A forum for Christian school educators

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"The Birth Of My Brother's Keeper"

Editorial

Bert Witvoet

Anyone's death diminishes me

For a while, now, we had been planning an issue on developing a social conscience, especially among high school students. This issue of CEJ makes good on that promise. Besides what you will read in this editorial, you will discover a social conscience focus in an article by Mark Eckel (pages 3 and 4), a collection of statements and suggested resources by five educators (pages 5 to 6), a reflection on the Golden Rules (pages 8 and 9) and a piece of fiction, based on an actual event, by Catherine Smith (pages 10 to 12).

You and I will have different understandings of what is meant by "social conscience." Mark Eckel thinks it's a desire to correct evils in the world. Jim Vanderwoerd talks about cultivating relationships and developing a heart for those who suffer injustice, poverty and oppression. Harry Kits wants to see a strong sense of justice developed as well as a commitment to caring for the creation. Harry Antonides wants us to start with developing a world-view and is, perhaps, a little suspicious of developing a social conscience if it means politicizing students. Lee Hardy says we must confront God in the needs of others and participate in God's care when we meet those needs. And Ren Siebenga, a principal who does perhaps more than most principals in developing a social conscience through his school's annual focus days on a social issue, gives up on trying to explain why he wants students to develop this thing called "social conscience."

Learned behavior

What all these people have in common is that they sense a need for students to feel some responsibility for the welfare of their neighbor. That kind of caring for others does not come to us naturally. Children are not born with a social conscience. The first step towards developing that occurs when they are taught to share their toys, a hard lesson for most toddlers. Those who never learn that lesson go on to become successful materialists.

Throughout the ages has resounded the one fateful question asked by Cain: "Am I my brother's keeper?" It didn't take long for human history to confront that most essential question. The answer sums up the law of Moses and the teachings of Christ: "Love God with all your might and your neighbor as yourself." Yes, we are our brother's and our sister's keepers.

Some people have different opinions about who our brothers and sisters are. They quote no lesser authority than the Apostle Paul when he says in Romans 12:13: "Share with God's people who are in need." The terminology of brother and sister is usually reserved for those who are of the faith, they argue. But Paul goes on in verse 20 to say that: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink." Cain used "brother" in the narrowest sense of the word when he asked God whether he was responsible for his biological brother, Abel. But the application of that question has always been universal. Perhaps the best term to use is that of "neighbor," which refers to someone relatively close by, an associate, or, at least, someone you know.

Starting at home

I find that term somewhat reassuring. A neighbor is one I come into contact with. Being responsible for caring for your neighbor does not mean you are responsible for the whole world. The whole world is not my neighbor, even though the media turns the whole world into a "global village." It's too much for us to assume such vast responsibilities. Not that we can't do our little share in relieving hunger and poverty in other parts of the world. But even here, we work with known organizations, like the Christian Reformed World Relief Agency or the Mennonite Relief Committee. I generally turn down telephone requests for donations to various causes because it lacks the neighborly touch. My wife and I have no difficulty spending our share of money on causes we know and trust. It's important, we believe, to attach the name of Christ to our caring for others. It's all about building God's Kingdom, not about being known as philanthropists.

Macro responsibilities

But let me not reduce the topic of developing a social conscience to giving. Nor do I want to reduce all my neighborly duties to personal relationships. We are citizens of villages, towns, cities, states, provinces, nations, and yes, even the world. With all citizens we share some responsibility for how these places are regulated. Injustice is not a matter only of personal grievances. In our complex differentiated societies we are deeply affected by systems and structures. These systems and structures must be fair and just. When they are not, we need to speak up. Surely, our students need to be aware of structural injustice. Are the

labor laws of the land fair? Is the educational system run fairly? Are the tax laws good for all people, not just the rich? Are the welfare or medical systems helpful or destructive?

First things first

Underlying the development of a social conscience among students must be the careful nurturing of a Christian world-view. The Reformed heritage has provided us with some useful tools here – principles that allow us to set boundaries and observe God's norms for life. There's no need, for example, to turn our children into little capitalists or socialists. There are enough Christian books to warn against these left and right options in humanism.

But underlying even a world-view has to be a heart in tune with God's love for the world. God so loved the world that he gave his only son to rescue that world from perdition. We must reflect that vast love of God for all his creatures. Every misfortune in the world should touch us deeply. We should become sincerely sad when a Taliban soldier is mowed down by bullets or when Osama bin Laden will meet his unfortunate end, as I hope he will very soon. John Donne, a British theologian and poet, once wrote the memorable words: *"No man is an Iland, intire of itselfe; every man is a peece of the Continent, a part of the maine; if a Clod bee washed away by the Sea, Europe is the lesse, as well as if a Promontorie were, as well as if a Mannor of thy friends or of thine owne were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankinde; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee."*

Now that I reflect on this a bit more, I conclude that the death of bin Laden and his fellow terrorists is not what will make me so sad. What makes me sad is what happened to them as image bearers of God. The moment they set foot on the path of hatred is the moment their clod was washed away by the sea.

Surely, this identification with all humanity as bearers of God's image must be at the heart of all teaching and learning so that our students can develop a social conscience as they learn about God's world and God's purposes for this world.

Love teaches responsibility

How excited my father and mother would be if I stood up for the freedom of some member of the community not myself! And well might they be, for to stand up for the freedom of others is one of the marks of those who are free, just as to fail to do so is one of the marks of those who are ready to be enslaved. I am in truth learning the meaning of responsibility, and it has been taught to me by love.

No doubt many of you will remember the story of the small girl who was carrying a still smaller boy on her back; and on being told by a passing stranger, "My what a burden you are carrying," she replied in innocence, "This isn't a burden, it's my brother."

In fact, I pause for a brief moment while I am writing this to reflect on the question, "Can responsibility be taught otherwise than by love?" And I reply to myself, "It cannot." Indeed many examples of irresponsibility and of indifference to the claims and needs of others are today seen by students of human behavior to have been due to deprivation of love in the very early years of childhood.

From "The Person in Community," by South African novelist Alan Paton, found in *The Christian Idea of Education.*

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THAT'S NOT FAIR!

Helping Students Develop a Social Conscience

by Mark Eckel

Mark Eckel (meckel@moody.edu) is assistant professor of education at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois.

"Did you read that article in *Mademoiselle* about discrimination against minorities? That makes me so mad!" "Can you believe it?! Mr. Quizzenberry refused to give Ashley another chance on her poor test grade! What a chauvinist!" "I'm not going to buy Nike products anymore; they allow sweat-shops to produce their shoes!"

Teenagers seem to have a heightened sense of hypocrisy and are quick to identify perceived wrongs where, from their vantage point, rights may have been violated or people marginalized.

"Social conscience," or the desire to correct evils in the world, is a process at which students are quite adept. But what they may not realize is that their sense of "fairness" comes because they reflect the character of their Creator. The responsibility of the Christian school is to make sure that a solid theological foundation is established for the correction of societal and personal wrongs.

Expectations around God

"Why doesn't God do something?" "Why did He allow this to happen?" Questions like these resound through high school classrooms. Human expectations of the Almighty are often improper. Teaching students to start with a biblical view of God begins the process of developing a healthy social consciousness. The doctrines of God that follow give us guidance in establishing principles for practicing earthly justice.

Transcendence and immanence

Holiness is based on transcendence: God is set apart, different from his creation (Job 36:22-26). God sets the standards. Ethical codes are based upon Heaven's Word. God never lowers his standard, but he does lower himself. God's immanence, care for his creatures, is demonstrated through the written Word (Scripture) and the living Word (Jesus), lived out through his covenant people (Philippians 2:1-11). Social consciousness begins with a transcendent standard. Reaching out to others mirrors God's personal custody of his world.

Justice and righteousness

Civil rights banners will often carry the former without the latter. Yet, there is no justice without righteousness (Deuteronomy 32:4). The words are often paired in the Old Testament (e.g. Psalm 119:121). And there can be no righteousness without the personification of the Just Judge (Psalm 11:7). The cry of "That's not fair!" is premised upon and answered only in the person of God himself.

Mercy and truth

A teacher is often a target of "grace expectations." People like to receive pardon. Once received, however, it's always anticipated. Standards are brushed aside. But the very need for mercy comes out of law breaking. God offers truth and mercy to human beings (Romans 2:1-11). Concern for societal ills must acknowledge both.

Infallibility and incomprehensibility

Instead of asking "How could this happen?" students must be prompted to query, "How should I respond now that this has happened?" God never fails. Human understanding of God, however, may fail (Job 33:12-30). God is infinite and humans are finite. People, therefore, do not always understand God (Job 11:7, 8), much less God's actions in earthly affairs (Job 37:5; Isaiah 40:13-14). Social injustices result from the Fall (Romans 8:18-22). How the Creator uses human rebellion to his own ends is not something people can even grasp (note Habakkuk's consternation when God judges Judah through the unrighteous Babylonians).

Temporal and eternal

Wrongs not addressed in this life will be redressed in the next. God's people have counted on his vengeance throughout history (Deuteronomy 32:34-43; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10). Humans have a tendency to be shortsighted. God takes the long view. While teenagers seethe with rage over real or perceived inequity, God records it all, and nothing escapes his sight. Our hope that the "bad guys get it" may not be realized on earth. But the basis for ethical liv-

Why does God allow this to happen?

ing is premised upon the fact that God is eternal, as is his judgment (Psalm 73).

People may expect too much of God because they don't understand him. High school students must be taught not to limit God but base their thinking about social consciousness on proper theology.

Expectations around ourselves

However, the problem of perception is a double-edged sword. Maybe we expect too little from ourselves. On the one hand, people want to blame God for injustice. On the other hand, people excuse their own behavior. "That's not my problem! I'm only human!" As if being "human" explains anything.

What we know of injustice begins with looking at ourselves. High school students know the latter truth full well. Being left out or put down for various teenage reasons produces its own forms of discrimination.

We need to look at ourselves! We all have blind spots. The awful actions of others are seen more closely by stepping in front of a mirror. The old maxim "if you point a finger at others, you have a few pointing back at yourself" is correct. While we fight for the dignity of others, we face our own depravity. The command of God to treat others based on the treatment we desire for ourselves is the linchpin of social consciousness (Leviticus 19:18; Mark 12:28-31).

We need to look at others! Why do we care for others? Again, our interest is a reflection of God's initial investment. The Christian world-view is based on a Just Judge who expects his people to act as his vice-regents on earth (Isaiah 58, 59). The response to social injustice must be paid in personal capital. While students learn about truth, they must also live that truth (Romans 12:9-21).

We need to look at opposite viewpoints. While our sensibilities of justice are heightened by the nightly news, we must train students to ask, "Am I hearing both sides?" "Is there a slant in the coverage?" "Is there other information that I need to know?" Journalists and media outlets may not give us "all the news fit to print." Every side of an issue should be fairly represented (Deuteronomy 19:15-18; Proverbs 18:17).

Practice the sermon

We need to seize upon opportunities. Involvement through editorial pages, local soup kitchens, service projects, and church outreaches are imperative for Christian high school students to practice what they preach. Response to social problems must always be personal, specific and measurable. Teachers should employ methods that help students interact with real life issues. Case studies, research, discussion, forums and debates would help to process different perspectives while ferreting out Truth. Looking for ways to instruct students "in the way they should go" must encourage biblical thinking that acknowledges fact, changes attitudes, and stresses participation leading to transformation (e.g., 2 Kings 23:25).

Social consciousness must be lived out. As believers in Jesus as Lord, our responsibility as "ambassadors of reconciliation" is demonstrated on the streets and in the classroom. Who God is and what his influence is on believers form the basis for true social change. Ministries to the poor, defenseless, homeless, prisoners and hungry are begun by people with a mind for Jesus and a hand toward humanity (Matthew 25:34-40).

A Heart for Others

We asked five educators to explain in one or two paragraphs why schools, especially high schools, should concern themselves with leading their students into social awareness. We print their responses here.

Undeniably Social Creatures

by Jim R. Vanderwoerd

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Humans are undeniably and unavoidably social creatures. In fact, if one were to hang out in the halls of any high school, one might be tempted to conclude that this was the only aspect of life that mattered! This profound truth about our "socialness" is so obvious it is often taken for granted.

Yet individualism still dominates current life. And if there is anything that undermines the biblical notion of what it means to be human, it is individualism, which says that ultimate fulfillment and meaning in life come in and through oneself. What a contradiction from what Jesus proclaimed to be the essence of the commandments: to love God, and one's neighbor above oneself. For high school adolescents struggling between childhood and adulthood to find their identity, individualism beckons seductively as the only way to "find yourself."

