A forum for Christian school educators

Christian Educators Journal

Volume 48 No.2 December 2008

"Greenhouse Blues"

The Importance of Culture for Good or Evil

Editorial

Bert Witvoet

Not All Cultures Are Created Equal

In Western democratic societies we have developed the myth that all cultures are of equal value and that it amounts to racism to criticize another person's or another society's culture. Nowhere has this fallacy been practiced more fervently than in the Netherlands.

With the influx of new immigrants and refugees in the '80s and '90s, Dutch society felt it was wrong to insist that newcomers adapt to their new homeland, that they and their children should learn to speak Dutch, and that they should avoid living in ethnic ghettos. This attitude came out of a feeling of guilt about past historical wrongs (think of Dutch colonialism) and a rejection of anything that smells of conservatism — the bane of the highest Dutch virtue: tolerance. The emptiness of this false tolerance becomes evident in the fact that many Dutch people are averse to singing the Dutch national anthem or raising the Dutch flag because it smacks of national pride. How silly and unbalanced can you get!

Historical amnesia

Ever since the Second World War, Dutch society has reacted strongly against its religious past. Dutch society had splintered into many factions (the term used is pillarization). Every religious group is represented in separate social and political groups. Even today in Holland there is no such thing as a majority government. All Dutch governments are coalition governments. That's quite a difference between the Netherlands and the United States, for example, where two parties dominate the political scene (you're either "red" or "blue"). In Canada political power is brokered between four parties, and a majority government is a possibility, though not a reality of late. Although the Netherlands has benefitted immensely from its Christian heritage, many of its inhabitants take great pleasure in ridiculing faith in God. Their view of history is characterized superficially by humility, but in fact, it comes out of pride — the idea that they are the inventors of justice.

Lack of integration

One of the benefits of its Christian past is that Dutch people tend to be generous. Tons of money gets collected on a regular basis for foreign aid. The social network in Holland provides generous support to newcomers, almost to the extent that it pays not to work. Not being involved in the formal economy hinders social integration for those who live off welfare. As a result, Dutch society consists of vast numbers of mini-societies that do not speak Dutch and that, in fact, look down on the Dutch.

This is especially true of the majority of Muslim newcomers. Their children are told that their host society is evil, that Dutch people are immoral. If a Muslim girl falls in love with a Dutch non-Muslim boy, she runs the risk of being killed either in Holland or in the country of origin where honor killings are easily accepted. This honor killing can be done by her father, brother or uncle (any male relative will do) to preserve the reputation of the family. A government study of two of 25 regions in the Netherlands revealed to a shocked population that, in the span of eight months, eleven Muslim girls had fallen victim to honor killing. What would the number be if all 25 regions had been polled? Something is wrong with a culture or religious group that practices honor killing in the name of Allah. Indeed, not all cultures are created equal. Last year a Muslim girl in Toronto was killed by her father because she liked to dress in Western clothing.

The voice of an insider

I have just finished reading the book *Infidel* by Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a former Dutch politician who came to Holland as a refugee from Somalia. Hirsi Ali has since moved to the United States where she does research. The purpose of the writing of the book was to awaken Dutch society and the world to the reality of the oppression of women in Muslim societies. Young girls are routinely incised on kitchen tables, children are beaten by their parents, women are beaten by their husbands, brothers have authority over older sisters, fathers can force on their daughters whatever marriage they deem suitable, women may not wear clothing that exposes their legs, arms and necks, they may not go out in public without a male escort, husbands have complete sexual control over their wife's body (her body is referred to in the Quran as "tillage"). A woman is solely responsible for adultery.

Islam needs to change

Hirsi Ali writes: "The kind of thinking I saw in Saudi Arabia, and among the Muslim Brotherhood in Kenya and Somalia, is incompatible with human rights and liberal values. It preserves a feudal mind-set based on tribal concepts of honor and shame. It rests on self-deception, hypocrisy, and double standards." These attitudes were imported into Holland by the Muslims who settled there. What upset Hirsi Ali was that so many Dutch people believe that Islam is a peaceful religion. Not so, says the author. The Quran is "a very tribal and Arab version of events. It spreads a culture that is brutal, bigoted, fixated on controlling women, and harsh in war." She and others began criticizing the moral and cultural relativism of the leftist parties.

Hirsi Ali continues to explain that making the transition to a

society that is honest and transparent is difficult. But, she adds, "We in the West would be wrong to prolong that pain of transition unnecessarily by elevating cultures full of bigotry and hatred toward women to the stature of respectable alternative ways of life.... Life is better in Europe than it is in the Muslim world because human relations are better, and one reason human relations are better is that, in the West, life on earth is valued in the here and now, and individuals enjoy rights and freedoms that are recognized and protected by the state."

Anti-dialogue religion

A Canadian Muslim woman, Raheel Raza wrote another helpful critique of Islam in her book *Their Jihad...Not My Jihad.* She confirms what other Muslim scholars have been saying, namely, that her religion "is frozen in time. Dialogue and debate, also known as *ijtehad*, an important cornerstone of Islam, has been deemed an unnecessary evil and has been stopped since the 16th century." She is less critical of the Quran and of the heart of Islam than is Hirsi Ali, who has rejected her religion. In fact, Hirsi Ali has stopped believing in any God.

Ms. Raza believes that there are two Islams practiced today. One is the Islam of the Prophet Mohammad — the Islam of peace and forgiveness and compassion, of tolerance and spirit, women's rights and equality. The other Islam is the militant, extremist, fanatic cult of those who misappropriate religious teachings to justify murder, inflict destruction on human society in the name of Shari'a, subjugate and suppress minorities and women to promote injustice...." We probably need to balance her views with those of Hirsi Ali's, who speaks more out of her experiences in Somalia and Saudi Arabia.

Multi-cultural benefits

I am not suggesting that we become insensitive to other cultures. Nor am I saying that our way of doing things is always superior. It is highly likely that most cultures excel in some areas and fail in others. No culture should present itself as the paragon of excellence in all areas. Together, as a rainbow of cultures, we have a better chance of interacting fruitfully and of taking up the cultural mandate given by God: to make the most of what this world has to offer and to develop it for the benefit of all and to the glory of God.

We can learn from other cultures. I personally am happy that I know at least two cultures intimately well. Having had my primary and secondary education in the Netherlands, and my tertiary education and career in North America, I understand that there is more than one way to express ourselves as a society. Schools do well to immerse their learners in other cultures. Multiculturalism as a way of showing respect for diversity can be a healthy practice in education and in society as a whole, *provided* we evaluate each culture honestly, including our own, using such standards as freedom of speech, freedom of religion, respect for life, public modesty, human dignity, inter-personal respect, freedom from violence, and equality of opportunity. When a culture lacks any of these standards, it deserves to be challenged.

Bert Witvoet

Christian Educators Journal

Published four times a year:
October, December, February, April

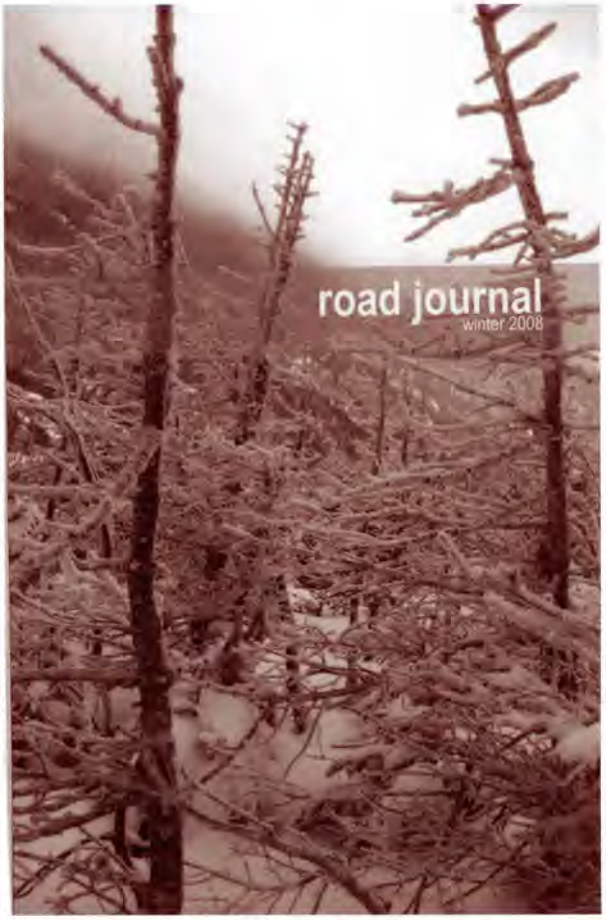
Reprint Policy:
We allow free reprinting or photocopying of individual articles that have appeared in our journal, as long as the copied articles are used within the context of schooling and the source is acknowledged.

Managing Editor: Bert Witvoet
Design Editor: Doug Roorda
Manuscript Editor: Nelly Westerhoff
Production Editor: Alice R. Oldejans
Business Manager: James Rauwerda

Teaching 'Culturing' of Creation by Example

by Kirstin Vander Giessen-Reitsma

Kirstin Vander Giessen-Reitsma (kirstinvgr@cultureisnotoptional.com) is a writer and teacher. She and her husband, Rob, publish a website — (www.cultureisnotoptional.com) and a journal.



Front cover of Winter 2008, the Road Journal of "Culture Is Not Optional"

My husband, Rob, and I were in high school when we first sat around the large dining room table of our friends in South Holland, Illinois. The table had to be large to accommodate the two families who lived in the house, as well as the constant array of visitors.

We were certainly intrigued by the choice these families had made to share a house in a culture of single-family homes. Over the next several years, we realized that was not the only unusual decision they were making. In an automobile suburb, they biked to work. In a period of "white flight," they committed to a neighborhood not in spite of, but because of, its diversity. In a media-saturated society, they minimized television and delighted in good music, good theatre, good literature, and traded recommendations with us whenever possible. Though their small community was not utopian and though its members wrestled solemnly with suffering, the joy of their commitments was obvious. Why doesn't everyone live this way? we wondered. These families were demonstrating for us an all-encompassing commitment to incarnate the love of Christ in all things.

Learning to be human

My experience at that house was an object lesson in something that I would come to understand later as emerging from a uniquely Reformed way of approaching the relationship between faith and everyday life. In fact, everyday life can't be separated from faith — it is the very arena in which our faith takes on flesh, the Spirit of God inhabiting the dry bones of the mundane.

College was a continuation not only of our connection with these South Holland friends, but a continuation of our journey to discover the implications of Reformed theology for culture, the ordinary and extraordinary ways human beings make sense of life in this world. Though our experiments were inevitably flawed, we lived in intentional community and discussed films. We wrestled endlessly with what faithful art looked like, what faithful shopping looked like.

All of these acts were intricately tied to what we were learning in and out of the classroom. We learned what it means to be human — to be created in the image of God, to be thoroughly affected by disobedience, to be thoroughly redeemed by sacrificial love. And then we tried to learn how to be human to God's glory.

Because God created all things out of love and because we were created in God's image as stewards of the earth, we needed to love all things, too. The Kingdom of God was not a disembodied la-la land, but an existing reality that promised to make itself complete on this earth, and we were invited to participate. Calvin Seerveld writes in the classic Reformed text *Rainbows for the Fallen World*:

Unless the first chapters of Genesis are simply a handy preface to God's revelation to refute macro-evolutionistic theories, Christians must hear what the Spirit is saying there to the churches, if they want the life perspective of biblically straightened out believers. Culture is not optional. Formative culturing of creation is intrinsic to human nature, put there purposely—God knows why. [1]

Competitors were waiting

We realized that as creatures who can't help creating culture every second of every day, it wasn't possible to compartmentalize faith to Sunday morning or daily devotions, but understood that such extravagant love had to spill over into every possible aspect of our lives — for something was going to fill that space if God did not. Narcissism, capitalism, nihilism, materialism and other ideologies were all understudies waiting in the wings to fill in a

dropped line or a missed entrance. These false ideas were no match for the victory of God over death in Jesus Christ, and we wanted to be completed in suffering and joy by following Christ's way every day.

We were so passionate about these ideas that we had to find a way to share them and to learn more from others about how to let God fill even the cracks we couldn't see. So we started camping together to share meals and stories about our efforts to live thoroughly transformed lives. Out of those camping trips came a desire to expand the conversation to whoever might want to participate. And so, named for Seerveld's quote, "*culture is not optional" was born in 2001 as non-profit organization maintaining an online discussion board.

A year later, we launched an online magazine called *catapult* that comes out every other week exploring various themes. *Eat Well* and *Do Justice* are the beginning of a series of topical collections of resources envisioning the Kingdom in particular areas of life. Subsequent gatherings and a biennial conference called Practicing Resurrection have continued to provide important face-to-face community around the desire to offer our lives to God in every aspect.

Classroom application

Now Rob and I find ourselves at an interesting place in which we can educate others about the ideas we gleaned from education. So how does the idea that "culture is not optional" influence the way we teach? As we engage students at the college level, one implication is that we attempt to model our South Holland friends in embodying the deepest values of our faith in even the smallest things. (Did I mention that those friends were also our high school teachers?) Theological education doesn't end in the Bible classroom; it encompasses home life, work life, leisure life, Sabbath life.

For example, in the context of a heavily theological curriculum focused on discernment, we consider carefully even the food we buy for retreats. We embrace the opportunity to have students around our own dining room table, recognizing from our own formative experiences how important conversation around a shared meal can be. In all of these things, we seek to understand and to help students understand the difference between the Spirit of God and the spirits of the age, for such a difference matters in all things.

The light of love

We haven't by any means discovered the key to unlocking the door to Kingdom life here and now, but, with the help of many mentors, we've been gifted with glimpses of what that reality might look like. Our best teachers did not underestimate the power of example in reinforcing what they were teaching in the classroom, and no doubt a cloud of witnesses also surrounded them. Maybe Seerveld's words were like a mantra: "Culture is not optional." Or perhaps it was a constant reminder from St. Francis to "preach the Gospel at all times, and, when necessary, use words." Whatever the immediate source of wisdom, it is the Ultimate Source of Light that has the ability to illuminate every corner of our lives with the light of love.

Footnote:

[1] Seerveld, Calvin. *Rainbows for the Fallen World*. Downsview, ON: Toronto Tuppence Press, 198 0. p. 24.

Suspicion About the Cultural Mandate

by Bert den Boggende

Bert den Boggende (bertdenb@yahoo.com) is a retired elementary teacher who lives in Brooks, Alberta.

Christianity has a history of looking askance at those who want to respond to the cultural mandate by exploring God's creation and by developing it. In December 1831, Charles Darwin, then twenty-two years old, joined the crew of the H.M.S. Beagle as its naturalist. The object of the expedition was to survey the south-east and west shores of South America, an expedition lasting about five years. While in Chile Darwin asked questions about earthquakes and volcanoes he experienced firsthand. In his account he wrote, "Some, however (like a few in England who are a century behind), thought that all such inquiries were useless and impious; and that it was quite sufficient that God had thus made the mountains."

