

PERSPECTIVES

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OCTOBER, 1975

COVENANT EDUCATION

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EDITORIAL STAFF

Miss Agatha Lubbers, Editor-in-chief
Mr. Jon Huisken
Mr. James Huizinga
Mr. Calvin Kalsbeek
Dr. Dwight Monsma

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

Perspectives in Covenant Education is a journal regulated and published semi-annually, in September and March, 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.

EDITORIAL OFFICE

MISS AGATHA LUBBERS
7227 COCONUT DRIVE
JENISON, MICHIGAN 49428

Forms 3579 should be returned to

SUBSCRIPTION OFFICE

PROT. REF. TEACHER'S INSTIT.
C/O COVENANT CHRISTIAN H. S.
1401 FERNDAL AVENUE S.W.
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN 49504

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Perspectives in Covenant Education exists for the purpose of furthering the cause of Protestant Reformed Christian education. This principle therefore regulates the entire contents of the journal. *Perspectives in Covenant Education* will publish any article written by a teacher, parent, or friend of Protestant Reformed education, provided the article is in harmony with the stated purpose of the magazine. The journal will publish articles whether theoretical or practical. All manuscripts must be signed and all authors are solely responsible for the contents of their articles.

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Editorial

The Protestant Reformed Teachers Institute Sponsors and Publishes PERSPECTIVES IN COVENANT EDUCATION

by Agatha Lubbers

The Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute is an organization of professional educators. The P.R.T.I. has had a continued existence since April 2, 1956, a fact which is recorded by the minutes of the organizational meeting of the P.R.T.I. Two decades ago a dedicated group of teachers from the two Grand Rapids schools (Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School and Adams Street Protestant Reformed Christian School) met at the First Protestant Reformed Church and formally organized themselves as the P.R.T.I. The minutes of the meeting held on April 2, 1956, indicate that the precise reason for the meeting "stems from a meeting held between the faculties and boards of the Adams Street and Hope P.R.C. Schools on March 29, 1956."

On June 14, 1956, the proposed constitution of the P.R.T.I. was formally approved. Eight teachers were present that evening to adopt the constitution. Of those eight teachers four are currently employed as P.R. teachers and are members of the Institute. Miss Ruth Dykstra teaches at Adams Street P.R.C. School. Mr. Fred Hanko, who presided at the meeting, and Miss Winifred Koole now teach at Hope P.R.C. School. Miss Agatha Lubbers teaches at Covenant Christian High School, Grand Rapids. We extol the faithfulness of God, who preserves us in the way of the truth, and we are thankful to God that today many men and women have been added to the ranks of those who are dedicated to instructing the seed of the Covenant in

Protestant Reformed Christian Schools.

Soli Deo Gloria!

The basis of the P.R.T.I. is stated in the constitution adopted that June evening twenty years ago. This basis has remained unchanged until the present time, and we pray God that He will continue to preserve us in the truth of this basis which is stated as follows:

The basis of this organization is the Word of God as interpreted by the Three Forms of Unity (the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dordrecht,) and as these are applied in the educational principles of the Protestant Reformed Christian Schools.

The purpose of the P.R.T.I. has also remained unchanged during the two decades of the existence of this organization. The constitution, as originally adopted, states the purpose of the P.R.T.I. as follows:

The purpose of this organization is:

1. To study materials related to the field of education in conjunction with the Word of God in order that we teachers may be better qualified to teach from a Protestant Reformed viewpoint.

2. To create a medium through which we may produce materials of a specific Protestant Reformed nature to be used in our own schools and thereby make our schools more distinctive.

3. To create a means through which we teachers may work towards unity and understanding among our Protestant Reformed Christian Schools.

Requirements for membership in the P.R.T.I. are stated in Article IV of the Constitution and have likewise remained unchanged. The article states the following:

Membership shall be limited to Protestant Reformed persons who are either teachers or prospective teachers.

Since that day of small beginnings, which the Scriptures tell us not to despise, the P.R.T.I. has grown. At this time there are approximately thirty teachers from the three Grand Rapids, Michigan, schools (Adams Street P.R.C. School, Hope P.R.C. School, and Covenant C.H. School) and the P.R.C. School of South Holland, Illinois, who actively participate in the meetings of the institute four times each academic year. In addition the P.R.T.I. sponsors annually, in the fall, the Convention of Protestant Reformed educators. The 20th annual Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute convention was held October 10 and 11, 1974, at Hope P.R.C. School. Teachers from the Protestant Reformed Christian School of Doon, Iowa, from the Free Christian School of Edgerton, Minnesota, from the Protestant Reformed Christian School of Loveland, Colorado, and from the Plymouth Christian School of Grand Rapids, joined the member teachers from the three Grand Rapids schools and the South Holland, Illinois, school.

It was during one of the business meetings of this 20th P.R.T.I. Convention that a motion passed to have the president of the Institute, Mr. Darrel Huiskens (teacher at Hope P.R.C.S.), appoint a committee to study the matter of the publication of a Protestant Reformed educational journal. A committee consisting of Mr. James Huizinga, chairman, Charles Bult, Calvin Kalsbeek, Harry Langerak, and Ignatio Quenga, did the initial work which resulted in the decision of January 24, 1975, to publish the periodical, **Perspectives in Covenant Education**.

The proposals of the study committee were approved and adopted with a few minor changes. The grounds for the

production of an educational journal were stated as follows in the proposal of the study committee:

1. We have a considerable number of people in our ranks who are capable of making significant written contributions.

2. We have previously prepared manuscripts that could be profitably published.

3. We have no magazine at the present time in our Protestant Reformed community that is devoted exclusively to the development of Protestant Reformed education.

4. Professional responsibility demands that we undertake the production of such a journal.

Perspectives in Covenant Education is described in the decision of the P.R.T.I. by the following five statements:

Perspectives in Covenant Education shall be:

1. a magazine produced and controlled by the Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute.

2. a magazine whose pages are open to all teachers, parents, and friends of Protestant Reformed education.

3. a magazine that encourages a degree of parental participation in the areas of planning and actual writing.

4. a magazine intended to have a broad base of subscription.

5. a magazine devoted to development in the academic areas and to the discussion of more general subjects such as: teaching methods, discipline problems, and the relationship between the home and the school.

The purpose for **Perspectives in Covenant Education** is specifically stated

in the decision of the P.R.T.I. This statement of purpose is as follows:

Perspectives in Covenant Education is a journal regulated and published semi-annually, in September and March, 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 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.

The editorial policy of **Perspectives in Covenant Education** has also been established by the P.R.T.I. This editorial policy is the following:

Perspectives in Covenant Education exists for the purpose of furthering the cause of Protestant Reformed Christian education. This principle therefore regulates the entire contents of the journal. **Perspectives in Covenant Education** will publish any article written by a teacher, parent, or friend of Protestant Reformed education, provided the article is in harmony with the stated purpose of the magazine. **Perspectives in Covenant Education** will publish articles whether theoretical or practical. All manuscripts must be signed and all authors are solely responsible for the contents of their articles.

