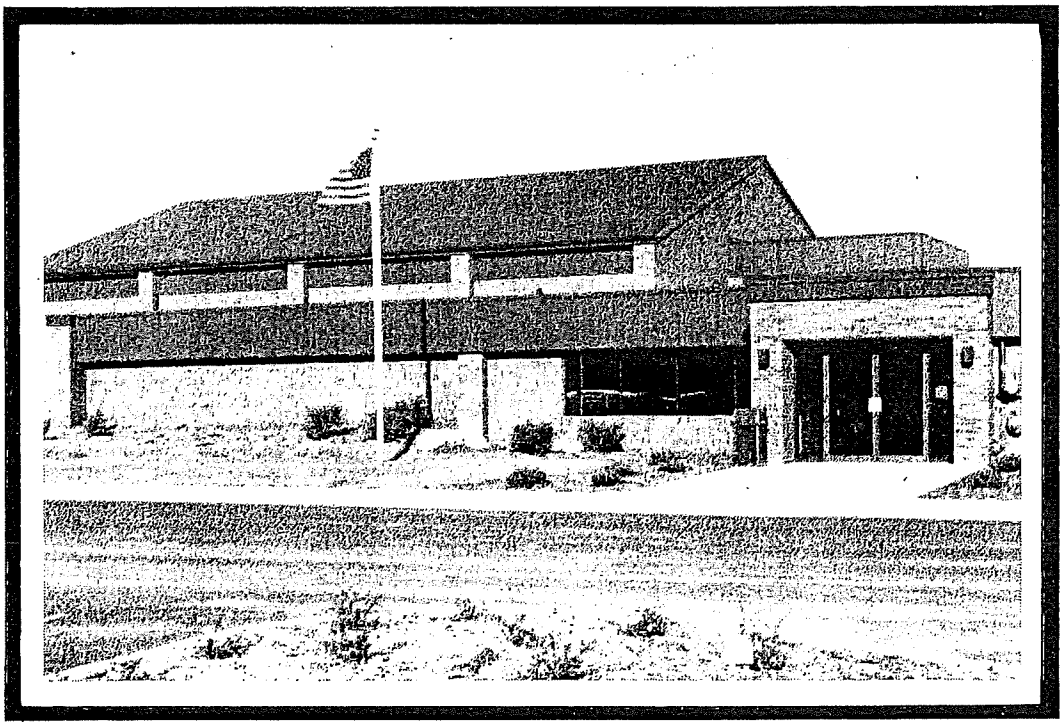
Perspectives

in Covenant Education

The entrance of thy WORDS giveth LIGHT: Psa. 119:130



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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

Perspectives in Covenant Education is a journal regulated and published tri-annually, in September, January, and May by the Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute. The purpose of this magazine, in most general terms, is to advance the cause of distinctively Christian education as it is conceived in the Protestant Reformed community. More specifically, the magazine is intended to serve as an encouragement and an inducement toward individual scholarship, and a medium for the development of distinctive principles and methods of teaching. The journal is meant to be a vehicle of communication: a vehicle of communication, not only within the profession, but within the Protestant Reformed community and within the Christian community in general.

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SPECIAL FOCUS

The picture on the front cover is that of the newest of the Protestant Reformed Christian Schools. That's Heritage Christian School, of course, in Hudsonville, Michigan. The school draws from families not only in Hudsonville but from Jenison, Zeeland, and Holland as well — all of which had for many years been served by our Hope School in Walker. It's conceivable, I suppose, that if Heritage were the first Protestant Reformed School in that area, there would have been a deeper joy in the opening of its doors. But the excitement, the enthusiasm, the gratitude so evident at the Open House held at the end of August were ample testimony to the fact that Heritage is not taken for granted by the families which make up the constituency of this new school. We are happy for them, and pray that the instruction given there might be prospered under the rich blessing of our faithful, covenant-keeping God.

Gerald Kuiper, whose teaching career began in Edgerton Protestant Reformed School and continued at Adams, Hope, Loveland, and, most recently, Covenant Christian High School, is the new school's new administrator. We are glad that, busy as he was with all of the details involved in the opening of the school, he nevertheless agreed to provide the following short article for this issue's "Special Focus."

Heritage Christian School

Gerald Kuiper

"The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea I have a goodly heritage. . . . All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children."

These beautiful truths from God's Word are the basis for our building parental schools for the purpose of instructing our children. The fact that the Lord has greatly blessed us in the West

Michigan area is certainly evident again as the number of children is so great that we have a need for another school in the Hope/Hudsonville area.

For the past several years the Board of Hope Protestant Reformed School had been trying to figure out how to deal with a fast growing enrollment. When the student body at length grew to the point where the existing plant could no longer accommodate them, rooms were rented from the Grandville Public Schools, and, later, land was bought in Hudsonville for the purpose of building a satellite school there. A depressed economy postponed the building project, however, and with more consideration it was decided that a separate society should be formed in the Hudsonville area. So about a year ago Hope Society members from Holland, Hudsonville, Byron Center, and Jenison formed the Society for Protestant Reformed Education in Hudsonville, and plans were made for the opening of a six-room school in the Fall of 1985. The members of the new society decided that the new school would be known as Heritage Christian School.

As time passed and more studies were made it became evident that six rooms would not be sufficient for a projected enrollment of 190. The Board therefore reverted to the original plan, which had been for a plant which would house nine classrooms, plus a science-classroom, library, offices, kitchen, and a gymnasium. An agreement was made between the two school boards whereby, in addition to a large cash contribution, the Hope School Society would give to the Heritage Society the parcel of land and the building plans. The effort then was a united one, and we are thankful that together we continue to work for the cause of the education of our children.

To accommodate an enrollment of about 215 students, nine full-time teachers, one part-time teacher, and a band director have been contracted for the '85-'86 school year. The Society for Protestant Reformed Special Education will also be providing a certified Special Education teacher to set up a resource room to be used during the mornings.

The new teachers, school board, and members of the Society are eagerly awaiting the opening of our school on September 4, 1985, the Lord willing. Many volunteers have served on committees, worked to raise funds, and given of their time and money so that our new school can be built and furnished. The fruit of these labors can be seen as we watch our modern energy-efficient facility take shape. It is our prayer that God may use this means He has given us, so that our children may indeed "be taught of the Lord." To God alone be the glory!

FEATURES

Our Feature Articles for this issue are two in number. Neither were written specifically as articles for Perspectives. *Both, in fact, were recent* speeches, *prepared for particular audiences on particular occasions. But the topics addressed were most emphatically ones of* general *interest and of vital concern to all who are involved in one way or another in the work of rearing children of God's covenant.*

Have you ever had the feeling that you have at long last "figured out how to rear a child"... and then "something unexpected comes up"? You'll appreciate Rev. Kortering's thoughts on "Developing Christian Character at Home and School." A thought-provoking speech it was, and very well received by Adams' P.T.A. on the fourth of October, 1984. About a year later Rev. Ron Cammenga spoke on a related topic at the convocation exercises for the beginning of the 1985-1986 school year in our Loveland Protestant Reformed School. He reminded his audience on that occasion that "God is glorified in a school not simply in that the curriculum is in harmony with His revealed Word. But God is glorified by a school in which teachers and students alike conduct themselves in a thankful, holy way." The substance of his address, entitled "The Moral Environment of the Christian School," follows that of Rev. Kortering's below.

