfully made by God* (Psalm 139:14). Bought with the precious blood of the Son of God (I Cor. 6:20) and indwelt by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:19), it is to be devoted to God, in purity of life (II Cor. 7:1) and in service (Romans 12:1), whether this service be bearing and rearing children, or working in a garage to the glory of God, or giving the body up to the flames of the stake as a martyr.

Such teaching of the Truth is the demanding task of the Christian schoolteacher; and such learning, the duty of the covenant student.

One of the questions raised by those who cannot yet see the need for Christian schools is whether it is not possible for a God-fearing child to know and hold the Truth even though the child attends a school where the Truth is not taught. After all, the child has the church and the home. The answer is that this is possible; indeed, it has often been the case, especially where Christian schools were impossible. But it is also the case that many children are weakened, and some even destroyed, spiritually. We must not underestimate the power of education, whether for good or for bad.

Although it is possible for covenant children to know the Truth and embrace it apart from

Christian schools, we Christian parents cannot be content that our children receive instruction five days a week, seven hours a day, for some twelve or fifteen years, that opposes and undermines our teaching at home and at church. We are desirous that all the teaching be harmonious and complementary. We are convinced, with the wise Preacher, that a threefold cord of home, school, and church is not quickly broken (Eccl. 4:12).

Besides, Reformed people are convinced that the Lie has no place in the world whatever, much less a place in the training of our covenant children. The Lie is a usurper and intruder in the world. It came in by the Devil — he is the father of it. Its aim is to blaspheme God's Name, to rob God of the glory of His works, and to recruit boys and girls — *your* boys and girls — for the war against the Kingdom of God.

Only the Truth has a rightful place in the world, much more in the schools that educate God's children. The Truth magnifies God's Name. It ascribes all glory to God, specifically for His works of creation and providence. It trains the children to seek first the Kingdom of God and to fight on behalf of this Kingdom against the coming kingdom of Antichrist.

We do not ask, then, how little Truth we can get away with, and

how much Lie we can put up with; but we burn to educate our children in the Truth entirely and exclusively. This is the Lord's command: Teach the Truth diligently to your children, always and everywhere.

I merely note in passing that it is in the Christian school that the conviction is alive that Truth can be known. To a large extent, the very idea that Truth exists, and the belief that men can know Truth, have long since disappeared from the educated world. There, the scepticism of Pilate reigns: "What is truth?" Not only is it true of the thinkers and scholars of the world that they are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (II Tim. 3:7), but they also boast of this, as though this were the noblest philosophy of education, rather than the most damning indictment of their learning.

As to the Benefit of Good Christian Schools

Always, there are benefits of doing the will of God. The benefits far outweigh the costs. In Christian education as in every other aspect of the life of the child of God the principle is, be willing to sacrifice and pay a high cost in doing God's will, as a disciple of Christ, and God will greatly reward you, both in this life and in the life to come. There are rewards. They are

rewards of grace; but there are rewards. These are incentives, because the work of the Lord always goes forward with much difficulty in this world.

Establishing and maintaining Christian schools is costly, difficult work. It takes a great deal of money. There are troubles of various kinds — struggles, problems, and disappointments. We need to be encouraged by the benefit of the work, in God's mercy.

That benefit is that our children grow up fearing the Lord and walking in His ways. Deuteronomy 6 puts it this way: they learn to know God as the one Lord and to love Him with heart, mind, and might. Psalm 78 holds before us that they will set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments. Proverbs 22:6 promises the benefit that they will not depart from the way of the Lord: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Some who have reservations about Christian schools ask whether sending children to Christian schools does not harm the children later on, when they must finally go out into the world. The thought is that in Christian schools the children are over-protected, so that they are unable to stand up against the world — its antichristian philosophies and

its ungodly way of life — when they leave the Christian school.

It is certainly true that the world is an enemy of our children. Christ said that we are sheep among wolves. It is also true that we are concerned about our children's not being devoured by the world. But exactly because the world is a foe of our covenant children, we want to protect them while they are children. We do not want to throw the lambs to the wolves. In the Christian school, we are preparing them for the inevitable conflict that is coming. There is a war going on. It is not a carnal war, not a war "after the flesh," as the apostle writes in II Corinthians 10:3ff., but a war that is spiritual, a war that has to do with "imagination, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God." It is a war of ideas; of thoughts; of doctrines; of teachings. These are the great issues and battlefronts: the sovereignty of man versus the sovereignty of God; the reign of Antichrist versus the reign of Jesus the Christ; the authority of man's word versus the authority of God's Word, Holy Scripture; a life of pleasure-madness versus a life of holiness; despair versus hope; the worship of the totalitarian State versus the worship of God, the Father of Jesus Christ.

In this war, a main object of the enemy is our children. John

God blesses the training of the
Christian home and the Christian

May this precious benefit be a powerful incentive to us to carry out the necessary work of Christian education.

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PARENTS' CORNER

Some time ago we asked Mrs. Eilene Terpstra to write an article dealing with the teaching of spiritual discernment to children. We had in mind, of course, the task of nurturing children such that, as they mature, they grow also in their ability to distinguish between what's right and what's wrong, what is the truth and what is the lie, what is God-glorifying music, literature, entertainment, etc., and what is not. The fervent prayer of every God-fearing parent is that instruction become internalized, that children become themselves spiritually sensitive, that they learn to know the right, and, as good instruction is applied to their hearts by the Spirit, to desire what is right. On reflection, we see now that the topic as assigned was a bit broad. Better it would have been, perhaps, to have concentrated on a specific area of discernment, rather than opening up the whole subject. Mrs. Terpstra, however, did a nice job. She touches on a good number of important concerns: singing, vocations, use of free time, to mention but a few. After completing the essay she admitted to having dealt with matters which had been of concern to herself and to her husband in their own rearing of children. The

article comes, she says, from the heart, and the writing of it with a feeling of personal inadequacy for the awesome parental responsibilities to which she draws the attention of our readers. It is God, however, not men, Who gives the increase; and for that she expresses her own gratitude. Serious-minded parents will appreciate Mrs. Terpstra's insights.