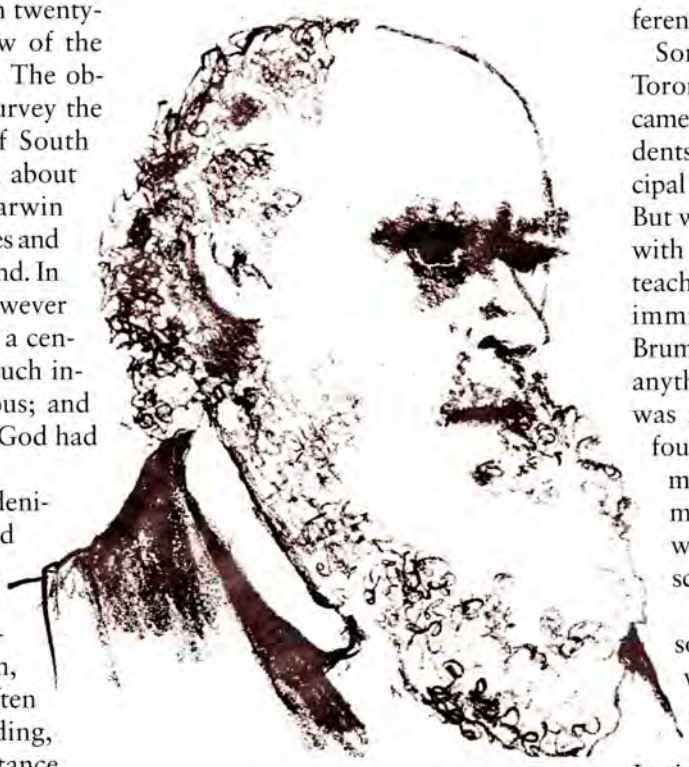
Darwin did not attempt to denigrate religion. In fact, he regarded himself a Christian "of some sort," and, when in Tahiti, he had much praise for the missionaries' achievements. But religion, in one form or another, has often impeded scientific understanding, perhaps the most familiar instance being the case of Galileo who stated that the earth moves around the sun.

Anti-intellectualism

A somewhat similar mentality can still be seen today. I recently had an opportunity to substitute-teach a few days in a Hutterite colony school. One girl told me she wished to become a teacher. However, when she turns fifteen, she will be taken out of school.

From these two examples it should be evident that the cultural mandate and Christianity don't necessarily go together.

Nor must it be assumed that Christian schools will vigorously pursue the cultural mandate. In my first year of teaching, in 1967-8 at the Christian school in Trenton, Ontario, I was blessed with and challenged by a very intelligent fifth-grade student. One day he asked me a question about evolution. Since I did not teach science, I could have told him to ask the science teacher, but that would have disappointed him. I explained what I knew about it, and since he did not ask any further questions, I assumed he was satisfied. Whether I did justice to Darwin is another matter. Years later, at another Christian school, I told about this experience, and one of my colleagues told me in no uncertain terms that I should have told the student that evolution was sinful. End of explanation.

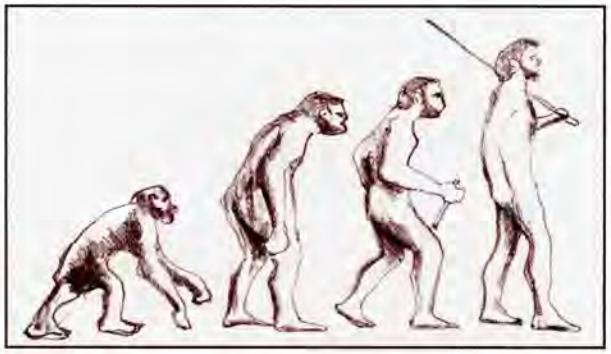


An important difference

While my colleague and I understood Christian education differently, I thought about it as being similar to public education with the addition of a study of the Bible. Most of the textbooks I used were indeed the same as those in the public school system. Two events made me realize that the cultural mandate made a difference.

Sometime during that first year, two Toronto Christian High School teachers came to Trenton to lecture to Christian students in the public high school. My principal suggested that I attend their lectures. But why should I spend a whole Saturday with what didn't seem useful? I wasn't teaching high school and being a recent immigrant, the names of Harro Van Brummelen and Bert Witvoet, didn't mean anything to me. I did go. Their material was not immediately applicable to my fourth- and fifth-grade class, but it made me realize that Christian education is more than guarding students against worldliness, and more than public school plus teaching Bible.

The second event had to do with the so-called Hall-Dennis Report, which was supposed to change Ontario's education. Again my principal invited me to attend a meeting with lectures by Institute of Christian Studies professors. At that time the ICS didn't mean anything to me, and I wasn't teaching in the public school system. Again, why go? I did, and what these professors said I had never heard before at my Dutch Christian teachers' college. Their penetrating observations showed the cultural mandate in action and made me realize that Christian thinking is not necessarily the same as thinking as a Christian. At that time I hadn't read Harry Blamires' book *The Christian Mind*, which begins with the sentence, "There is no longer a Christian mind." On the same page



he observed that "as a *thinking* being, the modern Christian has succumbed to secularization." I could see what he meant in my own teaching. I did not realize I was teaching math as a secularist until Harro Van Brummelen showed a Christian way of teaching math.

The mind of Christ

Over time I came to realize that taking the cultural mandate seriously implies the acquisition of the Christian mind. In turn this implied that as a teacher I needed to help students know and understand the thought patterns and actions of the modern secular world. Thus the cultural mandate creates a particular kind of Christian school. This doesn't mean that there are no other aspects of Christian education. Neil Plantinga, for instance, has posited that students need to be educated for shalom, which he defined as "universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight." In other words, the cultural mandate is not the sole determining factor in preparing students for an effective Christian life, but it is a very important component.

Superficially it looks as if I put the cultural mandate into practice by answering the fifth-grade student's question about evolution. However, that attempt was more accidental rather than intentional. As a teenager I had struggled with that issue. No one in church or school dealt with it; it was as if there was a conspiracy of silence. This silence nearly drove me out of the church, and, therefore, I didn't think that a fifth-grade student needed to go unnecessarily through such a struggle.

No room for playfulness

I had a comparable experience in art. I was using some leftover red and blue ink from the time before ballpoints. I asked the students to make the paper sufficiently wet but not too wet and carefully drip some of the ink on the wet paper. If it was properly done, the students could see some interesting shapes and patterns; if it was done improperly, they would end up with uninteresting blobs. The results were mixed, but the students had much fun with the experiment.

Later in the year there was a regional meeting of Christian school teachers and my principal suggested I take some of the better results along. So I displayed the art work, only to hear that the principal of another school soundly condemned the results: they showed nothing glorifying God. He showed some examples of the art *his* students had done: illustrations of biblical stories and texts accompanied by texts. While that could be regarded as one form of Christian art, it hardly exhausts that idea. Having fun in art is certainly a good educational experience, and so is exploring new techniques. Sure, our inherent imagination can be used in a sinful way, but delimiting imagination is a restriction of the creativity God has implanted in us as a reflection of himself.

Start early

The art experiment was not an intentional attempt to implement the cultural mandate. In contrast, a recent local Lutheran church bulletin noted that a fifth-grade teacher of a Christian school asked her class to look at TV commercials as a way to communicate ideas about God. The following are some examples, all starting with "God is like." "HALLMARK CARDS: he cares enough to send his very best;" "GENERAL ELECTRIC: he brings good things to life;" "COKE: he's the real thing;" "SCOTCH TAPE: You can't see him, but you know he's there." Rather than cocooning the students' imagination, this fifth-grade teacher wanted to interact with secular ideas.

It can easily be argued that elementary school students are not ready for the cultural mandate. But as the TV interaction assignment indicates, they can deal with it on their level.

Allow me one more example. Many schools use educational films, but on two different occasions I used well-known Hollywood films. In the first school, where I taught about a dozen junior high students, there were no school regulations about the use of films, and, in some cases, I asked parental permission — for example, for *Schindler's List*. The films were good tools to help us come to grips with some of society's ideas and ideals, and the students, often through intriguing discussions, had to use their biblical understanding and sometimes revise that understanding.

In the second school there were certain guidelines, making the choice of films much more limited. Since one of the sixth-grade students was, in my opinion, overly interested in guns and war, I showed small film clips which indicated that war under all circumstances is gruesome. While the students' reactions can be imagined, the parents had more objections. They wanted their children sheltered.

Here is a dilemma when one is trying to implement the cultural mandate: while the students are ready to interact with the ideas of the world around them, at least on their level, the parents are sometimes not. Put differently, how can teachers help students acquire a Christian mind and prepare them adequately to meet the secular world surrounding them, when parents themselves may not have acquired such a mind? My belief, however, is that just as math is taught in grade 1, so the cultural mandate should be taught right from the start, at a level students can comprehend.

The Artist As Prophet

by Chris Cuthill

Chris Cuthill (profcuthill@gmail.com) teaches art at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario.

One of my favourite movies of all time is a movie called *Network*. [1] Director Sidney Lumet, who made *Network* more than 30 years ago, attacks the falseness of contemporary media by exploring the corporate control of a TV network. The movie raises the question: If television isn't reality, then in what kind of reality do the people who create television exist?

Marketing anger

The main plot of *Network* follows TV news anchorman Howard Beale (played by Peter Finch) who works for a fictional fourth-rated TV network called UBS. Beale's ratings on the UBS nightly news hour have slipped, and he is about to get fired. In an act of desperation, Beale announces in the middle of his news monologue that he will "blow his brains out" on his program next week; an incentive to tune in. The UBS management team starts to do damage control and begins to try to balance Beale's mental breakdown against the soaring ratings. The network decides to cash in on Beale's anger by marketing him to the populace as the "mad prophet" of the airwaves.

The film is remembered for Howard Beale's many famous speeches, in which the seemingly crazed news man preaches a revolution from the shackles of capitalism, war, and corporate control. The words of one of his most memorable rants seem to resonate with our contemporary socio-economic situation:

Beale's rant

"I don't have to tell you things are bad. Everybody knows things are bad. It's a depression. Everybody's out of work or scared of losing their job. The dollar buys a nickel's worth; banks are going bust; shopkeepers keep a gun under the counter; punks are running wild in the street, and there's nobody anywhere who seems to know what to do, and there's no end to it.

"We know the air is unfit to breathe and our food is unfit to eat. And we sit watching our TVs while some local newscaster tells us that today we had fifteen homicides and sixty-three violent crimes, as if that's the way it's supposed to be!

"We all know things are bad — worse than bad — they're crazy.

"It's as if everything everywhere is going crazy, so we don't go out any more. We sit in the house, and slowly the world we're living in is getting smaller, and all we say is, "Please, at least leave us alone in our living rooms. Let me have my toaster and my TV and my steel-belted radials, and I won't say anything. Just leave us alone.

"Well, I'm not going to leave you alone. I want you to get mad!

"I don't want you to protest. I don't want you to riot. I don't want you to write to your Congressman, because I wouldn't know what to tell you to write. I don't know what to do about the depression and the inflation and the Russians and the crime in the street.

"All I know is that first, you've got to get mad. You've gotta say, "I'm a human being! My life has value!"

"So, I want you to get up now. I want all of you to get up out of your chairs. I want you to get up right now and go to the window, open it, and stick your head out and yell, 'I'm as mad as hell, and I'm not going to take this anymore!'"

Isaiah 11:6-9

In that day the wolf and the lamb
will live together;
the leopard will lie down with
the baby goat.
The calf and the yearling will be
safe with the lion,
and a little child will lead them all.
The cow will graze near the bear.
The cub and the calf
will lie down together.
The lion will eat hay like a cow.
The baby will play safely
near the hole of a cobra.
Yes, a little child will put its hand
in a nest of deadly snakes
without harm.
Nothing will hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain,
for as the waters fill the sea,
so the earth will be filled
with people who know the Lord.

To Beale's credit, he is not the lunatic the "network" would have us believe. For all his paranoid ravings, we begin to realize that Beale is strangely lucid as he exposes the machinations of the corporate-controlled media. He sees the madness of television and the sham that it has become. He sees the sham that *he* has become. Though Beale urges his viewers to "think for themselves" and "turn off the tube" he himself becomes another celebrity — another distraction. His audiences remain passive recipients of a message about revolution while complacently sitting in front of their television.

Prophetic entertainment

In the end we feel something of the frustration the prophet Isaiah must have felt. He was told by God to speak to the people, knowing in advance that they would not hear him, that his pleas would fall on deaf

ears. He was told that they, like Howard Beale's audience, would be entertained – but in the end, would be unchanged. There hearts will be calloused; their ears will be dull.

Sometimes we may just feel like going to a window and shouting. We may look out at a world gone mad and feel powerless to act. While writing these words the media restlessly discussed solutions to the financial crisis in the United States. Amidst the unending stream of Dow, Nasdaq and Nikkei numbers, a few statistics were thrown around. Apparently the amount of bonuses that Wall St. paid out to its executives last year exceeded the total amount that all countries contributed to the alleviation of poverty and third world debt. The seven-hundred billion dollar bailout used to temporarily prop up a corrupt market system could have completely alleviated all the poverty in Asia, Africa and South America.

These are numbers that make us mad. But given the enormity of such venality we feel powerless to act. Its hard to imagine a world where the rich don't oppress the poor, and where the wicked are not rewarded for their greed. The status quo is recalcitrant because those who control the status quo enjoy the advantage afforded by leverage. We live with an expectation of exploitation, and we do not imagine that it can be otherwise.

Prophets often feel the challenge of cultural apathy. And so it goes. Life as usual. We get up, run to work, drag ourselves home, pay the bills, watch TV for a couple hours, check in on Facebook, drop into bed, and then start all over again the next day. All the while we say, "We've been this way for so long, we cannot imagine being anything other than what we already are."

"Greenhouse Blues" (acrylic on canvas) by Peter Reitsma of Milton, Ontario. Reitsma writes: "The metallic skeletal remains (As the deer pants for streams of water,Ps.41:2) is frozen in a position of need and supplication on a melting ice floe. Mankind is altering the landscape. It is now well known that the survival of the caribou in the north is threatened by encroaching oil development and related global warming. Is it possible to give the land a voice? What would we hear and see?

Focus on imagination

What is a prophet to do? What Isaiah soon learns is that it is not enough to speak plain truth to the people. If you want to transform the heart you need to capture the *imagination* of a people. Taking captive the heart and mind requires more than fear or emotion, more than facts or knowledge. Consistently throughout scripture the prophets take an odd approach of using performance art and metaphors and mysterious visions to captivate not just the mind and the heart of the people, but the imagination.

In Isaiah 11 the prophet offers a whole series of strange and surreal images to the people — a shoot growing out of what seems to be a dead stump, carnivores and herbivores grazing with each other, and children playing harmlessly with poisonous snakes. He presents an imaginative vision of a kingdom where everything is out of whack. Wolves and lambs do not live together. Little children neither stroll with lions nor put their hands in a serpent's hole. Isaiah's depiction is completely unrealistic.

But Isaiah is using these unusual images to alter the community's perception of the situation. In the face of the people's despair, the prophet shouts, "I'll be your imagination. I will help you see."

See the abnormal

Which world, he seems to ask, is the real one – or, rather, which world better approximates life as God intends it to be? Wolves do not live with lambs, cows do not graze with bears, and children do not play with poisonous snakes.

On the surface this vision is absurd. But as Walter Brueggemann has suggested,

"what the poet means to say is that in the new age, these will be the normal things. And the effect of the poem is to expose the real abnormalities of life, which we have taken for granted. We have lived with things that are abnormal for so long that we have gotten used to them and we think they are normal." [2] Isaiah, rather than engaging in pure fantasy, seeks to challenge his people's conceptions and provide a wonderful array of new possibilities.