Developing Christian Character in the Home and School

Rev. Jason Kortering

The subject which we consider in this article is a highly emotional one. There are a number of reasons for this. The first that comes to mind is the fact that it is so overwhelming. Developing Christian character in a child is staggering. Our children are not robots, not animals, but highly complex individuals, each with his own personality. By the time we think we have figured out how to rear a child, something unexpected comes up. There are so

many facets to their personality. The second thing is closely related. It is also frustrating. Here we have in mind, not the complexity of their nature, but the fact that they are conceived and born in sin. Their natural inclination is not to develop Christian character. So the developing of it must come in the way of subjugating their natural desires and enhancing spiritual values. This involves sweat, tears, and many prayers. Finally, such development of our children is deadly serious. There is an urgency involved in this great task. It comes from two directions, God places upon us the demand that we labor long and hard at this work; the second is that we love our children and we desire nothing more for them than that they develop Christian character.

As we approach this subject, we will not let our emotions get out of hand. Though there may be a temptation to throw up our hands in dismay, though we may also be tempted to find human solutions and invent our secret formula for "child success," yet we know that the responsibility that God gives us for this work includes the assurance of His presence to accomplish it. God gives us direction and we do best when we as parents and school work at developing Christian character in our children according to the Word of God.

Let's begin by setting forth what the Bible has to say about Christian character. In theological terms, it is the "new man which is in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 4:24-32). This is set forth in contrast to the "old man of the flesh" mentioned in those same verses. Paul sets forth a similar contrast in Galatians chapter 5. There he speaks of the fruits of the flesh (vs. 19-21) and the fruits of the Spirit (vs. 22-26). The Holy Spirit led Paul to develop this in the letter to Timothy, especially chapter 6 where he speaks so loftily of "godliness."

Christian character then involves being right with God in all areas of our life. We can enumerate a few of them.

Most significant of all is that our children have a right understanding of God. This must include a proper blending of the righteousness and love of God. God is the High and Lofty One and perfect in all His ways. He is also, for Jesus' sake, our Father! Christian character acknowledges this "glory of God," and our children reverence Him. They learn to honor His Word, to take it seriously, to heed His commands, to conform their lives according to His will for them. All of this, because they truly

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Rev. Kortering is pastor of the Grandville Protestant Reformed Church.

love God. It is possible to conform outwardly to certain truths and rules; but godliness requires of us spiritual honesty in our hearts. In the secret recesses of our hearts we either love or hate God. How important it is that our children learn to have meaningful fellowship and communion with God in prayer.

Another area of our life is a correct understanding of ourselves. In terms of psychology this comes under the subtitle of self-esteem. We are afraid of that term because of its terrible abuse. Ungodly psychology pushes this self-esteem and denies the truth of our total depravity. Similarly, a man like Schuler, of crystal cathedral, wrote a book calling for a new reformation which does away with man's innate depravity and replaces it with natural self-esteem. This is wrong and a denial of our Reformed heritage. Nevertheless, we must not extol our depravity at the expense of our sanctification in Christ. Our children's Christian character is expressed in a wholesome attitude toward themselves. They are precious in God's sight; God loved them so much that Christ died for them. God has worked in them the mighty response of grace so that they are "new creations" in Christ. They are beautiful in God's sight and precious to Him. This carries over to our accepting ourselves as God has made us. As Christ taught, we must love our neighbor as we *love ourselves* (Matt. 22:39).

As implied above, Christian character expresses itself in caring for other people. The love bond between parents and child occasions a child to learn respect for authority, care for others in the family, dealing with right and wrong between brothers and sisters. As they grow up they reach out for friends outside the family.

Finally, our children must develop a system of values. What are good things, bad things? What do they want to achieve? How will they use their time and talents? What place will sports have in their life? What is God's will for their lives? Answers to these important questions reflect good Christian character.

As we concern ourselves with the development of such character, we should agree that the potential for such growth is in their spiritual re-birth. Our children do not have any *Christian* character through birth. They are conceived and born in sin. It is in their being born again by the Holy Spirit that they possess the seeds of such a life as Christians which must be developed. This humbles us, for the life which we treasure most, as believing parents, must be given to them from above. God's promises are our encouragement. The

presence of the Holy Spirit reassures us.

We do well, also, to remind ourselves that working at such development should begin immediately upon birth. Dr. Paul Meier in his worthwhile book, *Christian Child-Rearing and Personality Development,* makes this startling statement: "I have emphasized the first six years the most, because 85 percent of the child's eventual personality will be formed by the time he is six years old. After age six, all we can do is try to modify the other 15 percent of his personality development." Before he ever gets to grade school, 85 percent of his personality is formed for life! This would certainly lead us to conclude that the work of the Christian school teacher will be much easier if we as parents work hard the first six years. How important it is that we set forth Biblical values, a right attitude toward God, toward self, toward others, and even toward life itself long before they go to school.

What is it then that we can do as parents to develop this Christian character in our children? We enumerate a few suggestions.

Work hard so that you have a good marriage. Yes, a loving relationship between husband and wife contributes much to Christian development of character in our children. Look at the world for proof of the opposite. Divorce, common-law marriages, men coming and going in the home when children observe all this, works havoc in their lives. The fast life costs much in the broken lives of children. They become scarred for life and society pays a terrible price.

How different when the marriage is Christian and husband and wife love each other. The whole atmosphere of the home is trust, understanding, caring for one another. When father and mother pray to God and sincerely conform their lives to God's way revealed in the Bible, the children learn to do this. By word and example the tender soul of the child is prepared for a life of service. This includes carefully defining our roles as God wants us to do this. God instructs a husband to be the "head of his wife" (Eph. 5:23), and the wife to honor and obey her husband (Eph. 5:22). The greatest problem that affects child development is that weak fathers do not *exercise* their headship as they should, thus encouraging dominant wives and mothers. May God give us as fathers the ability to be *fathers* by being good *husbands.* A wife needs the strong leadership of a Christian husband. She needs his love and emotional support in order to be a Christian wife and mother. Instead of being a "doting mother" spoiling her children and trying to win their

love because she is afraid of losing her husband's, she will be an example of godliness, an inspiration that conveys to the children that life is difficult, but with God all things are possible and beautiful.

A second thing that is important for spiritual development is to create a spiritual environment in our homes. By this we do not mean that we set aside moments for "religion." This is good and necessary. Sunday is a special day. Prayer time and Bible reading is a special time. How tragic, if we barely finish praying and father or mother lets out a swear word and takes God's name in vain. Perhaps our devotions are cut short because dad has to run off for the ball game. Dinner conversation concentrates on criticizing the teacher or preacher, or anyone else for that matter. A godly environment includes our awareness that actions speak louder than words to our children. We must be god-fearing if we expect our children to be. Look around your house, would you welcome Christ into your home, should He step in at any time? If not, consider making the changes necessary, for He is present every day.