Developing a social conscience is to confront the idolatry of individualism by, first, understanding who we are and what we're here for. Who are we? We are humans, created in God's image. The Genesis account of creation depicts the triune Creator God not as an individual, but a social being: "And God said: Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). What are we here for? We are here to be a blessing to God and to others. God called Israel to be a blessing to the nations. Jesus fulfilled Israel's calling through his body, the church, whose task is to bring God's good news to all nations. Second, in addition to understanding who we are and what we're here for, developing a social conscience is to put this understanding into practice. This starts with cultivating relationships of harmony, forgiveness, and shalom within one's own family and community. And it means developing a heart for those who suffer injustice, poverty, and oppression, and seeking to be the salt and light that heralds the end of suffering in the city of God.

Suggested Resources:

Tony Campolo with Bruce Main. (2000). *Revolution and Renewal: How Churches are Saving Our Cities.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

Ron Sider. (1997). *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving from Affluence to Generosity*. Dallas, TX: Word Publishing.

Tom Sine. (1999). *Mustard Seed vs McWorld: Reinventing Life and Faith for the Future*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Brian J. Walsh. (1992). *Subversive Christianity: Imaging God in a Dangerous Time.* London, GB: The Regius Press.

Looking Behind Biases

by Harry J. Kits

Harry Kits (Harry@cpj.ca) is executive director of Citizens for Public Justice in Toronto, Ont.

I find that high school students in Canadian Christian schools are quite keen to wrestle with issues of social justice .... if given the chance. The chance is the opportunity to either directly meet someone who is different from them with special issues or needs or to be given challenging information and the tools to wrestle with them. I find they then have a strong sense of justice and a commitment to caring for creation.

Too often students easily pick up biases and opinions from their parents or the media or their peers. If they are not challenged to look at the assumptions behind those opinions and to wrestle with the complexity of social issues, students will not be able to contribute in the future as thoughtful citizens who can help shape Canadian society from a biblical vision.

Suggested Resources:

Web sites of Citizens for Public Justice (Canada) www.cpj.ca and Center for Public Justice (USA) www.cpjustice.org

Nation to Nation: Aboriginal Sovereignty and the Future of Canada. Editors John Bird, Lorraine Land, and Murray Macadam. (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 2002). Available from Public Justice Resource Centre, Toronto.

Justice not Just us: Faith Perspectives and National Priorities by Gerald Vandezande. Toronto: Public Justice Resource Centre, 1999. (info@publicjustice.ca)

First a World-View

by Harry Antonides

Harry Antonides (hantonides@look.ca) was director of research for the Work Research Foundation for some 25 years. He is now retired and lives in Willowdale, Ontario.

I think that such cannot be done directly but only by first seeking to develop a Christian world-view. Such a world-view is rooted in the conviction that Christ is busy building his Kingdom now and that we have the privilege and calling to live as citizens of that kingdom. As such we are called to love God above all and our neighbors as ourselves.

There is an order to that calling, which cannot be reversed, nor can the two be separated. Dr. S.U. Zuidema has written some memorable things about that (See e.g., Chapter 5, "The Great Commandment," in his *Communication and Confrontation).*

As children of the Reformation, we have a rich heritage to draw from, and we should do everything possible to pass on that heritage to our children. But I regret that all too often we neglect to do so. One symptom of that is the notion that social justice calls for more government intervention and spending on the relief of poverty. The politicization of society and of the churches — at least that segment that attempts to be relevant — is part of the sickness of modernity (again, see Zuidema, Chapter 3, "Church and Politics"). To do justice to our youth we urgently need a spiritual revival and a rediscovery of our Reformation heritage.

Suggested Resources:

Gordon Spykman, *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics*, Eerdmans, 1992.

Leslie Newbigin, *Truth and Authority in Modernity*, Trinity Press International, 1996 (This is a gem of insight (though only 82 pages) about the truth of the Word versus modern paganism.

Steve Garber, *The fabric of Faithfulness: Weaving Together Belief and Behavior During the University Years*, InterVarsity, 1996 (Excellent for all Christians, especially teachers, and all those who are in search of the Way of Life).

Ravi Zacharias has a special youth edition of his *Jesus Among other Gods: The Absolute Claims of the Christian Message*, Word Publishing, 2000.

Experience the Best Teacher

by Lee Hardy

Lee Hardy (lhardy@calvin.edu) is professor of philosophy at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Christian educators need to put special effort into cultivating a social conscience in adolescents for two reasons. First, adolescents are developmentally disinclined to pay attention to the needs of those beyond themselves and their immediate circle of friends. Their horizon of empathy needs to be expanded. Second, many — if not most — adolescents in Christian schools in North America come from middle to upper-middle class families who have isolated themselves both socially and geographically from the poor, the sick, and the needy. From such heights it is not hard to look down upon those less fortunate, to make of them the butt of jokes and strikingly callous remarks, to pass by them, uncaring.

Both of these reasons for cultivating a social conscience are based upon a fundamental element of Christian social teaching: that each human being bears within himself or herself the image of God, and is therefore — no matter how damaged or distorted — worthy of our respect and entitled to our help. We confront God in the needs of others, and we participate in God's care when we meet those needs. Our relationship to God is mediated by our relationship to others. We cannot claim we love God if we do not love others.

Suggested Resources:

I think in these matters experience is the best teacher; so various forms of service learning might be most helpful.

In second rank, I would place literature and film — portrayals of human suffering that lend some understanding of human vulnerability.

And in third place, I would put essays or articles on Christian social responsibility, like Ron Sider's *Rich Christians*.

Not Leading by Example

by Ren Siebenga

Ren Siebenga (siebenga@tdchristian.on.ca) is principal of Toronto District Christian High School in Woodbridge, Ontario.

I own a home in the suburbs of Toronto, the car I drive is a 1994 Colt, and my wife Barb drives a 2001 Mazda Protégé. Both Barb and I have good paying jobs, we travel a bit, eat out frequently and dress well. Several years ago, I quit reading certain magazines (*Sojourners,* for example) because they left me depressed and feeling guilty. I do not plan to sell all I have and give it to the poor. Furthermore, I rather enjoy the life I am living. So how can I lead a staff and students into developing a social consciousness? How can I lead them into the priorities of Jesus — compassion for the weak, concern for the vulnerable, justice for the wounded, empathy with the outcast?

It is my sense that Jesus would walk right on by most of our Christian high schools because most of them look like places of wealth and privilege — certainly not places for the down and out. Personally I am not leading by example. So what do I do? It would seem that the best I can do is to be honest about my own life style and the struggles I have with that life style. I need to expose to the staff and students the results that my life style has on the less fortunate of the world. And I need to teach students who they are as middle-class Christians. If I do a good job of that, perhaps they will then be able to see the possibilities for their own lives. They will then have perspective on their lives, so that they can make some choices about them.

TEACHING THE GOLDEN RULES

by Joel Beversluis

Joel Beversluis is editor of A Sourcebook of the World's Religions: An Interfaith Guide to Religion and Spirituality *and proprietor of CoNexus Multifaith Media Center. He and Gwendolyn, who have 10 grandchildren, live in Ada, Michigan, with 24 hens and one happy rooster.*

"Be nice!" "Don't hurt your friend." "Share your books!" "Let Jenny play, too!"

Facing conflict among children, many teachers have used phrases like these and then wondered about their effectiveness. In such situations we easily run out of the patience needed to teach sophisticated concepts such as *why* our children should be nice, and what that really means.

Do we even know *why?* What's a person to answer in our pluralistic society, where the post-modern attitude argues that there are no ultimate standards? Why should we be nicer to others than they are to us, or share when our media and market-dominated culture teaches that private ownership and personal gratification are all-American virtues?

A few weeks ago, one of my grandchildren told me his playground understanding of the Golden Rule: Do to others what they have done to you! Why shouldn't we fight back, especially if he or she makes me mad — or uses terrorism against us? Or when action figures, television heroes and politicians engage in "righteous" violence?

Universal wisdom

As my wife Gwen and I raised our three children, we tried to emphasize Jesus' statement (in Matthew 7) of the Golden Rule – "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" – along with his other teachings on love. Although I believed this maxim was an important moral truth in the Christian world-view and that Jesus had learned it from the Jewish "law and the prophets," I wasn't inspired at that time to explore its potential for teaching "ultimate" spiritual values. In fact, I was disappointed that the words seemed to be a Christian cliche, taught in Sunday School but for the most part overlooked by both church and our allegedly Judeo-Christian culture. Useful for keeping order among children, it was not to be taken seriously, it seemed, in adult matters of economics, ecology, international relations or human rights.

Since then I've explored many other world religions and spiritual philosophies and participated actively in interfaith organizations and events, including two Parliaments of the World's Religions. Interestingly, because of these experiences the Golden Rule has come to mean not *less,* but a great deal *more* to me. Its wisdom, I discovered, is quite universal. We now know that sacred writings and teachings of at least 13 of the world's religious and spiritual traditions offer what I've come to call *golden-rules* statements equivalent in some way to what is known in the Christian tradition as "the Golden Rule."

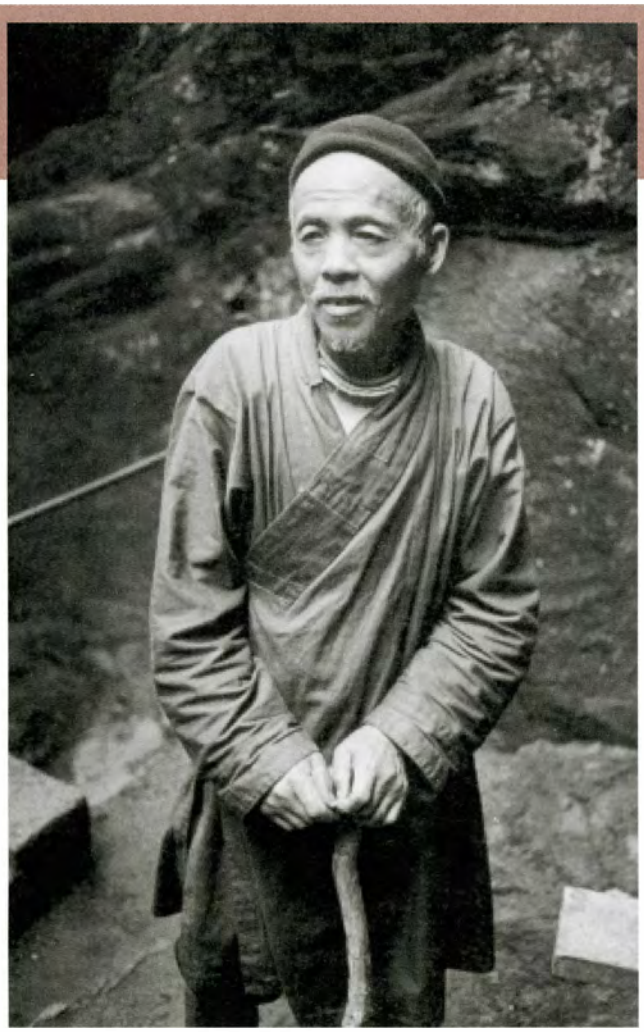
This apparently simple ethic has been taught to numerous others – parents and children – from many religions, for well over five thousand years. For me, this historically and culturally broad consensus validates the wisdom, authority, and usefulness of the Golden Rule as a principle upon which we can build the moral education of our children. In all its universality, as well as its diverse expressions, it is, I now believe, a fundamental spiritual law of the universe.

Global ethic

During the last century, the comparative study of religions and interest in perennial wisdom led to the comparison as well of moral principles. One compilation of "golden rules" was published as "An Ancient Precept" in the mid-eighties by Temple of Understanding, an international interfaith organization based in New York. A few years later, scholars Leonard Swidler and Hans Kung promoted the need for global responsibility and a global ethic.

In 1993, the declaration "Toward a Global Ethic" was drafted by Dr. Hans Kung and numerous consultants for the Parliament of the World's Religions. It included a strong endorsement of the Golden Rule. By signing the Declaration, the Parliament's Assembly of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, and thousands of others since then, affirmed that the diverse expressions of the Golden Rule are a vitally important and unifying ethical principle. This ancient precept, they agreed, "...is found and has persisted in many religious and ethical traditions of humankind for thousands of years... [and] should be the irrevocable, unconditional norm for all areas of life, for families and communities, for races, nations, and religions" (The Declaration "Towards a Global Ethic").

Far from being only a maxim for playground behavior, the golden rules were thus restored to prominence in an authoritative global ethic, applicable in their diversity to all spheres of our personal, international, and spiritual lives together on this planet. Building on this momentum, educational consultant Paul McKenna recently created a colorful poster featuring the golden rules. The poster displays 13 expressions of this ancient precept in a graphically attractive format, with sources for the statements and a commonly used symbol for each religion. With support from Scarboro Missions, a Catholic order in Ontario, Paul designed the poster to be a learning tool for use in homes, schools and religious institutions. (A teacher's guide is under preparation.)