Brueggemann calls this the "prophetic imagination." [3] It is through the complex symbols of their visions and their bizarre metaphors that we hear both a clear call to repent and a recapturing of hope. The prophets didn't offer three-point sermons. It wasn't direct communication, and it certainly wouldn't go over well in our spoon-fed seeker friendly churches. The prophetic will always be at odds with the status quo.

Outside perspective

The theologian N.T. Wright argued that now, more than ever, we need prophets to help us imagine. We need prophets who are willing to stand outside society, to critique its visual branding, and to help us imagine something different. Wright connects this to artistic activity. The Bible, he says, "helps us to understand, to re-appropriate, to celebrate the role of the imagination as part of our redeemed, renewed, image bearing humanness.

You need imagination to live in God's world. The Christian church has often been bad at encouraging imagination, but the arts, the imagination, our capacity to create – these are not simply incidental to what it means to be human." [4]

Non-mainstream artists

Of course God may raise up prophetic voices from anywhere in culture. But it should not be surprising to us that some vocations are more likely to be the locus of their emergence. The arts are often a natural habit for prophetic voices — because the artist often feels excluded not only from a culture which retreats into soap operas, shopping and sports but from a church which is threatened by the untidiness of their expressions. Artists and prophets have a lot in common — they seldom have a place to lay their heads.

Sadly, the church (at least the Protestant church) has not always allowed the arts much room to help us imagine. All too often we have turned theology into an intellectual exercise — systematic, logical and coherent. In the wake of the Protestant Reformation, and especially in the aftermath of the Enlightenment stress on rationality, Christians have debated with deep suspicion the role of the imagination in the life of faith. There is very little room in our catechism classes for surreal images and flights of fancy. When we have allowed the artist into our theology, it is often as a support to what we already know to be true — a polite banner proclaiming Jesus is Lord, a tame series of landscapes as a backdrop to chorus lyrics or a benign illustration in a church bulletin.

"There is very little room in our catechism classes for surreal images and flights of fancy."

But the arts have their own indispensable role to play in what Jeremy Begbie calls the "ecology of theology" [5] — the whole gamut of ways in which the wisdom of God comes to be articulated. And certainly not all art practiced by Christians must or should be prophetic. But there is a place for the prophetic.

Role of subversion

The Christian community is often guilty of producing bad art. It's bad not because it lacks skill, but because it doesn't invite us to play. It dives for the easily recognizable symbol as a device for getting at a literal meaning. But art can be playful and prophetic — it can be suggestive *and* invite us to imagine anew with it — to interactively discover new meanings through suggestion-rich languages which are porous and open and at times ambiguous. In a world, where, as Beale puts it, things seem bad, worse than bad, we need new words and new songs and new images to help us look beyond. We need a new set of metaphors to experience the present world — metaphors and images that are not exhausted at first hearing but which invite us back to imagine with them.

As Brueggemann reminds us, it is not the artist's job to carve out a vision of what the future will actually look like. It is not their job to coerce or teach or to give advice. The artist-prophet, "does not ask if the vision can be implemented, for questions of implementation are of no consequence until the vision can be imagined." [6] Their job is to help us entertain a vision of the world that doesn't yet exist — to challenge and subvert the dominant reality and to help us live out the expectant hope that is promised by Christ's redemption.

References:

1) *Network*. (1976) Directed by Sidney Lumet. Written by Paddy Chayefsky. MGM.
2) Walter Brueggemann. *Living Toward a Vision*. (United Church Press, 1976) 45.
3) Walter Brueggemann. *The Prophetic Imagination*. (Augsburg Fortress Press, 1978)
4) N.T. Wright. *The Bible and the Christian Imagination*. Lecture transcript. (Seattle Pacific University, 2005)
5) Jeremy Begbie. *Beholding The Glory: Incarnation Through The Arts*. (Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 2000) xi.
6) Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*, 40.

Christian Education:

by Bert Witvoet

I'm a little bit disturbed by the fact that when some Christians talk about the nature of Christian education, they immediately connect it to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. They see the Christian school as an instrument to bring children to Jesus. The primary purpose, then, of Christian education is to save our children from the evil one now and from damnation in the end. According to this worldview, teachers are evangelists. Schools are extensions of the church.

To be sure, the Holy Spirit must be at work in Christian day schools if we are to achieve the goal that God sets before us. All participants — parents, teachers, students — need to have hearts that open themselves up to God, through the mediation of Jesus. But this spiritual connection, although an essential *condition*, is not the primary *purpose* for Christian day schools. Just as families don't exist to save people, but to become building blocks for a healthy society, so schools have a purpose that is built into the very structure of creation. Schools exist to help future parents, citizens, church members, and workers prepare for their life tasks. The school itself, then, stands in the service of what, according to the Reformed worldview, is referred to as the cultural mandate.

We are partners

As former Calvin College professor Gordon Spykman pointed out so eloquently in his book *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics*, "God mandates mankind, as his 'junior partners,' to join him as coworkers in carrying on the work of the world" (pp. 256- 257). According to Spykman, creation has three phases. *Creatio prima* [the first creation] which refers to God's primordial act of creating the universe out of nothing. This is followed by God's ordering process, called *creatio secunda* [the second creation]. This, in turn, is followed by *creatio tertia* [the third creation], the ongoing phase in the life of creation when we, his image bearers, bring the creation to its intended fullness.

"The original creation was good, but not yet perfect," writes Spykman. "It stood poised at the threshold of its historical development. God's creating work was finished. Nothing good was lacking. Both structurally and directionally, everything was in a state of readiness, laden with potentiality."

> Our primary mandate is cultural, not theological

By orienting Christian schools to the cultural mandate, we prevent them from becoming institutions that take over from the church its task to preach the gospel and to evangelize the world. God is not pleased when we ignore the beautiful task he has given to his creatures — to show off the grandeur of his work by unleashing the amazing possibilities that are hidden in the structure of this creation. God enjoyed making this world, and so did Wisdom (God's Son), who reminds us that he was there when the Lord made the world, "when he marked out the foundations of the earth." "I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in humankind," sings out Wisdom. Then Wisdom turns to us and says, "Blessed are those who listen to me.... For those who find me find life and receive favor from the Lord" (Proverbs 8: 30-35). We are invited to enjoy the task of further unfolding God's whole world and delighting in humankind to the extent that the curse does not unduly hinder us.

Culture and technology

Spykman makes a direct connection with God's instructions to Adam and Eve before the fall, and our tasks today. We don't need to limit the original cultural task to agriculture and tilling the earth. "In Genesis this cultural mandate, refracted into a resplendent array of mandates, is described in agrarian, pastoral terms appropriate to the culture of its original readers," writes Spykman. "But it is no less normative for a highly scientific, industrialized, technological, computerized society such as ours. Such a hermeneutic reflects the unique book the Bible is. In our obedient responses to this cultural mandate ... lies our blessing, our delight, our deep sense of satisfaction and service."

What has complicated our task is the fall into sin and the effects of that fall both on humankind and the whole creation. But that creation groans for redemption, for the restoration of this stunningly beautiful world. A student and teacher can do no better as servants of God than to revel in this task, to be curious and to anticipate new insights and discoveries.

Spykman underscores this enthusiasm for work, which includes studying and teaching, as he writes: "We are thus creatures made to whistle spontaneously while we work — free of the curse of sin, of chronic unemployment, of environmental exploitation, of workaholic enslavement, and of an obsessive craving for retirement. Free to image God in our daily tasks. Freed, too, from that false piety which seeks to negate the world for the sake of a higher spiritual experience. Free to delight in our cultural mandate. Would to God it were still so! It can be so now already! And one

Founded on the Cultural Mandate

day it will be so again, perfectly!"

No contradictions

The implications for the Christian school are that we focus on the testimony of truth found in the creation itself. There is no contradiction between what the creation says and what the Bible says. If its practitioners unveil what they discover in integrity and humility, there is no real dichotomy between science and theology.

Generally speaking, if people want to know what the difference is between a Reformed Christian school and a generic Christian school, you can do worse than explain that Reformed Christian schools seek the meaning of Christian education in the original cultural mandate. Reformed Christian schools prepare students for continuing the third creation phase, until Christ returns.

I quote Spykman once more time: "In our obedient responses to this cultural mandate — therein lies our blessing, our delight, our deep sense of satisfaction and service. In elucidating this cultural mandate, Scripture speaks of exercising 'dominion' over the earth and 'subduing' it. Too often these words have been cited as excuses for wantonly plundering the creational resources of land and sky and sea. Wrongly so, however, for ours is a subservient authority, to be expressed in earth keeping and caretaking. We are not to be greedy potentates, but faithful stewards of God's good earth, treating other creatures with tender concern as we seek to meet our appointed needs.

"For that important earthly task we need to be restored in heart and mind and soul by the power of the Holy Spirit. For that we need to put on the armor of salvation. For that we need to discern the false spirits that spawn confusing and detrimental educational theories and practices. The school is much helped in creating a strong and nurturing spiritual climate by what families build and what the church does. Together we seek first the Kingdom of God. Together we are a covenant community. But each institution has its peculiar task. And that of the school is preparing students for the adult task of realizing the potential laid down in creation."

I hope that all Christian schoolteachers and administrators can echo these words wholeheartedly. Our primary mandate is cultural and creation-bound, not theological or evangelistic and heaven-bound.

Being Good Neighbors:

Christian schools and our calling to restore neighborhoods with shalom

by Mackenzi Huyser and Bill Boerman-Cornell

"I believe we can only be adequate to the earth if we are adequate to our neighborhoods" Scott Russell Sanders

Item: Southwest Chicago Christian School Association recently discussed a plan that includes closing their Oak Lawn and Tinley Park Campuses (which serve increasingly racially diverse communities) in favor of building a new campus in the further outlying suburb of New Lenox, and a new school next to the existing Chicago Christian High School in Palos Heights. There are sound financial reasons for this move, but at a meeting about the plan, many constituents expressed frustration and disappointment that the schools they support and send their kids to are planning to leave their neighborhoods.

Item: Faced with concerns about declining enrollment, CSI schools in the Pella, Iowa area hosted in-services last year that gave both their faculties and school boards the opportunity to consider ways to make their schools more welcoming to families in their neighborhoods that might be unfamiliar with traditional reformed Christian schooling.

Item: Illiana Christian High School in Lansing, Illinois, has struggled with whether to move the school further south. New locations discussed by the board would provide for a shorter commute for some students from outlying areas (some of whom need to travel over an hour every day), yet such a move would also pull the school further away from both the educational resources of Chicago, further away from the residences of those who chose to locate closer to the existing school, and further away from several increasingly racially diverse communities.

Item: Calvin Christian School in South Holland, Illinois, also dealing with declining enrollment and a changing neighborhood, hired two public relations/development staff to seek support and students from the community around them. The school has recently experienced enrollment growth for the first time in several years and has gone from having primarily white students from around 20 mostly reformed churches, to having a racially integrated student body from over 70 churches from various denominational backgrounds.

Call for shalom

Each of these schools or school systems has at least two things in common. The housing choices of the parents and the way the community is defined both have a huge impact on the location of the school; and the location of the school has a huge impact on the members of that community. Schools affect the neighborhoods in which they are located and vice versa. What does this mean for Christians? What responsibilities do we have toward our communities and neighborhoods?

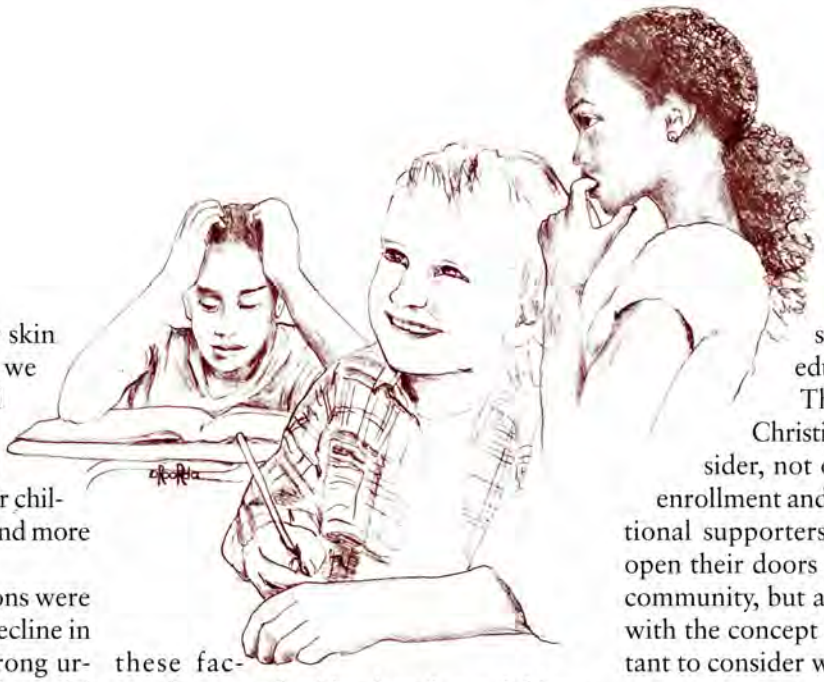
For Christians with a reformed worldview this responsibility involves the work of justice and participation in cultural tasks related to reshaping social structures, social institutions, and social relationships that reflect God's kingdom on earth (Breems, 2006). This work of justice and peace is called shalom. Nicholas Wolterstorff (1969) describes the concept of shalom in his book *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*,

"In shalom, each person enjoys justice, enjoys his or her rights. There is no shalom without justice. But shalom goes beyond justice. Shalom is the human being dwelling at peace in all his or her relationships: with God, with self, with fellows, with nature. (Reference to Isaiah 11: 6-8). But the peace which is shalom is not merely the absence of hostility, not merely being in right relationship. Shalom at its highest is enjoyment in one's relationships. To dwell in shalom is to enjoy living before God, to enjoy living in one's physical surroundings, to enjoy living with one's fellows, to enjoy life with oneself. Shalom is absent when a society is a collection of individuals all out to make their own way in the world" (p. 69).

Right, harmonious relationships with God and delight in his service; right, harmonious relationships with others and delight in human community; and right, harmonious relationships to nature and delight in our physical surroundings, are all included in our call to seek shalom. How can we apply this mandate to work for shalom to these current discussions about the location of our schools?

Negative trends

Most of us are familiar with the changing urban landscape that occurred in the 1950s and 1960s as a result of the phenomenon known as "white flight." We may also be familiar with the systemic (macro) reasons or policy decisions that contributed to this mass migration, such as the Federal Housing Administration programs and policies, the policies and programs developed with regard to transportation, and local zoning codes and land-use policies (Hardy, 2006). We may also be familiar with mezzo-level actions, including but not limited to, redliners (lenders who draw colored lines around safe, questionable, and unsafe zones in which to make loans), panic peddlers (when real estate agents hired African-Americans to walk up and down targeted streets so current home buyers would panic and want to sell their homes), and blockbusters (the real estate community pegging a neighborhood as white or black and steering whom they bring to see the neighborhood or tell about



the neighborhood based on their skin color: Suarez, 1999). And, finally, we may be familiar with micro-level reasons for leaving our urban communities, which for some included the fear of crime and safety for their children, better schools, and cheaper and more spacious housing.