A third consideration is that we give both positive and negative motivation to our children. I'm sure all of us as parents are well aware of the necessity of discipline. This is true and must be emphasized. Undisciplined children grow up to be evil characters. Are not the examples of Eli's sons given us in the Bible to warn us? Yet, how should we discipline? A small child must be disciplined differently than is a teenager. There are some clues to evaluate our discipline. Does it hurt us more than the child? (If not, we might be guilty of venting our rage on our child – a form of child abuse). Do we discipline our children so that they feel the wrath of God more than our wrath, and they know this because we explain it to them? There is also the positive side – a few words of encouragement might avoid the sorry consequences of sin. Here we fail most often as parents. It is always easier to criticize than to encourage. This is true in parenting as well. Our children often do well and we say nothing. Positive reinforcement is assuring them that when they do well, God approves, and that His approval does not stimulate pride, but rather makes us grateful that God is working through us.

Finally, we must be consistent in dealing with our children. Paul warns fathers, "Provoke not your children to wrath" (Eph. 6:4). We do this when we punish them according to our own moods, sometimes more severely than they deserve, sometimes not

at all when they should be. We do best when we establish God's guideline in all our life and seek to follow that day by day. As our children grow older they must know that guideline and have the consequences carefully explained so that they respect us when we deal with them, they honor us for God's sake.

May these few thoughts encourage you as parents. Whenever we reflect upon our calling to be involved in the rearing of our children, our inner nature revolts. So often, it seems too far out of reach. My reaction is the same. I encourage you to read the book mentioned above. Mrs. Gertrude Hoeksema also has an excellent book, *Peacable Fruit.* Yes, many of you mothers in particular tell me that it's too idealistic. But the Word of God sets our goals very high. It is good that we are aware of this. We will then not fret at our duty, we will take courage. God is able to use our efforts to accomplish much. We have many faults that we must confess and repent of each day. Our children are rebellious by nature. Yet, our God is faithful. He will bless our efforts to develop Christian character in our children. With that assurance we take up the task as the most honorable on the face of the earth. It is also the most rewarding. Of all our possessions, only our children will go with us into eternity, the Lord willing.

The Moral Environment of the Christian School

Rev. Ron Cammenga

Crime and violence in our nation's schools have become one of the most serious and pressing problems confronting parents, teachers, and communities today. The educational process itself is threatened by a moral environment that at best proves to be a hindrance to education, and at worst is positively detrimental to learning.

In their book *Violence, Values, and Justice in the Schools,* Rodger Bybee and E. Gordan Gee state:

"Crime and violence in schools have gained enough publicity now to be classified as a major concern of the American public. And, violence and disruption in American education is very real; it is directly perceptible at some level to most teachers, administrators, and, of course, students. The extent and intensity of school and classroom disruption — "discipline problems" — are unprecedented in American education and perhaps in the history of

of education. Whether we can explain the occurrence of violence and disruption is one matter; its existence is another. There is in fact a phenomenon of violence in American schools" (p. 99).

In recent years there has been a sharp increase not only in the number of school-related crimes, but in their seriousness. In the past, teachers had to deal with disruptions such as talking to friends, shooting spit-wads, hiding erasers, talking out of turn, or dipping pigtails in inkwells. Today teachers face everything from robbery to rape, from aggravated assault to vandalism.

We who support Christian education have a keen interest in the moral environment of the Christian school. Not only are we concerned that the school to which we send our children have a proper environment because in the end this is conducive to learning. But we are concerned for this proper moral environment especially for the sake of the honor and glory of God. God is glorified in a school not simply in that the curriculum is in harmony with His revealed Word. But God is glorified by a school in which teachers and students alike conduct themselves in a thankful, holy way.

Rev. Cammenga is pastor of the Loveland Protestant Reformed Church.

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The fact of crime and violence in our nation's schools is easily documented. Incidents such as the following (taken from those listed in the book, *Violence In Our Schools*, by Lester and Irene David) are reported throughout the country. A high school student in Virginia, fighting with a teacher, bit off the teacher's ear. A group of California students, angered because of low grades they received on a test, ganged up on their teacher and set her hair on fire. A 17-year old youth in Brooklyn, New York was fatally stabbed by another 17-year old, one block from the school they both attended in an upper middle-class neighborhood. In southern California, four boys dumped all the books from the library shelves and turned on a fire hose, flooding the entire floor. In Lawrence, New York a third-grader punched his teacher in the face and ripped a necklace from off her because she told him to put away his toy train and get to work. In Austin, Texas the 13-year old son of a former White House press officer shot and killed his teacher because he had received a failing grade. A freshman girl was raped on a stairway-landing the first week of high school in a wealthy North Chicago suburb. A New York City social studies teacher was severely beaten when five teenage boys

entered his room and punched, kicked, and stomped on him.

It is significant that these episodes of violence are not confined to one area of the country, or to one or two types of schools. It is not the case that violence and crime characterize only the inner-city, ghetto schools with high minority enrollments. School crime and violence are now found across the nation and in all types of schools. The problem is general and rampant. Bybee and Gee state:

". . . while the probability of a school's having a serious crime problem is higher in urban areas (i.e., in the big cities), the majority of schools with serious crime problems are in suburban and rural areas. Therefore, the problem includes all schools, not just those large schools in urban centers" (pp. 103-104).

Of particular concern is the increase in the number of acts of violence against teachers. Assaults on teachers have become so widespread that Dr. Alfred Block, a psychiatrist at the University of California, has identified what he calls "the battered teacher syndrome." Dr. Block researched 250 classroom teachers who had been the objects of abuse. He found them to be suffering from such things as ulcers, high blood preassure, eating disorders, breathing difficulties, anxiety, depression, fear, nightmares, blurred vision, dizziness, and fatigue. You'll recognize these as symptoms of psychological stress similar to those experienced by combat veterans, soldiers who have fought in the front lines.

In recent years, two substantial reports have documented the sad decline of morals in America's schools.

The first is the Bayh report. A Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, chaired by Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana, conducted an inquiry into school violence and vandalism during the period 1971-1975. The results of the committee's work were published under the title *Our Nation's Schools — A Report Card: "A" In School Violence and Vandalism.* The subcommittee reported on a nationwide survey of more than 750 school districts. For the period 1970-1973, results indicated:

1) Homicides increased by 18.5%

2) Rapes and attempted rapes increased by 40.1%

3) Robberies increased by 36.7%

4) Assaults on students increased by 85.3%

5) Assaults on teachers increased by 77.4%

6) Burglaries of school buildings increased by 11.8%

7) Drug and alcohol offenses on school property increased by 37.5%

8) Dangerous weapons confiscated increased by 54.4%

It was the Bayh Subcommittee that first attempted to put a price-tag on school violence and vandalism. The report estimated that $600 million was being spent annually on repair and replacement of vandalized school property. That's more than $10.00 a year for every student in school, more than is spent on textbooks each year, and enough to hire 50,000 additional school teachers.

The second important study of school violence was conducted in 1978 by the National Institute of Education (NIE), largely in response to the findings of the Bayh Subcommittee. The findings of this study, published under the title *Violent Schools — Safe Schools: The Safe School Study,* only substantiated and underscored the work of the Bayh Subcommittee. The NIE reported that in any given month, 280,000 students and 5,200 teachers are physically assaulted; 2,400,000 students and 128,000 teachers are robbed; and a total of 42,000 acts of vandalism are committed.

A survey by the National Education Association (NEA) found that in the 1978-'79 school year more than 110,000 teachers had been physically attacked by students, an increase of 40,000 over the previous year. An NEA report issued in 1978 found that 100 murders, 12,000 armed robberies, and 9,000 rapes had been committed by American school children that year.