Building the House: Raising Discerning Children

Eileen Terpstra

I would rather the editor had asked for a good chicken soup recipe, or "Ten Easy Steps in Organizing Your Housework" than the topic assigned me. The topic was intimidating to me. In writing an article, such as this one, there is the danger of sounding as if you have all the answers, or that you are doing everything right. This is not the case, let me assure you, for the more one becomes involved in the awesome task of rearing covenant children, the more one is struck by the fact that it is truly weakest means that fulfill God's will. Much to our shame, it is often in spite of us and not through us that God "builds the house" (Ps. 127:1). For the beautiful fruit that we have seen on our labors we give God humble thanks. But rejoice in these fruits we must, and with thankful hearts for God's great gift of salvation and His covenant promises we gladly assume our

covenant responsibilities and train our children to be discerning and spiritually sensitive — those who are alive to and able to perceive spiritual truths. In this way we and our children bring glory to God's Name.

A frequent complaint regarding child-rearing articles from a Christian perspective is that they are so idealistic. The lament is heard that the picture is too "rosy" and that their homes fall far short of this ideal. That is pretty typical of how we all feel, I think. It is fitting however that we be idealistic, for God's Word is idealistic. He calls us "to be holy: for I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 20:7). Although we know we can never, in this life, be perfectly holy, we must strive to be so. This is what perseverance and the Christian struggle is all about. We must teach this to our children. We find that we often feel inadequate, untrained, or are

found wanting in many areas. How reassuring to know that we do not go about this task of "building our house" in our own strength. The God of Jacob is also our Help. He equips us by His Word and Spirit, never leaving or forsaking us in our effort. How diligent we must be in using the means He has given us. Unfaithful parents cannot bring up faithful children. This nurturing must be done by spiritually mature parents. Love for God and our children must permeate all of our efforts, and this love is rooted in Christ. These children are God's precious gift to us but they are given with this command, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6).

That *way* is one of obedience to Him. It is the *way* of fearing God, keeping His commandments, and sorrowing over sin. It is the *way* to the Cross. We must teach our children about a thankful walk and show them that it is pleasant and delightful to serve their Heavenly Father. We will teach them about the blessed privilege of drawing near to God in prayer. On this path of instruction we will teach them to be discerning.

Rev. Herman Hoeksema makes these observations in the *Reformed Dogmatics* in the chapter "The Preaching of the Word": "Modern educators stress the im-

portance of surrounding the child even in its cradle with objects, sounds, shapes, and colors and smells that are calculated to make the most favorable impression upon the little infant. Why then cannot the Holy Spirit in connection with the living Word of God impress the little child with all the influence of a truly covenant home, the singing of psalms or hymns, the playing of sacred music, the simple prayer uttered by the parents at the cradle, the folding of the little hands of the infant in prayer at the table in the high-chair, and many other influences of the Christian home, to bring the faculty of faith in to some sort of conscious activity?" (page 653). So then, we realize the importance of beginning at a very early age to instruct and foster a zeal for the Kingdom of God.

First of all, parents must be equipped to "build this house." We must be faithful in using the means God gives us to prepare us for this labor. We must first seek the Kingdom of God in order to teach our children to do so. We do this by faithful and diligent attention to God's Word in the preaching and in our own Bible study. We spend much time in prayer. God's Word is our rule of life, it is "able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 3:15b). It is profitable for all

things and addresses every circumstance in our life (II Tim. 3:14-17). God equips us by His Word and Spirit in this way and blesses our labors. Without this blessing, we "labor in vain" (Ps. 127:1).

In speaking to other parents, especially mothers, I conclude that an area of preparation that we often neglect is our own personal devotions. We become so busy in taking care of our daily chores that this very important part of "seeking the Kingdom of God" is pushed aside. Do we wonder, then, why we are not having a very good day or that everything seems to go wrong? Did we not have time to pray this morning? Lord's Day XLV, Q and A 116, tells us that prayer is the chief part of thankfulness which God requires, not only, but "that God will give His grace and Holy Spirit to those only, who with sincere desire continually ask them of Him, and are thankful for them." Are we ready to take on the awesome responsibility of training covenant youth without these blessings?

In beginning to teach our children we stress these same principles, applying them according to their ages. Our children must be able to observe and "feel" a love and devotion for God. It is an atmosphere that is created. Faithful church attendance, catechism instruction, and

other church related activities must have top priority in their lives also. When our children are very young we should begin to train them by reading the Bible with them, helping them to memorize special Bible verses, singing the songs of the church with them, praying with them and teaching them to pray. A good Bible Story Book such as *Come, Ye Children*, by Gertrude Hoeksema, Bible dictionary, Bible concordance, commentaries, church publications, and other literature which pastors and teachers are helpful in suggesting, are valuable aids in this instruction.

It would be impossible to list all the areas in which we should teach our children to be discerning. I am very thankful that space does not permit even attempting to do so! We will look at just a few of these areas.

It is crucial that we teach our children to be discerning in their use of spare time for, "Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right" (Prov. 20:11). In this area we have the opportunity to teach him about Christian liberty also. One of the ways they can be taught to fill their "free" time is by giving them the love of reading. By reading to them and giving them an appreciation for good literature we are giving them a gift they will cherish

all their lives. An excellent little book that will help in choosing worthwhile literature is *Honey for a Child's Heart*, by Gladys Hunt.

