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*Christian  
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## Greetings!

My name is: Christian Educators Journal.

I was born on: October 5, 1961.

My parents are: The Christian Educators Association and the Education Department of Calvin College.

### My History

The idea of a professional magazine for Christian school teachers is not new; it has been discussed for many years. Almost every organization of Christian school teachers with a fair-sized membership has at one time or another considered the possibility of publishing such a journal.

The spurt in Christian school enrollment of recent years, with its accompanying increase in number of teachers, has intensified the longing and agitation for a professional journal. Christian school teachers are now confident that their number is adequate to support a teacher publication. They also feel the need of a publication of their own more than ever before. Christian school expansion has resulted in teaching staffs that represent an ever increasing divergency of backgrounds. This, in turn, has led to greater differences of opinion about the principles underlying Christian day school education. Some medium must be found, therefore, to provide for the discussion of these ideas and for the clarification of basic principles.

Awareness of this need led the Education Department of Calvin College a few years ago to declare itself in favor of undertaking the publishing of a journal for Christian school teachers. About a year ago a committee was appointed to investigate the possibility and advisability of launching the project. This committee discovered that the Board of the Christian Educators Association had also committed itself to the publishing of a similar journal, and that its Newsletter was the beginning of what was hopefully to become a full-fledged magazine.

Inasmuch as both groups were working toward a common goal, it was decided to join forces. An editorial committee, composed of four members of the Christian Educators Association and two members of the Education Department of Calvin College, was appointed to get the project under way. The committee herewith presents the first issue of the long awaited professional journal for Christian teachers.

### My Program

This, however, is only the first issue. The continued appearance of this journal will depend largely upon two factors. The first is the help that can be obtained to meet publication costs until the project becomes self-supporting. The second is the support which Christian school teachers give both by their prayers and by their readiness to become readers and contributors.

The *Christian Educators Journal* is published quarterly by the Christian Educators Association, whose members teach in, or are committed to the idea of, Christian day schools, whether at the elementary, secondary, or college level.

The general purpose of this journal is to foster the continuing improvement of educational theory and practice in Christian schools. Therefore, its pages are an open forum for the publication of significant articles and studies by Christian educators on Christian teaching. All articles and editorials appearing in it are to be regarded as the expression of the viewpoint of the writers and not as the official position of the Christian Education Association.

Business correspondence concerning subscriptions to the journal or membership in the Association should be sent to the Business Manager. Correspondence concerning articles or book reviews should be addressed to the Editor. Subscription price is \$2.00 per year. Association members receive the journal free.

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The Editorial Committee is well aware of its own responsibilities. If the journal is to survive, it must meet the needs of the Christian school teachers. In consideration of this the committee has outlined an editorial program that is based on what it considers to be the urgent professional needs of Christian school teachers.

The first of these needs is help in classroom situations. No one teacher or group of teachers has a monopoly on the best techniques of teaching. Professional teachers are ever on the alert for new methods of teaching and for opportunities to share successful methods with others. We therefore expect to include in the journal articles on methods of teaching that have "actually worked" in classroom situations. The frequency with which such articles appear will depend largely upon the willingness of Christian teachers to share successful methods with others by writing about them.

There are others who can give valuable assistance in this area. They are the specialists in the field of teaching methods. They can give classroom teachers help and guidance, and their contributions will also be solicited.

The second need is knowledge of what is taking place in the field of education. Christian teachers should be eager to grow professionally and to use whatever techniques and knowledge are helpful in performing their duties more effectively. They should therefore be acquainted with research and trends in education. This does not mean that they will adopt all that is new and recent, but it does mean that they will be aware of what is going on and place themselves in a position to evaluate it intelligently.

Articles will therefore be solicited from those who have participated in or have become well acquainted with specific areas of research and from those who have become interested in and made a special study of particular areas of education. An increasing number of Christian school teachers is attending graduate schools, and many of them should be willing to share with fellow teachers the benefits of their learning.

