STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:
Perspectives in Covenant Education is a journal regulated and published tri-annually, in October, February, and June by the Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute. The purpose of this magazine, in most general terms, is to advance the cause of distinctive 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.

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SPECIAL FOCUS

We did, in the Spring issue of Perspectives, provide some in­formation about Young Writers' Day, 1986. But that was by way of anticipation. After the fact, we asked some of the people most intimately involved, both in the making and in the imple­mentation of the plans, how the event actually came off. They were quite enthusiastic. And since this apparently successful venture was something of an innovation for us, we figured our readers would understand our desire to give it a little more ex­posure. The Writers' Day was a project sponsored by the Federa­tion Board of Protestant Reformed School Societies. The Teacher Educational Development Committee (a committee of the Federation) was responsible for setting up general guidelines. But all of the details were worked out by the three people who agreed to serve as directors. The three were teachers: John Kalsbeek, from Adams, and Jim Huizinga and Cal Kalsbeek of Covenant Christian High School. We commend them for a job well done. And we thank Mr. Huizinga for providing us with the following account of the activities of the day. (The picture on the cover, by the way, is of Mr. Huizinga's daughter, Susanne, a Young Writers' Day writer.)

Young Writers' Day
Review

Jim Huizinga

On July 15, 1986, Young Writers' Day was held at Heritage Christian School. After much effort and no small amount of anxiety on the part of the planning committee, the long-awaited day arrived. It was a hot day in early summer, but that didn't lessen the enthusiasm of either students or teachers. From the point of view of those of us who worked on Young Writers' Day, it was a pleasant success.

We believe that Young Writers' Day is unprecedented in the his­tory of Protestant Reformed Christian education. The Federation of Protestant Reformed
Christian Schools has sponsored many worthwhile projects in recent years, but never an event like this. Eighty-one youngsters in grades 3-5, from 4 different Protestant Reformed Schools participated. Schools represented were Hope, Heritage, Adams Street, and South Holland. Eight teachers and eight teacher assistants were there to help the young writers in their work.

Young Writers' Day was an exciting and fun day for all who participated. Everyone, including the teachers and teacher assistants, were given an official Young Writers' Day tee-shirt that proudly displayed the Young Writers' Day theme. There was ample time for play and fellowship, and at lunch time everyone was treated to pizza and pop. Perhaps the most popular fun-time activity was the 45 minutes that the young writers had cooling off in the pool at Hudsonville High School at the end of the day.

Young Writers' Day was not all fun and games, however. We believe that the young writers had a genuinely good time functioning as Christian young writers. MAN AND GOD'S CREATION was the theme for the day. The day's format consisted of 3 parts. After orientation and devotions, PRE-WRITING EXERCISES were held. The purpose of these exercises was to start the young
writers thinking about some of the important aspects of the Young Writers' Day theme. Brenda Regnerus and Linda Van Baren, both teachers in our South Holland Christian School, combined to give an excellent picture presentation which showed that man must take care of God's creatures. John Kalsbeek, from Adams Street, used a film and a few well chosen comments to show the young writers that man often abuses God's creatures. Winifred Koole and Antoinette Quenga, from Hope, also give stimulating presentations. Miss Koole used a short story to dramatize the fact that often God's creatures are useful to man. Mrs. Quenga drew from her experiences on the island of Guam to show that nature, particularly violent winds, can be harmful to man.

We believe that these PRE-WRITING EXERCISES accomplished two things. In the first place, they stimulated, in a powerful way, the young writers to think about the important relationship that they have with God's creation. In the second place, these activities gave the young writers an abundance of material that they could use in their own stories.

Following the pre-writing part of the day, the young writers were divided into small groups. Each group was led by a teacher and a teacher assistant. Within these groups, the young writers were reminded of the Young Writers' Day theme and of the important things they learned during PRE-WRITING. After a brief discussion they were asked to write an original story that in some way had to do with man's relationship to God's creatures. Having teacher assistants working in the small groups proved valuable, not only from the point
of view of the extra help they were able to give the young writers, but also, seeing that many of the assistants are interested in teaching, they had a fine oppor-
tunity to find out what it is all about.

The writing session lasted until noon. After pizza and kickball, we all came together again in our small writing groups. It was now time for RE-WRITING. The teachers had examined the papers while the writers were on the playground. Now, with the help of their assistants, they tried to show each young writer how to improve his or her story. Much progress was made making good stories better. The young writers, perhaps, learned that good writing does not come easily. Most of them worked hard right up until the end of the session.

By the time Young Writers' Day was coming to a close, all the young writers were ready for a swim. We came together again in the gym to sing and thank God
for a good day. The young writers were then dismissed with the promise that soon after school began in the fall they would be given a booklet containing all the stories written by all the young people who attended Young Writers' Day, 1986.

Was the day a success? We believe that it was. A great deal of money was spent, and a great deal of time and effort was put into this one-day event. Those of us who were there, however, were inspired by the way the young writers conducted themselves. They were eager to learn and obviously enjoyed thinking of themselves as writers. We believe that a day such as this can do much to develop a positive attitude toward writing in the minds of our children. Such an attitude, if properly nurtured, can only grow as the children go on with their education. If Young Writers' Day, in some small way, helped to foster good attitudes toward writing, then certainly the day was worth the effort.

Those of us who planned Young Writers' Day, 1986 are grateful to all the young people who participated. We are equally grateful to their parents for sending them. We thank too all the teachers and teacher assistants who agreed to help out, especially those teachers who gave presentations during the PRE-WRITING EXERCISES. We thank the Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools for its financial support. Most importantly, we are grateful to God Who gives us an opportunity to help prepare His children for service in His Kingdom.

We hope to be involved in Young Writers' Day, 1987.

Our Winter, 1986 issue included two “Viewpoints” on the matter of home-schooling. Both articles were short, intended to be personal opinions more than detailed analyses of the subject. We make good now on our promise at that time to return to the topic in a later issue of our magazine. To begin, we have the text of a speech given at the P.T.F.A. meeting of Covenant Christian High School on April 25, 1985, by Prof. Robert Decker, of the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches. In that speech he took the position that home schooling may indeed be preferred if a good, solidly Reformed school is unavailable. He spoke in the context of our own Protestant Reformed, Christian
schools of course, and insisted that, where these existed, the practice of home-schooling could “detract from the corporate responsibility of the covenant community of believers toward the children of the covenant.” Mrs. Carol Brands, a member of Edgerton Protestant Reformed Church and a mother whose previous experience included teaching in three different Protestant Reformed schools, takes a slightly different view. With Prof. Decker, she recognizes the legitimate, important, and necessary place that our Christian schools have in the instruction of covenant children. She acknowledges that instruction can normally best be given by qualified teachers in the schools. She does insist however that home-schooling should be considered “the ultimate obedience to the command to train up a child in the way he should go.” We’ll trust you’ll find these articles worth your careful consideration.

**Home Education**

Prof. Robert Decker

Home education is a rather popular and prevalent movement in our country today. A fairly good number of parents are taking their children out of the school systems, both public and private, and educating them at home. Some of our own Protestant Reformed people are doing this. It should be noted that state law allows for this practice. There are various learning centers, some secular and some religious, which provide curriculum. In the state of Michigan certified teachers must approve of the work being done by these children and their parents on a weekly basis.

What must we think of this? Is home education right, proper? Ought we all be doing this? Is home education to be preferred over the current school situation?

Is home education a better way to train our children? Is home education better for the children academically and is it better for them socially?

The Biblical principle is clear. Scripture teaches in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 that parents are to teach their children. This passage reads: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a
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sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." This passage clearly teaches that it is the parents' responsibility to teach their children. This passage also teaches a corporate responsibility, for the house of Israel is addressed. The entire church, therefore, has a responsibility towards the children of God's covenant. The church must help in the instructing of the children through its prayers and gifts and also by means of the mutual admonition and encouragement of its members. In Ephesians 6:1-4 the Bible teaches: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Children are admonished to obey their parents; and fathers must bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It is the father's calling (with the assistance of his wife) to instruct his children. According to the Bible's teaching, therefore, neither the church institute nor the state has the calling to educate the children of God's covenant. Both public education and parochial education are wrong. This is so clearly taught in Scripture that it hardly needs saying. In early Bible times, especially Old Testament times, education was done almost exclusively by individual parents.

There are two possible ways in which this Biblical principle may be implemented. It may be implemented by parental schools. Because of the complexity of our times parents find it impossible to educate their children individually at home. Covenant parents form Christian school societies. They elect boards to administer the school and hire teachers to teach. These schools are Christian, covenant schools. They are in harmony with the Biblical principles. They are parental schools and as such are extensions of our covenant homes. In these schools our children are taught by Protestant Reformed teachers who are professional educators and who stand in the schools in loco parentis, in the place of the parent. In these schools too our children are taught all things in the light of the Scriptures as interpreted by our reformed confessions. They are taught not only the "three R's," but the "three R's" in the fear of God. And our children are disciplined in these schools according to the teachings of the Word of God.

Another way to implement the
Biblical principle is by means of home education. Any Christian parent who is competent, willing, and has the time has the perfect right to instruct his own children. Against this clear, Biblical principle one simply cannot argue.

