



Christian Educators Journal

VOLUME 16.

NUMBER 4

MAY 1977

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SPECIAL ISSUE

PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE

Call For Manuscripts

CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS JOURNAL is interested in receiving quality manuscripts stressing why given educational theories, objectives or practices are good or bad, and demonstrating explicitly that the principles, goals or methods are identifiable as or consistent with Biblical principles.

Manuscripts demonstrating *practical* application of Biblical principles in any area of curriculum are also welcome.

CEJ solicits manuscripts such as:

1. Significant theories of education generally and various disciplines specifically.
2. Position papers on current key political, economic and social issues as they relate to Christian education.
3. Analyses of trends in education, particularly Christian education, as they relate to teachers, students and parents.
4. Proposals for curriculum deletions, changes and development necessary to meet the needs of students coping in a world of "future shock."
5. Methods and techniques which have proved successful in integrating Christian principles in any subject at any level.
6. Creative ways of strengthening Christian education and promoting Christian commitment at elementary, middle, secondary and college levels.
7. Creative expression such as art and poetry which will enrich the readers' sensitivity to the beauty and challenge of appreciation of God's world. (Don't overlook possible contributions from students.)
8. Any writing which will stimulate professional excellence in Christian teachers.

CEJ is always open to quality manuscripts which fulfill its statement of purpose, that is, to provide "an open forum for significant articles and studies by Christian educators on Christian teaching."

Manuscript hints:

- double space, typed, wide margins
- length: preferably 900-1200 words
- incorporation of necessary documentation within the body of the article
- side headings and illustrations where useful.

Send your manuscripts to
Lillian V. Grissen, Managing Editor
Christian Educators Journal
2300 S. Birch Street
Denver, Colorado, 80222

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The Christian Educators Journal Association, composed of several member or sponsoring organizations, publishes the Journal as a channel of communication for all educators committed to the idea of evangelical Christian schools, whether at the elementary, secondary, or college level. The general purpose of the Journal is to foster the continuing improvement of educational theory and practice in Christian schools. Therefore, its pages are an open forum for significant articles and studies by Christian educators on Christian teaching. Editorial policy encourages those contributions that evaluate as well as describe existing trends and practices in North American education. 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 Educators Journal Association or its member organizations.

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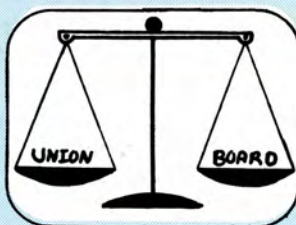


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ARE WE, OR AREN'T WE?

by Joel R. Brouwer, Chairman, Special Issue Committee

The service offered by our profession is the only professional service deemed so important that every citizen has a right to take advantage of it.

If everyone's opinion of the status of teachers coincided with Gaetano Polichetti's, perhaps there would be no need for a *CEJ* Special Issue on "Professional Excellence in Christian Schools." According to the July 5, 1976 issue of *Time*, Polichetti, an Italian immigrant plasterer in Boston's North End, aspires to send his children to college, "even if it costs too much money for me. I'd like to see us have a profession in the family, like teacher or engineer."

Time itself, though, seems not to share Polichetti's opinion. A subscriber survey which the magazine sends out periodically asks subscribers to reveal what they do for a living by checking the appropriate box. Just above the box labelled "Professional (M.D., lawyer, etc)" is another box labelled "Education." Perhaps, for some reason, *Time* needs a separate head count of educators, while they can make do by lumping "M.D., lawyer, etc." together. Or could it be that Gaetano Polichetti, Italian immigrant, speaks out of a European attitude toward education and teachers, while *Time's* survey reflects an attitude native to this continent?

This American attitude seems ironic to me, considering that *the service offered by our profession is the only professional service deemed so important that every citizen has a right to take advantage of it.*

(The statement is not quite true in Canada, where the professional services of doctors and dentists are also guaranteed to all citizens. But that only complicates the question of professionalism for the doctors and dentists—not for the teachers.) If we're so important, why must we expend so much energy convincing others, and perhaps ourselves, that we're worthy of the respect and esteem—and the authority—which should be ours as professionals?

Maybe our importance is at the root of the problem.

It's also important to have the garbage picked up and the mail delivered, which is why governmental agencies hire garbage men and mail carriers. Governmental agencies also hire teachers, and while we'd argue that our calling is important in a different way, the distinction is probably lost on a populace which is all too likely to see teaching as just another category in civil service. When news of the teachers' strike comes sandwiched between the stories of the garbage strike and the mail strike, do we encourage others to see us any differently?

Our importance militates against meaningful professional recognition in other ways, too. For example, we

continued.

generally concede that a professional, because of his training and expertise, should make the ultimate decisions in the exercise of his profession. When my dentist tells me that I need four cavities filled, I don't dispute the diagnosis. Even if I did, we wouldn't submit to arbitration, I'd simply have to find another dentist. But the importance, and in this case the institutional nature, of education dilute the authority of the teacher. Children are more important than teeth, and if their educational treatment is inappropriate, the consequences are much more distressing than the after effects of bad dental treatment.

Since most of our constituents have been educated themselves, they are fairly familiar with what we're trying to do. Often, they have very definite ideas as to what our goals should be and how we should try and achieve them. Obviously, though this is true for all teachers, it is especially true for Christian school teachers. While Christian school parents and teachers can usually agree on goals, and even on procedures, whose will prevails when they can't? Whose *should* prevail?

One other way in which our importance dilutes our authority deserves comment. *One of the traditional marks of a profession has been self-regulation and control by the profession of who enters the profession.*

Thus, graduation from law school doesn't qualify one to practice law—passing the bar exam does. Lawyers themselves set the standards to which practicing lawyers will be held. We teachers, of course, exercise no control over our profession. While self- and peer-evaluation are certainly steps in that direction, they don't amount to control. Again, the reason can be traced to our importance: if all children have a right to be educated, society can't allow teachers to restrict entry into the profession in the manner that physicians do. Society needs too many of us and can't afford to let us regulate and restrict ourselves.

One of the traditional marks of a profession has been self-regulation and control by the profession of who enters the profession.

All this leaves us, particularly as Christian teachers with a lot of questions. Should we be concerned about our professional status? Should we press for self-regulation? To what extent should we seek to control the conditions under which we teach, and what channels should we use to assert that control? Many public school teachers have unionized—would that be an appropriate model for us to follow? Is it consistent with the idea of professionalism? Finally, is it realistic to talk about upgrading our professional status in the face of

declining enrollments and a continued teacher surplus—or do these factors make such talk crucial?

We on the CEJ Board of Trustees hope that this Special Issue will begin to answer some of the questions posed above and provoke further thought on these issues and others related to them. Read the articles—discuss them informally in the faculty room and put them on the agenda for a future faculty meeting. Share your copy of the journal with a school board member. If you have a reaction, or more to say on a topic, write us a letter. We hope also that you will see the ideas and perspectives presented here as distinctively Christian ones, and that this issue may become an important resource as we all attempt to learn how to do God's will—as professionals—with excellence. ●

Joel Brouwer is Language Arts teacher at Unity Christian High, Hudsonville, Michigan.



THANK YOU

from

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Joel R. Brouwer, Editor
Leroy Stegink
Lillian V. Grissen, Managing Editor

for this issue on PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE



PROFESSIONALISM — A DIRTY WORD AMONG CHRISTIANS

by Barbara Hudspith

Christian teachers should not even discuss professionalism. To admit there is such an animal in our midst is to incorporate yet another pagan idea into Christian education. We are fooled into thinking that we, as believing educators, must keep up with the world in every sense —first class academic standards, the latest equipment, modern buildings and now a proud professional stance taken by our teachers. We are servants, not professionals, and should any man think he is first, he will be last. These are the words of our Lord.

