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**Distinctively
Christian
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Christian Curriculum Beyond Books and Walls

“Click on the icon . . . Decide when you want to leave, sometime after March . . . Now type in your name . . . Decide what you’re going to be—a banker, a farmer, a blacksmith, a teacher.”

We’re about to hit the Oregon Trail. The eight-year-old leads me through the choices: “How many sets of clothes? How many pounds of food? Do you want some spare axles for your wagon?” The trail is full of decisions—with consequences. As Rianna clicks deftly through the route, I remember the old green volume with the brown lettering that I read in fifth grade: *The Oregon Trail*.

Both trails are rich with detail, drama, and danger. But they are different. Learning and teaching “strictly by the book” is hardly feasible any more.

I was struck by North American reliance on textbooks last year when I taught in secondary and university classrooms in Venezuela, where only a handful of students can afford books. Secondary teachers teach by a national curriculum, but they must develop their own lessons, apart from textbooks. The system is by no means ideal, but teachers are very aware of curriculum goals. University departments develop their own curriculum, but not around textbooks. There aren’t many. Instead, members of departments develop course curricula around learning goals for each course.

A well-written textbook can be a wonderful asset in the classroom—or a crutch. Sometimes the textbook becomes “the curriculum.” Now the electronic boom blows the bottom out of that kind of reliance on the teacher and the text. Textbooks still abound, but technology bombards us with new sources of information and hourly updates. Even textbooks now come online. We’re forced now to do more sifting, more searching, more synthesizing. The learner and the teacher must take on greater responsibility to judge the authenticity and the reliability of the information. Students and teachers work together to search for new sources.

Our sense of the “classroom community” also changes as students click on icons and connect around the world. With

the growth of distance education and service learning, we question whether students of a given class will still gather everyday in the classroom. Unless schools adapt to these new approaches to education, home schoolers with modems may have more availability (consider the ratio of students to computers) and more adaptability for this new concept of schooling than students in classrooms.

Too often we think of school as “covering a body of knowledge” rather than developing the skills that enable us to be stewards of the creation. I have been asked, on occasion, to identify the body of knowledge that I teach in a particular English course, as if knowledge is marketable. That concept assumes that our task as teachers is to dispense bits of the same goods to all students, day by day. Anyone who can manage this process can teach. (Anyone who is a Christian and can manage this process can teach Christianly.) A better approach to curriculum development is to ask what goals guide the course.

We must never lose sight of the basis for education goals. God calls us and our students to be not dispensers of knowledge, but to be kingdom workers, stewards of the creation—the fallen, redeemed creation. God calls us to be fruitful and to increase, to fill the earth and subdue it and rule over it (Genesis 1:28 NIV). Thus, the role of the Christian educator is one of nurturing, of restoring, of appreciating what can be made wholesome and praising to God. Our students too are called—that’s why we lay claim to covenantal Christian education, and that curricular goal remains firm, even as we fulfill the goal in new ways. ■

Ten Tasks of Curriculum Writing

by John E. Hull

John E. Hull is a professor of education at The King's University College in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Considering the central place that the curriculum has had in defining Christian education, one would assume that curriculum writing is a top priority for every Christian school teacher. But this is not the case. Some teachers think they lack the requisite skills or wisdom. Many are satisfied with the current state of their courses. Others would like to redesign their curriculum, but feel they never have sufficient time. Another group actively takes up challenges that curriculum development presents, but the daunting nature of the task and the lack of institutional support wears them down.

Regardless of the magnitude of these obstacles or the validity of the excuses, it seems to me that all teachers are curriculum makers. Whether they strictly adhere to the formulas laid out in published materials, construct original thematic units, or operate somewhere in between, all teachers must make choices about the content and delivery of their material every day. Furthermore, these curricular decisions, we know, always take place in the context of a paradigm. Generally hidden from view, this pattern for planning sets the limits and makes the rules of the game. Thus, not only do all teachers design curriculum, but their work always carries a philosophical signature.

If Christian schools have been established on the premise that they offer a different kind of curriculum, what should we make of the fact that only a handful of teachers are both willing and able to write curriculum in the context of a well-defined, biblically-sensitive paradigm? Some people assume that Christian teach-

ers just know how to teach Christianity; the status quo is not bad. A similar view assumes that "Christian education" is really "Christians educating," that is to say, it is a more academically excellent and more moral version of public school education. We do not need a new curriculum as much as we need Christian teachers who know their stuff.

I prefer to think of curriculum development as one of the major battlegrounds where Christian educators must distinguish what they do from all others. When Christian school teachers regularly

to educational questions of ultimate concern. Meeting the first challenge requires a recognition and mastery of the skills and principles of good curriculum planning. Overcoming the second demands wisdom to envision alternative answers to questions such as these: What is worth knowing? How should the learning situation be structured? Who is a good student? What is good teaching? How should students be evaluated? Christian school educators may not take either of these challenges lightly. Nor should they underestimate the impact that one challenge has on the other.

Sometimes I think we Christian educators are just beginning to discover our own theory of curriculum. At this early stage knowing what we do not want remains easier to articulate than defining what we want. For example, I know I do not want my education students to adopt the popular additive approach to curriculum writing. Simply adding Christian ingredients to a mixture already flavored by traditional notions of academic excellence and essential skills and reconceptual ideals of social relevance and personal choice will not provide Christian schools with a biblically distinctive curriculum. However, if the best we can do right now is add to or subtract from the eclectic curriculum that we have inherited, then Christian school educators must at least understand what criteria regulate curricular choices.

In the absence of a fleshed-out Christian philosophy of curriculum development, I currently present my students with ten interrelated curriculum-writing tasks. Through them I teach my students how to make lesson, unit, and year plans that reflect their answers to the ultimate questions mentioned above. This list is not exhaustive; neither should it be confused

Simply adding Christian ingredients . . . will not provide Christian schools with a biblically distinctive curriculum.

surrender to status quo philosophies, ideologies, and theories of education, they enlarge the espoused vision of Christian education and actual practice.

Curriculum development presents Christian educators with two very different challenges: 1) the year-to-year improvement of unit and lesson plans, and 2) the implementation of biblical answers

with a template. There is no one best set of terms, nor one best order for writing curriculum. Teachers produce curriculum in a variety of ways. They use different names for similar components and denote a variety of concepts with the same term.

This list tries to capture a set of useful tasks. Each description of a task is accompanied by one or more challenges, temptations, and strategies for overcoming the temptations. Much is implied in this list. Much more could be said about each task. Probably, there are other tasks that should be included. Without question, this list represents a work in progress. It needs to be tested by the practice and wisdom of in-service teachers. And, not wanting to sound too presumptuous, I think it also provides criteria for testing the quality of units presently taught by teachers who do not generally write down the background thinking that shapes their planning process.

Whether you are a beginner or veteran, a linear planner or a master of the web, a lover of centers or one who keeps the curriculum in a dozen treasure boxes, I hope this list challenges and inspires your curriculum development work in your small corner of God's kingdom. Our vision for the task does not allow us to find some comfortable stance between the traditional and reconceptual camps; our mission is nothing less than establishing our own philosophical paradigm for curriculum development.

Ten Tasks of Curriculum Writing

1. Defining the topic—The topic determines what boundaries limit the study.

Challenge: To define a field of study that is relevant to students, that can be accessed through available resources, and that provides rich opportunities for addressing one's goals and objectives

Temptation: To let textbooks determine the topics of study; to stick with subject-specific topics that are difficult to integrate with each other, are not easily rationalized, and are difficult to relate to the students' experience

Strategy: Develop at least one thematic unit per year, working up to a goal of 40% of your curriculum.

2. Organizing the activities/topics—This task includes fencing in and ordering what is taught. Fencing fixes the breadth and depth of the material to be studied. Ordering is a process of prioritizing topics both in terms of temporal sequence and the amount of time each receives.

Challenge: To find a good balance between depth and breadth of topics; to give priority to topics/activities that best address one's goals, theme, and philosophy

Temptation: To work without constructing an outline or web

Strategy: Construct an outline or web chart with sufficient detail (three tiers) so that content can be organized week by week and lesson by lesson according to the time available.

3. Defining goals and objectives—These are the specific directives that define student learning. Goals represent long-range or ongoing targets while objectives connote once-and-for-all-time achievements. Units generally require one to three goals and approximately nine to twelve objectives.

Challenge: To identify goals that reflect the vision and mission statements of the school and which can, in turn, be fleshed out as achievable lesson objectives

Temptation: To list goals that are not school specific, but reflect life-long, general targets that are equally applicable to other social institutions; to so narrowly define the objectives that education is reduced to an instrumental process of skill acquisition that lacks any sense of mission

Strategy: Target goals and objectives that pertain to several different areas such as knowledge and skill acquisition, interpersonal relating, perspective-discernment, personal growth. Be able to relate these goals and objectives to specific activities and topics of the unit.

4. Outlining a thematic statement—A short thematic statement captures the unique perspective used to direct both the teaching and learning within the unit. This statement provides a unit-specific interpretation of the intentions, expectations, and commitments that belong to the following basic relationships: humanity and its God; humanity and its environment,

interpersonal relationships.

Challenge: To bridge the gap that often separates confessional statements of purpose from unit goals and objectives

A thematic statement for a unit on environmental issues should, for example, contrast the different “mountain top perspectives” among a Christian educator, a new age universalist, and a progressive technologist.

Temptations: To work without a theme; to “spiritualize” the theme; to express the theme in the form of the Creation, Fall, Redemption motif without making any direct applications to the unit; to confuse the theme with objectives or a content summary

Strategy: Imagine how your approach to this unit will differ from those of teachers with contrary perspectives. Your theme should capture this difference.

5. Stating the rationale—Provide a persuasive statement aimed at convincing a school constituent of the importance of the unit.

Challenge: To teach only what can be rationalized in terms of the vision and mission of the school

Temptation: To allow expediencies rather than vision to rationalize what is taught and what has priority

Strategy: Write unit rationales that are convincing to skeptical parents, unmotivated students, and principals concerned about accountability.

