

at all when they should be. We do best when we establish God's guideline in all our life and seek to follow that day by day. As our children grow older they must know that guideline and have the consequences carefully explained so that they respect us when we deal with them, they honor us for God's sake.

May these few thoughts encourage you as parents. Whenever we reflect upon our calling to be involved in the rearing of our children, our inner nature revolts. So often, it seems too far out of reach. My reaction is the same. I encourage you to read the book mentioned above. Mrs. Gertrude Hoeksema also has an excellent book, *Peacable Fruit*. Yes, many

of you mothers in particular tell me that it's too idealistic. But the Word of God sets our goals very high. It is good that we are aware of this. We will then not fret at our duty, we will take courage. God is able to use our efforts to accomplish much. We have many faults that we must confess and repent of each day. Our children are rebellious by nature. Yet, our God is faithful. He will bless our efforts to develop Christian character in our children. With that assurance we take up the task as the most honorable on the face of the earth. It is also the most rewarding. Of all our possessions, only our children will go with us into eternity, the Lord willing.

The Moral Environment of the Christian School

Rev. Ron Cammenga

Crime and violence in our nation's schools have become one of the most serious and pressing problems confronting parents, teachers, and communities today. The educational process itself is threatened by a moral environment that at best proves to be a hindrance to education, and at worst is positively detrimental to learning.

In their book *Violence, Values, and Justice in the Schools*, Rodger Bybee and E. Gordan Gee state:

"Crime and violence in schools have gained enough publicity now to be classified as a major concern of the American public. And, violence and disruption in American education is very real; it is directly perceptible at some level to most teachers, administrators, and, of course, students. The extent and intensity of school and classroom disruption — "discipline problems" — are unprecedented in American education and perhaps in the history of

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of education. Whether we can explain the occurrence of violence and disruption is one matter; its existence is another. There is in fact a phenomenon of violence in American schools" (p. 99).

In recent years there has been a sharp increase not only in the number of school-related crimes, but in their seriousness. In the past, teachers had to deal with disruptions such as talking to friends, shooting spit-wads, hiding erasers, talking out of turn, or dipping pigtaails in inkwells. Today teachers face everything from robbery to rape, from aggravated assault to vandalism.

We who support Christian education have a keen interest in the moral environment of the Christian school. Not only are we concerned that the school to which we send our children have a proper environment because in the end this is conducive to learning. But we are concerned for this proper moral environment especially for the sake of the honor and glory of God. God is glorified in a school not simply in that the curriculum is in harmony with His revealed Word. But God is glorified by a school in which teachers and students alike conduct themselves in a thankful, holy way.

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The fact of crime and violence in our nation's schools is easily documented. Incidents such as the following (taken from those listed in the book, *Violence In Our Schools*, by Lester and Irene David) are reported throughout the country. A high school student in Virginia, fighting with a teacher, bit off the teacher's ear. A group of California students, angered because of low grades they received on a test, ganged up on their teacher and set her hair on fire. A 17-year old youth in Brooklyn, New York was fatally stabbed by another 17-year old, one block from the school they both attended in an upper middle-class neighborhood. In southern California, four boys dumped all the books from the library shelves and turned on a fire hose, flooding the entire floor. In Lawrence, New York a third-grader punched his teacher in the face and ripped a necklace from off her because she told him to put away his toy train and get to work. In Austin, Texas the 13-year old son of a former White House press officer shot and killed his teacher because he had received a failing grade. A freshman girl was raped on a stairway-landing the first week of high school in a wealthy North Chicago suburb. A New York City social studies teacher was severely beaten when five teenage boys

entered his room and punched, kicked, and stomped on him.

It is significant that these episodes of violence are not confined to one area of the country, or to one or two types of schools. It is not the case that violence and crime characterize only the inner-city, ghetto schools with high minority enrollments. School crime and violence are now found across the nation and in all types of schools. The problem is general and rampant. Bybee and Gee state:

"... while the probability of a school's having a serious crime problem is higher in urban areas (i.e., in the big cities), the majority of schools with serious crime problems are in suburban and rural areas. Therefore, the problem includes all schools, not just those large schools in urban centers" (pp. 103-104).

