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Because this journal is intended to help teachers, parents, and friends of Covenant education, the editors wish to make the articles as pertinent as possible. If you have any suggestions for the improvement of the journal, we solicit your comments and suggestions.

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## PARENTAL EDUCATION

by Dr. Dwight Monsma

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This phrase, Parental Education, is used by all of us to describe our system of Christian education. When asked by outsiders to give a reason for sending our children to our own schools, we answer that we feel that their education and rearing is our responsibility and not that of the state. We all feel this so strongly that we are willing to spend thousands of dollars each year to maintain schools for our children...and not only for our own children, but also for the children of our Christian brothers. Protestant Reformed people have also described their schools as Covenantal schools which reinforces the idea of Christians rearing their children to become mature Christians. Although the above statements are true, and we accept them as the basis of our educational system, many times we violate the principles implicit in such a system.

In the October, 1975 issue of *Perspectives*, Rev. David Engelsma spoke very

clearly about many of these principles. He directed his words primarily to our teachers, but each of us would profit by re-reading his article. I will quote from his words later in this paper to emphasize certain points that he made so well. While he described the Christian teacher, he also involved the Christian parent, the board and the church. I intend to examine the subject of Parental Education as it applies to parents, students, the school society and the board. However, of necessity, some of this will involve teachers, administrators and the church.

### Definition of Parental Education

To reduce parental education to its simplest terms: it is the instruction of children by their own Christian parents. Parents of all ages the world over have done this every moment that they have spent with their children. Christian parents especially are called to instruct their children in the home by word and example. We must do this every waking hour to fulfill our God given calling.

But I want to focus our attention on the area of Parental Education that we call SCHOOL. Often school is referred to as

term because it implies that this part of a child's education is well organized. Very few parents are able to devote their talents and time exclusively to rearing their children through fifteen to twenty years of formal schooling. Nor would this be the ideal for most parents and children even if it were possible. Therefore Christian parents hire Christian teachers to teach their covenant children. This is the Christian school, this is covenantal education, this is the responsibility of parents. Parents must direct the teacher to rear and educate their children in such a manner that there will be complete harmony between home and school. Parents and teachers must communicate frequently to accomplish this goal. Anything we can do to improve this communication and make it more meaningful, will make our schools more parental.

#### **The Philosophy of Parental Education**

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6. This simple command with promise summarizes very succinctly all that God says to his people regarding their duty toward their children's education. Solomon directs us in Proverbs 1:7 & 10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom:". By following this truth, we as Christians make parental education Christian education. The next time that you use the book of Proverbs for family devotions, take note of the frequent references to the instruction of children by parents. In fact, the whole book speaks of father instructing son; and son hearing and obeying. Not only is this idea taught in Proverbs, but all Scripture impresses us with the necessity of fathers to teach their children. Passages such as Deuteronomy 3:9-10 command us to remember God's law and, "teach them to thy sons, and thy sons' sons." Chapter six commands us to diligently teach our

sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Thus, the training of children should be a consuming interest for us and we must devote all of the time we possibly can to this great and glorious calling. Psalm 78 commands us to tell our children all the great things God has done for us and to teach them what God's law requires.

Thus we see that we do not need a complex philosophy of education, but have only to follow the clear and simple commands of Scripture. No Christian can have any doubt that it is the duty of the parents to teach and the obligation of the child to listen. When parents hire teachers to help them accomplish this goal, the parents are nonetheless responsible that their children are reared correctly. We cannot hire teachers who are unbelievers; we must be sure that our teachers confess God just as we do. Parents and teachers must work together toward their common goal which is the proper instruction of the covenant seed. Any time there is disagreement, it must be resolved between parent and teacher so that both can be most effective toward the child. To the extent that any of the above principles are violated, to that degree we lose parental education. It would be easy to have parental education if only one parent and one teacher were involved, but when many parents with many children hire many teachers to help them fulfill their covenantal obligation to rear their children, a host of problems arise. The solution of these problems as they apply to our educational system is the primary concern of this article. I hope that the discussion of these problems will be enlightening to all of us.