6. Grounding the concepts—Establish a recurring point of reference: a regularly asked question, a common topic or problem, a story, a concept, or a pedagogical regularity. These reference points serve as the links to connect activities and topics.

Challenge: To define memorable and accessible reference points that will unify the diverse experiences provided by the unit

Temptation: To have none; to assume that students will make their own connections

Strategy: Identify at least one connecting thread per unit and consciously work on it.

7. Clarifying one’s curriculum orientation—Orientation is the philosophical stance that one takes with respect to curriculum development, that is, a) traditional academic, b) technological, competency-based, c) constructivist-developmental, d) social reconstructionist. This stance expresses one’s worldview and philosophy of education in terms of knowledge and its acquisition, pedagogical methods, content arrangement, learning outcomes, and evaluation procedures.

Challenge: To maintain harmony among one’s philosophy of curriculum development, one’s worldview, and actual curriculum implementation

To overcome the traditional regularities of schooling that impede achieving consistency

Temptation: To take an eclectic-pragmatic approach; to borrow from various status quo orientations without consideration of their inherent conflicting ideals or the opposition this mix poses

to one’s personal philosophy of education and worldview

Strategy: Make philosophical choices based on one’s vision of the educational task rather than choose whatever is expedient or in vogue.

8. Planning lessons—Lessons are the pedagogical plan for determining how content will be experienced. Methodology takes into account developmental stages, learning styles, classroom interaction and atmosphere, unit goals, creativity and motivation, and the unity and diversity of knowledge.

Challenge: To develop a dynamic and flexible pedagogy that is consistent with one’s curriculum orientation and worldview

Temptation: To teach only in one way—typically the traditional, didactic, teacher-centered way

Strategy: Use at least two different teaching styles per class period, that is, blend cooperative learning formats with teacher-directed learning.

9. Developing an evaluation model—Evaluation refers to the various means by which a teacher assesses student achievement and communicates the results.

Challenge: To evaluate the whole shoreline of desired educational goals and outcomes

To find a balance between formative and summative assessment

Temptation: To reduce all evaluations to a quantity; to think of evaluation as a postmortem on the teaching-learning experience rather than as a vital part of it

Strategy: Help students define challenging but reachable goals. Always think of tests as teaching tools.

10. Implementing a plan for reflection—The plan is an on-going critical assessment of the unit and its delivery.

Challenge: To regularly make changes in a unit’s goals, content, pedagogy, and evaluation scheme

Temptation: To leave a unit alone once it is fairly well organized, or to be so critical that the unit is never delivered with satisfaction

Strategy: After every class session, jot down what went well and what did not. Note the reasons behind any problems and the changes you want to make. Keep these notes on file and access this resource when you next revise the unit. ■

“A Prayer for Schools”

by George Pasley

Dear God,
We remember that your Son, our Lord,
was once a schoolboy—
he once unrolled a scroll, and learned to read.
He once stood at Joseph's elbow,
and learned to guide a plane.
And he once exasperated his mother,
in consequence of his studies.
Remembering this,
we know that to share knowledge,
one with another,
is to enter into covenant
with what we were meant to do.

And so, dear God,
we ask your blessing upon all who teach
and all who learn,
your grace upon all who labor at the task
of sharing knowledge, each generation with another.
Bless the parents who tape their children's lessons
to refrigerator doors,
bless the care-worn citizens
who gather to cast their vote,
bless the custodians and cooks and secretaries
who make our schools hum.
Bless the one who drives the yellow bus,
and the one who puts the Band-Aids on.
And bless the teachers, Lord,
that a spark of your joy divine
might brighten every lesson planned.

But most of all, dear God,
bless the children.
Let a sense of excitement overtake them
each time they enter through these doors,
let a sense of wonder embrace them
as they pass among these halls.
May they discover the collected wisdom of the ages,
waiting to greet them at their desks.
And may they learn the art of learning
as they toil at their tasks,
so that the wisdom of this age
might linger after class,
to greet the children
of ages yet to be.
Amen.

Schooling for Covenant Kids

by Robert Illman

Robert Illman is an administrator at Contra Costa Christian School in Walnut Creek, California.

Where have all the children gone? I am of course speaking about the fact that many of us in Christian schools with a Reformed perspective note that the people we once counted on as our “assured” constituency are no longer so “assured.” According to the *New York Times*, many of them are now homeschooling. In fact, there are more children in homeschooling than are enrolled in all types of private day schools. We can assume, and have even observed, that many families who have chosen that route are families who would in earlier days have been enrolled in schools.

As Tom Mulder pointed out in his article “Home or Schooling for Covenant Kids” (*Christian Educators Journal*, October 1998), homeschoolers are, for the most part, independent of any covenantal relationship. They have rejected that idea and have turned inward toward the family unit, trusting that this will provide a “safe” place in which to communicate Christian values and worldview to their children. Mulder concludes, and I agree, that we have been too timid in laying claims to the covenantal promises that God has given us.

To deal with the problem, we need to look at why homeschoolers have failed to grasp these great truths, and we need look no further than ourselves. The truth is that we don’t remember them very well either.

Last summer I attended a seminar for Reformed, Christian school administrators. One raised his hand and said, “Even

my own teachers are considering public schools or homeschooling. What do I tell them?” I suggested that we tell them about the covenant.

First off, we need, as Mulder suggested, to stop considering ourselves as just another “shopper’s selection.” We are not like other Christian schools built on an outreach theology. We exist to satisfy God’s mandate to families and the entire Christian community to provide a school where God is talked about in all courses of instruction and not just in Bible classes.

We need to educate our staffs in this distinction and we need to remind “shoppers” that this is why we are here and how we are different. I am always impressed that Reformed thinkers such as Francis Schaeffer and R. C. Sproul remain true to covenantal theology, and are able to communicate to audiences that are far broader than the Reformed community. Our schools on the other hand, keep our distinction under wraps for the very few in leadership, and often we miss the opportunity to educate our staffs and families on why we think the way we do.

To the “shoppers” we often look a lot like our outreach brothers and sisters; we appear as public schools with Bible classes thrown in. Because we are not rigid “rules” schools, our fundamentalist friends consider us liberal. We rarely wear uniforms, all or some of our texts are published by “secular” publishers, and our students are rarely subjected to the strict discipline practiced at other Christian schools across town. Even those who reject the outreach schools conclude that our schools are not going to provide a safe haven for their children, so they turn to

homeschooling. In short, those who must choose a day school turn to the “rules” model, and those who see the folly in that model often turn to homeschooling. They simply don’t trust us to give their children a truly Christian education.

In short, they perceive us as a messy school, and so we are. We need to challenge the assumption that Christian schools are supposed to be “safe” schools. We choose sanctification over altar calls. Sanctification is messy. We choose subjective disciplines, as they do at home, over a set of rules that never seem to cover all situations. We want the kids to learn to apply God’s standards when we aren’t there to do it for them. I tell parents that since we are an extension of the home, we shouldn’t dream of cheating them out of the opportunity to deal with matters such as how their children dress. We are not supporting them if we tell the kids how to dress without teaching them about modesty and worldly tee shirts.

We can challenge the assumption that withdrawing from the world is heeding God’s call to educate our children in his ways. We can help parents see that trusting us should not end when their children are exposed to less than perfect children from other Christian homes. God commanded Abraham to provide training for Ishmael as well as for Isaac. Like the rest of God’s kingdom, schools reflect his covenantal community not only at its best, but also at its worst. They are to be “safe” only in the sense that what God says is still the standard for right and wrong.

We can remind them that schooling without the umbrella of authority provided by the Christian community is unbiblical.

After all, the command in Deuteronomy 6:6-8 that mandates Christian education is not only to the parents:

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. (NIV)

To educate with credibility requires that we do a little housekeeping. First, we have to believe that we should be different from the public schools and other types of Christian schools. Then, we have to take a look at how we “do school.”

Let’s face it. Most of us would agree that the students we get now are different from those who came to our schools in years past. They have grown up in a post-modern world. (Yes, I know the term is overused, but it is true!) Are we as quick to realize that we also have grown up in a post-modern world? Is it valid for us to assume that teachers and administrators, growing up in this world, are ready to communicate a Christian worldview? Can we really rely on the old adage that any curriculum will work, since it is our teachers who teach, not the curriculum? I am convinced that we cannot. Perhaps we need to look at Christian texts more often. If we are not happy with those that are available, then we should be writing new ones and sharing them with each other.

Our answers to homeschoolers don’t

always ring true in their ears. Yes, they are wrong in protecting their children from association with other kids of the covenant. But, we are often just as wrong when we say we do a great job of communicating a Christian worldview just because our founding documents say that we do. Too often we espouse an educational model rather than a philosophy. We cannot confuse the two.

It is not enough to say that Christian school and Christian homeschoolers are kicking in separate races. It is not even correct to assume that it is okay if we are swimming in parallel lanes. We should be in the same lanes.

We should start by reminding homeschoolers that they have covenantal responsibilities. Independence is not a covenantal characteristic. After all, our emphasis on the interaction of the home, church, and school really makes us a large homeschool; we are continuing to communicate the values that God has given us through the academic disciplines as an extension of the home. Homeschoolers should be as accountable to the school boards as day students. Let’s make it easy for homeschoolers to gain a trust in us by enrolling them in our own independent study programs, allowing them to take selected classes while they are getting to know us. (At our school we have an independent study program of this nature. Most of the students who start out this way end up as full-time day students. The parents are enthusiastic supporters of what we are trying to do.) If the thought of embracing homeschoolers into our programs bothers us, then perhaps we have as much of a problem in trusting them as

they have in trusting us.

Those of us looking ahead have to deal with the fact that tuition costs keep going up and up. Some people who support the philosophy of covenantal Christian schools cannot rely on a supporting church to make school affordable. This number will only get bigger as tuition rises. Have we really explored how we will be “doing school” in ten or twenty years? Perhaps our options include a certain reliance on overseeing certain independent studies mixed with day campus classes. Distance learning is already an established fact on college campuses, and some progressive high schools have established accountability practices that allow them to include it in their programs. (Note that *accountability* is the operative, covenantal word.)