Music should have a prominent place in our homes. Praising God is certainly commanded of us. Notice how often the Psalms speak of this. We should sing and teach them the songs of Zion. We should encourage their musical abilities and help them to appreciate good music. We are accomplishing two things by doing this — stressing proper use of time and talents.

It is important that we spend time with our children, showing them the wonders and signs in creation, pointing them to God's beauty, goodness, and faithfulness in it. "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Thy Name in all the earth!" (Ps. 8:1a). What a great way to spend time and to give them a love for God's creation.

If we pay careful attention to "building our house" in this manner then the television, VCRs, computer games, etc. will not occupy much of our time, will they? If our guide for living is God's Word, then all kinds of negative things do not have to be said about these "entertainers." Let Psalm 101:1-3 teach us. Recreation can surely be a profitable thing; but there is a proper kind of fun for the child of God, and spiritually mature parents ought to know what this is.

Another area that is very important to consider is helping our children to seek God's Will for them in their calling. We should remember Paul's words in Colossians 3:23, 24, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ." This eliminates all self-seeking, doesn't it? Our goal is not riches, a great name, or social standing but always God's glory. We should certainly point them to the biographies of some of God's saints in connection with this. The self-denial practiced by Moses, Joseph, and Daniel should be an example to all of us.

We should not exclude the area of discipline. Consistent, loving, and firm correction is commanded by God. See Proverbs 29:15, 17; Proverbs 19:18; and Proverbs 13:24. In Hebrews 12:11 we read that "it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Notice too, that Eli *reproved* his sons but he did not *restrain* them (I Sam. 2-4, especially chapter 4:13). Read about the terrible judgment of God because of this. We must teach our children the consequences of sin. Unruly, disobedient children disrupt the home and God does not command His blessing in a home where sin is not dealt with. Because we love

Psalms 127 and 128 give us a good picture of the house we must build. The very first thing we must do, as was mentioned before, is to seek the blessing of the Lord on our labors. And, of course, we cannot labor if we are not there! Christ tells us in Matthew 18:5 how serious it is to offend one of His little ones. Aren't we offending them when we neglect to take the time to teach them the fear of the Lord? Isn't this hiding the Word of God from them? (Ps. 78:4). Often, the excuse of fathers and mothers, when spending little time with their children is that it is the quality and not the quantity of time that is significant. God is talking about quantity as well as quality in Deuteronomy 6. In Deuteronomy 6 we read that we must teach our children the Words of the Lord when "thou sittest in thine house, and when thou

Then, because God's covenant promises are sure and because of His marvelous Grace, we will someday hear the blessed words of our Lord in Matthew 25:34b, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

What a mercy was it to us to have parents that prayed for us before they had us, as well as in our infancy when we could not pray for ourselves!

Spring, 1987

CURRENT ISSUES

Television and Reading

Brian Dykstra

Articles dealing with the effects of television upon education usually do not cast an approving vote for television. Dominic Martia, an English teacher and vice president for student services at Roosevelt University in Chicago, expressed his concern in an article which appeared in the February 9, 1987 issue of *U.S. News & World Report*. Martia is alarmed by the growing dependence of Americans on television for ideas and information. As this dependence grows, Martia claims, reading skills decline.

Martia says that television is appealing because critical thinking is being done for the viewer. He writes:

The point is that television's seductive and misleading immediacy lulls our critical judgment. Watching TV requires much less effort than reading does. Our preference for TV as a source of information and ideas is a measure of intellectual laziness.

Reading more is only half of

the solution to the problem. Martia continues:

If overreliance on TV has atrophied our reading skill, then reading more should help restore it. But besides reading more, we need to become more-selective and more-critical readers. Much of what we might read isn't worth reading. It panders to the same laziness that induces us to turn on the TV rather than open a book.

That reading is essential to education and to effective citizenship is also asserted by Martia.

Dr. Quentin Schultze, professor of communication arts and sciences at Calvin College, agrees with Martia about the appeal of television. In the *Christian Educators Journal*, February-March, 1987 issue, Schultze claims that a major goal of primary education "is to orient students to the world of books and instill in them a love for reading and writing." About the relationship between reading and television Schultze says:

Schultze appears to have chosen the last word in the above quotation carefully. Television viewing is not just socially "acceptable," it has become "expected" of every normal American. Not knowing much or anything about the popular television shows, and certainly not even having a television, is to become something of a social dinosaur. These types simply do not exist anymore.

Millburn, New Jersey, collected \$500 from his mother for not watching television for a year. This boy had "watched six to seven hours of TV daily and routinely taped his favorite shows while watching others." It was no small task for this boy not to watch television for a year, especially "because his friends teased him mercilessly."

How much television do our children watch? Is the time spent before the television really worth it? Is there something better to do? If we decide to read more, is what we read challenging or is it just more prattle which enters our minds by an alternate route? Should we run the risk of becoming social dinosaurs before our critical reading and thinking skills become extinct?

It is not the work of the Spirit to tell you the meaning of Scripture, and give you the knowledge of divinity, without your own study and labour, but to bless that study, and give you knowledge thereby. . . . To reject study on pretence of the sufficiency of the Spirit, is to reject the Scripture itself.