The question therefore becomes this: is home education to be preferred? The answer is affirmative in some instances. If the alternative is public education then parents ought to instruct their own children at home. This is true for several reasons. The state has no right to educate our children. Public education is secular, decidedly anti-Christian, and the environment in the public school is entirely worldly. In many instances public education is inferior academically. The Bible simply forbids us to subject our children to these influences. We may not do this. If there is no Protestant Reformed Christian school available, parents ought to consider home education.

Christian schools in the Reformed tradition are rapidly losing their Reformed character and distinctiveness. Dancing and movie attendance are condoned. Drama is taught as a legitimate art form. The religious instruction actually in many cases undermines the Reformed faith. Other Christian schools, while having commendable features, present no valid option. Some Baptist and evangelical schools are shot through with Arminianism and Millennialism. We may not subject our children to these influences.

Sometimes too missionaries find it necessary to educate their children themselves at home. The Rev. Bruinsma family in Jamaica is an example of this. In these types of situations parents have two options: 1) Home education. 2) They may move to an area where there is a Protestant Reformed Christian school.

Is home education to be preferred where we have our own Protestant Reformed Christian school? The answer to this is no. Why not? For several reasons. Curriculum materials are lacking. Instructional materials are either secular or they are from fundamentalist sources such as Bob Jones University. It takes a discerning parent to use such materials. It is much better to have our children taught the truth by Protestant Reformed teachers. Home education might very well detract from the corporate responsibility of the covenant community of believers toward the children of the covenant.

Why positively are our schools to be preferred? All of the instruction in our schools is based upon and presented in the light of the truth of God's inspired and infallible word as interpreted by the Reformed creeds. The truth is presented antithetically over
against the lie. There are weaknesses, to be sure. There is always room for improvement and growth. But our children are being nurtured in God's fear. That is a tremendous blessing and a priceless treasure. Discipline is maintained in our schools. Our children are taught to obey all in authority over them for God's sake. This is a tremendous blessing and a priceless treasure. Our Protestant Reformed schools are academically sound. There are weaknesses and there is always room for improvement and growth. It is, however, simply a fact that academically our schools are of high quality. This is as it should be for God requires our best effort and the maximum use of our gifts in His service. This is a tremendous blessing and a priceless treasure. There are in our schools social advantages as well. Our children attend school with fellow Christians of like precious faith. These become friends. Our children often find their husbands and wives from among their classmates. How many married couples in our churches in the last 10 or 15 years, for example, met at Covenant Christian High? This is a tremendous blessing and a priceless treasure.

There is one objection with which we ought to deal briefly. The school takes the children out of the home for so long a time that family life suffers, it is alleged. The answer to this is that this is not the schools' fault. It is the parents' fault. There is time for family life if we take the time.

All of this implies a tremendous responsibility. We must use these tremendous blessings and priceless treasures for the advancement of God's kingdom and to His glory. As parents we have a great responsibility. Our children are "the heritage of the Lord." God calls His children from among our children. God gives them to us with the calling to teach them His commandments and judgments, His Word. We must, therefore, be involved directly with every phase of their instruction. We must not just simply assume that because we have our own schools we have done our duty by sending our children there. We need to take time every single day to teach our children the fear of God. We need to show them by the example of our lives what is involved in living the Christian life. They must see by our speech and actions how to live to the glory of God. We need to be involved with our school. We need to know what our children are taught. We must encourage the teachers and support the schools with daily prayers and with our offerings.

Teachers have the calling and responsibility to study and
Home Schooling in Relationship to Home Responsibility

develop in the areas in which they teach. They must grow and develop in the knowledge of God's Word so as to be able to apply the Word of God to the courses which they teach. Work, much work, needs to be done to provide textbook and curriculum materials which are Protestant Reformed. Teachers must never forget that the children entrusted to their care are after all God's covenant children. Again, the cause demands our best efforts. The welfare of God's covenant and the honor of His Name are at stake. This is the on-going calling and challenge to our Protestant Reformed teachers.

Our children have a great responsibility in all of this. Their responsibility is to use those tremendous blessings and priceless treasures to God's glory. The covenant children must be encouraged and admonished to use their gifts to the fullest extent. They must redeem the time God gives them in our covenant homes and schools. The children must learn and grow and develop as citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The entire community of believers has a calling toward covenant education. Our responsibility towards the schools does not cease when our youngest child graduates from the system. The schools need the support, the prayers, the wisdom, the gifts of all of God's people. To all of the covenant community comes God's Word in 1 Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Home Schooling in Relationship to Home Responsibility

Carol Brands

In so many areas history has a way of seeing the pendulum swing back and forth from one extreme to the other. Always, always, the hard part is to find and maintain a proper balance.

This is true also in what we call a "new" movement – new for our American generation, that is – the movement to return to home schooling. Home schooling is simply what its term denotes,
“schooling” children at home, or, more properly, academically educating children at home.

Now, this concept is obviously not new. Adam and Eve had no choice but to educate their children at home. Throughout history, the vast majority of children have been taught whatever they learned at home by their parents.

It has always been the elite, the intelligentsia, the more wealthy or more privileged few who have had access to schools, to scholastic education. Never until modern times, the last 150 years or so, has there been mass education for the general populace. This kind of education has rapidly become a global concept.

What has been the motivating force behind compulsory education for everyone? Certainly, these concepts are among them:

1. Evolutionary man needs proper structuring through education to shape future man and society, to ensure survival.

2. Social advance demands conformity to social ideals. Education can form man’s thinking to form uniform thought patterns. Thus, conformity is an ideal.

3. We need leaders and sometimes the best leaders arise from poor homes where there would be no opportunity to learn apart from mass education.

4. Really a corollary of 2, mass public education also has a motivation of (ir)religious indoctrination. Educational articles abound which have these two theses: on the one hand, separation of church and state, with no religious bias taught in the public schools; on the other hand, moral motivation of the student apart from God with such ideals as progress of the state and/or material prosperity of every individual. Along with this, oppression of any system of thought contrary to those ideals and to conformity becomes a necessity, and the stage is set for oppression of non-conformists, especially Christians.

Because compulsory education has been around so long, we have accepted it as the norm. Even we, as Christians, have become accustomed to view education in a school setting as a necessity for our children. We may not deprive our children of the “social and academic advantages” of advanced modern education.

But are these ideas true? Do our children need schools? What is the true, the Biblical viewpoint on this issue?

* * * * * *

THE REFORMED PERSPECTIVE

The Bible-oriented, Reformed thinker has always insisted that the education of the child from start to finish is the responsibility of the parents. There are numer-
ous Scriptural passages which make this totally clear. In a society which we call too complex for us to be able to keep up with advances, we feel pressured into scholastic training due to our own feelings of inadequacy in training our children. Besides that, the government has made education compulsory, and either we send our children to government schools — an illegitimate option — or else we set up our own.

Now in setting up our schools, we have insisted on this maxim, "Schools are the extension of the home." What we mean is that parents alone — homes alone — are responsible for the education of the children and that therefore our schools must be parent-controlled. Nonetheless, the parents are not there in the schools doing the teaching, and obviously not every parent will like everything going on in the schools, so that the school is also obviously not exactly an extension of the home.

What we mean to say, and this must be true or our schools have no Biblical right to existence, is that "education in the schools is the extension of education in the home." Education begins at birth and continues throughout life, being the development in wisdom, the ability to love God and the neighbor and to apply all of life in service to God. Academic education in the schools is a specialty area of this education, the area of the study of social achievements — in language, math, government, and so on — and we have correctly stated that as we study these areas of necessary preparation for our role in today's society, we must study them in accordance with home principles so that true education is continued also in our schools. Accordingly, we have developed our parent-controlled schools, fought for them, loved them, and sacrificed for them.

And suddenly onto this Reformed scene pops the "new" home schooling movement. "Forget it!" says this movement. "Schools cannot properly educate your child. You are responsible and you alone must educate your child — in every area, also academically. Educational responsibility is given by God to parents and to parents only: no delegation of responsibility is legitimate."

*

THE HOME SCHOOL MOVEMENT'S STRENGTHS

There are a lot of strengths in the home school movement. For those who lack the Reformed background or parental schools, especially, these strengths emerge.

Strength One. It is a corollary movement to the return to the Biblical concept of women being real mothers, "workers in the
home” and not pursuing careers. Being a mother is a full-time job, but with modern conveniences there can be too much “idle time” so that mothers seek a career to counterbalance their home boredom — or else to pay for the conveniences that have caused their boredom. The homescooling movement insists that motherhood is God’s career choice for the woman and that this is full-time, involving “work in the home,” not merely being at home.

Strength Two. It puts modern technology and advancement into their proper perspective. Rather than seeing scientific development as a frightening spectacle which is crushing us, it says technology is rather a tool to aid us and which can make homeschooling easier. We may have to unplug the television but we can plug in the computer — with our own, home-made or home chosen programs. Resource centers for use by schools can also be used by parents. And home conveniences can give the mother (or father) extra time to work with her children.

Strength Three. The movement properly emphasizes that parents and parents alone hold the responsibility for the child’s education. The government is totally out of its domain in education. Nor is this the church’s sphere. And even parental schools may not usurp a parent’s role of full responsibility for the child. If God says to a parent, “You educate!” then the parent may not respond, “I cannot! I’m delegating that responsibility to someone else...”