The consequences of these actions were a decline in urban population, a decline in urban services, resources, and strong urban neighborhoods; an increase in racial segregation and class stratification; and, an increase in automobile use and urban sprawl (Hardy, 2006; Suarez, 1999). How did different classes respond to these macro and mezzo level changes? As Suarez (1999) states, "The poor saw themselves as stuck. The rich could surround themselves with physical barriers, continuing to live a charmed life in a declining city. The middle class lacked the cash to insulate themselves from the diminishing quality of services, but they had the one thing the poor did not: mobility" (p.7). Today the poor have been forced to move out of our central cities as a result of the demolition of public housing projects. They have been granted mobility, but only through housing programs and forced moves.

Greater freedom of movement

It is important to remember that economic status does not equal ethnic identity. It is unreasonable to assume that if an ethnic minority family moves into your neighborhood, that family is economically disadvantaged. Recent legal challenges to long established discriminatory practices have resulted in a growing range of freedom for ethnic minority families of all economic levels to purchase homes where they wish. In addition, the growing existence of an African-American and Latino middle class has made home purchases possible for a growing number of families. All of these factors have resulted in changing neighborhoods, and many of these neighborhoods are where our Christian schools are located. How are we responding to our new neighbors? How are we, as Christians trying to live in shalom, welcoming our new neighbors into our communities?

What do we do, for example, when racism rears itself and families living in these neighborhoods move away because of the fear of declining property values? Or what happens when new neighbors move into a neighborhood only to be shunned as previous residents talk about how "the neighborhood changed."

What can we learn from our history to help us in our response to building neighborhoods with shalom? How can we work for right, harmonious relationships with God and delight in his service? Right, harmonious relationships with others and delight in human community? and, right, harmonious relationships to nature and delight in our physical surroundings? How can we, as Breems (2006) states, "be hopeful and vigorous in applying our knowledge toward realizing peace in culture: shalom"? What message are we giving to our new neighbors when we make the decision to move our schools?

Regardless of why we are moving, how will our neighbors interpret this move? How should we define our communities and define the communities which serve our Christian schools? Whom are we called to serve through Christian education?

These are questions that Christian schools need to consider, not only because declining enrollment and commitment by traditional supporters is *forcing* schools to open their doors to the wider Christian community, but also because in keeping with the concept of shalom, it is important to consider what is *right and just.*

Dr. Mackenzi Huyser is an associate professor of social work at Trinity Christian College. Her contact information is: Mackenzi.Huyser@trnty.edu, 708-239-4809.

Prof. Bill Boerman-Cornell is an assistant professor of education at Trinity Christian College and serves on the CEJ editorial board. His contact information is Bill.Boerman-Cornell@trnty.edu, 708-239-4932.

References:

Breems, B. (2006, August). *From the garden to the city: Devotions and response to Clinton Stockwell and Michael Sider-Rose's presentation of the "New Chicago".* Paper presented at the meeting of the Trinity Christian College Faculty Association Orientation, Chicago, IL.

Hardy, L. (2006). Dysfunctional Cities: Where did we go wrong? *Christian Reflection: Cities and Towns,* 11-19.

Sanders, S.R. (1993). *Staying Put: Making a Home in a Restless World.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Suarez, R. (1999). *The old neighborhood: What we lost in the great suburban migration 1966-1999.* New York: Free Press.

Wolterstorff, N. (1969). *Until justice and peace embrace: The Kuyper lectures for 1981 delivered at the Free University of Amsterdam.* Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

p@nel•edu

Albert Boerema
ajb37@calvin.edu

Should the adjective 'Reformed' be dropped?

September 22, 2008

Al Boerema raises the questions:

In February 2002, Clarence Joldersma, the former moderator of this column, posed the question: "Perhaps peculiar to CSI schools is the question of confessional identity. Do we want the schools in which we teach to be known as (1) Reformed Christian schools, or (2) Christian schools with a distinctly reformed outlook, or (3) should we drop the adjective 'Reformed' in all our promotional material, staff discussion, staff hiring and what not, so that we can be known as Christian schools?" Six years have elapsed. Let's discuss this adjective again. Is it still important to use this term in identifying our schools? What are the implications of using it or not using it?"

September 27, 2008

Jolene Velthuizen writes:

Hello to you all from the Southwest!

Growing up thick in the reformed tradition has instilled a special place for the solid reformed theology in my heart. However, I never want this tradition I am part of to be exclusive. One treasured aspect of our small Rehoboth Christian School is the variety of religious traditions that our school represents and welcomes. I have students who are strictly Christian Reformed, more who come from other Christian denominations, some whose families stick strongly to the Native traditional religion, and even one who is Mormon. Teaching the Bible curriculum developed by Christian Schools International (CSI) in this mix is both great fun and a challenge!

Jolene

September 27, 2008

Christian Altena adds:

Greetings from the south side of Chicago:

In my opinion, the reformed perspective should never be deemphasized in our schools. That said, with the changing and diverse demographics of many of our schools, we have to think very carefully about how we can best explain ourselves to parents and students who don't come from a reformed background. Many from other traditions confuse being reformed with being Dutch and Christian Reformed; and, indeed, many students from reformed churches have very little awareness of the waters in which they swim. When explaining it to parents and my students, I try to keep it simple by saying: "Our world belongs to God!"

Christian

September 30, 2008

Bruce Wergeland writes:

Good morning from the sunny Pacific Northwest! The reformed perspective that exists in CSI schools is a wonderful testimony to parents and educators who understand the need to immerse their children in biblical truth and practices, as described in the book *12 Affirmations of Reformed Christian Schools*, for example. However, this perspective is not unique to the reformed tradition, but would be widely accepted amongst all streams of the church: Protestant, Catholic and Eastern Orthodox. What I believe sets the CSI schools (and the reformed tradition) apart is their intentionality and doctrinal emphasis in the propagation of this biblical message. Unfortunately, the word "reformed" is a loaded term, both culturally and historically.

Bruce

October 7, 2008

Tim Leugs writes:

Hi everybody,

I agree with the need for us to assure that we enfold students from a variety of different denominational backgrounds, but I think it may be against our best interest to rid ourselves of the heritage from which many of our schools were born. The identity we gain using the reformed perspective (namely, Christian's statement that our world belongs to God) places all subjects under God's reign — and should make the immense financial investment of our constituents worthwhile. The reformed perspective allows us to justify that all subjects are subjects that are taught in a perspective almost certainly not offered by public schools and possibly not offered by many other Christian schools.

Personally, I believe that the reformed tradition is the tradition that best helps me to understand God, his grace, and my role in the world. That said, I also know that the ways in which I see God at work are not necessarily the ways that other brothers and sisters in Christ see God at work (it is in this regard that I sometimes envy the opportunities Jolene encounters!) There is tremendous variation within the body of Christ, and it is important to recognize that no one denomination perfectly reflects the Kingdom. That's the simple product of a sinful nature. Nonetheless, the perspective of recognizing that God is making all things new allows those of us within the reformed tradition to reach out to other denominations with openness and a broader and more responsible view of ourselves as Kingdom builders.

Tim

October 8, 2008

Christian summarizes and asks:

We've all been talking about diversity, both within Christendom at large and our individual school communities. As many CSI schools experience increasing percentages of students coming from non-reformed churches and an ever widening circle of backgrounds, is there something about the reformed perspective on Christian education and the way it addresses culture and creation that might be more beneficial and powerful than ever? Does this perspective build bridges between differing Christian experiences, or does it throw up walls?

Christian

October 11, 2008

Tony Kamphuis adds:

It comes back to the view of creation that makes all the difference. Every school, public, Montessori, or Christian is built because someone wants to explain to children what the world is like and how they should understand their place in it. Christian schools built on the reformed notion that God created a wonderful world that is damaged but not abandoned, and that we can play a role in signaling its redemption, have a fantastic starting point for a relevant education that reveals the meaning of life.

Tony

October 14, 2008

Bruce jumps back in:

Good Morning. I don't think that this column is ready to close quite yet, so I would like to extend our discussion. Are we making huge assumptions that the reformed tradition is really embraced by all CSI schools? From my own experience, it is apparent that this tradition, in most CSI schools, is only about the sovereignty of God. The totality of the reformation doctrine and perspective has been flattened, so that it can be more inclusive of other denominations, dogmas and even other faiths. I don't believe that most CSI schools are sincere in their adherence to the tradition that they think that they are upholding; if they were, most classes would present a biblical interpretation that is narrower than I have witnessed in my own teaching experience. The reality is that most CSI schools are no longer reformed Christian schools due to their having been influenced by the secularization within Western culture. Thus, the reformed perspective is no longer pervasive within the curriculum, and the reformed label is all that may be left in most places. Then what is the purpose and direction of a CSI school if it is not truly reformed?

Potentially, a CSI school can move in one of three directions: first of all, it can rightfully remove the adjective reformed from its title, or even the reformed perspective from its curriculum, and widen their scope to become a "catholic" school — indeed, a Christian school for all people that promotes the universal claims of Jesus Christ based on the teachings of the New Testament and the early church; secondly, a CSI school may flatten its biblical perspective even more (through secularization) in an attempt to be more inclusive to a broader cross-section of the community (with the adoption of a new adjective in front of their name, such as independent or alternative); or, finally, the school may critique its mission statement and curriculum, and assess whether it is willing to make the necessary changes for a return to the fullness of the reformed tradition, and then make a strong commitment to an exclusive perspective within the Christian community. CSI schools need to be authentic in their claims about Christian tradition, regardless of the doctrine, sacrament or practice. I hope this stirs the pot a little.

Bruce

Well, stir the pot Bruce did. We were not able to contain the next passionate exchanges of views in this issue, so we will publish the second installment in the February issue.

Editor

What Was I Thinking?

by May Drost

May Drost (wdrost@cogeco.ca) is a retired teacher of English, who, with her retired principal and husband Wayne, lives in Sarnia, Ontario

Some time ago this journal carried an ad for the Education Department of Calvin College featuring the old saying, *Discens doces docens discis;* that is, "By learning you will teach, by teaching you will learn." When I was in the throes of retirement, I had to think of some suitable responses to the gracious comments of friends, relatives, and students. The phrase I used most often was, "Well, I learned more than I taught." Thinking about that comment now, I realize what a whopping understatement it was.

When I first began teaching, I didn't know much. I am not indulging in false modesty here. I knew something about my disciplines. I knew a bit about integrating my faith with my subject areas — in theory at least. I knew about course outlines and Ministry of Education requirements. What I had to learn — from scratch — was how to share space day in and day out with students who had pre-conceived notions just as I did, whose likes and dislikes about being in a classroom were just as valid as mine, and whose experience we could draw on as much as my own. Learning, I soon found out, is not an enterprise that starts from the top down (the top being the teacher), but a shared activity with everyone contributing (or detracting, as the case may be).

*****

In the spirit of sharing some snippets of wisdom from the educational cracker barrel, I'd like to recall some lessons I learned from my students:

When are you going to figure out that there's more to life than school? This comment came from a student along with tears of frustration after I had assigned some additional homework because most of the students hadn't finished the previous night's work. Because I personally wasn't taking the time to have much of a life besides school, I assumed the same about my students. Big mistake on my part. I should have developed more interests beyond my career: I might have been a better teacher.

"I can't believe that people are more fascinated by a fat old f—t in a red suit than by Jesus Christ. I grew up so afraid of false piety that for many years I had a hard time being candid about my own faith for fear of turning students off." The eleventh grade boy who made this remark went on to talk about his admiration for Jesus without hesitation or embarrassment. The lesson I learned: If your faith is real, talk about it.

"Don't take it personally, Mrs Drost. We don't always think of you as really being here." The kind young man who shared this thought with me had noticed that I had overheard some girls talking about the "stupid" poem we had just been discussing. He saw that I was hurt and disappointed and was trying to cheer me up. He did more than that. Unwittingly he showed me how unrealistic I had been in wanting everyone to like what I liked. It's humbling to be considered part of the woodwork, but it's liberating to learn that "it's not about me."

"You can't say that to a student!" The girl who blurted that out was angry about what I was saying to another (chatterbox) student in an attempt to curtail her talking. That lesson was specific and straightforward. There are lots of things teachers should never say to students. I know that now. Wish I had known it sooner.

"Why do you mark so hard? I worked my butt off on this essay!" This outburst did not change my mind about setting standards for writing, but the dismay accompanying the remark made me think of a comparison pop fiction writer Danielle Steele is alleged to have made: A bad review is like baking a cake with all the best ingredients and having someone stomp on it. What I learned is that there's a big difference between stomping and grading.

"What if I won't?" This in-your-face kind of disobedience is what I used to have nightmares about. But here's the thing, (to quote Barak Obama). In this particular instance I had asked for trouble by issuing an impossible order. I learned subsequently that most ultimatums are a dead end, and consensus works much better. I also learned that my agenda is not the only important one, and that my priorities are sometimes self-serving.

******

The big lesson that I learned (probably much too late) is that as a teacher/authority figure I am never to glory in my power or to pull rank. Instead, I am a servant, called upon to give leadership in such a way that responsibility moves steadily away from me and toward my students. The ideal classroom is one where, once set in motion, the learning activities hum right along because the students have "taken charge." Teachers, like parents, need to know when to "step out of the way."

Being a parent as well as a retired teacher, I have stepped out of the way. I am now redundant on two fronts.

What's Up With This "Integration of Faith and Learning"?

by Donald Oppewal

Donald Oppewal (doppewal9166@messagelink.com) is professor emeritus of education at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

If you've moved about in Christian school circles for any length of time, you must have heard the phrase "integration of faith and learning" used. Maybe it was in a teacher's convention speech or in an article on the features of a Christian school that distinguish it from a public or secular school.

The context in which the phrase is used often suggests that our religious beliefs and our educational practices are joined or interact with each other. The term "integration" suggests that the two are not simply two separate elements of our educational outlook, but they are in interaction with each other — not just standing side by side, but embracing each other. An example of this could be the way Christians understand corporal punishment because of their understanding of what the Old and New Testaments say concerning children. The actual practice of classroom discipline is, then, in this view, brought together with the faith component.

Special insight

Some prefer the phrase "Christian perspective on education" to suggest that the Christian element gives us special eyes to make given practices more attractive. For example, some have suggested that, of all the pedagogical moves available to any teacher, cooperative learning strategies are most compatible with the biblical picture of all humans being image bearers of God who are responsible to each other.

Some have abandoned both these phrases as being unhelpful or misleading; they opt for the phrase "seeing through the eyes of faith." This expression may resonate with the assertion that the Christian uses the spectacles of Scripture to view life and all that is in it.

All these points of view try to articulate that one's biblical understanding and Christian view of how we know anything produces a set of beliefs that might be called one's educational philosophy.

Whatever phrase is most meaningful to you as you select bits of subject matter, maintain a given form of classroom discipline, or determine how seriously you take individual differences in students, I would insist that all three phrases are helpful. They give us confidence that we are not unthinking or careless about what practices and preferences we have adopted.

> "Everybody believes that schools pass on content, but there is little agreement about what content is essential."

Curriculum selection

Unless we are called to be slaves to a textbook or to merely repeat what we have been told about a subject when we studied it in college, it is our professional responsibility as teachers to make a conscious decision about what aspects of a subject we will select from a vast array of possibilities. In this process of selection we can use our religious faith as a guide.

Everybody believes that schools pass on content, but there is little agreement about what content is essential, what is peripheral and background, or what is incidental for Christian educational purposes. Designers of standardized tests (tests that may be different for each state) assume some centralizing tendencies in choice of subject matter. However, they still do not give us Christian teachers an obligatory formulation of priorities in any given subject, whether that subject be mathematics, science, or history. That leaves accountability for many curriculum choices to us teachers, either personally or collectively. The desire to be different in our choices from public school educators puts further pressure on us to think carefully about what we do rather than slavishly follow commercial texts or state-sponsored tests. So now what?

