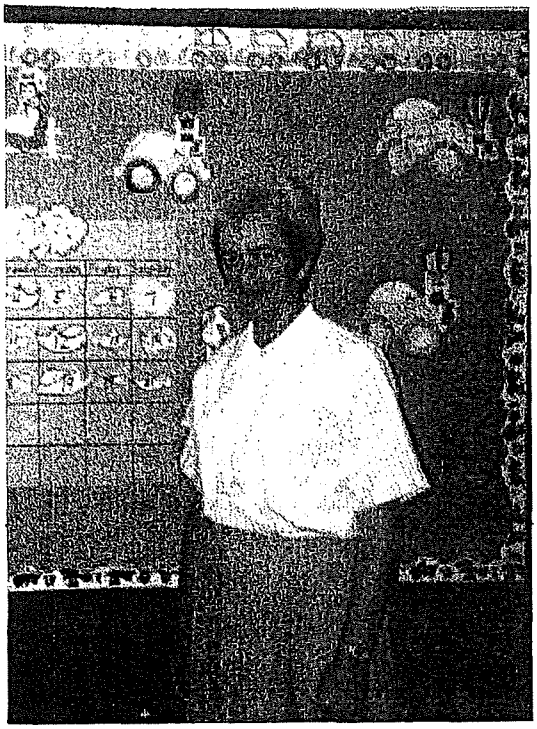
excellent teaching in the lower grades has provided a strong basis for the future education of the children here, especially as it provided an enthusiasm for learning, a solid background in the Scriptures, and firm structure for social behavior and study habits. May God graciously give you many more years to serve Him in this important calling, Miss Lubbers.



Miss Genevieve Lubbers

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FEATURE

When one reads the word "basics," in the context of "education," of what is he likely to think? Of studying phonics, perhaps? . . . and of conjugating verbs; . . . and of memorizing multiplication tables? That's what "the basics" are all about, aren't they? Readin', 'ritin', and 'rithmetic – the basics. . . as in "Basics, Back to the. . . ." For just a moment there, when I saw the title "Remembering the Basics," I imagined that I knew what would be the thrust of Rev. Kuiper's article. That was until I read his first paragraph. Then I saw, and had to admit shamefacedly, how wrong I had been. For there are indeed "basics" which are more basic than the "how-to's" of formal education. Covenant children, parental schools, instruction permeated by the infallible Scriptures. . . . Ah yes, ***these*** *are the basics. True it is that our schools must remain strong academically. If students leave our schools less than highly literate, we have failed them. If our students do not in our schools receive a good foundation in science, geography, history, literature. . . we have failed them. But, above all else, we may never let time dim our perception of*

of the underlying principles on which our schools were established. We do well therefore to heed the admonition of Rev. Kuiper that we "remember the basics."

Remembering the Basics

by Rev. Dale Kuiper

Time does many things. Time bears all its sons away. Time heals. Time works nostalgia, so that many yearn for earlier times, often forgetting the hardships of those times. Time brings change. But time also tends to dull the perceptions and lull to sleep in respect to the issues of life and the principles that ought to be vivid in our minds and hearts.

Many of our schools have commemorated various milestones or anniversaries recently. God has been faithful in allowing us to have our own schools for many years. Are our schools standing for, and upon, the same principles as they once did? Does our membership know and love the principles upon which our fathers established these schools? Are we of a mind to sacrifice, if need be, to maintain those principles? Allow me to spell out five basics of Reformed education that the passage of time must not take from us.