A Taoist priest in North Eastern China

Spiritual learning community

As expressed by the African phrase, "It takes a village to raise a child," children are raised through their interaction with numerous influential people, media, and institutions – for good or ill – in what could be termed a "spiritual learning community." Acknowledging this, parents, educators and clergy are searching for ways to teach appropriate moral and religious education in their homes as well as in private religious schools and places of worship.

Realizing that religions are an integral part of history, culture and education, parents and educators are seeking to fulfill new mandates on teaching about the world's religions at an academic level. They've also searched for ways to enhance character education, and we've witnessed the ongoing debate about values education. Sometimes this debate has centered around – and been stymied by – the question, "Whose values?" Frequent controversies over placement of the Ten Commandments in public schools in the United States are one example of that debate.

With the Golden Rules poster, parents and educators now have access to a compelling visual aid that offers a very interesting and useful new approach to both the study about religions and the desire to enrich the moral character of our students. On one hand, the poster emphasizes the universality of the principle and therefore its worldwide and multi-cultural authority. This provides a more acceptable answer to the question "Whose values?" At the same time, when it is taught in conjunction with curriculum about the world's religions, the poster also presents the diverse but related emphases – golden rules– in different religious and humanistic traditions. It can thus support character education as well as study about the similarities and differences among world religions. It can be used in public schools in the United States without displaying a problematic bias toward any one religious community. Interestingly, the Toronto Public School system ordered 1000 copies of the poster so that students can explore this universal theme as well as the unique message of each tradition.

Education in the home

The home and family are the essential components of the spiritual learning community. Due to the necessary constraints in public schools and the curricular demands in Christian schools, the primary responsibility for teaching spiritually-inspired values to our children falls on parents. But parents – as well as teachers – may well wonder whether it is appropriate to use the "golden rules" of other religions to support our training and values.

I think such use is not only appropriate but has enormous advantages. For instance, conservative Christians with concerns about legitimizing other religious traditions can take comfort from the fact that Jesus was revealing a universal spiritual law when he expressed the Golden Rule. The widely accepted theological doctrine known as General Revelation supports the validity of finding God's spiritual truth in other traditions.

By studying the subtle differences among the thirteen golden rules, educators, parents and students will find support and deepened insights in the wisdom of other traditions for their own understanding and behavior. Furthermore, our children can thus learn a mature way of relating to the members of other religions that we increasingly find in our communities.

As a visual image on a wall in the home or school, the golden rules can inspire teachable moments and conversations on values and appropriate behavior. Now, in addition to finding challenging moral truths in our root tradition, we and our children can explore the variations of this universal wisdom in very modern and specific situations.

Note: To purchase the Golden Rules poster (See back cover for sample) or other resources such as the *2002 Multifaith Calendar*, the *Sourcebook*, or a calendar of inspirational quotes from the Abrahamic traditions, call CoNexus toll-free at 1-877-784-7779 or visit the online catalog at www.conexuspress.com.

On the Way to McDonalds

by Cathy Smith

Cathy Smith is a resource and seventh- and eighth-grade language arts teacher at John Knox Christian School in Wyoming, Ontario. Her story is based on an actual event that occurred when her daughter was a teenager.

I couldn't wait to get home and tell Tom about it, though I knew how he'd react — shake his head, smile indulgently. My sister, Frances, on the other hand, would be completely empathetic, so I'd call her first. For me, nothing's ever done until it's talked out. It was one of those "truth is stranger than fiction" things — if I didn't know better, if it hadn't actually happened to me, I'd think it was made up. I just had to share it.

Janine and I were coming out of Winners, loaded with packages. We'd had fun shopping together, spending some quality mother-and-daughter time. It doesn't happen often enough now that I'm teaching full-time. Janine's a sweetheart, fun and thoughtful, not too rebellious yet. So far, her most outrageous prank has been dyeing her hair blond! I can live with that. We were going to deposit our bags in the car over in the McDonalds parking lot and then stop there for some early supper.

We heard the commotion before we saw it. Hooting and yelling. A teenage boy screeching, "That's telling her, man. Let 'er have it. 'Bitch' is right!"

As we rounded the corner of the building, the car in the drive-thru lane spun away, a spiked-hair silhouette still hanging out of the rear window, jeering and waving both arms wildly. Then we saw what had triggered the outburst. In the parking lot, an enraged man was shouting, "Give me the keys, bitch. Now! Jesus Christ, you stupid bitch, hand 'em over. Don't make me take 'em off you."

He was a big man. He towered over the woman, threatening her without even touching her, cursing violently, completely oblivious to us. He wore a brown leather jacket and looked quite clean-cut. His racy black sports car, (I wouldn't have a clue when Tom asked me the make), was parked right next to our Honda. Janine and I froze, the vicious words barricading our way. Two grey-haired matrons, exiting McDonalds, paused for a moment to stare, then hurried to their car. The woman was backing away from him, one hand hovering placatingly, the other hand clutching a set of keys. A purple shirt, tucked into tight jeans, fit snugly over her plump figure. Her long, bleached-blond hair was almost as white as her fleece sweatshirt. Her tone was pleading. With a final ugly snarl, the man ripped the keys from her hand, flung himself into his car, slammed the door, and squealed off. Sobbing, the woman stumbled away, heading for the east entrance of the mall from which we had just come.

We went to the Honda and put our stuff in the trunk.

"I need to sit down a minute," I told Janine. My fingers were trembling on the steering wheel and my heart was pounding.

"That was scary, wasn't it, Mom?" Janine's eyes were huge and serious.

"It was! He was losing it, all right. It's sad how some women live. If any guy ever treats you like that, you leave. Don't put up with that kind of abuse for a minute. I think he had too much to drink. She didn't want him driving."

I could see Janine's lashes blinking back tears, and I knew I couldn't just let it go at that. I couldn't just pass it by.

"Let's go and see if she needs help," I said. We drove to the Bulk Food Barn entrance where we had seen the woman enter the mall. "Stay in the car. Lock the doors. I'll be right back."

"What are you going to do?"

"Just see if she needs a ride somewhere. Or if she wants me to call the police."

I strode through the mall, searching for blond hair or a white sweatshirt. I didn't see her. I wondered what I was doing, getting involved. People are so crazy nowadays. Maybe the guy would come after me if I helped her and he found out my name or where I lived. Or, more likely, she'd go back to him, and they'd laugh about what a stupid busybody I was, sticking my nose in where it didn't belong.

I checked the washroom. There was a pair of shoes and jeans in one of the stalls, but I didn't hear any weeping or snuffling. I was losing steam. At least Janine could see that I had tried. I went back to the car.

"Couldn't find her," I reported.

"There she is!" Janine cried. Sure enough, the woman was coming our way, scanning the parking lot warily. Almost simultaneously, I saw the sports car, cruising the lot some distance away. I rolled down my window.

"Excuse me," I called. "We saw what happened at McDonalds. Are you OK? Do you want a ride somewhere?"

She, too, had spotted the car. She hesitated a moment.

"Yes, please," she said. She opened the back door and got in. The three of us sat in silence as the black car left the parking lot and turned right on London Road.

"I don't think he saw you," I said. "Where would you like to go?"

The woman gazed at me blankly. Her eyelids were pink and puffy and her mascara was smudged. Her mouth was rimmed with splotchy patches. No external bruises, but obviously a wounded soul.

"I don't know."

"Do want to call the police?" I asked.

"No. No, I don't want to do that," she stammered.

I looked at Janine, perplexed. I wanted to do the right thing, but what was it?

"Well, we were about to go to McDonalds for supper. Why don't you join us and then you can decide what to do," I offered.

She nodded meekly. At close range I saw how young she was, in her early twenties, maybe.

While we waited in line, she pulled herself together a little and told us her name was Christine. The guy was her boyfriend. They'd been living together for about nine months. He had a temper, she admitted, but only when he was drinking.

We shared our french fries and chatted a bit — about my teaching job at Lindsey Christian School, about Janine's role in the drama production at her high school. But when I broached the topic of the police again, or a women's shelter, Christine still hedged. She didn't want to do that. She had a good friend, a childhood friend, that maybe she would call. Then she eyed me intently and remarked, "I don't think you remember me, do you? I think I know you. Did you ever teach Vacation Bible School? At Bethel United?"

Indeed I had. About 17 years ago. The summer after my first teaching job. I recalled crafts in the gym and snack-time on the lawn. Red Kool-Aid and crumbly crackers every day. Sing-songs in the sanctuary. Rainbow rays of sunlight slanting through vibrant stained-glass windows and glinting off dark pews. I didn't remember her, though.

"Yes," she said, more animatedly. "I must have been around seven or eight. We lived on Dunlop Street, you know, right there by Bethel? I loved the singing. *Dare To Be A Daniel. We AreClimbing Jacob's Ladder. Jesus Loves Me.* There was some play about goats and sheep, too. I don't remember what it was about anymore, but we made these cute little sheep by winding this fuzzy white wool around black wooden spools."

There was a pause in the conversation. Janine said, "Mom, can I have a sundae?"

"Sure, honey." I gave her some money and turned to Christine. "I'll just be a minute. I have to visit the ladies' room." I would steer her into a decision about what to do when I came back, I thought. But when I returned, Janine was sitting alone, swirling her dessert.

"Where's Christine?" I asked.

"I don't know. She wasn't here when I got back."

We left. She wasn't in the parking lot, either. "Do you think she'll call her friend?" Janine wondered.

"I don't know, honey. I hope so."

I called Frances as soon as I got home. "I'm still shook up," I told her. "I was actually scared to go to my car! I didn't know what to do. The guy was ready to explode!"

Frances sympathized. "I know. You can't help thinking: 'What if that had been Janine? What if it had been me?' You did the right thing, trying to help."

Predictably, Tom couldn't fathom how worked up I was. He laughed goodnaturedly about the "rescue." "People fight all the time. A little on the dramatic side, aren't you? That's where Janine gets it from, I suppose."

It took me a long time to fall asleep that night. Janine hugged me extra hard before she went to bed, the day's initiation kerneled in her fervent embrace. A fire burned bright in my heart casting lingering shadows of meaning over the event. Maybe Tom was right. We'd accomplished nothing really. Still, it felt like we had. A victory, of sorts. A stop on the way. A reunion to remember. Songs in a sanctuary. White wool wound on black spools.

Query

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The benefits of looping

Question #1:

We hear a great deal about "looping" these days, with one teacher following the same group of students for two to three years. What are the benefits of looping? What are the problems that teachers might face?

Response:

"Looping" is the practice of advancing a teacher from one grade level to the next along with his or her class. At the end of a "loop" of two or more years, the teacher begins the cycle again with a new group of students. This type of teaching has been called "teacher rotation," "family style learning," "two-cycle teaching," "student teacher progression" or "multi-year instruction." A three-year loop (Italian), as long as six years (German) or eight years in the Waldorf system, may be variations in the cycle.

There are a number of benefits. Teachers and students need not start each fall with learning new names and personalities or with establishing classroom rules and expectations. Without this initial routine, the students can focus on learning more quickly. Greater efficiency in learning also occurs in the last month of school because of the expectation that students will continue their learning in the fall and may be given assignments over the summer. Reduced time is spent each fall on diagnosis. Instead, the teacher continues teaching the students using the accumulated knowledge of the students' personalities, learning styles, strengths and weaknesses.

Stability and a sense of community is built in for students having the same teacher and classmates for a number of years. The emotionally supportive environment and the extra instructional time help to make inclusion successful. Because of the increased time together, there is greater focus on developmental learning. Teachers have greater opportunity to try promising innovations in teaching. A comparative study indicated that students in looping classes scored substantially higher on standardized tests in reading and mathematics than did students in regular classes. Teachers also reported more positive relationships with parents.

Some caution must be observed. Not all teachers are ready for looping, and teachers as well as students deserve choice. It is advised that teachers do not become involved in looping until they are secure in teaching one grade level. Staff development is essential. New curriculum expectations are involved each year. Summer workshops are necessary to familiarize teachers with these expectations and also build teaching teams. Extra materials and planning time must be provided for looping teachers.

There may be a tendency to place more special-needs students in a looping classroom because of the supportive environment. Teachers and administration will have to be careful in classroom composition. New students entering an already established looping classroom may find it hard to fit in; therefore, the teacher will have to pay special attention to this. There may be some teacher/student personality clashes, or teacher/parent personality clashes, but research indicated there was no greater percentage of this in looping classrooms than in regular classrooms.

All ye who mentor

Question #2:

What would make a good mentoring program for new teachers? We currently assign each teacher to a mentoring teacher. Sometimes it is profitable and sometimes it isn't. Should we have an actual mentoring program with specific topics and activities?