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The experts point to several causes to account for the sharp increases in school violence.

Included as a contributing cause, first of all, is the break-up of the family. Nearly every book or magazine article that I consulted that addressed itself to the cause of school violence, cited marital breakup as an important factor. In recent years divorce rates have soared, leaving thousands of hurt and angered children. In some schools up to a third of the students return to single-parent homes, where there is often inadequate supervision and an overburdened parent.

Television violence is often cited as a key factor in explaining school violence. The U.S. Surgeon General's office has found, after a three-year study, that ". . . the more violence and aggression a youngster sees on TV, regardless of his (or her) age, sex, or social background, the more aggressive he (or she) is likely to be." Common sense tells us that this must be so. Studies indicate that the average youth between the ages of four and fourteen watches more than three hours of television per day for those ten years. The cumulative result is 10,000 hours of TV, with an average of 9.5 violent incidents

per hour. During this time, a child will see more than 13,000 people killed on the TV screen.

Drugs and alcohol, themselves behavioral problems, also contribute to the rise of school violence. Recent studies indicate that the great majority of high school students throughout the country have used illegal drugs and that drugs are readily available in most high schools across the land. Out of every ten students surveyed, about seven reported illicit drug use at some time in their lives. Young people are also drinking heavily. A nation-wide study recently revealed that 28% of students in grades seven through twelve were problem drinkers. There are clear indications, even, that problem drinking is seeping down into the elementary grades as well. One doesn't have to be an expert in alcohol or in education to understand that a student who is "high" or downright drunk will not be able to learn in school.

Other causes cited as contributing to the problem of school violence are: school and class size; slashes in school budgets; an increase in racial tensions in many schools around the country; and the influence upon the schools of a general increase in crime in our society at large.

Although all of the things mentioned undoubtedly contribute to the sad moral condition of our nation's schools, other factors, which educators and many parents refuse to reckon with, also enter into the picture.

Unquestionably the present situation of our nation's schools is in large part due to the erroneous and permissive views of education that prevailed in the last several decades. These are the views propounded by a John Dewey and others of his stripe. According to these "progressive" educators, children are inherently good and ought to be allowed to develop according to their own natural impulses. This kind of thinking is bearing its fruits in the schools today. Commenting on this in his book *Withhold Not Correction,* Bruce Ray writes:

"Self-expression is the cry of the modern educator. We are told that we must not restrain our children, but rather we must encourage them to express themselves. But the Bible says that the selves that we urge them to express are sinful! Expression of the sinful self can only create damage and harm. Is it any wonder, then, that the same educators have found it necessary in many of our great cities to man the halls of the schools with police armed with pistols, night sticks, mace, and tear gas? Is it any wonder that in the suburbs of our land mothers are afraid to send their children to school, lest they be assaulted between classes

or even in the midst of a class? Is it any wonder that in the schools of our land teachers fear for their very lives, lest they be beaten or even killed by their students? Is it any wonder that the school districts complain year after year and spend increasingly more of our money to replace chemistry labs that have been purposely destroyed, to replace windows and repair other acts of vandalism, when we encourage children to express their sinful selves? Permissiveness is not the strategy of the Scriptures: it is the strategy of the devil" (p. 31).

Added to this is the almost universal teaching of and acceptance by the schools of the theory of evolution. Thousands upon thousands of junior high and high school students are taught every day that they are basically animals. Is it any wonder, then, that they begin to behave like animals? If a child commits some act of violence, it's not a sin. It's really only the expression of inherent animal instincts. He can't help it, really, and certainly can't be blamed for it. Long ago, the Apostle Paul wrote, "Be not deceived: evil communications (teachings) corrupt good manners" (I Cor. 15: 33). America is finding out the truth of this the hard way.

But the greatest, single cause for the moral downfall of our nation's schools is that the Bible has been ruled out as the standard of instruction. Now, we are not advocating the introduction of Bible reading and Bible study into the classrooms of our public schools. Not at all. But we are saying that, because the Bible has been rejected, it was inevitable that the situation in the schools became what it is today.

Way back in the mid 1800's, when the whole idea of a national, public school system was being discussed, the Presbyterian theologian, Dr. Robert Lewis Dabney warned of the bad consequences that would result if such a movement succeeded.

"If, in our moral training of the young, we let go the "Thus saith the Lord," (i.e., let go of the Bible) we shall have no hold left. The training which does not base duty on Christianity is, for us, practically immoral. If testimony to this truth is needed, let the venerable Dr. Griffin, of a former generation, be heard. 'To educate the mind of a bad man without correcting his morals is to put a sword into the hands of a maniac.' Let John Locke be heard. 'It is virtue, then, direct virtue, which is the hard and valuable part to be aimed at in education. If virtue and a well-tempered soul be not got and settled so as to keep out ill and vicious habits, languages and science, and all the other accomplishments of education, will be

to no purpose but to make the worse or more dangerous man.' Let Dr. Francis Wayland be heard. 'Intellectual cultivation may easily exist without the existence of virtue or love of right. In this case its only effect is to stimulate desire; and this, unrestrained by the love of right, must eventually overturn the social fabric which it at first erected.' " (*Discussions of Robert Lewis Dabney,* vol. 3, p. 283, in an article entitled "Secularized Education.")

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But our response must not be simply that we all stand aghast at the terrible moral condition of education in the schools around us. My purpose is, having noticed with you the situation in the schools generally, to exentuate and underscore our calling to maintain and to support our own Protestant Reformed Christian schools. We ought to be sufficiently impressed with our calling to send our children to Christian schools. Now, we do that primarily because of the content of the instruction. But the moral environment of the school cannot ultimately be separated from the instruction. And we're concerned, vitally concerned, about the moral environment in which our children are educated.

Besides the many evils in the public schools which even worldly parents and educators are concerned about, there are many things in those schools that are not viewed as being even the least bit immoral, but which ought to be serious considerations to every believing parent: rock music, dancing, movie attendance, loose views of sex and marriage, open Sabbath desecration, the exaltation of sports, the justifying of revolution and civil disobedience, the teaching of hedonism (the pleasure principle, that if it feels good, do it), humanism, and evolutionism. All of these things are reasons why we ought not to send our children to the state's schools.

We know something about our children. We know something about our children because we know ourselves, and we also remember when we were once young. We know about the evil nature that lives within them, an evil nature that only lusts to sin and looks for every opportunity to express itself. We know about the powerful temptation of bad examples, evil teachers, and ungodly companions. And we know from the Word of God that we their parents have the calling to keep them separate from the world and the world's evil influence.

And so, we have a concern for a proper moral environment in our schools. We are concerned for this, first of all, because only in the context of proper moral behavior can teaching be carried on

effectively. It is no accident that we witness two things happening in education today. On the one hand, there is an increase in school violence; on the other hand there is a decline in academic excellence. The decline in academic excellence is in large measure due to the loss of a proper moral environment in which alone education can take place.

Secondly, we are concerned for a proper moral environment in the school because of the goal of Christian education itself. That goal is not mere head-knowledge; it is not the mere accumulation of historical, scientific, or mathematical facts. But the goal of Christian education is the man or woman of God thoroughly furnished unto all good works. It's the goal that Moses told the children of Israel must be their goal in their education of their children: "That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged" (Deut. 6:2).