General and special revelation

To establish a strong link between faith and learning requires a solid understanding of what theologians have called general and special revelation. According to them, the Bible is God's special revelation to us, and the created world contains his general revelation. We need to consult both forms of revelation if we want to be thoughtful teachers, and their interaction in our choices legitimizes our claim that we are offering a faith-based education. For the benefit of those who appreciate Reformed doctrine, I could add that this notion of both general and special revelation is rooted in the Belgic Confession, which dates back to the 16th century. In section 2, entitled "The Means by Which We Know God" we read: "We know Him by two means." Focusing on one of those means, namely, general revelation, the Confession states that we know God "by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe, since that universe is before us like a beautiful book in which all creatures, great and small, are as letters to make us ponder the invisible things of God...."

This language suggests that Christians, in addition to the Bible, have a second book that tells them of God's nature. This sec-

ond book is what gives special direction to our work as educators. While pastors and theologically trained scholars are experts in what the first book, Scripture, tells us, we are specialists in what general revelation can show us.

While we teachers have some training in the first book via in worship services, college courses, and Christian periodicals, it is our higher professional education that exposes us to what general revelation has revealed. Through our academic majors and minors we gain the right to be called specialists. While our pastors have been immersed in the intricacies of classical languages, principles of exegesis, and church history, we as professional educators immerse ourselves in such disciplines as psychology, science, history, mathematics, and literature. While theologians are experts in special revelation because of their training, we are experts in general revelation.

Need for specialists

Those of us who have attended a Christian teacher training institution have been blessed with liberal doses of each of the two books of revelation. It is understandable, then, that many of us have been engaged in such issues as the age of the earth, the status of slavery, the uses of corporal punishment, and the role of women in church and society. By the very nature of our training and daily work with the young, we cannot but encounter both the views of the past and the contribution that contemporary studies of general revelation make to changes in view within the Christian community. If the community of Christians is ever to come to a unified view of current or future issues like abortion, homosexuality, or war, it will be because of the leadership offered by Christian scholars — by those who are specialists in both books, the book of special revelation and the book of general revelation.

But, you say, how does an elementary or secondary school curriculum maker get any help from the two-book doctrine of the knowledge of God? When the Psalmist says, "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows his handiwork," how can we translate the key words "glory" and "handiwork" into our choice of curriculum emphases? Would we have to settle for showing amazement, wonder, admiration at anything that we include in our curriculum content? Would we be able to view a sunset with anything more than an emotional response of wonder and a feeling of awe? How would we formulate this into a knowledge of God's very nature?

> "Both books have a potential for knowing God."

Help from Berkhof

For me some help has come from Louis Berkhof, writer of six volumes of theology and once President of Calvin Seminary. His condensation of the six books can be found in *Manual of Christian Doctrine*, first published in 1933. He made popular the terms and distinctions between special and general revelation.

In 35 pages he dealt with the worth of each and the connection between them. The part of his lengthy treatment that seems to provide some direction for Christian school teachers is in the following assertion that general revelation "consists in an embodiment of the divine thought in the phenomena of nature, in the general constitution of the human mind, and in the facts of experience or history." (p. 26)

Berkhof seems to be saying that studying the natural world (science) leads to a knowledge of God, and that psychology, literature, and art do as well. He also identifies history as another place to look for knowledge of God. He also has much to say about how the two revelations support each other, and that answers about God's nature come from both. The relevance of this view to teaching is at least this: not only are Bible and religion classes paths to the knowledge of God; so are other subjects in the school curriculum. Both kinds of subjects make the Christian school different from those schools based on a secular worldview and which can take seriously only one of the two sources of the knowledge of God.

Such a viewpoint is also different from those Christian schools that believe that only the Bible holds the whole truth about the nature of God. Parochial schools, because they are owned and operated by an ecclesiastical body, usually some denomination, reflect the conviction that all courses are to reinforce the specific doctrines of that denomination. They thus make Bible knowledge and mastery of it the most powerful part of the school day. Ecclesiastical officials who take on the role of principals and teachers reinforce the impression to students that the Christian day school is really an extension of church schooling.

In our two-book doctrine of revelation, both books have potential for knowing God. Religion classes teach some of the characteristics of God, and the rest of the curriculum focuses on other facets of his nature. Both give us teachers opportunity to look for evidence in what we teach, thereby showing concretely that our schools are "faith based."

Getting specific

If we were to follow Berkhof's charac-

teristics of general revelation, we would likely conclude that he is urging special attention to the cognitive domain or the intellectual aspect of any classroom subject. When he says that general revelation consists in "an embodiment of the divine thought," he is not necessarily claiming that "thought" is the *only* way that God is revealed — only that it is an important way. Laying aside for now the other objectives to be achieved in any subject matter, Berkhof's description still needs some application and be put into the language of the curriculum maker.

Getting more specific would mean that regularities, laws, and generalizations would be constantly highlighted and underscored and tested. In science it would mean that textbooks and teacher would, as one science textbook has it, repeat phrases like "creation is ordered" and "creation follows plans that God made" as well as that nature shows "patterns that God set up." If this approach were pursued vigorously and persistently, then teachers would frequently give special emphasis to laws and generalizations that are imbedded in the pool of facts. Simple examples would be the laws of gravity, laws of motion, or laws governing the principle of the lever. For older students the law of osmosis would be another example.

Of course, these and other "laws" have a practical value in summing up lots of data, but, if Berkhof is right, they as generalizations are particularly well suited to give insight into the nature of God. There is great variety and diversity in nature. In butterflies, for example, there are differences in color, in means by which they fly, in what they eat; and there are always laws that govern their flight however different they appear.

Perhaps it is time to capture the term "intelligent design," not just for science but for all courses and subjects. We would be rooting it not simply in observation alone, but also in the biblical evidence. The Bible itself is full of references to laws, and not just the Ten Commandments. Broadening the term "intelligent design" would join the two books of revelation in giving the same message. The spectacles of the Bible and the spectacles of telescopes, microscopes, and organized reason all complement each other. Of course, if the same God wrote the two books, they would both reflect the primacy of order over chaos, for the earth as well as society.

Rules and regulations

Subjects like language show order and regularity, as well as variety and beauty. Berkhof would seem to favor, or at least include for special attention, the regularities and rules in grammar and spelling. They especially give a glimpse of God's nature as including order. Language, of course, also exists in a tremendous variety of dialects and languages, but no languages are without structure or rules of usage.

Subjects in social studies, whether civics, geography, or psychology, would also focus more on the similarities in structures of the person and society than on the differences found in every tribe and nation. Marriage practices differ widely in various cultures and times, but the concept of marriage as a legal and public contract is universal, is it not? The pieces and parts (facts) of a subject reveal God less than the generalization or law exhibited in them.

Let's look at mathematics for a moment. When Pythagoras articulated the fixed relationship between the sides and the hypotenuse of a right triangle, he was discovering more than a helpful rule for doing geometry. Although some have assumed that math as a system is simply a fabrication of human minds, Christians believe that such regularities and laws reveal God as one who favors order over chaos.

Beyond facts.

History is filled with facts and pieces and parts of a puzzle. Berkhof would seem to want to rescue history from being merely a vast accumulation of items (like names, dates, rulers, and movements) and give some credence to the assertion that God reveals himself in history. When the causes and effects of given cultural practices are highlighted, we as teachers can get beyond the pieces and parts of the past and show that God is at work everywhere. When practices in agriculture are shown to have an effect on the health and wealth of a nation, and when laws of supply and demand are in evidence, then we can conclude that God is being revealed. Generalizations about both the causes and consequences of war will show patterns that reveal that God is not arbitrary, but a being of cause and effect. All these generalizations arise out of facts, but they transcend the facts to make a religious point.

Reformed Christian educators are always looking for ways to put a Christian stamp on subject matter. Both textbook writers and lesson plan makers can, by using this two-book doctrine of revelation, show our students that God is present in all subject matter.

None of the above would require teachers to fill their classrooms with God talk, although some of it is always appropriate. Much of the integration of faith and learning would go into the *planning* of the curriculum. This curriculum selection would have the cumulative effect of showing that the created world and its people reveal a law-ordered reality, which would constitute the Christian worldview, and not a world of chance, or, even worse, chaos.

A (Psychotic) Mime is a Terrible Thing to Waste

quotes w/in quotes

by Jan Kaarsvlam

Jan Kaarslvlam is thinking of applying to be the new editor of the *Christian Educators Journal*. He is especially interested in repackaging CEJ as a high school musical about a young editor from Canada who dances his way into the hearts of the lower forty-eight. Jan would also like to write some articles about teaching and stuff.

It was at the end of morning devotions at Bedlam Christian School, when Rex Kane, the high school PE teacher, walked in the door. Shop teacher Gord Winkle looked up from his object lesson (which had started out as an even dozen doughnuts, but, as Gord had illustrated, each of the ways the larger world eats away at people's Christian convictions, he had also been consuming the doughnuts at an alarming rate. There were now two and a half left). Everyone else in the staff room turned toward the door as well, and their eyes stayed there.

Rex Kane was resplendent in lime green sweat pants and a t-shirt from last night's Mega-Metal Concert at the Hummer-Dome. Rex was wearing a t-shirt advertising the band "Psychotic Mimes Consortium" and a headband that bore the words "Spoiled Meat," and over one shoulder had draped a tea-towel that said "Lacerated Underwear" in fancy gothic script, with an umlaut over the r in the word *lacerated*. The powdered sugar doughnut in Gordon's mouth slid quietly to the floor and the room fell silent.

Principal Bentley VanderHaar, was the first to recover. He cleared his throat. "It's not Halloween. It's not Spirit Week. It's not National Freak-Out-Your-Principal Day. I give up, Rex. Why are you dressed like this?"

Jane VanderAsch leaned toward Jon Kleinhut and muttered beneath her breath, "That outfit is breaking the student dress code in at least three different ways." Nodding in agreement, Kleinhut pulled his tie a bit tighter about his neck, hoping that VanderHaar would notice and remember his conservative dress later that night when he had to appear before the tenure committee.

Rex drew his head back and cocked it sideways, staring at his principal as if he were speaking another language. "Why am I dressed how?"

VanderHaar stammered, "Dressed how? I. . . I don't know. How about we start with the t-shirt?"

Rex smiled and nodded. "Pretty cool, huh? I got it at the PMC concert last Saturday. They were awesome! And hey, if you like the front, check out the back." Rex spun toward the door. His colleagues stared in a mix of shock and disbelief. The picture showed three mimes with menacing makeup and rakish berets wrestling over a meat cleaver while a frightened dachshund tried to sneak away. Over the top of this image, a font that looked liked bullet holes said, "Who Let the Dogs Out Tour—2008." Rex looked over his shoulder at the whitening face of Bentley. "Awesome, isn't it?"

"More like deranged," VanderAsch said. She stood to face Rex. "How can you dare to wear a shirt like that to school or anywhere else? I read about that so-called band in the paper. Their so-called music encourages violence and sexual promiscuity."

Rex snapped around to face her, and he looked angry, a rare look for him. "Well, maybe your 'so-called' information is misinformation, and maybe you are too quick to make up your 'so-called' mind. The Psychotic Mimes Consortium neither encourages nor condones violence. Their music is a wickedly clever satire that exposes both the moral degradation of mainline rock bands and the narrow-minded, hyper-religious convictions of such bands' critics."

"Rex," said Cal Vander Meer, "I just had a student in Bible 4 turn in a paper on the worldview of the Psychotic Mimes Consortium. The student gave some lyrics from a song titled "Oral Obsessions." In her paper, my student rightly pointed out that the lyrics represent a hedonistic celebration of oral sex with multiple partners."

Rex turned to Cal, and he shrugged. "Well, yeah, "Oral Obsessions" is a bad song. But did this girl write about "The Pious and the Pilloried." Cal shook his head, no. "She should have. That song gives a scathing attack on both the sinners and the saints. At one point, Ned Toady, the lead singer, belts out, '...The monkeys jump/ the monkeys dance/ the monkey preacher's got no pants!/ We need to be wilder. /We need to be clearer. / We all need to pal around with Reinhold Niebuhr."

Cal smiled. "But Rex, it isn't like that song tells students anything about Niebuhr's philosophy. I doubt the lead singer even knows who Niebuhr is."

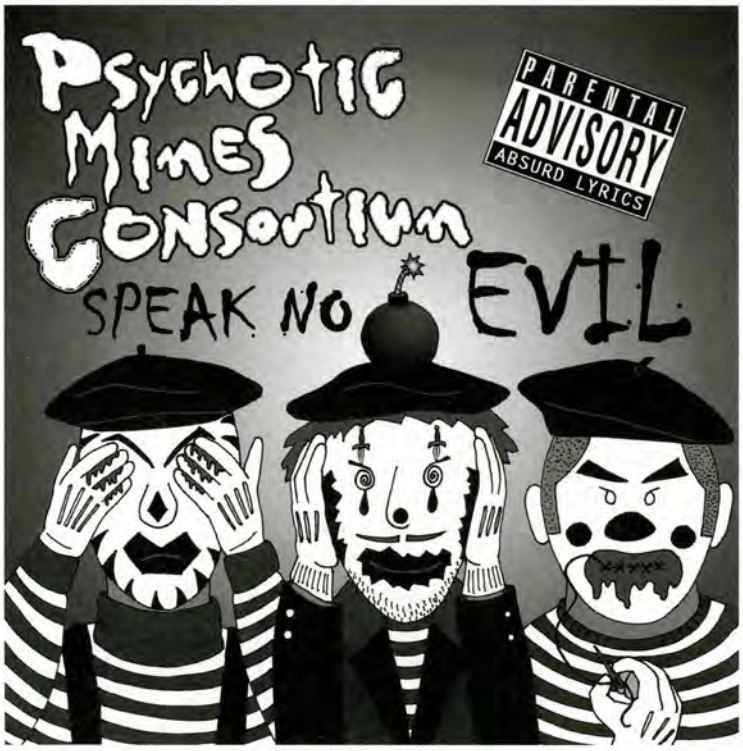
Then everyone seemed to speak at once. Head Counselor Maxwell Prentiss-Hall jumped in. "Yeah, but maybe a song like that would get kids to read Niebuhr!" Gordon Winkle, unmindful of the half doughnut in his mouth, tried to speak: "Whooff's Rwhineholf Neeborff?" Rex said, "I own all PMC's albums. On the third one, they give thanks to 'the God who knows and loves us even when we don't know him' in the liner notes." Art teacher Gregg "Rigor" Mortiss wondered aloud whether it might not be a good way to reach students and start conversations.

Principal VanderHaar asked for silence twice with no response. The color crept up his jowls toward his temples, as it was wont to do when he grew angry. Finally, he had to shout to get everyone's attention. "Thank you," he said to his surprised colleagues. "I

Or... I Grow Old, I Grow Old, I Shall Wear My (Lime Green) Trousers Rolled

don't know about the 'psychotic' part, but I could sure go for a bunch of mimes right about now. We have several issues here. First of all, there's the matter of professional dress. Rex, we can talk about bands and music and culture, but no teacher who works for me is going to enter a classroom in a rock concert t-shirt. The same goes for the headband and tea towel, and I don't even know what those items are supposed to be about."