The editorial staff of **Perspectives**

consists of three teachers and two parents. Since Mr. Jon Huiskens has returned to the ranks of those presently employed by Protestant Reformed Christian schools (He and his wife Joanne are teaching at the Redlands, California P.R.C. School.), Dr. Dwight Monsma of Grand Rapids is the lone parent on the editorial staff. In addition those who collaborate with the undersigned are Mr. James Huizinga, department of English at Covenant C.H.S., and Mr. Calvin Kalsbeek, teacher of the sixth grade at Adams Street P.R.C. School. This editorial staff supervises all aspects of the production of the journal; however, contributors to the journal are solely responsible for the contents of their article. Therefore the editorial staff seeks manuscripts which positively develop Reformed Christian educational ideas which will assist the teacher and give positive directives to both teacher and parent in our Protestant Reformed community, and also the broader Reformed community.

Considerable thought was given to the naming of the journal. Teachers were asked to submit possible titles for the journal. From an aggregate of approximately twelve titles the name **Perspectives in Covenant Education** was chosen. Because the magazine is designed to be a forum for both parents and teachers, the title is sufficiently inclusive to include both parents and teachers. We believe that all instruction of Covenant children is controlled and regulated by the parents, and therefore we wish to have parents included in the studies and writings of the professional educators employed by Christian parents. The journal is designed to be medium whereby teachers can talk to other teachers and parents. It is also intended to be a means whereby parents can speak to teachers and other parents.

The P.R.T.I. has been in existence for two decades. One of the purposes stated in the constitution adopted by this

organization was that "this organization should be a medium through which we Protestant Reformed Christian teachers could produce materials of a specifically Protestant Reformed nature to be used in our own schools and thereby make our schools more distinctive." Because of a generous monetary grant from the Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools and because the Institute has substantially increased each member's annual dues, this introductory and promotional issue of **Perspectives in Covenant Education** could be published.

This periodical cannot exist, however, without the generous support of dedicated parents and without a faithful list of subscribers. The P.R.T.I. asks therefore that you become a supporter of this important cause and that you subscribe to this journal which we plan, D.V., to publish semi-annually in September and March.

It is certainly significant that **Perspectives in Covenant Education** is published by the P.R.T.I. at a time when the members of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America commemorate fifty years of the Covenant faithfulness of Jehovah God. From the loins of the people of God in this denomination of churches have come men and women who have matured in the faith and truth of the Scriptures. They are the second and third generation in the church and to them the torch of leadership has been passed. This too is an indication of God's Covenant faithfulness. Jehovah God fulfills the promise given to believers and to their seed.

Employing the Word of God, i.e., the Scriptures, and its orthodox interpretation in the Reformed Confessions these educators, who have dedicated their lives to the education of the seed of the covenant, can give leadership and inspiration in this important work of teaching the youth.

We pray God for direction and

faithfulness in this important endeavor.

"Except Jehovah build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except Jehovah keep the city, the watchmen waketh but in vain." Psalm 127:1.



Mini Course '75 and.

by Mr. Calvin Kalsbeek

Mr. Calvin Kalsbeek teaches sixth grade at Adams Street Protestant Reformed Christian School.

Had you wandered into the Protestant Reformed Seminary Building on August 8, 9, 11 or 12, you might have been surprised to see Protestant Reformed teachers from as far away as Loveland, Colorado or as near as Grand Rapids, Michigan. If you had taken time to look the crowd over carefully, you might have been further surprised to see Protestant Reformed ministers and other visitors from near and far.

It would be natural to wonder about the why and wherefore of such a

diversified gathering, so I'll tell you: they came to be fed. Now you and I both know that people will travel rather great distances to go to their favorite restaurant but not hundreds or thousands of miles! Yet some of these people did, and I'm sure they didn't return home disappointed.

Actually, those present during all four of the above mentioned dates received five scrumptious meals. I believe, however, that most of us would still think it a little absurd to travel such distances for even five meals! A peek at the menu might be the key to understanding the motivation for such seemingly inappropriate behavior.

Mini-Course '75:

Sponsor: Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies
Instructor: Rev. David Engelsma

Lecture titles and tid-bits:

1. The Covenantal Basis of Reformed Christian Education (Aug. 8)
 - The root of the entire endeavor: God's Covenant with believers and their children.
 - An examination of other bases of Christian education, e.g. evangelism, dissatisfaction with public schools, social reform, etc.
2. Scripture in the School (Aug. 9, 8 A.M.)
 - The basic place of Scripture is not that of a formal subject but of a foundation of every subject.
 - Is the Word of God the authority for those in the camp of the AACCS?

3. Reformed Education and Culture (Aug. 9, 10 A.M.)
 - Reformed Education is not synthesizing (common grace) nor anabaptistic (world-flight).
 - Why pay high tuition costs when vocational training might better prepare our children for jobs at much less cost?
4. The Goal of Christian Education (Aug. 12)
 - A mature man or woman of God who lives in this life as God's friend servant using all his abilities to this end.

You'll agree, I'm sure, that if ever there were a case for gluttony this was it; and that without the usual resulting upset stomach. For this there is good reason: the food prepared by the chef was founded on the perfect Word of God. Can you ever get too much of that? If you have an appetite for that kind of food, a feast awaits you following this article. The main course: "The Protestant Reformed teacher." Taste it. Digest it. Be strengthened. Grow.

And that was mini-course '75. In case you're wondering, I wrote about it to familiarize our readers with the kinds of things which the Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies promotes. This was but one of many treats made available to Protestant Reformed teachers by the Federation. Other Federation sponsored activities and projects include:

1. Mini-Course '74 led by Prof. Herman Hanko in which the teachers received instruction concerning "Biblical Psychology."
2. Various workshops in which teachers worked together during the summer; the concrete results of which are recorded in manuals with these titles: "Music Curriculum Guide," "A Writing Program for the Covenant Child," and "Biblical Perspectives in the Social Sciences."
3. The production of a Bible curricu-

lum by Mrs. H.C. Hoeksema.

4. "Seminars" in which ministers and teachers wrote and discussed papers on

teachers wrote and discussed papers on various topics pertinent to Covenant instruction.

That's quite a record for an organization of which, it seems, so little is heard. From what we've seen of its activities, we shouldn't be too surprised to learn that its primary purpose is to "seek ways and means for a more thorough training of teachers and prospective teachers in Christian principles." *

I'm sure that as long as this purpose remains vivid in our minds many more feasts await Protestant Reformed parents and teachers in the future. And, I'm positive that if the Federation remains true to this purpose, it will not suffer for the lack of financial as well as prayerful support by our covenant parents and teachers. It is my prayer that this means may continue to be used to the end that our children be brought up in the fear of the Lord. Shall we make that, **our** prayer?

*For a detailed history of the Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies, please read pages 111 through 113 of **God's Covenant Faithfulness** edited by Gertrude Hoeksema.

The Protestant Reformed Teacher

by Rev. David Engelsma

Rev. David Engelsma is the pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois. He is the author of a recently published book, *Marriage the Mystery of Christ and the Church*. He is a frequent contributor to the *Standard Bearer*. Pastor Engelsma served as instructor at a mini-course sponsored and financed by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Schools during the summer of 1975. This is the fourth in a series of five speeches on "Reformed Education." The entire series will be published soon by the Federation in a monograph.

In this lecture, we come to the heart of our subject. For we treat here, not only what the Protestant Reformed teacher is to be, but also what the position of the Protestant Reformed teacher is and what he, or she, does. We will take up the truth that the teacher stands in place of the parents and that this necessarily implies that the work of the teacher is essentially the work of rearing covenant children. From this follow important practical considerations concerning the credentials of a teacher, as well as certain considerations pertinent to parents.