Response:

Bova and Phillips (1981) compiled a list of characteristics inherent in any mentor-protege relationship. The relationship grows out of voluntary interaction. It has a life cycle: introduction, mutual trust building, teaching about risk taking, communication, and professional skills, transfer of professional standards and dissolution. People become mentors to pass down information to the next generation.

Mentors encourage proteges in setting and attaining short- and long-term goals, guide technically and professionally, protect proteges from major mistakes by limiting exposure to responsibility, provide proteges opportunities to observe and participate in work, act as role models and sponsor proteges organizationally and professionally. Mentor-protege relationships end amiably or bitterly.

In a school-sponsored mentoring program, participation is not

usually voluntary, and the mentor cannot regulate the protege's level of responsibility. The beginning teacher must carry the responsibility of teaching the class. An effective mentoring program will create a school environment which offers assistance and provides means to expand the beginning teacher's repertoire of teaching techniques and classroom management skills.

All teachers could be invited to an initial session explaining the mentoring relationship and the benefit to the mentor, the beginning teacher and the school system. Questions from beginning teachers provide opportunities for mentor teachers to reexamine their own classroom practices and the effects of their instructional techniques on the teaching and learning process. Willing mentors could be paired with beginning teachers either voluntarily or with administrative assistance. Just as in any teaching and learning situation, the needs of the beginning teachers must be determined. In the first phase of mentoring, mini workshops could focus on those needs common to a number of teachers.

An effective mentoring process is built on a foundation of mutual trust. Once the relationship is established, the mentor and protege should be capable of determining their goals based on their own needs. At a scheduled mutual sharing time the mentor/protege teams could determine necessary group goals and activities. Learning is most effective when situated in a context in which new knowledge and skills will be used and learners construct meaning for themselves but within the context of interaction with others.

Merit pay or equal pay?

Question #3:

Our school board is considering turning to merit pay for teachers. They say that tying merit pay to student performance is the way things will go in the future and is already happening in some places. Many of us teachers are concerned about that. We actually are all working as hard as we can. What are some appropriate ways we could respond to the board?

Response:

Merit pay means any device that adjusts or provides compensation to reward higher levels of performance. It can be awarded on the basis of input criteria (teacher performance) or output criteria (student performance).

Considerations to keep in mind while planning a merit pay program are as follows: What are the objectives? What evaluation criteria and methods will be used? How will the program be perceived?

The success of merit pay depends on the support of all who will participate or be affected (board, administrators, teachers and community) and therefore involves their inclusion in the planning process. Research indicates that the implementation of a merit pay program is a most arduous task, drawing on all the human relations and management skills possible.

A committee needs to find out what did or did not work in similar schools as well as the level of local teacher support. Once the objectives are determined, consideration must be given to evaluation, as the evaluation must be based not only on the agreed upon criteria but also conducted fairly and impartially by trained personnel.

The need for well-documented evaluation procedures and a variable salary scale makes the administration of the program cumbersome. Proposed budgets must include salary increments, the cost of evaluation (including training of evaluators), and the cost of administering the program. One researcher emphasized that unless you plan carefully and include your entire teaching corps in an evaluation plan that it helps develop, the merit plan is doomed to failure.

What can you do? This is a controversial issue. Research the topic and make a presentation to your board. Micah 6:8 calls us to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God. As you say, you are working as hard as you can.

Every person is worthy of his hire (Mt. 10:10), and, although teachers may be given different gifts, each seeks to use them to give glory to God and his Kingdom.

The Two Sides of Sports

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Americans are ambivalent about athletics. More accurately, perhaps, there are two conflicting opinions – a dominant positive view, and a more negative judgment that is less frequently expressed.

The dominant view may be called a belief in the redemptive power of sports. Sports, according to this view, build "character." Athletes, we are told, learn the value of hard work, discipline and teamwork. They learn to cope with failure and to deal graciously with success. And above all, they learn the supreme American virtue: competitiveness. To express the point hyperbolically – it is blood shed on the playing field that saves us from our sins.

In the cult of salvation through sports, the athlete becomes a demi-god, who is sought by girls, envied by boys, and worshiped by children. Hollywood movies provided some of the scriptures for this cult in the hagiographic sports-hero films of the 1940s, from *Knute Rockne All-American* (1940) to *The Stratton Story* (1949). These movies also created most of the clichés of the sports movie genre.

Test of character

As professional sports heroes became less and less admirable, and younger journalists no longer cooperated in the creation of mythic heroes out of drunken womanizers like Babe Ruth, sports movies focused increasingly on fictional characters and on children. In the 1980s athletics, and particularly baseball, became the stuff of fable and wish-fulfillment in films which were often excellent, such as *The Natural* (1984), in which Robert Redford plays a ball player with a mysterious past and a bat made from a lightning-struck tree, and *Field of Dreams* (1992) in which Kevin Costner plays a man who is reconciled with his long-dead father on a baseball diamond built in an Iowa corn field.

The character-building qualities of athletics have become a staple of films for youth, most of them mediocre at best, including Little League movie *The Bad News Bears* (1976), which introduced us to foul-mouthed children, and Disney Studio's lame and predictable *The Big Green* (1985). More commendable are films such as *Hoosiers* (1986), in which an alcoholic father finds redemption as an assistant coach; the recent Disney effort *Hardball* (2001), in which baseball gives a sense of dignity to a group of kids from the housing projects; and the excellent Denzel Washington vehicle *Remember the Titans* (2000), in which football becomes an instrument of racial harmony in a Virginia high school in 1971.

The bully hero

But there is another side to this story, in the movies as in life. In movies that focus on the kids who find it difficult to fit in, the arrogant bullies who make their lives miserable are often the athletes. Biff Tanner, the bully who gets his comeuppance from misfit Marty McFly in 1985's *Back To The Future* is a perfect example of the jock bully. The arrogant, boastful, conceited, power-tripping athlete has become almost as much a cliché as the handsome, rugged sports god and future leader. Last year's *Varsity Blues* went even farther, taking direct aim at the violence and the abject hero-worship that so often are part of the high school sports scene.

Sport as cult

The two views of athletics, the one seeing sports as building character and future success, the other seeing sports as creating a culture of arrogance and bullying, come together with a vengeance in Kenneth Carlson's thought-provoking documentary, *Go Tigers!* The subject is the town of Massillon, Ohio. With a population of 30,000 people, Massillon has a high school football stadium that seats 20,000. The Massillon Tigers have played football there for more than a 100 years, and, in a 1951 newsreel, the city was dubbed "Touchdown Town." In Massillon, the newsreel commentator said, football was not sport: it was "a cult, a religion, a civic enterprise that knows no season."

Carlson grew up and played football in Massillon, and he remains a Tiger booster. But as he follows the Tigers through their 1999 season, he shows us the best and the worst of a blue-collar steel town obsessed with the sport. This is a town where miniature footballs are delivered to the cribs of newborn baby boys, and where ardent fans can buy Tiger-theme caskets. The town is ruled by a jock culture that extols strength, athletic skill, competitiveness and the endurance of pain as the only virtues worth possessing. Boys are bred to play football, and those who cannot are essentially outcasts. Football players routinely repeat eighth grade, not because of poor grades, but so that they will be older

and stronger when playing high school ball.

This is a town where prayer is not banned from the locker room. In fact, Protestant, Catholic and Jewish clergy all contribute at various times to prayers for the team. But these are warrior prayers, calling God to battle on behalf of the Tigers. In the words of film reviewer Stephen Holden, it is "disturbing to watch spirituality perverted into warlike partisan cheerleading." The pious words of the prayers are not carried into the language of the players, which alone would qualify the film for an R-rating. That is even before we see the victory party where team members drink prodigious quantities of beer and vomit extravagantly.

On the other hand, there are some for whom football has brought a kind of redemption. The team captain, Ellery Moore, grew up as a troubled adolescent in the streets of Kansas City, and spent time in jail on a charge of raping his stepsister, a charge he vigorously denies. But on the Tigers football team he has become a local hero, clean-cut and straight with the law, an inspiration to his fellow team members.

Sexual violence

Massillon may be ruled by a jock culture, but it has not lost its soul. The same cannot be said for the town of Glen Ridge, New York, the subject of Bernard Lefkowitz's 1997 book *Our Guys*. In 1989, a group of high school seniors, some of the most respected and admired students in the school, including the co-captains of the football team, raped a mentally retarded girl named Leslie Faber and sodomized her with a baseball bat. The good citizens of the affluent suburb rose to the boys' defense. The town had fulfilled the worst fears of the 1941 Yale University study of the town, in which it was observed that Glen Ridge High School placed "too great emphasis on producing winning teams at the expense of important social values."

Nearly 50 years later, Lefkowitz concluded, the values of the community of Glen Ridge "had not progressed beyond those of a high school pep rally." The entire town was ruled by a jock culture that placed athletes on a pedestal. In his research he had discovered a persistent and disturbing pattern of sexual harassment and sexual coercion, which led one female graduate of the school to observe, "All of the jocks were perverts, that's what I decided." Most disturbing of all, Lefkowitz discovered that the degradation of women was the pattern among the adults in Glen Ridge. The teenagers were behaving as they had been taught, by the example of their elders.

Feelings of omnipotence

The Glen Ridge case is important not because it is so extreme, but because it is only the tip of the iceberg. In a study of gang rapes on college campuses, it was discovered that members of the social elite who were most likely to be involved. "If they are not involved in a fraternity, they are members of sports teams," says Bernice Sandler, the researcher reporting the study. "And it is team sports – football and basketball. It's never the golfers and swimmers." A 1986 FBI study showed, according to Lefkowitz, that "football and basketball players were reported to police for sexual assault 38 per cent more often than the average male college student."

As Lefkowitz later puts it, what happened in Glen Ridge "reveals the extreme outcome of the behavior of young men who are made to feel omnipotent." Massillon, Ohio, seems dangerously close to the edge of the same cliff. Many other schools, Christian schools not excluded, approach the same precipice when they begin to place the Darwinian value of competition ahead of the biblical emphasis on the body of Christ, when the goals pursued by the surrounding culture are smuggled into the Christian community, shrouded in a few convenient Bible verses. I shudder when I recall the Christian school in Florida whose display at a convention displayed a banner bearing the school's motto: "God, Discipline, and Sports."

A familiarity with the movie *Go Tigers!* and the book *Our Guys* should be required of every parent and teacher in our schools before they claim the right to speak on the subject of the place of competitive team sports in our schools. And before we blindly follow the crowds headed into that expensive new stadium, we need to seriously ask whether we are helping to create the aura of omnipotence which so readily leads to the abuse of power.

Shining Like Moons in a Dark World

by Michael Goheen

Michael Goheen is professor of history at Redeemer Christian University College in Ancaster, Ont. This article is an excerpt from the keynote address he delivered at the BC/NW Teachers' Convention held in Lynden, Washington, on October 7 and 9, 1999. The theme for the conference had been taken from Philippians 2:14-16: "Shine like stars in the universe as you hold fast the word of life."

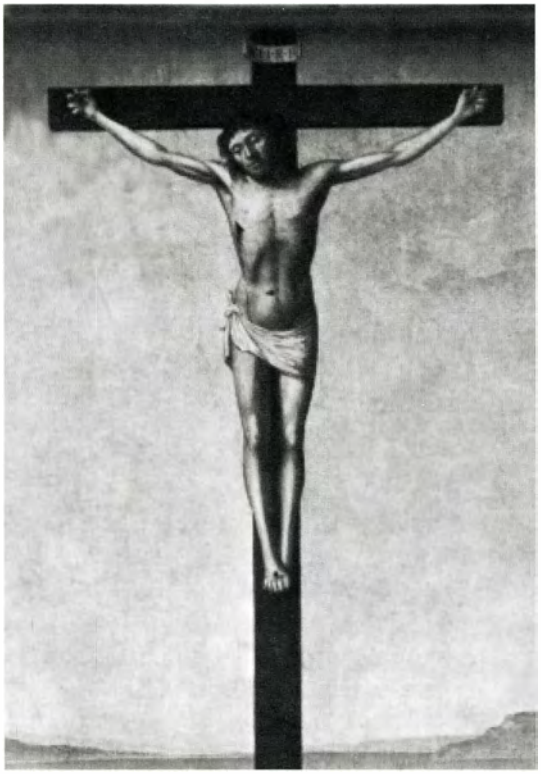
When the Apostle Paul wrote his letter to Philippian Christians in the first century of our Lord, he characterized the Roman empire as a "crooked and depraved generation" and challenged the Philippian church to shine like stars in that context. Today we live increasingly in dark times, and so this call is urgent to us.