Finally, we are concerned for a proper moral environment in our Christian schools because God and God's glory demand this of us. The ultimate goal of all the education of our children is that they might live in the world to the glory of God. And God is glorified by a life of obedience to His commandments, a morally pure life.

How may we be assured to have and to keep the proper moral environment in our Christian schools? To mention just a few things, first of all, the Bible must be the standard for the life of the Christian school. It must be the standard not just for what is taught in the classroom, but for the entire life and every activity of the Christian school. Then the Bible doesn't only tell us what we must believe, but also how we must live. The Bible doesn't only teach creation and oppose evolution. But the Bible says to the students, "Love your neighbor and treat your neighbor as you would be treated." The Bible doesn't only teach that God is the God of history, the God Who governs the course of the nations. But the Bible says, "honor your parents and obey your teachers." The Bible doesn't only teach that the wonder and orderliness of mathematics is due to God. But the Bible says that we must work to the best of our abilities, must not cheat or steal or abuse the property of others.

Secondly, we will maintain the moral environment of our schools by seeing to it that the teachers that we hire to teach our children are men and women who are godly and pious. We will be sure of

this before we hire them, and we will be careful of this after we hire them throughout their teaching career. The school boards have an important duty here. The moral character of the teachers will, in large measure, set the moral tone of the school.

Thirdly, to maintain the proper moral environment of our schools there must be the presence of discipline. A strict, rigorous, loving discipline. A discipline consistently administered by the teachers. A discipline supported by the school board and by the parents.

When all of the instruction of our school is God-centered, and when the love and fear of God are stirred up in the hearts of the children, then we will have achieved our purpose in Christian education. Then all the cost, all the sacrifice, all the hard labor will have been worthwhile. For then, God will be honored. And then our children will have been equipped to live in His world to His glory.

PARENTS' CORNER

Are your children readers — avid *readers? Or are they drawn more to computers, video games, and television sets? As you well know, those are questions of no little consequence. They're addressed in the following article by Sue Looyenga, mother of three aspiring little "bookworms" at Adams Street Christian School.*

Encouraging Reading in the Home

Sue Looyenga

Imagine your family being offered round-trip travel tickets to be used as desired for life. These tickets could be used to transport the entire family to a chosen destination anywhere in the world or each individual in the family could choose to travel alone at his own whim. Who would be so foolish as to turn away an opportunity such as this?

And yet, as fantastic as this offer might sound, it still cannot rival the opportunity that families have to read together, but which they often turn aside. Reading

together or alone can not only transport us to faraway places, but can also bring us into other time periods, both past and future. A book can even convey us into the mind of another person, so that we can view the world through his eyes.

But reading as a pastime for the family and its members has all too often in our day been replaced by other activities of little or no lasting value. Countless hours are wasted by families attracted to the instant gratification – the quick thrill, the quick laugh, and the quick "solution" to life's problems – offered by an ever-increasing number of television channels. Video games lure many others before their flashing screens to while away the hours in pursuit of elusive imaginary characters or munchable dots. Even the home computer, while proving worthwhile in many ways, has taken many an avid reader from his books and placed him before yet another screen. Our world of vast technological advances is proving to be a contributor to the premature death of many an aspiring "bookworm."

But reading need not become a thing of the past in our homes. Indeed it must never be allowed to become that in our Covenant homes, for we, more than any others, need to read. First and foremost, our God has revealed Himself to us in a written Word. That alone is reason for us to want to read and for us to desire our children to read also. We also have a rich legacy of historical Christian literature that must never be neglected because it reveals God's unfolding Plan throughout the ages of the church and brings us the rich truths of God's Word as they have withstood the onslaughts of the centuries past. And, finally, God has used the pens of both godly and ungodly writers to bring us to a better understanding of the world in which we live, so that we might become better aware of our place in it and God's plan working within it.

Because of the ever-increasing sinfulness of our world, the depravity of man, and the blasphemy of his tongue and pen there is much literature that is unfit for our sensitive, regenerate hearts to partake of. Even among so-called Christian literature the Truth is often perverted and distorted. So then, it is most important that we become not only readers, but *discerning* readers. It will do us no good to decry the abominations that appear on television and theater screen while allowing the same to appear in our homes in printed form. We must become aware and make our young children aware of what constitutes worthwhile literature, lest we do our families greater

harm than good in bringing books into our homes. Always our choices must be made with the glory of God foremost in our minds.

Gladys Hunt, in her book *Honey For a Child's Heart,* lists some of the ingredients of a good book, that is, a book that not only is morally sound, but also has the qualities good writing should have. First of all she begins with the theme of the book, or idea behind it. It must have quality or it will, she states, result in a "flabby story." Books that are themeless prove also to be incoherent and rambling in their style, and usually fall flat in the first few pages. And just as important as the theme is the plot, because, being the design or "why?" of the story, it holds the book together. If the author is skillful, his plot will bring meaning to the story and to its characters, and add depth to the idea of the story. And, finally, the conclusion of the story is also significant, for it sums up the entirety of what the author has said and leaves us with something to think about. Mrs. Hunt sums up the greatest quality of truly good books with these words: "A sense of permanent worthwhileness surrounds really great literature. Laughter, pain, hunger, satisfaction, love, joy — the ingredients of a human life are found in depth and leave a residue of mental and spiritual richness in the reader." These criteria make it somewhat easier to select reading material that will benefit our children and ourselves.

How then do we encourage reading in our homes? First of all, by being an example to our children. If we do not read, they most likely will not find pleasure in reading themselves. And the kind of literature that we choose will affect their choices also. If our reading is limited to worldly human interest magazines and trashy novels of the sort found near grocery store check-out lanes, we'd better not expect their tastes to run to literature of any higher caliber. Secondly, we must introduce our children to good books at an early age. Most of us already have a beginning in doing this at our family mealtime devotions, but we can go far beyond this by reading other stories to them and applying the Scriptural principles that they already know to the new-found knowledge of God's world and the creatures within it. In beginning at an early age, we can help them grow in their understanding of their place within God's world and broaden their world and life view. This is according to the instruction of God Himself in Deuteronomy 6, where we are commanded to teach His commandments, statutes, and judgments to them in our households,

as we walk by the way, when we lie down and rise up. And last of all, we must show an interest in the reading that our children do, for that is the very best encouragement a child can have. We should familiarize ourselves with their special interests and help them to choose good books that they will enjoy. Then we can encourage them to broaden their horizons, perhaps reading an old favorite of our own childhood to them. By discussing what they have read with them and reading to them – even to our older children who can read by themselves – we share in their interests as well. And by discussing with them what *we* have been reading, whether it is the Scripture passage of our personal devotions or another literary passage, they will sense our enjoyment and be encouraged to continue with their own reading. In this way families are drawn together by the bond of mutual love for that which is worthwhile reading.

What are some good books? Following are listed some of our own family favorites. Also included are a few of my own favorites for those with older children, as ours are mainly limited to the young readers' bracket. I'm sure many teachers could add to the list and so could the many parents who find snuggling up with a child and a good book one of life's most blessed experiences.