It is fitting that we treat the heart of the subject of Reformed Christian education in connection with the teacher. Although it is a slight exaggeration to say that the school is the teachers (for God has blessed and used schools that suffered for a time with poor teachers), the thrust of the exaggeration is correct: Christian education is Christian teachers teaching covenant children.

After the building is up, the principles printed, and the teacher-training completed, Christian education begins - the mystery of teaching. And it is a

mystery. It is more than a good lesson plan. It is more than a brilliant scholar before children. It is a gift. A good Christian teacher and good Christian instruction are great gifts of the Holy Spirit. There was good reason why the original 21st Article of the Church Order of Dordt called for good schoolmasters: "The consistories shall everywhere see to it that there are good schoolmasters..."

The Teacher Stands "In the Place of the Parents"

It is an integral part of the covenantal conception of the school to view the teacher as standing in the place of the parents. The day school is a demand of the covenant, an aspect of the parents' calling in the covenant. Therefore, the school is an extension of the home, a parental school, and the teacher's status is that he stands in the parents' place, or office.

This defines the authority of the teacher with regard to the students: it is nothing less than the authority of the parent, nothing less than God's authority given to parents, nothing less than the authority referred to in the 5th commandment. This must be preached to the children by the pastor in sermons on the 5th commandment; it must be inculcated upon the children by the parents; it must be insisted on by the teacher himself.

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 parents' own authority - in the teacher - that they are undermining). There may no more be disparagement of teachers in the

presence of the children than a disparagement of each other by parents. As regards the teacher's weaknesses and faults, parents and students alike must always keep in mind the instruction of the Heidelberg Catechism as to how God requires us to respond to the "infirmities" of those in authority: "patiently bear with their weaknesses and infirmities, since it pleases God to govern us by their hand" (Q. 104).

That the teacher stands in place of the parents is the historic Reformed conception of Christian education. Dr. H. Bouwman wrote: "The rule ought to be, that the school originate with the parents. According to the ordinance of God, the full task of rearing rests first of all upon the parents. To the many aids which serve to assist the parents in this rearing belongs especially the school. The school takes over a part of the task of the parents. It follows from this, that the school must stand on the same foundation as the Christian family, that is to say, on the ground of the covenant..." When Bouwman sums up what he has said about Christian schools, his first point is: "That according to Reformed principle, the schools must originate from the parents." As Biblical basis for this position, he appeals to Deut. 4:9,10; Deut. 6:7,20; Eph. 6:4; and Col. 3:20,21. (cf. Dr. Bouwman's *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, Vol. 1, pp. 520, 521, in the chapter entitled, "Scholen" - my translation of the Dutch.)

The Dutch educator, T. Van Der Kooy, wrote: "Considering the Christian school in its nature, we find as its distinctive feature that it pretends to be nothing further than a school; that is to say, an institution auxiliary to the family in the education of the children for their position in life. It is content with this supplementary function" (*The Distinctive Features of the Christian School*, p. 30).

It is necessary for us to maintain this view of the school over against a challenge

to it. The challenge is that the school must be viewed as an independent, sovereign sphere, so that the teacher is independent of the parents. The school then becomes a teacher's school, instead of a parental school, and the students, the pupils of the teacher, rather than the children of the parents.

This is the position of the A.A.C.S. (Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship). This becomes apparent in the educational creed of J. H. Olthuis and B. Zylstra. It speaks of a free, sovereign teaching office, apart from parents. (cf. "Confessing Christ in Education" in the *International Reformed Bulletin*, Summer 1970, especially Articles 6,9, and 10.)

But this is an incipient threat within the Reformed set-up, always. It was a threat in the Netherlands in the 1800's, so that the watchword of many Reformed believers became, "the school belongs to the parents" - and the intent was - not to the teachers! (cf. Van Der Kooy, p. 34) A sovereign school and independent teachers was suggested in discussion at the convention of the National Union of Christian Schools in 1930. After a lecture on "The Relationship Between Parent and Teacher," there was a discussion that centered on the speaker's assertion that the relationship between teacher and parent was that of employee and employer. Someone suggested that the teacher's position is "something like sovereignty within a certain, particular sphere of action." (cf. the annual of the NUCS, October, 1930, pp. 74ff.)

Where this notion creeps in, the teachers regard themselves and their work as independent, resent parental "intrusion," and fail to view themselves as servants of the parents.

The justification for this view is that the teachers are competent in the field of education, whereas generally the parents are not. In fact, in many cases, the

parents are not even well-educated. It is supposed that sovereign educators, unhindered by blundering parents, will make for a better school and better education.

It is essential that we turn down the challenge and retain parental schools, both in theory and in practice. An educator's school will not be better, but will spell the doom of the Christian school. For it cuts itself off from the root of Christian education, from its own life-source: the covenant of God with parents and the Word of God to parents. It will either lose support, the zeal of the parents and then inevitably their money, or it will lose its Reformed, covenantal character. The Christian school must fully and wholeheartedly show itself to be the home's extension - to the parents too. There is something seriously wrong when teachers and parents begin to think of each other as "us and them." The fact is that "we are they, and they are we."

Since teachers stand in the place of the parents, they are servants. We must avoid the endless wrangling, whether teachers are professionals, employees, and the like. Christian teachers are servants. They are servants of snot-nosed children, of uneducated parents, and of God; and they are servants of God by being servants of parents and children. Therefore, teachers are lowly, very lowly. But according to the law of the Kingdom, exactly in this lowliness they are very great, so great that sufficient honor cannot be given them. He who would be great in the Kingdom, let him be the servant, not the lord, but the servant of all, according to the example of Him Who washes our feet and died for us.

The Christian teacher must be humble, not puffed up over his degrees, knowledge, and abilities, but lowly on account of his sins. He lives in the consciousness: what do I have that I have not received? As a pastor, I am not unaware of what may be a sore temptation for the teacher: exposure to the constant

scrutiny and criticism of everybody, including those who are less qualified in the field in which they offer criticism. I read recently that one reason why so many men avoid or leave the pastorate is that in the pastorate a man is subject to the judgment and criticism of every member of the congregation. Sunday after Sunday, schoolboys, housewives, and ditchdiggers weigh his sermons and do not hesitate to find them wanting. This is a blow to pride. It is similar with the teacher. The answer, for the teacher, is: humility.

That the teacher is a servant does not mean that every whim of every parent is simply carried out by the teacher. This is impossible anyway. There is a Board and an Association. But it does mean that the teacher is to listen to every whim of every parent and to listen in such a spirit as indicates that he knows the parents's right to speak on the matter of his child's education and as indicates that he is ready to give account of his teaching or discipline.

The servant-position of the teacher does not mean that the teacher is allowed no liberty in the sphere of his labor, that he becomes a mere puppet of the parents. This is a warning to parents to let the teachers teach and not to be looking over the teacher's shoulder at every move he makes, like I look over the shoulder of the mechanic working on my car - to his great harassment and absolutely no advantage to myself. Within the framework of parental authority, there is ample room for the free, unhampered labor of the teacher. It is impossible to spell this out in exact detail, to formulate a codebook. Love, trust, and responsibility always run the risk of meddling on the one hand and an overstepping of the bounds on the other hand. The general relationship between parent and teacher has been pointed out. In his **Ons Program**, A. Kuyper wrote: "The parent determines the spirit of the instruction, the church determines the principle whereby that spirit may be

conserved, the state determines the minimum amount of education, but the method by which all this should be brought about is left to the teacher to determine." According to H. Bouwman: "As to the manner of instruction, the school itself decides, but the parents prescribe what must be taught and in what spirit." (Geref. Kerkrecht)

But the servant-position of the teacher does mean, as Van Der Kooy said, that "the Christian school...is content with its relation to the home. It respects the rights of the family. It does not usurp any prerogatives of the home...It never undermines the home." (The Distinctive Features of the Christian School)

The Teacher's Work is Covenantal Rearing

If the teacher stands in the place of the parents, his task is thereby set forth as the rearing, or upbringing, of the covenant child. For this is the task given to the parents by God. The parents may not and cannot assign to the teachers anything else than this task. Even if the parents set certain limits on the task of the school, the work remaining is, at its heart, the rearing of covenant children.