I. Our Children Are Covenant Children

The educational basic that our children are covenant children cannot be repeated too often or emphasized too much. The God Who calls us to train up our children, and Who blesses us in this task, is the covenant God. He has revealed Himself to Old Testament Israel and to the New Testament church as the living God Who lives within Himself a perfect life of fellowship. The covenant did not begin with Abraham, or even with Adam and Eve, but it stretches back into the endless reaches of eternity and belongs to the very essence of God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit live in unity of friendship and love from eternity. That Triune God reveals His covenant by graciously calling into His friendship a people in Christ; this we know as the covenant of grace, the heart of which is the bond of friendship that all the elect have with God. There belongs to this revelation the truth that God saves His people in the line

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of believers and their seed, and here we come squarely to our children! As friends of God and believers in the Messenger of the Covenant, Jesus Christ, we have the promise of God that He takes His children from our children. And this means that as parents and as church we look at our children, organically and as a whole, as covenant children. Therefore the command to instruct in the ways of the covenant and in the fear of the Lord comes to us in respect to all of our children.

Because we deal here with the important matter of the covenant, we ought to be very clear as to the *purpose* of our schools. And if we would know what this purpose is, we simply have to answer the question, What is the purpose of the God of salvation with us? As I attempt to answer this question, please do not turn me off for a few minutes and say, "How trite and hackneyed!" For the purpose is the glory of God in Jesus Christ; another purpose there is not. We can use the verbs glorify, praise, magnify, extol, laud, etc., as long as we make the direct object of those verbs God Himself! This point rests upon the fact that our covenant God is always a self-glorifying God – in creation, in salvation, in history, and therefore in our schools. The life we live in fellowship with God does not center in us and our children but it centers in God and His good pleasure. And His good pleasure is that those whom He brings into His covenant live unto the glory of His grace.

Our schools must assist in a very real way in the fulfilling of that purpose. Not that we train citizens for the state; though, as our children are instructed in the wisdom, power, and authority of God, they will by His grace be good citizens in the state. Not that we have vocational schools that turn out skilled workmen of various types; though, as our children are instructed in stewardship and calling, they will develop their abilities in this direction. The single statement that covers it all, the ensign that could well be engraved above the doors of our school buildings, but first engraved upon our hearts and the hearts of our children, is simply this: *To God Alone Be the Glory!* If that purpose seems too high. . . or too low. . . or seems not to be stating the purpose at all, then surely we have slipped from the primary concern of Reformed education.

II. Our Schools Are Parental Schools

It is not our purpose with this second basic to warn against parochial or public schools. Clearly there is no basis in Scripture for either the state or the church to assume the day-to-day instruction of children by setting up and operating schools. In many ways the Word of God lays this task upon the heart of parents, and especially the fathers. But

this is not the contrast we have in mind. There is a pretentiously-named group in Toronto called the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship (A.A.C.S.). The men at this would-be university have spoken on a wide range of subjects from the point of view of sphere sovereignty and the Kingdom of God; naturally much has been said concerning the Christian school.

Let us see what the A.A.C.S. stands for as far as Christian education is concerned, and then notice what this can possibly have to do with Protestant Reformed Christian schools. Toronto ridicules the idea that the Christian school is the extension of the home and that Christian school teachers stand in the place of the parents. They view the school as an independent sphere alongside of the home. The parent has the responsibility to educate his children, but the authority to do so lies with the educators. Parental involvement with education is seen as limited to what the child wears, when he does his homework, and what he eats for lunch. On the other hand, in the school are the professional educators, or team of teachers, who have authority in such vital matters as curriculum, discipline, textbook selection, criteria for passing and failing, and outside activities of the school. But the parents have no control of the education of their children because education is a sphere distinct from that of the home. The A.A.C.S. constitution states, "The responsible freedom of the scholar must be protected against any constraint or domination of church, state, industry, or other societal structure." James Olthuis, in his book *To Prod the Slumbering Giant,* writes, "While parents have the responsibility for determining the spiritual direction of their children's education, the body of educators in the Christian community has the office of articulating the content of the educational curriculum." It is even the case that school boards must take a hands-off attitude, and allow the teachers to be free in the fulfilling of their teaching office. The result of this philosophy is that a class of professional, independent educators is formed which is beholden to no one. The parent is told, "Bring your child to the classroom door, but you don't have to come in, and you don't have to concern yourself with what goes on here. We know what we're doing. We have the vision of the kingdom. Trust us!"