Richard Baxter

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BULLETIN BOARD

We'd like to tack onto our bulletin board this time a page of the September 17, 1986 issue of the Edgerton Enterprise. Two new teachers in the Protestant Reformed School in Edgerton made the news that day. They even got their pictures in the paper. That was neat. We can't reproduce the pictures here, but we can certainly show you what was said about them, and by them. The Enterprise seems to have done a nice job on that one. Here it is:

Fresh Faces in School

Two new teachers can be found at Edgerton Free Christian School this year. Lim Kok Eng will be acting as principal and teaching grades 5-9. Mrs. Dawn DeVries will be caring for the kindergarten children.

Mr. Lim has lived in the United States since 1982, when he first entered Hope College. He is a citizen of Singapore. After graduating this past spring, he applied in various Protestant Reformed schools in Colorado and also in Edgerton. "I felt that I'd like to teach in a Christian school," he commented.

He continued, "Teaching is more than teaching math, science, and English. Teaching involves helping the children to see the power of God, the creation of God. From there, they will grow

up knowing His precepts. We want to train them up to be a people that love the Lord."

He added, "Teaching is exciting, it's interesting. Since the time I entered college, I've wanted to teach in a Christian school. The kids here have been very responsive to the school work, although it has been challenging for me with several grades."

Although Mr. Lim has found the community considerably different from the large one he was accustomed to, he noted, "So far I like it here. It is a peaceful, nice community."

Mr. Lim's hobbies include reading and photography. He has dabbled with a variety of scenic shots, black and white pictures, and is presently experimenting with indoor portraits.

Dawn, wife of the pastor of Edgerton's Protestant Reformed congregation, is trying her hand at teaching for the first time this year. She reflected, "Judy Brummel decided not to teach again this year. The school needed someone. I was here to fill the need."

She continued, "I felt it was God's leading. My youngest daughter is in kindergarten. I wouldn't even have considered it, if I had children at home, but this way our schedules are the same."

She smiled, "I never really expected I'd be doing this, but the need was there. And I'm really

enjoying it a lot. The kids are so excited; anything you do is great. I am finding out, though, that you really can't stick with anything too long, with such little ones, so I'm really tired by the end of the day. But it is nice to just be there with them; being there to teach them what they have to know."

Mrs. DeVries' hobbies include reading and playing piano at home. "Really I keep busy just being a minister's wife — there is a lot of entertaining involved with that." She paused, "Although right now it is enough just to keep up the wash of four children!"

Item number 2 on the bulletin board is an announcement about the second Young Writers' Day Workshop to be sponsored by the Federation. It's going to be held this year in Hope School in Grand Rapids. Pilots this year are Messrs. Darrel Huiskens, Cal Kalsbeek, John Kalsbeek, and Jim Huizinga. They'll be providing information to students later on this spring, but for now we'd like to give at least this advance notice to our Perspectives readers.

Young Writers' Day to be Held Again

Darrel Huiskens

The Federation Board of Protestant Reformed School Societies has again consented to finance another Young Writers' Day Workshop in Grand Rapids. The theme of this workshop is

"God's Perfect Plan for Me: Writing Meaningful Autobiography" based on Psalm 139 and Psalter 383. The participants are fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh graders. The price is \$15.00.

The format is similar to last year except that seventh graders will also participate. Also, the planning committee will distribute registration materials, including pre-workshop registration materials and pre-workshop activities, to the participants before the end of school. These pre-workshop activities include three short worksheets to help the participants get a head start on the work of the day.

The work of the day is writing meaningful autobiography. Because time will not allow the writing of an entire autobiography, the participants will, with the help of parents and teachers, pick out one turning point in their lives to show God's perfect plan in that incident. The students may pick a "big" event, such as a death of a loved one, to a rather "small" event, such as breaking a bone or losing a pet.

The goals are also similar, viz., to give these children an enjoyable writing experience, and to encourage young writers to have a good attitude toward writing.

Again this year the schedule calls for a pre-writing session, a writing session, snack breaks, lunch break, and a group swimming party. Also, as last year, each participant will receive a booklet of the productions at

the workshop and a complimentary T-shirt.

As teachers of the workshop we encourage wide participation of all students in the Grand Rapids and Chicago areas. For those who live greater distances and are vacationing in the area, by all means send your children to this worthwhile activity. All our schools will receive the registration materials. Young Writers' Day is planned for Friday, July 10, at Hope School.

To the Parents:

In order for your children to receive the most from this workshop we are asking you to help your child with the worksheets and the other activities that will come in the registration materials.

We ask that you fill out the worksheet before the workshop, use the guide for devotions, and in any other way prepare your child for this activity. In doing this you will help your child and help all those participating in this worthwhile project.

If you have any questions about this project, please call or write the Director —

John Kalsbeek
3092 Harvest
Grandville, MI 49418
(616) 531-6553

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FILE CABINET

Classrooms have bulletin boards on which to post information and/or pictures of things that are happening currently. A file cabinet serves a different purpose. In every teacher's file cabinet there's probably one drawer which becomes the repository of "junk." But, besides the junk drawer, there's always going to be a drawer for filing away stuff from the past — appropriate pictures, worksheets, newspaper articles, whatever — things which have proven to be worthwhile and are kept on hand for future use. That's what we have in mind with our new rubric: "File Cabinet." Our file contains things which were written probably long ago, but which have not over the years lost their appropriateness. A Standard Bearer article entitled "How and What to Read," written by the late Rev. Marinus Schipper, fits that description. Though written over 45 years ago it addresses a problem of very real current concern. In fact, in light of what Mr. Dykstra said about television and reading, in "Current Issues," this article of Rev. Schipper probably speaks with more force today than it did back in 1941 when it was written. Come to think of it, the article relates well also to what Mrs. Terpstra had to say in "Parents' Corner" about building houses. But, find out for yourself. We hope you will enjoy this addition to Perspectives.