Another need is guidance. <sup>philosophy</sup> The Christian schools do not possess a clear and comprehensive statement of the educational philosophy that is basic to their existence. This may be disappointing but it need not be surprising. Education is very complex and has many facets. It is well-nigh impossible for all who are interested in Christian education to arrive at complete agreement on which aspects are more important than others, or which should receive the greatest emphasis. For our encouragement it may be said that the situation in secular education is even worse. There are now several philosophies of secular education, and schools vary according to the philosophies which their leaders have adopted. In the Christian schools there is agreement at least on basic principles. What remains is the serious task of relating these principles to specific practices and issues.

There are within the Christian school community several who have done considerable disciplined thinking about Christian education. They are able to lay down some guiding principles that will be of help to teachers in the Christian schools. Articles dealing with the principles

of Christian day school education will therefore be solicited and included in the journal from time to time.

A clear understanding of Christian education is not achieved, however, through a mere acceptance of statements or dictums that have been handed down by others. There is need for critical evaluation of diverse ideas and opinions about Christian education. Furthermore, educational philosophy should not be static. Education relates itself to the society and the world in which we live, and since they are ever changing the purposes and outcomes of education must continually be reviewed and re-evaluated. Articles that will stimulate reflection in this area and lead to evaluation will therefore appear as their presentation is deemed advisable and timely.

Finally, Christian teachers, to be effective teachers, must keep acquainted with new publications. Literature on education is voluminous. It is impossible for busy teachers to keep abreast of all the material that comes from the press. For their help a book review section will be included in future issues. Its purpose will be to call attention to new publications and to assist teachers in determining which books may be of special interest or help to them.

This, then, is our program. Does it seem presumptuous? The Editorial Committee does not think so. It has confidence in the Christian schools, in teachers, and in God who governs all. It is in His Name that we launch this journal and in the confidence that He will add His blessings we hope to continue. Our Lord is great; let us undertake great things for Him.



# The Elementary School Reading Program

BY DOUGLAS RIBBENS\*

It has been suggested that methods used to teach beginners to read are much like fashions in women's clothing — both change frequently, often from one extreme to another. Today new "fashions" for teaching reading continue to be proposed, and the elementary school teacher, reading the educational periodicals, finds it difficult to unscramble them. We read that the solution to the reading problem lies in the use of a new series, in the use of film strips, in the use of mechanical devices to increase reading rate, in the use of a basal reading program or a developmental program or an individualized program, and so on.

## What Is Involved in Reading

All teachers acknowledge that many improvements must be made in reading instruction, and all are eager to learn new techniques which will help them to make these improvements. Too many, however, are searching for a panacea and are willing to accept reading "fashions" which are over-simplifications. There is a tendency to forget that reading is indeed a complex process. McKee states:

Many people seem to believe that reading is a physical process rather than a mental process, that it is passive rather than active insofar as it is mental, that reading is done with the eyes rather than the mind, and that the reader needs to exert little if any effort as he reads. Actually, however, effective reading is something very different from looking at printed words while the writer's meaning makes itself clear. To build an understanding of what a writer means by a given printed expression and to think critically about that meaning is always an active mental process, and more often than not a complicated one in which the reader must work diligently.<sup>1</sup>

And Strang, McCullough and Traxler state:

Reading development progresses year by year in kaleidoscopic patterns, not in a series of separate steps. Reading skills listed as separate items are interrelated, their modifications are continuous as the child moves through school. One reading pattern merges imperceptibly into another as the individual progresses . . .

Reading development takes time . . . We must guard against pressure methods that may result in temporary gains at the expense of self-confidence and self-reliance.<sup>2</sup>

There is no simple solution to the problem of improving instruction in reading. One cannot agree with Terman and Walcutt who feel that "it is absurdly easy to teach a child to read with the proper method. Most children in America could be taught in a few weeks or months at the age of five."<sup>3</sup> Our efforts to improve reading instruction should emphasize the development of a complete reading program which provides for the development of all aspects of reading ability. In any case we must guard against those "fashions" which stress only one phase of reading ability or which result in only temporary gains.