By rearing is meant the work with the covenant child that directs and guides and nourishes his growth unto a mature (or, as is often the rendering of our version, perfect) man of God. It is the upbringing of Ephesians 6:4: "And, ye fathers,... bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The way in which the covenant God brings to spiritual maturity the reborn child of the covenant is the oversight, direction, and guidance of others, namely, parents. Parents do this by instruction, discipline, and example; and the work of a teacher is to assist in this labor - to be busy in **this** task. The teacher's work is not only to impart facts, to give head-knowledge, to educate intellects, to teach subjects capably, or to

develop fully God-given abilities - although he may not do less than this or something entirely different from this! - but he must, in all of this, rear the **covenant child**. As the Dutch educators put it: "Alle onderwijs moet opvoedkundig tewerk gaan" (i.e., all instruction should have nurture as its purpose - cf. C. Jaarsma in **integrated education**).

Covenant education is supremely and always spiritual-ethical-practical labor. This is the message of every text in which the call to Christian education is given, Deuteronomy 6, Psalm 78, Ephesians 6:4, and all the others. We certainly may not maintain the covenant basis of education, but construe the education differently than that prescribed in this basis. The one child must, in the totality of his nature and in the development of every aspect of his nature, be spiritually nurtured. Parent and teacher alike must know this and labor in this consciousness and never for one moment lose this consciousness. When I send my child to school, and to you, the teacher, I do not say: "Teach my child to read and write;" but I say: "Carry out Deuteronomy 6 and Ephesians 6:4 in and through teaching my child to read and write."

This ethical-practical concern has ever been the heartbeat and power of the Reformed movement of Christian education. Not that it is uniquely a characteristic of Reformed **education**, for this characterizes the Reformed faith and life throughout. But it is true also of Reformed education. Here we better be all ears to the common man, the uneducated parent, the man who stammers and stutters when it comes to educational theory, but who speaks ever so clearly and powerfully when it concerns the essence and heart of Reformed, Christian education. We will rue the day that we shut him up or cut education loose from his spiritual-ethical concern, for that will be the day that Christian education dies. He knows why

he wants good Christian schools and why he gives liberally of his precious time (time that he has far less of than the scholar) and of his money (got through sweat and blood) for those schools. God's children must be godly taught; covenant children must be taught to fear God; separate children must be kept apart from wicked teacher and wicked children; sanctified children must be taught and disciplined to be holy.

Down through the ages, believing parents speak with one voice. You hear it in the father of the Book of Proverbs: "My son, the beginning of wisdom and knowledge is the fear of Jehovah - fear Jehovah, and keep His commandments!" You hear it in Luther, who raged against existing schools - Christian in name - for a practical reason: they corrupted the youth of the Church in mind and manners. It is heard in our Dutch forebearers of the Synod of Dordt when, in the original Article 21 of the Church Order, it called for "good schoolmasters who shall not only instruct the children in reading, writing, languages and the liberal arts, but likewise in godliness and in the Catechism." "... in godliness and in the Catechism!" It is heard in the early Dutch settlers in America. At the first meeting of Classis Holland, in 1848, the ministers and elders faced the question, "What shall we do about schools for our children?" The Classis' answer was: "We judge that the congregations should make sure that their children are trained in schools where the influence is definitely Christian..." (cf. M.Schoolland, *De Kolonie*, pp.198-204) We have heard the same voice in our own parents and grandparents. They have plainly expressed that our schools were born of their spiritual-ethical-practical concern that their children be reared in the fear of God. So much was this the case that there is some truth to the observation that the schools preceded the theoretical basis of the schools.

Covenant life often precedes theoretical reflection on covenant life.

In my judgement, our schools have a weakness here. I do not have in mind the school's failure in practice, as regards the rearing of the children. Certainly, these are no greater or more numerous than the failures of the home. But I refer to the idea itself of the school that prevails among us. There is an unhealthy intellectualism, a notion that the business of the schools is not only primarily academic, but even exclusively academic. There is a hesitancy, a fear to assert, and boldly to implement, that the main task of the Christian school is spiritual-ethical rearing. We do well to listen to the warning of the Dutch educator, Jan Waterink, against what he calls "a one-sided rational approach" in education. He suggests that this is an area "of fundamental importance in the practice of education." He gives the example of a child of limited intellectual abilities, who is nevertheless hounded in school to learn and to get better grades and who, as a result, becomes "peevish, surly, tiresome and later perhaps untrustworthy." What is forgotten in such an education of this child, says Waterink, is "the unity of life." Then, he goes on to give this warning (the emphasis is his):

"And thus we naturally come to the conclusion that there is a **danger** to life itself in a **one-sided rational** approach. The human intellect, which dissects everything, analyzes everything, counts everything and measures everything, is itself a product of a life-dissolving activity. Therefore any science and any pedagogy which arises merely from this isolated **ratio** is doomed to death; for though the man who tells you exactly how many sepals, and petals, how many stamens and what pistil he has picked from the flower you gave him may speak very accurately and very

scientifically, he is not speaking of the flower which God has caused to grow. For in nature, stamens and pistils, petals and sepals do not grow: God has made flowers.

"And he who understands this, who is able to attain the harmony between head and heart, who learns to know with his heart and to love with his intellect - and this is the knowing and loving repeatedly mentioned in the Scriptures - he will also experience the unity of life in education. He will not today be engaged in religious education and tomorrow in intellectual education, nor will he be occupied now in morally educating the child, and then in esthetically training him. He will understand that life is one, and that both in himself, the educator, and in the child which he is educating, this one life must express itself and develop according to the rule given by the Creator, in order that he may be, and the child may become, a man of God." (*Basic Concepts in Christian Pedagogy*, pp. 31-33)

How ought the Christian school to work at this calling to rear the children?

Not by periodic excursion into mysticism, along the lines of neo-Pentecostalism: and not by injections of the emotionalism and superficial piety of fundamentalism ("Children, put your history books away now, and let us sing, 'Throw out the lifeline'")

The Christian school rears simply by being true to the covenantal basis of the school, by being true to the Reformed faith. It rears by instructing the mind in the various subjects in the light of and on the basis of the Word, Holy Scripture, and thereby relating the subject to God and relating the student to God in his knowledge and use of the subject. The teacher can and should be detailed and explicit, if he is not merely to impart knowledge but, above all, rear the

covenant child. E.g., in science, the teacher ought to show that evolutionistic science is rooted in unbelief, thus bringing home to the student that in confessing creation he takes a stand for the Truth against the Lie and is involved in the great battle of all ages. He ought to point out the dark shadow of despair that evolution casts over all of human life - man is without God and without hope in the world. If he does not quote Bertrand Russell to the class, he will at least make plain to them the implication of the theory that now has educational, scientific, and indeed all human life by the throat in our society, as those implications were acknowledged by Russell, who himself, of course, embraced evolution:

"That man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labors of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noon-day brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins - all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet nearly so certain (!), that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built...Brief and powerless is man's life; on him and all his race the slow sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way;

for man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little days...proudly defiant of the irresistible forces that tolerate for a moment his knowledge and his condemnation, to sustain alone, a weary but unyielding Atlas, the world that his own ideals have fashioned despite the trampling march of unconscious power." (quoted by Gordon H. Clark in *A Christian Philosophy of Education*, pp. 56,57.)