How and What to Read

Rev. Marinus Schipper

In a country where illiteracy is rare and education is not only within the grasp of almost every child but even literally forced upon them, it might seem superfluous to suggest, as my subject does, that there not only might be but actually are some, yea many, who do not know how to read.

One need not necessarily be illiterate to know not how to read. In fact, the majority of people who read have never mastered the art. Almost everyone is able to pick up a book or newspaper and assimilate its contents, but not everyone knows how to read.

Reading is an art. Ernest

Legouvé, a French teacher and lecturer on the subject, asks and answers the question as follows: "Is reading an art at all? Many doubt it. Some deny it. My opinion I give without the slightest hesitation. A careful study of the question for at least thirty years, aided by numberless and varied experiences, has convinced me that it is an art, a real art, but as difficult as it is real, and as useful as it is difficult."

Reading is an art "which entails the powers of sharing and understanding the thoughts and sympathies of great men and women who have left books as signposts on the road of culture, to guide those who stumble along the way" (Henry Guppy on the Art of Reading).

I shall have occasion in the sequence to call your attention to the fact that these "signposts" must be true signposts for us or we had better ignore them altogether. But the fact remains nevertheless that as far as the art of reading is concerned, it consists chiefly in the ability to grasp and share in the thought of the author of the material to be read. Did it ever strike you that on the shelves of a library which is worthy of the name you will find that the secular intervals of time are abridged and that generations of men meet on a single shelf? Then if you look more closely, you shall discover that all the leading

facts of life are there, the differences between men and men, with all the differences between the ages and ages of the world. If our minds are properly attuned, we shall hear the laughter and the sobs of mankind, and we shall understand as perhaps never before, something of the labors of mankind, of their successes, of their useless sacrifices of which there are so many in history, of the idle dreams with all their mischiefs.

At the same time we shall discern something of the power of books to annihilate as it were, space and time, and, like a "magic carpet" transport us into regions the most remote. It is possible by their aid to witness unharmed the great catastrophes of the world. It may be even that, though you are deprived of the opportunities of travel and exploration, yet through the medium of books you can be privileged to rove the dark continent of Africa with the Scottish explorer, David Livingstone, or with Johanna Veenstra into the heart of the Sudan.

The world of books is our common heritage, but before we can enter into it, we must gain possession of the key that unlocks it, and that key is the art of reading.

It is hardly reasonable, therefore, for anyone to expect to be able to pick up a piece of work, the result of years of thought and

experience, and hope to find in it relaxation for idle hours. Anyone who intends to read in the real sense of the word must first rid his or her mind of the idea that reading is anything but a strenuous exercise of the brain, calling into action all the appreciations of mind with the faculty of imagination.

And this art of coinciding your thoughts and your understanding with that of the author whose literature you read is an art that needs to be cultivated. Nobody cares for it to begin with, unless he is a prodigy. It is never too late to begin. I have talked with people about the matter of reading the *Standard Bearer* or other good literature. A very common expression you hear amongst our older people is, "I have no desire to read because I cannot read. If I had only started when I was younger, I might have acquired the habit." Now it is true that the great readers of the world began very early, and that what we read in early life impresses the mind more deeply than what we read later. Nevertheless a real love of reading may come late in life. It is related of a man of affairs, who had wanted all his life to read and had collected a fine library for the time when he should have leisure to enjoy it, that he found to his dismay, when the opportunity for which he had long waited came,

with his physician's order to take a few years rest from business, he could not read, because he had never learned how, and was unable to keep his mind fixed on the page. He had thought that man could read just as easily as he could walk, but he discovered that it was an art, and with shame he had to confess that he had never cultivated it. The tools were within his reach, but he could not use them. If we wish to care for reading, we must begin to read and go on reading until we really care for it.

However, when we begin to read we should read slowly and deliberately, just as a pedestrian setting out on a long journey starts at a moderate pace, quickening it as his muscles get into full play, and as his limbs become accustomed to the exercise. This suggestion may not be favorable to rapid reading at first, but it will insure thorough reading. It is not the multitude of books that gives wisdom; it is not how much we read that should concern us, but how much we retain. On the other hand, it is true that the more you read the faster you should read, and good readers are quick readers. Accordingly, Professor Cavanaugh, the Psychologist, in his observations on the subject of the pace at which we read remarks that many, perhaps most, people read too slowly, and could by a conscious effort speed up

their reading by something like 50%. And paradoxical as it may appear, quicker reading is more efficient. The quick reader understands and remembers better than the slow reader. Quick reading leads to alertness of mind. Tests have been made and have shown that the quickest readers are best at answering questions on the subject-matter of their reading. Masters in the art of reading also exhort to reading aloud. The reason for this is that the ear as well as the eye collaborates with the mind in the activity of reading and serves to aid us in remembering what we read.

Moreover, the art of reading is not yet perfected unless you are also able to read critically. Fundamental as it is to enter into the spirit of the author, this does not mean that one slavishly mumble the words of the author and cry "amen" to his every conclusion. The only Author to whose Word we shall say "Amen" is God alone. Though you may exegete His Word and with finite minds seek to analyze it, you may never hold that Word in suspicion. But for the rest the artful reader will inquire with a free exercise of his mind. You should therefore read good literature "with the admiration of intelligence and not with the wonder of ignorance." The result will be that your art of reading will broaden into the refined accomplishment of

"skipping and skimming." By this we mean that you will be able to detect the useless and uninteresting and corrupt literature which is swamping the markets. Many people read a book principally with the object of getting through it. They reach the word "finis" with the same sensation of triumph as the Indian felt when he had added a fresh scalp to his belt. This is not proper. The accomplished reader is he who speedily detects and chooses the material he really desires to read.