1. Paul McKee, *The Teaching of Reading in the Elementary School* (Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1948), p. 4
2. Ruth Strang, et. al., *Problems in the Improvement of Reading* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955), p. 88, 89.
3. Sibyl Terman and Charles Walcutt, *Reading: Chaos and Cure* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1958), p. ix.

## Objectives in Reading

To set up a program of reading instruction which does justice to all aspects of reading, it is necessary to determine the objectives of reading instruction.

Since our reading programs aim at the development of good readers, the objectives listed below are stated in terms of what we consider to be a good reader. It should be remembered that the good reader cannot be fully developed in the elementary school. Therefore, the objectives listed below will not be fully realized at the end of six grades.

1. The good reader is able to attack new words independently.
  - a. He has the ability to use structural analysis.
  - b. He has the ability to use contextual analysis.
  - c. He has the ability to use phonetic analysis.
  - d. He has the ability to use the dictionary.
  - e. He constantly builds his supply of sight-words.
2. The good reader has the power to solve, through reading, the problems he faces in his school work and later in life.
  - a. He has the ability to locate information.
  - b. He is able to evaluate critically the information he has located.
  - c. He is able to organize information in such a way that it is most useful to him.
  - d. He is able to retain important information and use it to solve problems.
3. The good reader comprehends what he reads.
  - a. He develops an ever increasing vocabulary of more and more precise meaning.
  - b. He reads with a purpose and has developed the attitude of demanding meaning from his reading.
  - c. He has built a background of experience (direct and vicarious) which provides the concepts needed to understand the author's intended meaning.
4. The good reader has developed proper habits of reading.
  - a. He uses proper eye-movement as he reads.
  - b. He has developed an adequate reading rate.
  - c. He is able to adjust the method of reading to his purpose for reading and to the type of material read.
5. The good reader has developed the ability to read orally.
  - a. He understands the value and purpose of oral reading.
  - b. He has developed the attitude of desiring to convey meaning to his listeners.
  - c. He has the ability to use the skills required to convey meaning to others.
6. The good reader has developed a taste for reading good materials.
  - a. He has developed Christian standards for judgment and discrimination.
  - b. He has developed an appreciation of reading material of high quality.
  - c. He has developed the habit of reading for pleasure and personal development.
  - d. He has developed an interest in reading a variety of material.
  - e. He understands where he may obtain reading material.
  - f. He has a wide acquaintance with good authors and their writings.

The reading program which will accomplish the above objectives is in reality made up of a number of parallel integrated sub-programs. Each of the sub-programs must receive its proper emphasis and must be carefully integrated with the other sub-programs.

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## A Program for Reading Instruction

The first sub-program may be called the fundamentals of reading or the basic reading program. It is this program that many think of as the complete reading program. The basic reading program develops the skills which are required in all types of reading. The materials used are typically the commercial reading series with their books, manuals, work-books, and teaching aids. Properly understood, this program systematically develops readiness, word attack skills, vocabulary, comprehension skills, and proper reading habits including adequate rate of reading.

The second sub-program may be called the work-type silent reading program. This program develops the ability to use reading materials in all subject areas and for the solution of problems. The teaching materials are reference books, text-books, and supplementary informational books in all subject areas. Much of the instruction is given within subject areas as history, geography, science, and Bible. Special attention is given to developing the ability to locate information, to evaluate information, and to the organization of information for effective use.

The third sub-program may be called the oral reading program. In this program pupils are taught to read well to others with the purpose of communicating the intended meaning of the author. Reference is not made here to oral reading as a method of instruction which is used in teaching beginners to read or to oral reading as a diagnostic device. The oral reading program provides opportunities to develop the skills necessary for proper oral communication. It provides many audience type situations for students to read to others the materials which they desire to read and in which the listeners are interested. The materials used will vary from student to student,

each using material which he wishes to share with others.

The fourth sub-program may be called the program of children's literature. The program of children's literature seeks to develop desirable tastes for and interests in reading a wide variety of good material, including fiction, short stories, poetry, travel, biography, and drama. These objectives are met by direct teaching through lessons, by wide independent and individualized student reading, and by teacher reading to pupils. For this program a wide variety of materials must be available for student use. It is especially important that the teacher very carefully select the materials she reads to the class.