Toronto and this educational philosophy may seem a long ways away from us and our schools, but let us recognize the danger. Although the A.A.C.S. was often times rebuffed in the early days of its existence, they have had a remarkable success over the years. They have succeeded in getting many school societies to rewrite their constitutions and educational principles; they have many teachers and

administrators on their side through their writings and seminars; they have taken over the teacher training departments of several Christian colleges so that more and more the teachers in the Christian schools today are A.A.C.S. men and women. And as long as our teachers are trained at these colleges the danger is acute.

Positively, the calling to educate covenant children comes to the parents, and there is no way in which the parents can be eliminated from the process. Generally it is stated that the parents have this responsibility because they have brought the child into this world. There is a certain amount of logic to that statement, but the issue goes deeper than that. We ought to notice that God addresses parents in the Bible, and gives them this task, because this is in harmony with the covenant and with our covenant God Himself! The realtion between God and His people is that of Father and children. As Father, God instructs His sons. He nourishes them with His Word unceasingly. Because God does that, He demands of us (Deut. 6) that we act toward our children with the same unfailing, continual instruction. He demands that of you and of me because that is what He Himself does toward us.

Parents, then, may not shunt this responsibility, nor may we allow any one else to seize it from us. Parents are to be involved, perhaps more than we are, in the educational process of the school. Even though many actions of the parents are accomplished through an elected board, we ought to be careful lest a professional class of board members arise in our circles. Parents have the right and the ability to be involved in the choosing of textbooks and other educational materials, the stocking of the library, the setting of guidelines for discipline; and parents certainly have the right to "visit school" in order to view their children in the classroom situation and to listen to the instruction. Nor ought we think that P.T.A. meetings exhaust parental involvement.

III. The Word of God Is the Basis of All Instruction

Again, strange winds are blowing. All the A.A.C.S. writers hold to a view of the Bible that does not square with the traditional, Reformed view, nor with the claims that the Bible makes in regard to itself. By speaking of a cosmonomic word, an incarnate word, and an inscripturated word (some add to this), they downgrade the Bible as only one of the words of God. Hendrik Hart in *The Challenge of Our Age* writes, "It is high time that we become struck with this undeniable message of the Scriptures that although they in numerous places speak to us of the Word of God, in no place do they mean themselves. As such, as in-

scripturation, there is nothing unique about the Bible, for God's revelation is certainly not limited to that book. Nor is the inspiration of the Bible limited to it alone. For we certainly do not believe that after the Bible was complete God stopped inspiring authors. No, the uniqueness of the Bible is that it is an authoritatively inspired inscripturation of God's Word-revelation to His people." And Arnold DeGraff writes in *Understanding the Scriptures,* "You must read the Bible as the book of the acts of God. The Scriptures are first of all the recital of God's mighty acts in Jesus Christ through whom He created and recreated the world. Secondly, they contain man's response to God's revelation. This means that you distort the Scriptures when you read them as a collection of objective statements about God and man, as truths in propositional form, or as a collection of moral lessons."

What does this do to the Scriptures, especially now as those Scriptures are used in the Christian school? First, by separating the Bible from other Words of God, they make the Bible *subject* to these other words. Since the creation word was first, and is basic to all the other words, we are to read the Bible in the light of the creation word. John Calvin instructs us to look at creation with the Bible as our spectacles, but the A.A.C.S. turns things around. Secondly, this view means that Scripture really has nothing to tell us about anthropology, history, or science; the Bible is for the church while creation is for the schools. And as science continues to shed more light on creation, this new information becomes for them the Word of God. And they are eager and ready to tell us what this Word of God is!

But the Word of God is *one!* There is no Word of God apart from Christ, the Word from the beginning. Christ is that personally as the Son of God incarnate; He is that as regards creation, for all things were made by Him and for Him; and He is that as far as Scripture is concerned. It is by the Spirit of Christ that we have the Bible; and that Spirit always speaks of Him. Rather than several different words of God, the Word of the one true God is *one.* That Word speaks to faith and life; that Word instructs in the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom in all areas of human investigation; and therefore that one Word of God is the basis of all truth and all true instruction.