* * * * * *

HOME SCHOOLING IS LEGITIMATE

There is in principle nothing wrong with total education of the child at home. If a parent is capable of such instruction — and parents are far more capable, often, than they think — then this is the ultimate obedience to the command to train up a child in the way he should go. One cannot very consistently question whether a parent who educates his own child in all areas of life is obedient to God’s command to do just that.

And, there are advantages which make home training very attractive. Some of these advantages:

1. Financial. If the cost of education makes a mother succumb to the modern call for a career outside the home, it were indeed better to forget the school and educate the child herself within the home.

2. Social. Children are not adults and the adjustment to school social life is difficult for most if not all children, and heartbreaking for others. Often this adjustment makes learning nearly
impossible for certain children.

3. Handicaps. A high percentage of children have disabilities of some form which make education in the school system difficult. An increasing number of articles appear showing how mothers have chosen to ignore institutions and to raise their handicapped children themselves, with notable success. These articles often focus on severe handicaps, but the same principles apply to lesser handicaps. Dyslexia — stuttering — eye problems — incontinency — severe shyness — all these and many more problems are prompting special education in today's schools. The main advantage of this costly special education is that it permits work with children on a one-to-one or two-to-one basis with more personal attention. Many times, parents would be equally capable of giving this time, and often they are better qualified.

4. Readiness for learning. Any elementary teacher recognizes that a main problem with the school system is that every child enters school at a given age regardless of his mental and social readiness. Abundant studies have made it clear that most children could learn in half a year what it takes three years to teach the child who begins too early, so that beginning school at age eight would make a lot more sense as a general rule. By teaching the children at home, a parent can observe his own child and know whether or not the child is ready, holding off education until the child is ready and not letting age determine the starting point.

5. Proper motivation. In our school system, there is often a built-in system of improper motivation. Our children work for grades, for superiority over other students, for various achievement awards. Proper motivation is the seeking of God's approval, typified in youth by parental approval. This motivation is exceedingly difficult to attain in our present scholastic setting.

6. Total child supervision. A teacher with twenty or thirty students simply cannot observe every child's needs adequately — and when the child spends 60% of the day without his needs being detected, they won't be met. Every child has spiritual weaknesses and sins which must be counteracted, as well as strengths that must be encouraged. The parent is responsible for this training, but if he is not there to see the needs, he cannot help his child meet them. And when the child is home, the time of day is the mother's busiest time with meals and dishes and bed prep and other necessities, leaving little time for personal attention to the children.
These are very real advantages!

In the light of all this, I believe some parents probably should educate their children at home, bypassing our schools. In fact, it has been predicted that by the end of the century (rapidly approaching!) 10% of all U.S. children will be having their schooling at home, either for a few years or through high school. But this still leaves 90% of us using schools. Are we 90% in gross error?

* * * * * * *

For myself and for many others among us, I believe our schools are necessary, are legitimate, are a blessing, and are an advantage over universal home training. What is my logic? Is it Biblical? Is it weighty enough to outweigh the very real advantages which home schooling has?

1. Covenant obligations are corporate, not individualistic. When we view our schools, we may not merely consider my children but all the children of the covenant. If as a Christian community we need the school, then we should support the existence of the school for God's sake even though it might be my second choice for my own children.

2. While the education of the child is the parent's responsibility, delegation of instruction in certain areas is not forbidden by Scripture but rather has Scriptural precedent. (Note: total abrogation of responsibility is always illegitimate; delegation of partial instruction is a different issue.) Hannah gave up her child completely at age six or younger to service and training in the temple. Moses was trained spiritually in the home but with this training to undergird him was equipped to get academic studies even in Pharaoh's schools. Schools were developed and common among the Jews long before Christ's time, although it appears that Jesus never attended them. The courts probably all had schools or tutors for the preparation of princes as future leaders and rulers. Such education was valued among them and used whenever possible.

3. The home responsibility is not instruction in every possible bit of knowledge. This is impossible. No parent can know everything. Rather, the home responsibility is training in wisdom, in the knowledge and love of God and a walk of life in accordance with that love. When a child's earthly life demands knowledge beyond what a parent can give, it is not wrong for that child to be sent to school to obtain this information. But the parent must diligently watch that this additional information is never gotten to the detriment of wisdom, and so must still be
Home Schooling in Relationship to Home Responsibility

spending time with his child, listening to him and warning him and showing him always the right way to go.

4. Academic education is \textit{specialized} instruction which requires training on the part of the teacher as well as full-time labor to do a good job. To teach language well, e.g., a teacher must be well equipped to handle spelling, phonics, punctuation, sentence structure, paragraph unity, composition organization, linguistic style and diversity, poetic structure, and so on. To teach math well, a teacher must be prepared not just to teach addition but an understanding of addition, not just simple arithmetic but the whole logic of mathematics in preparation for later application to the various sciences and, today, computer technology. To teach history, the teacher must understand the underlying unity of history, its diversity and development and trends and goals, and have a wide grasp of his subject to make it interesting, understandable, and memorable. The same goes for music, for art, for the sciences, for geography. Can one mother be equipped to instruct well in all these areas?

5. Some mothers, adequately educated themselves, may well feel they are prepared to assume this education, especially in the elementary grades. (I can't imagine anyone feeling he can teach everything, and all well, by near college age, although such persons may exist.) And where it is mandatory, as is the case with some missionaries and some handicapped children, God will certainly bless such diligent parental efforts to the welfare of His kingdom. But even where the parent has sufficient education, and even where the parent may wish he could do the job, other factors may make the child's home education nearly impossible. Consider:

a. The control situation. In a school, the entire setting is controlled to promote study and instruction. At home, some homes more than others, the distractions are numerous: phone ringing, Father needing Mom for emergencies, baby and toddler demanding attention, salesmen at the door. I teach my own children only piano lessons, and find I cannot teach a 45-minute unit without distractions so that I have had to break this down into three 15-minute segments per week per child; how could I ever organize a full curriculum?

b. The babies in the home. In a home with only a few children, organization of the home for child training may be a good possibility, but where there are many children this becomes more and more difficult. For some gifted mothers, it may still be
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possible (I think of the mother of John and Charles Wesley, mother of eighteen children, a great example as a mother despite her Arminianism. ... and have also read of successful modern home-school mothers with thirteen and eleven children). But for many of us, a busy family would greatly deter good scholastic instruction.

c. Differing life styles. Given:
   1. A manageable family
   2. A healthy mother
   3. An educated mother
   4. Sufficient time

Given all this, I can imagine home schooling in the academics being successful. But one factor overlooked in this modern movement is the fact that women are wives as well as mothers and that the vocation of their husbands can greatly alter their life-styles. If a career or any self-imposed busyness is the reason for insufficient time, these would be excuses rather than reasons and carry no weight. But where the husband's occupation and life-style prohibit sufficient time, there isn't a lot one can do about it. This is the situation in which many farm wives find themselves (I can't speak for every occupation): there are simply so many farm-related demands that the time to organize home schooling isn't available.

d. Mother's health. Since teaching the academics is a strenuous and time-consuming job, it takes a fairly healthy woman to be able to do that in addition to keeping a clean house, clean laundry, mended clothes, balanced meals, and all the other demands of a family. It is indeed true that many times disorganized households are the result of the woman trying to do everything alone and that children also need to learn to take their place in helping the family, but even such organization of the children demands a certain degree of health. Some women simply aren't that healthy. And even a woman who normally is healthy may be unable to carry such a load during and after a pregnancy. A mother in this community, a noted hard worker, commented that she never had a garden (and that's a way of life here!) on the years she had a baby. The same would go for organized home schooling. So, eight babies, eight years of no schooling?

Given the assumption that we today need academic instruction— an assumption I accept — such instruction can normally best be given through organized instruction by qualified teachers. Since private tutoring costs too much, we organize schools. Since we are still responsible for the educational atmosphere undergirding academic instruction in our schools, we organize parental schools. But let us beware that we do maintain our parental
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responsibility through parental supervision of our schools!

Let us thank God for these schools and use them gratefully. Costly though they are, they fill a great need. And where true education occurs in these schools — where our children are truly taught the wisdom of God in all their studies — then the cost to our pocketbooks is cheap in comparison to the value for eternity.

Parents' Corner

We asked Mrs. Esther Kamps, of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, to write for us an article on parents as teachers. She agreed, and, in a couple of respects, gave us more than we had asked for. For one thing, she provided us with enough material to fill not one but three Parents' Corners. And, for another, rather than writing a formal essay on the topic, she chose instead to write a story. She calls it a "parable, whose subject is Christian parents teaching children," and adds that it was her intent "to clothe some very old principles in picture language." The principles, in other words, are woven into the story; they're implied, not stated. The reader therefore, Mrs. Kamps says, "is expected to come halfway and make his own applications."

Already it should be evident that Esther is something more than the average writer. She was in fact a teacher of writing. She has earned degrees from the University of New York and from the University of Michigan and has taught English and French, in the 50's, in three different high schools, including four years at Grand Rapids Christian High, where she taught "all of the English courses." She closed out her teaching career with a year at Hope School, and then began learning by experience the principles of parents teaching children, of which she writes in this story.