"That's all very well," you say, "but you don't have to work under my school board or put up with my parents. I have to fight for every penny I wring out of them—and talk about work, they expect twenty-four hour service." Every teacher has similar griefs to share, but pouring on a slick coat of professionalism isn't going to solve these problems. Christ didn't say it would be easy to be a servant and that others would readily follow suit. No, washing one another's feet is not a pleasant, status job nor is it easy to point out to others kindly and tactfully

things are only beginning to get off the track, and you may choose to stay and fight the subtle influence of the world's values upon your little community.

"It all sounds so simple and straight-forward," you say, "but it isn't. It's so difficult to sort out who is right and who is wrong." You're right and that is why it's so wrong to band together under the powerful title of a "professional staff" so that your voice will be heard and your demands met. There is no precedent for this in Scripture.

It may be a matter to be discussed with older and wiser believers, prayed over and to be subjected to the authority of Scripture, but certainly not to be solved in the world's way. When we choose this route, we stray from the basic principles of Christian love and fellowship. Paul severely reprimands believers who cannot settle their differences without resorting to the methods of the pagan court. He even expects them to let themselves be wronged but never to wrong others. See I Corinthians 6:1-8.



that they should be doing the same. If, as believing educators we become preoccupied with fighting for our rights, then something has obviously gone amiss. The "world" has very craftily succeeded in leading us away from our first love. We would do well to rethink our purpose in teaching and to evaluate our relationship with those in the Christian community around us. Things may have degenerated to a point that real Christian education is now a side issue and personal grievances have taken the spotlight. This may be a situation in which you cannot effectively function as a believing teacher and must leave. Or it may be that

"But what about the children," you say. "They deserve good teachers and we must be very professional in our hiring principles and our teacher accreditation." Again we have fallen prey to the world's reasoning. There is no guarantee that a teacher with several degrees and all the current summer courses, knowledge of the latest audio-visual materials and reading techniques will love our kids and serve them faithfully. Impressed by all the wrong things, we wonder why our staff can never agree and won't work together as a team. It could be that they have no calling to teach and no love for our little ones. But we are too sophisticated even to touch

continued

these issues when choosing our staff.

This is not meant to advocate sloppy, second-class education for our children but rather a re-evaluation of our standards. If we feel we need advice on the abilities of our teachers, we should ask for outside advice, not from the state or the province, but from a competent Christian School organization. How can we seek guidance from the world outside when our own schools were formed out of distrust of their values and beliefs? It's ludicrous that we should crawl back to the public school system for approval or even look to them for a pat on the back assuring us that we're at least up to scratch. We seem to trust our own judgment in "religious" areas, but we have no confidence in our academic prowess. Does not the same Spirit pervade our ethics class and our chemistry lab? Does not our God give wisdom in all things? Or does He tell us that His wisdom lies only in certain areas and that we should seek the advice of the world in more academic matters? This is the subtle implication if we constantly use the public system as our measuring stick and view them as the 'real' professionals.

"But what about graduation and the future? Our children need a good grounding by competent professionals to get into the job market and into the university.

We can't be lax in their preparation," you protest. What better preparation can they have than that which the Christian school offers? They are nurtured by Christian teachers working under God's guidance. If, on graduation, they don't fit into all the artificial niches set up by society, then so much the better. Surely this only means that God has something better planned for His children—something that we cannot see because our sights are dimmed and clouded by the world's values.

If as Christian parents and educators we are worried about professionalism in any sense of the word, we have taken a giant step backwards. Let us fill our minds with the important issues.

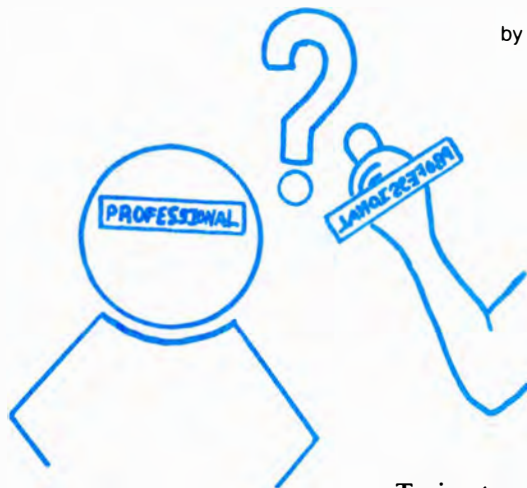
Jesus called them to Him and said, "you know that among the pagans the rulers lord it over them, and their great men make their authority felt. This is not to happen among you. No; anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." Matthew 20: 25-28. ●

Barbara Hudspeth serves on the Education Committee for the Community for Christian Learning, (grades 9-11), North Gower, Ontario, Canada, and edits the school's promotional newspaper.

PROFESSIONALISM

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

by Leroy Stegink



It is not an uncommon thing for people to express allegiance to an abstract idea, such as democracy, liberty, and justice for all. We are all for good literature, clean air, moral politicians, and good students. Indeed, we can hardly be against such things.

Difficulties begin when people attempt to apply these principles to their daily lives. A politician may vote against a bill because of his moral conviction, yet find his constituents trying to recall him because they consider his moral vote highly immoral. A school librarian may order a novel which meets certain criteria for good literature, yet find himself the target of a parent group for trying to pollute the minds of their children.

Trying to arrive at a concrete definition for the word "professional" as it applies to teachers can be as difficult as defining "good literature." Does the word apply to the hard-working teacher who is an administrator's delight, always turning in his absence slips on time and attending all of the athletic events? Does it also apply to those more militant colleagues who close schools in the fall by striking? Does it just mean one who is concerned about and loves children? Questions such as these, raised in a faculty lounge during morning coffee, often guarantee the student body at least five more minutes of precious recess time.

In an attempt to define the term "professional" as it is used by the readers of the CEJ, I would direct your attention to the following cases:

continued

CASE #1

Jane Gray is in her late fifties, a veteran of many years in the City Christian School. She is an effective teacher in her own way, which is very traditional. She is of the firm conviction that children learn best when seated in rows and that learning goes on only when the teacher is talking. To her, the "open" classroom is a method which exposes children to the temptation of cheating, and she has so far successfully resisted attempts to get her to use this method and other so-called educational innovations.

However, Jane is in trouble this year. It seems that the principle must recommend the name of a teacher to be dropped by the board because of declining pupil enrollment. He narrows his choice down to two teachers, Jane, and Sue Wright, the newest teacher on the staff. Sue is also an effective teacher, using the latest methods and materials, such as learning centers and role playing.

The principle, after agonizing over his decision, has finally decided to recommend to the board that it retain the services of Miss Wright for another year, and that it not renew Jane's contract. He gives "effectiveness" as his reason for the recommendation.

Questions for discussion and reaction:

A. What should Jane do now?

1. Accept the decision
2. Protest the decision to the board
3. Appeal to the parents
4. Hire a lawyer and threaten to sue
5. Other _____

B. What should her colleagues do?

1. Ignore the incident
2. Support Sue Wright
3. Join in a protest to the board in support of Jane.
4. Join with Jane in appealing to the parents
5. Collect money for Jane's legal fees
6. Other _____



CASE #2

The faculty of Woodlawn Christian School is upset. Last week the board informed the teaching staff that, due to the high cost of tuition, salary raises for next year would be only \$200. The faculty had hoped for a raise which would at least enable them to keep up with the standard of living for their area, but now, in the words of one faculty member, "\$3.85 more per week won't even keep up with the increase in faculty dues to pay for the higher price of coffee."