What is it that we should desire to read? But isn't also this question superfluous? Should this question be asked of people whose world and life view is generally Reformed and particularly Protestant Reformed?

I believe the question is not only proper but also timely. We are coming into that season of the year when more than any other we have time and occasion to read. The long winter nights keep us inside and are more opportune for reading and study than the hot, sultry days of summer. Church society life is sliding into full swing, and demanding preparation through reading and study. And not only does the season of the year lend itself to the justifiability of the question, but the time in general in which we live — the time of great world events and a time of much difference of opinion and creed.

In times such as these there is noticeably also much literature to be had. Literature that is good and bad. "Signposts" that are true and false. Books and papers also that present deceptive mixtures.

What shall we read? Well, the Reformed man knows the answer. The covenant young man and woman also knows the answer. The little children of God's covenant should be instructed in the answer if they do not already know it.

We shall read with joy only that with which not only our minds and understanding can coincide with the author's, but also our hearts. That literature only we will seek to read which shall build us up first of all spiritually and then intellectually. And though we cannot help but read much of the "stuff" that floods the mart, concerning that we shall say, "My soul loatheth it." And, "My children shall have 'bread' and not 'stones' to eat."

For you realize that we have not said enough when we described the art of reading. Reading for us is not merely a natural, intellectual activity of the mind and eye, mouth and ear whereby we assimilate the thoughts of others and criticize them. But reading for us is also a spiritual matter. The unregenerate reader may be intellectually of world renown but

spiritually he rejoices in corruption even when he reads. The child of God reads also intelligently, and develops his intellectual powers, but spiritually principally he rejoices only in the good. Should he nevertheless still find a delight in the corruption, it is not he that does so, but sin that dwelleth in him. From this sinful delight he must be converted and repent. In respect to this we shall all have to be admonished.

It is therefore proper not only to ask the question: what shall we read? but it is also proper to answer it by pointing once more to that which is good. That which is supremely good is the Scriptures which are able to enlighten the mind of our understanding to such a degree that all other literature will be judged in its light. And he who delights himself in reading the Scriptures will also be interested in developing in the truth as it has been formulated in our creeds by the church in all ages. The good reader, Reformed reader, will apply the principles of reading described above also to these. Need I remind you also how beneficial it is to read our church periodicals, the many books and pamphlets of delightful reading materials?

Most naturally, for us, first things come first and therefore we should also follow the order

just as we prescribed it above. Only then, when there is time waiting on our hands, should we broaden out in our field of reading materials. Then no harm is done or evil perpetrated if we peruse a history book, a recommended novel, or even a magazine, the possession of which will not cause you to blush when your minister or elder comes for a visit. □□



from the TEACHERS' LOUNGE

Summertime is almost upon us. "No more teachers, no more books, . . ." It always sounded so good, didn't it, to get away from all that learnin'. And yet, it wasn't really the learning itself that one longed to escape, as much as it was the structure which was necessary to facilitate formal education. A lot of informal, unstructured learning can take place in the summertime, so that a child will return to school in September with increased academic skills. That'll happen, often, whether or not conscious attempts are made by parents to encourage it. But there can be no doubt but that progress will be better if summertime learning is fostered in and by the home. We're talking, remember, about fun things, incidental learning — but things that can nevertheless be planned. What are some of those things? Parents are probably in a better position to offer suggestions for that than are teachers. But, maybe it wouldn't do any harm to listen in on some Teachers' Lounge conversation on this subject. We have for you, here, some ideas presented by primary grade and intermediate grade teachers in several of our schools. Suggestions for intermediate grade students were submitted by various of our western school teachers, and compiled, I believe, by Mr. Skip Hunter, principal in Doon. From what follows, you should be able to pick up a few ideas that'll work well in your family.

So You Want To Help?

As we draw near to the end of another school year, I get asked the question by some parents if there is anything that they can do for their children over the summer. In order to help you with this question I decided to describe four activities that I think would be valuable for all students.

First, make sure that they have an opportunity to read. They need materials. These materials can be almost anything that is suitable for children to read. Books, magazines, newspapers, and other reading materials are a valuable exposure to the written word. This would be a way for them to improve their skills in the area of vocabulary and comprehension. The type of written material does not matter so much, as that written material is *read*. A good horse story, dog story, mystery story, sport story, or whatever else catches a child's fancy makes for a time of fun learning. Help them find their interest, and then let them cultivate it.

Second, lots of physical exercise is good for them, whether it be swimming, bicycling, mowing the lawn, horseback riding, hiking, washing the car, playing ball, walking beans, or whatever else; physical exercise not only builds

the body but also helps to mellow the temperament of the child. Too much sitting can make one, among other things, very edgy.

Third, they need help in the area of responsibility. All children, whatever the age, need to learn and to cultivate responsibility. This responsibility must be geared to the child's age. They all should be expected to complete certain tasks on their own and to be responsible for the consequences of not doing the task correctly. This is a skill that will carry over and be useful all of their lives.

Last, help them with their knowledge of the Bible. Whether it be knowledge in knowing the books of the Bible, or knowledge of the well-known Bible stories or characters, or practical application of certain texts to their lives, Biblical knowledge is valuable to every child of God. I am very surprised when students in the upper grades do not recall well-known Bible stories. If the Word is to be our sword in the battle of faith we would do well to keep it sharp.

There you have it. Four easy ways for a parent to help their child. Do all need help in the same areas? No. Do all need help to the same degree? No. Do all need help? Yes. These

are not four ways that can be backed up with lots of statistical evidence. But these are areas in which a child and parent can work together for the child's good.