We live in a culture in which the story that has shaped our society for several hundred years is failing. The educational system tied to that story is also failing. The call to the Christian community in terms of its educational task is to embody a different story in our schools. The Enlightenment dream has shaped the purpose of education, the curriculum, the pedagogy, the structures, as well as the internal theoretical structure of the various disciplines. The task of the Christian school is to reject the idolatry that has shaped the humanistic schools and embody a different story, a contrast story.

A radical call

The story of the Bible, then, is to shape the purpose for educating our children. The problem is that we are not as "pure" (to use Paul's terminology) as we think we are. The light of the Age of Reason has shaped our schools far more than we care to admit, and, moreover, the gospel's call in education is far more radical than most of us are willing to admit. In a postmodern world, in which the light of the Enlightenment is failing, the people of God need to double their efforts to ask: "What would a school look like if it were radically shaped by the gospel, by the biblical story, rather than the Enlightenment story?"

An encounter



An act of solidarity and separation

There have been two continual dangers for the Christian community. The first is an inclination to lessen the tension, the antithesis, the encounter, and to accommodate ourselves to the prevailing culture with its reigning idolatry. The second occurs when we see the irreconcilability of the two world views, causing us to somehow withdraw in order to live out our commitments in peace. Both are unscriptural.

We are called to live as members of our culture, participating with love, sympathy, compassion, and justice in cultural development. However, we are to continually live out that responsibility in the light of the gospel. That will mean an encounter. And the Bible is very realistic about this. We are not to expect a final victory until Christ returns. We are to expect opposition, rejection, and even suffering.

Our task is not to build the kingdom, but to be faithful witnesses to it. Jesus says to his disciples, preparing them for their mission in the world: "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also." (John 15:18-20).

Solidarity and separation

Two qualifying statements are in order lest what is being said be misunderstood. First, the stress here is on the antithetical responsibility we have in our cultural calling. However, this is not to be misunderstood in simply a negative way. As Christians we are called to participate in the cultural development of the societies in which we live, not simply stand in protest. There are two sides to our responsibility — participation and antithesis. I have been emphasizing the second. The second qualification is this: the gospel has had a salting impact on Western culture, and that encounter is not as sharp as it would be in, say, a Muslim or Hindu culture.

It is precisely for that reason that the antithesis needs to be emphasized. It is too easy for us to forget the antithetical side of our calling when the sharpness of the en-

We must bring to the foot of the cross our dreadfully compromised educational practices.

counter is reduced. Our culture is one that serves idols and has been called pagan or neo-pagan by many. That idolatry has deeply shaped our educational institutions and, therefore, an antithetical stance will be one side of our faithfulness.

Love and judgment

All of this can be pulled together by focusing on the center and supreme witness of our faith — the cross of Jesus Christ. On the one hand, the cross was God's ultimate expression of his love for the world. It was an act of solidarity with the sin and suffering of the world. It was an act of identification with idolaters he loved and came to save. On the other hand, the cross was God's ultimate expression of judgement on the sin and idolatry of the world. It was an act of separation from the sin and idolatry that shaped culture. It was an act of rejection and opposition to that which destroys his creation. It was, therefore, an act of both solidarity and separation, of both identification and rejection.

Believers called to take up the cross and follow Jesus must assume this same stance, for a faithful witness in education requires that attention be paid to both these aspects of the cross. On the one hand, we live in solidarity and identification with our contemporaries, our educational colleagues, who are attempting to transmit insight to the next generation. Education is a good part of cultural development. On the other hand, we stand against, reject, and separate ourselves from the sinful idolatry that shapes the humanistic educational institutions of our day.

Spiritual discernment

This twofold stance will require discernment. Its form will be different in each place. Discernment is not a matter of intelligence but of wisdom and spiritual sensitivity that results from a close walk with Jesus Christ — Creator and Redeemer. This spiritual discernment will have the following five elements if a faithful educational embodiment is to take place.

First, we must **understand the biblical story as one unfolding story that reveals to us universal history and our place in it.** When the story is broken up into devotional, theological, historical-critical, or moral bits it is easily absorbed into the reigning cultural story. Holding fast the word of life means holding fast the Bible as one story that begins with the whole creation and ends with its renewal.

Second, we must **understand much more adequately the foundational idolatrous assumptions and currents that are shaping western culture.** We have been deceived

by the myths of a Christian culture or secular neutral culture. A Chinese proverb says: "If you want to know about water, don't ask a fish." If you want to know about Western culture, don't ask someone who is Western! Yet the thriving churches in other parts of the world have enabled us to have a new set of eyes to view our culture. Let us struggle to understand the idolatry as well as the created goodness of our culture.

Third, we must **have a cultural strategy for dealing with the idolatrous forms of education that are prevalent in our culture.** We can neither simply reject them nor adopt them. The forms of our culture must be subverted.

Fourth, we must **be ready to work and suffer.** It will take hard work to understand the biblical and cultural story. It will take hard work to discern both idolatry and creational insight. Faithfulness will also bring suffering. Paul makes it clear that those who live godly lives in Christ Jesus will suffer. When the church is faithful in challenging the idolatrous culture of its day, it is bound to pay the price. If status and success in the educational world are more important to us than faithfulness, we will not shine as lights but will inevitably adopt the prevailing norms.

Fifth, Christian schools must **assume a posture of prayer and repentance.** Perhaps if Paul wrote his letter today, with our broader understanding of astronomy, he would have written: Shine like *moons* in a crooked and perverse generation. Moons, of course, have no light of their own; they reflect the light of the sun. Neither does the believing community have any light of its own. Jesus Christ is the light of the world. It is only in the light of his life, death, and resurrection that the world can be seen for what it truly is. We can only reflect that life if we abide in Christ as branches grafted onto the vine so that the sap of his life might flow to us.

Christian schools ought to be vital communities of prayer and worship. From that radiating center the gospel should permeate the whole educational enterprise, and only then can we shine like moons, reflecting the life of Christ in the midst of our culture. And since the conforming of our education systems to the gospel is a spiritual battle, and not simply getting our worldviews straight, constant repentance will be part of that prayer and worship.

We bring to Christ and to the foot of the cross our dreadfully compromised educational practices; we ask his forgiveness; we ask for his wisdom; we ask for his empowerment to take a few more baby steps toward faithfulness.

And — this is essential — we joyfully take up our task knowing that the kingdom belongs to him. He will bring his purposes to pass, of that we can be sure. Unlike the idols of the Age of Reason, God delivers on his promises. And so we rejoice, and hope, and seek to embody a little more faithfully this good news.

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Stuck on a Word

"Complacency, noun: self-satisfaction, usually in an unreflective way, and without being aware of possible dangers." I am pondering this word because of something that happened in my high school classroom near the end of the year last year. It is a delightful story, and when I told it to one of my colleagues today, she laughed uproariously. But you will have to wait to hear it until the end of this brief article.

If someone were to ask me as a teacher what I believe to be one of the gravest dangers to our students in this world, I would say it is complacency. And it seems to increase after middle school. Middle school is a time of so much uncertainty and change. It is hard to be self-satisfied in middle school. Chances are, you may be sailing along thinking you are doing fine one day, and the next you are shattered by a careless comment that another student has made to or about you. Since middle schools are smaller communities, the "king pin" can so easily be overthrown by just one new person being thrown into the mix. I have seen this happen countless times.

Julie was the smartest in the class until Jenny came along. Brad was the best athlete until Ryan got his growth spurt over the summer. I remember Jim, who was so manipulative and threatening from fourth grade to sixth grade. Then suddenly in seventh grade, one brave soul got tired of him and set up a quiet revolt. And before you knew it, Jim was grasping for any potential friend he could find.

As far as the unreflective part goes, I remember middle school, eighth grade particularly, as being one of the most soul-searching, inquisitive times in life. C.S. Lewis affirms this. In his famous book *Surprised by Joy*, which is a kind of spiritual autobiography, he says, "I fancy that most of those who think at all have done a great deal of their thinking in their first 14 years...." It was at this time in his life that Lewis struggled with whether or not his faith was valid, and, because of the influence of an unbelieving teacher, he gave up his faith for a long time.

Eighth-graders are soul-searchers, who are still able to wonder in both senses of that word — being filled with questions and being filled with awe.

And danger? Well, in the world we live in, it is hard to be oblivious to danger. But in middle school the dangers seem to be more vivid and conquerable, and often a bit exaggerated. There is a strong spirit of hope, and an admirable desire to make the world a better place.

When the world seemed to forever change on September 11th, my friend's middle school students were shocked, but responsive. I found high school students to be more numb, slower to react, less apt to talk about their fears or concerns.

So here is my story. On my podium I have a small bumper sticker poster that says: Complacency kills: body, mind, and spirit. At the end of the year last year, a girl in one of my English classes raised her hand and inquired, "You know, I've been looking at that message all semester, and I don't get it. What does complacency mean, anyway?" And I, hardened English teacher that I am, responded with the predictable: "Why don't you look it up?" She looked at me with mild amusement, and shrugged, "Naw. I don't really care that much."

We need to instill in our students of any age the opposite of complacency, which I would suggest just might be urgency. The world is not well-served by placid, unthinking, self-serving people. As teachers, we must make every effort to make them grasp and search and risk. And middle school is the most fertile ground for this undertaking. A term that has become frighteningly familiar in the wake of the New York tragedy is "high alert." Perhaps we do our best teaching when we put our students there — not in a state of panic or fear, but in a state of compelling desire to find our place on this tightly stretched planet and fill it with passion and integrity.

Panel Dot Edu


Clarence Joldersma

Emphasize the heart wear, not the hardware

Clarence Joldersma (cjolders@calvin.edu) assistant professor of education at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich., encouraged the Dot Edu panel to pick up on something Tony Kamphuis wrote in the spring of 2001. Tony wondered if Christian schools should use technology as a drawing card for their schools. His question sparked an interesting exchange about computers, idolatry, souls, pencils and marketing.

The panel consists of:

Pam Adams (padams@dordt.edu), assistant professor of education at Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa.

Lois Brink (LBrink@grcs.org), curriculum coordinator and media director at Grand Rapids Christian High School, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Johanna Campbell (ctabc@twu.ca), executive director of the Christian Teachers Association of British Columbia, Langley, B.C.

Tim Hoeksema (thoeksema@hollandchristian.org), the principal of Holland Christian High School, Holland, Mich.

Tony Kamphuis (TonyKamp@aol.com), who teaches history and business at Smithville District Christian High School, Smithville, Ont.

April 16, 2001


Tony Kamphuis

In our Canadian context, and I assume the same is true of the U.S., Christian schools find themselves in a position of "marketing" themselves to a group of potential families (I don't want to say "clients" or "consumers"). Lately I notice more and more schools trying to tout their high level of computer technology as a drawing card. But is it? Should it be? Is the move to be "wired" a positive step for our schools, or is the cost too high, the initiative misdirected ("since human nature hasn't changed, the sort of education people benefit from hasn't changed either"). Is the bold promise of ever-changing technology apt to remain unfulfilled?

Tony Kamphuis

May 11, 2001

Tony, I think I understand your concern .You are wondering if we are promoting our technology to show that we are progressive and "in touch, on the cutting edge and that we are cool." I hope that, in our acceptance of technology, we are not embracing a technocism that gets caught up in cutting-edge talk, techno-flash, and the current mindset that if you can do it with technology, it's cool, do it.


Lois Brink

At another level, I hope we are not embracing a consumerism that, when it sees something new, it wants it. I hope we don't accept without questions the premise of national economic growth and individual vocational use. I hope, instead, that the reasons for the use of technology in education and in a school system are in line with our beliefs.

Since I'm into numbering today, here comes a list or two. (1) Technology can increase communication and general efficiency of the school operations. Attendance by computer, voice mail for parent/teacher communication and e-mail between colleagues, for example, can redirect staff time and energy. (2) Technology in the school does provide for a variety of learning experiences for students to use, including new opportunities to apply what they have learned. (3) Technology in the classroom also provides for some variety in teaching methods and allows teachers to assume different teaching roles. (4) Technology can add to the general learning environment by providing a huge range of resources, supplying some motivation and excitement in learning, attending to some learning style issues.

Equally important, we can use technology to (1) express our world-view, (2) provide a platform for interjecting discussion about discernment and media literacy, (3) show concern about direction away from God's norms, (4) express a vision of renewal within various technologies, and (5) give authentic opportunities for restorative use of media in our culture.

So, you wondered to us if the move to be wired is positive. My answer is, it can be. It all depends!

Lois Brink

May 16, 2001


Pam Adams

Tony, if we are going to use technology as a drawing card for "marketing" our schools, we ought to emphasize the philosophy of education that directs our understanding of

technology rather than the hardware. Any school can have computers. What our schools should be doing is teaching students not only how to use computers but how to use them in an appropriate manner. We should get our students to think about how computers can be used in obedient and disobedient ways. Emphasizing that computers are artifacts that have values and propensities embedded in them is an important concept for our students to understand.