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BOOK LIST

Gertrude Hoeksema, *Come Ye Children: A Bible Storybook for Young Children*

Garth Williams, *Baby Animals*

Margaret Wise Brown, *Good Night Moon*

Marjorie Flack, *The Story of Ping*

Beatrix Potter, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit,* il. by author

Ezra Jack Keats, *The Snowy Day*

Eric Carle, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*

Richard Scarry books, *What Do People Do All Day, Best Word Book Ever, Cars and Trucks and Things That Go*

Lois Lenski, *Policeman Small*

Robert McCloskey, *Make Way for Ducklings, Blueberries for Sal*

Don Freeman, *Corduroy*

Clarence Anderson, *Billy and Blaze* and other books in the series

James Marshall, *George and Martha*

Marie H. Ets, *Play With Me*

Hans A. Rey, *Curious George,* look for other books in this series

Gene Zion, *Harry the Dirty Dog*

Dr. Seuss, *Horton Hatches the Egg, The Sneetches and other Stories*

Claire H. Bishop, *Five Chinese Brothers*

Munro Leaf, *The Story of Ferdinand*

Bernard Waber, *Lyle, Lyle Crocodile* and other books in the Lyle series

Peggy Parish, *Amelia Bedelia,* a series, also *Granny and the Indians*
Else H. Minarik, *A Kiss For Little Bear, Little Bear,* and other bear books
Norman Bridwell, *Clifford, the Big Red Dog,* a series
Arnold Lobel, *Frog and Toad Are Friends,* and other books about Frog and Toad
Philip D. Eastman, *Are You My Mother?*
Rebecca Caudill, *The Best Loved Doll*
Carolyn Haywood, *B is For Betsy* and other Betsy/Eddie books
Michael Bond, *A Bear Called Paddington*
A.A. Milne, *Winnie the Pooh*

For Readers in Intermediate Grades

E.B. White, *Charlotte's Web*
Laura Ingalls Wilder, *Little House in the Big Woods* and all the series of books by this author
Beverly Cleary, *Henry Huggins, Socks, Ramona and Beezus*
Dorothy Canfield Fisher, *Understood Betsy*
Mary Norton, *The Borrowers* and others in the series
Lois Lenski, *Strawberry Girl, Houseboat Girl, Cotton in My Sack*
Marguerite De Angeli, *The Door in the Wall*
Carol Ryrie Brink, *Caddie Woodlawn*
Hugh Lofting, *The Voyages of Dr. Doolittle*
Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden*
Louisa May Alcott, *Little Men, Little Women*
Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*
Johann D. Wyss, *Swiss Family Robinson*
Anna Sewell, *Black Beauty*
Johanna H. Spyri, *Heidi*
Sydney Taylor, *All-of-a-Kind Family*
Doris Gates, *Blue Willow*
Astrid Lindgren, *Pippi Longstocking,* Pippi's other stories
Eric Knight, *Lassie Come Home*
Meindert De Jong, *The Wheel on the School, Hurry Home, Candy*
Mary Mapes Dodge, *Hans Brinker or The Silver Skates*
Marguerite Henry, *Misty of Chincoteague, Stormy, Misty's Foal,* and other horse stories
Walter Farley, *Black Stallion*
Norton Juster, *The Phantom Tollbooth*
Kate Douglas Wiggins, *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*
Helen Keller, *The Story of My Life*
Walter D. Edmonds, *The Matchlock Gun*
C.S. Lewis, *The Narnia Chronicles*

Older Readers

Scott O'Dell, *The Hawk That Dare Not Hunt By Day*
Esther Forbes, *Johnny Tremain*

William O. Steele, *Flaming Arrows*
Marjorie Rawlings, *The Yearling*
Fred Gipson, *Old Yeller*
John Steinbeck, *The Red Pony*
Irene Hunt, *Up a Road Slowly, Across Five Aprils*
Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage*
Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities, Oliver Twist*
Richard Llewellyn, *How Green Was My Valley*
Conrad Richter, *The Light in the Forest*
Esther Hautzig, *The Endless Steppe; Growing up in Siberia*
Ernest Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*
James Herriott, *All Creatures Great and Small, All Things Bright and Beautiful,* and other books in this series

Books of Poetry

Edward Blishen, *Oxford Book of Poetry For Children*
Nancy Larrick, *Piping Down the Valleys Wild*

It is common sense to put the seal to the wax while it is soft.

Arthur Jackson

VIEWPOINTS

There are in life many questions which cannot be set to rest simply by declaring one view "right" and another "wrong." In education too there are issues with which teachers and boards and school societies must struggle in their efforts to provide the best for their children. Take, for example, the matter of school organization. Should we have K-8 elementary schools, and 9-12 high schools? Or will we serve our children better by retaining our K-9 and 10-12 setup? Two veteran educators take a look at that question, from different points of view, in this issue's "Viewpoints." Mr. John Buiter, long-time teacher and principal at Hope Protestant Reformed School, argues convincingly that it's time "to break the old mold." Mr. Cal Kalsbeek, on the other hand, relying on his own experience both as principal at Adams Street Christian School and now

teacher at Covenant Christian High *School, comes with arguments equally cogent in favor of the status quo. Read on:*

Where the 9th Grade?

. . . IN THE GRADE SCHOOL!

Cal Kalsbeek

Although I would be quick to agree that there are some educational advantages to including our ninth grade students in the high school instructional program, it is my opinion that there are disadvantages which by far outweigh them. Following are what I consider to be three key disadvantages, listed in order from least to most important.

1. The *cost* would be prohibitive. It is simply a fact that tuition rates are considerably higher at the high school than in the grade schools. Part of this difference is reflected in the sliding tuition schedule of the grade school which is not available in the high school. But whatever the reasons, a simple example will clearly illustrate this cost disadvantage: Take a family that has three school-age children, one of them a ninth grader. Using 1984-'85 tuition rates of our Hope grade school and Covenant High School in Walker, Michigan, that family's tuition expense would be $3,035.00 if all three were sent to the grade school, but $4,820.00 were the ninth grader sent to the high school. One need not have a master's degree in mathematics to see the impact this would have on many of our families.

2. Such a move would result in additional *restrictions* for all our high school students. Ask a sophomore early in the school year how the high school is different from the grade school, and very likely he will respond that he has freedoms in the high school that he did not have in the grade school. I believe that this is as it should be. Our young people should be given freedoms proportionate to their level of maturity. However, when they demonstrate that they are not able to handle these freedoms properly, restrictions are in order. Simply stated, therefore, the inclusion of younger students on the high school scene will necessitate more restrictions for all students. I believe this would have a negative impact on our 11th and 12th grade students.

3. The *social pressures* on our ninth graders would have harmful results. Obviously the high

school is much more evening-activity oriented than the grade school. Were our ninth graders to attend the high school they would naturally want to be involved in these activities, and they would in fact be encouraged by the school to attend them. As a result, our young people will be away from home more often and at an earlier age. I consider this a very real problem *now*, and have little doubt that a move of our ninth graders to the high school will magnify it. Also, it is inevitable that such a move will result in additional pressure on our young people to begin dating at an earlier age. In my opinion these social pressures for ninth graders, and for the parents who will in turn be confronted with them, should be avoided.

In conclusion let me add that I believe our grade schools are currently doing an excellent job of instructing our ninth grade students. Why do away with a good thing?

. . . IN THE HIGH SCHOOL!