The story has two chapters, and though the first is a bit long for this rubric, our intention is nevertheless to finish the parable in two installments. We thank Esther for this contribution to our magazine. And we encourage others to consider doing something similar. There's room in our magazine for different kinds
of writing. How about poetry? Some of you, I know, are very good at that. Why not think of submitting something for use in Perspectives? And please don’t think you have to wait to be asked. We delight in surprises, and we welcome variety.

INTRODUCTION

Ancient records from Time tell of the Beni lad (that is, the “Blessed”) who kept sheep, finding such joy in the myriad stars of his Maker’s heavens and in the patriarchal histories of the Beni race, that his songs came down through the ages and are even sung today! Though in later life this shepherd became a man of blood, hunted, betrayed, and even grievously fallen, yet he never lost his kingliness or the SongWords of his youth, passing them on to his sons and generations beyond, even unto Lastimes. He was, as you know, the sweet singer of Repentancejoy (“Dankesingen”), David. Singing and giving thanks was a trait strata deep in the Beni character. Asked by the Inquisitors why, the Confessors said, “It is our Chief goal to Praise God and to enjoy Him, now in Time and Always.” They really believed this must be so; for at the stake, parents bound with their children prayed, sang, and gave thanks, encouraging one another as the flames devoured their bodies.

And They Taught Their Children

by Esther Kamps

The family I am going to tell you about lived in the period of history known as Lastimes. Nathaniel Faithful was a farmer. Not rich, but wise. He had lost his father’s farm to a dishonest uncle during the great famine of ’97. He and his wife Jerusha had packed all their possessions and seven children on the old cart given him by a Beni neighbor, along with the ten chickens his uncle scorned to keep, and a few oddments of housekeeping — blankets, pans, a bit of mismatched crockery. Jerusha, with a newborn son at her breast, was hard put to keep countenance as they rolled, creaking, out the lane under the canopy of the beloved ancient maples. What Nathaniel thought, the angels knew; but he was seen to swallow hard a number of times as the bend
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of the road took them for all time out of sight of the old stone farmhouse, passed from father to eldest son for generations. The trees hid the little family graveyard from view. If the children expected their mother to break down as they left behind the one small grave, they were mistaken. At most they saw a rebel sigh.

Already uncle Ahab’s workmen were tearing down the old boundary wall along the road and carting the quarried stones up the hill pasture for a new hog barn. The boys, seeing this, gritted their teeth in dismay. How could it be that their father, so godly and true, could be so betrayed? The precious vineyard too was being burned and uprooted to make way for bigger barns. Its smoke could have accounted for the smarting eyes. Probably not. The muscles of the cartiers’ horses rippled and bulged with power, their sweat glinting in the sunlight. Some of those colts Nathaniel had raised himself, for he had ever a way of making his livestock prosper. Seeing those horses pass — some of whom would have nickered in response had he but called their names — Nathaniel found it necessary to pray with all his might in order to submit under this bitter blow. His sons wondered at his silence.

In fact the taste of shame was in their throats, choking them. What a sad contrast, the scrawny shanks of the old mare, bought with the small monies left to Nathaniel! As the insolent cartiers jolted and bounced past, there was barely room left on the road for the ragged refugees. They were covered by the billowing dust of the heavy wheels and sickened to their very souls by the raucous songs fading off up the hill.

Jerusha heard Nathaniel give what seemed like a groan and then, to her surprise, the moan turned to humming. The name of the song is long forgotten: “We Are Climbing Jacob’s Ladder” or “I am a Stranger Here,” something like that. (In later years the boys would argue over it.) The important thing was that Jerusha, beginning to rock to and fro with baby Jeremy, joined in, her voice silvery, a mite shakey, the tears slipping down her face. Never had she felt so deeply her love for Nathaniel and her thankfulness for having been given him. At the second verse she was able to turn, giving the eldest daughter Ruth a smile and a look which said louder than words, “Come, you’re the oldest; be an example; help me. We will sing away our tears. We will give thanks.” This episode at this traumatic point in the family life was probably the most important lesson the parents had ever taught their children. Certainly the most effective.

They settled finally near a town called Abatoir, where father Faithful found work in a slaughterhouse. It was cruelly hard, especially
the sheep days. But Nathaniel did not despise to spend his strength to
feed his children. His bread of self denial and killing toil was sweet to
him and his Sabbaths precious. Then in Kirkhall those keen blue eyes,
so lonely for the old fields, would gladden, caressing his family lined up
scrubbed and shiny-nosed on the Worship Bench, singing with the other
Beni.

At home Jerusha cleaned, cooked, sang, and read to her children.
If she missed her old kitchen she never spoke of it. If fear of the
wicked city of Abatoir overwhelmed her, she prayed. If the loneli­
ness and poverty dragged at her spirits betimes, it was not visible. She
was a Beni, daughter of the Beni race. She busied herself making the
home a cheerful place, establishing the comforting routines of chores
and pleasures, rewarded by the love which, received from the Almighty,
she poured out on everyone under her roof. Given the twin gifts of
contentment and joy, she shared them unstintingly. Her daughters saw
and heeded. Her sons, at first bewildered by their father's fall into
poverty, began to understand. And they were happy together.

Then came the awful days of the Great Apostasy. A messenger from
Satan came to their Kirkhall, a subtle, lying prophet, a Masque Wearer.
For many months the words sounded the same. Although there was a
certain something missing, a strange lack of nourishment, especially of
comfort, though certainly not a lack of words! Then slowly it began
to become clear to the Faithfuls that this was an Imitator, not a true
Thus-Sayer at all. Jerusha and Nathaniel, more alarmed than they had
ever been over the robbery of their farm, discussed
the
problem in
hushed voices night after night in the darkness of their bedroom.

Suddenly one Sabbath morning the satanic emissary, waxing bold,
came out clearly saying: “God needs your help. He can't do anything
without you. He’s giving you a chance today. Won’t you take it?
Don't let Satan win!” The congregation were smiling in pleased agree­
ment. Nathaniel and Jerusha gathered their children and left in stunned
silence, exchanging shocked glances with the older ones. Their fragile
shelter perched on the edge of the city Slaughterhouse (“Abatoir”) had
come crashing down. Cast adrift, aliens once more. Where to go?

The completeness of their second betrayal would only dawn on
them fully in the months to come as they traveled towards Death­
shadow Range, searching shelter in Bacca Valley, where rumor had it
that there were still Beni of the old school. Uncertain as to how to
reach that country or even if they could pass the border unhindered, it
was enough for each day's journey to know they had done the right
thing in fleeing the great Blasphemer with all the speed they could
muster — for themselves, for the children’s safety, for the honor of God Himself, whose name was being blasphemed, and that in the very Kirkhall.

So once again the old creaking cart carried its precious cargo away. The old mare had long ago been sold, but an ox which five minutes from the kill floor had been judged too poor to sell for meat, had been bought by Nathaniel in exchange for after-hours work. Tending it in the shed behind his house with all his farmer’s cunning, he had hoped to sell it for a profit when back in full flesh. Already halfway to strength under his patient and compassionate hand, the ox was now pulling them with unhurried tread away from the sluggish watershed of Abatoir, out Hugonaut Valley towards the mountains of Deathshadow Range. So full of concern for his family’s future, the unborn babe, finding nightly shelter, and the like, Nathaniel realized the wonderful providence of the ox, but just barely.

As to Providence! At night they camped out under the stars, in a hard and hostile country; yet they met no travelers whatever, for the angels had been sent to protect them. The boys approved their father’s new venture, not for the proper motive perhaps. To them it was one vast lark, yet they too felt some of the burden, and worked willingly pitching camp each night, helping with the ox, finding wood, fetching water. Their campfire in the wilderness resounded with song, even as the light faded off the mountain peaks towering above them. That those songs became more and more prayers of longing was only natural. It was a time of family unity. It seemed that the ugliness of their pilgrimage into Abatoir was fading from mind, washed away by the clean mountain air and those splendid nights under God’s sky.

It was as if the Holy Book had come to life in their lives. They read with joy of the patriarchs, finding comfort in their “trials of cruel mockings and scourgings,” especially those who “wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented.” Hunggrily they read the words “of whom the world was not worthy,” who “wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.” Only as these thoughts took hold of their hearts did they realize how near the house of death they had been in Abatoir, and how close they had been to partaking of its poison. These things they discussed earnestly around their fire at night. Father spoke of them to the boys as they plodded beside the ox up the laborious switchbacks of the mountain passes. Jerusha spoke of it as she and her daughters and little ones labored over the evening meals. Their souls, so long overwrought with the weight of darkness and dread, seemed now to soar.
like the mountains round about. The angels saw and were glad.

Nevertheless the journey grew long; provisions were short. The wagon, not sturdy to begin with, was showing signs of imminent collapse. Jerusha wore herself out devising ways to entertain and teach the children who grew fractious with the unremitting boredom, fatigue, and desire for food other than dry bread and wild rabbit stew. They had crossed the pass the day before, puzzling over which branching road to follow. Choosing the less traveled one, they had descended rapidly into a tree-lined, dusty road amid tidy fields. Feeling unwell, Jerusha had given Jeremy to Ruth to coax to sleep. As darkness approached she could feel that Nathaniel's heart was in his boots. Here was rich farmland, but not his to till... she heard him sigh. The faith he had felt so strongly up in the mountains seemed empty and as dusty as this road to nowhere. The storms which had spared them up on the heights seemed to be gathering now as Nathaniel cast a weather eye aloft. Everything was against him, and it would soon be night. How would he provide for these hungry children?