The reading program is not complete in itself. Instruction in reading must be integrated and correlated with all other school subjects and activities. As has already been suggested, the reading skills taught in the reading program must be applied and practiced in content areas. Each content area has its own vocabulary and its own style. Instruction should be provided to teach this vocabulary and to teach the special skills required to comprehend written material in each area. In addition to this integration of reading and content areas, reading should be correlated with the other language arts. In many cases instruction in reading assists the student in his grammar or his spelling. In other cases skills learned in grammar or in spelling will assist the student in learning to read. The principles of punctuation learned in grammar will be helpful in reading comprehension. The phonetic skills taught in reading and in spelling should supplement and re-enforce each other.

The establishment of a well-balanced reading program will not solve our reading problems. However, it should help us to evaluate the results of research and to guard against the pressure methods which result in only temporary gains.

## By the Stars or by an Errant Compass?

by W. HARRY JELLEMA\*

School buildings we have; devoted and academically capable teachers and administrators we have; but when are we finally to get a Christian philosophy of education? The question is asked repeatedly, with obstinate persistence; often by laymen, but certainly no less frequently by teachers themselves. Occasionally the question carries a note of impatience and reproof; always there is the implication that, despite our many advances, we still lack a Christian philosophy of education. Always, too, the question springs from a deep concern for the distinctiveness of Christian education.

There is of course an easy way to dispose of the matter. One can simply point out that we already do have a Christian philosophy of education, a philosophy in sharp and distinct contrast with that generally prevalent today, and (this, indeed, is not exactly flattering to the questioner) that he himself actually possesses the philosophy he professes to be seeking. And if he doubts that he possesses it, let him note his own antithetical reactions to tenets characteristic of the philosophy popular in our age; to such tenets as, for example, that only what can be verified by the experimental and mathematical methods employed by the natural sciences is finally reliable, that there is no objective hierarchy of values, that there are no objective universals and laws (perhaps not even in the world of nature), that concepts like God and sin and revelation are of no central significance in education, that man is a highly complex animal differing only in degree from the brute, that his chief end is to adjust himself to society and with his fellowmen to exploit nature.

Let him note his reactions to such statements, and let him consider, further,

that he can, when challenged, intelligently justify his reactions by appeal to a system of ideas with which he is thoroughly familiar. That system of ideas is the Christian philosophy of education. The questioner need therefore, no longer to be asking for a Christian philosophy of education; he already has it.

This, as I said, is an easy way to answer the questioner. And this — with modifications, and expressed more tactfully — is essentially the answer he customarily gets.

But despite the changes rung on the answer, and despite the frequency with which he has heard it, the questioner is neither satisfied nor silenced. He still persists in asking for a Christian philosophy of education. Either he is irritatingly obstinate, or we have failed to understand him. The latter alternative is, I surmise, the true one. And I think something may be gained by an attempt to state what I, at least, understand the questioner to mean. In any event, in this brief paper I shall try to state the case for the questioner; whether he is right or wrong, the issues he raises are certainly important enough.

### The Case for the Questioner

First of all, then, it would seem obvious that the questioner and his respondent do not mean quite the same thing by philosophy. By philosophy the questioner means not a cold system, however rational, however basic, of verbal propositions; he means philosophy as dynamic, living, active mind. The difference is analogous to that between two senses of the term history, — cold history as one finds it in a book, and history as the actual living process. Or

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again, to reproduce the philosophy of, for example, Plato in a well organized page or two is one thing; philosophically to think with the mind of Plato is something quite different.

And what is true of Platonic philosophy is equally true of Epicurean, or Christian or any other. The term "philosophy," the questioner means to say, may be used in either of two senses, and though the first sense may be the more usual, the second is not improper, and surely is not less important.