John Buiter

We face an age-old problem, how best to organize the school life of our children. The facet of this problem which is the focus of attention in this article is the place of students in our school systems when they reach the ninth grade, usually the fourteenth year of their life. This is actually the tenth year of their formal schooling, maybe even the eleventh, since we don't start counting until the first grade; kindergarten and now pre-school don't seem to count.

As soon as we start to institutionalize schooling in the form of group education we face many educational decisions and a certain amount of debate. Individual education is and can be very flexible and unique. A study of the biographies of many important figures in the history of our nation and in church history will give examples of many varied and unique plans of formal instruction, many of them rather unorthodox and highly successful. But in our times the instruction of our children has become highly institutionalized, and organization along some fixed uniform pattern is demanded. We no longer have the freedom of many choices. We have to pick a mold carefully and use it effectively for the majority of our students.

How that mold is built or has been built is determined by custom and the history of education in a particular area. The system we have in our area today has been influenced by those customs and that history. Customs and history are not

easily changed. The "debate" is whether we should break the mold and restructure our system somewhat; should the ninth grade be part of a senior high school or should it remain as it has for many years in this area, in a junior high school setting.

It is my contention that we should change our mold and recast the ninth grade as part of the high school organization. I will try to present some arguments to support that contention, no one of them of overwhelming impact, but on the whole of some impact. First, the present structure reflects to a certain degree the popularity of a movement that was in vogue during the formation of our school systems; it was the way things were done. I believe it would be difficult to support the proposition that the system of six years of elementary grades, three years of junior high, and three years of senior high has produced a better education than the older system of eight years of grade school and four years of high school. A strong argument that it has not is the large scale return to the four-year high school that we are seeing in both public and Christian schools.

Another reason for having the ninth grade in the local Christian "grade" school had something to do with the history of these schools. Forty and fifty years ago the grade schools were closer to a local community, often the end of formal education for a sizable group of students. That situation has changed much over these past forty to fifty years. In our own Protestant Reformed school movement our start was in the grade schools and there was a desire to keep our children in our schools for that ninth year. That situation has changed also in some areas. Is it time to look to other considerations when these organizational decisions are being made?

Some direct educational considerations should be faced in this discussion as well as the historical ones. One of the questions is whether ninth graders or fourteen year olds are mature enough for the environment and traditional educational structure of the high school. My experience of the last twenty-seven years (has it been that long?) in working with ninth graders is that generally their maturity level is such that they fit better in a four-year senior high than they do in the junior high. That is a personal evaluation and sometimes hard to defend, but I believe one which is quite defensible.

Other educational considerations are the greater variety of courses that usually are available to these students when they are in the high school. By ninth grade, students are showing a wider spread of aptitudes and

and interests than in the lower grades. These wider interests can be better served by the more numerous tracks to follow in a high school setting. Students of ninth grade age generally need that greater variety, both the more academically inclined and those who need a more practical education.

We have not yet looked at a couple of areas that ought to be touched. One of them is the social area. This region has always produced some strong arguments for both sides of this question. Again, I believe from personal experience that ninth graders fit in better in the high school social setting than they do in a junior high setting. One can always find the glaring exception to this rule, maybe even quite a few outstanding exceptions; but again, taken as a group, students of ninth grade age are ready and would fit in well in the senior high environment.

There are also the practical arguments to be faced in this "debate," one of them being the traditional way high school education has been financed in the Christian schools. The argument is that the traditional straight-line tuition system used in most Christian high schools places undue "burden" on some families and students. This may well be true, but, while we are changing things, let's also take a look at the way we finance Christian education. I don't want to start another debate! Let it suffice to say that this practical problem can be solved and should not be an important consideration in determining where our ninth graders belong.

One last practical consideration is the legal one. In the State of Michigan the matter of credits for graduation has placed the ninth grade in the high school even though for many years these students have not been in the high school. Placing the ninth grade in the high school would solve this very old problem. Teacher certification laws in Michigan are also structured so that school systems can operate with greater ease when these ninth graders are in the high school. Practically, it is much easier to move the students than it is to change the laws.

After years of placing the ninth grade in the junior high or grade school setting I believe that our experience over the last thirty or more years teaches us that they would be better served if they were in the four-year high school. That lesson is not overwhelming but there is enough of a lesson there to convince me that it is time to break the old mold and to re-cast that mold along new lines. Let's give it a thirty-year test!

CURRENT ISSUES

Brian Dykstra, a teacher at Hope Protestant Reformed School, has agreed to write regularly for this rubric in Perspectives. *His intention is to provide a "short newsy article" for each issue. He might deviate from that on occasion; and, for that matter, his approach might change somewhat as he gets into the work. But for now you may look to this space for articles which, though they will ordinarily give some direction to our thinking about various issues in the educational world today, will not be in-depth analyses of those issues. We might add, incidentally, that if any of you in the course of your other reading run across the kind of "news" which you think deserves some comment, you are encouraged to send articles, or copies thereof, to Mr. Dykstra. His address is: 171 Baldwin Dr., Apartment D, Jenison, MI 49428.*

Christian Practices Barred in Allendale Public Schools

Brian Dykstra

It has been the practice of several teachers in the public schools of Allendale, Michigan, to pray, read the Bible, and tell Bible stories in their public school classrooms. Michigan State School Superintendent Phillip Runkel, believing that such practices were not legal under the United States Constitution, threatened to sue the school system if such religious practices were not halted. A small group of parents and teachers of students in Allendale Public Schools claimed that if they were no longer allowed to pray and read the Bible, their First Amendment rights of free speech and freedom of religious expression were being taken from them.

At the end of July of this summer the issue came before United States District Judge Benjamin F. Gibson. In a written opinion given on July 25, Judge

Gibson gave no opinion on the issue of holding Bible Club meetings on public school property during school hours since there were no U.S. Supreme Court precedents on which to base an opinion.

Several questions about this case come to mind. If the parents and teachers of these public school children are so concerned about the religious life of their children and students, what are they doing in public schools in the first place? Do we as Christians agree with Judge Gibson's opinion? Of course we support prayer and telling Bible stories in our Christian schools, but may we support prayer and the telling of Bible stories in public schools when legitimate questions can be raised about whether prayer is being done properly to the God of the Bible and whether Bible stories are presented in accordance to Reformed truth? Should we disagree with Judge Gibson's opinion because perhaps such activities in public school classrooms could bring conversion to a believer who has not yet been brought to the church? Should a Christian teaching in a public school do such things in class, or should he let the students know that he is available for these practices outside of school if they desire it?

While these questions might be interesting to contemplate or discuss, they do not yet vitally concern us as teachers and parents of children in Christian schools. Is a decision such as Judge Gibson's an indication that the time is drawing near when there will be no toleration for the true worship of the true God? Hopefully the following quotation taken from the front page of the July 26, 1985 issue of the *Grand Rapids Press* applies to parents of public school students, but it has an ominous tone nevertheless. In paraphrasing Judge Gibson's written opinion, the *Press* states:

"While parents have 'liberty interests' to direct their children's upbringing and education, it 'is not absolute,' Gibson said.