The teacher ought to indicate that evolution produces lawlessness, existentialism ("Eat, drink, and be merry - this moment - for tomorrow we die"), and the hippie-life of irresponsibility. Then, he can contrast the doctrine of creation and show how the call to the people of God to a life of trust, hope, and good works is based on it. Good, thorough, Biblical teaching of the subjects will itself rear the children, by the blessing of the Spirit. If I may make a comparison for a moment with preaching, in the Reformed faith doctrine itself is ethical, i.e., the doctrine itself sweetly inclines the believer to holiness of life. Holiness is not "tacked on later," is not a "second blessing."

Secondly, the school accomplishes rearing by the teacher's concerning himself with other aspects of the child than his mind. No covenant parent sends a brain to school; he sends the one, entire covenant child. Teachers may counsel. They must. It is impossible not to. Teachers are derelict, if they do not. This is an aspect of discipline, and discipline is part of the covenant calling of parents, which they pass on to the teachers who stand in their place. Discipline is an important part of the calling of parents and, therefore, an important part of the teacher's calling. The importance of discipline is brought by the fact that the

word for child-rearing in the New Testament, the word, *paideia*, is sometimes used to refer strictly to discipline. In Hebrews 12, e.g., "chastening" is the word, *paideia*, i.e., the rearing of a child.

Discipline is much broader than 'spank' or 'write lines' or 'stay in at recess.' It is the structuring, or ordering, of the child and the life of the child. This is done partly by the inflicting of some pain when the child sins, but it is done largely by the words of parents and teachers, whether in praise or reproof or exhortation, which words are the Law of God applied to the child.

The teacher must deal with laziness, irresponsibility, sullenness, anger, disrespect, pride, cruelty, and mob-spirit. As a parent, I beg you, I command you, "Help me here! Stand with me, here! Stand for me and my wife, here! Admonish! Discipline! I.e., rear my child! Foolishness is in the heart of my covenant child, but your rod and your rebuke will drive it far from him.

I make bold to suggest that a future "mini-course" on discipline would be very profitable.

Thirdly, the Christian school rears a child by the teacher's direction of the child in his use of his knowledge and abilities. The school is concerned that the child have a critical, discerning mind: how to use time; what kind of books and magazines to read; what kind of music to listen to; the proper use of the money he will make through his knowledge of math; etc. If my son uses his knowledge of history to help set up the Kingdom of Antichrist or if my daughter uses her ability to communicate to deceive others and aggrandize herself, my one, great purpose with my children's education has not been realized, even though he is Ph.D. in history and she, the most highly acclaimed author in society.

This, the rearing of covenant children, is the responsibility of the teacher's office. For this service, he is given his

authority. To do this, the teacher must love the children. He must love them as the parents do and carry out all the instruction in love. It is true, when I take my child to you, I say to you nothing less than this: "Rear him!"; but I say this also, and I say it first: "Love him, as a covenant child of God!"

The Teacher's Credentials

If the work of the teacher is rearing children of the covenant, the teacher must have spiritual credentials. He must be full of the Spirit and grace of God. The man or woman to whom I entrust my child - not merely my money or my property or even my bodily health and life, but my child! - must be worthy, must be trustworthy. Luther saw this long ago and spoke of "honest, upright, virtuous schoolmasters and teachers offered by God." He also warned those who rejected good, Christian schoolteachers, in a Christian school, that they would "get in their place incompetent substitutes, ignorant louts...who at great cost and expense will teach the children nothing but how to be utter asses, and beyond that will dishonor men's wives and daughters and maidservants, taking over their homes and property..." prophecy fulfilled with a vengeance in our day. (cf. "A Sermon on Keeping Children in School," in *Luther's Works*, Vol. 46, p. 218.)

The teacher in our school must be Reformed, knowledgeably, soundly, and thoroughly Reformed, i.e., Protestant Reformed. He may not be merely "Christian" in a broad sense, a sense in which he or she has distaste for the Reformed faith. He may not be loosely "Reformed," having no eye or concern for the maintenance and development of the Reformed faith in the Protestant Reformed Churches. He must, on the contrary, be confessionally Reformed, with a love for the Reformed truth and principles as we know them and confess them and with an

eagerness to teach them and apply them in every area.

Whether or not a teacher has these credentials must be determined. The early Dutch synods proposed that a consistory have a committee of elders for school-surveillance, to see to it that the teachers were soundly Reformed as well as capable and to see to it that the instruction in the schools had a Reformed character. This, in addition to the fact that the teachers had to sign the Formula of Subscription. Bouwman gives us this interesting information:

"The Church leaves the matter of the instruction entirely up to the school-association, and asks for herself only the right of inspection of the instruction." "The consistories must try to exercise surveillance (*toezicht*) both over the ability of the teachers and over the religious character (*gehalte*) of the instruction." "...surveillance of the church over the instruction is desirable for these three reasons: a. because the foundation of the school is the Word of God and the confession of the church, and the church has the calling to see to it whether the school is faithful to this foundation; b. because the parents have bound themselves at baptism to instruct their children in the doctrine of the church, and it is the calling of the church, to make certain that the parents fulfill their baptism-vow; c. because parents with their children are always subject to the surveillance and discipline of the church, not least as concerns instruction...this surveillance does not have to do with the instruction as such, i.e., with the lesson-plan, etc., but with the Christian character of the instruction...the manner in which the surveillance is exercised is determined by mutual agreement. To that end the consistory might be given the right to appoint

one or two members to the Board of the school or to appoint a special committee of surveillance." (Geref. *Kerkrecht*, Vol. 1, pp. 520,521)

This goes in the direction of parochialism and hierarchy. Not the church, but the parents have the responsibility of determining the credentials of the teachers and the character of their instruction, and the parents carry out this responsibility through an Association and a Board.

This means that there is a heavy responsibility on the Board and on the Association. The Board must make the spiritual qualifications of the applicant their concern. In their oversight of the instruction in the classroom, they must make the Reformed character of the instruction their concern. This requires Reformed Board members - men elected to the Board because of their spiritual qualifications, as well as their educational abilities. Since Boards rely heavily on administrators, sensitive Reformed administrators are called for.

I am not altogether satisfied with the way in which we parents get teachers for our schools. The Association of parents has little, if anything, to do with the hiring of teachers and little, if any, say-so in the matter, less, in fact, than a congregation does in the calling of a pastor. Decisions of a Board should have to be ratified in some way by the Association before teachers are hired.

The teacher's credentials also include his ability to teach. Not every good, Reformed, well-meaning man, or woman, can teach. The teacher must know his stuff; must be able to work with children; and must be able to get the stuff he knows through to the child.