#### **Practical Implications...For Parents**

Parental education could properly be called Paternal education because most Scripture passages speak of the duty of

the father, rather than that of the mother. This does not mean that the mother is not involved, but rather that the responsibility of it falls on the shoulders of the father. In Ephesians 6:1 we read, "Children, obey your PARENTS in the Lord: for this is right." But in verse four it says, "And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Scripture puts the whole burden of education upon the parents. Therefore, they must use all means possible to fulfill this calling. When parents unite to found a school society based upon their common desire to educate their children, they must be sure that they are uniting with parents of like mind. They must agree together regarding the interpretation of scripture, must speak the same confessions, must want the same educational emphasis and must be willing to freely discuss these especially if disagreements arise. The most important decisions that these parents face is the choice of a teacher for their children. The teacher or staff of teachers is, in fact, the school; because they are called by parents to rear and educate their children. All the other entities related to our schools are simply means to implement this primary relationship between parents and teachers. Thus the society is not the school, the pupils are not the school, the board is not the school, nor is the building the school; only when parents have hired teachers can they say that they have a school.

But, in our schools, we do not let parents choose teachers for their children. In practice, school boards hire teachers without even giving the parents a chance to approve their action. Technically, I suppose, society members do approve the choices of the board when they approve the budget for the coming year. This, you must admit is one of the most oblique methods of approval possible, but we accept it because we have used it for such a long time. Parents are content to 'let the board do it', when they know that they

should be intimately involved themselves. It is true that the Board of Trustees and especially its education committee can most efficiently interview, evaluate and select teachers for our children. It is also true that this task has been assigned to them by the society as one of their primary duties and responsibilities. But we must involve parents in the final decision. Parents must be given the opportunity to meet with new teachers, talk to them about rearing their children, evaluate them and accept them to stand in their stead...before the board can extend a formal contract to them. The society of parents must give final approval to each teacher's contract each year if we are to maintain the principle of parental education. Perhaps our present method works efficiently, but we must not think pragmatically nor argue from this position... we must follow the principles of parental control. Parental control does not pass through the board to the teachers, but directly from parents to teachers. Parents must also control the board, but the board is only an expedient for certain parental tasks related to aspects of the school...the board is not charged to rear our children. The board may never stand between the parent and the teacher. But this often happens and is destructive of parental education.

I have emphasized repeatedly that parents must direct the teacher in the rearing process...because this is not usually done. There are many reasons why this relationship breaks down and some of them can be laid at the feet of parents. Parents who attend PTA meetings three or four times each year and participate with teachers in five minute conferences twice a year feel that they are among the top 25% of parents who use our schools...and they are! Yet, this formal contact is only superficial compared to the intimate communication necessary to make parental education a reality. What has happened to the good custom of inviting

the teacher into our homes as an honored guest? Are we too busy with 'our own thing' to be concerned with the person who is standing in our place as parent for six hours each waking day? Do you really know the person who is rearing your child? If we would socialize with our teachers more, we would have opportunity to talk about mutual concerns for the child we are both rearing. Parents should feel free to talk to teachers anytime about the children charged to their care. As much as fathers and mothers need to talk about their children; so they must feel the need to talk with the teacher of their children.

All too often, I fear, we as parents would rather talk to other parents about the teacher. Voicing our concerns to other parents, rather than to the person who is teaching our children, is a violation of Matthew 18. We may praise the teacher to each other, we should cooperate as parents to make his task easier, we should express our united confidence in him...but we may never discuss with other parents what we consider to be the failings of our teachers. If we feel that our teacher is not conducting himself as we would in the rearing process, then we must go to the teacher. The only person who can give answer to us for the teacher is the teacher. Nor can we get an answer by talking to a board member. He does not stand in our place to rear our child...only the teacher does. Nor do we talk to the board of trustees...we talk to the teacher only.