I am concerned for the future of covenantal education. Let’s celebrate who we are and encourage the participation of the whole covenantal community. As we do so, let us not confuse our educational philosophy and program with our present educational model. If we believe what we say we believe, then we cannot withdraw from what is happening around us. ■

Bug Books, Black Lagoon, Bookworm, and Bats

by Arden Ruth Post and Erin Bos

Arden Ruth Post is a professor of education at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Erin Bos is a Calvin student research assistant, a junior, from Plano, Texas.

“What is a *Bug Book*?” some Calvin students and I wondered as we observed second grade classes at a local Christian school. We soon found out.

Bug Books are small word family notebooks in which students paste a strip of different phonograms each week. Students glued the strip, representing the -ack word family, in their *Bug Books* and read the word list together. Then it was time for the teachers to read aloud *The Jacket I Wear in the Snow* and *The Teacher from the Black Lagoon* (see *Introducing Word Families Through Literature, K-3*). Students were asked to identify -ack words from the stories and add them to their lists. Other words would be added as they were encountered in reading and writing throughout the week.

Next it was time for the basal reader *Bookworm*. As students read a story about a squirrel, they watched for -ack words, as well as other phonic elements they had learned previously.

Are these second grade classes following a whole language, a traditional skills-oriented, or a combination approach to literacy instruction? This was the primary question we sought to answer in a survey of 400 kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers across the United States in Christian schools that are affiliated with Christian Schools International. Our goal to include Canadian Christian schools was put on hold because of budget limitations and the cost of postage. The questionnaire was divided into two areas: literacy instruction and early literacy instruction. Teachers were asked about specific literacy practices.

Literacy instruction

1. *Do you consider yourself to be predominantly a whole language teacher, a traditional skills-oriented (phonics) teacher, or a balanced literacy (about half and half) teacher?*

We found that nearly 75% of respondents consider themselves to be balanced literacy teachers, about 25% traditional skills-oriented teachers, and fewer than 5% whole language teachers. However, nearly two-thirds say that the whole language movement has influenced their teaching and caused a change in their literacy instruction style.

2. *Are you currently teaching phonics? If so, are you using explicit, systematic, direct instruction; implicit, embedded within context, instruction; or a combination?*

Almost unanimously, teachers indicate that they teach phonics. About two-thirds say they use a combination of explicit, direct instruction, which teaches letters/sounds in isolation, and implicit, embedded phonics instruction, which teaches phonics within reading material. One-third use only explicit, direct instruction, and fewer than 5% use only implicit, embedded phonics instruction. Teachers using a combined approach spend half or more of their time in direct, systematic phonics instruction. About one-third of the teachers spend only 20-40% of their time on implicit, embedded phonics instruction.

3. *How do you think the whole language movement has affected your students' reading, writing, and spelling in the following areas?*

Teachers saw improvement in the following areas: motivation to read; critical thinking; vocabulary/knowledge of word meanings; number of trade books read; oral language fluency; use of syntactic and semantic context of words; sight

word/automatic word pronunciation; and literal, inferential, and applied comprehension. However, one-third indicated that whole language caused a detrimental effect on sounding out words and the ability to spell according to the sound of a word. Few thought that visual memory of words suffered.

Bat, cake, and kite

After reading their basal story about a squirrel, the second graders we visited took out their *Spelling for Writing* books that accompany the basal series. They wrote *bats*, *cakes*, *kites*, and *games*, applying what they knew about long and short vowels. Later they would do a page from their plaid phonics books from Modern Curriculum Press (Columbus, Ohio). These second graders enjoy a combination of explicit, direct instruction and embedded phonics instruction. They also see the sound/symbol connection applied to spelling as well as to word identification. They discuss stories, answer questions, and respond by creating their own stories, using the sound/symbol connection in writing.

4. *How much change have you made recently to increase skills teaching in the following areas?*

Teachers indicated the following changes in response to parental demands or their own concerns. More than half indicated that they were spending more instructional time on sounding out words, developing critical thinking, teaching vocabulary, and motivating students to read. Nearly one-half encouraged students to read more books and taught more spelling according to sound. They also increased an emphasis on oral language fluency; syntactic and semantic context of words; literal, inferential, and applied comprehension; and sight words (immediate word recognition). It appears that

teachers have carried over some of the positive benefits that they ascribe to the whole language movement while also overcoming its shortcomings.

Early literacy instruction

5. *How much of your reading/language arts time do you spend in each of the following activities?*

With regard to early literacy instruction, teachers reported spending a considerable or moderate amount of time, ranging from 90% down to 66%, in the following areas, listed in order of popularity:

- oral reading to students
- guided reading/discussion questions
- direct instruction in synthetic phonics, building a word from individual phonemes
- comprehension strategies
- direct phonics instruction in analytic phonics, the use of word families such as *-ack* or *-it*
- story/book writing
- journal writing
- partner reading with classmates
- implicit phonics instruction, embedded in the context of reading
- student silent reading, often referred to as DEAR for Drop Everything And Read
- Daily Oral Language (DOL) in which students correct sentence errors
- spelling
- sight word work

An example from kindergarten

Mrs. V. is introducing her students to many of the literacy activities listed above. She reads a series of books that emphasize the letter N, one of which is Mercer Mayer's *There's a Nightmare in My Closet*. She engages the students in talking about what they are afraid of, and she models writing as she lists:

Kevin: thunder
Kelsey: sinking in a boat
Emily: lightning
Jenna: basement

She then hands out a paper and gives directions for the students to complete the sentence "At night I'm afraid of _____." Students complete the paper with draw-

ings, letters, and/or words.

She also directs the children's attention to a Letter Person, Mr. N with the noisy nose, from *Land of the Letter People*. She may use accompanying art, math, science, literature, and word work from this published program. Students circle the letter Nn on a morning message and say the words with her.

6. *Do you teach the following?*

Teachers responded *yes* or *no* to several additional items. Ninety percent indicated that they taught the sounds of letters, the sounding out of words, phonemic awareness (which is a currently popular term for developing awareness of sound units), oral language conversation, and book browsing—looking through books as a precursor to individual silent reading. The same percentage engages in various writing activities: modeling writing for their students, engaging the students in shared and interactive writing, having their students write stories, and doing other types of writing. A smaller percentage (80%) engage their students in journal writing.

Summary and implications

It is plain to see that most early elementary Christian school teachers see themselves as "middle of the road," that is, *balanced* literacy instructors. However, they interpret *balanced* in different ways, notably in how phonics is taught. Teachers seem to favor a combination of explicit, direct instruction and implicit, embedded instruction, with a slight preference for the former.

It also appears that most teachers see some positive changes coming from the whole language movement while about one-third expressed concern about students' ability to pronounce and spell words according to sound. This concern may account for the popularity of phonics teaching and the various phonic elements in early literacy instruction. Several "time honored" practices appear to be thriving: reading aloud to students, teaching comprehension strategies, partner reading, writing by and with students, student silent reading and book browsing, and Daily Oral Language.

The main implication of this study is

that a blend of the traditional and the new seems to work best for most teachers. They engage in a variety of sound literacy instructional practices. They provide skills instruction in isolation and in multiple contexts. They integrate the four components of language arts—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—in a connected way throughout their literacy activities. They model good literacy practices and provide opportunities for the children to read and to write. They practice skills, expose children to quality children's literature, and encourage independent reading and writing.

Dedicated Christian teachers

We are blessed in Christian schools with teachers who truly care about their students, their teaching, and their literacy instruction. The fact that so many teachers took the time to contribute to this research, to write comments, and to invite me into their classrooms speaks about their dedication.

If our study has sparked interest and discussion about literacy instruction among teachers within and across schools, it has accomplished a worthy objective. That we can learn from each other and that there are many ways to conduct a balanced literacy program have become clear to us. Let's go forth with the best literacy practices we can find! ■

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Fitting Together

by Cheryl Brostrom

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As a kid, I enjoyed puzzles. When the rains set in during the fall, I frequently climbed the stairs to the game cupboard tucked under the eaves of our house. There, in the cozy confines of converted attic space, I dug past my brother's and sisters' more popular pursuits—Candy Land, Life, Monopoly, Chinese Checkers—until I got to a stack of old puzzles.

We had lots of them, and I just loved those chopped up bits of wood or cardboard. I would pull out a box or two, then retreat to my bedroom, where ancient linoleum along the edges of the rug formed as good a foundation as any. Much better, in fact, since I could work uninterrupted. To escape the “help” of four younger siblings, my puzzles and I hid.

There, in the confines of my room, I'd recreate scenes from another era—of children in strange clothes, with (of all things) a monkey—or an elephant. I'd make up stories about them and imagine myself in their midst. Old map puzzles found me tracing my fingers along roads and boundaries, trying to visualize those unfamiliar lands as I mouthed their strange names.

Most of all, I liked having everything fit—having each piece tuck together just as it should. Bringing order to those jumbled scraps motivated me. So, missing pieces sent me high-tailing it back to the cupboard, looking for orphan pieces on its floor, or in another puzzle's box. Some days I spent more time rummaging for lost pieces than I did putting the puzzle together.

Now, decades later, I still enjoy puzzles. Every December, I bring home a 1000-piece jigsaw puzzle, and dump it out on our dining table. Folks visiting will pop in a piece or two, our kids will grapple

with it now and then, and my husband and I will talk and have tea over it. While it doesn't really contribute to eye contact, it does encourage us to linger around the table. It stays there until Christmas dinner moves us from the kitchen to the dining room.

Most significantly, we need our Lord to complete us, wonderful puzzles that we are. In 1 John 4:16-17, we read, “God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us. . . .” (NIV). Jesus tells us in John 15:4-5,

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (NIV)

Jesus spoke of a vine and branches, telling of the connection we need with him—he in us; we in him—fitting together like pieces of a puzzle.