Computers are great for some forms of communication but not for others. For example, I appreciate e-mail for allowing me to stay in touch with family and friends, but the e-mail card that I received on Mother's Day from one son did not have as much meaning to me as the handmade card I received via snail mail from another son.

Computers are tools. Some times one tool works well, while at other times another is better. Since community building is at least part of what we should be about as Christians, we need to assess if and when computers will enhance communication and community building. Having students think through issues surrounding the use of technology is one way to show the distinctive nature of our Christian schools.

Pam Adams

May 18, 2001

Pam and Tony, you both allude to the pervasive "idol" of technology in our culture. And, Pam, I agree with your ideas about our schools being given the mandate to teach kids to engage in thoughtful use of this technology. Isn't stewardship an attitude towards all kinds of resources and a responsible action which comes from that attitude?

So, we can teach stewardship through responsible use. We can ask students to "sign up" and explain their anticipated use of computers; we can expect teachers to give assignment guidelines that steer away from credit for glitzy format and look at the substance of the work presented; we can teach and learn how to deal with copyright and the giving of credit to the real authors; we can share issues of image, advertising, and all kinds of misuse of the media; we can teach a variety of uses for software programs.

Besides teaching discernment in the use of this technology, we can also encourage and enjoy the use of this technology in God glorifying ways. The clever and creative assignment projects, the use of a variety of resources and information pieces, the deliberate use of positive images and careful messages, the strong learning tool that visual software can offer, the resulting learning that students can show us, and the excitement of new learning formats and environments — all of these can be restorative uses of this technology in education.

I hope we can continue to learn ways to use technology with eyes towards renewal, restoration, shalom even, as well as developing keen discernment and wariness about the misuse of this technology and its accompanying media.

Lois Brink

May 22, 2001

Pam and Lois, I like what you said, Pam, about teaching our students to use computers in an appropriate manner. You explained how we go about that process, Lois, namely by proper stewardship of our technological resources, discernment, and implementing use of computer technology in God glorifying ways. Your final paragraph sums that up. It's a matter of building into the curriculum questions of values and personal responsibility. I think we need to be more deliberate and exact about building into our curricula the biblical, God honoring ways in which to use computers. We don't want our students to fall into the consumer mentality, where self, money and greed rule their motives; this is definitely the danger of our age: "Perhaps Christian educators, when considering the latest technology should go beyond discussing its effectiveness to ask, 'What does this technology do to our souls?'" (Monsma, quoted in Stronks and Blomberg, 1986). The answers to this question should be built right into our computer programs throughout the curriculum, it seems to me.

Johanna Campbell

May 15, 2001

Tony, me again, I think I was on my soap box in my last reply. On a lighter note, can you picture a school promotion that "touts" their older (or non-existent) technology?

"Yep, we have older computers, many of them donations, all different kinds! We use these in the most basic ways – for keyboarding skills mostly. None of them can run the current Windows programs so that means they cannot be used for much word processing, and not any of the other software applications that are so prevalent and so helpful. We cannot access any of the variety of Internet resources, those huge libraries of journals, or e-reference books. Our students' research is limited to our library collection! And of course teachers own personal copies of materials. We cannot communicate with anyone outside our area code. Even our teachers have to find addresses and make phone calls to professional resources or sharing. And, boy, do we make a lot of handouts for class. Our students still write things out by hand and make a lot of posters. We cannot make

charts from our data. We must retype our documents if we want alphabetical order. Our library notices and our catalog cards are still typed, taking hours of time. And when our students hit college, they won't have a clue about research or class communications! They won't even know how to register for classes. Yep, our old computers serve us really well. Come to our school and see how!"

Lois Brink

May 25, 2001

Tim Hoeksema

I'm entering the discussion a little bit late. It is the end of school year and there is way too much to do. But I finally read your responses ... and, you guys are all way too philosophical for me! Of course we have to have computers in our schools — they are the tools of our culture that are essential for the world we live in. And we need to get the best ones we can afford, just like all the other "tools" we use. I can't imagine having these high brow discussions about the proper use of pencils, pens, paper, textbooks, etc. We will use our computers — like we use pen and paper — to meet the mission of our schools and prepare students to be able, capable, and committed disciples of Jesus.

Tim Hoeksema

May 28, 2001

Tim (et al), Yeah, you're right on one level, but I suspect in earlier days people didn't rhapsodize about how the pencil was going to revolutionize education, and that any school worth its salt couldn't be left on the sidelines. Furthermore, introducing pencils didn't have the same financial implications. "The best computers we can afford" isn't an airtight category. If we reduce the band program or order fewer art supplies we can afford better computers! There is a certain pain involved in having someone look at your computers and saying, "Wow, look at those dinosaurs!" that we just don't experience when they look at our old kiln in the art class. Maybe we've bought into the glitz a little too easily. After all, we don't advertise the great art instruction we offer!

Tony Kamphuis

"Slouching Toward Bedlam"

The Sinking of the Bismarck or The Wrath of Grapes

by Jan Kaarsvlam

After a mid-year evaluation which accused him of "excessive and unwarranted sarcasm" and "not adequately grasping the Iowa milieu" and following an accident involving the school's radio station and the live narration of a food chain experiment using the first-grade's pet hamster and the sixth-grade's python, Jan Kaarsvlam has left the Pella Christian School to accept Chris Vanderveen's invitation to be development director for the Brantford Christian School in Brantford, Ontario.

Rex Kane walked through the door of the lounge, spotted the donut boxes on the table, and scurried forward with a renewed sense of purpose. He reached the table, and his eyes went wide with dismay.

"They're gone," he whined, staring at the boxes in disbelief as he rifled through the wax paper left behind. "I can't believe you people ate them all."

Shop teacher Gordon Winkle, having just grabbed a jelly bismark, turned his back slightly toward Rex and desperately shoved half the donut into his mouth. Jelly squirted out the hole and dribbled down his chin. He wiped at it with a crumpled napkin as he turned back to Rex.

"Sowwy, Wex," he forced out around his food. He paused, chewed quickly and swallowed. "Sometimes life ain't fair."

"Don't 'Sowwy Wex' me. I want a donut. I want justice!"

"Justice?" laughed Carrie Wellema. "Don't you think that's a bit melodramatic?" She thrust one finger in the air, put a hand over her heart, and said, "Give me a donut, or give me death!"

Rex didn't smile. "As Martin Luther King Jr. stated, 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,'" he said. A stunned silence descended on the table. Rex was always quoting people, but the moments were rare when he got both the quotation and the speaker correct. "Winkle, you got a piece of donut left. Give me a bite."

Winkle shook his head and started across the room, Rex in hot pursuit. Carrie shook her head and laughed.

"A bit of serendipity there," said Christina Lopez, the youngest member of Bedlam's English faculty. "We just talked about that quote in my freshman class last week. We were reading *The Jungle*, and then we discussed a Christian's responsibility to seek justice. And then I thought that we should do some sort of project so students could practice what we were preaching. Well, a friend of mine works for a public advocacy group in Washington, and she was telling me that these payday loan places are bad news. A lot of people, mostly economically-depressed people, are getting ripped off; they get an advance on their paycheck, but they pay a ridiculously exorbitant rate. The interest builds, and soon they are so far in debt they can never get out. I suggested we might want to see what we could do about the problem by writing letters to our representatives."

"Sounds great," said Carrie.

"That's what I thought," said Christina, "but some parents called Mr. Vanderhaar and complained that they wanted me to teach their kids English, not foist my political views on them."

"Well, I trust Bentley took your side," said Carrie. There was an awkward silence as Christina stared at her coffee and smiled sadly.

"Why that spineless weasel!" Carrie muttered.

Just then the door opened and the spineless weasel entered, his signature pursed-lip frown on his face. As he crossed to the coffeepot, Rex's voice rose from somewhere across the room.

"Don't bother looking for any donuts. They all vanished. They just mysteriously sprouted wings and took off. Yep. Every last doughnut gone."

"Stop whining," said Winkle. "Eat those grapes you left here yesterday."

Carrie caught Bentley's eye and signaled him over. He dropped into a seat beside her. Carrie raised her voice enough that she could be sure Cal Vandermeer, who was sitting a few chairs away, would be able to hear.

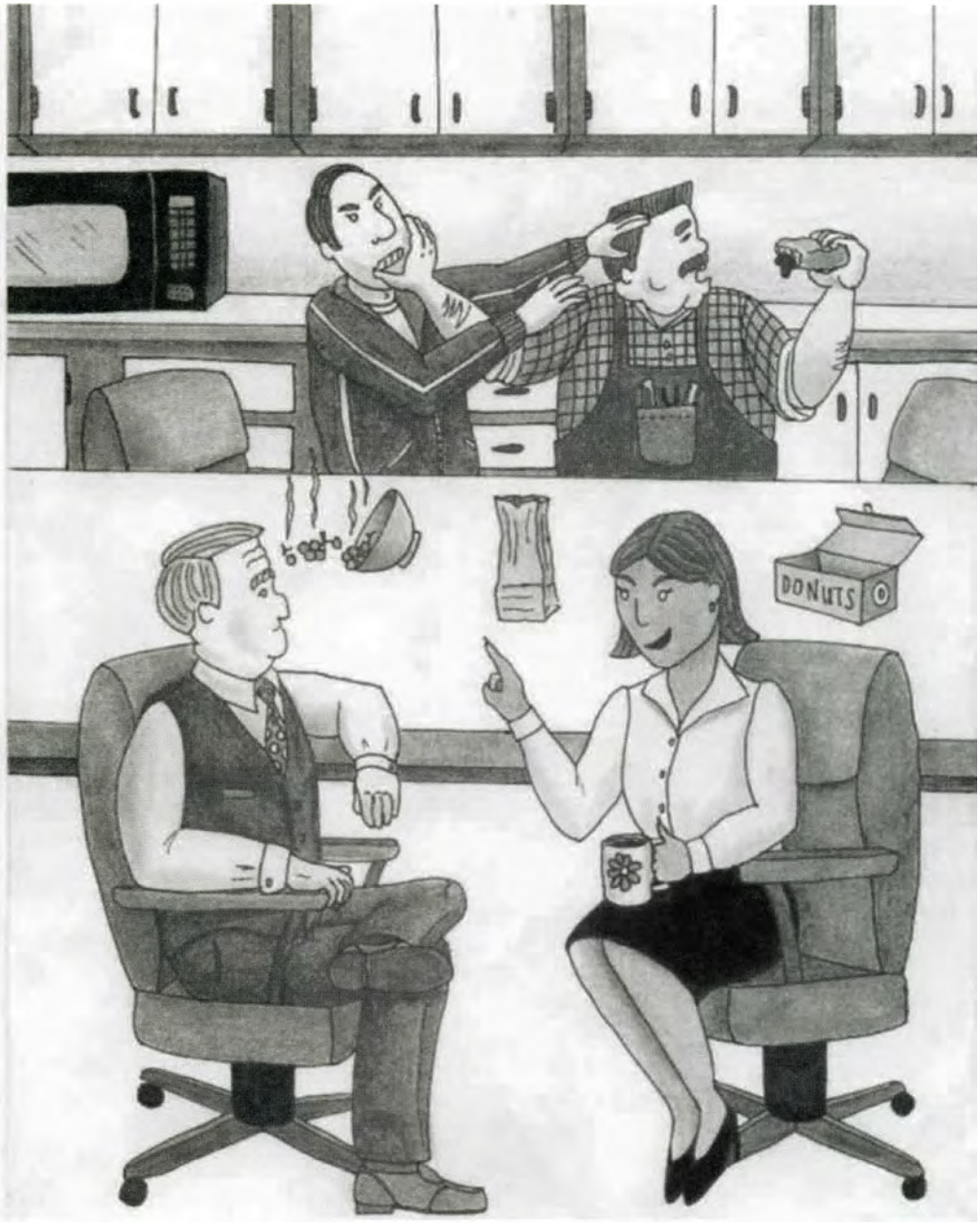
"I was just wondering," she said without a hint of anger or guise in her voice, "but I heard that maybe Cal wasn't going to be allowed to give his Bible students extra credit this year if they went on the Pro-Life March in Washington, D.C. Is that true?"

"It better not be," said Cal, his mustache bristling as he lunged his head forward so he could see Carrie and Vanderhaar.

"Where did you hear that nonsense?" Vanderhaar asked with a derisive chuckle. "Of course, Cal can encourage his students to go."

"I didn't really hear it anywhere," said Carrie with a shrug of her shoulders. "I just assumed that since we weren't supposed to foist our political views on our students, Cal would have to quit."

Whenever Bentley got angry, the wattle below his chin would flush red, and the color would creep up his cheeks until it finally



disappeared in his hairline. The color had crept midway up his cheeks, and his eyes were boring holes through Lopez. "Abortion is not a political issue. It is a moral one. Banking is an economic and political issue."