In this same connection, parents should consider the teacher to be one with themselves as a third parent to their children. Therefore it is inconceivable that parents would discuss a teacher's failure with their children. When we do that, we are undermining the parent-child relationship and are guilty of schism within our children, our teachers and ourselves. By doing this we are sowing the seeds of rebellion in our children, we are disrupting the confidence of others in our teachers, and we are limiting the effec-

tiveness of our teachers...besides being guilty of sin against the ninth commandment.

### **Practical Implications For The Society**

One necessary instrument already mentioned is the school society. It is a group of like-minded Christians parents and friends who join together to help each other. Every father who wants to educate his children through the means provided by this society...must be a member. How can a father of the covenant dare to say before God and men that he does not have time to devote to the nurture of his children in school? Parental education is not just choosing the best school and then paying for it. Parental education must involve parents! Too many of us turn this duty over to others 'whom we trust' and then wash our hands of our children for six to eight hours every day. Such parents are indeed fortunate that we have dedicated teachers in our schools who are concerned with the rearing of their children; in fact so concerned that they have devoted their lives to this task. Most of us as parents, I think, fail to appreciate the great devotion of our teachers. They stand to serve us by serving our children each day of the school year. If we communicate this appreciation to them at every opportunity, they are encouraged in their calling.

However, having teachers whom we can trust, does not take away the responsibility of each father to be an active member of the school society. One annual meeting of two to three hours is not much of an imposition on a father's time...but I've heard this as an excuse. Even members of our school societies neglect these once-a-year meetings with the same excuse so that often only thirty percent of the membership votes to determine policy and board members for the coming year. I have noticed that many members are present only when a controversial issue is on the agenda of the

meeting. They feel their responsibility to the school only at time of 'crisis', but are content to let others shoulder their burden, as a parent, when only the ordinary hum-drum issues are scheduled to be discussed. These people give lip service to covenant education especially at times of crisis, but violate the true spirit of parental schools. They also expect to exert influence on policy grossly out of proportion to their numbers and participation. This is an inequity in our system and should be corrected. Mandatory attendance and participation of all parents (fathers) at the society level would improve this aspect of covenantal education.

Member fathers know that they may be asked to serve on the Board of Trustees of the school. This prospect frightens many fathers into abstaining from membership. Compulsory membership of all fathers of children attending the school, would also make them eligible to become nominees to the board. Therefore, it is important that our societies pass resolutions which would make membership in the society mandatory to all fathers who ask the school to rear their children. It is inconceivable to me that our schools can rear children whose parents have nothing to say about this God-given task. How can teachers rear my children unless I tell them how I know God wants me to do that? How can I know that they are following my direction unless there is open communication between us in the rearing process? If we truly believe that covenantal education (rearing of our children) is a parental obligation, we must do everything in our power to make it a reality. In the school society this means full participation of all the parents of the children in school.

#### **Practical Implications For The Board Of Trustees**

The Board Of Trustees is an instrument of the parents to serve certain needs

of the school. These men are members of the society who are willing to devote their time and talents to the welfare of the school. They too are servants to the parents and often have a thankless task. Though it is a position of honor and trust, the work calls for more soul searching, wisdom and patience. Every father would profit by experience in this area of kingdom service, but everyone is not qualified for this position. Boards must consider teachers to fulfill the needs of the school. This involves interviews, evaluation, bargaining, contracts, etc. Boards must provide finances for the support of the teachers and the educational needs of the students. They must provide a building, approve texts, pay for supplies and utilities, set policy, communicate with parents, propose budgets, collect monies, and do a host of routine tasks which are necessary to the daily operation of the school. No one who stands outside and is served by a board can fully appreciate the time and effort that these men devote to us.