It is philosophy in this second sense which the questioner has in mind. He is asking for Christian philosophy of education as dynamic process. With this Christian philosophy of education which we have, philosophy is the sense in which the respondent takes it, the questioner is familiar enough; he accepts it as true and as indispensable. What he is looking for, however, is this same philosophy in act, philosophy as on-going process of discrimination, assessment, judgment, choice. He wants to be shown that in our educational theorizing and programming we are actually thinking, "philosophizing," with a mind indelibly dyed by Christian philosophy of education in the formal sense in which the respondent understood the term. And our original questioner implies that of the existence of "Christian philosophy of education in act" he finds but little evidence. In his most pessimistic moods he is inclined to say that we profess to know North from the stars, but then proceed to make our way through the contemporary educational thickets by the same errant compass which guides all too many non-Christian educators.

### Weighing the Case

If its statement ended at this point, the case of the questioner could fairly be judged to rest entirely on his unsupported contention that in our theorizing and programming we have no Christian philosophy of education in his sense of the term. And if the case of the questioner thus reduces to no more than an expression of his personal disparaging

opinion of our educational activity, his case could be dismissed for want of substantiating evidence.

But dismissal at this point would be premature. The questioner does have (and he frequently voices) what he considers evidence for his contention that we have no Christian philosophy of education in act. Read our articles, listen to our speeches or to our discussions in committee meetings, he says, and note how, despite occasional or more frequent garnishment with Scriptural quotations, their final appeal is essentially to such popular generalities as these: "Education should be of the whole man"; "The school should recognize social changes"; "The educand must come to know the world in which he lives today"; "We teach not subject matter but the child"; "Liberal education is aristocratic"; "The school should prepare for life." But such statements are, every one of them, highly ambiguous. And because ambiguous, they cannot serve as final authority for a position that claims to be distinctively Christian. Because ambiguous, such generalities settle nothing, prove nothing. They remain ambiguous until in each instance the terms employed are carefully defined, and defined not psychologically but philosophically. Even the beginning of an attempt at such discrimination and definition would reveal that what the statements mean to a Christian educator is something quite different from what they mean to the contemporary educationist. And if the Christian educator continues philosophically to define and discriminate, he may well find that many of the educational theories and programs which such generalities are in our day supposed sufficiently to justify, actually depend for their justification on a philosophy with which he finds himself in sharp disagreement.

### The Challenge in the Case

In sum, the questioner challenges us as Christian educators to show, by philosophy in act, that we do not actually rely on uncriticized popular ambiguities of the sort he has instanced; nor are misled by their (purely linguistic) translation into, or assimilation to, Biblical phraseology; nor suppose that building

on such we are engaged in Christian philosophy of education. His case can be pinpointed in his metaphor of the stars and the compass.

Here I end my statement of the case for the questioner. So far I have avoided passing judgment on it. And now I limit myself to three comments.

First, I think the sense in which the questioner wishes to use the term philosophy, though not usual today, is not improper.

Second, I think he may be underestimating the difficulty of achieving what he means by a Christian philosophy of education (so, too, does the respondent). What is required is not mere learning, nor mere professional literacy, but insight, wisdom. And these latter are not easily come by. And hence I think he is a shade too pessimistic, though it should be borne in mind, of course, that he is speaking generically. Nor do I understand him to mean that there is little Christian teaching going on in the individual classrooms.

Third, whether he is right (are we sure he is not?) or wrong in his contention that we too generally limit ourselves to what he calls popular generalities, I think he is quite right in his thesis that these are highly ambiguous, and that they therefore settle nothing. And I think the correctness of this thesis of his can readily be tested. I submit a few random examples of propositions, each of which a contemporary educationist, appealing to the very generalities referred to by our questioner, would forthwith condemn as educational heresy.

And yet every one of these random propositions is wholly compatible with these same generalities:

"The ideal of democracy is liberal education for everybody."

"Training for specific vocations is not the business of the school."

"There is an objective standard of value among subjects."

"Every individual should learn at least one language besides his own, should begin it in kindergarten and continue its study or use throughout school."

"Learning to be is more important than learning to do."

"One whose more intimate acquaintance is only with modern culture is not educated."

"Few subjects should be compressed into single semester units."