Rex raised one finger in admonishment as he prepared to defend himself, but a withering glance from his principal took the starch out of him. He sighed heavily and ripped the headband from his head, crumpling it up with the towel. He mumbled, "I'll change shirts when I go back to the PE office."



Seeing that he'd have to fight no further for compliance, VanderHaar softened. He said, "The second issue is how, as a faculty, we are going to lead our students to approach the secular culture that surrounds us."

Rex rolled his eyes dismissively, but it was Jane who spoke. "I teach trigonometry and calculus. I don't have time to ponder filthy songs in my class. Apparently, that's a good use of time for Bible class."

Rex couldn't contain himself. "I told you, the Mimes are not all filth. Geez! Don't be so narrow-minded."

Christina Lopez cleared her throat to get everyone's attention. "You know, Christians often approach culture in predictable ways. Some of us," and here she glanced toward Jane, "think that we can withdraw from the culture around us. We remove ourselves from anything distasteful, but the problem is that when we withdraw, we tend to give over all the tools and treasures of culture to a people who will likely grow increasingly alienating without the presence and influence of God's people in their lives."

Now she turned toward Rex. "Other Christians, however, embrace the umbrella culture that surrounds them. These Christians recognize culture as a human exploration of God's good earth, but they fail to account for human sin. They forget that total depravity is, well, so total. They show a lack of discernment as they embrace a secular culture, willfully justifying their cozying up with wickedness with the flimsiest of rationales."

Cal spoke up. "We should teach discernment, so our kids can tell the good from the bad. That's why I have my Bible 4 students write papers on the worldview of various secular artists."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah," said Lopez. "Discernment. We've talked that word to death in the last five years. I think we can do more. We should be training our students to *make* culture. We don't need Christians discerning films by secular directors as much as we need Christian filmmakers. We don't need a Christian critique of politics as much as we need Christian politicians creating a Christian politics. We need to thoughtfully engage how we eat, how we design homes and communities and infrastructure. If our culture is less than godly, we'd better get busy. The only way to change culture is to create it. I highly recommend we as a faculty read the book *Culture Making* by Andy Crouch. It's high time for contemporary Christians to get off the sidelines and into the game."

A moment of silence hung in the air before the bell calling them to begin the day pierced the silence. Rex left to change clothes, Gord crossed to the sink to wipe powdered sugar from his mustache, and Bedlam's other teachers scurried off to class with thoughtful looks on their faces. VanderHaar, however, went straight to his office. He had to visit an on-line bookstore. He figured he would see about getting that Andy Crouch book — and then it occurred to him that if he also bought the Pathological Mime Comrades, or whatever they were called, (just to give it a listen and see what all the fuss was about) he might be able to get the super-saver discount to boot!

Half-dead Pines and Authentically Christian Teaching

by Dave Mulder

Dave Mulder (dmulder@scchristian.pvt.k12.ia..us) is a self-described "curriculum-and-instruction junkie," who teaches seventh and eighth-grade Science and Bible at Sioux Center Christian School, Sioux Center, Iowa.

When we bought our house, we were thrilled with the big trees on the property — a linden tree up front, three huge maples shading the house, a row of evergreens along the south side ... and, then, there was the lone pine along the alley out back. About 40 feet tall by my trigonometric shadow-measuring estimate, this tree was half dead. That is to say, because of the other large shade trees, the side of the pine facing the house didn't receive enough sunlight to sustain photosynthesis, and the branches slowly died off. If you would stand in the backyard of the neighbor across the alley, you would think this was a stately, majestic arrow pointing heavenward. From our living room windows it just looked ugly. So I began plotting its removal.

I mentioned my thoughts to my dear wife, Missy, and she gave me "that look." She pointed out that, within falling distance of the tree, there are a shed, a garage, and a parked camper, all owned by neighbors. I tried to explain that, if properly felled, the tree would actually fall right down the alley, missing all the aforementioned properties. I got "that look" again. Chastened, I "agreed" with her, but secretly continued plotting the half-dead pine's demise.

Arborial family

My parents come to visit for a week or so every summer. When at work, my accountant father spends eight or more hours a day at his desk; when on vacation, he has no "sit" in him. We try to plan lots of little projects to do during the visit, which I love, as Dad is a lot handier than I am. While we were working on taking down a rotten split-rail fence along the alley during a visit a few summers ago, I mentioned to Dad that I'd like that pine to go. He looked up at that pine and narrowed his eyes.

Now, you need to understand something about the Mulder-side of my family. There is something about Mulder men and trees. My grandpa Mulder had a love of trees, and an even greater love of trimming trees. The place they bought when they moved out to California was the old house of a former dairy farm with a wonderful variety of trees around it. A few were excellent climbing trees for the grandkids and a few were fruit trees. A few were just beautiful shade trees. Grandpa loved those trees. He took care of those trees. Armed with his chainsaw and extension ladder, he would cut out dead limbs and cull diseased branches before the whole tree became infected.

Grandpa had a few close calls; I can remember Grandma telling the story of how she was cleaning up the kitchen one morning when my 70-something-year-old grandpa went out to take care of the trees. While doing the dishes she was startled when Grandpa's old work shoes suddenly appeared dangling in front of the window above the kitchen sink, still on his feet! She ran outside, and found that he had slipped off the branch he was standing on, and had caught himself with one hand, preventing disaster. She quickly put the ladder under his feet, and he climbed down. After repositioning the ladder, he picked up his dropped chainsaw, started it up, and climbed back up to finish the job. This is the sort of family line from which I am descended.

No cooperation

As Dad squinted up at that half-dead pine, I became quite sure he had inherited this tree-trimming gene. I think he was picturing himself with a chainsaw chewing and sawdust flying. We discussed tactics for how best to bring up the subject to our wives. When we casually mentioned our tree-felling intentions over lunch, we were shot down. They told us we had enough other things to get done during this trip. Fair enough, that would give us more time to dream about it!

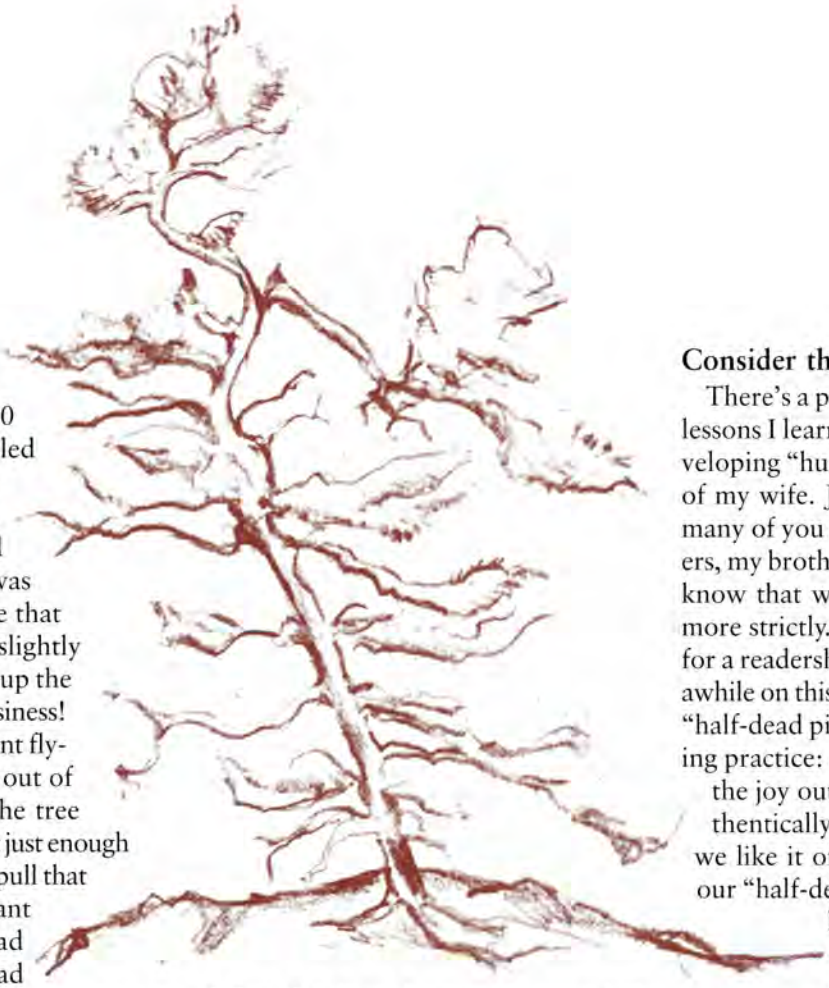
Over the following summers, however, while we got lots of other little projects finished around the house, we never seemed to get to the big old pine. It seemed that every time we'd introduce the topic, our wives deftly changed the subject to the other projects we had yet to complete. Once Dad and I even called a tree service to get a quote, just to demonstrate how much money we'd be able to save by taking down the tree ourselves. It didn't work. Summer after summer, the pine stood tall, half-dead, as if mocking us somehow.

Infallible scheme

This past summer, Dad and I were determined. The tree WOULD come down! We plotted; we schemed. We decided we'd wait until Missy was at work and Mom was busy taking care of the kids. Then we'd run next door and borrow my neighbor's chainsaw, and we'd drop that tree before they were the wiser. A foolproof plan!

On Thursday, Missy headed to work at 4:30. Mom was busy with the kids. We headed over to the neighbor's place. My neighbor, Rob, laughed and became a willing accomplice in our scheme. He actually had *two* chainsaws ∫ all the better; now we'd each have one! He even volunteered the use of his pickup to help pull the tree over so it would land in the alley. We hadn't thought of that. He also said we could use it for hauling the remains away. We hadn't thought of that either. Thanks, Rob!

Quick now, before we lose our nerve!



Dad started up the tree with a rope, which he tied around the trunk about 20 feet up. While Dad scrambled back down, I tied the free end to the hitch on Rob's pickup. Rob drove forward down the alley until there was enough tension on the rope that the tree began to lean very slightly in that direction. Dad fired up the chainsaw and we were in business! Sawdust and wood chips went flying as he cut. I stood back, out of the way, keeping watch. The tree began to creak, and Rob kept just enough pressure on the gas pedal to pull that rope taut. Finally, with a giant CRACK, the old, half-dead pine began its descent. Dad dove out of the way of the swinging branches, Rob revved the engine and drove out of the way, and I watched my nemesis come CRASHING to the ground.

We had aimed well — the tree fell neatly into the alley just as we had planned. We thanked Rob for his help and he left the scene, so as not to be guilty by association. We started up both chainsaws and made quick work of turning the 40-foot felled beast into more manageable chunks.

The next morning

About this time, Mom came outside with the kids. She had been watching in wonder from the living room windows. She took a few pictures for posterity. As we loaded up the truck with the remains of the day, we felt quite pleased with our work. When we returned from the dump, Mom said Missy had called from work. Dad's advice — don't tell her ... yet. I did call her back, but I did not mention our afternoon's labors. I vaguely said we had been "working outside," which was not untrue, right?

Missy didn't get home until after dark, and I didn't mention anything about the half-dead pine. The next morning, at breakfast, Missy happened to look out the window. Her question had steel in it: "What ... did ... you ... DO?" A feeling of chilly dread gripped me.

"Ummm ... look, honey ... the tree ... half-dead, you know? We ... I ... we ... I'm sorry!" She didn't reply.

It took about half the day before she could speak to me. I finally got out of her what the issue was — she was not actually opposed to the tree coming down. She was opposed to the two of us with our "hurry-up-itis" and lack of chain-sawing experience doing the job. And, further, she was furious with the deceptive way we went about it, resorting to a lie to keep her in the dark about our actions. I could see her point, but somehow I was a little upset with her; the tree was down, and no damage came to any person or property! And think of the money we had saved that would have otherwise gone to the tree service!

Consider the fall-out

There's a point to this story, beyond the lessons I learned about deception, my developing "hurry-up-itis", and the wisdom of my wife. James 3:1 reminds us, "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers [and sisters], because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly." Dangerous words to write for a readership of teachers! Bear with me awhile on this. I want you to consider what "half-dead pines" there are in your teaching practice: those rotten things that take the joy out of your calling to be an authentically Christian teacher. Whether we like it or not, the way we deal with our "half-dead pines" will be scrutinized by others around us. I was so consumed with getting rid of my back-alley tree that I became unconcerned with the possible fall-out of my actions. I simply wanted to get the job done. How often is this true in your teaching practice?

That student who just drives you crazy — how do you deal with him? That parent who questions your every move — how do you deal with her? That subject area or specific unit you just don't feel you can teach well — how do you deal with it? That conflict with a colleague that is still simmering under a mask of congeniality — how do you deal with it? Someone is always watching. We can *plan* on being judged for our dealings with our "half-dead pines." *How* we deal with these situations is crucial. The end does *not* justify the means.

Our half-dead pines

For instance, what do I do with a classroom full of noisy, sweaty seventh-graders who come rolling into my room after lunch, obviously not ready for the hard work of learning? Do I bellow at them, demanding their silence? Do I stand silently, patiently

Spelling Mistake?

by Bert Witvoet

Several readers sent me an email in which they indicated what they thought was a spelling error on the front cover of the October issue. Instead of writing, "Serving the Academically-Talented Student," we had written, "Serving the Accademically-Talented Student." Did you catch this so-called mistake?

If it were a mistake, it would, of course, be a serious matter. In importance it would rank somewhere between the outcome of the World Series and the world-wide economic decline witnessed in the latter half of 2008.

Lack of intelligence

Spelling a word correctly is a hallmark of intelligence, isn't it? Just read what a Wikipedia entry has to say about that:

"Divergence from standard spelling is often perceived as an index of stupidity, illiteracy, or lower class standing. The intelligence of Dan Quayle, for instance, was repeatedly disparaged for his correcting a student's spelling of 'potato' as the now non-standard 'potatoe' at an elementary school spelling bee in Trenton, New Jersey on June 15, 1992.

The opposite viewpoint was voiced by President Andrew Jackson, who stated 'It's a ... poor mind that can only think of one way to spell a word'" (the ellipses indicate that I took out a swearword).

Let's discount what President Jackson said. No doubt he would have argued that Dan Quayle had a perfect right to adhere to a "now non-standard" spelling. If being a Vice-President means anything, it should include the power to transcend the "now" and invoke past standards. But we shall deny people of high rank that kind of power. So let's agree that misspelling a word is "an index of stupidity, illiteracy, or lower class standing."

Lack of uniformity

Not so fast, you may say. Even if we agree to let the past go and stay in the present, it is a fact that not all languages in the world *today* have a uniform way of writing a word. Just read the following entry from this wicked website called Wikipedia:

"Whereas uniformity in the spelling of words is one of the features of a standard language in modern times, and official languages usually prescribe standard spelling, minority languages and regional languages often lack this trait." Notice the qualifying "usually" with respect to official languages. Apparently exceptions are tolerated in such an official language as English. And when it comes to minority and regional languages, all bets are off. These languages *often* lack uniform spelling.

"Furthermore," says Mr. Wikipedia, "[uniform spelling] is a relatively recent development in various major languages in national contexts, linked to the compiling of dictionaries, the founding of national academies, and other institutions of language maintenance, including compulsory mass education." Did you catch that? "A relatively recent development!"