However, there is some confusion among us regarding the exact position of the school board in the educational process. The board is not the school, but only trustees elected by the society (parents) to provide leadership to the society, care for the physical needs of the building, collect and distribute money for the operation of the school, encourage parent-teacher communication, support the teachers financially and spiritually, and in general to care for the school in the best interests of the parents. Some of us have the idea that the board 'runs the school' and is a watchdog for the parents overagainst the teachers. The effect of this idea is that there is a growing chasm between 'us and them'. In their zeal to perform what they believe is their 'God-given duty' of overseer, many boards completely break the direct communication which is necessary between

parents and teachers. Boards are not mediators between parents and teachers and may not become involved unless there is an impasse that cannot be settled after following the principles of Matthew 18. Board members must direct parents who call them regarding a teacher to go to the teacher. If they listen to the complaint, they will be influenced. If they repeat the complaint to others (even to other board members), they will compound the damage. If they make decisions on the board level based on the whisperings they hear, it will result in the complete destruction of our parental schools. Parents do not control the rearing process through the board (the board is not involved in the rearing of our children)...they can only do it through the teacher and themselves on a one to one basis. Yet, I know board members who consider it their duty to listen to every wind that a parent or student blows in their ears...and believe that the board must consider this hearsay when making decisions. I have recently heard of board members who conduct informal polls among their friends during Sunday evening visits. This smacks of gossip. They even feel that this is their duty and refuse to see that talk about teachers to others is clearly gossip. They must remember that they alone were elected to serve on the board...not they and their close friends. The board need not worry that they might not reflect the opinion of their public, but must rather be concerned that their decisions will be for the benefit of the school in its duty of rearing our children. This is not to say that they must not answer to parents regarding decisions they make. Channels are open for such communications at the annual meeting of the society, special meetings and any regular or special board meeting. As far as I know, board meetings are open meetings and cannot be closed to any society member. Thus there is ample opportunity for direct interchange of ideas between parents and the board without

gossip. Understandably parents hesitate to appear at board meetings, but the board could do much to encourage parental participation when they feel it is necessary. Contact with individual board members is no substitute for communication with the whole board...in fact it is likely to be gossip.

Among Protestant Reformed people the idea has developed that the school board is responsible for certain administrative duties. This idea has its roots in our humble beginnings as small schools where the services of a competent administrator were not available. In those days, when many of our teachers served us with little or no formal training in the field of education, let alone in administration, we relied on zealous board members to give direction to the school. Even then, however, this created poor direct communication between parents and teachers. Most of our schools are no longer in this handicapped position and boards would do well to rely heavily on their administrator and teachers. They are not only competent to give good advice to us, but also, because they stand in the place of parents before their children six hours each day, are in an ideal position to advise the board on most matters. This would not result in undue power for administrator or teacher unless weak men occupy board positions. It is incumbent upon boards to seriously consider well-grounded advice they receive from their teachers. Consult with them often and you will gain much better insight into the educational process of our covenantal schools.

Our boards are called to be 'benevolent employers' to our teachers in the name of the society. Boards must be zealous to provide salaries which are more than adequate for each teacher. They must ask themselves whether they as individuals would be willing to work hard for a teacher's salary. They must remember that these teachers have devoted their lives to us and our children and they must

be rewarded amply for it. They should be bold to champion teachers' financial needs before the society with sound proposals for collecting the needed money. I am always surprised when boards deny their teachers hundreds per year because they are afraid to ask parents for dollars per year. I have observed also that most teachers are hesitant to campaign for more money for themselves. Therefore boards and society members must do this.

A necessary part of our stewardship as parents toward our teachers in this day is a pension plan. Almost all of us hope to be beneficiaries of retirement plans provided either by our employer or by ourselves. All that our teachers have is Social Security and that is administered by the federal government. Though we are all forced to be enrolled in this system, we also realize that the benefits are not adequate to provide for all our needs during retirement. We, as parents, through school boards, are obligated to care for our teachers even after their years of service to us are completed. I believe that each of our school boards should consider this matter and come to our society meetings with well-grounded proposals regarding adequate retirement plans for our teachers. At best we pay teachers only a subsistence salary and we cannot expect them to be able to from that provide for their own retirement. It is incumbent upon us, therefore, to shoulder this burden for them. Most of our teachers are young, but, within twenty to thirty years many of our present teachers will be over sixty-five years of age and will want to retire. We should face this fact now so that we may adequately fulfill our obligation to them in the future. It is up to our boards to provide leadership in this matter.