Of particular concern is the increase in the number of acts of violence against teachers. Assaults on teachers have become so widespread that Dr. Alfred Block, a psychiatrist at the University of California, has identified what he calls "the battered teacher syndrome." Dr. Block researched 250 classroom teachers who had been the objects of abuse. He found them to be suffering from such things as ulcers, high blood pressure, eating disorders, breathing difficulties, anxiety, depression, fear, nightmares, blurred

vision, dizziness, and fatigue. You'll recognize these as symptoms of psychological stress similar to those experienced by combat veterans, soldiers who have fought in the front lines.

In recent years, two substantial reports have documented the sad decline of morals in America's schools.

The first is the Bayh report. A Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, chaired by Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana, conducted an inquiry into school violence and vandalism during the period 1971-1975. The results of the committee's work were published under the title *Our Nation's Schools — A Report Card: "A" In School Violence and Vandalism*. The subcommittee reported on a nationwide survey of more than 750 school districts. For the period 1970-1973, results indicated:

- 1) Homicides increased by 18.5%
- 2) Rapes and attempted rapes increased by 40.1%
- 3) Robberies increased by 36.7%
- 4) Assaults on students increased by 85.3%
- 5) Assaults on teachers increased by 77.4%
- 6) Burglaries of school buildings increased by 11.8%
- 7) Drug and alcohol offenses on school property increased by 37.5%

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8) Dangerous weapons confiscated increased by 54.4%

It was the Bayh Subcommittee that first attempted to put a price-tag on school violence and vandalism. The report estimated that \$600 million was being spent annually on repair and replacement of vandalized school property. That's more than \$10.00 a year for every student in school, more than is spent on textbooks each year, and enough to hire 50,000 additional school teachers.

The second important study of school violence was conducted in 1978 by the National Institute of Education (NIE), largely in response to the findings of the Bayh Subcommittee. The findings of this study, published under the title *Violent Schools — Safe Schools: The Safe School Study*, only substantiated and underscored the work of the Bayh Subcommittee. The NIE reported that in any given month, 280,000 students and 5,200 teachers are physically assaulted; 2,400,000 students and 128,000 teachers are robbed; and a total of 42,000 acts of vandalism are committed.

A survey by the National Education Association (NEA) found that in the 1978-'79 school year more than 110,000 teachers had been physically attacked by students, an increase of 40,000 over the previous year. An NEA report issued in 1978 found that 100 murders, 12,000

armed robberies, and 9,000 rapes had been committed by American school children that year.

The experts point to several causes to account for the sharp increases in school violence.

Included as a contributing cause, first of all, is the break-up of the family. Nearly every book or magazine article that I consulted that addressed itself to the cause of school violence, cited marital breakup as an important factor. In recent years divorce rates have soared, leaving thousands of hurt and angered children. In some schools up to a third of the students return to single-parent homes, where there is often inadequate supervision and an overburdened parent.

Television violence is often cited as a key factor in explaining school violence. The U.S. Surgeon General's office has found, after a three-year study, that "... the more violence and aggression a youngster sees on TV, regardless of his (or her) age, sex, or social background, the more aggressive he (or she) is likely to be." Common sense tells us that this must be so. Studies indicate that the average youth between the ages of four and fourteen watches more than three hours of television per day for those ten years. The cumulative result is 10,000 hours of TV, with an average of 9.5 violent incidents

per hour. During this time, a child will see more than 13,000 people killed on the TV screen.

Drugs and alcohol, themselves behavioral problems, also contribute to the rise of school violence. Recent studies indicate that the great majority of high school students throughout the country have used illegal drugs and that drugs are readily available in most high schools across the land. Out of every ten students surveyed, about seven reported illicit drug use at some time in their lives. Young people are also drinking heavily. A nation-wide study recently revealed that 28% of students in grades seven through twelve were problem drinkers. There are clear indications, even, that problem drinking is seeping down into the elementary grades as well. One doesn't have to be an expert in alcohol or in education to understand that a student who is "high" or downright drunk will not be able to learn in school.