"Just as teachers' freedom of speech and religion 'must yield to the requirements of the establishment (of religion) clause. . . so the parents' rights to direct their children's upbringing are similarly limited.' "

Finally, as teachers in Christian schools, are we sure that all of our teaching is distinctively Reformed, or are our classrooms "Christian" simply because we pray, read and study the Bible, and tell Bible stories? If this is all that Christian educating means to us, and God is not found in any other area in our classrooms, may we be satisfied that we are fulfilling our callings?

from the TEACHERS' LOUNGE

Jeffrey Lenting is the son of Adrian and Trudy Lenting, members of South Holland, Illinois Protestant Reformed Church. Mary Beth Lubbers is part of the teaching staff of the school which is within an easy stone's throw of that church. Her article about Jeffrey, which appeared in the April, 1985 issue of the school's Reflector, *must have touched the hearts of its readers. We are happy to be able to share it with you in "from the Teachers' Lounge."*

A Special Commencement Address

Mary Beth Lubbers

Jeffrey Lenting will not graduate from our school this year. Under ordinary circumstances, however, he would have, for Jeffrey will be 15 years old on May 17. But the circumstances surrounding Jeffrey are not ordinary. Jeffrey is a very special little boy-teenager.

Jeffrey has eyes, but they have never beheld the breathtaking beauty of springtime nor the look of love on his parents' face as they care for him. Jeffrey has legs, but they have never walked or skipped or kicked a soccer ball. Jeffrey has arms, but they have never been used to steer a bicycle or to hug his brothers and sister. Jeffrey has a mouth, but he has yet to speak his first word or delight his family with a note of song.

Jeffrey is severely handicapped in mind and body. He has never comprehended the simplest instruction. This is not to say that Jeffrey has no understanding. I have seen him respond to his father's gentle touch and to his mother's loving voice. And certainly his parents and relatives could give you other examples of his responses. Without a doubt, too, God speaks to Jeffrey in ways that are too deep, too mysterious for us mere mortals to understand. Nevertheless, Jeffrey has little or no awareness of life as we so richly enjoy and imbibe it.

Jeffrey even has difficulty

breathing on his own. Often he is hooked up to an oxygen machine. Nor has Jeffrey ever eaten any ordinary food. He has never sat down to a meal of pot roast, mashed potatoes, and green beans – nor has he ever complained about any of his meals. His mother says that he is a very grateful little boy – grateful for the smallest service rendered, the slightest recognition of his needs. Jeffrey eats a thin gruel heavily dosed with medicine to prevent the convulsions which would otherwise rack his already frail and crippled body. And even this he has great difficulty swallowing, only achieved by the second spoonful forcing the first spoonful down his throat.

I stood by Jeffrey's bed last Sunday evening; for that, after all, is where Jeffrey spends every day, every hour of his life curled up in a near-fetal position. It was a totally humbling experience, and it always affects me profoundly for many days afterward. "My life in all its PERFECT plan was ordered ere my days began?" Sometimes the Lord makes this a very difficult confession.

Did Jeffrey sin? Did his parents sin? Has the church sinned some great corporate sin? Why has God dealt with us in such a heavy way? To ask these questions is to turn quickly to the Gospel of John where Jesus Himself answered this question for His people clearly and for all times: "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

God's ways are too wonderful for us. God's works are too "awe-full" for us. God's ways are past finding out. So we will not attempt to find out either. Rather we *can* and *will* acknowledge His supremacy in all our lives. We will bow before His awesome sovereignty in His dealings with us, weak vessels of clay fitted for destruction. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it" (Psalm 39:9).

With Jeffrey, we all look forward to the day when the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped, the tongue of the dumb unloosed; when broken hearts shall be bound up; when we shall run and not be weary, walk and never faint. Sometimes I try to envision the very special, altogether lovely places that God is preparing for all His little Jeffreys ("I go to prepare a place for you. . ."). What a love and tenderness must go into their preparation, every detail for their heavenly comfort and bliss attended to by Father's hand.

Our son, the Lord willing and by God's grace, will graduate on Friday evening, May 31. We will celebrate this occasion. It is

fitting that we do so, for this is an important milestone in his life and ours. And that is just what it is – a milestone, an earthly marker along the road of life. While we all await the Great Commencement Day – that day of new beginnings when we shall leave this earth forever to walk down the long bejeweled aisles of heaven into the loving arms of Father. What a day of pomp and celebration and rejoicing that will be! Then we will all sing one great "class song." It is the song of Moses and the Lamb. "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints" (Revelation 15:3).

BULLETIN BOARD

Those of you who are regular readers of the Perspectives *will have noticed that with this new volume year we have added rubric titles to our magazine. The titles are, we think, more or less self-explanatory – with the exception perhaps of the one above. Our intention in "Bulletin Board" is to give some publicity to what's going on in our various schools. In it we'd like to stress* student *achievements and/or writings, but not necessarily* limit *ourselves to that. The rubric title, happily, allows for a good deal of latitude.*

For whatever we do include in this space we are dependent on information provided by the schools. So, all you school principals, please consider this an official request that you regularly send a copy of your school paper to the Editorial Office of Perspectives.

For our Fall, 1985 "Bulletin Board" we'd like to lift a little from Lynden's school paper, the Northwood Lights. *Have you ever wondered what it could be like to attend a* little *high school? There is a certain dimension of the more typical high school life which is admittedly "missed" in a school in which enrollment is small; but that the blessing of the Lord is not dependent at all on* numbers *seems evident from reports of several members of Lynden's 1984-1985 high school student body.*

I am a senior now, and am coming close to the halfway mark, or milestone of my final year in high school. Being the only senior this year, it was not hard to decide who was going to write this article for the senior class.

Although I am the only senior, I take only one class by myself. The rest of my classes I take with the juniors, Tammie and Mary. Having others in a class with you is very helpful, because in most classes, one of the easiest and best ways to learn is through class discussion. This fact becomes apparent in History. Some of the things you remember the longest are the things discussed in class.

This year, the juniors and the seniors are, for the first time, taking Speech together. This is because of the fact that there is only one senior. What would you do in a speech class with no audience!! We all help each other better ourselves, with our constructive criticism, and by seeing good points in each other's speeches.

Physics is the one class that I am taking by myself. This is a science course in which you really put to work all your math, algebra, and geometry. It deals with the laws of nature, explaining more fully the actions and reactions of the things in creation around us. It also applies mathematical laws and equations to these things, so that we are able to predict the results of our actions, and the actions of many others around us. It takes careful analysis as well as the right equations to work them out.

The work in this class as well as others is not easy; but who ever said that your senior year was going to be easy? As seniors also we must do our work to the best of our ability, according to the gifts that God has given us, and to the honor and glory of His name. Ed de Boer

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I have been assigned to give a report of the various subjects which our sophomore class has been studying recently in our daily classes. . . .

We have recently been studying genetics and heredity and also various genetic mutations in Biology. On a test over this material, one of the questions was: Do heredity or environment cause a man to be saved? Here are some excerpts of answers: . . .

"A believer does not receive his believing from heredity because our parents can only bring forth children who are sinful. The Lord has to spiritually regenerate us. Then the Lord provides us the environment, to hear the Gospel of Christ, which we will believe because of God's regenerating work in us." — Richard Smit

We are now examining the false theory of evolution, and how men falsely interpret things such as fossils to say that the earth was founded apart from God, but also looking at what we believe to be true based on Scripture. . . .

We are looking forward to soon being done with half the year and hope our studies will continue to go well. Calvin Den Hartog