Without God, we all sense an emptiness, a longing for him, a puzzle piece missing when we either have not received his salvation or have distanced ourselves from him through neglect or disobedience. Unfortunately, we often try to shove other pain-killers into the gaping hole left by the missing piece of God in the puzzle of our lives. We are all too familiar with friends who have chosen to jam kidney-shaped cardboard pieces of adultery, overeating, popularity, drugs, drink, work, ownership, or self-sufficiency into the oval puzzle slot that only God can fill perfectly.

Let us recognize our students' (and our own) tendency to do the same. Only then can we help each other toss counterfeit puzzle pieces in favor of him who fits

our empty places best. As Thomas A'Kempis wrote in *The Imitation of Christ*,

When we feel at one with God, it is easy not to need others; it is difficult, though not to need others when God seems to be missing in our lives. . . . We all gladly cling to some comfort; it is hard not to. . . . We must each wage a long and fierce inner struggle before we learn to master ourselves fully and to focus all of our love on God. When we rely on ourselves, we easily slip into finding comfort in material things and in each other rather than in God.

Two years ago, I gave up on a puzzle. A colorful forest scene, it looked inviting, and it seemed a bit as I think heaven will look: lions, tigers—all the big cats—lying peacefully with prey animals—sheep, gazelles, and zebras. Zebra stripes constituted a good forty percent of that puzzle. By Christmas, piles of zebra pieces still littered our table. I looked the other way when I walked past those heaps, stymied.

It scared me a little bit. I had lost my desire to see it completed. As I think back over earlier teaching years, I can remember feeling like that. There were spells when my enthusiasm flagged, when the work load overwhelmed me, or when a difficult student made third period so miserable that I didn't wish him success—I simply wished him gone.

When I encounter those times this year, I pray that I won't give up. Instead, I'll keep sorting through the pieces until that exasperating zebra really does lie down with the lion. I'll pray that my students and I will toss the pieces that pretend to fit our lives' puzzles and will ask our Lord to fill those waiting holes, as only he can. ■

“Teacher: The Me Nobody Knows”

Rosalie B. Icenhower

The teacher—the Public Me—
The Me Everybody Knows—
Is quiet, sedate,
Bespectacled, master-degreed.
But the Real Me—
The Me Nobody Knows—
Runs with glad abandon
Down sunny slopes
They’ve never seen.

The Real Me spies the
Wild strawberry patch
and sucks the sun-sweet fruit
Through laughing lips.
The teacher—the Public Me—
Listens attentively
In dull faculty meetings,
Dutifully takes notes;
Grades papers till dawn.

The Me Everybody Knows
Teaches her English class
About Shakespeare,
Or Chaucer or Donne,
While The Real Me
Dreams in the meadow, sits
Cross-legged in the grass,
Singing with Will and
Geoffrey and John.

It Could Be OCD

by Cherry Pedrick

Cherry Pedrick is a registered nurse from North Las Vegas, Nevada.

Robert was a well-behaved child in Mrs. Wiley's class. He asked a lot of questions and was overly concerned about doing projects "right." His papers were filled with eraser marks since he couldn't let any of the letters touch each other. When Mrs. Wiley prayed, he repeated each word softly. Robert has obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and with treatment, has improved greatly.

Do you have a student who rarely finishes projects, asks too many questions, is always late, doesn't pay attention, or insists on doing everything perfectly? It's probably just individual differences, lack of self-control, or misbehavior, but it could be OCD.

OCD often begins in childhood or adolescence, but many children go undiagnosed for years. Once considered hopeless, it is now being treated successfully with therapy and medication.

What is OCD?

Obsessive-compulsive disorder is characterized by obsessions and/or compulsions that are time consuming, distressing, or interfering with normal routine, relationships with others, or daily functioning. Obsessions are persistent impulses, ideas, images, or thoughts that intrude into a person's thinking and cause anxiety. Compulsions are mental acts or repetitive behaviors performed to relieve or prevent anxiety. They may also have the intent of preventing or avoiding some dreaded event.

OCD is believed to be associated with a chemical imbalance in the brain involving the neurotransmitter serotonin. Medications developed in recent years are

prescribed to help correct this imbalance. Medication and cognitive-behavior therapy are the most commonly used treatments.

Recognizing Signs of OCD

The most common obsessions found in children and adolescents with OCD are fears of contamination, harm, illness or death, number obsessions, and scrupulosity. Children who fear contamination are often reluctant to touch or handle such substances as dirt, ink, paint, glue, paste, body secretions, and chemicals. Often, they wash their hands frequently or for long periods. Be alert for children who spend excessive time in the bathroom or who have dry, chapped, red hands.

Some young people with OCD fear bringing harm upon themselves or others. They may be overly concerned about their own safety or the safety of significant others, or have a fear of inflicting harm upon others. *Repeating rituals* are often designed to prevent something bad from happening to a loved one. These rituals include such actions as rewriting letters and words, getting up and down from a chair in a particular manner, and walking through a door in a certain way. Some feel compelled to repeat the actions a certain number of times, while others repeat them until it "just feels right."

Fear of harm also frequently precipitates *checking rituals*. The child may feel compelled to check doors, windows, appliances, water faucets, light switches, and other objects. Unsure, they must check several times. They may check and recheck answers on assignments or constantly check that all their books, papers, and pencils are in order.

Number obsessions are most common in boys with OCD. Certain numbers are

"safe" or "good" numbers, while others are "bad" numbers. Obsessions with certain numbers often lead to counting to a particular number almost continuously or repeating actions a specific number of times.

Young people with strong religious ties may develop an obsessive fear that they will do something evil or tell themselves that they commit many sins. This is called *scrupulosity*. Some feel compelled to pray continually, find ways to atone for these imagined sins, or try to replace or counter sinful thoughts with good ones.

Many children who do not have OCD display one or more of these behaviors at some point in their development. All children go through developmental stages characterized by rituals such as not stepping on sidewalk cracks, performing bedtime rituals, counting, having lucky and unlucky numbers, ordering or arranging things, and collecting things. While these behaviors begin in toddlers and are most intense in four to eight-year-old children, OCD rituals persist into adolescence.

Normal childhood rituals advance development, help children deal with anxiety, and enhance socialization. OCD rituals cause pain, promote social isolation, and often incapacitate. OCD is suspected when obsessions and/or compulsions cause marked distress or interfere with daily functioning.

How You Can Help

If you suspect OCD symptoms in a child or teenager, talk with the parents about your concerns. Suggest they try to discuss the obsessive behavior or rituals with the child in a nonjudgmental manner and encourage them to have the child seen by their pediatrician.

If the child is diagnosed with OCD,

ask the parents if you should adjust your teaching techniques to assist in the cognitive-behavior therapy. Be ready to offer your support and counsel as they help their child struggle with OCD. Recovery will involve a team approach with parents, counselors, doctors, and teachers playing important roles in the child's fight against the disorder.

Accommodate behaviors over which the student has no control because OCD symptoms can be exacerbated by stress and punishment. However, don't allow the child to "use" the illness to get special privileges. Like all children, they still need clear limits.

Make an extra effort to involve the child in activities, and never allow teasing. It may be helpful to discuss OCD and the child's symptoms with the class, but never do so without the child's and the parents' permission. This is a good opportunity to discuss how God made each of us special and loves us all unconditionally.

Notify the parents of both positive and negative changes in behavior that may be a result of cognitive-behavioral interventions or medication side effects. Ask the parents if there are particular changes you should be looking for. Watch for signs that the child needs extra help. When necessary, make a referral for assessment of

the child's need for special education.

Try to assign a teacher who is especially sensitive to special needs. God has given some of us a special compassion for children with disabilities. It may help to designate a school employee to be the child's "safe" person to turn to when OCD symptoms are especially bothersome.

A good resource for school personnel is the booklet *School Personnel: A Critical Link*. It covers the identification, treatment, and management of OCD in children and adolescents and can be ordered from the obsessive-compulsive foundation: OC Foundation, Inc., P.O. Box 70, Milford, CT 06460. ■

Reader Response

Dear Editor,

Thank you for your issue dealing with death/grieving (December 1998). You dealt honestly and sensitively with the teacher's role in the life of the grieving student. However, there are also grieving teachers in our midst. I am one of them. I write an open letter to colleagues of grieving teachers everywhere.

My husband (also a teacher) has cancer. The impact that has had on our life is indescribable. Although the prognosis for his full recovery is cautiously optimistic, we nevertheless live each day in the shadow of death.

During his chemotherapy and radiation treatments, life at school for me was, at best, a place away from the cancer clinic, where people lived normal lives, to, at worst, a place where it cost all the emotional effort I had to continue the pretense of being interested in teaching the everyday academics of the square root of 64.

Do we—grieving, well spouses—care about the new computer programs or the VCR schedules or the kids on the playground who "wouldn't share the climbers"? Yes. We love our jobs and care for our colleagues and students deeply. Yet, it may seem to you, dear colleagues, that we don't.

Do not mistake our absence from the staff room and its chatter for lack of interest. It isn't. It's just that we have a finite amount of emotional energy. Since the bulk of that energy is taken up dealing with cancer and the changes that brings in our lives, there is not much left over for the things that used to take up so much energy. We really don't mind your laughter and chatter. We just find it harder to join in.

Sure, ask us how our spouse is doing, but don't do it as we pass in the hallway. Ask us one-on-one, and we'll tell you how much effort it takes to force our professional selves to carry on teaching while our hearts seem to break within us. If we cry, don't be embarrassed. Just listen to our grief, for we grieve the loss of life as it once was and never can be again. To those of you who listen, send a plant to grace our desk, and provide a listening ear, thank you.

Does God give strength for today and hope for tomorrow? Absolutely! But the grief remains.

On behalf of all grieving teachers,
Christine de Boer
London Parental Christian School
London, Ontario

Mentoring Students in Faith Development

by William J. Rowley

William J. Rowley is a professor of education at Seattle Pacific University in Seattle, Washington.

It is a basic goal of educators in Christian schools to assist their students in faith development. It isn't possible to demand spiritual development, but we can intentionally seek ways to facilitate and encourage such growth. Our efforts can be conceptualized as a mission of encouragement, and the Bible provides us with insight for helping others to grow in their faith.