#### **Practical Implications For The Church**

How does the church fit into this picture? The church must point the parent

and teacher to their God-given task of rearing covenant children. The church must encourage parents to establish Christian schools. The church should help young men and women prepare themselves to become acceptable teachers for our schools. The church can also help financially without violating the principle of parental education. However, the church must never interpose itself between the parents and the teacher. The consistory may not try to run the school in any way lest we fall into the errors of parochialism and parents become even less involved in rearing their children than they now are. God gives this task to parents only; but the church as well as the school helps parents in different ways to fulfill their baptismal vows. In fact, the church is called to do this not only by Scripture but also by the church order in Article 21.

#### **Practical Implications For Teachers**

Our teachers have prepared themselves at great cost to themselves for the privilege of helping us rear our children. There is a great honor indeed and I think that this is really what motivates most of our teachers to continue serving us so faithfully...year after year. Each of them has spent four to six or more years training at their own expense, often with great sacrifice...so that they would be prepared to help us rear our children. We as parents must be eternally grateful to them for their selfless dedication to a cause we often take so lightly. Therefore, we must be willing to sacrifice greatly to promote the welfare of our teachers in any way we can. We must urge our boards to be benevolent stewards of our money with regard to teachers' salaries...and we should support such proposals at society meetings.

What an honor for a new teacher to stand in the place of the parent with respect to his pupils. An awesome responsibility and an impossible task...but

one which will be done with God's grace and the help of parents, board and church. Since teachers stand in the place of the parent, they are empowered to do all that a parent must do. Teachers must love their covenant pupils and be concerned for their total welfare. Instruction, correction, reproof must be done in love toward the child for God's sake. Since this is true and we want it to continue, the teacher must keep an open line to parents. Many good means for this are available such as notes, phone conversations, word of mouth to the children; but the best way is directly with individual parents.

Although tactical problems exist, a teacher should try to arrange his time so that he can visit with each of his parents at length at least once each semester. He should initiate this contact with parents whenever the needs of the child call for such a conference. All too often the teacher feels that he has spent enough time contacting parents through the formal conferences that may be arranged at open house and PTA. I do not think that these contacts are sufficient to establish the rapport necessary between parents and teachers to facilitate rearing covenant children. Perhaps teachers could reserve one afternoon or evening for each set of parents per semester. Whether this discussion of mutual concerns took one hour or three, our mutual concerns should be strong enough to warrant the effort. Think of the great feeling of unity and cooperation that could be fostered by such an exchange. Time spent in this pursuit could easily save as much and more time in the educational process. It certainly would eliminate any misunderstandings between the school and home, which in themselves can cause time consuming and emotion-draining losses. Teachers already devote unknown long hours to serve parents, but I believe that more can be done to promote an appreciation and understanding of these efforts. Nor would these conferences be one-sided; because, I

am sure that teachers would learn much from parents that would enable them to be more effective in the task of rearing covenant seed.

Teachers, I have observed, are more hesitant than parents to administer discipline to children in school. Just because they do not use some of the methods employed by parents does not mean that they are indeed not disciplining the children. By word and example they lead the child to learn his lessons and also to respect authority for God's sake...and all of this is included in the idea of discipline. We as parents must not limit teachers either as to the methods they may or may not use which they consider effective. We must give our support to the teacher as they rear our children at school because they stand in our place before our children. We may not criticize the teacher before the child any more than the teacher may criticize us before the child. If we or the teacher does this we undermine the covenant relation with the child. Rev. Engelsma gets to the point when he says, "For parents to connive at their children's disrespect for any teacher, much more to foster disrespect, is for parents to assist in making rebels whom God will cut off from the land and is for parents to cut their own throats (it is the parent's own authority - in the teacher - that they are undermining.) There may no more be disparagement of teachers in the presence of children than a disparagement of each other by parents." (*Perspectives*, Vol. I, No. 1, p. 7 & 8) Of course, the same admonition applies to teachers. Besides the awful results described, engaging in such activities even between adults is a clear violation of the ninth commandment and Matthew 18. For teachers to merit such confidence from parents who entrust their covenant seed to them, it is mandatory that our teachers be truly Protestant Reformed in confession and walk.