The possession of these credentials demands training. The ideal is our own college for the teaching of teachers. In the meantime, prospective teachers should use the best Christian colleges available. In addition, our most experienced and

best qualified teachers could give instruction to aspiring teachers during the summer months. Ongoing training is in order for all our teachers. There should be frequent faculty meetings to discuss the Reformed world-and-life-view. This is worth pursuing.

Some Implications

Some important, practical implications should be drawn out from the teacher's standing in the place of the parents and from the teacher's calling to rear the children.

There must be the closest intimacy and cooperation between parents and teachers. This will be expressed and effected by meetings and conversations, not mere public meetings, but private meetings as the need calls for. In my experience, we parents have the greater fault on this score. We often operate under the notion that the teacher replaces us; we abdicate in favor of the teacher; we regard the school as a substitute for the home. Then, we do not even avail ourselves of the ordinary means of cooperation with the teachers, PTA, conferences, and association meetings. As far as the teacher is concerned, he ought to call the parents regarding problems and consult with the parents regarding moral flaws (sins), and he ought to do this early.

Cooperation is the normal way. I echo, with all my heart, Van Der Kooy's remark: "It is my fervent hope that we may be spared the unfortunate conflict between parents and teachers which has sometimes been predicted. These ought by all means to stand shoulder to shoulder in the fulfilling of the sacred calling to educate."

Essential is the unity of home and school, of parent and teacher, as regards the child and his rearing. The home and the school must be one in mind and will, and above all in heart, as to who the child is, what the required instruction and

discipline are, and Who God is. At this point, the church's work is crucial: to preach to home and school alike the mind and will of Jesus Christ. The unity of our homes and schools in the truth is a rare thing today - pray God that we not lose it!

It is also implied that the teacher must be awe-struck with his calling, just as the parent is. He should feel that he would not accept such a position for a million dollars and that he could not leave it for two million. Having this attitude, he will depend on God for the ability to do the work and will pray for the grace constantly. He will also be diligent. He will give it all he has. If ever there were a calling that warranted sacrifice and effort beyond the call of bare duty, teaching covenant children is this calling.

Finally, teachers are to be highly honored. They should be paid well. They should be respected. Luther said it in his inimitable way:

"I will simply say briefly that a diligent and upright schoolmaster or teacher, or anyone who faithfully trains and teaches boys (and girls! -

DE), 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 and my other duties, or had to do so, there is no other office I would rather have than that of schoolmaster or teacher of Boys; 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)

P O T P O U R R I

Teachers and parents are invited to contribute short, helpful articles to this section of *Perspectives*. Mr. Roland Petersen, principal of Covenant Christian High School and chairman of the music department, writes a brief article of advice for elementary teachers.

Elementary teachers, are you bothered by boys who seemingly can't sing and whose efforts usually consist of two or three notes in the vicinity of middle c or lower? Bear in mind that these boys, barring the possibility of some rather rare functional hearing disorders, should have perfectly good soprano voices, voices that would add much to your singing in the classroom. Instead of labelling them "monotones" (In twenty-eight years of choral work I've never found a genuine monotone!!) and placing them in musical limbo until their voices breaks, why not spend some time helping them find their real voice. Remember that the boy soprano voice is probably the most beautiful of all!

A possible solution to some, if not all of your problems, is the following two-step approach. First, eliminate the piano. Yes, work **without** the piano!!!! You may use a pitch-pipe if necessary, but rely on your voice as the principal instrument. The second step is to pitch the songs down so that the lowest note is in the vicinity of a-flat below middle c. Most youngsters can sing this low without straining. These two steps often will be sufficient; a few may require some personal attention, but the non-singers should begin to sing. After they have gained some confidence the pitch can gradually be raised to a normal level. Bear in mind that certain songs in The Psalter are pitched too high to begin with and can well afford to be sung in a lower key.

The above is written in the assumption that you are a woman. If you aren't, then you'd better start cultivating your falsetto. Most men have a perfectly good, but seldom used, high falsetto voice that can sing easily in the mezzo-soprano range. The recent revival of the **counter-tenor** voice is proof of the fact. A great many male altos possess normal baritone voices. A little work on your falsetto can work wonders in your classroom singing...!

If you have any questions I'll be glad to consider them. Just write or call at the high school.

by Roland Petersen

The Theological Basis For Teaching Writing

by James Huizinga

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

I John 1:3

Mr. James Huizinga is an instructor in the English department of Covenant Christian High School. He serves as an assistant

editor of Perspectives in Covenant Education.

We who support Protestant Reformed Christian education have chosen the ideal of a distinctive education, invigorated by the Word of God and true in all its parts to the doctrines of the Reformed Tradition. We insist that all instruction have a theological foundation. We believe that God's Word, not only inspires us to the task of educating our children, but that it also provides us with our purpose and establishes our goals. We maintain that Scripture, and Scripture alone, illuminates all of reality. Thus Scripture is the source and basis for all knowledge and all understanding. We, therefore, demand that a very real and vital Scriptural emphasis be present throughout all of the instruction given in each course in the Christian school curriculum.

We have made our position clear, generally, with respect to this theological foundation, in the constitutions that we have written for our schools, and in the principles of education that we have adopted. We have given our teachers the mandate, to work out and apply the specifics of this position in the various courses that they teach. Each teacher must understand the theological basis for his course, and it is his responsibility to make the implications of this theological basis meaningful in all of his teaching.

The task of teaching a course in the light of Scripture is an immense one, a humanly impossible one. It takes much thought, much study, and much prayer. One thing is certain, however. When teachers and parents have a clear understanding of basic principles, and when teachers and parents make a diligent attempt to communicate these principles to their children, we will be well directed toward achieving an effective Christian education.

The purpose of this article is to explore the theological foundation for teaching writing in our schools. We believe that the purpose for teaching

writing is clearly implicit in the doctrines that we hold precious, and we believe that the teaching of composition in our schools can not proceed aright unless these principles are clearly understood by parents, teachers, and students.

We desire, above all else, that our teaching be true to the demands of Scripture, that it satisfy the demands that Scripture makes for the lives of the people of God. There is always the danger, however, that the education in our schools be derivative: that it not be distinctive; that it be similar, if not in theory, then in practice to what exists in other institutions. Although this danger exists in every subject area, it seems particularly a threat to the teaching of writing. We too seldom think of the profound spiritual importance of writing. We tend to think of writing merely as a practical skill that we need, to get along in the world. Here we are influenced by the world and the world's view of education. The world says, "Learn to write if you expect to be a success in the world of buying and selling." "Learn to write if you wish to achieve the good life." We very easily share in this kind of thinking. If this be our motivation for teaching writing, we and our children will fail to see the more profound role that writing plays in the life of the child of God.

Besides the motive of materialism, there are other worldly motives for teaching writing that we reject. We do not teach our children to write for humanistic reasons. Traditionally, in the humanistic tradition, writing has been seen as one of the fine arts, a noble expression of the human heart and spirit. To learn to write well was to achieve something uniquely and grandly human. Writing was for the betterment of the individual and ultimately for the improvement of society and the human race. Humanism, however, always exalts man at the expense of God. This we do not want to do in our teaching

of writing.