Before we can mentor our students, we must be engaged in a spiritual growth process of our own. There is a principle in counseling that is relevant to the task of mentoring students in faith development. It is difficult, if not impossible, to help someone grow beyond the level of our own growth. Expanding this concept further, it is unreasonable to ask our students to grow when our own spiritual lives are stagnate. The reason is simple. Mentors share their knowledge and experience.

It is useful to conceptualize our own journey of faith. An ancient philosopher once suggested three characteristics of effective speakers. They must have logos, ethos, and pathos. In other words, they must have something to say, do what they say, and feel deeply what they believe. Steele (1990) suggested that faith development should include orthodoxy, orthopraxy, and orthopathy. These terms suggest that we must believe correctly, behave properly, and desire passionately what God desires.

In our own spiritual growth, it is important for us to address these important areas if we are to become effective faith mentors to our students. First, we must continue to know God better. We must come to know him as he is. If we are

going to help our students come to know Christ, described by John as the Word, we must have logos, a substantive knowledge of him. The writer to the Hebrews exhorts us to leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, and Paul prayed for Christians in Colosse to continue growing in Christ and to bear fruit.

Second, our behavior must be consistent with our faith statements if we are going to influence young people in their faith journeys. This is what orthopraxy and ethos are all about. Jesus made this clear when he said, "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me" (John 14:21 NIV).

Borrowing from the research of social learning theory, we know that one of the major ways students learn is by watching models of the desired behavior. Demonstrating our faith by living our faith is likely to be far more effective than all the formal lessons we present. And, in a very quick moment, we can undermine what we teach about Christ if we behave incongruently to what we say we believe.

Finally, we must deepen our love for God. We will become effective mentors by sharing our desire to be all God wants us to be. This will help us share our passion as well as our knowledge of Christ with our students. Who can ever forget Paul's spirited testimony when he said, "for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21 NIV).

To be faith mentors, we must believe properly, behave correctly, and love deeply. Attending to these areas in our own lives will ready us for the task of mentoring students in their faith development.

It is helpful to understand the mentoring process through an illustration. Luke introduces us to a man named Joseph in Acts 4:36-37. We know him better as

Barnabas, an Aramaic nickname given to him by the apostles. It means *son of refreshment*. In an insightful parenthesis, Luke tells us what Barnabas means in Greek: *the son of encouragement*. It is the same work that John uses in his gospel to describe Jesus as our advocate, and the same word that Jesus used when he prayed to the Father to send us a counselor who would be with us, the Spirit of Truth. In this context, the Greek word used by Luke suggests a person who comes alongside to help, encourage, or enable another to stand. Luke notes that Barnabas gave the proceeds from the sale of a piece of land he owned to the apostles in order to help the poor.

As we look at the life of Barnabas, we have examples of his role as an encourager. He was the first to recognize the legitimacy of Paul's conversion. Barnabas personally introduced Paul (Saul) to the apostles in Jerusalem when everyone was understandably afraid of Paul. He launched Paul's ministry at the church in Antioch. He accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey and took a back seat as Paul's leadership blossomed. When Paul refused to allow John Mark to accompany Barnabas and him for the purpose of revisiting the churches they had previously established, Barnabas decided it was more important to spend time with this young man than to travel with Paul. Barnabas recognized John Mark's potential and helped him grow and mature in his faith.

Luke's description of Barnabas' role in the lives of others suggests a clear biblical model of faith development for those who are mentoring others. It is a model that can aid educators in Christian schools to conceptualize their mission of encouraging children and youth to grow in their faith in Jesus Christ.

Four characteristics are included in this biblical model. First, there must be an intentionality of purpose. Notice in scripture that Barnabas took Paul and brought him to the apostles. He went to Tarsus to look for Paul when it occurred to him that Paul would be the perfect one to lead the ministry in Antioch. He took John Mark and sailed for Cyprus when he realized that this discouraged young man needed someone who believed in him and saw his potential for growth in Christ. Barnabas was proactive in the faith development of those around him.

The mere fact that children and youth are in Christian schools does not guarantee their faith development. A number of years ago, I talked with a senior who attended a Christian high school and had been sent to me by the court for counseling. He had recently destroyed some property in his neighborhood and had been jailed for a night by the police. I learned that he had attended Christian schools continuously since the first grade. I asked him why he had behaved improperly when he likely had been taught repeatedly at school and at home to love God and his neighbors. With candor he answered, "I just never connected what I had been taught with my behavior."

As Christian educators, we must purposely seek to encourage students to develop their faith in Christ. It is a decision we make to take an active role in this process. Barnabas was intentional in helping young John Mark grow in his faith development.

A mentoring relationship is the second characteristic of this model. More than simply teaching the truths of the gospel, Barnabas' characteristic way of relating to others proved to be an effective method of assisting others in their faith development. This kind of relationship between Christian teachers and students is still relevant.

Students often perform because they value the relationship they have with their teacher.

When it came to Barnabas, he didn't just ask Paul to begin his ministry in Antioch. He didn't wave goodbye and wish him luck when Paul embarked on his first missionary trip. He didn't simply tell John Mark to keep a stiff upper lip. He involved himself in their faith journeys by developing a mentoring relationship. And then, like all effective mentors, he let them go. Once they were able to stand, he stepped aside.

The third characteristic of this biblical model of faith development is its developmental aspect. Spiritual development, like growth in all other developmental domains, takes place over time. Barnabas spent a year with Paul at the church in Antioch. They spent a year together on their journey to establish churches in the Gentile world. And, this caring mentor spent a year with John Mark as they traveled together, giving this young man an opportunity to mature in his faith.

The concept of development is demonstrated again and again in the Bible. For example, Moses spent years in the desert being prepared by God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Jesus spent three years with his disciples readying them to carry on his work following his death and resurrection. Paul spent time with a new congregation of believers before going on to a new area. His letters reminded them of what he had taught them when he was in their midst. Even Jesus grew physically, intellectually, socially, and spiritually prior to his ministry.

Finally, this model suggests the necessity of a personal response to Christ by the one being mentored. John Mark's response to the mentoring of Barnabas is significant. Remember that Paul believed that John

Mark had betrayed him when he prematurely left the first missionary journey. There was no way that Paul was going to allow him to participate in the follow-up visit of churches.

Some time during his year with Barnabas, John Mark responded to his mentor's efforts and grew strong in his faith. Listen to Paul in 2 Timothy 4:9-11: "Do your best to come to me quickly, for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get (John) Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry" (NIV).

As much as we might like to control the outcome, we cannot respond for our students. We must allow Christ to empower our mentoring and trust that God will draw them to himself. And when this happens, we must step aside and celebrate their growth. May we, like Barnabas, mentor children and young people like John Mark. May they come to know Jesus Christ as we know him, and may they become, like John Mark, effective ministers of the gospel in their own right. ■

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Query Editor
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I find that students today do not appreciate the beauty of language. I try to teach them poetry, but they don't seem to respond. As an English teacher, do you also find this to be true and do you have any suggestions?

Actually I think poetry is a new pastime. It may not look like the poetic verse of the previous generations, but my students' new-found interest in words is encouraging. The refrigerator door in the home or the bulletin board in the workroom tell me that the beauty of language is a creative break for many who love to write and play with words. I thank Dave Kapell who invented the Poetry in Motion Kit and who now has an improved electromagnetic poetry kit (www.emago.com). Kids can grab words at an adjustable speed and spin them into a tapestry; computer time becomes poetry time.

I take that a step further with my students. Words evoke feelings and meaning, but stringing words together into phrases creates images as well. I cannot force the love of language, but I can offer the opportunities for students to experience the joy of combining the head, the heart, and the hand. As I read with my passion for the language, they discover what they like in other writers' literary works, whether style, choice of words, or sounds. They jot down selected phrases and then twist and shift words into their own hopes and ideas. With delight and intrigue, the students read their creations to each other.

When students fall in love with the sight and sound of word combinations, they will seek structure to house their new expression of language and concrete images. I am not discouraged, but challenged. Language is such a beautiful gift; we must not tire of helping students play with words, create meaning, and develop a passion for poetry.

I am disappointed that teaching is often equated with a learned method. The assumption is that the practice of such techniques would produce a good teacher. Don't you think of teaching as more of an art than a skill? Can it even be learned?

Yes, good teaching is an art, finely tuned or crafted. Over time it can even become a masterpiece. All known methods are only guidelines for the magic that occurs in the classroom between teacher and students. I doubt, however, that without methods, the teacher would continue to have success. The gloss of passion and knowledge would dull if not presented with a variety of techniques for various types of learners and the easily bored student. The preparation for an artful presentation or activity is a necessary skill; art and skill coexist to ensure learning. I personally value those ingredients equally.

On a recent trip to London, I spent some time in the National Art Gallery. I stopped to listen to a teacher or tour guide who held twenty high school students entranced by well-phrased and timed questions. The queries subtly led the students into the full meaning of the painting; they discovered facts by answering questions, one of the oldest and most effective teaching methods still used today. I, too, became engrossed in both his teaching and my own learning. I stood there, awed by the art of pedagogy.

If I love kids and I love teaching, I can learn the methods to become better at my profession. But if I have not love, I am only making noise anyway. Maybe we as educators should go back to basics, reminding ourselves that the best presentations are nothing without this key ingredient. Love can motivate us to refine and redefine the art and skill of teaching.

Particular thanks to columnist Marlene Dorhout, who has edited the Query column for 11 years. This is her closing column.



Marlene Dorhout

We are nearing the end of the school year. We are required to give exams to all of the students covering the last semester. This exam will determine a major portion of the student's grade. Many of my colleagues give objective tests in order to correct them quickly and easily. I feel this is an unfair practice to determine such a large portion of the grade. What can I do or say?

You probably will feel uncomfortable doing or saying anything, or you would have already. I suspect what you want is support for your theory. I personally favor a variety of questions for exams, which decreases the possibilities for the inherent weaknesses of certain types of questions. Expressing ideas and facts in well-developed paragraphs should be a goal for any subject area; therefore, essays should be included as well.