In our schools, let that Word be open in every classroom; let that Word be open on the teacher's desk as he prepares his lessons. Although no one would claim the Bible is the only textbook we need, yet it is the case that no worthy textbook for any subject can be written without the Biblical givens of creation, flood, and end of the world. There is no true understanding of history without a humble, believing

understanding of the prophecy of Daniel and the Revelation of John. So it is with any subject we would care to hold before our children.

How wise our fathers were to insist that the basis of the instruction given in our schools is the infallible Word of God. And then to add, "as interpreted by our Three Forms of Unity." Heavy criticism is being brought against that inclusion. These are church creeds and have nothing to do with Christian schools. We must set them aside and write educational creeds. And many schools have done this. Yet if we should remove the Reformed Creeds from our schools, we stand in danger of losing it all.

IV. Our Schools Are Jealously To Be Guarded

Briefly, the fourth basic that we should be reminded of is that our schools are jealously to be guarded. There are several forces present that would destroy them or alter them as to make them unrecognizable. There is the state, with its educational grants and title programs; there is the willingness of the state to allow our students to attend the public schools for non-religious, non-sensitive subjects; there is their willingness to share their buses with us. Let's understand that the only language the state can speak is money. That's all they have to offer. And when governments of various levels give away the taxpayers' money, they want to set the standards and they want to have control.

There is also the A.A.C.S. that is out to destroy the Christian school as we know and love it. They are out to take children away from the parents unless the parents get on the ball and catch their vision of the kingdom. They are set on getting the Bible out of the classroom as surely as is the Supreme Court of the United States.

But all the dangers are not necessarily from without; we must also be on our guard within. Although we cannot operate our schools in an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion, it is neverthless the part of wisdom to be alert within our schools and societies. If the price of freedom is vigilance, surely it is true that one cost of good Protestant Reformed schools is spiritual awareness and watchfulness. There may be those who clamor for frills at the expense of solid academics. There may be those who want less emphasis placed upon the antithesis between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Let us guard our schools as one does guard the apple of his eye.

V. Our Educational Yoke Is an Easy Yoke

The final basic of Reformed education is that our educational yoke is an easy yoke. No matter what you or I may think of the matter, this is unalterably true because Jesus has said so. We have in mind the closing verses of Matthew 11, where Jesus commands, "Take my yoke

upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Although the primary application of this passage is the salvation and well-being of the burdened soul, there are other applications. When Jesus says, "Learn of me," we are to understand that our calling is very broad, and we are to learn all things of Him. There is an educational yoke, and that yoke is easy and light!

To be a teacher in one of our schools is an important trust. Parents hire you to stand in their place for six hours a day to reveal to children the wonders and praises of God Who has made all things and Who rules all things through Christ. The teacher's experience in the classroom, day by day, is fraught with problems and disappointments. It is hard work. Nevertheless that labor partakes of joy, the joy of revealing the glory of our covenant God.

That joy belongs to parents in a special way. Establishing and operating our schools requires faithful support, over many, many years. Many things we have to learn to do without. But the price is never too high — not when we consider this task as our calling from God, and not when we consider the alternatives. The yoke that settles upon the shoulders of believing parents is easy and light for two reasons. God always blesses the way of obedience and faithfulness; from that fundamental rule of His kingdom He never departs. And, no greater joy can a parent have than when he sees his children walking in the truth. That is rest of soul too!

Nothing new has been set forth here. These principles go back to the Reformation and before. They go all the way back to antiquity. For they are founded on the Word of God itself. Do you agree that these are the basics? Are you resolved by the grace of God to stand upon them? ■□■

BULLETIN BOARD

We use again the summer issue of ***Perspectives*** *to honor the June graduates of our various grade schools and high schools. With the exception of Covenant Christian High School (G.R.), we have provided the names such that they can be matched easily*