The board is of the opinion that they did the right thing. In the words, of one board member: "We pay a good wage for only nine month's work. Besides, we have our parents to consider. Their tuition bill is high enough."

Question for reaction:

What should the faculty do now?

1. Accept the decision
2. Attempt to educate the board
3. Organize and bargain collectively
4. Other _____



CASE #3

Miss Joyce James, a high school English teacher, has been teaching *The Grapes of Wrath* to her American Literature class. The class is not yet finished with the book, but Joyce has been ordered by the principal to stop teaching it and to start another which she considers an inferior novel. It seems that the parents of one of her students heard about the racy birth scene and protested the use of the book.

Joyce has attempted to discuss with the parents her reasons for using *Grapes of Wrath*, but to no avail. The principal will not change his mind.

Questions for discussion and reaction:

A. What should Joyce do now?

1. Accept the decision and teach the inferior novel
2. Quit
3. Teach *Grapes of Wrath*, in spite of what others say
5. Other _____

B. What, if anything, should her colleagues do?

1. Ignore the problem
2. Give Joyce verbal support in her decision what ever that may be
3. Give Joyce more than verbal support, such as some form of collective action
4. Other _____

These are three of many such incidents, I am sure the reader could suggest many more. The issue at stake in all three cases involves the rights and duties of the Christian professional teacher.

The CEJ welcomes any and all reactions to these cases in out attempt to define professionalism. Discuss the proper role of the Christian teacher in each case, and let us know your opinion. ●



Reader Response

Dear Editor:

It is with surprise that I note the publication of a review of the book *Scientific Creationism* in the March 1977 issue of *The Christian Educator's Journal*. A thorough review of that same book was published in the March 1976 issue of *CEJ*. One might guess that the earlier review was disliked by present editors of *CEJ* because it was critical of the book, and they concluded that it would be well for another viewpoint to be published. However, that could not be the justification in this case because a response by the editor of the book was published along with the critical review in 1976.

I undertook to review the book *Scientific Creationism* for the *Christian Educator's Journal* in 1976 because I thought that a thorough evaluation of the book would be of use to teachers in Christian schools. I am convinced that the ideas in that book do a disservice to Christian education because its claims are misleading or are based on partial data. I expressed that as well as I could in that earlier review. I certainly respect your right to publish another review of that same book, but I think that your decision to do so was a mistake.

Clarence Menninga
Professor of Geology
Calvin College

Dear Clarence,

Thank you for your contribution to the continuing discussion on one of the most pressing and unresolved issues facing educators at every level. Although some readers may agree with your assessment that the printing of Gary Parker's review "was a mistake," let me assure you that our actions were intentional and not the result of excessively short memories. As we announce in our Statement of Purpose, the general purpose of *CEJ* "is to foster the continuing improvement of educational theory and practice in Christian schools. Therefore, its pages are an open forum for significant articles and studies by Christian educators."

Certainly you would not wish us all to conclude that your article and the response by Morris and Jansma in the March '76 Journal drew the curtain on creation and resolved all disputes for posterity. In our estimation, your original review merely opened the door, allowing the Christian community new opportunity for dialogue. Gary Parker was the first to reply, submitting an unsolicited review, written four months before yours was published in the *CEJ*. In his estimation and ours, the basic issue is for more than bickering over scientific detail or the quality of a particular book. *Scientific Creationism* is merely a convenient catalyst, calling our attention to such unresolved questions as the validity of the uniformitarian approach, the problem of hermeneutics, and our philosophy of science. These issues we need to focus on and not bury.

It is our hope that the *CEJ* can increasingly become the forum it was intended to be. To that end we solicit continued discussion and will actively seek articles or reviews which extend our understanding of the issues.

Norman De Jong
Book Review Editor

UNIONIZE NOW!

by Lester De Koster

Of course, Christian school teachers should unionize. They should have done so long ago.

Unions are an integral part of the free enterprise system.

Christian school teachers should form their own union today.

The details of how such unionization should be realized can be passed by here and now, but the principle which should drive teachers to doing so is obvious. It is so obvious that responsible parents and responsible boards should promote teacher union with all their might.

What principle?

This: that while *training* can go on almost anyhow, *education* is more caught than taught.

The facts communicated and skills imparted in classrooms around the world are pretty much the same. Math is math; science is science; technology is technology; typing is typing; accounting is accounting; grammar is grammar; and even the basics of history, rhetoric, philosophy, and the arts are constant enough—in fact, all this adds up to our experience that Christian school graduates arrive on college and university campuses and in the everyday worlds of labor and enterprise trained much like their peers, only (often) better.

But *education*—what is caught in the Christian classroom in distinction from others, that's another matter. Education occurs in an environment, an atmosphere, where the Word with its priority-setting mandates comes to communicable reality. Education transpires where in the light of the Scriptures students see things clearly and whole. The key to this contagion is the intelligent, dedicated, courageous, and avidly believing teacher.

What economic environment stimulates and nourishes such teachers and teaching?

Hardly ours!

The salary indispensable to a teacher's survival is administered to him or her as an allowance purveyed from parent to child—conditional solely on the will of the board (and, it may be, on good behavior as defined by the narrowest and most bigoted in the school community.)

No teacher can exude in today's world that spirit of liberty which is his in the Lord when his economic existence is patterned on relations which went out of style with absolute monarchy. The power-relations between boards and individual faculty members (and administrators, too) survive in the fossilized forms known today only in the non-union shop. Yet, ironically, the teacher is supposed to eulogize in and out of the classroom a free enterprise calculatedly denied to him!

What will our children subtly breathe in, where the classroom atmosphere is created by teachers so held in bondage under the old law? Surely not that true liberty which belongs both to teacher and to student in Christ Jesus!

No teacher can exude in today's world that spirit of liberty which is his in the Lord when his economic existence is patterned on relations which went out of style with absolute monarchy. The power-relations between boards and individual faculty members (and administrators, too) survive in the fossilized forms known today only in the non-union ship. Yet, ironically, the teacher is supposed to eulogize in and out of the classroom a free enterprise calculatedly denied to him!

Yes, I use Biblical terminology, for ours is a Christian community. Biblical language is practical language, dealing with the realities of daily existence. One of the realities of Christian liberty is economic. Old Israel and the New Testament Church both link the affirmations of brotherhood with God-prescribed economic right, even to the extent of community of goods.

No teacher can hold his head high in the classroom—and thus communicate ineffably but absolutely the joyous liberty Christians should radiate—when he has always to reckon with the absence of job security and must guard his lips against his powerlessness vis-a-vis both the Board and the loud-mouths in the community.

Nor can any school administrator, especially one whose family depends upon his discretion for their daily bread, give his best and most creative leadership when he is all too well aware that behind him there can be no united faculty and beside him there is no administrative community endowed with the sinews of power.

It becomes a question of what kind of *education* we want.

What spirit do we want children to imbibe?

A discretion dictated by the realities of paternalism, insecurity, and fear? Or a liberty supported by realities of organization and strength?

To the degree that school boards desire spirited teaching and genuine education, they will demand that teachers unite to meet boards from positions of economic strength. Happily, a vital element in modern free enterprise, unionism represents the right every seller has to bargain from combined strength—a right which certain classes of sellers have enjoyed alone for far too long.

continued

What boards profess in regard for free enterprise they should require teachers to enjoy. Christian school boards should urge teachers to help them rid our community of a master-servant paternalism which the absence of a teacher-united front makes inevitable.