Never to offer objective tests or teach students how to take them is also a disservice because many such tests are required of students for college entrance. Even though such tests are questionable for many reasons, they still remain an indicator used by many colleges today. They are the most cost- and time-effective way to determine applicants.

Lawmakers have been urgently attempting to improve educational quality, and an objective measure of performance is a way to gauge how effectively tax dollars are being spent. From their perspective, lawmakers need concrete determining factors.

Many alternatives have been promoted, however. The National Assessment of Education Progress recently released tests that ask for written analyses of scientific experiments, as well as multiple choice questions. Some school systems have reverted to student portfolios, accumulations of work samples.

Most people agree that better measures of performance are needed. I would like to see Christians in the forefront of this endeavor.

Perhaps the real problem is the amount of time given to correct and record grades. Teachers are tired near the end of the school year and are dealing with many pressures. Morally, the obligation to offer the best culmination to an academic year should not be altered by a teacher's time, but human limitation is a reality. Possibly the beginning of the next school year would be a more productive time to discuss this issue.

Classified Advertisement

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The True Value of Family

Stefan Ulstein teaches media and English courses at Bellevue Christian Junior High School in Bellevue, Washington.

Most teachers are familiar with Mary Angelou through *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, her poignant memoir of growing up in Stamps, Arkansas, during the Depression. In that award-winning modern classic she details a litany of horrors,

from sexual abuse, self-imposed muteness, and self-loathing to racism and the Klan. But what shines through is Dr. Angelou's humanity and her deep understanding of the central role of family in the process of personal redemption. While many more superficial writers crow on about family values as a way to lash out at their perceived enemies, Maya

Angelou understands something profound about the family as a living, evolving, growing part of life. She is as aware as anyone of the forces at work to destroy families, but her focus is on the family itself.

Known primarily as a novelist and poet, Maya Angelou's curriculum vitae would make most superstars look like slouches. She has taught in Europe, Africa, and North America; she has directed and written plays; and she even trained and performed as a dancer when she was young. In a PBS special with Bill Moyers she returned to Stamps and crossed the old railroad tracks that marked the separation of the races in her childhood. In those days, crossing the tracks meant taunting, rock-throwing, or worse. Returning to her old school, she found an integrated class-

room and a black teacher who proudly introduced her to the children as "a famous person from Stamps." It was a healing moment in the miserable legacy that is the American obsession with race.

Dr. Angelou now turns her considerable talents to a new venue. She is the director of a stunning film about a fatherless family locked in a downward-spiraling life in a Chicago housing project. *Down in the Delta*, written by Myron Goble, is a modern-day family saga of great proportions. Rosa Lynn (Mary Alice) is a proud widow who fled Jim Crow Mississippi for a better life with her husband. She now has a rudderless daughter, Loretta (Alfre Woodard), whose alcohol habit grows worse by the day, a gradeschool grandson who feels that soon he'll need a gun like the other kids, and an autistic granddaughter who speaks only in screams.

Despondent, she calls her estranged brother, Earl (Al Freeman, Jr.), who runs the Just Chicken restaurant in their tiny hometown.





Stefan Ulstein

Earl cares for his wife, Annie (Esther Rolle), who suffers from Alzheimer's. Earl is a decent, old-fashioned man who married his childhood sweetheart. He sees in the confused elderly woman, who must be locked in the house, the love of his life. It's a vivid and moving portrayal of marriage vows lived faithfully and joyfully. This performance alone makes *Down in the Delta* worth seeing.

As Rosa Lynn begs Earl to take her daughter and grandchildren for the summer, we find out that a dispute over a family heirloom lies at the root of their estrangement. Family is family, however, and Earl reluctantly agrees.

Earl is somewhat gruff, yet he becomes the father figure that Loretta has never known. Loretta has never held a job and despairs of finding one. She lacks marketable skills and the confidence to get them. Earl starts her out making sausages and slowly allows her to assume more responsibility in the restaurant. Alfre Woodard turns in a flawless central performance as a woman who has been rejected and humiliated, yet longs for respect and dignity. But even as she longs for it, she puts up a wall against further rejection. Woodard's every gesture and nuance reveal the depths of her despair and her longing for a better life.

Wesley Snipes has a small role as Earl's successful lawyer son. He lives in the big city and drives a Volvo, but his family is in trouble and he doesn't like coming home to see his mother because she doesn't recognize him anyway.

As the family begins to reunite, Earl assumes his rightful place as the patriarch, not in an authoritarian way, but as a servant and a keeper of traditions. He has bought the "big house" from the white side of his family and keeps up the family cemetery where 150 years of Sinclairs lie near the family church. The family members begin to understand the importance of knowing where they come from, and now they want to hear Earl's stories. Finally, we are told the story of the disputed heirloom, which was once the symbol of family unity and has now become a symbol of brokenness.

Down in the Delta is a fine film on any level. It's a great drama, it's romantic, it's humorous, and it's sad. Ultimately it is a powerful apologetic for an intact family. *Down in the Delta* is

also eminently teachable. Like a fine novel, it offers numerous pegs upon which to hang great ideas. It transcends its time and place, and the ethnicity of the family, to become applicable to any family at any time. In short, it's an ideal film for Christian school teachers to use from upper grades to high school. ■



Ron Sjoerdsma

“So, Sammy, you going to let me in on your little secret.” Jim felt uncomfortable pressing and knew he was being too flip-pant.

“I don’t know exactly where to begin. But I guess it goes back to a couple of years ago when you and Mrs. Wells let us start messing around with the web.”

“I object! You were learning something.”

“Yeah, but I really loved it more than anything else I did in school—it was kind of like playing. So when I got the chance this year to help with our school web site in Miss Maxwell’s computer class and learned how to write HTML and then got to teach DreamWeaver to guys at the CC course . . . I don’t know, maybe I just felt too untouchable.”

“You sure seemed to know what you were doing. Maybe you could help me fix this problem I’m having with too many list-servs clogging up my e-mail.” Jim was having a tough time adopting the serious tone that Sammy brought into the room. It felt like the times his wife and nineteen-year-old daughter, Megan, got into “discussions” and he’d try to lighten things up; he was better off leaving the room.

“That would be an easy one. I’ll do it for free if you get me out of this nightmare.” Sammy faked a smile.

“So let’s talk about the nightmare.”

“I was trying. I guess the problems really started when Ms. Maxwell let me do a lot of the web designing. At first, she basically told me what she wanted or what the administration wanted and I’d just do it. That got a little boring, but it was better than study hall. Then I had this big run in with Jonesy, I mean Mr. Jones. Did you have him for algebra too?”

“I’m a little older than that, but Megan had him; I don’t think she had too much trouble with him.”

“That’s ’cause he never picks on girls. He made me look stupid one day. And so on my web site—did I tell you that Ms. Maxwell gave us our own Internet space?—I just started asking which of our teachers might be aliens. Remember that movie from a few months ago? I said their leader had to be Mr. Jones because he didn’t seem to be human. Like his eyes kind of glow when he looks at you.” Jim was losing his kidding mood fast. “And I just made some cool little applets that made his eyes dance—you can do that stuff in DreamWeaver real easy. Then I guess some parent called because he was looking at Christian High’s site and then got over to mine and now I’m in big trouble.

Ms. Maxwell told me that she was also in big trouble—but she didn’t know anything about it—that they were talking about suspending me for a while.”

After letting out a long breath, Jim could only say, “Maybe wrecking your dad’s car would have been better.”

“I need help, not jokes, Mr. S. I thought you’d been in this school long enough and people trust you. I don’t know, maybe you could talk to them. I was just playing around, and now I’ve got this nightmare. I might miss some baseball games. And what if they really kick me out? I just can’t go to Hillendale Public.”

“I don’t think they’ll kick you out. But sometimes the consequences can be pretty stiff even when we are just playing around. I remember—” Jim stopped. His own story was not going to be helpful in this situation. “Have you apologized to anyone?”

“I told Ms. Maxwell that I was sorry I got her into trouble.”

“Have you said anything to Mr. Jones?”

“No. I’m not even sure he knows about it yet, and my site has been disconnected so I don’t think he’ll even see it.”

“That’s something you’ll have to do at some point. It’s probably the toughest consequence of anything else that might happen.”

“I think I can do that. I mean now that it’s done—and I know it’s too late to say this—but I wish I had just played around with it but not posted it. It was supposed to be a joke, but I can see how it isn’t.”

In the back of his mind, Jim was turning over issues of freedom of speech and who “owned” Sammy’s site. What was justice in this case? And could he go with Sammy to the administration? Could he speak for Sammy? But he was also thinking about sin, repentance, and redemption.

In a Christian school, nightmares should have a morning. What would happen when Sammy woke up from this one? Jim wasn’t at all sure, but he did know he would be there to find out. It was a commitment he’d made when he took this job so many decades ago. ■

Kite Night

by Jennifer Gamache, Kristie Spyksma, and Karen Vlieg

Jennifer Gamache, Kristie Spyksma, and Karen Vlieg are grade two teachers at Langley Christian Elementary School in Langley, British Columbia.

Kite Night has become a tradition at Langley Christian School, one that students, parents, and teachers eagerly anticipate. It is an exciting spring evening in which grade two students and their parents catch the wind—they build and fly kites together. Originally organized and begun seven years ago, Kite Night has been handed down to successive grade two teachers.

Kite Night serves as a culminating activity for the wind unit, and the kites and balloons unit, both taught at the grade two level. Beyond applying science concepts the children have learned, the activity builds community and provides an opportunity for parents to be involved in their children's curriculum. Each student is asked to bring along a dad, uncle, grandpa, or other special adult to help build the kite. Specifically, fathers are invited to be part of Kite Night with their children because they usually are not able to be at school during the day.