When on the same specific issues both what passes among contemporary educationists for orthodoxy and its contradictory opposite are equally compatible with popular generalities, these generalities obviously settle nothing. Certainly, then, they cannot serve as the Christian educator's compass.

I trust (if this postscript be not out of order) that the new journal in its successive issues may gradually convince the questioner that he is witnessing Christian philosophy of education in act, and that step by step we are finding our way not by the same errant compass that guides most contemporary educationists, but by the very same stars that for us define North.

# The Composition Gap

by N. HENRY BEVERSLUIS\*

I should like in this article to set forth for the consideration of all Junior and Senior High School teachers the need for and possibility of a workable weekly composition program. (Some of what follows was last February introduced at Eastern Christian Junior High School. Details of the program are given at the end of the article.)

## The Art of Writing

Dr. Conant's reports as well as the caustic criticisms of many others, from college deans to business executives, have only highlighted a problem about which many teachers have long worried. This is the problem: how do we close the gap between what the schools are doing and what they should be doing in the way of teaching students to write?

Surely almost no one in our schools will deny that there is a problem. Good teachers in all departments, and not just English teachers, deplore it. Our students, even honor students, appear to have had next to no writing practice—or at least give little evidence of first-rate communication skills. Surely, most of us will agree that something ought to be done about this, indeed, not merely in grades seven to twelve, but really from grade four on up through college.

By "writing" I mean here that crowning potential of created personality; namely, communication through well-considered, well-structured and well-articulated thought embodied in well-considered, well-structured and well-chosen language. By "doing something about it," I have in mind that such writing be assigned and practiced, appropriately, of course, for each given grade level, during the years indicated above—

and surely during the Junior and Senior High School years; that this be done in short, carefully defined weekly assignments. (As a by-product, if written communication begins in this way gradually to be mastered, oral communication, too, will be improved at the root and not merely, as now in some of our so-called "speech" courses, at the superficial levels of communication).

And so, again, by writing is meant something other than even grammar and punctuation and syntax—desperately in need of training in such matters as our children and young people may be. (I pass over them lightly here only because their importance to anything else I have to say is self-evident.)

By writing, then, is meant words put together in clauses and sentences and paragraphs. It has to do with organizing and predicating and concluding. Before that it has to do with knowing something, with putting this into a relationship with something else. And so it has to do with analysis, therefore, and judgment and summary. But before this it has to do with reading and seeing and listening. And so, of course, it has to do with thinking, not only in the process of writing, but also in the preparation for it, at the end of it and at the beginning.

Writing in this sense has to do with facts or ideas or judgments clearly discerned and distinguished from other similar facts or ideas or judgments. It has to do with the ordering and structuring of such, by means of grammar and punctuation and syntax, into affirmations or propositions or judgments or opinions or speculation, or whatever—and *composing* it in such a way that what is written is clear and coherent and turns out well said and worth saying.

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Some of this, according to pupils' readiness, of course, should be begun and mastered (along with the grammar, etc.) in grades four through eight; much of it should be crowned and honored as one of the few most important goals of Senior High School education; and no one should be judged fit for the last two years of college work who has not pretty well mastered the rudiments and disciplines of written (and oral?) communication somewhat as set forth above. (And to carry this all the way through, perhaps the Seminary faculty should, in the tradition of a liberally educated clergy, re-emphasize this skill as of paramount importance in the preparation of ministers of the gospel, equal, say, to doctrinal knowledge—as professional equipment, that is.)

Children and young people have great endowments of mind and persistent instincts for system—far more of this, I think, than we adults know how to exploit wisely. Listen to them argue on a street corner or around the dinner table or in a baseball game for proof that logic and reason are for them a sword and shield in most inter-personal tensions. Nastiness and fighting are not so much substitutes for reason and logic as they are for a kind of massive retaliation upon those whose own logic and reason have put them beyond "reasonable" persuasion.

It would seem then that writing disciplines such as those suggested above are both urgent and attainable for the emergent personalities in our classrooms.