He expected her to back down, but Lopez, fresh from a university graduate setting, had been well trained in standing up to authority figures. "And abortion is *not* a political issue? I don't think too many politicians would agree with you."

Cal Vandermeer had stood and crossed to a position next to her. Now his loud gravelly voice followed hers. "Besides, if we are really supposed to be educating in the Reformed tradition, we understand that everything is related. Every issue is a moral issue. If those parents want their kids to grow up with the ability to discern in an increasingly confusing world, we need to help them to see everything from a moral perspective, in English, Science, Math, Home Ec, Phys. Ed., everywhere."

"Oh boy," muttered Jon Kleinhout. Bedlam's cantankerous librarian sat at the far end of the table. "Here goes Mr. Reformed Boy again. No matter what topic we discuss, we get the same stump speech. Give it a rest."

"The problem may have a moral dimension, but it is still a political issue," said Vanderhaar, his lips still pursed.

During the conversation, Rex Kane had made his way to the microwave. When the machine chimed, he pulled out a bowl of grapes, then turned to address the others. "Vanderhaar's got a point, you know. If people make stupid personal finance decisions, that's their problem. Don't forget the Latin phrase, *Cravat Emptor* – 'Better be careful.'

"*Caveat emptor*, buyer beware," Carrie Wellema muttered under her breath.

Lopez grew more fiery. "That's my point. We live in such an individualistic society that if a problem doesn't affect us directly, we're crazy for worrying about it. Maybe I ought to be pushing the kids to write letters about school vouchers. Then at least *our community* could get a financial break, or I could have them get a work crew together and go paint one of *our widow's* houses. As long as I don't ask them to make a difference for anyone outside of our bubble, huh?"

"There's nothing wrong with fixing the problems in our own community before we help others," said Vanderhaar hesitantly. Some of the anger had drained from his face.

"Yeah," said Rex. "You know, 'Think like a globe, but act like a local.'"

"Think globally, act locally," muttered Carrie Wellema again. Vanderhaar winced. It was uncomfortable having Rex as an ally.

Lopez shook her head. "Justice demands that we think beyond ourselves. These payday loan places prey on poor and uneducated African Americans, Latinos, and Asian immigrants who haven't got the resources nor education to fight back."

Winkle had returned to his seat as Lopez spoke. He pointed at

Lopez with a candy bar he was eating. "Easy for you to say, Christina. But if I said that, I'd be accused of being a white guy who thinks he's got it all together and now needs to rescue his poor brothers and sisters of color. That sounds a bit condescending to me."

"Yeah," chimed in Rex, "and it sounds like you're trying to be politically cor—Ow! These grapes are hot!"

Lopez slammed her fist to the table. "Why do we love that accusation so much? I think it is because it lets us think of human beings as numbers, and it makes a joke out of our responsibility toward God."

"Look," said Cal Vandermeer, "name-calling and flaring tempers aren't going to help. I think we have stumbled across an interesting problem. We all want to promote a Christian understanding of justice, but justice is always enacted, at least socially, within a political and economic system. So how can we teach students to act for justice without at the same time "foisting" our politics on them? Is such a thing possible?"

As Cal's well-modulated voice slowly faded, Rex Kane inserted himself. "I don't know, Cal, but I do know we need justice. Which brings me back to the donut issue. Some of you people have to learn to share. Winkle, let's see what's in your lunch."

In the melee that followed, Bentley VanderHaar, principal of Bedlam Christian, slipped out of the teacher's lounge and its accompanying moral questions. Only Christina Lopez saw the look on his face that was a combination of shame and thoughtfulness. She decided she would give him a day to chew on the issue, then she would put some article in his box. A day or two after that, maybe she would ask him about the payday loan store writing assignment again. She smiled a hopeful smile.

Turning Discipline Inside Out

by Alan Bandstra
Alan Bandstra (abandstra@scchristian.pvt.k12.ia.us) is a teacher at Sioux Center Christian School in Sioux Center, Iowa.

Adam is small for a sixth-grader, but his quick tongue more than makes up for his size. His claim to fame is his sense of humor, but Adam's antics aren't exactly what his teachers call mirth provoking. Many of their lessons are sabotaged by his remarks or his behavior. Perhaps the trait most unnerving is Adam's calmness under fire. You cannot intimidate this child who seems to enjoy being in trouble.

One day at school two teachers confronted Adam about his behavior. In the morning Mr. Lange caught Adam throwing paper wads in class. And Ms. Elliot talked with him about disruptive noises in her afternoon class. Both teachers confronted Adam, yet each saw a different response.

Mr. Lange reminded Adam about the type of behavior that is expected in his class and warned him that next time there would be a punishment. Adam looked directly back at Mr. Lange but said nothing. The tiny smirk on Adam's lips showed the pleasure he was getting from this negative attention. Not wishing to spend another recess inside, though, Adam decided to cool it, and for the rest of the morning he behaved – while Mr. Lange was watching. But whenever the teacher turned his back, Adam continued to act up, whispering to his neighbor and shooting spitwads through a drinking straw at a girl who sat nearby. The girl was afraid of being called a tattletale, so she kept quiet. At one point Adam pulled a face at the teacher's back, and several students giggled. Suspecting he was the culprit yet not having any proof, Mr. Lange just glared at Adam who looked back innocently.

Ms. Elliot, the afternoon teacher, approached Adam differently in her class. Privately, in a nonthreatening manner, she asked him if anything was wrong. She reminded him about the class rules and told him how difficult it was for her to do her job when students disrupted. She thanked him for his positive participation in past days and asked him if he could help her by continuing on that path instead. Adam agreed to try, and for the rest of the class he raised his hand often.

At one point when he became distracted and talked to his neighbor, Ms. Elliot calmly began walking toward him. Adam remembered his agreement and immediately turned his attention to the lesson again.

Why did two teachers see almost opposite reactions in the same student? Of course, each approached him differently, but was the style of confronting the only factor? Probably not. If Ms. Elliot did not balance her kind reprimand with a presence of authority in her classroom, a disruptive student would likely ignore or laugh at her gentle reproof. How does a teacher discipline without using threats and get better results than teachers who rely strictly on punishment?

Effective discipline

For starters, Mr. Lange and Ms. Elliot hold entirely different beliefs about discipline, and their beliefs affect their whole management style. Mr. Lange would tell you that children cooperate only when there is a reward to entice or a threat to compel. In short, his model operates from the outside in. According to Mr. Lange, external stimuli teach children to avoid the wrong and desire the good. Unfortunately, his rewards and punishments aren't working, and he knows it. It's the parents, of course, he tells himself. They don't teach respect for authority. And with the lack of support from our administration, how can you expect things to be any better? What Mr. Lange doesn't realize is that his management style is part of the problem.

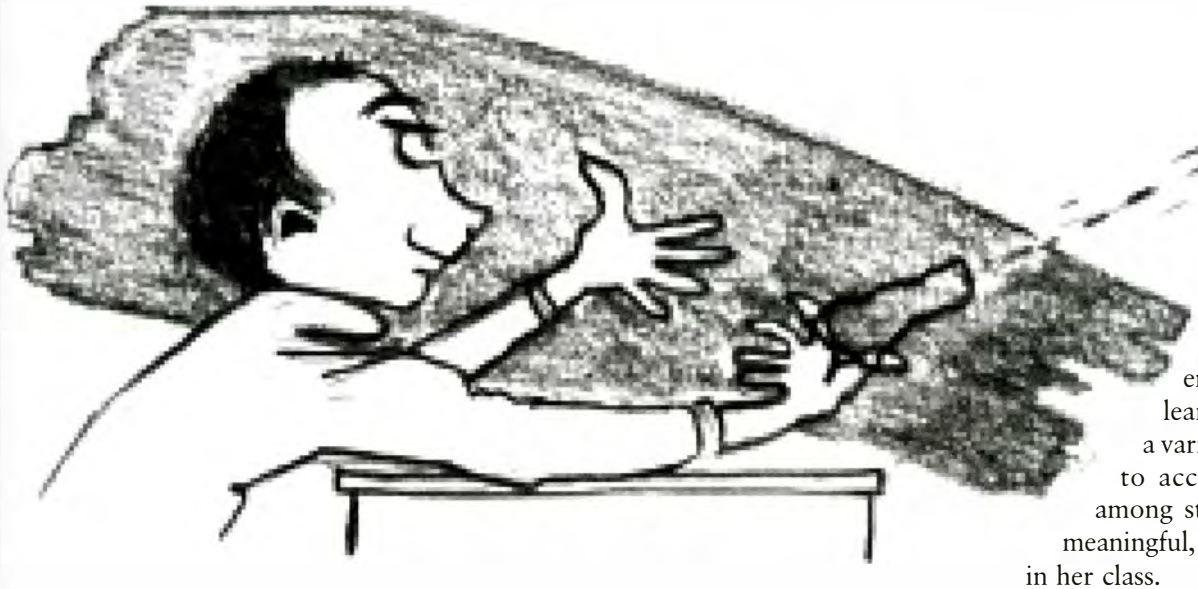
Ms. Elliot, on the other hand, believes that effective discipline works from the inside out. She knows that words and actions flow out of the heart, the core of a person's being. Her strategy is to work on the way children perceive things and help them understand that their actions affect others. When the heart is where it should be, appropriate behavior usually follows. Teaching students to love the good keeps them on track a lot longer than coercing them to avoid the wrong.

Mr. Lange and Ms. Elliot differ in more ways than just their views of discipline, though. If Mrs. Elliot approached the rest of her teaching the same way Mr. Lange does, her ideas about discipline would work only in Fantasy Land. Let's take a look at three other areas where Mr. Lange and Ms. Elliot diverge.

Building connections

Mr. Lange fears that befriending the students would compromise his authority, so he remains somewhat distant. Neither does Mr. Lange take the time to chat with the children or to get involved in their lives. An efficient worker, he tries to spend recesses correcting or preparing for class. Unfortunately, dealing with discipline problems consumes much of his break time.

Ms. Elliot has learned that children respond better to her reprimands when she takes the time to build positive relationships with them. She tries to visit with her students outside of class, and she demonstrates sincere interest in their lives. Of course, she intervenes when children do wrong, but usually a brief conversation suffices because of the bond that exists between the children and herself. Because her students like her, they don't want to disappoint her.



Cultivating a community

Adam belongs to a group of children who delight in making life miserable for others. They invent demeaning nicknames for some of their classmates and sometimes whisper rude comments about them during class. Mr. Lange is aware of some of this behavior, but he is not really sure what can be done. If the harassment is obvious, he keeps students in at recess or sends them to the principal. But he tends to ignore most of the smaller complaints about bullying. Boys will be boys, after all, and some of these victims just need to buck up. You can't protect them their whole life.

Ms. Elliot knows that Christian community doesn't just happen by itself. A teacher has to be intentional about cultivating a spirit of acceptance among class members, and Ms. Elliot works hard at it. She models mutual respect by celebrating the uniqueness of all students, no matter what their gifts. She carefully plans cooperative learning activities, making sure that all students have specific tasks and know their responsibilities. Over the course of the year, children of different friendship groups become more tolerant of each other and even have fun learning together in her class.

When conflicts do arise, Ms. Elliot meets with the students jointly to talk about their differences. Rather than trying to find out "Who started it?" Ms. Elliot utilizes these meetings as teaching opportunities. She helps students focus on how their actions affect others and she teaches them the skills of working through disagreements peacefully.

Delivering the goods

Mr. Lange and Ms. Elliot differ in their teaching styles as well. Mr. Lange follows the textbook closely in his lessons and units. He lectures most class periods, giving notes off the overhead. Assignments typically involve reading the chapter and answering the questions at the end. There is little time for activities because the book must be covered before the semester ends. Students cram for tests and then quickly forget what they have learned. Their apparent boredom frustrates Mr. Lange. He blames it on the influence of television.

Ms. Elliot realizes that an irrelevant curriculum causes apathy among students and usually results in management challenges. She attempts to design units that are more student-centered. Before teaching a new concept, she asks herself why this concept is so important for her students to know. What choices are they presently making in their lives that might be affected by learning this material? Using these questions as a starting point, she prepares lessons that will connect in as many ways as possible to what her students know, feel, and believe. Ms. Elliot also understands that children are created differently and possess different learning styles. She employs a variety of teaching strategies to accommodate uniqueness among students. The learning is meaningful, and children are engaged in her class.