Jerusha could not tell if it was hunger or the nausea of pregnancy which was making her feel so witless and desperate. She knew that Nathaniel would ask for shelter at the approaching farmhouse, grand and lordly though it appeared. She knew too what it was costing him. His face told the tale of yet another humiliation, drawn out, agonizingly as the stolid tread of their faithful beast drew them slowly nearer. Everyone, gritty with the dust, was past tiredness. Now when she most needed to pray, the words fled from her mind. Rummaging mentally through her scanty supplies, Jerusha was wondering frantically what she could rig for supper. So small a larder to begin with, so little left! Worried and distraught, it was small wonder that she did not at first hear the singing as the cart squeaked to a standstill.

The children heard it though. The music rising out of the farmhouse windows signalled the end of their long trek. Little sister Becky leaped down from the tail gate and skampered after Father, her face alight. His own eyes ignited with hope too as he recognized the music. It was one of the shepherdsongs: "As the hart about to falter in its trembling agony, panteth for the brooks of water, so my soul doth pant for thee."

The notes of a homemade zither hesitated, then stopped with Nathaniel's knocking, and the door swung open.

Before them stood Isak The Fountain. He was a man of stocky physique, strong, dark visaged, stern. A face lined with many cares and sorrows of life lit up with a smile of such welcoming and benevolence that Nathaniel could have wept for pure relief. In moments, all the
farmhouse occupants were galvanized into action: setting a meal before the strangers (welcomed as if they had been angels), arranging for quick baths for the children, rounding up blankets, towels, spare garments, and showing them to their beds. Oh happy day, real beds, with sheets, hand-woven, patched, darned, but clean and like silk to weary little bodies! Prayers that night were brief but heartfelt by children pushed almost to the edge of their courage, children who fell asleep to the sound of singing, thinking, “Is it angels?”

Cleaned and refreshed, the others gathered at the huge kitchen table around steaming, home-brewed “tea” to exchange their stories and to close the day in prayer. How renewed father Faithful felt, knowing his prayers had been answered once again. His family had found refuge (even the faithful ox which Isak praised: “The best creature for the plow, now that we are forbidden machines”). Isak was pleased and astonished with their arrival across so many dangers. He eyed the eldest Faithful sons with pleasure. Here was the manpower so badly lacking: young men he could teach the crafts needed to support his growing “Family” in a society where the Beni were forbidden the use of money. Here were young men to step in the gap as the older generation passed on. Best of all, here was Nathaniel Faithful, whose name told the whole story of who and what he was. Here was the sorely needed second pillar in the small Kirk that gathered in the Stone Farmhouse. Now, as the boys trooped in from the barn (or “grange,” as the Fountains called it), Harmony Fountain found place for them, bringing fresh crusty bread and steaming hearty soup. She was one of those women, who having a small family herself, was forever mothering other people. She was happy to see Jerusha so obviously with child and was thinking: “Ah, God is good; He is giving us another little one!” Jerusha, for her part, was thinking happy thoughts about finding a congenial friend, someone to share her womanly concerns about the raising of the children. Harmony took the last soup to the table and found a place by Jerusha. Tomorrow’s bread sat quietly rising under a cloth by the fire-blackened brick oven at the chimney.

It was fully dark now. The flickering light of the kitchen fire giving the only light. Outside, let the wind howl. Inside all was well. Isak began his story: “You must understand, my friends, that you are welcome here. More than welcome — needed. We are hard pressed to do all that needs doing. The days are not long enough.” He paused, looking directly at Nathaniel. “However, I must warn you: there have been persecutions here. There may be again.”

Nathaniel spoke hesitatingly, “Sometimes outright persecution helps
us.” He was not a man of eloquent speech, yet all understood, especially his family, having so recently escaped the Blasphemers. Dire as their penury had been, Nathaniel and his wife and children knew, worse things there were than physical danger. The allurements of the city Abatoir Nathaniel had seen daily. Working in the “Belly” of its slums he had feared for his sons. To him the city was one vast kill floor. The filth, the daggar men, and their equally deadly women, smiling their death’s-head smiles to the sound of castanet, the flick of fan and skirt, and the sensuous thrumming of drum and stringed instruments, luring the foolish. Yes, one vast slaughterhouse! He shuddered. How scarcely had they escaped it? How welcome would the bodily danger be in contrast to the spiritual, Nathaniel thought, glancing at Jerusha with concern.

Isak’s resonant voice broke into Nathaniel’s thoughts: “In those days my father’s health was failing. So we sons would take the produce by caravan across Danger Mountain to the trading place. For even in that day money was forbidden to us because we would not ‘Take the Mark.’ Always he had warned us of the allurements and pitfalls. How well he knew that when the gypsy music played with the dancers whirling their skirts and flaunting their bodies, how hard it was not to listen, to watch, and to lust. In consequence he had always before gone with us, watching our own. I was betrothed then; Harmony’s parents were staying here at the farm. I could not wait to return to her.” An expression of remembered sorrow darkened his face.

Isak cleared his throat, continuing, “A storm had been building for some time. The mountain pass would be treacherous if it broke while we were crossing. We held back because of the cattle, especially the Cartier brothers who had gone with us. Yet we were all uneasy.” Harmony and Isak exchanged a spousely look across their safe snug kitchen, where the sturdy red geraniums sitting in the window wells nodded bright and brave against the darkness outside. “I wanted my brothers to start home. Another night of waiting and we would miss our Kirkday.” The deep lines in Isak’s face fell once more into the pattern of grief.

“It was Earnst Cartier who brought the terrible news. He had overheard it at the horse market. Of course then we made haste, our hearts leaden with fear.

“I remember the time with shame because prayer was so far from me when it should have accompanied every breath.” Isak sighed deeply. Harmony looked down at her hands, tears springing afresh, even after so many years. “As we came around the mountain, the
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whole valley lay below us a-smoke. I was beside myself. The marauders had come and left. Too late we were! I grabbed one of the Cartier's horses and galloped down that terrible pass like a madman."

He cleared his throat, then continued. "I'm telling you this so that you will know that these things can really happen if you stay. YOU could live to see your wife or children disembowelled or hung from the nearest tree for refusing to 'Take the Mark.' Can you imagine how it was? No, you can't! Let me tell you! The sheds were afire. They had slain my father, my mother, my three younger brothers. The barnyard was spattered with their blood. Their bodies lay around mother in a circle. Her fingers were still clutching pages from the Book. The marauders had ripped it from her grasp and thrown it into the fire as she lay dying.

"My sisters, and my betrothed had taken the little ones into the deep cellars. Harmony's parents gave their lives leading the soldiers away from the hiding place. Only their twelve-year-old son Isaiah Gladden escaped. He ran to the next farm and warned the Cartier womenfolk."

There was silence in the kitchen a good while as an ancient clock ticked patiently on. Finally Isak came to the crux of his statement. "I cannot allow you to think the days of persecution were anything but terrible. Our faith was tried, our spirits plumbed. There was no escape, no warning, and no mercy. And yet" — his magnificent, deep brown eyes kindled with joy and the characteristic gentle smile softened the contours of his care-worn face — "and yet God spared us; His Spirit was very near to us. He fed us with heavenly food. And a new generation was given us to rebuild and teach. We have sons and daughters here to labor with until He comes — yet a little while, my friends, in which to live by faith! Will you join us, brother Nathaniel? Here is toil, here is tears, here is peril. But here also is Communion."

He spread out his hands at the assembled guests. "Here are children to be taught God's ways, children yet unborn, youth coming to manhood and womanhood. What do you say, Brother?" Two men so different in appearance, so weighted by responsibilities, clasped hands across the table. Outside a mighty wind was screaming at the shutters and down the chimney. As the storm front whipped down Bacca Valley (Valley Tearful), the crack and fury sounded about them. The good stone house which had sheltered so many children from such storms stood fast with never so much as a shaking or shifting of its rocky foundation. The men looked at their families gathered about the fire and opened the Book. (to be continued)
Debate concerning the importance of physical education in a school's curriculum may not be as warm as is that concerning interscholastic sports (with which we dealt in our last issue), but there are surely differences of opinion here as well. In our "Viewpoints" this time Mr. Tim Heemstra, a member of the Board of Covenant Christian High School and a former member of the Board of Hope School in Grand Rapids, contends that a P.E. program is essential in the elementary grades. He draws attention particularly to the apparent correlation between a student's physical fitness on the one hand, and his classroom performance on the other. Mr. Ken Vink, a former member of the Board of Adams Street School, while not disputing the relationship between the physical and the intellectual, between a healthy body and an alert mind, nevertheless wonders aloud whether physical conditioning (often necessitating costly facilities) is the business of the school. He's suspicious, he says, of another motive behind the current emphasis on phys ed. But... read for yourself.