No teacher can hold his head high in the classroom—and thus communicate inefably but absolutely the joyous liberty Christians should radiate—when he has always to reckon with the absence of job security and must guard his lips against his powerlessness vis-a-vis both the Board and the loud-mouths in the community.

Parents who know what *education* is and how intimately its quality is related to liberty in classroom, should demand that teachers unite, stand side-by-side with those in adversity, and together lift their heads in genuine Christian liberty. If it's the best *education* that we are after, there is no alternative! If it's *Christian* education that we demand, the Bible prescribes security for all in the necessities of life—and an economic form assumed by the struggle for that security in our times is *unionism*!

Righting the balance of power between the board and the individual teacher is not an invitation to license. On

the contrary, it will relieve the teacher of a great temptation to equivocation. Issues not now touched, matters hinted at, judgments never quite spelled out can at last be freely made and tested. The cowardice which students so readily detect and want to editorialize in the school paper (when the faculty sponsor and principal dare let them do so) can be eliminated.

A responsible teacher union—and if irresponsible, then it cannot be Christian!—polices itself, in the very liberty it enjoys. With strength comes, for the Christian, growing responsibility. Some teachers who should long ago have taken up another vocation may be persuaded by organizational standards to make the transition. Others now in disfavor for too-creative views may be given wing.

Moreover, neither parent nor board is deprived of power and authority. They simply meet their faculties, at last, as more nearly equals.

Christian schools *train* well. Very well. Our graduates are frequently top in skills.

Christian schools will, however, be freed to educate to their full potential only when every teacher can be liberated from looking over his shoulder, and can fix his eyes, as a member of a united community, upon the exciting, horizonless enterprise which educating can be.

Lester DeKoster, editor, *The Banner*, weekly Magazine of the Christian Reformed Church

UNIONIZE? NO!

by John A. VanderArk

"Unionized yet? If not, chances are you soon will be - or have the opportunity to be - as a trend toward organizing collective bargaining units picks up steam among school administrators..." so reads Croft's *Curriculum Letter*, January, 1977.

"Across the nation, labor unions are flexing their muscles in the Catholic schools, adding the issue of 'teacher rights' to a long list of quandaries already facing the Catholic Church. It's becoming a nasty fight...." writes James Robison in *The Chicago Tribune*.

And then there is that heavy-fisted pronouncement known as Shanker shock: "If you don't unionize, some one else will do it for you."

These are samplings of news and editorial opinions with which reading educators are bombarded. There are offsetting releases, of course, such as this: "Unionization move poses problem of parental control," an editorial headline by Dr. Edward Spiers in *Freedom in Education*. I tend either to cringe or recoil under the blatant threat of impending confrontation, but there is a more becoming posture than the wringing of hands. It is to proceed deliberately and collectively - no pun intended - to marshal arguments for or against unionization of Christian school teachers. I shall contend in

this article that unionizing Christian school personnel is not the way to go to do justice to our personnel policies and practices.

There is a need for giving steady attention to the teacher's role as partner in the system. Inflation, job security, teaching conditions, and cultural pattern changes in administration alert us that there should be professional involvement in decisions on salary, fringe benefits, and other conditions of employment which affect the security and ability of teachers to function without stress.

The accent, however, is on partnership, whole-school consciousness. The accent of unionizing is, in the final analysis, on collective bargaining. All the accoutrements associated with unionism are unavoidable, including pressure, even the strike mechanism.

For your consideration I advance the following arguments.

Unionizing is out of character in Christian schools.

First and foremost, the basic concept of unionizing is out of character in a Christian school system. It sets up an adversarial condition, an alien ingredient. Our schools, like all private schools, are collegial (or col-

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Unions would drive a wedge between the profession and the Christian community which patronizes Christian schools.

legual - the word's not in the dictionary, so either spelling will mean the same thing) by their essential nature. The genius of Christian schools is their cohesiveness, affinity, and identification as a whole body, a veritable partnership. If you introduce an adversarial role, you undermine the system. There is a commitment in a voluntary organization which does not compare to public, non-voluntary, government organizations.

In this connection I invite you to examine the literature of the Christian day school: the basis articles, educational creeds, and all such statements of belief. There is an acknowledgement of ultimate authority, namely Christ, a chain of command, and, not to be minimized, a good distribution of empowered members. The basic question is: what kind of institution do we want to perpetuate?



Unions tend to reduce teacher responsibility.

My second argument is that unions tend to reduce, not enhance, teacher responsibility. To have a union "you have to give up something." The history of unionization in education is crystal clear: initial lofty goals of professionalization soon dwindle to professionalism. In fact, the goals soon become very narrow, usually crass - more money.

I recognize that this argument may be considered a bit presumptive. The perspective has been gleaned largely from reading and listening to news media and to comments by experienced school administrators. I am strongly influenced, too, by a close associate who is a member of a State Labor Relations Board and who has many encounters at the bargaining table where this point is clearly manifested. Granted, the argument lacks other specific documentation but is nonetheless an historical point of view which cannot be neglected. The prevailing attitude among unionized teachers is often, "Let others do it." At this point the militants step in and carry the ball.

Private sector "authorities" do not favor unionizing.

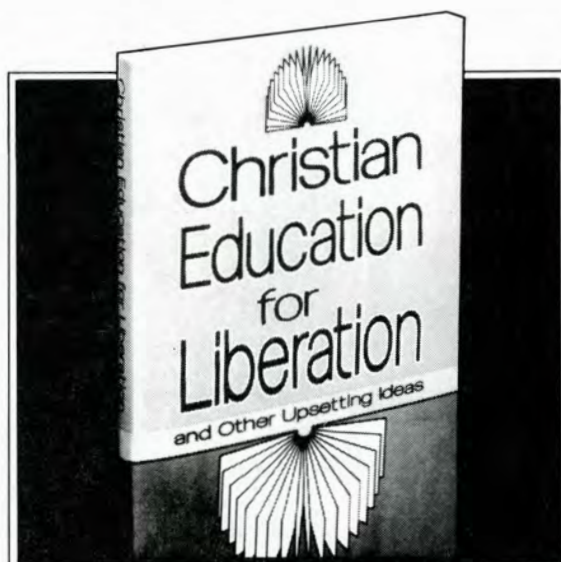
That leads logically to a third consideration. *The opinions of teachers and other "authorities," practitioners and theoreticians in the private sector, do not by and large favor unionizing.* Private, independent edu-

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CHRISTIAN EDUCATION FOR LIBERATION AND OTHER UPSETTING IDEAS



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cation in the U.S. covers about 10% of the pupils in school. I don't have a reliable figure for Canada, but I assume it is not less. I have spoken several times with Mr. Cary Potter, president of the National Association of Independent Schools. That system has nearly 1000 schools with 250,000 students. Only a few schools are unionized. Says Potter, "When you introduce an outside force, it has its own objective. It has little to do with the total institution."

In the Catholic system, there is some union activity among lay teachers. But "today," says James Robison in a syndicated article in *The Chicago Tribune* referred to in the opening statement, "only about 20 out of 150 dioceses in the nation have collective bargaining agreements [for lay teachers]... only about 8,000 out of 94,000 are covered by union contracts...." Conferring with Father Herman Zervas, superintendent of the Grand

Our vision should be that of working together. Boards and parents are concerned about good conditions of employment and professional standards for teachers because it is ultimately for the good of their own children that teachers are happy and motivated to do their best. Teachers are concerned about these issues for the same reason. It enables them to better serve the parents, students, and Christian community. Neither side may be concerned with bargaining for selfish reasons, but always for the sake of building the Kingdom and doing the best possible job of educating covenant children.

