

BACKGROUND BRIEFS

by Agatha Lubbers

The school bell has sounded in the schools of America and many other parts of the world announcing the beginning of the 1982-1983 school year. That means that we too, who are responsible for the publication of *Perspectives in Covenant Education*, must heed the sound of the bell and bring to your homes the first issue of our magazine which we now publish tri-annually in the fall, winter, and spring.

Several magazines and periodicals that are not specifically devoted to educational issues have made comments about the educational situation in Christian schools. I want to take an opportunity to quote from two such articles.

Andrew Kuyvenhoven, writing in the September 6, 1982, *Banner*, commented on Christian Schools in his editorial. He said,

If God and education are taken seriously, the two cannot be separated. God is the beginning and end of all things. He is Originator and Goal of creation and human history. Education is a process that equips us for meaningful life in the present world. Hence true education must be Christian education.

A little later in his article he wrote rather tellingly that there seems to have been a swing in the pendulum of emphasis in Christian education as this is practiced in Reformed circles.

Some years ago many of us were saying that in a Christian school the instruction in Bible, Christian ethics, church history, and a course in Christian perspectives were non-essentials. The Christian faith, it was said, should simply permeate all subjects, including grammar and computer math.

Well let me say that I remember those days too, when we were saying such things. But one has to know his Bible, his church history, and Christian ethics if he is going to permeate all subjects with the Christian faith; and *all subjects must be permeated* with and taught from the perspective of the Christian faith.

For that reason I concur with Andrew Kuyvenhoven when he says,

Today I firmly believe that a grounding in the Scriptures, a formulation of Christian perspectives, and training in discipleship must have top priority in the Christian school. May this kind of instruction be at the core of all schooling during the new year.

* * * * *

Another issue that deserves some more attention than we have given it has been addressed in several other magazines that I take the time to read. One is the *Outlook* and the other is *Reformed Perspective*. In both of these periodicals the issue of the relevance of the Reformed ecclesiastical creeds for the schools has come under discussion.

This is in part due to the fact that there have been those who have insisted that the Covenant schools are not to be regulated by ecclesiastical creeds but that the schools should be regulated by a creed that is specifically educational. Another reason for this concern is the work that Christian Schools International has done through a "Task Force on the Future of Christian Education." Peter DeJong, editor of the *Outlook*, writing about this says, "Under its auspices Dr. N.J. Beversluis, retired professor of Education at Calvin College, prepared two studies on the subject. The first, a 15-page document, was entitled *Christian Education: A Creedal Summary*, and the second, issued in March, 1982, amounting to 30 pages, was entitled *IN THEIR FATHER'S HOUSE, A Handbook of Christian Educational Philosophy*."

Writing about this problem in the October, 1982, *Outlook*, editor Peter DeJong says,

Our schools, although parental rather than parochial, have been initiated, promoted and supported by our churches to apply the faith they confess in their creeds in the education of the children. There seems to be a tendency as the schools grow and become accepted, for the churches' interest in and support of them to decline. The results are often obviously detrimental to the school and particularly to parents of larger families who need the help of fellow Christians to sustain the costs of educating their children. To introduce a difference even of creedal definitions of Christianity between the churches and schools promises further alienation and injury to churches, schools, and families. As one young parent observed, "Our Christian schools may turn into private schools for the rich." That too has happened before.

God forbid that this should happen in the community of churches that is primarily responsible for the establishing of the schools in which

the teachers, who are responsible for the publishing of this magazine, teach. We need the support of the churches. We need the strong preaching of the gospel and the direction given by the Reformed creeds so that our schools will remain truly Christian schools.

God grant us grace to be faithful to our Reformed Heritage.

* * * * *

You will have noticed that the cover of this issue of *Perspectives* describes this issue as a Special Issue. It is special in that most of the copy for this issue comes to us from the pen of Rev. John A. Heys. Rev. Heys is an emeritus minister from the Holland, Michigan, Protestant Reformed Church. He has served the churches in many ways and has always been interested in the cause of Christian education. He was helpful in his early years as minister in the establishing of the Grand Rapids, Michigan Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School.

The articles that appear in this issue of *Perspectives* were originally given as speeches to the teachers in the summer mini-course sponsored by the Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies. In keeping with the purpose of the Federation that it "promote the development, understanding, and presentation of distinctive Christian education," the general theme of the mini-course is the general theme of the three articles that appear in this issue. We believe you will enjoy and profit from the reading of these three articles, which explore and develop the general theme, *Teaching Our Children Scriptural Values*.

By Christian education we do not mean secular education with Christian features added on externally; Christian education means education that is Christian in its essence or inner character all along the line, not only in the chapel and Bible classroom, but in every classroom and every laboratory, as well as in the life and thinking of every teacher.

What is Christian Education?

J.G. Vos