### Practical Implications...For The Administrator

Any school with more than one teacher must have an administrator or member of the staff who acts in that capacity. The administrator heads the staff to help the teachers be more effective in their task of rearing covenant children. The administrator must be a teacher who is called by parents to do this. He really assumes the role of parent to all the children in the school for the sake of the parents. He and the parents are working toward the common goal of rearing the seed of the covenant and there must be complete harmony between them; and this must be fostered by all. He is the director of the staff of teachers and must coordinate the school to fit the needs of the students. He must organize the learning (rearing) process so that it truly benefits the children under his care. As leader, he is truly the head of the school. He administers the school (teachers and pupils) for the benefit of the parents. He is also an advisor to the board. He should suggest school policy which they must consider and decide upon regarding specific problems that may occur. He must advise them of the physical needs of the school such as supplies, aids, classrooms, etc. He may consult with them regarding problems that arise during the year and may ask for advice if he is unable to solve them. He should advise the board about state requirements or new developments in the field of education. He should be consulted regarding the hiring of new staff members or the replacement of present teachers. He is charged with the execution of policy decisions made by the board or the society. One very important function of the administrator is that he provides communication between the board and the teachers and between the teachers and the board. It follows then, that if he is to be an effective administrator, he must be present at board and society meetings. Our school boards err when they restrict the

administrator to only certain parts of their meetings because they fail to see that unity must exist between them and the school. Boards often think of themselves as being the school and have an exaggerated idea of their own importance. But nothing could be farther from the truth. The teachers are the school...called by the parents to rear their children. The board is called by the parents to help the teachers perform their task. Any time the board makes the teachers' task easier, they are helping; anytime they get between teachers and parents, they are being obstructive of the whole educational process. Too often boards think of teachers and their administrator in terms of "we and them" when they should be thinking in terms of "US". How sad when we see evidences of disunity in the educational process among us. I am bold to say that these are usually caused by boards that foster antagonism between themselves (in the name of parents) and the teachers who are truly the servants of the parents. And they do this in the name of parental education!

Boards who limit the participation of their administrator in their discussions are fostering disunity in the school. If they feel that he must be limited, they are really saying that they do not trust him. Yet, they have hired him to rear their children! Where are their values...in their own little duchy of authority...or in the Christian education of their children? The administrator should be an expert in the field of education and his advice would be of immeasurable value to the board in almost all of its decisions because their most important decisions involve policy which effects the school. Therefore boards do well to weigh heavily the advice they receive from their administrator and teachers. Remember, these people spend their lives standing in the place of parents before the seed of the covenant. By the way, any advice the board considers; whether it comes from parents, teachers

or experts...must be more than just an opinion; it must be well-grounded opinions. Boards must be careful that they do not vacillate with every wind that blows. A situation of perfect trust should exist between parents and teachers. A good board and a competent administrator can do much to promote this if they are all working for the common goal of the rearing of the covenant seed.

#### **Practical Implications...For Students**

As far as our students are concerned, they must assume the same attitude toward the school and its teachers that they have toward their parents. Students in our schools must accept the work of the teacher as if it were the word of their parents, which it really is. This means that what the teacher says is law and must be obeyed. This also implies great trust on the part of students for their teachers and this will be the case if it is promoted in their homes. It is only natural that students will question this relationship and try to rebel against teachers just as they sometimes do against their parents. A favorite tact of students is to pit teachers against parents and parents against teachers. I think most teachers are aware of these attempts by students to undermine authority and therefore are in a good position to recognize a situation early and put a stop to it. Communication with the parents of such students should rectify this situation before it becomes a big problem.