Rapids Catholic Diocese, I learned that there are no unions in that diocese and few in the State of Michigan. Nationwide there are pockets of activity but only in the large cities. Zervas summed up his opinion and that of leading parochial school educators in these salient words: "Unions are unnecessary and detrimental to unity."

Union activity among Protestant school groups is almost nil. In the three Lutheran bodies, Mennonites, Friends, Seventh Day Adventists, Baptists, Assemblies of God, and a wide spectrum of inter- or undenominational schools the question of unionizing is academic. Hebrew schools located in large cities, I understand, have more of a problem.

Unionization is more common in private colleges, also many religiously oriented ones, than in private elementary and secondary schools. But the testimony from such sources is neither encouraging to unionizing nor persuasive. In a book, *Unions on Campus*, 1975, Frank Kemmerer and J. Victor Baldrige, after giving the positive influences of unions, concluded that: "A number of negative consequences, however, may offset

these positive effects. In struggling for their members' job security, unions may harm the traditional process of peer evaluations based on subjective criteria ... this in time may reduce the quality of the profession. The price for job security may be a system hamstrung by burgeoning bureaucracy, rigid rules and procedures, and constant grievance actions."

Albion College in Michigan, after being the subject of a highly funded study by the Carnegie Commission in 1971-74, voted against having an outside agency to deal with personnel matters. The college opted, instead, for a stronger dean.

I could add testimonies ad infinitum from teachers and administrators in our and other private schools, but the same point would be made.

Better methods and resources are available.

The fourth point, I submit, is that *there are better methods and resources in Christian schools to deal satisfactorily with personnel policies and practices than through unionizing*. It is not beyond our wit and competence to involve teachers in matters pertaining to the full range of their employment.

Without claiming to be first in the field, the National Union of Christian Schools has available some excellent sources - *Board Member Handbook*, *Administrator/Teacher Handbook*, *Salary Study Report*, all replete with model policies and practices. Many schools have their own written and classified policies compiled in accessible references.

Within many a school structure there are organizations like a teacher-board council, a teacher council/senate, or simply teacher membership on regular or ad hoc committees. A few of the regional teacher associations have expanded their agenda to include matters of professional concern. I'm thinking particularly of the Ontario (Canada) Christian Teachers Association and the Christian Educators Association in the U.S. Great Lakes area.

Other regional associations may also have the advancement of professional standards on their agendas, but I am not acutely aware of such. The main purpose of all regional teacher associations is to conduct an annual convention for both inspiration and pedagogical growth. Several such associations have studied and adopted a code of ethics as a basic professional statement.

The two bodies referred to above are active in several areas. They have drafted, for example, guidelines with respect to the hiring, continuing contract, and dismissal of teachers. Dismissal, incidentally, may be related either to teacher competency or to circumstances beyond a teacher's control, such as a drop in school enrollment. Some work has been done on salary, fringe

benefits, and other conditions of employment. Other professional interests like teacher exchanges and professional growth workshops are sponsored by regional associations.

Such studies and services have resulted not only in stating positions on various issues but also in being conveyed with influence to school boards.

Teacher evaluation is assuming a much more sophisticated complexion than formerly. Evaluations are made by peers, students and supervisors. Self-evaluation is one earmark of a profession. The track record of unions in this connection is not good. They tend to protect the incompetent and consider tenure above merit as a criterion for continuing contracts.

A very sensitive area in this connection is policy on handling grievances. The Christian school system has not wholly "arrived" on this score. There are still too many unhappy and unnecessary episodes which get out of control, but we have the mechanisms to handle such problems. There is recourse to an education committee or other school-wide provision. There are district-wide policies to handle serious grievances, and the NUCS is ready to set up adjudication procedures should other attempts not resolve an issue.

Resources, organization, and policy are all needed, but even more important is a cooperative will to resolve such problems. Unionizing certainly does not engender mutual confidence and the feeling of working together toward a common goal. It puts teachers and school boards on opposite sides of a fence.

Parental rights and concern are largely ignored.

Finally, there are other arguments, but my space and your endurance are virtually exhausted. Parental rights and concern are largely ignored in this controversy. That perhaps is explained by the fact that the small unionization movement has affected only the Catholic sector of private education, and that not extensively. Should unionization come into more prominence in our and other Christian schools, it will involve not only teachers and school boards, but the conflict will spread to the consideration of basic rights of parents in selecting educational values for their children.

Unions would drive a wedge between the profession and the Christian community which patronizes Christian community which patronizes Christian schools. It would even drive a wedge into the Christian community itself, since teachers are a part of that community. Can you imagine what kind of constituency reaction would be touched off if teachers would go on strike?

No one argues the need to correct any teacher exploitation, unfairness, or lack of working policies. Where do NUCS schools stand on the scale with other religious schools? We are among the top in salaries, fringe benefits, job security, and generally good

employer-employee relationships. Let's not introduce an alien component which has the potential to divide and confuse the roles and categories of persons working cohesively, which have made one system strong. There is an old adage which says, "We're only one giant step behind the world but trying desperately to catch up."

This is not my sense of mission.

Our vision should be that of working together. Boards and parents are concerned about good conditions of employment and professional standards for teachers because it is ultimately for the good of their own children that teachers are happy and motivated to do their best. Teachers are concerned about these issues for the same reason. It enables them to better serve the parents, students, and Christian community. Neither side may be concerned with bargaining for selfish reasons, but always for the sake of building the Kingdom and doing the best possible job of educating covenant children.

John A. VanderArk, Director, National Union of Christian Schools



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THE ASYLUM

H.K. Zoeklicht invites contributions from other coffee clatterers who might like an opportunity to take their place behind the searchlight and focus the readers' attention on yet another Asylum situation. Whole columns as well as suggestions for columns are welcome and will be seriously considered. H.K.Z.

The door to the faculty room swung open and in strode Bill Silver, commercial teacher at Omni Christian High. His face was red and his voice was strident as he dramatically waved a sheet of paper for everyone to see, then slapped it forcefully on the faculty room table and said to everyone in the room, "Hey, did you guys see this rating chart yet?"

"What have you got there, Silvers, the latest stock report?" said a grinning Steve Vander Prikkel. "You look like it's dropping again."

"I wish it was a stock report," responded Silver, still breathing hard. "What this is is . . . here, let me read it to you . . . it's called 'A Faculty Evaluation Instrument,' and do you know what it's for? Someone thinks he's going to use it to evaluate each one of us to see if we're professional enough."

John Vroom, Bible teacher, sat frozen in his chair, his mouth wide open. He had opened his mouth to receive a Twinky, a chocolate one with cream filling, but now he just sat there, immobile, a Twinky poised about six inches from his gaping mouth. Three unopened Twinkies occupied the napkin on his lap. He said nothing. Vroom just stared incredulously at the bearer of such bad news.

Bill Silver picked up the sheet, then slapped it down on the table again and began to walk disgustedly toward the door. "Tell us what's on that thing," said a voice from the far side of the room. "Right, let's hear it," said

another. Steve Vander Prikkel picked up the object of wrath and began to read:

This is an evaluation instrument. It attempts to assess your strengths and weaknesses as a professional teacher. Accordingly, each item on this instrument represents a point value; the total of points in your score will indicate your standing. A score of 100 would indicate that you are a perfect teacher. A score of 75 would indicate mediocrity. A score below 60 would indicate unacceptability. Some of the items will measure objective, Factual information; others will reflect the judgment of competent observers and evaluators of your classroom performance.