The kite is a simple sled design. The plan, along with all the materials, are supplied for a fee. Planning for this event begins several months in advance. A date after daylight savings time begins is chosen so that the kite flying can continue until 8:30 p.m. Materials for making the kite—fabric, kite string, and sticks—are ordered from a local kite store one month in advance. The same store originally supplied the sled kite pattern that has been copied and reused each year. Doweling is purchased at a building supply store, and a parent cuts it. A month before Kite Night, the first notice is sent home so that parents can reserve that evening. A later note requests students to supply refreshments (juice or cookies) and pay the \$5.00 cost for the materials.

Finally, the much-anticipated day arrives. During the day, the

students plan the design they will draw and color on their kites that evening. The teacher reminds them that when kites fly high in the sky, big, bold, colorful designs look best. After school the teachers spend a couple of hours gathering materials and setting up the gym. Crayons, tape, hole punches, and tables are borrowed from every class.

By 6:45 p.m. the gym is filled with three classes of eager students and their parents. A teacher describes how to make the sled kite, pointing out the important parts of the pattern and where to find supplies. Finally, about a quarter of the group is sent into the hallway to measure and wind kite line onto doweling. The rest trace patterns, cut, color, punch holes, and tape. They color with crayon because it adheres best and has the boldest color. Everyone works with single-minded determination.

Since the children and their fathers or special helpers can pretty much do the work on their own, the teachers are free to watch, take pictures, and clean up scraps of kite fabric.

Within forty minutes, the first kites are up and flying . . . well, some of them are flying. Others need repairs, strengthening, or redoing *exactly* according to the pattern and instructions. (Yes, some people did not understand the importance of a centered bridle.) By the end of the evening every kite has flown. Some have crashed, and some have become tangled in trees, but everyone has had a wonderful time.

This year every child in grade two attended. Some have said, "It was the best night of my life!" Their fathers or special helpers loved being part of the event, and some of them have participated in three or four Kite Nights. The next day several children brought their kites back to school. Most have reported that they continue to fly their kites at home. ■

Hooking the Resistant Young Reader

by Leah Rozendaal

Leah Rozendaal is an education student at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa. Her specialty is teaching reading.

When I was five, my priorities were simple—I had only one: playing. My parents were amazed when they discovered that I could not and would not read. They wondered if I had been switched at birth. I was nothing like my older brother and sister when it came to academics. Chris knew the whole alphabet before he was four and voluntarily stayed in from recess in second grade to read encyclopedias. Julie was in the top reading group in her class and even went to a special class for advanced readers.

My parents thought reading to me every night would make me interested in reading, but I just liked putting off going to bed. Every night, I would pick out a book and climb into my dad's big red chair to have it read to me. I usually picked the same story because I could never seem to catch what was going on in a book the first time. I just couldn't concentrate long enough to hear more than a couple phrases here and there. After hearing the same story about fifteen times, I finally put the plot together. It was about a boy named Pippin who went hunting for bears in his cabbage patch in the middle of the night. In the end, he finally trapped a bear in his pillowcase only to find it was his teddy bear. I looked and looked at those little black letters, but they would not make the same story for me. I concluded that I just did not have the capability to read.

I decided to stop trying to read and just fool people into believing I could. Every Sunday our family went to Grandma's house for dinner. In her toy box there was one of the greatest works of literature of all time: *The Teeny-Tiny Woman*. I begged anyone who could read to tell me the story. In fact, I heard the story so often, I knew all the words by heart. One day I told my cousins I could read. To demonstrate, I pulled out *The Teeny-Tiny Woman* and proceeded to recite the entire story, word for word. All was going well until my sister realized I wasn't turning the pages at the right time. Everyone laughed at me, and I was so angry I ate the last page of *The Teeny-Tiny Woman* so no one else could know how it ended.

In first grade we were placed in reading groups. I had made a little progress from the days of literally devouring books, but I was still in the lowest group. I didn't really care though. I actual-

ly thought it would be fun because we got to read *Frog and Toad Together*. I liked this book because when Dad read it at home, I got to yell when the Frog gave cookies to the birds, "HEY, BIRDS! HERE ARE COOKIES!" When I did this in class, however, I got in trouble for disturbing other reading groups. I didn't understand why I couldn't yell when the book said to use a very loud voice. I decided I didn't like books or school.

The situation between books and me had not improved by the time I reached second grade. Our class went to the library every Friday, and we were allowed to check out only five books. This proved to be no problem for me; I had to struggle to find one book I wanted to take home. Another rule in the library was that people under third grade could get only one book from the "big kids" section of the library. This was a greater problem for me because I soon found I liked joke books, and all the good ones were in the "big kids" section.

One week, after a careful search, I picked out a Clifford book because it had many pictures and not very many words. Besides, who didn't love that big red dog? But when I went up to the checkout counter, the librarian sent me back to find another book. "You can't just get a picture book," she said. "Look in the 'big kids' section." She didn't have to tell me twice. I went straight for Charlie Brown and soon headed back up to the counter. This time the librarian said, "You can't get just a picture book and a joke book," and she led me over to a shelf housing "big kid" fiction. She pulled *B is for Betsy* off the shelf and handed it to me. Now, I already had one big kid book, and she had just given me another! I felt so grown up that I didn't tell her I was breaking the rules.

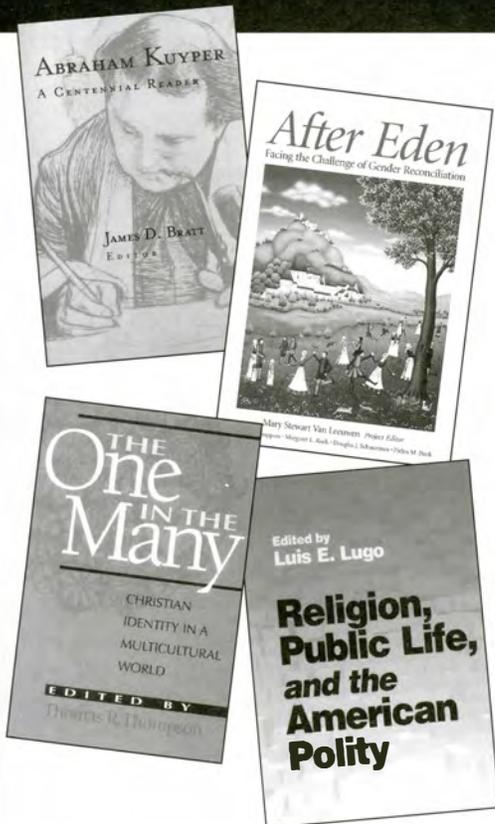
I started to read the illegal book out of as much contumacy as a six-year-old has, but I soon found I really enjoyed the story. In the first chapter, Betsy got to take her stuffed panda with her on the first day of school. What a great beginning! I was hooked. The next Friday in the library, I discovered that *B is for Betsy* was the first book in a series. I soon read all the books by the author. I began to wonder if all books were as interesting as the Betsy series. I was so enthusiastic that I read anything I could find. When I advanced to the top reading group in second grade, my parents were shocked and proud at the same time. They thought all the bedtime stories had finally paid off.

Looking back now, I realize the value of the various people

God placed in my life in those early years. My parents were training their child in the Lord. The librarian was encouraging children to read. My siblings and cousins were patiently reading the same story to me over and over. I don't think anyone was trying to entice me into reading. They were simply doing what they thought was best. They knew the new world I would enter from reading and enjoying the words.

I believe my love of literature grew from the loving people in my life who would not let a little girl be content with Clifford and Charlie Brown. ■

The Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship



Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, ed., *After Eden: Facing the Challenge of Gender Reconciliation*, Eerdmans Publishing, 1993.

A comprehensive book with a biblically-faithful vision of shalom for gender relations. \$20.00

James D. Bratt, ed., *Abraham Kuiper: A Centennial Reader*, Eerdmans Publishing, 1998.

This anthology published in the centennial year of Kuiper's famous Stone lectures, brings together Kuiper's essential writings, some never before available in English. \$29.00

Thomas R. Thompson, ed., *The One in the Many: Christian Identity in a Multicultural World*, University Press of America, 1998.

This collection gives witness to Calvin College's attempt to struggle with the meaning of cultural diversity. \$16.00

Luis E. Lugo, eds., *Religion, Public Life and the American Polity*, University of Tennessee Press, 1994.

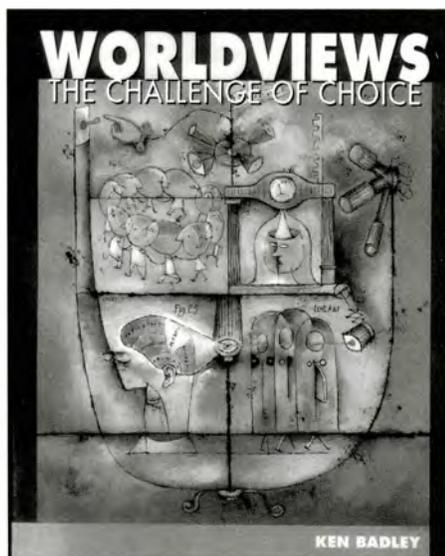
A collection of essays exploring the meaning of the continuing vitality of religion in American public life, using historical and contemporary examples and case studies. \$39.00.

All of these books are available through Calvin College Bookstore, 3201 Burton St., S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49546, 800-748-0122. Please include 6% tax if you are a Michigan resident. Shipping and handling is \$4.00 per order. Make checks payable to Calvin College Bookstore or call with your Mastercard, VISA, or Discover card.

CALVIN
College

Ken Badley, *Worldviews: The Challenge of Choice*. 1996. Toronto: Irwin Publishing House. 435 pages.

Reviewed by Jack Fennema, professor of education at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa.



Just as specialty shops in a mall have their unique purpose and place, *Worldviews* could be considered a specialty text for the secondary school. A finely crafted work, it creates its own niche as it interfaces with adolescent issues, ethics, and world religions. Moreover, it can be used within either a humanities, social perspectives, or bib-

lical studies course. It can also be used within church discussion groups, from junior high through adult. But that's not all. The text has been sensitized for both the Christian and the public school—no small feat. In essence it is a text written from a Christian perspective but so written that it should pass legal muster within public schools as well. It describes rather than preaches, and it includes a number of perspectives beyond that of Judeo-Christianity. It is, in fact, presently being used within public schools in Canada.

