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,

"schooling" children at home, or, more properly, academically educating children at home.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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THE REFORMED PERSPECTIVE

The Bible-oriented, Reformed thinker has always insisted that the education of the child from start to finish is the responsibility of the parents. There are numer-

ous Scriptural passages which make this totally clear. In a society which we call too complex for us to be able to keep up with advances, we feel pressured into scholastic training due to our own feelings of inadequacy in training our children. Besides that, the government has made education compulsory, and either we send our children to government schools – an illegitimate option – or else we set up our own.

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

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

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

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THE HOME SCHOOL MOVEMENT'S STRENGTHS

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

Strength One. It is a corollary movement to the return to the Biblical concept of women being real mothers, "workers in the

home" and not pursuing careers. Being a mother is a full-time job, but with modern conveniences there can be too much "idle time" so that mothers seek a career to counterbalance their home boredom – or else to pay for the conveniences that have caused their boredom. The home schooling movement insists that motherhood *is* God's career choice for the woman and that this is full-time, involving "*work* in the home," not merely being at home.

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

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

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HOME SCHOOLING IS LEGITIMATE

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

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

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

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

impossible for certain children.

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

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

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

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

These are very real advantages!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

b. The babies in the home. In a home with only a few children, organization of the home for child training may be a good possibility, but where there are many children this becomes more and more difficult. For some gifted mothers, it may still be

possible (I think of the mother of John and Charles Wesley, mother of eighteen children, a great example as a mother despite her Arminianism. . . and have also read of successful modern home-school mothers with thirteen and eleven children). But for many of us, a busy family would greatly deter good scholastic instruction.

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

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

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

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

responsibility through parental supervision of our schools!

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

PARENTS' CORNER

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

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

The story has two chapters, and though the first is a bit long for this rubric, our intention is nevertheless to finish the parable in two installments. We thank Esther for this contribution to our magazine. And we encourage others to consider doing something similar. There's room in our magazine for different kinds