More recently a new sound is being heard. It is the clamor of those who have become impatient and disillusioned with the humanists. The steady voice of the humanist has become the desperate cry of the revolutionary educationist. Refinement of the human race is no longer the crucial issue in education. Now the issue is survival. A book, written by Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, first published in 1969, entitled **Teaching as a Subversive Activity**, is representative of this changing concern in education. The book expresses severe dissatisfaction with education in our country, charging it with gross irrelevance. The main thrust of the book is that "new education" can and must come to the aid of a sorely troubled society. The authors base their book on two assumptions:

- a) That the survival of our society is threatened by an increasing number of unprecedented and, to date, insoluble problems.
- b) That something can be done to prove the situation.

The list of problems that Postman and Weingartner present is truly startling: the mental illness problem, the crime problem, the suicide problem, the child beating problem, the misinformation problem, the civil rights problem, the electronic bugging problem, the sex problem, the drug problem, the population explosion problem, the birth control problem, the abortion problem, the housing problem, the pollution problem, the garbage disposal problem, the radio activity problem, the megalopolis problem, the super-sonic jet noise problem, the traffic problem, the who-am-I problem, and the what-does-it-all-mean problem. In the words of the authors:

It is the thesis of this book that change -- constant accelerating, ubiquitous -- is the most striking characteristic of the world we live in

and that our educational system has not yet recognized this fact. We maintain, further, that the abilities and attitudes required to deal adequately with change are those of highest priority and that it is not beyond our ingenuity to design school environments which can help young people to master concepts necessary to survival in a rapidly changing world.

What Postman and Weingartner have to say in their book characterizes a growing trend in education today. As the world's problems increase, the plea for relevance in education becomes more urgent. More and more the schools are being pressured to discard traditional values and methods in favor of programs designed to solve immediate problems. Increasingly, the resources of the schools are being turned in the direction solving the problems that threaten society. The teaching of writing, also, is part of this new emphasis. Writing is important today because writing is a means of communication. Communication is what man so desperately wants. Man believes that lack of communication is the root cause of most of the world's problems. Thus he presses writing in the service of solving these problems. Students in writing classes are taught to solve their personal problems through self-expression. The confused adolescent, the angry member of the minority group, the alienated teenager, the person with the "who-am-I problem," the person with the "what-does-it-all-mean problem": they are all encouraged to work out their problems by relating to others. In these situations writing becomes a kind of therapy, a method of survival.

In schools where the students' personal problems are not the pressing concern, students are allowed to do "issue centered writing." Students are given the opportunity to explore contemporary

problems, such as: the problem of war, the problem of over population, the problem of poverty, and the problem of race. Throughout their exploring, students are encouraged to discover the causes for the world's troubles and to propose solutions. New education hopes to create a new generation of people, sensitive to the problems of the world, able and willing to engage in an interchange of ideas that will eventually serve to make the world a safe place to live.

For the world, communication in all its forms is the key. Never before has man so urgently felt the need to communicate. Never before has man been so terrified by the threat posed by divergent elements in the society of men. Never before have peace and harmony and singleness of purpose been such dearly sought prizes. For modern man the issue is survival. He knows that his future depends upon undoing the confusion of tongues and upon regaining the glory of Babel.

The Christian teacher of writing does not want to share in the ungodly, Antichrist-seeking goals of modern education. Yet there is a danger. The danger lies in the fact that the goal that the Christian has for teaching writing appears similar to the goal sought by the world. Not that the Christian imitates the world, but rather that the world steals from the Christian. The world seizes the gift of communication and perverts it into the service of a kingdom, which for all its apparent goodness is really a counterfeit kingdom, and whose king is the most wretched kind of imposter. Christians, too, are interested in writing because it is a form of communication. They, too, desire peace and harmony and singleness of purpose. Christians, too, seek the establishment of a kingdom. However, the kingdom that Christians seek is entirely separate and everywhere opposed to the Kingdom of the World. The world trains its children for the Kingdom of the World.

We train our children for the Kingdom of God. The Christian school does not train children to be social activists. We are concerned about the problems of the world because they affect us. We are concerned about them because we know that they serve God's purpose. We are not concerned about them because our survival is at stake. For us the future is secure. Resting in the knowledge that our earthly existence is only temporary, we can pursue our primary goal of knowing God and our fellow Christians. Writing, as we will see, plays an important role in this activity.

The Biblical doctrine, then, that is the foundation for the teaching of writing in the Christian school is the doctrine of the Covenant. The doctrine of the Covenant has implications for every aspect of our lives. It has implications for every one of our natural gifts. When God created Adam, he fitted Adam for the Covenant relationship in which Adam was to live with God. God gave Adam the gift of communication. Adam by speaking and listening was able to live in close fellowship with God.

The gift of communication was in fact a Godlike gift, a reflection of the nature of God himself. For God, the Scriptures tell us, is a communicating God. He communicates first of all with himself. This is evident in Genesis 1:26 where God said, "Let us make man in our image." This communication of God within Himself, we believe, is evidence of the perfect fellowship and harmony of purpose that exists within the Trinity. When God chose to communicate with Adam, he established a Covenant of friendship with Adam. He formed the basis of this friendship by communicating himself to Adam. Adam could hear God's speech in creation, and he could also hear God's speech directly as is apparent in Genesis 1:29-30, Genesis 2:16-17, and Genesis 3.

Nor did God cease speaking to Adam

when Adam deliberately violated the blessed relationship that he had with his God. Although Adam could no longer communicate perfectly with God through creation, and although he was now spiritually cut off from God so that he could not naturally hear the voice of God, God continued to communicate with Adam by speaking the name of Jesus Christ. Thus the promise of Christ became the basis for the Covenant of Fellowship between God and man throughout the Old Dispensation.

And then the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and some of us communed with him face to face. And then the Promise was fulfilled as God spoke the central message of all time, the message that God continues to speak through his written Word, promising the joys of salvation to those who read it and hear it proclaimed. So God's speech to his people is the language of the Covenant. For those to whom he has given the ears to hear, God's speech makes possible the most blessed fellowship and communion with Him.

God's people, however, are not mere passive listeners. A strange relationship indeed it would be if God could talk to us, and we could not talk to him; an incomplete and unnatural relationship at best. The fact is that our role in God's Covenant is an active one. God has so designed and structured us that we are able to respond to him with our voices. He gives us the desire, not only, but also the ability to answer his speech to us. Covenant life also demands that we seek fellowship and communion with each other. As the family of God we feel compelled to know and enjoy our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is this truth that is the motivating principle for the teaching of writing in the Christian school.

Just as God chose the written word to communicate himself to us, so our written words serve to promote the communion of

the saints. It is this fact that we have to communicate to our students. We have to get them to see that writing is a useful and beautiful tool for the Kingdom of God. The essential fact about writing that we have to stress is that writing is sharing. The Christian writer is concerned with sharing knowledge of God and insights into the will and working of God. It is knowledge of God that the saints must seek, and the more they grow in the knowledge of God, the more they grow in fellowship and communion with each other. That the Church of Christ down through the ages to the present has had writers who have enriched the people of God by sharing their peculiar insights is plain enough. It is equally plain that Christ's Church in the future will need such writers.

We must impress our students with the fact that writing is sharing knowledge and insights about God. We must also show them that the Christian writer shares himself, that he imparts a knowledge of himself to his reader. No writer (unless he is writing something as coldly objective as a cookbook) can escape revealing something of himself. We say that all writing has a degree of subjectivity, meaning that all writing to some degree bears the mark of the author's personality. It is this insight into the mind and spirit of the Christian writer that is valuable to the Christian reader. A piece of writing may help us know God better, but at the same time it may help us to know the writer. When we recognize the knowledge of God in a fellow Christian, and when we see the unique way that he gives expression to this knowledge, our knowledge and enjoyment of this fellow Christian becomes more complete.