But there's more: "Most spellings attempt to approximate a transcribing of the sounds of the language into alphabetic letters; however, completely phonetic spellings are often the exception, due to drifts in pronunciations over time and irregular spellings adopted through common usage." Aha. In other words, when a pronunciation of a word drifts, it is the standard spelling that

---

Continued from p. 25

waiting for them to notice me? Do I kick the trashcan and explode at their immaturity? Do I write the page numbers for a reading assignment on the board and sit at my desk, stewing? Do I assertively walk amongst the students, quieting them and directing them to the agenda for the class period I've written on the board?

To be completely honest, over the last few years I've dealt with this particularly prickly "pine" in each of the ways I've described. In each case, I met some level of "success" in getting students to meet some academic goals. But just because a particular tactic "works," does that mean I have license to use it? What social, emotional, and spiritual lessons am I teaching in the process? What does my teaching demonstrate to my students? What are my students learning from me in the way I interact with them? Am I modeling Christ-like love to my students? They are always watching! *How* we teach is as important as what we teach! The end does *not* justify the means.

James doesn't beat around the bush: he boldly reminds us that "we all stumble in many ways." This doesn't excuse us; in fact, James uses this as an admonition for how we ought to see ourselves as teachers. How do we deal with the "half-dead pines?" Do we plot and scheme their demise? Do we quickly cut them down, unaware of the full consequences? Do we strive to take care of them in our own power? What chainsaws do we wield haphazardly? Do we acknowledge that we don't always have the expertise necessary to finish the job? When do we call in the expert Tree Surgeon to take care of our messes? Thanks be to God that he sanctifies our feeble tree-felling attempts!

misses the mark. Maybe here in Canada the pronunciation of the word "academically" has drifted towards the sound of two "c"s. Almost as if we are saying: "ak-ka-dem-ik-al-ly."

Warm response

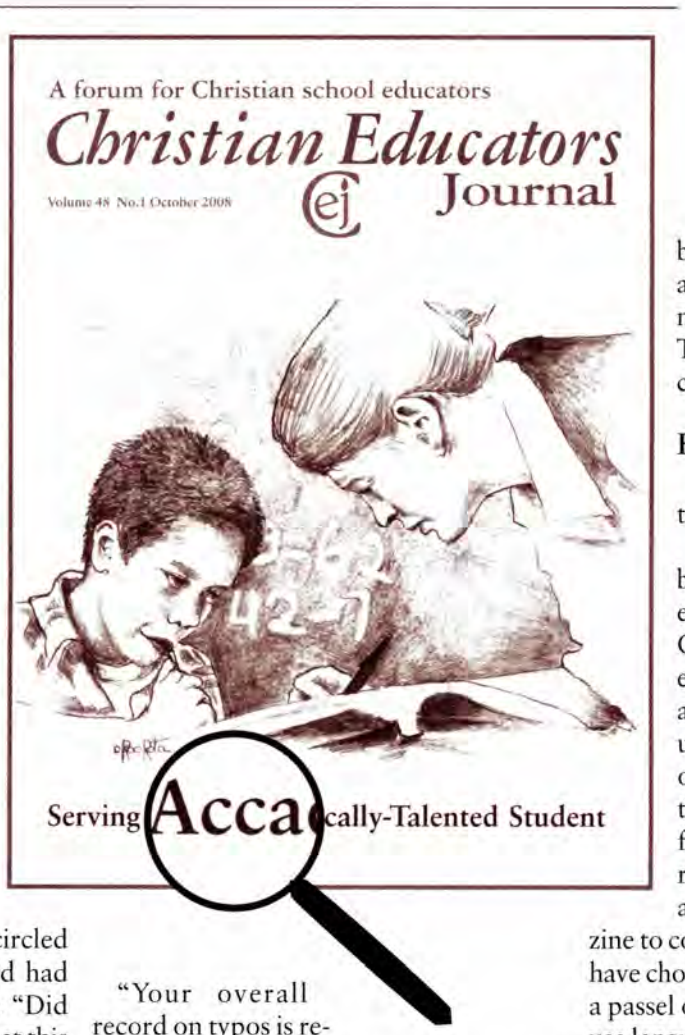
Just the same, it was nice to get so many letters from our readers in response to what you perceived as a blatant disregard of Webster's totalitarian regime. Your empathy was heart-warming. All of you confessed to a teenie weenie bit of *schaden freude.*

One anonymous person sent me an issue in a large manila envelope with three first-class stamps and a postmark that indicated the place of origin. He or she had encircled the misspelled word in red ink and had added a stickie with the comment: "Did anyone proofread?" It's my guess that this person was annoyed.

Members of our board were more understanding, though. This is what one wrote:

"I did not yet receive the latest issue. Regardless, had I seen it, I would have congratulated you on the misspelling. It goes right to the heart of the issue, in that the act of knowing, as with the act of educating, is not linear. Like the archetypical absent-minded professor who walks out the door with mismatched shoes and goes on to give a riveting lecture on protest poetry and its relationship to quantum physics, the action of printing a misspelling on the cover of an issue about "academic talent" only serves to highlight the paradoxical nature of the quantification and qualification of something so abstract as intelligence. In short: good job, you subversive editor, you!"

Another one wrote:



"Your overall record on typos is remarkably low." More than one reader I talked to assumed the misspelling was ironic. Don't sweat it." I'm not sure what his initial comment has to do with the issue at hand. It's almost as if he thinks it *was* a mistake.

Intelligent staff

Another board member related how he and some of his colleagues combed through the October issue to find the clue to what was obviously an intended misspelling. The irony was simply too strong. Somewhere in the magazine there must be a box with text in small 8-point font that reads something like this: "Ha, we fooled you. You thought our front cover contained a mistake. Didn't you get it? 'Accademically Talented'? Wink, wink — Poke, poke."

Finally after a fruitless search, the staff concluded: "Nope, it's an unintended wrong spelling." But, according to this board member, it did cause quite a conversation, and people took notice of the content of this issue. They almost got it. Close, but no cigar.

Face the music

Alright. Enough already. It's time to come clean.

Yes, we committed a grave error by misspelling "Academically –Talented" on the front cover of the October issue. There! It was not easy, but no amount of research and philosophizing opened up for us so much of a crack in the wall of standard English. The irony of the context escaped very few of our faithful and spelling-conscious readers. We could not have picked a more obvious place in the magazine to commit our faux-pas. We could not have chosen a more sensitive audience than a passel of teachers whose business it is to use language correctly!

I'm reminded of a cartoon I saw once. It pictured a School for the Advanced. A student, who had apparently qualified for enrollment, was seen pushing against a door that had a large sign in its window: "PULL TO OPEN."

As I wrote to one of our appreciative readers, "They say that egg will eventually slide down the face to the ground. We must be thankful for small mercies."

Well, what is the upshot of all this? We have that previously quoted statement staring us right in the face: "Divergence from standard spelling is often perceived as an index of stupidity, illiteracy, or lower class standing." At least we have a choice. I pick "lower-class standing." The American dream honors those who pull themselves up from a lower class position. Call me Joe the plumber.

Query

About Motivation, Special Ed and Troublesome Students

Tena Siebenga-Valstar (tvalstar@telus.net) is currently living in Calgary in "an in-between space," waiting on the Lord's direction. She is also supporting her husband by commuting with him to serve for one year in a part-time ministry position in Central Alberta.

The inside and the outside

Question #1:

What is your opinion on extrinsic motivators: should they be used in the classroom and how?

Response:

We cannot talk about *extrinsic* motivators or motivation without also talking about *intrinsic* motivation. Intrinsic motivation comes from within. It is participation in an activity which is pleasurable, based on enjoyment, excitement or the desire to learn to improve. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, comes from outside oneself. It may be a material reward given when a certain goal is achieved; for example, stickers, candy, money or scholarships. Essentially, our desire in Christian education is to have students learn because they have a joy in learning and possess the inner desire to serve God and to use their God-given gifts in the service of God, others, and the creation. Scripture says, And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Colossians 3:17). We want students to learn just because they are enthralled with the mystery of creation and want to find out how it works.

Our experience tells us this is not always the case. Sometimes students require the external motivation, such as a star, given to young child when he or she can say the required memory work or learn the given number facts. I believe the development level of the student has a bearing on the type and need of extrinsic motivation. A teacher must use discernment and wisdom in determining when to use extrinsic motivators. When personal goals are set and achieved, then extrinsic motivators may be used. For example, if the student's goal is to learn the names of all the provinces or states and their capital cities, then a reward may be given. Some students may not need the motivation while others may need a tangible motivation. If the child who experiences challenges with impulsivity has as goal to raise her hand rather than blurting out, an external reward may be considered when the child succeeds a predetermined number of times.

I do not believe that extrinsic motivation should be used to encourage students to compete against one another individually. However, it may be used when the classroom goal is to work together to achieve some objective. This encourages students to spur one another on in the task. For example, the class with the highest average per student of items brought for the Food Bank wins a class party.

Some athletes lose some of their intrinsic motivation when extrinsic motivation is added. If athletes feel that someone is "pulling the strings," they lose a sense of self-determination. "However, if they feel they are the cause of their behavior, they feel greater autonomy, and motivation rises" (Shane, 2005, p. 7). Students at certain developmental levels can be very aware of manipulation by their leaders or teachers and respond accordingly. This may result in the opposite reaction to that which is desired.

Sports psychologists have learned that intrinsic feelings — perceptions of autonomy and competence — are the most powerful motivators; while the promise of a pot of gold actually has potential to generate non-motivation. The best way to insure steady motivation is for an athlete to identify effort with something personally satisfying and meaningful. A sense of purpose carries an athlete the furthest and helps him weather the worst storms (Shane, 2005, p.8).

Reference: Murphy, Shane (Ed.) (2005) The Sport Psychology Handbook, Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics Pub. Inc.

That first year!

Question #2:

What do you believe, makes an excellent first-year Special Education teacher (perhaps working in a resource room)? What goals and strategies should a first year teacher have, and what is one major thing to be prepared for?

Response:

I believe an excellent first-year Special Education teacher would be knowledgeable in the field and possess a willingness to love and respect children and their parents and be ready "to move mountains" to enable children to achieve their own educational goals.

I believe some of the goals the special education teacher should strive for are the following: to coordinate services for the students, be prepared to evaluate students and work with them, and, with the teachers and staff, seek to achieve the potential of the student, assist teachers in preparing individual education plans for those students who need them, and educate teachers and parents as to the role of the special education teacher and the ser-

Query

About Motivation, Special Ed and Troublesome Students

Tena Siebenga-Valstar (tvalstar@telus.net) is currently living in Calgary in "an in-between space," waiting on the Lord's direction. She is also supporting her husband by commuting with him to serve for one year in a part-time ministry position in Central Alberta.

The inside and the outside

Question #1:

What is your opinion on extrinsic motivators: should they be used in the classroom and how?

Response:

We cannot talk about *extrinsic* motivators or motivation without also talking about *intrinsic* motivation. Intrinsic motivation comes from within. It is participation in an activity which is pleasurable, based on enjoyment, excitement or the desire to learn to improve. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, comes from outside oneself. It may be a material reward given when a certain goal is achieved; for example, stickers, candy, money or scholarships. Essentially, our desire in Christian education is to have students learn because they have a joy in learning and possess the inner desire to serve God and to use their God-given gifts in the service of God, others, and the creation. Scripture says, "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Colossians 3:17). We want students to learn just because they are enthralled with the mystery of creation and want to find out how it works.

Our experience tells us this is not always the case. Sometimes students require the external motivation, such as a star, given to a young child when he or she can say the required memory work or learn the given number facts. I believe the development level of the student has a bearing on the type and need of extrinsic motivation. A teacher must use discernment and wisdom in determining when to use extrinsic motivators. When personal goals are set and achieved, then extrinsic motivators may be used. For example, if the student's goal is to learn the names of all the provinces or states and their capital cities, then a reward may be given. Some students may not need the motivation while others may need a tangible motivation. If the child who experiences challenges with impulsivity has as goal to raise her hand rather than blurting out, an external reward may be considered when the child succeeds a predetermined number of times.

I do not believe that extrinsic motivation should be used to encourage students to compete against one another individually. However, it may be used when the classroom goal is to work together to achieve some objective. This encourages students to spur one another on in the task. For example, the class with the highest average per student of items brought for the Food Bank wins a class party.

Some athletes lose some of their intrinsic motivation when extrinsic motivation is added. If athletes feel that someone is "pulling the strings," they lose a sense of self-determination. "However, if they feel they are the cause of their behavior, they feel greater autonomy, and motivation rises" (Shane, 2005, p. 7). Students at certain developmental levels can be very aware of manipulation by their leaders or teachers and respond accordingly. This may result in the opposite reaction to that which is desired.

Sports psychologists have learned that intrinsic feelings — perceptions of autonomy and competence — are the most powerful motivators; while the promise of a pot of gold actually has potential to generate non-motivation. The best way to insure steady motivation is for an athlete to identify effort with something personally satisfying and meaningful. A sense of purpose carries an athlete the furthest and helps him weather the worst storms (Shane, 2005, p.8).

Reference: Murphy, Shane (Ed.) (2005) The Sport Psychology Handbook, Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics Pub. Inc.

That first year!

Question #2:

What do you believe, makes an excellent first-year Special Education teacher (perhaps working in a resource room)? What goals and strategies should a first year teacher have, and what is one major thing to be prepared for?

Response:

I believe an excellent first-year Special Education teacher would be knowledgeable in the field and possess a willingness to love and respect children and their parents and be ready "to move mountains" to enable children to achieve their own educational goals.

I believe some of the goals the special education teacher should strive for are the following: to coordinate services for the students, be prepared to evaluate students and work with them, and, with the teachers and staff, seek to achieve the potential of the student, assist teachers in preparing individual education plans for those students who need them, and educate teachers and parents as to the role of the special education teacher and the ser-

Tena Siebenga-Valstar
tvalstar@telus.net

vices which the special education teacher is able to offer.

Here are some strategies a special education teacher can use: learn what is expected of the special education teacher in the particular school in which he has been hired by asking for a job description, and how it manifests itself in the daily life of the school. The special education teacher is wise to apprise the administrator of his efforts to achieve the job description and report on progress in the various areas. It is important to communicate with the parents communally and individually. Whether the special education teacher has a self-contained classroom or works with teachers in their classrooms, it is very important to effectively communicate the knowledge one has of this specific area of education because the teaching-learning strategies used in the special education classroom are applicable to all areas of education in order to accommodate the diverse ways of learning.

One major thing to be prepared for is the fact that parents may not necessarily accept the evaluation of their child's academic or developmental progress, or lack thereof. I have found that sometimes parents initially have a hard time accepting the fact that their child is not achieving or developing at the expected standard. Parents' hopes and dreams for their child may be crushed by what educational testing reveals. They may protest and even reject the findings, threatening to remove the child from the program. Parents may be afraid that their child will be labeled for life. Sometimes it takes a while, even years, for the parents to accept the help that can be given. Some times the window of opportunity for funding and services has passed before the parents can accept it, and, therefore, the child does not receive the necessary services. The responsibility of the teacher is to inform the parents of the services available but not take responsibility for their decision in the matter. That can be difficult because a teacher's heartfelt desire is that students reach their God-given potential.

The unloveable ones

Question #3:

As with any new situation, when you go into a situation with brand new people, there are going to be those with whom you get along better than others. How, as a teacher, do you get past the biased opinions you have of students to teach them despite the difficulty of getting through to them? In other words, how do you learn to love even the most difficult students?