Steve paused.

"Sounds as though the Principal Club is up to some mischief," said Matt De Wit grimly. "Where did you get it, Bill?"

Bill Silver, who had remained standing near the door, said a bit sheepishly, "Well, I, uh, I saw a few copies of this on Snip's desk, and it, well, it looked interesting, and uh, there were several copies, and I took one." He added, "It wasn't marked 'confidential' or anything."

Then Kurt Winter's big voice took over. "OK, everybody, maybe I can shed a little light on this thing. I know that Rip has been working on getting an evaluation instrument for us. And you don't have to be Barnaby Jones to figure out why he wants one. The

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enrollment at Omni is down this year, and it's going down further next year. I've heard that the school board has told Rip that we've got to drop two teachers next year. I'll bet this is Rip's way of going about it. He'll have us all evaluated, and the two with the lowest scores will be" Kurt made the quick gesture with his hand across his throat.

First there was silence. "You've got to be kidding," said one voice. Another one said, "Rip would be hopping mad if he knew we had this thing." Bill Silver said, "It seems to me that we have a *right* to know what's going on here. Teachers have rights, too, don't they?"

"Well," came from Matt De Wit, "now that we've got it, let's see what's in it." And he took the paper from Steve, cleared his throat and declaimed, "Very well, ladies and gentlemen, hear ye some items from the doomsday document. Item number one, for a maximum of five points: Are you a member of professional organizations related to the teaching profession? Item number two, for a total of six points: Do you read professional publications for teachers?"

"There you are, Silvers," said Steve. "Now you know why you've got to subscribe to the *Christian Educators Journal*. You can keep your job that way."

The commercial teacher fired right back. "I think the whole thing stinks," Silvers said. "They *make* us belong to a teachers association and *make* us pay dues for that dumb journal, and that's supposed to make us professional? That's horsedung." He looked around warily.

"Oh, come on, Silvers," came maliciously from the other side of the room. "With all that income tax business you did this spring, you can afford more membership fees and subscriptions than any of us. In fact, if you read the professional journals, you may discover that some people think teachers should give their full time to teaching, and that heavy moonlighting is unprofessional."

Silvers glanced angrily at the source of that remark and retorted: "How I earn money is my affair, as long as I do a good job of teaching when I'm here. Some of you guys make the extra buck by having your wives work, when they should be home taking care of the kids."

John Vroom winced at that one, because his Minnie was a full time clerk at Penneys, arguing that the added income enabled them to give more generously to "kingdom causes." He said nothing, and devoured his last Twinky.

Bob Den Denker had been enjoying the whole conversation. Grinning, he turned to Vroom. "What do you make of all this, John? What is a professional, anyway?"

Vroom wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, then licked the frosting from the back of his hand, rolled

his eyes imploringly toward the ceiling, and said, "I tell you, Bob, this matter has nothing to do with professional meetings and working wives. It seems to me that we are really professional when we, uh, well, when we take our profession of faith seriously, when we first and foremost promote a world and life view. You know what I mean?" "I'm not sure I do," responded Den Denker; "I wonder if there isn't more to it than that. Why should we object to being evaluated, as long as the criteria are reasonable?"

"That's just the point," put in Silver. "The criteria aren't reasonable. As long as I know my stuff, deliver it in the classroom, and keep control, I'm meeting the criteria for being a good teacher. That's what I'm getting paid for. Let's face it—teaching is a job. It's a job you do in the classroom. All this business about conferences and reading journals and being professionals is nonsense. We aren't getting paid for all that anyway."

"But, Bill," protested Den Denker, "you need to do something to keep up your interest in your field, to give you new ideas about teaching business issues and things, don't you? Reading journals and attending conferences could make you and your classes more interesting."

"Not for me, Bob. Not for me. I've got the real stuff. My practical experience in my income tax business, and my work as advisor to investment clubs—that's the kind of nitty-gritty stuff that I can take right into the classroom with me. That's the real world."

Vroom nodded approval. He was a member of an investment club for which the commercial teacher was a paid advisor.

"This isn't getting us anywhere," trilled Ginny Traansma. "I still haven't got the foggiest idea of what they mean by a professional teacher." Now Ginny had the "hot" evaluation sheet in her hand and was running her eyes over the questions. Listen to this one," she chirped. "How many graduate courses have you taken in the last three years?" How about that, Matt? Does your summer housepainting count as graduate work?"

De Wit smiled. "I wish it did. I wouldn't mind taking courses in the summer, but I need to pick up some tuition money then. I did take a good extension course just last fall, though; it was worth the time and money. I needed it."

Ginny waved her hand for silence and piped, "Listen to this one. 'How many extra-curricular activities are you involved in? List them.' " Then she added thoughtfully, "Do you know that if my job depends on my getting a good score on this rating sheet, my chances are zilch? I'm a member of only one professional organization; I get only the *Christian Educators Journal* and *The Banner*; I haven't taken any graduate courses. I'm not even helping the cheerleaders this year." Ginny looked worried.

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"But you have been doing some things that look pretty good," said Den Denker. "For one thing, you spend more time in this school building just helping kids than anyone else at Omni. And I noticed in our church bulletin that you were giving a book review of *Roots* somewhere. I forget where, next week. That should count, too."

Ginny smiled gratefully for that recognition.

"How come all the heat is on us?" asked Karl Den Meester. "Aren't administrators supposed to be professional, too? Are principals and superintendents and directors of education supposed to be mere technicians? Where are we supposed to get our inspiration and stimulation? Do you suppose Rip is considering giving himself some kind of evaluation? Wonder if he has read a book in the last year." Then he added, "Is there anything on that sheet about reading books?"

"I wonder if there's anything about being an interesting person," added Den Denker. It seems to me that a real professional teacher knows his stuff, knows how to get it across to young people, but besides all that—he's an interesting individual. Maybe he has some interesting hobbies, maybe he has had a lot of interesting experiences, or maybe he just has a lively interest in a lot of things. Whatever the case, exciting teaching and learning often depends as much on what kind of a person the teacher is as on what he knows."

"I think I agree with you, Bob," responded Ginny. "But don't you think a teacher needs time to become a more interesting person? We're often caught in having to spend almost all our leisure time on school-related activities: correcting papers, reading professional journals, going to conferences, serving on committees, going to ball games and other school things—and there's little time left to do anything else. I've been thinking of taking up flying, but I'll probably feel guilty about taking the time."

"Exactly my point, Gin. Somewhere on that sheet should be an item something like this: 'Takes time to become more interesting.'"

"Is there anything on being a good Christian influence? How about that one," asked Karl Den Meester. "Or does it include only those things that they can measure scientifically?" he added somewhat sarcastically.

John Vroom reached up and took the evaluation sheet from Ginny's hand and began searching it anxiously for any items on which he might score well. He rubbed his apple on his soiled shirt as he intoned, "I don't see anything that says 'Full of the Spirit of the Lord.' " Suddenly his eyes lighted up as he saw one which offered him hope. He smiled, sat down and said, "Now here's one that makes some sense." He read the item aloud: " 'In what ways have you served the community?' I think my monthly sermons down at the county jail would qualify there, don't you?"

Vroom was about to read another item when he noticed that Dr. Peter Rip, the principal of Omni Christian High, had entered the faculty room and was listening intently to the conversation.

"Would qualify you for what, John?" inquired a grim Peter Rip. "And where did you get that paper?"

Bill Silver had slipped quietly from the room.