Students must remember that their teachers are working to serve them and their parents. Teachers are helping your parents to rear you to be children of God. Therefore students have the obligation to obey teachers for God's sake. You, also, have the calling to take advantage of every moment of training that is offered to you at school. What you learn at a covenantal school will profit you for time and eternity. All too often children take for granted the heritage which is theirs by birth into a

covenant home. But please be aware of the great sacrifices which your parents make willingly for your sakes. They not only provide you with a home and all material needs such as clothes and food, but much more important than that they are rearing you in the fear of the Lord. They love you as their own children, but also as children of the covenant. Therefore they are concerned for your spiritual welfare both at home and at school. They willingly contribute one to four thousand dollars per year to our schools to assure themselves that you, their children, are receiving a Christian education at the hands of carefully selected teachers whom they have chosen to stand in their place for hours each day. Think these thoughts each morning as school begins, think these thoughts during the school day when you may be tempted not to make good use of your time, and think these thoughts when you return home and thank God for such parents. At the same time thank God for your Christian teachers who have trained themselves to be competent in their field of teaching. They have all spent years of their lives at great personal sacrifice so that they might be ready for this great calling. Teachers also spend untold hours each day searching for effective means to instruct and rear you as covenant seed.

#### **Summary**

In one sentence, Christian education will be parental education if parents honor teachers as they honor themselves. This implies that teachers are also deeply aware of their position and the awesome responsibility which they bear toward parents. The real object of this intimate relationship and the loving care involved in it is the covenant child and ultimately the realization of the kingdom of God. Each person involved in the mysterious process of Christian education is a saved sinner, and an imperfect member of Christ's church, a fellow earthly saint. If

we can bear with each others weaknesses and faults, if we can counsel with one another when problems arise, if we can forgive each other for God's sake,...we will experience the blessing of God in our mutual calling to instruct covenant seed for God's sake. Then the teacher, as a mature Christian, faces each day with renewed enthusiasm for his God-given task. He received his high calling to teach as a result of his own rearing in a covenant home, Christian school, formal instruction, study of God's word, and worship with the church. He is a devoted servant of God by dedicating his life to serve parents and children of the covenant. This position of teacher is certainly as great as the position of parent and is more influential if for no other reason than that a teacher has the opportunity to rear many more children than any natural parent. Besides, teachers are trained for their jobs and prepare for each day to make themselves more effective; whereas most parents have little if any preparation for their task and learn only through experience.

We, as parents, must respect our teachers as servants of God. Not only just servants of God, but servants to us for God's sake. We must honor our teachers for their devotion to us and our children. We must take care of their needs and speak well of them to our children. We must hold open the lines of communication with them so that they know how we expect our children to be reared. If they have a problem with one of our children, we must help them solve it. If we disagree with the conduct of one of our teachers, we must tell him and also try to resolve it between him and us alone. We must never feel that we dare not approach our teachers because then we are denying parental education. If a teacher makes

himself hard to approach, talk to him anyway and point out that he must have an open ear and an understanding heart toward you and your child because he stands in your place so much of the day. We must not yield to the temptation to gather support from other parents or even other students for our 'gripe' because in so doing we are really admitting that our position is so weak that we need others to help us. Worse than that, we are reveling in the sin against the ninth commandment and are engaged in backbiting. Nor may we go to the board or even the principal... we must deal with the teacher who is standing in our place as a parent before our child in school.

The quotation which Rev. Engelsma made from Martin Luther at the conclusion of his article in the October *Perspectives* deserves repeating here. Luther says: "I will simply say briefly that a diligent and upright schoolmaster or teacher...can never be adequately rewarded or repaid with any amount of money, as even the heathen Aristotle says. Nevertheless, this work is as shamefully despised among us as if it amounted to nothing at all. And still we call ourselves Christians! If I could leave the preaching office...there is no other office I would rather have than that of schoolmaster...; for I know that next to that of preaching, this is the best, greatest, and most useful office there is. Indeed, I scarcely know which of the two is the better. For it is hard to make old dogs obedient and old rascals pious; yet that is the work at which the preacher must labor, and often in vain. Young saplings are more easily bent and trained, even though some may break in the process. It surely has to be one of the supreme virtues on earth faithfully to train other people's children..." (Luther's Works, Vol. 46, pp. 252,253)

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"...let the educators, who stand in *loco parentis* and represent divine authority...teach the children to submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake..."

L. Berkhof