P.E.: Essential in the Elementary School

by Tim Heemstra

All of us as parents recall our excitement as we observed the physical development of our young infants. We anxiously referred to growth charts and developmental guidelines supplied by the pediatrician. (This seemed more so with our firstborns, right?) The Baby Book contains our notations of Junior's achievements: 3 mos. — "He held up his own head"; 7 mos. — "Ile began crawling"; 11.5 mos. — "He took his first step." We observed the joy that Junior had in developing his motor skills. Throwing the spoonfuls of cereal on the floor as he sat gleefully in the highchair created a mixed reaction from Mom. She could appreciate the refinement of gross to fine motor control. She noted the
improved eye-hand coordination. But the cleanup of the mess on the floor was less pleasant. On the other hand, Junior was truly excited about his newfound motor skill and realized there was indeed a cause and effect relationship going on.

As Junior continued to grow, we as parents were most excited by the first tottering steps that he took from the coffee table to Mom's outstretched hands. The glee on the toddler's face was indeed contagious. Junior developed further motor learning as he matured and became more adroit with manipulating toys and appliances. He became more adept at running on uneven surfaces and controlling his clumsy movements with greater ease and efficiency.

We trust that Junior will continue to receive a series of successful motor experiences during his preschool years, from playground equipment to improvised games with parents, brothers and sisters, and playmates.

We also hope that physical education is an integral component of his primary education. The learning experience provided by qualified teachers (not necessarily a specific physical education instructor, although such a luxury would be the best) will continue to build motor proficiency and establish a long-term basis for health fitness. The ability to express himself through movement at least partially shapes the child's impression of self.

I personally have had the experience of observing individuals who had not been given ample opportunity to maximize their motor skills through bona fide physical education programs. My first vivid impression of such gross neglect was the case of Don, a 24-year-old student at the Reformed Bible Institute (now College) where I worked as a part-time P.E. instructor during my undergraduate years at Calvin College. Don had been reared in a small farming community and essentially sheltered from physical activities by his parents. There were no attempts in his local Christian school for providing P.E.

Don could not perform satisfactorily on even basic motor tests. He could not perform even a minimal standing broad jump — could not jump off the floor with both feet at the same time! He could not catch a volleyball or throw a Frisbee (common social activities engaged in by his peers). He also complained that his heart beat fast when he ran! (I'm certainly glad it did! He would have had more serious trouble if it did not!) He did not lack the basic neuromuscular tools — there were no physical handicaps. But rather, he lacked coordination due to insufficient training. When given adequate
training sessions, he became more coordinated, he became more self-confident in his demeanor, and he began to interact with fellow students in social game playing. He was no longer the "wall flower" who hung back, but found greater self-confidence and a feeling of acceptance with others. Why were these skills not developed earlier? Don admitted to me that he suffered all his school years due to the lack of them.

I maintain that motor skills which enhance self-concept and wellness must be developed during the early formative years. The first 12 years are the most important. They are considered skill-building years. It is apparent that the child who enters school with poor motor skills and little previous opportunity to learn them is at a serious disadvantage if he receives no instruction to help him improve his situation at school. Fortunately, most children develop their motor skills to a greater or lesser extent by sheer default. We should not tolerate neglect. And we should be doubly concerned about those children who do not develop adequately.

Recently, as a physical therapist in private practice, I had the opportunity to work in remedial programs for the Physically and Otherwise Health Impaired (P.O. H.I.) students from a number of intermediate school districts. These students are not mentally handicapped children, per se, although they might have some associated learning disabilities. Here it is obvious to note the close relationship between accomplishment of specific motor skills, such as grasping a crayola, walking with a rollator walker, or climbing in and out of a wheelchair independently and the resultant feeling of joy by the student at such a success. You can note the improvement in the student's self-concept.

David Prescott, an educational psychologist, has written, "The child continually uses his own body in interacting with objects, persons, and processes in his own environment. Gradually he gains a measure of control over his body and learns its potentialities and limitations. Experiences with others also lead children to compare themselves with each other and to rate themselves as stronger or weaker, more skilled or less skilled, fully equipped or handicapped, attractive or ugly in comparison with others. The degree to which the child has met the physiological needs for movement directly influences the development of his self-concept."

In addition to the component of self-concept, recent educational theory promotes the idea that perceptual motor development is essential to the development not
only of mature body functions and motor proficiency, but also of mental perception and intellectual learning. In layman's terms, a sound body and good health are an important framework for the best learning.

We have frequently heard of the child who never crawled — who went from sitting to standing and walking, but who in later years had learning difficulties. Problems with visual perception and transposing of letters of words in dyslexia have occurred. Frequently, going back to remedial motor exercises such as crawling and practicing right and left body movements was able to improve test results. Developmental psychologists such as Piaget, Delacato, and Kephart have maintained that sensimotor activity has an influence on perceptual development, which in turn influences higher thought processes. Posture and balance, locomotion, the sense of body image and laterality are basic to perceptual organization and intellectual capability.

Thus I would maintain that a good physical education program (as distinct from a sports program) in the elementary grades is essential because:

1. Improved motor proficiency and health fitness may enhance self-concept, which in turn may result in increased classroom performance.

2. Movement experiences of the body can contribute to perceptual development by improving body awareness and space awareness. Reading and writing competency can be built up.

3. Movement experiences, if properly applied, may help the hyperactive student, the right brain dominate student, or the student with minimal brain dysfunction. These students will be able to learn to place themselves under better control, and this will possibly result in increased attention to classroom tasks.

But these important movement experiences as part of the P.E. program do not just happen without meaningful and adequate preparation on the part of the teacher. I am thankful to hear of many of our teachers who take P.E. seriously. But let's not hear of the teacher who takes the class out to the playground or down to the gym, throws out the rubber ball, and says, "Have fun!" — while he sits back to read a book or mark papers.

Nor should the aim of the teacher in the P.E. program be to provide a training camp for the development of the athletic teams in which only the best players participate. (May this be an incidental although worthwhile, secondary gain!) But rather the goal should be to develop health fitness and motor proficiency in all our covenant children. The
teachers should prepare lesson plans for the motor activities and movement experiences, just as they do for the "academic" subjects in the "desk and chair" classroom. It is a planned program of activities that both develops the body and fosters intellectual growth in harmony with the goals of Christian education.

"Fitness" is a popular buzz word these days. All kinds of programs are being developed for the adult populations from huge promotions by the local community hospitals, by employers interested in corporate programs for healthier employees, and by insurance companies and health maintenance organizations (HMO'S) to cut down on the spiraling health care costs. But fitness is most appropriate an area of attention in our elementary schools. This is for two reasons.

First of all, a recent study by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services indicated that despite claims about the popularity of exercise, one-third to one-half of the American adult population never exercises and only 10% meet the exercise requirements to prevent heart disease. In another study, the National Center for Health Statistics says that American adults are exercising less, gaining weight, sleeping less, and drinking more than in the past, despite a decline in smoking and more public emphasis on health. Thus I maintain, we've got to impress the young. The first 12 to 14 years are the most important to effect changes in proper Christian care of one's body. The P.E. class will provide the necessary arena to instruct our children in this care. To develop health fitness goals for their present and also adult years is important: to keep their bodies from impairment of excessive adipose tissue (getting too fat!), to maintain organic soundness free from disease, and to encourage fitness vitality with enough strength, endurance, and flexibility to handle everyday and emergency situations.

The second reason to stress the importance of health fitness in our schools is to distinguish our motives for such fitness from those of our secular contemporary society. Our motives should not be to create the "body beautiful" for self aggrandizement nor for the longer, more enjoyable life. Nor should it be for the selfish pride of personal achievement in sports. Such motives conflict with the end for which God made us as human beings. Our children must be taught that each of their bodies "is a temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19). Once students learn how important their bodies are, they can learn how to care for themselves in order to function most efficiently to serve God and others.
The care of the body is an important responsibility and part of reasonable service to God.

Frequently we fall prey to the Aristotelian concept of the dichotomy of the soul and body. The soul = good; the body = evil. There frequently has been the emphasis on proper care and feeding of the soul exclusively and a disregard for the body as something that "is of the flesh and evil." It should be ignored at the least and put up with at the best.

But it must be emphasized that each child of God is an organic whole — made up of mind, soul, and body. Each person is a divinely created creature "who is soul and body, inner man and outer man, a conscious personal being and a biological one" (N. Wolterstorff, in *Curriculum: By What Standard?*). All of God's people, as created in His image, function through the physical body as an instrument which is an indispensable, integral part of the total being. The body has weaknesses and illnesses as a result of sin against the Creator. But we should promote health fitness and motor proficiency as part of responsible service before the Lord. While Scripture points out that physical training is worth less than exercise in godliness (I Tim. 4:8), it nevertheless is clear in instructing that the body is the instrument through which God calls His people to live their lives of service to Him.

In the past, some have questioned the need for a physical education program in the elementary Christian school because of the greater emphasis on the "3 R's" (mental) and the religious (spiritual) training while de-emphasizing the physical (body). There have been others who felt that students had plenty of opportunity to exercise in their work and play. And indeed, a generation or two ago this may well have been true. The lifestyle and culture of those bygone days required that children do physically exerting work and participate in physically demanding play. But times have changed. Physical efforts in work have been reduced. Technology and our modern conveniences have given more leisure time. Children generally have become much more sedentary, and engage less in physically demanding work and play. They have frequently become spectators rather than active participants in motor activities.