"Well, I, uh, you see, Dr. Rip, the fact of the matter is, that, uh, I was just commenting on, uh, our need to be professional, that is, to get out and make speeches and things."

Vroom was reddening fast. He took a ferocious bit out of his shiny apple, and looked anxiously about the room for some help, but no one offered any.

Bob Den Denker finally broke the silence.

"Look, Dr. Rip. We probably shouldn't be discussing this evaluation sheet. Apparently you didn't intend it for our eyes, at least not yet, and we're sorry if we have been out of place in talking about it. But this is an important matter. We have heard that several teachers here are going to be dismissed because of declining enrollments at Omni, and we are naturally a little bit uptight about that. Is it true that you are going to have us evaluated somehow, perhaps with an instrument like this one, and then dismiss the teachers with the lowest scores?"

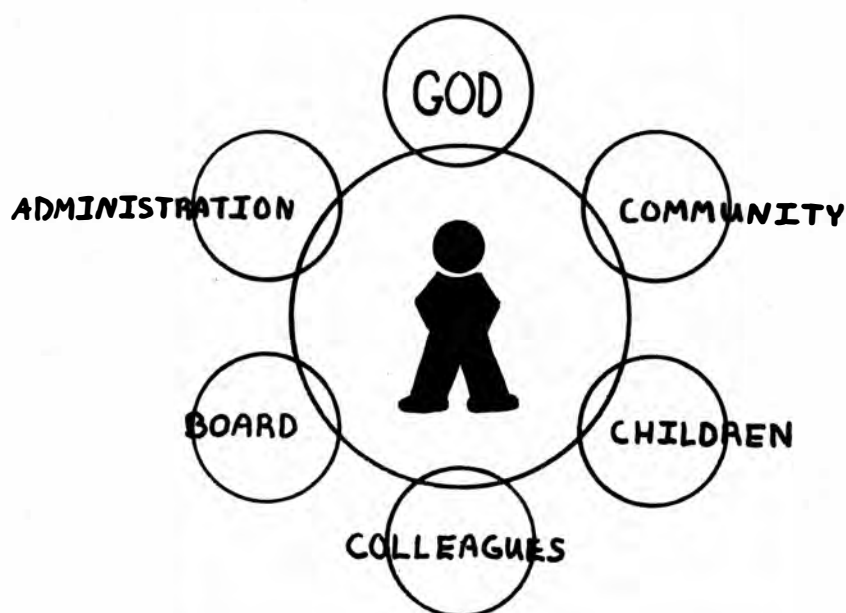
Peter Rip's face was redder than Vroom's.

H.K. Zoeklicht, a serious educator, sifts the chatter and matter from the clatter of the indispensable faculty lounge coffee cup. Unless inflation takes coffee, cup or commentary, this column will continue to shed light on educators' problems



PROFESSIONALISM AND GROWTH FOR THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER THROUGH A PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION

by Stanley DeJager



Professionalism for the Christian Teacher

In order to define "professionalism" for the Christian teacher, we must know something about the nature of his profession. Webster defines a *profession* as "a calling requiring a specialized knowledge and often long and intensive preparation." As Christians, we have a special reason to identify with "a calling" because we believe that whatever our tasks in life, we are "called" by God to perform a special service and to do this to the best of our ability. Often a "calling" by God to perform a special service implies sacrifice, for a person who answers the call of God often turns down the calls of such things as money and social prestige. Ephesians 4:11-12 tells us, "It was He (Christ) who gave some to be

... teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. . ." Thus, the Christian teaching profession should be viewed as a special calling which involves sacrifice so that children may be taught in the wisdom and knowledge of the Lord. When the Christian teaching profession is thought of as a calling and a sacrifice, "professionalism" for the Christian teacher has a meaning which is uniquely Christian. A Christian understanding of professionalism helps the Christian teacher to see his proper relationship to God, to the community, to the children he teaches, to his colleagues, and to the board and administration of his school. It also helps him to realize that his goal must be to serve God and others rather than himself, or he can never be content with his occupation.

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Consequently, professionalism for the Christian teacher first of all implies that he is a servant of his Lord and Savior. But what kind of servant is considered a "professional?" If, as a professional, he is expected to render quality service, he must have an advanced degree, the freedom to choose his own position and the amount of effort he wants to exert in his position, and he must be allowed to determine the materials needed to carry out his work.

If a Christian teacher is to be a faithful servant who renders quality service, he must also be keenly aware of the nature of those whom he seeks to serve. *The Christian teacher must see his students as image bearers of God*, students that will be active in His kingdom now and forever. Since the child is commanded by God to make full and active use of his talents, he has the inalienable right to a quality education. Therefore, professionalism for the Christian teacher implies making children aware of their obligation to serve God with their talents and doing everything possible to help them achieve that end. The Christian teacher, a model for Christian attitudes and behavior, must conspicuously teach Christian virtues. He must instill a Christian sense of values in his students by teaching them such virtues as respect for authority, concern for others, respect for the property of others, a desire to cooperate with others, enthusiasm for work, and most importantly, submission to the Lordship of Christ. *It is, therefore, the Christian teacher's duty to provide the experiences wherein the child will have his talents elicited, developed, and perfected for the service of God.*

Moreover, the Christian teacher must be *well trained* if he is to do a competent job of teaching. He should be willing and capable to recognize educational change and progress, and to incorporate into his own teaching that which is worthwhile. He should thoughtfully organize his daily work and use the most modern tools and equipment available so that he can be most effective.

It is also important for a professional Christian teacher to *cultivate the friendship and support of his fellow staff members*. He must show an interest in sharing problems and successes as well as ideas and equipment. Though he encourages open discussion of differences, he must promote a cooperative rather than a competitive spirit in the faculty.

A Christian teacher must be *keenly aware of his responsibility to Christian parents* who have made a covenant with God concerning their children. He respects their concern and understanding of their children and keeps the parents informed of educational change. Finally, he works to get parents involved in school activities so a better continuity of training for the children can exist.

A Christian teacher must also try to understand and appreciate the unique qualities of the Christian community. Just as it was important for him to keep the student's parents informed of all activities, of educational change, and of the progress of the school, so too it is important for him to keep the supporters of the school aware of these things. A Christian teacher is concerned about the Christian School's image in the community. This means that he is an educator who is willing to contribute to the support of community programs. He supports community programs in such a way that reflects Christ who served the world and commanded us to follow His example.

If we understand the implications of being a professional Christian teacher, we realize that the Christian teacher must not be caught in a rut and get by with as little work as possible; he must not be closed minded toward new ideas; he must not be indifferent to the opinions of others; he must not teach for self-serving reasons; he must not make derogatory remarks about students or other teachers; he must not be lax in attending faculty meetings, educator's club meetings, or CEA meetings; he must not shortchange the student classroom time, or by allowing the student to cheat; he must not be afraid to provide service to the school beyond contract requirements.

Professional growth through a professional organization

For a Christian teacher, professional growth should not stop with attaining some academic degree or reaching a certain step on the pay scale. *Professional growth should continue to take place as long as one is in the profession*. There are organizations for teachers that can aid them in professional growth. The Christian Educators Association (CEA) is such an organization. It is committed to promote the welfare of the educators of the midwest Christian Schools by providing professional leadership, propagating the cause of Christian education and providing for annual conventions. I believe giving you a brief history of one of the CEA committees, of which I am a member, can show you how such an organization can facilitate professional growth.