## Imagination and Creativity

There is a second kind of human discipline which a good writing program could improve. If the first kind is more related to the moral and rational growth of personality, this other has more to do with esthetic and emotional development. Just as the practice of art and play and music and even conversation, for that matter, provide occasion for cramped personalities to stretch themselves and be free, so it can be with the practice of *imaginative* writing. Just as play, whether in childhood or in either early or late adolescence, is essentially

creative and (therefore) emotionally satisfying (even therapeutic), so art and music ought more and more to be this in our homes and schools. At any rate, a second set of values and skills in a good writing program in early years should, I think, relate to that emotional and creative and esthetic development all children need and just about all can profit from.

Children and young people are richly endowed with potential for such expression also. That is to say: they are, more at their age than they will ever be again, preeminently both dreamers and communicators. Watch them and listen to them: toddlers over a carriage and crib or a sand box; primary graders keeping house or driving a tractor; the ten-year olds roaring about as cops or bad guys or Indians. Watch the pantomime, hear the chatter,—and break into it if you can with a call to "reality." Call the teenager away from his adventure books—six times and he'll hear you, maybe. Or tell her she may not wear the lip-stick and she'll obey, perhaps, but not when she's alone in her room, in her castle with the mirrors and a door locked against "reality." See these teenagers, listen to them: on their first date, or in a cluster around a juke-box, some taking a dance step or two, others talking familiarly about, and half-consciously imitating, a favorite movie star, a baseball pitcher, a test pilot, a tough guy on T.V.

What does it signify, this sound and fury? I think this: they are actors, fakers, posers, imitators, escapers. Good or bad does not here matter for the moment; the point is they are *creating* an image of themselves by projecting themselves, through words and actions; they are expressing themselves as beings of also that second world—the world of fantasy, of make-believe, of dreams.

Notice that this is perhaps more true (or was until it, too, was stifled?) of the "dull" child or teenager than of the other ones. But all of them some of the time, (some longer into life than others) inhabit a dream world, a world of make-believe—of cheap imitation it may be—but a world of freedom, of imagination, of exploration; a world right next door

to or, indeed, all mixed up with this other world of yours and mine which we do not really want yet because they are not ready for it and do not yet really understand.

That first of all: the never-never land of childhood and growing up. Children and young people are dreamers. But they are something else too. They are communicators. Listen to them talk. It may be in atrocious grammar, but listen to it, how it comes out whole and neat and true, with feeling and drama and suspense. Listen to the twelve year old boy who can't read third grade reading and who thinks a verb is a noun — listen to him bring off a story about something that really moved him. Listen as he tells his friends and even, if he has not yet become blocked by failure and frustration, as he tells his parents or his teacher. The words come out with a rush, he's breathless, his eyes are shining, he's confident and articulate and running over with the importance of his story and, therefore, with the legitimacy of his status and place at front-center of the stage. Who will deny that such a momentary affirmation of the surging self within is good and should be fostered.

Or listen again to the teenagers in a talk-session at a coke and cookies party, or under the raised hood of a hot-rod, or coming home from a ball game. Through noise, through the egotism and the show-off sounds, listen to one here, another there, talking. Again it is wanting in grammar and in logic, maybe, but it's easy, articulate, natural, with good gestures and pacing and facial reinforcement; there are good ideas and there is good communication.

And when it's all finished this has happened — to the dull one of twelve or of sixteen, to the quiet one or the cocky one, or the bookworm or almost anyone — this has happened: he has communicated, not only words, but himself; and for a while, long or short, he has the good feeling and emotional release that come with self expression. He had a sense of belonging to the group not only, but of power, actually, in the group, and this good thing he takes home with him; and it cancels out some of the opposite bad things he usually has to live with in a world of adults.

Coming back to imaginative writing, we should expect of the schools, I think, that they fan this spark, that they release these forces, that they guide these dreams.

But also, that they, without violating and undoing these others, formalize and perpetuate these natural endowments through careful guidance in writing assignments. This could then also provide both the means and the motivation for the mastery of the proper mechanics of writing. It would surely give the school an opportunity for the further releasing and guiding of these innate endowments of mind and heart and sense that make us all wish that we, now and then, could be young again.