As a parent, I am pleased that my children have had some teachers who have done a most worthy job in providing a quality physical education experience. I hope their efforts are contagious.
P.E.: A Necessity or an Excuse?

by Ken Vink

This short essay should be considered a statement of opinion. Opinions are often the fruit of experience. My personal experience as a phys ed student (I considered myself more of a victim at the time) is not something I look back on with a glow of pleasure. In my time, Adams School students had an occasional “gym” class, and Grand Rapids Christian High School had no phys ed classes. My first real taste of phys ed was mandated by Calvin College. All able bodied students who were not veterans of the armed forces had to take two years of phys ed classes. The first year consisted of playing football outside in almost any weather. Those who in the judgment of the “coach” did not block and bump with sufficient vigor were sentenced to run around the field five times. The last five to make the circuit ran around three more times. My class so detested this “educational” experience, that we locked the coach in the locker room for a class period.

I continue to be amazed at the share of school resources devoted to “physical education.” The “gym” is often the most expensive teaching station in the modern school, both in terms of construction cost and operational expense. Yet, it is something we must have. To deprive our children of phys ed as we now know it would be a terrible thing!

I continue to harbor a certain suspicion that there is another reason in addition to the “need” for physical education that engenders such support for the phys ed program. In our age and even in our circles, the interest in sports is close to an addiction. Interscholastic sports are followed with great interest in our schools. A place to identify, nurture, train, and encourage future basketball and other team players is certainly found in the phys ed program.

In order to have a “well-rounded educational experience,” we are said to need a good sports program. To have a good sports program, we need good facilities (gym, ball fields, track, etc.).
And to justify the need for the facilities, we need a good phys ed program. I also harbor a suspicion that the value of a phys ed program has been promoted by the "professional" educators and accepted with little question by those of us who are served by the educational system. Based on my experience with four children in phys ed classes at Covenant Christian High School, I would say that some worthwhile subject areas are treated in phys ed. Substance abuse and CPR training are very good topics. But, they need not be confined to a phys ed class. Opportunities for physical exercise and group activities and the manner in which they are taken has changed a great deal during the past two or three decades. Instead of walking to school, students must be bused or drive their own cars. Rather than mostly informal group activities, we must organize and provide "opportunities" for young people's activities. For all this we need elaborate and costly facilities. Walking is an activity viewed with disdain. Do we really have our priorities in focus?

CURRENT ISSUES

A Call for Tolerance

Brian Dykstra

TIME in its July 28, 1986 issue and The Grand Rapids Press in a recent article reported on a group of Fundamentalist Christian parents led by Vicki Frost which is bringing charges against the public schools of Hawkins County Tennessee. Quoting from TIME:

...the Fundamentalists want to shield their children from basic readers put out by the publishing firm of Holt, Rinehart & Win-ston and used by 15,000 school districts in all 50 states. The group objects to the books in part because they "teach other forms of salvation, other than faith in Jesus Christ alone." The parents demand that their children be allowed to use alternative textbooks more in line with Fundamentalist beliefs.

The Fundamentalists are also
upset with the secular humanism which is endorsed by the books. Frost alleges that the books "promote pacifism, child rebellion, situational ethics, and feminism. She censored readings that reverse traditional roles for boys and girls. She objected to a story for its line "language makes us human," explaining that the sentence implies that mankind evolved and was not created by God. Timothy Dyk, lawyer for the school board, has said, "There is no way this woman could attend public school and not be offended."

While the Fundamentalists sound combative against the board and insistent on their First Amendment right for freedom of religion, the board in its case sounds moderate in that they are trying to avoid extremes in religion. This is, of course, the best that the public schools can ever hope to do, since they are operating in the melting pot of America. The Grand Rapids Press reports:

Faye Taylor, state director of elementary education, testified that the learning of the whole class would suffer if students are divided by religious objections.

"It's important for children to hear all views," Taylor said. "It would be a shame for other children not to hear the viewpoint of the plaintiffs' children."

Taylor, 36, said allowing some students to use another reader would wreck a teacher's plans and jeopardize numerous teaching objectives such as citizenship, honesty, or tolerance.

Some obvious questions come to mind in this case. Is there a Christian school in the area? If there is, why are not these parents sending their children there? Is it possible for the parents to form a school on their own? Should Christians who have no choice other than public schools undertake such ventures, or should parents "re teach" their children at home? Will there come a time when we can no longer find textbooks of which we can approve? If so, what should be done?

What might be the most troubling, however, is the stress the public schools place upon tolerance. It is the view of most Americans that one can do or believe whatever one wishes as long as nobody is hurt by such actions or beliefs. Most students are being taught to be tolerant of others' actions or beliefs. Could this tolerance of all religions lead to some "world religion" in the end of time?

Where does this stress on tolerance leave us as Reformed Christians? Our belief in the antithesis requires us to say "yes"
to God and "no" to all else. Could some government find our schools to be “hazardous” to the mental well-being of our children since we do not present our children with many different religions so that they are able to choose which one or which mixture best suits their lives? Might our schools then be forcibly closed if we refuse to teach our children to say "yes" to God and "maybe" to everything else? In these last days we will need spiritual courage to adhere to God's Truth, but we can be thankful that our faithful Father will be with us so that we are able to worship only the one, true God.

READERS FORUM

This is a new rubric for us. Actually, it’s been our intention, ever since we introduced rubrics to our magazine, to include space also for correspondence. We had only to wait for something to put into it. Now that it’s born, we hope that reader response will keep it alive.

Response this time was generated by Gary VanDer Schaaf’s contribution to “Viewpoints” of the spring issue. Perhaps you will recall that we considered at that time the matter of interscholastic sports. Mr. VanDer Schaaf took the “negative” side of that question; and, not surprisingly, there was some reaction. Even the dissent however is friendly, for it happens that Gary’s own brother, Peter, chose to take issue with him. The latter VanDer Schaaf was himself once a teacher, at Hope School in Grand Rapids, and later in Covenant Christian High School, where he served also for several years as athletic director. We’re glad to have this kind of discussion in our magazine, and, again, we encourage more of our readers to help us make of this rubric truly an open forum for ideas.

Dear Mr. Editor,

Kudos to Gary VanDer Schaaf for his able defense of an unpopular position. I found his article timely, necessary, and extremely well-written.

Yours for covenant education,

Lois E. Kregel
A Discussion of Sports

Peter VanDer Schaaf

The debate over interscholastic athletics has gone on among Protestant Reformed people in the Grand Rapids area for some time now. An outside observer who had followed this debate over the years may have noticed a pattern to the discussion that goes something like this:

1. Debates over matters of school policy among us often generate much more heat than light.

2. These discussions often take the form of verbal artillery duals. The idea of these debates is neither to teach nor to learn from the other side. The goal is, rather, to blast the opponent so far off the field that he will, once and for all, shut up.

3. At some stage in the disagreement some proponents of one position will declare that all those who disagree with them are insufferably stupid and far too pig-headed even to talk with. Some proponents of the other position will declare that their consciences simply will not permit them to support the Christian school if the school board accepts the position of their opponents.

4. At this point things quiet down a bit. Some people are not speaking to each other. Others, who wish to be polite, just do not bring up divisive subjects.

5. This relative peace and quiet lasts until the next item comes up that requires a decision, whereupon the cannon are rolled out again and the battle rages afresh.

Our outside observer may not, as a result of watching this spectacle, be entirely aware of what high regard Protestant Reformed people actually have for each other.

I do not believe that I have exaggerated (very much) the way in which the discussion of the place of sports in our schools has taken place. For that reason I am glad that the Perspectives has provided an opportunity to address this matter. I am confident that in this journal those of us who hold the pro position on competitive sports and those who take the con can debate in a way that will be beneficial for all of us.

As a condition of this talk I would like to ask that all who want to take part accept the following proposition: that is, the debate over competitive sports is between people who want what is good for the children of the covenant. This is not a debate...
between people who are idealistic and people who are not. Even less is it a disagreement between people who are willing to compromise Scriptural principles and people who are not. This is a matter having to do with school policy. We want to find the best way to educate covenant young people. This proposition must be accepted because it is factually true (more on this farther on), but also because we will not trust each other or listen to each other if we do not believe this. Anything that we say will only be an effort to overawe, humiliate, or otherwise force the other into being quiet. If we try to do that, then we are simply back to our verbal artillery battle.

I believe, Gary, that you have made two errors in your argument. First, in stating and refuting the case for sports, you set up a straw man. Second, I believe that you describe a standard of behavior for young people which is not required by Scripture as if it were.

