

# Editorials

by Agatha Lubbers

## EDITOR-IN-CHIEF AGATHA LUBBERS RESIGNS

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

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

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

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

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

God bless you, Don, in your work.

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## GEOGRAPHIC ILLITERACY HAS BECOME A DISEASE OF EPIDEMIC PROPORTIONS!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Sinai Desert is in Vietnam.

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

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

The Gallup study was also said to reveal the following:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

\*Projected

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

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

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#### STANDARD BEARER ARTICLES ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION BY HERMAN HOEKSEMA REPRINTED

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### CONTENTS:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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