ment upon disobedient children. The teachers and administrators, standing *in loco parentis,* likewise have the right and duty to exercise reasonable corporal punishment to maintain discipline, provided the following guidelines are observed:

1. Corporal punishment should be exercised with prudence, moderation, and discretion.

2. Corporal punishment shall be limited to spanking the disobedient child on the buttocks with a paddle designated for that purpose.

3. Corporal punishment shall be inflicted by the teacher or principal in the presence of another staff member.

4. The child's parents shall be notified the same day by the school principal.

5. Parents may request in writing that the Board exempt their children from corporal punishment for medical or other well-grounded reasons.

Generally speaking, school boards should loath adopting restrictive rules. But because of recent developments in this sensitive area of corporal punishment, it may be advisable to consider such minimum guidelines as suggested above. The desired goal should be a balanced and workable policy to guide teachers and principals who are often burdened with the difficult task of disciplining with love the disobedient children of others.

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Sparing the Rod

Gary VanDerSchaaf

"Reading and writing and 'rithmetic/All to the tune of a hickory stick." So goes the old ditty; but so it definitely does not go in American schools today. The hickory stick is all but forgotten, banned by law in some places, or used only as a last resort, reserved for the most dire offenses in most schools, as it is in our own.

I've been thinking of corporal punishment lately, not because I've got a particularly bad class this year, but because within the last few weeks, the Michigan State Legislature came perilously close to passing a law which would ban any form of corporal punishment in all state and private schools. According to this bill, school staff could not administer a spanking, or cause a spanking to be given. In other words, not only could the school not spank; the school could not tell the home to spank, or give information to

the home that might incline you or cause you to spank your child.

As covenant parents, we recognize this bill for what it is: an unholy bit of legislation that, if enacted, would have put the state a half-step from forbidding corporal punishment in the home. Our parental Protestant Reformed schools are extensions of the home, with the teacher in the parents' place, given, then, the parents' authority and divinely mandated duty to spare not the rod which, with reproof, gives wisdom (Proverbs 13:24; 24:15).

Regarding this recent "spanking-ban bill," however, I wonder what our reaction would have been if the bill had passed. We would have objected, I'm sure, on the principle grounds outlined above. But how convincing would our objections to state control be? Our schools have a long history of compliance to state regulations, even regulations that the state has no business enforcing. For instance, by demanding state certification of teachers and by annual certification review, the state controls who teaches in our schools. Further, and in direct connection to the corporal punishment issue, we have long acquiesced to state regulation of the *manner* in which corporal punishment is administered. Did we ever really think that if we allowed the state to determine the exact manner in which Biblical discipline was administered that the state would not someday seek to forbid its practice altogether?

Secondly, I wonder how sincere our objections would be. Really now, what is the sense in protesting the prohibition of a form of discipline that we, for all intents and purposes, have long since abandoned? In most Protestant Reformed classrooms today, you will find children whose parents forbid school spankings under any circumstances, children whose parents forbid spanking except for the most heinous offenses, and lastly, that ever-smaller group of children whose parents tell the school, "If you think he needs it, spank him." (Oddly enough, the children of such parents do not seem to need much spanking.)

In such a classroom it is impossible to administer corporal punishment equitably and consistently, and soon the paddle – the rod of Proverbs 13:24; 22:15; 23:13; and 29:15 – falls into disregard, disrespect, and, finally, disuse.

For the state to forbid corporal punishment in the school is principally wrong. It is just as wrong, however, for the *home* to forbid this punishment. Furthermore, it is wrong for the home and the school to consider corporal punishment as an "ace-in-the-hole," last-ditch defense

against behavioral catastrophe. As Dr. Noel Weeks, author of *The Christian School* remarks, "To see physical punishment as the very last resort, never to be used except in some rare and extreme circumstance, is not taking Proverbs seriously" (p. 70).

The Lord sends such trials as the state's attempts to control our schools for the benefit of His people. It is time, I think, for homes, school boards, and teachers to re-evaluate their dedication to Biblical principles and practices of discipline. The apostle Peter tells us that no form of chastisement is, at the time, pleasant, and that is as true for him who receives the chastisement as it is for him who must administer it. But Scripture is clear on this point and, as ever, changeless. The rod is not the product of a crueler, less enlightened age, a relic of the days of inadequate psychological understanding of the child. It was and remains a part of the God-ordained way to produce the peaceable fruit of righteousness. To deny the rod, at home or in school, in sum or in part, is to confess hatred of our children. It is to condemn them to a life of godless foolishness. And it is to invite shame, not only upon father and mother in the home, but upon mother church, her risen Lord, and upon the heavenly Father of us all.

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CURRENT ISSUES

Where in the World is Zaire?

Brian Dykstra

The December 1988 issue of the *National Geographic* contained a map of the world. If asked, could you point, on that map, to the continent on which you live? Could you locate, even in a general fashion, the nation in which you live? Might you even be able to locate the particular area of your nation in which you live? Would you be insulted if I were to ask you these questions in a way which suggested that I felt you could not "find yourself"? I hope so.

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