Beginning with the straw man, you write that interscholastic athletics has become a pedagogical idol. More good things are attributed to sports than are expected of any of the other, more important, parts of the school program. I take this also to mean that blessings are expected from interscholastic sports which it cannot possibly deliver and that it has come to be considered one of the most important things that our schools can offer. I call this description of the situation a straw man because I do not believe it is accurate. I do not know of any one who has anything to do with sports in Protestant Reformed schools who makes of athletics a pedagogical idol. I was involved in a school sports program for several years. I did not believe that a young person could receive more benefit from sports than from academics or music, and I certainly did not think that sports were anything near the most important things we could give our children. The coaches with whom I worked abhorred such an idea. Together we put out a good deal of effort to make sure that sports did not become a pedagogical idol. I am not aware that any Protestant Reformed school has acted as if students will learn more good things playing basketball than they could in class, catechism, or young people’s society. I am talking about school boards, teachers, and coaches. These are the people or groups that set sports programs up, run them, and have the most to say about policies and the role that sports will have in Protestant Reformed education. In my experience boards, teachers, and coaches have insisted that athletics have a lesser role in the student’s life. There
are some who have decided that sports has no role to play at all. It is also my experience that our parents believe the same things. Some do not allow their children to take part in interscholastic sports. Most of those who do also believe that sports is one of the less important things in their children's lives. Maybe now is a good time to talk about the exceptions.

I cannot deny that some Protestant Reformed people do act as if competitive sports are much more important than education. Nor is it much of a secret that some Protestant Reformed people make fools of themselves by the way in which they act at basketball games. And it is a grief to all who have been involved in sports that among those with whom they go to church there are some who think it is their right to malign the coach who does not win enough games or anyone else who does not show enough "school spirit," as they call it. But about this there are some things that should be said. First, to the best of my knowledge, people who act in the way described above have nothing to say about how sports programs are run in our schools. Second, to write as if that behavior is representative of the situation is inaccurate and much less than fair to the great majority of parents, board members, teachers, and coaches who have tried to instruct children differently. Our schools have consistently required that sports take a back seat to church activities and other school programs. Games have been rescheduled or forfeited in order that students could attend catechism, lectures, and music programs. Students are instructed on how they must behave at games, and, if you have noticed, are usually not among the offenders when their parents or older brothers or sisters misbehave. Athletes are disciplined when they break codes of behavior or do not meet academic requirements. They are kept from playing, regardless of their athletic ability, the effect that their suspensions will have on the win-loss record, or their family connections. In these ways Protestant Reformed schools have distinguished themselves among other schools, public and Christian. It is not enough simply to grumble that "that is the way it is supposed to be." It is true that our culture makes an idol of sports and therefore necessary that those who run and support our sports programs resist that temptation. When they do so, it should be recognized as evidence of the sanctification that God's people have as a result of their regeneration.

My second argument, Gary, with your case against sports has to do with the manner of beh
havior that you imply is binding for all of us. You state, "interscholastic sport promotes poor stewardship of time and ability," and in the rest of your article indicate that the student should spend all of his time out of school in academic pursuits, in studying the Scripture, and in discussion of the Bible with other young people. As I understand your article, you believe that a systematic and disciplined pursuit of a sport is useless in itself, distracts a person from doing much more valuable things, and is evidence of nonchalance (at best) toward spiritual and mental development. I am not sure whether you were exaggerating in order to make the point or whether you stated your case exactly as you believe it. I do think that a young person who took the line of your argument and the tone of your article at face value would feel a guilty conscience for diverting any time at all into athletic activity. That alone makes the issue serious enough to warrant some discussion.

It is necessary to make a distinction between those things that a Christian must do and those things which he may do. We agree that the child of God who is a student must learn his lessons to the best of his ability. He must study the Scriptures regularly and use the means that are provided to him to grow in grace. This refers to the worship service, catechism, and Bible discussion. I would also say that instruction in music falls among the "musts," but that is a different matter. It does not follow from this that the student must do these things all of the time. This is neither necessary nor desirable, and I think it better that a young person have a broader range of activities in order to develop a broader range of abilities. Indeed, the best students that I have known, or read of, planned some form of diversion, entertainment, into their schedules knowing that this would allow them to work more effectively. What is much more important, though, is that it is not good education or sound nurture to tell a child that he is guilty of spiritual indifference if he regularly takes part in a leisure time activity. I have no desire to make a caricature of your position, but you appear to say both of these things when you write "...just as surely as our baptismal vows bind us to teaching our children the difference between good and evil, so they demand that we teach the difference between 'good' and 'better' and 'best.' Are we willing to stand before the face of God and tell Him that the hours and effort spent in interscholastic sport are the best possible use of our time and ability?" and "Athletic skills are fundamentally,
undeniably leisure skills. Athletic games are just that — mere games. . . . We are engaged in unceasing struggle; why are we training those who will someday be the generals and footsoldiers in the Army of the Cross how to behave on furlough from a battle that has no end?"

I am not aware that Scripture lays such a burden of guilt on the believer who regularly takes part in an activity which for him is a form of entertainment. If the Christian takes part in an activity which is itself not forbidden by God's Word, then the principle that applies is that he may exercise his own judgment. If he does not allow that activity to keep him from his obligations and does the activity in a way which does not lead his brother to sin, then he may enjoy it with a clear conscience. And if in the course of that entertainment the believer behaves in accordance with Scripture, acts in faith, and exhibits love for God and for his neighbor, then he may believe that he does God's service in doing that activity.

Let's apply this to sports. I took Miss Lubbers' article to mean that interscholastic sports do not keep a student from more important activities, but rather present another set of opportunities for students to develop their talents. She showed that this is true by using statistical evidence. This is also my experience. Motivated students did not perform less well during their athletic seasons. Students who were not so motivated did not try to blame their poor performance on the fact that they were on a team. Furthermore, if the Christian athlete exercises godly self control when he competes, obeys coaches and officials willingly, and shows love for the neighbor against whom he is competing, then he should not be told that his wearing a team uniform is incompatible with his putting on the whole armor of Christ. He may expect God's blessing when he prays for the grace of sanctification, and I am glad to hear that that prayer is often made by the team members of Protestant Reformed schools just before games. Finally, the sensitive Christian parent is aware that there are many forms of entertainment that are not good, and that not every child is immune to temptation. The parent may see that when his child is involved in a sports program he is under the supervision of an adult who shares the parent's faith and that the child is associating with other covenant children. He may believe that his child is indeed involved in an activity in which he may learn good things and is avoiding the temptation to get involved in forms of entertainment which are worldly and
which will do him no good at all.

It is legitimate to include sports among those things that covenant children may do. I am glad that many of our schools offer interscholastic sport programs. I can think of no other institutions that could so well teach our children the proper values that apply to sports, the proper place that sports may have in a Christian’s life, and the godly way in which a redeemed person must act when he takes part in competition.

RESPONSE

Frater Meus,

What you have called a strawman argument is not. You write that in your experience you neither saw nor heard any indication that adults involved in interscholastic sports considered it a pedagogical graven image. Well, I have seen and heard such evidence, and the next time we have dinner at the folks’, I will provide you with the same.

More to the point, I am reminded of what Walt Whitman once said: “What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear a word you say.” Educators and school policy may say one thing, but to me, at least, it is abundantly clear where our “educational hearts” are when an extracurricular activity, one indeed conceived, implemented, and supervised by adult believers, demands more time and effort than any single academic endeavor that the school offers. No school board, no teacher, would dare (or care?) to propose an academic course demanding a minimum of twelve hours of class time and homework a week. If we really believe that the study of science or history is of more pedagogical and personal value than interscholastic sport, why don’t we put that belief into consistent practice?

Regarding your second argument, you have indeed caricatured my position. The jump between a “systematic and disciplined pursuit of a sport” as demanded by a school-sponsored interscholastic sports program, and a strictly personal “form of diversion,” a “regular...leisure time activity” is a jump that you have made, not I. A daily game of one-on-one, a round of golf, or a twenty-minute jog may not keep one from his obligations, but the same cannot be said of the systematic and disciplined pursuit which you describe. There simply is no Christian life so bereft of worthier obligation as to justify twelve to fifteen hours a week of “serious diversion.” It is this pursuit of sport, demanded by interscholastic athletics, which I find incompatible with the pursuit of holiness.

G.V.S.

Fall, 1986
Our Bulletin Board today displays a couple of poems, borrowed from the Spring, 1985 Highland Park Review. That's Hull's newsletter to parents. The writers were 7th and 8th graders then, 9th and 10th graders today.

The Four Seasons
Each year there are four seasons in all,
Winter, summer, spring, and fall.

The winter months are January, February, and December
When the birth of our Lord we remember.

The snow comes down in beautiful flurries
The broad, brown ground it buries.

Springtime comes in March, April, and May
The robins tell us that nice weather is on its way.

The summer is June, July, and August
To say the least I must.

For vacation, play and rest
Is why I like these months the best.

September, October, and November are the months of fall,
The gorgeous color changing is seen by all.

God hath sovereignly made these seasons
But why? To fulfill His purpose and reason.

Susan Gritters
8th Grade

God's Creation
The grass that's waving in the wind
Has the flower for a friend,
The flower always gleaming bright
Shining in the sun's radiant light.

The tree that's waving in the wind
Has the sky for a friend,
The sky big, bright, and blue
Holds the birds that sing to you.

The whole creation in the wind
They all have God for a friend,
Through the creation His glory shines
Bringing His greatness to our minds.

Patty Hockstra
7th Grade
Coming in our February issue:

- a "Feature" article on Sex Education, and another on language development.

- two Viewpoints on the merits of pre-school.

- some thoughts, "From the Teachers' Lounge," on the study of astronomy.
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