Activities for subject areas for the middle grades:

Bible:

Memorize Bible passages and review passages already memorized (especially where there is no Sunday School). Preview the next year's Bible stories. Work out Bible quizzes and play Bible games. Have daily personal Bible reading.

Math:

Drill basic facts. Follow recipes. Do measuring projects. On trips do mileage, map work, expense planning, logistics. Play games involving adding and subtracting. Go shopping with a fixed amount of money. Fill out orders from a catalog.

Language Arts:

Oral reading to younger children. Visit the library. Write book "report" to friends. Write letters to school friends, etc. Play travel games for parts of speech. Keep a journal of travels or experi-

ences to present at school. Play word games.

Geography:

Use maps. Take a family trip to a foreign land using reference materials.

Science:

Observe God's creation often. Take factory tours. Make collections. Grow gardens. Cook, can, and freeze together.

Health and Safety:

Learn safety rules of everyday living — biking, boating, swimming, playing, traffic. Learn simple first aid.

Music:

Sing with the family. Experience new kinds of songs either by singing or by use of a record or a tape. Take music lessons now and not during the school year.

Physical Education:

Bike riding, hiking, swimming, using fitness parks, playing games within the family.

Other:

Learn responsibility in many activities. (This can prove a good help for slow learners.)

How about this, for kindergartners going on to 1st grade?

1. Reviewing sounds of letters is always very helpful between kindergarten and first grade.

a. Choose a letter or two for each meal and see if your child can think of something, which is part of that particular meal,

that begins with that letter.

b. When planning a trip (be it a day at the beach, or a two-week vacation) see how many of the "letters" we are taking along. (If checked in alphabetical order this helps also.)

- c. In one day, see how many things you can think of to do that begin with a particular letter.
- d. While traveling, find things that begin with the letters.
- 2. Reviewing math concepts is also helpful.
 - a. Talk about the shapes of things. Can your children find particular shapes?
 - b. While setting the table, have your child count out the number of spoons, forks, plates, etc. that are needed.
 - c. When change is received after shopping, have your child count it and tell you how much you've received.
 - d. Simple addition or subtraction "story problems" can be made from almost any situation.
 - e. While traveling, count the number of . . . (red cars, traffic lights, stop signs, hamburger joints, or any other frequently observed things [trees in Nebraska might be counted, but don't try that in Michigan]).
- 3. Read
 - a. Read books to your children.
 - b. Read books along with your children.
 - c. Have them find words they know in the books you're reading.

And for 2nd and 3rd graders:

Reading:

Good ideas can be gleaned from a book like *Games for Reading: Playful Ways to Help Your Child Read*, by Peggy Kaye.

- 1. Label the house with word cards.
- 2. Word concentration, jigsaw sentences.
- 3. Dictionary reading to learn the meaning of words that the child does not know while reading books during the summer. These new words can be kept in a book or on a keyring.
- 4. Read good books to your children — especially older children.
- 5. Reading recipes, writing the

recipe on another sheet of paper, learning about liquid and dry measuring, following directions.

- 6. Treasure hunt — sentence clues are written on index cards that are hidden throughout the house that lead from one place to another and finally to a gift.
- 7. Scrapbook of trips, people, animals, etc. Pictures are drawn or taken by camera and put into the scrapbook. Information about the picture is written on the same page.
- 8. Coupons — reading, cutting, sorting.

Science:

Here you might want to skim *Foolproof Failsafe Seasonal Science*, by Instructor Books.

1. Scavenger hunt — specific creatures must be found and brought back to be studied. Research on creatures can be written out.
2. Map the house, the backyard, or even the neighborhood.
3. Collect leaves and bark to make rubbings for trees around the house.
4. Investigating water — melting, freezing, evaporation, boiling, and pollution. If you have a microscope, take water from various places (ponds, rivers, lakes, etc.) and examine the marine life.
5. Observing changes — weather watching, gardening, and growing yeast.
6. Sort and classify objects.

7. Gardening — there are many biblical concepts that can be taught in gardening while putting the seed in the ground, cultivating, spraying, fertilizing, and harvesting.

Community Resources:

Use the resources available in the community. There are many excellent summer programs available through the library, museum, city recreation department, schools, and colleges.

Rainy day (or boring day activity):

On slips of paper list activities that you and your children can do together. Fold the slips up and put them in a jar. Store the jar in a special place and take it out on a rainy day. Let one child draw a slip and that will be the special *family* activity for the day. Example: Bake cookies; plan a rainy day picnic (make it a special lunch).



All sorts of things can come out of Teachers' Lounges — sometimes even things of a more cerebral kind. The following is an example of that. It comes to us from Lynden, Washington. Mr. Peter Adams teaches there, and, as the article suggests, he's both a teacher of science. . . and a philosopher — a not unhappy combination. He deals in this article with the methodology of science, explaining that the so-called scientific method can be considered reliable only if, for one thing, creation is orderly and behaves consistently, and, for another, man is able to think and reason in a logical way. He then goes on to explain how miracles fit into this orderly scheme of things. You'll need your "thinking cap" for this one.

Science, Miracles, and God

Peter Adams

As Protestant Reformed educators we need to grasp for ourselves and communicate to our students the relationship of the material under study to the truth of God. Not only is this something we ought to do in our schools to validate our reason for existence, but also this provides satisfaction in our minds and hearts as we contemplate how all things fit together under God.

Science is an area in which we can readily correlate God's truth. One way is to point out continually the wonders of nature, whether that be in the geologic splendors of mountains and valleys, the physical makeup of the creation in chemistry, or in the wisdom displayed in how God has made His living creatures. The heavens do declare His glory, and the earth does show forth His handiwork.