Thus it is important that we teach our students to be original in their writing. We have to teach them to avoid cliches, trite expressions, and over-worked forms. We want them to be true to themselves,

which is a way of saying that we want their God-given uniqueness to shine in their writing. We are not, however, exponents of unbridled freedom in writing. We do not encourage students to say what they want to say when they want to say it. Rather, we insist that our students learn to move freely in harness. We readily grant each student the freedom to be himself, yet we insist that his written expression be governed by a desire to foster the communication of the saints. If we can get our students to appreciate the importance of content in their writing, and if we can help them achieve a style of writing that is personally honest, then their writing will truly be a useful tool in the Kingdom of God.

We can be thankful to God that we have active writers in our churches today. We have **The Standard Bearer** and the **Beacon Lights**. We have people who write papers for society meetings and the like. These all serve the nurture and growth of the body of Christ. Yet the sad fact is that the writers among us represent only a handful. Why is creative writing (published creative writing at least) virtually non-existent among us? Why does the **Beacon Lights** staff find it difficult to get young writers? The teacher of writing starts with the assumption that every Covenant child has a contribution to make, and it is frustrating knowledge to him that many of his students will never use the

writing skills that he has tried to teach.

One reason for the lack of writing among us is no doubt the distractions of our age and the preoccupations that we allow in our lives. We do not seem to have the time nor the energy to devote to such a strenuous intellectual pursuit as writing. Maybe we have become too content with being mere listeners. Whatever the problem, our task as parents and teachers is clear. We have to promote writing. As parents, we have to see to it that our children master the skills of writing, then we have to encourage them to apply these skills. As teachers, we have to be diligent and thorough in showing the students the role that writing plays in the life of the child of God. One thing that the schools can do is provide more opportunities for the students to see their writing published. Students who write only for the teacher quickly see writing as a meaningless, artificial activity. We have to let them see their writing do its work.

The ideal of a distinctive, truly Covenant education is an ideal that we can hope to realize only in part, and that by God's grace. Also in the business of teaching written composition we fall far short of the glory of God. Yet we have every reason to believe that if we are faithful stewards of the time and opportunities that God has given us, our efforts as parents and teachers will bear rich fruits in this life and in the life to come.

“... No covenant parent sends a brain to school; he sends the one, entire covenant child. Teachers may counsel. They must. It is impossible not to.”

“The Protestant Reformed Teacher”
Rev. David Engelsma

READING TO CHILDREN

by Darrel Huisken

The freshly bathed children listen attentively as mother reads them a bedtime story. Father enjoys listening although he does not often admit it. It is the first time since breakfast the family is again together. It is the first time all day that the children have sat quietly. The sedative works, for soon they are off to bed and to sleep.

The noon hour is over, the last home run struck, the last touchdown made, the last goal scored. The anxious and exhausted soon sit quietly, for they know that story hour follows noon hour.

The once rambunctious sit in rapt attention as the minister tells them another of those spellbinding stories from the Bible. The stories of creation, the flood, the plight of poor Joseph in Egypt, the children who mocked the prophet Elisha, the trials of Daniel and his friends, the birth of Jesus, and hundreds more.

These three incidents involve reading and telling stories to children. This practice of telling stories and reading to children has a firm basis, the Word of God.

The basis for talking to and reading to the covenant children is found throughout the Scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments. There are several in the Old Testament; four stand out. The first one is found in Exodus 12 where the Lord, through Moses, exhorts the children of Israel to tell their children about the blood on the doorposts in the celebration of the Passover. Another occurs in Deuteronomy 6. Again the Lord exhorts the people of Israel to teach their children God's law: "when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Still another is found in Joshua 4.

Joshua here reminds the children of Israel of their obligations to tell their children the meaning of the twelve stones piled up on the bank of the Jordan River. The last one comes by way of implication. The book of Proverbs is replete with the phrase "My son," implying that as Solomon instructed his sons in the ways of the Lord, so covenant parents are to instruct, discuss, tell, and exhort their children in the ways of Jehovah God.

The New Testament supplies two examples. The first is from the Lord Jesus Himself. When the disciples wanted to send the little children away, he rebukes and says, "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not." A second example is that of Timothy who knew the Scriptures from the mouths of his mother and grandmother.

These are but a few; there are many more. These suffice to show that parents and teachers in the place of the parents must read to their children and tell the children about God's Word and World. The basis is firm, and the benefits are many.

In the home, first of all, there is the benefit of getting the whole family together to do one thing. The bonds in the family are also strengthened through this mutual endeavor. Through reading to their children, especially from God's Word (the *sine qua non* of good family reading), parents learn to know their children as they never knew them before. In the home the children can be exposed to the kind of reading they ordinarily do not get in school, for example, religious periodicals, biographies, church histories, certain types of fiction, and poetry. The primary book that reads excellently aloud is the King James Version of the Bible. The

beauty of its cadences and its simple but majestic descriptions cannot be excelled by any other version of the Bible. Reading aloud as a family activity is on the wane; a revival is long overdue.

In the school the benefits are many and varied. One benefit to all teachers, no matter in what grade he teaches, is that he establishes a lasting and personal rapport with the children entrusted to his care. Reading aloud to children often brings out "that other side" of the teacher that the children do not often see. Another benefit is that the pupils are introduced to literature, especially in the primary grades; and literature that the children do not always choose to read in the middle and upper grades. Reading aloud to children also serves as a supplement to the pupils' reading, for many children re-read for themselves what the teacher has read to them previously. It introduces them to good books in a charming and painless way. Still another benefit is that the children learn to listen to their teacher in a relaxed atmosphere. And added to this benefit is another, that of asking and answering questions that do not often come up in class. Sometimes the reading of a story, especially to older children, affords the children an opportunity to ventilate their feelings on certain subjects that trouble them. Almost every teacher worth his salt knows that reading aloud has sedative powers. When the filmstrip projector does not work, when the class ends early, when the rain does not stop for three days straight, when the heat is oppressive, or when the pupils are keyed up before a program, the wise teacher takes out a good book and begins to read.

Soon the cares of moment are set aside and the children are off to Narnia, Plum Creek, or the back of the North Wind. And it works!

Some of the fondest memories that children have of their ministers is their ability to catechize by telling Bible stories that were real, vibrant, and meaningful. This storytelling, which is directly related to reading aloud, again has the benefit of establishing between catechumen and catechete a lasting trust and rapport. Like the teacher, he reveals oftentimes "that other Dominie" that children do not see when he is on the pulpit, and like the teacher, he asks and answers questions that often do not arise anywhere else. Like the teacher, the minister uses his story telling to bridge the gap between what a child can read and cannot read. But unlike the teacher, the minister uses this method to indoctrinate the children in the name of Christ. He really preaches to them. This method is unique; may it continue.

The foundation is firm and sure for reading to and telling stories to children. The benefits are many, both to the children and the one who reads or tells the story. May God grant the grace so that the children rise up and call those blessed who instructed them. May they echo the words of the children in Psalm 44:1 as they say: "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days in the times of old." May the covenant seed of today promise, "I will make Thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee forever and ever." (vs. 17)

"No one is really equipped to face life who cannot face it from the bastions of an education based upon the knowledge of God."

W. Vander Hoven

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