Response:

That is a question I am sure others have asked themselves, as I have in my teaching career. At times it arose because I did not know the student and judged the student by his or her outward actions. As a regular classroom teacher, one has the opportunity to get to know each student, and in the process,

see that the student is more than his or her initial outward appearance or actions.

As Christian educators we believe that each student is someone made in God's image. We may not like the actions of everyone, but we must love everyone. As a teacher of younger children, this question rarely became an issue for me. As I became more familiar with the children, I loved them for who they were and always found that there was something in them to love.

Substitute teaching in the junior high, a level with which I was not as familiar, was not as easy. But even in this situation, the more I became familiar with the students, the more I found that there was something to love in each student. I also began to understand them better as I became more familiar with them and discovered the reason or reasons for their outward actions or appearances. Sometimes it was to cover up some sense of inadequacy or feeling of being unlovable. Seeing past this to the person beneath is what we have to do. It is worth it. Pray and allow God to open your heart to the student with whom you have difficulty.

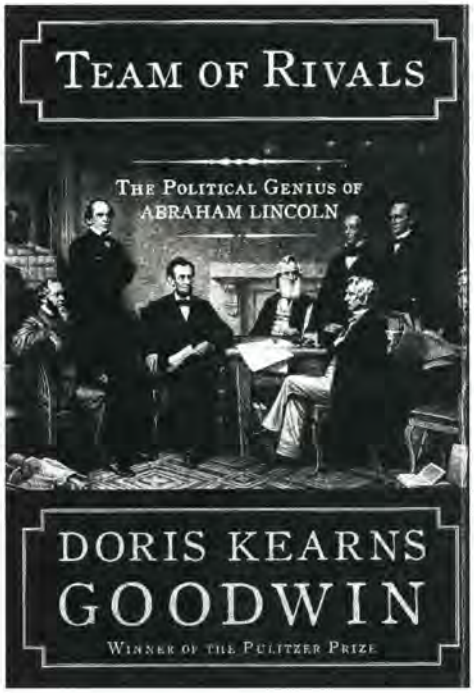
Eventually a teacher has to concentrate on the student's progress in learning and measure that against a standard which does not include the personality of the student. In isolating the personality from the learning that the student achieves, the teacher can commend the progress in learning. That may be the breakthrough. As time goes on, I trust the situation will improve. If it does not, you may have to confide in a colleague, together praying for love and grace in your relationship with the student and looking for the best in the student. CEJ

Interactive CEJ website

The *Christian Educators Journal has a new web presence, even though our global address on the World Wide Web is still cejonline.com. We are working in partnership with *culture is not optional, an organziation that wants to equip Christians to redeem all of culture. Our new web presence means that the CEJ site has become an interactive site. Visit cejonline.com and drop us a line or an article.*

About Character and Redemption

It has been well said that education in the truest sense requires that the student confront models of character, genius, and moral courage — qualities which can kindle his or her imagination and shape the student's mind and heart and soul. Without such models — so goes the argument — the student has nothing to which to aspire except his own limited experience and resources. A biography of the caliber of Doris Kearns Goodwin's new study of Lincoln could serve as a basis for a study of, say, some weeks in a history course, or an after-school book club, or, perhaps, a special project for students perceptive enough to know the limitations of the electronic distractions so readily available. A careful study of this book will give such a student a great advantage in his comprehension of American history, the inescapable moral consequences of such evils as slavery, complexities of human nature and the motives which prompt people's actions, the art of leadership, the gift of listening and understanding how others approach a given situation, the enormous power of the gift of rhetoric, the indispensable role of faith, and the spirit of magnanimity, which brings out the best even in one's inveterate opponents and turns them into allies.



Who were the rivals of the title? They were William Henry Seward, Salmon Portland Chase, and Edward Bates. Each one enjoyed the privilege of birth and education and had distinguished himself in a variety of settings. And now, in 1860, each one was poised to reap the fruits of reputation and achievement; each one was assured by his supporters that he would win the nomination of the Republican Party and go on to win the presidency. Each one made extensive preparations for celebrating that victory as the news of his success would make its way to him from Chicago. No one took the fourth candidate seriously — a person of low birth, of very little formal education, a self-taught backwoodsman, a circuit-riding country lawyer with a reputation for folksy humor and story-telling. True, Lincoln had made himself known in places like Brooklyn where he had spoken — with rhetorical effectiveness — about slavery and other matters. And a few were aware of his careful planning and the loyalty of many friends. Still, what chance had he when pitted against the cosmopolitan, sophisticated experienced men who were aspiring to the highest office of the United States? Seward was so confident, in fact, that he took an extended tour of Europe in the final months before the convention.

Goodwin divides her book into two parts. Part I — the first eleven chapters — focuses on that political convention in Chicago in 1860. She gives us extensive introductions to each of the players and explains why each one, on the basis of the constituencies he had aligned and the positions he had taken, could confidently expect to win the contest. After providing some flashback into key events and developments in the previous decade, she takes us to the convention hall, in her chapter "Showdown in Chicago," where the balloting was to be played out.

Goodwin describes in abundant detail what went wrong for the three contenders. New alliances came into play, compromises were reached, old hostilities were aired, "safe" states became negotiable, loyalties shifted, positions on issues changed. After the second ballot, the race had narrowed to Lincoln and Seward. After the third ballot, Lincoln was shy only 1.5 votes of victory. Ohio switched four votes from Chase to Lincoln — and the die was cast. A unanimous vote followed. The three rivals were shocked, humiliated, irritated. Seward was devastated, Bates more philosophical. The fireworks prepared for the celebrations went unlit, the refreshments went uneaten, the prepared speeches were not delivered as the news was delivered to each of them by horse and telegraph.

Goodwin's book is about Lincoln, but we learn about him through his team of rivals. The book reminds one of a four-part musical staff — in some ways, in fact, like a symphony, as the relationships among these four people swirled and eddied in response to the grave issues facing the nation. For Lincoln astonished everyone by appointing each of his defeated rivals to his cabinet. He knew the risks — the risks that any of his appointees could sabotage his agenda, could destroy him through spreading gossip, through disloyalty, through taking credit for achievements not their own, through a continuance of their personal ambitions. Chase, in fact, worked behind the president's back to unseat him in the 1864 election and thwarted him many times. A lesser person would have dismissed Chase very early. Lincoln, however, proceeded on the assumption that these well-reputed men were among the most qualified and that, therefore, the nation deserved to have their services. Finally, in the case of Chase, Lincoln had no choice but to accept the last of his many offers to

Doris Kearns Goodwin, ***Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln.*** New York and others: Simon & Schuster, 2005. Pp. 757 plus 159 pages of notes and index.
Reviewed by Steve J. Van Der Weele, Calvin College (Retired)

Steve J. Van Der Weele
svweele@calvin.edu

resign. But even now he did not abandon this rival. He now made him Chief Justice of the Supreme Court!

With great skill Goodwin narrates the tumultuous events of Lincoln's all-too brief presidency — one full term and a year of his second. The day of reckoning for the slavery issue had finally become due. Hardly a village, or family in both the North and the South, remained unaffected by the issue of slavery and the war which finally settled the matter. In his Second Inaugural Address Lincoln spoke these very searing words — "terrible words" someone has called them: "Fondly do we hope, fervently, do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled up by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." (What comes next, of course, is the phrase "With malice towards none....") All the contention centering on slavery, the seemingly interminable war, the incompetent generals, the devastating defeats on the battlefield, the infighting in his administration, his domestic problems, tragic deaths in the family, threats from abroad ∫ these all wound up on the president's shoulders.

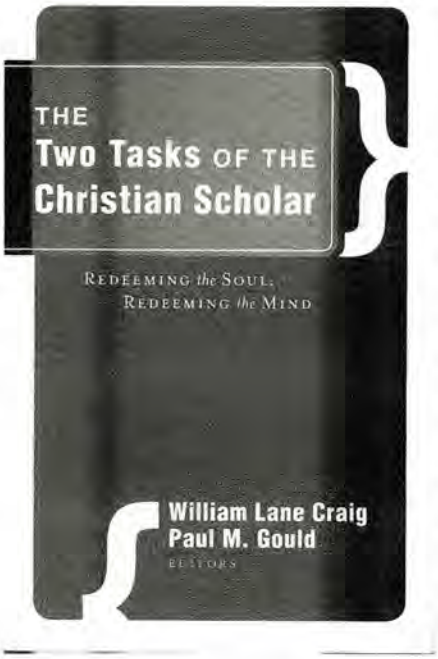
Goodwin entitles Part II of her book "Master Among Men." Through compelling narrative she demonstrates how each of the three rivals, though initially embittered and not above rancor, eventually came to acknowledge Lincoln's superiority. Even Chase, though less than loyal, paid tribute to Lincoln's undeniable gifts, especially his sense of fairness and patience. Goodwin goes on to explore, with great narrative skill, other expressions of Lincoln's spirit of magnanimity. For example, he would often take on himself the blame for some failure that was really attributable to others. When he had before him a pile of warrants for the execution of army deserters, he would strain to find some way to pardon them. His oratory appealed to people's "better angels" and called for compassion. He was not vindictive. With all his rhetorical fervor he pleaded for generosity rather than punishment towards the fallen South. When he visited the troops — which he did at least a dozen times — they would robustly demonstrate their loyalty and respect. The secret of his sterling virtues was his ability to place himself inside the mind of another and try to see how the world looked to that person. Through this art he developed a superb sense of timing. He held off issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, for example, until the mood of the country was right — and until the Union had achieved a notable victory.

Team of Rivals, make us all walk taller to be living in a nation which produced a man of such stature — acknowledged by nations all over the world to be, indeed, "A Master of Men." History would have been different but for the mind of a deranged assassin. One needs a stern make-up to reach the end of the book without a tearful eye. ℭ

William Lange Craig and Paul M. Gould, editors, *The Two Tasks of the Christian Scholar: Redeeming the Soul, Redeeming the Mind.* Foreword by Habib Malik. A collection of eight essays in tribute to Charles Malik. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2007. Pp. 200.
Reviewed by Steve J. Van Der Weele, Calvin College (Retired)

The occasion for this tribute to one of the great men of our time — Charles Malik (1906-1987) — lies in two of his discourses on education: (1) "The Two Tasks," — which he gave in 1980 and which serves as the title of this collection — and (2) the Pascal Lectures on "Christianity and the University" that he delivered in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, in 1981. Of course, Malik accomplished more than that. A Christian Lebanese, he excelled academically in all the major disciplines — mathematics, science, and philosophy. He was active in Christian ecumenism and in the cause of a free Lebanon. Add to this his involvement in the work of the United Nations — in various capacities, including, finally, as President of this world organization — and we understand that the whole world has been the beneficiary of this man of many and varied talents. But it was his two addresses on education that prompted a group of 400 scholars (Faculty Commons of the Campus Crusade for Christ) at its biennial meeting in 2006 to conclude that on the centennial of his birth, nothing less than a *festschrift* would serve to honor Malik and to renew his call to the two great tasks of redeeming the soul and redeeming the mind.

Peter Kreeft, one of the contributors, asserts that "The Two Tasks" ranks as the single masterpiece in the twentieth century on Christian education — with the possible exception of C. S. Lewis's *The Abolition of Man.* High praise indeed. That lecture constitutes one of the chapters in the collection. And a pleasant amenity is a chapter by Malik's son, Habib, "The Two Tasks



Revisited." He also provides the foreword.

Let us begin with the Malik essays. Malik probes the pathology of the modern university. "The enormity is beyond words," he complains. He is concerned especially about the waywardness of the humanities — how they have been seduced by the idolatries of our age — materialism, hedonism, relativism, cynicism — and including the itch for novelty and indifference to our past legacy — all of which cumulatively account for the disorder in the world. He concludes: "No civilization can endure with its mind being as confused and disordered as ours is today." (64)

He said all this twenty-five years ago. What has happened since then?

Here is where Malik Junior — Habib Malik, Associate Professor of History and Cultural Studies at the Lebanese American University — makes his contribution. He sets forth six geographical and cultural areas which impinge on — and threaten — Western civilization — namely, the secularization of Europe, the turbulence of the Middle East, the rising tide of Islam and Muslim extremism, the problem of Russia — with a plea that Westerners acknowledge our common Christian tradition vested in the Orthodox Church, our obsession with novelty, deriving from the urge to deny permanent truths, and the imperative for churches to adopt an ecumenical stance. Thus, he reinforces and updates the spiritual malaise of the West his father had so accurately described in the 1980s.

We move to the other essays — each one contributing significantly to the discourse about faith and learning. Paul Gould outlines the basic narratives of biblical history and calls on Christian scholars to do justice to both that revelation and to revelation in the natural world. He complains that secular scholars are not the only ones who reject the first; Christian scholars often imbibe the worldview of their secular education and are often unprepared to confront the agnostic in an effective way. This essay serves well as a parameter for the remaining essays.

Peter Kreeft reports how he was "blown away" by Malik's *Critique* when he first encountered it. But he brings his own wisdom to bear on the subject of the two tasks. He takes the measure of the contemporary university — with its pride, its pretense to knowledge it does not have, its refusal to acknowledge presuppositions. A reversal has taken place during the course of his teaching career. Now it is the scientists who tend to be theists, and most of the English and history majors who declare for agnosticism.

Walter L. Bradley describes his experiences as a Christian professor in the secular academy. With effort, and planning, he has achieved respect as a Christian academic. Web sites, a night at the movies, a free book at the end of the course — these are the initiatives he takes with the awareness that students are concerned not only about what the teacher knows, but whether he cares about them as students. Relationships are crucial — also with colleagues; a genuine interest in others builds effective bridges which permit deeper conversations.

Robert Kaita holds up the Apostle Paul at the Areopagus as a model of how the Christian academic can establish a relationship with his secular, agnostic colleagues. The rhetorical arts — timing, good choice of words, respect, all aid in communication. For example, using substitutes for such well-worn phrases as "Intelligent Design" and "God" will remove semantic barriers. Physics and biology are dueling over issues that will be resolved only by careful use of words. Enough real barriers exist; we should not compound them by inept communication and dialectical awkwardness.

John North takes on the vexing state of the humanities — how in many courses literature is taught in such a way that it no longer serves as "parables of our soul's longing for God." Students are admonished to forget about the text "in itself." Tell your narrative, define your victimization — and rebel. Critical theories of various stripes — cynicism, postmodernism, and nihilism are strategies used in the struggle for the hearts and minds of students and society. Literature is deprived of what at its best it can offer — C. S. Lewis's trio of mirth, wonder, and wisdom. These theories hold at arm's length such issues as evil, death, suffering, and truth. We need to go back to the literary work "in itself."

William Craig, coeditor, deftly summarizes the discourse of the book. He refers to Al Plantinga's work as a pleasant reminder of what a first-rate scholar can accomplish with competence and dedication. His detractors ruefully concede the reversal in philosophy departments Plantinga achieved by exposing the fallacies in the naturalistic philosophies of the 1960s. Craig fingers the mindset of "verification" as a flawed epistemology and theory of meaning. And he reminds us that the academic life is an *agonistic* life — a life full of traps and barriers and opposition. Gideon's faithful band can serve as inspiration.

The collection does two things well. It honors the memory of the life and work and influence of one who has made an enormous difference in the political and academic arenas. And they challenge those in academia to strain every nerve to achieve what we need to become and what we need to pass on to our students: the ideal of the saintly sage and learned saint.