Worldviews reflects Badley's persona rather well. It is unashamedly Christian, reflecting the author's evangelical underpinnings. It is truly reformational, reflecting the Kuyperian tradition of the Institute of Christian Studies where he served as professor of education. It is not only readable but colorful—in its art work, pictures, cartoons, and non-didactic style. Badley, a high school teacher in western Canada, understands adolescents well.

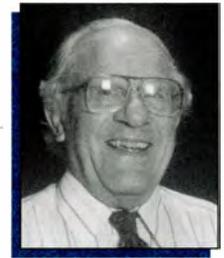
The primary purpose of this text is to assist secondary students in developing their worldviews based on their faith presuppositions and applying their worldviews to key issues within their lives. Badley deals with each issue in three ways. First, he describes the issue much as a reporter would write a news story.

Its history and current status are developed in a straightforward manner. Second, he provides a biblical, Judeo-Christian perspective—again, in a non-proselytizing way. The impact lies in the truth of the message, not in a moralizing mode of presentation. It is descriptive rather than prescriptive. The Judeo-Christian perspective within each chapter is legitimized because so many issues within North American culture cannot be fully appreciated apart from an understanding of their Judeo-Christian roots. Third, he provides a perspective of one other major world religion on each issue. This strategy has several uses. By the inclusion of an added religious viewpoint the text is more palatable for the public sector. It also sensitizes students to similarities and differences between their religious worldviews and those of others. And by acknowledging a mosaic of diversity not only in Canada and the United States but globally, the work fosters a better understanding of the major religions of the world—an achievement commendable by itself.

The first two chapters of *Worldviews* deal with morality, ethics, and the development of a personal worldview. Chapter three touches on several key questions, such as “What is the meaning and purpose of my life?” The remaining chapters deal with a myriad of social ethics issues: family and peer relationships; media and technology; sexuality, sex and gender roles; the world of work and leisure; the spiritual dimension of human life; understanding death in the context of life; science and medical technology—including sanctity of life, quality of life, and ethics; suicide and euthanasia; origins of the universe; living in our environment—domination or stewardship; protecting the future; war; threats to peace and security; global poverty and global cooperation; understanding social justice; tolerance and understanding; problems of discrimination; fostering a caring community.

The text is teachable. Each chapter begins with a list of learning outcomes. “What do you think” questions are interspersed within the chapters, and a number of higher-level, real-life problems are included as well. Some teachers in U.S. schools may hesitate adopting a text that is unashamedly Canadian, but the quality of the text easily overshadows particular illustrations or applications to the Canadian scene. The issues are as American as they are Canadian. This is a text that quickly gets to the heart of what education is truly about as viewed from a biblically Reformed tradition and, consequently, should serve students well.

Book Reviews



Steve J. VanDerWeele

Eight New Books

Judy Nichols. 1997. *Teaching in Tough Times: Encouragement for Today's Teacher*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books. 115 pages.

This teacher has been in the trenches—has taught in some of America's toughest schools. Despite self-doubt, frustrations, and even dangers, she has persisted and has seen the tangible results of her tenacious commitment. She writes to encourage today's teachers as they educate the next generation. Be prepared for an unusual format: anecdotes and poems based on appropriate biblical passages. Refreshing, courageous.

Richard J. Edlin. 1998. *The Cause of Christian Education: A Practical Guide to Educating Our Young from a Truly Christian Perspective, with an annotated bibliography by Harro Van Brummelen*. Second edition. Northport, Ala.: Vision Press. 269 pages.

The author reflects on the biblical vision for Christian education, at every point challenging the myth that education can ultimately be neutral and secular. He pleads for integrity, sketches out areas of responsibility, furnishes guidelines for evaluating students, and—in the final chapter—offers criteria for evaluating textbooks. Van Brummelen's bibliography is a valuable addition.

Harro Van Brummelen and Daniel C. Elliott, editors. 1997. *Nurturing Christians as Reflective Educators: Proceedings of the Second Biennial Symposium for Christian Professional Educational Faculty*. San Dimas, Calif.: Learning Light Educational Consulting and Publishing. 269 pages.

The conference presentations are organized under the following headings:

Nurturing to Teach Christianly; Foundational Issues; Nurturing for Diversity; Programs in Practice; Experiences in the Schools; Concluding Thoughts, by Daniel C. Elliott, "Is There an Emerging Agenda for Educator Preparation with a Christian Worldview?"

Educators of teachers reminded each other at this conference that they must model the role of servanthood as they prepare stu-

dents to become teachers. The book is replete with pedagogical wisdom.

Don Oppewal, editor. 1997. *Voices from the Past: Reformed Educators (William Jellema, Henry Zylstra, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Nicholas Beversluis, Cornelius Jaarsma, Louis Berkhof, Peter De Boer, Donald Oppewal)*. New York: University Press of America. 336 pages plus index.

To ignore the rich legacy of writings by past Reformed educators would be a regrettable form of amnesia—a refusal to acknowledge how Christian education got to be where it is today. Based on a Christian anthropology—a thoroughly Christian sense of the nature and destiny of mankind—these essays remain relevant. Several relate to curriculum, others to a definition of liberal arts; one provides a history of Christian day schools; still others address attitudes and mind sets. All the essays at some point delineate the distinction between a Christian and a neutral, or secular, approach to education.

David W. Gill, editor. 1997. *Should God Get Tenure? Essays on Religion and Higher Education*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 245 pages.

Robert C. Roberts, Mark A. Noll, Corbin Scott Carnell, Jill Baumgaertner, and Richard Mouw are among the sixteen authors included in this anthology—a plea for an acknowledgement by academics everywhere that theological perspectives and religion are crucial to a meaningful education. The marginalization of religious concerns in higher learning has been amply documented; if academia is to fulfill its obligations, it must counter the present trends and, yes, indeed, vote to give God tenure.

Bruce Kuklick and D. G. Hart, editors. 1997. *Religious Advocacy and American History*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 233 pages.

This book contains essays by leading educational and cultural historians—Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, D. G. Hart, George M. Marsden, and Harry Stout among them. These writers reflect on the perception of religion by the Academy. Is it true that personal religious convictions are regarded there as idiosyncrasies? Is it

accurate to argue, as some do, that although courses in religion are few, religion is given its due in humanities and social science courses? Again, can history really be taught without bias? Or are one's a priori views inevitably going to shape the content and the tilt of the course? These are well-informed, challenging essays.

James Tunstead Burtchaell. 1998. *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 868 pages.

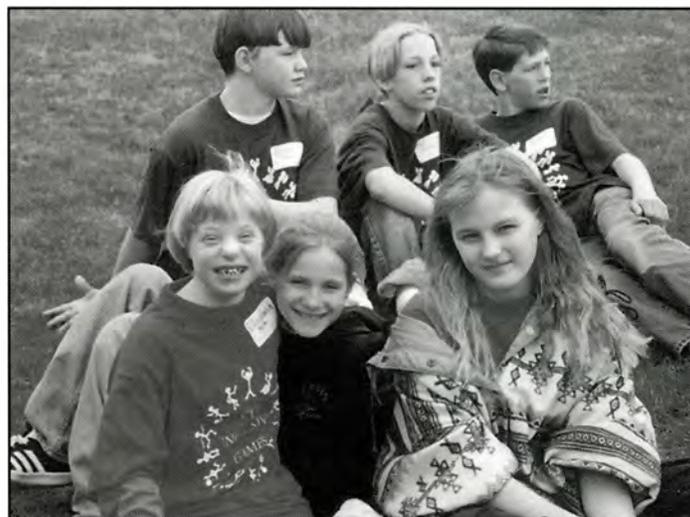
This is a very thoroughly researched account (in a book the size usually reserved, say, for major wars) of the direction taken by seventeen colleges and universities originally founded—as were most institutions of higher learning in this country—on religious principles. Interestingly, Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, is one of the seventeen (pp. 782-810); alongside his treatment of Dordt and its boisterous history he provides some observations about the Christian Reformed Church and its educational enterprises. His work is a continuation of similar work by George Marsden, Philip Gleason, and Douglas Sloan. (His earlier account of the Van Der Bilt University experience published in *First Things* is not included here.) Readers of this journal will recognize the situations that inherently produce tensions in any effort to integrate faith and learning at the college and university level: faculty appointments, admission policies for students from other—or no—denominations, dependence on government aid, the task of inculcating dogmas of the church without propagandizing, the twin dangers of anti-intellectualism and learning detached from faith, the specificity of doctrinal statements in the institution's publications. Is a Christian atmosphere sufficient? Is a college designed to foster religious growth, or is that a matter in which the student continues the tradition of his home and church? Is the religious vision of the institution to be explicit or implicit? How accommodating must the institution be to keep the funds flowing from the constituents?

Although these are generic problems, no two situations are alike, and the author (a researcher at Princeton) is at pains to avoid stereotyping. Also, research materials were not uniformly available. The author possesses an uncanny ability to deal with religious nuances. He finds his task a melancholy assignment, for one by one, as the title suggests, the light of Christian learning is gradually dying in these institutions. Why is Dordt College included? The Kuyperian ethos of accommodation, he supposes, may lead even Dordt College toward a diminution of its religious principles.

Thompson R. Thompson, editor. 1998. *The One in the Many: Christian Identity in a Multicultural World*.

Lanham, Md.: Calvin Center Series/University Press of America. 111 pages.

This book proposes “to aid our common quest to articulate and implement biblical multiculturalism.” It consists of the proceedings of a faculty symposium on the subject held at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, April 25-26, 1997. The contributors are teachers and administrators from our Reformed colleges. Two essays somewhat shape the discourses. The first is not included, but prominently referred to: the address given at Calvin by Justo Gonzalez at the beginning of the 1997-1998 school year, based on Revelations 10:1-11. The second is the editor's own essay, “Ungrasping Ourselves: A Kenotic Model of Multicultural Encounter.” The implications for education are well set forth in these essays. ■



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