Other causes cited as contributing to the problem of school violence are: school and class size; slashes in school budgets; an increase in racial tensions in many schools around the country; and the influence upon the schools of a general increase in crime in our society at large.

Although all of the things mentioned undoubtedly contribute to the sad moral condition

of our nation's schools, other factors, which educators and many parents refuse to reckon with, also enter into the picture.

Unquestionably the present situation of our nation's schools is in large part due to the erroneous and permissive views of education that prevailed in the last several decades. These are the views propounded by a John Dewey and others of his stripe. According to these "progressive" educators, children are inherently good and ought to be allowed to develop according to their own natural impulses. This kind of thinking is bearing its fruits in the schools today. Commenting on this in his book *Withhold Not Correction*, Bruce Ray writes:

"Self-expression is the cry of the modern educator. We are told that we must not restrain our children, but rather we must encourage them to express themselves. But the Bible says that the selves that we urge them to express are sinful! Expression of the sinful self can only create damage and harm. Is it any wonder, then, that the same educators have found it necessary in many of our great cities to man the halls of the schools with police armed with pistols, night sticks, mace, and tear gas? Is it any wonder that in the suburbs of our land mothers are afraid to send their children to school, lest they be assaulted between classes

or even in the midst of a class? Is it any wonder that in the schools of our land teachers fear for their very lives, lest they be beaten or even killed by their students? Is it any wonder that the school districts complain year after year and spend increasingly more of our money to replace chemistry labs that have been purposely destroyed, to replace windows and repair other acts of vandalism, when we encourage children to express their sinful selves? Permissiveness is not the strategy of the Scriptures: it is the strategy of the devil" (p. 31).

Added to this is the almost universal teaching of and acceptance by the schools of the theory of evolution. Thousands upon thousands of junior high and high school students are taught every day that they are basically animals. Is it any wonder, then, that they begin to behave like animals? If a child commits some act of violence, it's not a sin. It's really only the expression of inherent animal instincts. He can't help it, really, and certainly can't be blamed for it. Long ago, the Apostle Paul wrote, "Be not deceived: evil communications (teachings) corrupt good manners" (I Cor. 15: 33). America is finding out the truth of this the hard way.

But the greatest, single cause for the moral downfall of our nation's schools is that the Bible

has been ruled out as the standard of instruction. Now, we are not advocating the introduction of Bible reading and Bible study into the classrooms of our public schools. Not at all. But we are saying that, because the Bible has been rejected, it was inevitable that the situation in the schools became what it is today.

Way back in the mid 1800's, when the whole idea of a national, public school system was being discussed, the Presbyterian theologian, Dr. Robert Lewis Dabney warned of the bad consequences that would result if such a movement succeeded.

"If, in our moral training of the young, we let go the "Thus saith the Lord," (i.e., let go of the Bible) we shall have no hold left. The training which does not base duty on Christianity is, for us, practically immoral. If testimony to this truth is needed, let the venerable Dr. Griffin, of a former generation, be heard. 'To educate the mind of a bad man without correcting his morals is to put a sword into the hands of a maniac.' Let John Locke be heard. 'It is virtue, then, direct virtue, which is the hard and valuable part to be aimed at in education. If virtue and a well-tempered soul be not got and settled so as to keep out ill and vicious habits, languages and science, and all the other accomplishments of education, will be

to no purpose but to make the worse or more dangerous man.' Let Dr. Francis Wayland be heard. 'Intellectual cultivation may easily exist without the existence of virtue or love of right. In this case its only effect is to stimulate desire; and this, unrestrained by the love of right, must eventually overturn the social fabric which it at first erected.' " (*Discussions of Robert Lewis Dabney*, vol. 3, p. 283, in an article entitled "Secularized Education.")