Focusing on the heart

With a classroom like Mr. Lange's, where the learning does not stimulate and the teacher and students are opponents, outside-in discipline is perhaps the only option for maintaining control. In such situations the teacher has little choice but to coerce. However, in classrooms like Ms. Elliot's, where students and teachers enjoy each other and where teaching meets children's needs, inside-out discipline becomes workable and effective. Early on in my teaching I was Mr. Lange. His assumptions about children, teaching and discipline were my assumptions, and his frustrations were also my frustrations. Over the years, through research and good mentors, I have slowly become Ms. Elliot in the way I manage and discipline. This transformation has lead to a more enjoyable and productive teaching and learning climate in my classroom.

Just how does inside-out discipline work? Positive relationships and dynamic teaching eliminate a host of problems, yet students still get into trouble. Because the behavior of children is so closely tied to their feelings and perceptions, effective teachers aim at the heart. If the heart is focused in the right direction, appropriate behavior is likely to follow.

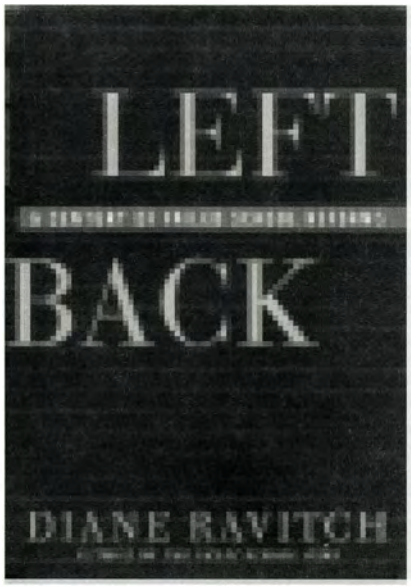
Book Reviews

Pedagogical Fads At Work

Steve J. Van Der Weele
svweele@calvin.edu

Diane Ravitch, *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms*. New York: Simon and Schuster. 2000, 467 pages plus 88 pages of notes, bibliography and index.
Reviewed by Steve J. Van Der Weele, Calvin College (Retired)

Americans have been aroused from their complacency about what is happening in their children's classrooms. Task forces in many cities, the August issue of *Harper's*, Congressional budget debates, cries for accountability, and new initiatives underway in cities like Chicago reflect this concern. At such crises, we need a historical perspective. Diane Ravitch's *Left Back* supplies such a perspective with stunning success. Much of the energy in discourse about education will be squandered if teachers, parents, administrators fail to understand the historical roots of problems that recur over and over. Ravitch's book serves the purpose admirably.



The overarching debate about education concerns the curriculum through high school. Should all children receive a more or less traditional academic education, with emphasis on language and literature, history, science, mathematics and foreign languages? Or should high school become an institution for sorting students out and preparing them for specific kinds of work, with a differentiated curriculum? The author tilts towards the first position. Acknowledging the mistaken approach of earlier proponents of the "education as discipline" theory and transfer-of-learning" approach, she believes that all students should have an opportunity to develop the more versatile intelligence offered by the conventional curriculum, whether or not they attend college. Any school with a curriculum which fails to prepare a student to exercise free commerce with the ages, confront her with the literary legacy of the world, and teach him mathematical concepts and skills is living beneath its obligation and privilege.

Spokespersons for the first position -- William Bagley, Charles Elliot, William T. Harris, Isaac Kandel, Michael Demiashkevich, Theodore Sizer, Mortimer Smith, and Albert Lynd, among others – give priority to intellectual development and oppose Dewey's pragmatism and "the fallacy of the immediate." Demiashkevich contends that the humanities help the student develop "a heart capable of possessing wealth without becoming its slave, a mind capable of using machinery without becoming its victim, and will prevent him from becoming a tool of the tools created by man himself." Study of mathematics and natural sciences would teach the students the art of discrimination and would inoculate them against "crises of credulity, unreflecting enthusiasm, and fanaticism." (294)

These philosophers of education, together with such writers from the public domain as Howard Mumford Jones and Walter Lippman, opposed throughout the debates the laissez-faire views of the progressivists – their improvised curriculum, without priorities or values, resulting in a failure to register any enduring ideas or supply any spiritual moorings. Paul Shorey prophesied that this cultural decline would bring about "a world of nothing but ragtime, chewing gum, chocolate sundaes, the wit of the Sunday supplements, best sellers, uncensored films, continuous vaudeville ... of Short McAbe displacing in the schoolroom our glorious heritage of English speech...." (119)

The progressivists, however much they differed among themselves, were united in assaulting the conventional ideas about education. The big names here are (after Rousseau, who looms behind them all) John Franklin Babbit, John Dewey, Lewis Terman, Paul Shorey, David Sneddes, and A. H. Lauchner, among others. Lauchner characterized – and caricatured – traditional education as "repressive, monarchical, barren, and repellent." They advocated a differentiated curriculum, one which would facilitate an easy entry into the student's world upon graduation.

It was James B. Conant, who posed as an educational statesman but who was actually an"insider," who called for the end of small high schools and proposed mega-high schools – institutions which could offer a vastly increased number of courses. That movement did indeed come to pass. In 1922, high schools were offering 175 different courses; in 1973, 2100. Now a student could prepare himself for his world through a wide array of practical courses, from film making to health studies, from shoe repair to canning vegetables and the rest. Gradually, decade by decade, this movement took over the country's schools, abdicating – so it surely seems – their responsibility to teach knowledge, character and appropriate behavior.

The progressive movement claimed scientific support for its program – the Intelligence Test. The reigning orthodoxy came

Useful Educational Tool

Michael J. Anthony, editor, *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House (Baker Academic Division). 2001, 747 pages, $49.99.
Reviewed by Steve J. Van Der Weele, Calvin College, Retired

Publishers who envision and follow through with a project such as this dictionary of education place educators in their debt. This volume, a unique and comprehensive reference resource consists of over 580,000 words and 850 entries by 117 contributors from a wide range of disciplines – theologians and educators primarily, but also psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists, and philosophers. The preface reads, "The articles included in this dictionary represent the salient issues facing Christian educators today." And so they do – from Atheism to Postmodernism, from Feminism to Laissez-faire leadership, from Plato and Aristotle to Prayer and Preaching, from Asian Theology to Children's Sermons, from Calvin to Process Theology, from Fetal Alcohol Syndrome to Comenius, from C. S. Lewis to Nuclear Families, from Kerygmatic Theology to Promise Keepers. The work has depth and breadth. The entries, though succinct, are more generous than one would expect in a dictionary – a modest title, by the way.

The work will have a broad and general appeal for all Christian educators. Entry after entry provides a useful introduction to names, movements and ideas for anyone who comes upon these for the first time or needs to refresh himself on such matters. Having said that, one needs to acknowledge the importance of the word "Evangelical" in the title. The theological orientation implied by the term explains the constituency of the editorial board (two editors are from the Southwestern Baptist Seminary, one from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and one from Fuller Theological Seminary), the choice of contributors, the inclusion of entries related to educational programs of the church, and, now and then, a particular view of a given topic. For example, "inerrancy" is not only included but robustly defended. "Infallibility" won't do – the stance which asserts the reliability of Scripture in all things concerning our redemption and God's purpose with his world. Another somewhat polemic entry appears where the editor defines the goal of education; "...to bring people to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ ... to see that they grow ... and to ultimately present them spiritually mature at the throne of God." Most readers of this journal will feel more comfortable with a more Trinitarian approach to education, with the view that contends that education begins with Creation. That view asserts that Christ, the Word, was involved in the creation of the world, and that Christ's redemption involves the redemption not only of humankind but of creation as well. (Scott Hoezee's *Remember Creation* sets forth this position very ably). Eugene S. Gibbs accurately describes the Reformed tradition, placing it in its historical context, from Reformation times to the renewal of Calvinistic thought in the 19th century under the leadership of Abraham Kuyper (p.159).

School boards should see to it that such a compilation joins other books on a reference shelf of basic educational tools.

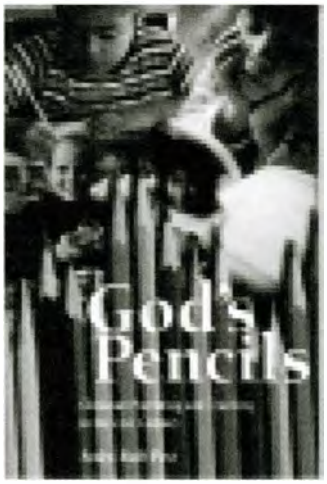
(*Continued from previous page*)
to be "the brutal pessimism" of Thorndike's "Intelligence is hereditary and immutable." Educators now could claim that students would be damaged by an academic education. The child's interests – however fleeting they might be – and aptitudes should determine the content of his education, not the body of knowledge which had traditionally been regarded as the proper resources to shape the mind of the child. Social efficiency and reform – not intellectual development – became the educational goals. The perpetuation of Latin, history, which required memorizing a scaffold of dates and events, and "the dead hand of mathematics" (Snedden's phrase) were seen as obstacles to these new social goals.

The results of these pedagogical fads became painfully obvious: unfocussed curricula, de-emphasis on homework, mediocrity, lowering of standards for the average student, anti-intellectualism, illiteracy, reading wars, and, yes, "the new math." Relativism, deconstructionism and postmodernism have followed in their train. Ravitch makes the point repeatedly that the professional educators were proceeding contrary to the wishes of the parents and contrary to burgeoning enrollments in the more traditional courses. And she reminds us frequently how this educational chaos has worked great harm on Afro-American students and immigrant children. The report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk*, represents one of many current efforts to stabilize the listing educational ship.

Ravitch's book is an enormously helpful work to help teachers see their tasks "steadily and to see them whole." But even her book has its limitations: it lacks a philosophic anthropology. She never asks the question, What is man? – the question Aristotle designated as the key issue – adding that the rest is detail. Let Augustine's observation provide at least a hint of how the book's deficiency can be corrected: "The glory of God is the human being fully alive." Now there is a principle which can serve as a basis for a sound educational program.

Brief Review Notes

by Steve Van Der Weele



Arden Ruth Post, *God's Pencils: Christian Parenting and Teaching in the 21st Century*. Grand Rapids: Calvin College Alumni Association. 2001, 185 pages plus six pages of references and supplements.

Professor Post has updated and added lively photos to articles she has written over the last 16 years for *Christian Home and School* (published by Christian Schools International). She has organized her articles under these themes: Developing Self-Esteem and Literacy in the Early Years, Helping Children Face Issues of Acceptance, Facilitating Literacy and Learning at Home, Developing Responsibility for Life and Learning, Facing Special Needs in Educating Children, Adjusting to Changes and Challenges in Family Life. Drawing on her learning and experience, she provides a reservoir of common sense and wisdom as she offers valuable tips for parents and teachers on raising and teaching children.

Stephen H. Webb, *Taking Religion to School: Christian Theology and Secu1ar Education*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press (A division of Baker Book House). 2000, 242 pages plus 11 pages of notes.

Taking Religion to School addresses the pedagogy of teaching religion in our high schools, colleges, and universities. Until recently, religious studies were taught with the methodology of science – empirically, dispassionately, critically, and with the aim of using the knowledge attained for manipulation and control. But a new teaching paradigm is not only needed, but is possible. It is of the essence of religion to be confessional, to enjoin obedience, to shape one's view of the world and his or her place in it. Teachers of religion must make room in their teaching for personal responses by their students – controlled and disciplined responses, so directed that the religious disposition of the student is creatively affirmed rather than suppressed.

"A religious education that is optional, local and faithful should not cause alarm to secularists in education" (p. 242). Theology must resume its rightful place as the structural framework for religious discourse – not just as another area of study, with a vocabulary as distant from the language of faith and belief as possible, but as a vital and confessional component of the discipline itself.

Corwin E. Smidt, editor, *In God We Trust: Religion and American Political Life*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing (Baker Academic), 2001, 276 pages.

This anthology of 14 essays will serve as an excellent supplemental volume for introductory courses in American politics. Its intent is to fill the gap in such studies, which largely slight the role of religion in American political life. All the contributors are Christian scholars who have published books, articles, or both. They are all members of the Association of Christians in Political Science who teach in denominationally affiliated liberal arts colleges and who are knowledgeable about the important role religion plays in public life. These chapters were originally written for presentation at the Conference of Christians in Political Science held at Calvin College, June 17-20, 1999. It was hosted by the Paul B. Henry Institute for the Study of Christianity and Politics.

Philip A. Greasley, General Editor, *Dictionary of Midwestern Literature*, Vol I, The Authors. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press. 2001, 553 pages plus 113 pages of Indices and Appendices.

This dictionary surveys the life and writings of nearly 400 Midwestern authors and identifies some of the most important criticism of their writings. Generous in biographical detail, the entries include helpful literary orientation as well.

This is the first of a three-volume series sponsored by the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature. Volume 2 will describe sites, centers, and movements. Volume 3 will present a literary history of the Midwest. The project in its entirety acknowledges the regional quality and the cultural landscape of this, the Midwestern region of the country.