The purpose of this article, however, is to examine the methodology of science itself and to show that even here God can and must be acknowledged. The scientific method may be used as a means to understand how science works. After a problem or situation is identified, a possible explanation is put forth

called a hypothesis. This hypothesis is tested through a controlled experiment and finally a conclusion is drawn.

Suppose, for example, you wish to produce the most milk possible from your herd of dairy cows. That is the problem. The hypothesis is the belief that the proper feed will produce the most milk. Keeping track of milk production of the cows using one type of feed one month, and another type of feed the next month, and so on, with all other factors kept the same, makes up the controlled experiment. The conclusion consists of evaluating the figures thus obtained and making a choice of which feed to use based on that evaluation.

Notice two underlying assumptions that are made in following this procedure. The first is that the cows, their feed, and in fact all creation must behave consistently. For the results to be meaningful, you must believe that if checked again three months or three years from now, the feed will not have changed its properties nor the cows their production of milk using that feed. Otherwise there would not be any incentive to make systematic trials

since no expectation of future results could be based on those past trials. This is known as the principle of the uniformity of nature.

Perhaps at this point you are saying to yourself, "Of course! Creation is that way. If water boiled at 100 degrees Centigrade yesterday in the lab, then it will do so today in my kitchen; if the right curvature of the wing of an airplane enabled it to fly previously, it will do so now as we go down the runway." You say this because you believe in God, Who being the rational, orderly God that He is, made His creation orderly and rational as well. It can be counted on to perform reasonably and consistently so that the rules that govern it can be found through systematic investigation. The creation is lawful because of the Legislator. This is a proper and correct assumption for the Christian.

What of those people who have not understood the God of Scripture, however? For instance, some peoples of the Far East would toss sticks into the air and note which way they fell and from that receive, in their minds, divine guidance. Their god was a random, impersonal, non-communicative god. Nature was looked upon as being in the same mold: random and unknowable. Thus, even though

they were clever in inventing kites, paper, gunpowder, and fireworks, they never had a systematic, logical framework of principles that explained why their inventions worked nor further developed these basic discoveries. These people lacked the fundamental confidence in nature needed to nurture science because they didn't know nature's God. Christianity gave rise to science.

The second assumption necessary to the operation of science is even more elementary. In all the formulating, hypothesizing, observing, and evaluating that takes place in science, what has to be true is that the person doing all this can think and reason in a valid and true manner. The thinking process has to be something more than a collection of molecules whirring away in the upper portion of a person's body. Just as we pay attention to what a computer prints out onto a page only because we believe that its action has been controlled by a rational programmer, we hold to be valid what we ourselves and other scientists have thought and written about because we feel we too are rationally controlled. If this were not believed to be the case, the results would be considered nonsense and no one could or would do science.

How can it be shown that man thinks correctly? It can't be

shown, because in the process of showing this you are already assuming right then that the thinking process is valid. You have to begin with faith in your own thinking ability in order to commence to demonstrate anything else. As a result, any conclusion which is inconsistent with man's having a logical mind is self-contradictory and therefore must be thrown out. If my findings in science, for example, lead me to the conclusion that my thinking process is the result of evolution from mud-puddles to amoebas on through to monkeys and apes, I could not accept that conclusion, because it would mean that the findings themselves would be based on thinking stemming from irrational sources. The conclusion, therefore, would have to be rejected.

On the other hand, if I accept God's revelation of who I am as being one He made in His image, who would then have His faculties of reasoning (though in a limited, fallen way), I can have a proper foundation for believing my thoughts to be valid. I can go on from there to do science. Only Christians have the solution to the epistemological question of how man can know that he knows. Descartes, the humanist, said, "I think, therefore I am." The Christian confesses, "God is, therefore I think."

Notice the utter foolishness

and irony of the actions of sinful, rebellious man as he, in the name of science, "disproves" God and holds as unthinkable anything being true that is beyond his "scientific" observations. He cheats by taking orderliness and knowledge from God and using them to fight against Him. This sinful "scientist's" damnation is just.

Can a place for miracles be found anywhere in this picture of creation, without ruining it? By the common definition, miracles "break" the laws of nature, as if they are improper or illegal. This would be the case if the physical, mindless universe were the total of reality or if God were a god who created an orderly universe and then wouldn't dare to interfere with its perfect, mathematical operation. But this is a denial of Who God is. First of all, He is the ever-present God sustaining His creation. Secondly, the larger purpose of creation is not just to be a reflection of God's orderliness, but at times to direct attention to Him in special ways. The creation does this by being orderly the vast majority of the time so that when God performs extraordinary events in it, these stand out as pointers to the glory of God. The series of miracles in the Gospel of John, to use one example among many, is expressly said to serve as signs that manifested Christ's

glory and caused His disciples to believe upon Him (John 2:11). The ultimate Master which creation serves is not the physical laws that God put into it, but God Himself. In the great landscape of creation, miracles serve as the signature of the Artist.

Thus it is only by acknowledging God's ordering of creation

and His giving to us reasoning powers that man, honestly and humbly, can do science, realizing its foundations and limitations. As Christians we do our experiments realizing they go in the normal manner, the Lord willing. Of Him and through Him and to Him are science, miracles, and all things.



TOO BUSY?

If you are too busy in your work, civic duties, or social activities to participate in the activities of your children, then you are too busy. There is no substitute for your personal involvement with your children. Your children need you more than they need your money, your record of civic achievements or social standing. Time with your family comes first on your life's list of priorities.

by Dr. Paul A. Kienel, Executive Director
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PERSPECTIVES

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