But our response must not be simply that we all stand aghast at the terrible moral condition of education in the schools around us. My purpose is, having noticed with you the situation in the schools generally, to exentuate and underscore our calling to maintain and to support our own Protestant Reformed Christian schools. We ought to be sufficiently impressed with our calling to send our children to Christian schools. Now, we do that primarily because of the content of the instruction. But the moral environment of the school cannot ultimately be separated from the instruction. And we're concerned, vitally concerned, about the moral environment in which our children are educated.

Besides the many evils in the public schools which even worldly parents and educators are concerned about, there are many

things in those schools that are not viewed as being even the least bit immoral, but which ought to be serious considerations to every believing parent: rock music, dancing, movie attendance, loose views of sex and marriage, open Sabbath desecration, the exaltation of sports, the justifying of revolution and civil disobedience, the teaching of hedonism (the pleasure principle, that if it feels good, do it), humanism, and evolutionism. All of these things are reasons why we ought not to send our children to the state's schools.

We know something about our children. We know something about our children because we know ourselves, and we also remember when we were once young. We know about the evil nature that lives within them, an evil nature that only lusts to sin and looks for every opportunity to express itself. We know about the powerful temptation of bad examples, evil teachers, and ungodly companions. And we know from the Word of God that we their parents have the calling to keep them separate from the world and the world's evil influence.

And so, we have a concern for a proper moral environment in our schools. We are concerned for this, first of all, because only in the context of proper moral behavior can teaching be carried on

effectively. It is no accident that we witness two things happening in education today. On the one hand, there is an increase in school violence; on the other hand there is a decline in academic excellence. The decline in academic excellence is in large measure due to the loss of a proper moral environment in which alone education can take place.

Secondly, we are concerned for a proper moral environment in the school because of the goal of Christian education itself. That goal is not mere head-knowledge; it is not the mere accumulation of historical, scientific, or mathematical facts. But the goal of Christian education is the man or woman of God thoroughly furnished unto all good works. It's the goal that Moses told the children of Israel must be their goal in their education of their children: "That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged" (Deut. 6:2).

Finally, we are concerned for a proper moral environment in our Christian schools because God and God's glory demand this of us. The ultimate goal of all the education of our children is that they might live in the world to the

glory of God. And God is glorified by a life of obedience to His commandments, a morally pure life.

How may we be assured to have and to keep the proper moral environment in our Christian schools? To mention just a few things, first of all, the Bible must be the standard for the life of the Christian school. It must be the standard not just for what is taught in the classroom, but for the entire life and every activity of the Christian school. Then the Bible doesn't only tell us what we must believe, but also how we must live. The Bible doesn't only teach creation and oppose evolution. But the Bible says to the students, "Love your neighbor and treat your neighbor as you would be treated." The Bible doesn't only teach that God is the God of history, the God Who governs the course of the nations. But the Bible says, "honor your parents and obey your teachers." The Bible doesn't only teach that the wonder and orderliness of mathematics is due to God. But the Bible says that we must work to the best of our abilities, must not cheat or steal or abuse the property of others.

Secondly, we will maintain the moral environment of our schools by seeing to it that the teachers that we hire to teach our children are men and women who are godly and pious. We will be sure of

by the school board and by the
parents.

When all of the instruction of our school is God-centered, and when the love and fear of God are stirred up in the hearts of the children, then we will have achieved our purpose in Christian education. Then all the cost, all the sacrifice, all the hard labor will have been worthwhile. For then, God will be honored. And then our children will have been equipped to live in His world to His glory.



Are your children readers — avid readers? Or are they drawn more to computers, video games, and television sets? As you well know, those are questions of no little consequence. They're addressed in the following article by Sue Looyenga, mother of three aspiring little "bookworms" at Adams Street Christian School.

Encouraging Reading in the Home

Sue Looyenga

Imagine your family being offered round-trip travel tickets to be used as desired for life. These tickets could be used to transport the entire family to a chosen destination anywhere in the world or each individual in the family could choose to travel alone at

his own whim. Who would be so foolish as to turn away an opportunity such as this?

And yet, as fantastic as this offer might sound, it still cannot rival the opportunity that families have to read together, but which they often turn aside. Reading