*schools of course, and insisted that, where these existed, the practice of home-schooling could "detract from the corporate responsibility of the covenant community of believers toward the children of the covenant." Mrs. Carol Brands, a member of Edgerton Protestant Reformed Church and a mother whose previous experience included teaching in three different Protestant Reformed schools, takes a slightly different view. With Prof. Decker, she recognizes the legitimate, important, and necessary place that our Christian schools have in the instruction of covenant children. She acknowledges that instruction can normally best be given by qualified teachers in the schools. She does insist however that home-schooling should be considered "the ultimate obedience to the command to train up a child in the way he should go." We'll trust you'll find these articles worth your careful consideration.*

# Home Education

Prof. Robert Decker

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

What must we think of this? Is home education right, proper? Ought we all be doing this? Is home education to be preferred over the current school situation? Is home education a better way to train our children? Is home education better for the children academically and is it better for them socially?

The Biblical principle is clear. Scripture teaches in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 that parents are to teach their children. This passage reads: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a

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

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

Another way to implement the

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

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

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

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

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

Why positively are our schools to be preferred? All of the instruction in our schools is based upon and presented in the light of the truth of God's inspired and infallible word as interpreted by the Reformed creeds. The truth is presented antithetically over

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

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

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

Teachers have the calling and responsibility to study and

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

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

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

# Home Schooling in Relationship to Home Responsibility

Carol Brands

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

This is true also in what we call a "new" movement – new for our American generation, that is – the movement to return to home schooling. Home schooling is simply what its term denotes,