But then we must believe in these goals — in the values of imaginative writing, for all students. This is an area which for many has at best been given only a step-child status, and at worst is opposed or dismissed or misunderstood as childish and frivolous. There is a tendency in an age of mechanized culture and propositionalized religion to challenge the legitimacy of day-dreaming, of fantasy, of poetry, of flights of heart and mind. There is a tendency to settle back into our little earth-prisons and to be content if the young are reared in our own dull image.

The schools can help change this. One way, I think, is to recognize the esthetic-emotional needs and potential of our children and young people, and to attempt, by means of a writing program in our schools, to return the world of imagination to a place of honor.

How would this be done? Certainly not by encouraging the undisciplined first-person themes, the autobiographies, etc. Free, imaginative writing would tend to be the opposite of this. It would be free precisely because the student would be "forced" to free himself from the stereotypes of his immediate experience; free from the clichés of the familiar word and form; free from what everyone else has said about the same things; free (for the time being) from the everyday world, which he has not come yet to see or hear or meet really, and whose familiar outlines are too close to write significantly about.

For while it often is this everyday world that he *speaks* most eloquently about, when he tries to *write* about it he freezes up. Perhaps the practice of imaginative writing about "other worlds" would help most of all, eventually, to get him to see and hear and write about this real world in which he will have to live.

The teacher might, thus, in this kind of writing (especially in grades four through eight or nine) give assignments that would thrust the pupil into situations where he could not just write a series of "things," in effortless words. In carefully prepared, limited, defined, written assignments by the teacher, the pupil would perhaps be pushed through a looking-glass or down a rabbit-hole and told to describe an episode Alice overlooked; or into a wardrobe to find a *Namia* of his own; or into a highway adventure with the preposterous Mr. Toad. Or he would be a horse who finally got the wings he'd been praying for; or the rabbit who poked his nose out of a hole on the day the mountain exploded; or a monkey in a cage watching the people on a Saturday afternoon.

In each case the teacher would need to set an objective, limit the assignment, create the mood, require that the pupil do precisely so and so — and then within those limits require that the student let his freedom and imagination run riot.

At any rate, whatever the method let us teach writing also for the sake of this second important goal. Surely, if our schools, from grade four on up, could provide for regular weekly practice in both writing skills, somewhat as set forth throughout this paper, the results could well be of significance for the education of the inner person of our children and students.

And this is what Christian liberal education should be most of all concerned with.

### A Suggested Program

At our Junior High School we began such a program last February. The teachers involved were well-satisfied with the results and the program is continuing. For those who are interested, I outline some of the mechanical details.

1. All students have one short composition assignment (20-30 lines)

each week — one week a new assignment, the next a redraft.

2. One teacher teaches all the composition in a given grade.
3. Each composition receives two grades: one for mechanics, the other for content.
4. Competent lay people (former teachers) assist by marking the mechanics. They are engaged at a professional rate per hour. (Engaging such "markers" to help with the load is perhaps the best way around the biggest roadblock to writing programs in our schools.)
5. The papers are sent to the homes of the assistants, and after they are graded and returned, the classroom teacher assigns the second grade and returns the papers to the students. On the redraft, only one grade is given, based on the kind and amount of improvement over the first draft. The assistant markers indicate by a code what their estimate of this is, and the classroom teacher then assigns this single grade (which is the third grade for a given assignment).
6. All students in a given grade have the same assignment. The classroom teacher meets them once a week for a double period. Half of this is a period of "teaching": introducing a dittoed assignment complete with sample, instructions, story to be completed, etc; returning and discussing errors or good features of the former assignment; some general note-book instruction in writing (description, dialogue, argument, point-of-view, etc). The other half of the double period is a writing period, in which the students, under supervision, begin their assignments.
7. It happens that each of our grades is made up of five sections of 25-30 students each. Each section uses this double period, one for each day of the week, for the five so-called minor subjects (Art, Music, Composition, Physical Education, and Health, the latter in combination with a music study). This means that schedule-wise, it was possible to schedule composition as a separate subject.

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