Articles written in the CEJ in the late 1960's dealing with professional principles prompted the conception and birth of the Professional Standards Committee (PSC) in the fall of 1969. The committee was appointed by the executive board of the Midwest Christian Teachers Association (name was changed to CEA in 1973) "to develop a set of professional principles which would give guidance to the MCTA as they seek to fulfill their mandate to give leadership to the teachers." Since that time the committee has become permanent,

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appointed by the Governing Board of the CEA to study and make recommendations on professional proposals referred to it by the Governing Board.

The seven-year history of the PSC shows many accomplishments. Eight policies concerning the professional status or treatment of Christian teachers have been written and approved by the CEA. Many of these policies have been accepted treatment and approved by faculties and boards of member schools of the CEA helping to cement the relationship between faculty and board and constituency. Following is a brief summary of the policies.

1. Policy for Resignation: Conditions are defined and steps are outlined which show why and how a teacher can terminate his contract before that contract ends.

2. Policy for Intern Teachers: Guide lines are established for intern and supervising teachers.

3. Policy for Membership on School Committees: The CEA proposes joint board-faculty committees in areas that concern both board and faculty to help develop more productive school systems.

4. Policy for Professional Advancement: Minimum standards for professional advancement are established to help educators develop a greater awareness of their role and responsibility.

5. Policy for Procedure for Non-renewal of Contracts Due to Decreasing Enrollment: Guidelines are outlined for staff reduction caused by enrollment loss.

6. Policy for Procedure for Non-Renewal of Annual Contracts: If conditions arise that lead the board to consider not renewing a teacher's contract, a procedure to accomplish such a purpose is outlined.

7. Policy for Dismissal of Teachers: Steps for immediate termination of a teacher's contract are proposed.

8. Policy for Evaluation in the Christian Schools: Justification and procedures for evaluation for teachers is proposed.

In addition the PSC has worked at establishing workshops for delegates at our CEA conventions. These workshops were intended to improve the delegates' active role in the CEA.

The past year found the PSC struggling with writing a statement that distinctively defines professionalism of a Christian teacher, a statement that identifies us in a unique way to our profession. Such a statement defends the preceding policies of the CEA and establishes new areas of study that contribute to the professional advancement of our colleagues. The statement is in its final stages of refinement and adoption.

Recently the PSC has received its mandate for the year ahead. This mandate includes evaluating and making recommendations regarding: the base for school evaluation teams, one-year teacher exchanges, establishing a hearing board for teacher grievances, familiarizing the membership with candidates for office, and workshop sponsorship in specific subject areas. The committee has met and discussed these mandates, and assignments were given to committee members to report on at our next meeting. With these mandates the year promises to be interesting and fulfilling. We hope we are filling a professional need of the CEA membership.

Let me conclude with a statement from the "History of the MCTA (CEA)": The basic question remains the same for the Christian Educators Association, "How can I a Christian teacher, best teach God's children about God's world?" I believe that a Christian teacher needs to be professional. The CEA can aid in Professional Growth through a Professional Organization. ●

Stanley De Jager, chairman Professional Standards Committee of the Christian Educators Association



TEACHING (IS) (IS NOT) A PROFESSION

by Robert L. Mulder

A concept of "profession", whether explicit or implied, flows throughout all education. Instructors, publishers, parents, administrators and school boards use the word frequently and comfortably, each assuming that others know how they are using it and agree about its meaning. From the contexts in which the word is used it appears to have a great variety of meanings; and the implications, if drawn to their logical conclusions and applications, indicate a wide range of disparate beliefs and practices. This paper does not presume to answer the question about the meaning of the word as it applies to education, but rather is an attempt to give individuals guidance toward discovery of a meaning as they become aware of the need to clarify the issue for themselves.

Teaching is a profession; teachers receive professional training; teachers are professional. Such a statement at first glance appears to be self-evident at best, and redundant at worst. It is not important here to determine if it is one or the other; what is important is the bringing of attention to the word "profession" to serve as an opener for a discussion of the problems one has when dealing with the concept for which the word stands as it applies to education.

To some, a profession is simply what one does to provide income, an occupation or a vocation, encompassing everything from agronomy and astronomy to zookeeping and Ziebarting. To others, profession and occupation cannot be synonyms, because in their view some practitioners of occupations are "more professional" than others in that they perform their jobs better. Still others point out that even the doing of a job particularly well does not qualify one for the label professional. True professionals, they maintain, are those unique persons who not only do something very well, but have themselves been captured by what they do and pursue it with total life expenditure. Not always, however, is the term defined in such all-encompassing fashion. Sometimes when people talk about teaching being a profession, or teachers professional, they have more specific things in mind, such as the manner in which teachers dress on the job, the extent to which they follow or challenge building procedures, the degree to which they emphasize teaching content or teaching students, the flexibility with which they approach their work, the amount of success, the behavior and beliefs they model, or the degree to which they remain individually autonomous or organize themselves to negotiate for what they believe to be their rights.

Myron Lieberman, in *Education as a Profession*, a monumental study of the problems adherent to "...the concept of "profession" as it relates to education, would limit the term to be applicable only to those occupations which exhibit, with only minor deviations, the eight interrelated generic characteristics:"

1. A unique, definite and essential social service.
2. An emphasis upon intellectual techniques in performing its service.
3. A long period of specialized training.
4. A broad range of autonomy for both individual practitioners and for the occupational group as a whole.
5. An acceptance by the practitioners of broad personal responsibility for judgments made and acts performed within the scope of professional autonomy.
6. An emphasis on the service to be rendered, rather than the economic gain to the practitioners, as a basis for the organization and performance of the social service delegated to the occupational group.
7. A comprehensive self-governing organization of practitioners.
8. A code of ethics which has been clarified and interpreted at ambiguous and doubtful points by concrete cases." (p. 2-6)

The essence of a profession cannot be found in a surface reading of its list of salient features, but rather in an understanding of the philosophical assumptions which underlie and give meaning to those features.

Although many occupations may at certain points be described in the listing, only those such as the practice of medicine, law, and perhaps ministry and psych/social work qualify as professions according to Lieberman, who amplifies the meanings, implications, and exceptions to each point, and in subsequent chapters addresses pertinent issues in education such as function, authority, autonomy, training, unionization, and ethics. Anyone desiring to pursue the question "What does it mean to be professional?" would do well to make himself familiar with the thorough, challenging, in-depth treatment this book gives to the issues involved.

To have identified the characteristics of something, however, is not necessarily to have discovered its essence, as was pointed out by Dr. L. DeKoster in his

continued

speech "Professionalism for the Teacher," delivered at the 1974 Christian Educator's Association convention in Chicago. Characteristics are those manifestations of something which are observable, which can be discerned through direct sensation or through direct observation of effects. For example, I can discern the characteristics of a tree, a person, or a typewriter through direct observation. I cannot see gravity, or the wind, or health, but I can observe their effects, and describe the characteristics of each accordingly.

Essence, in differentiation from characteristic, can mean one of two things. Sometimes it can refer to the most salient features of something, those features which may differ in specific manifestations from instance to instance, but in a generic way are consistent in all instances.

For example, trees may vary in shape, size and color, but consistent salient features of trees are roots and limbs; therein, according to this definition, lies their essence. This meaning of essence is the same as the generic characteristics of something typified by Lieberman's list. To illustrate this, one can look at the practice of medicine, an acknowledged profession. The specifics of medical practice and theory vary a great deal: dentists, surgeons, psychiatrists and general practitioners vary in the services they perform, the manner in which they perform them, and the knowledge on which their performance is based. All, however, can be said to practice medicine, and collectively they exhibit the eight characteristics of a profession as identified by Lieberman. In this case, the characteristics, or salient features, of the medical profession constitute the essence of the profession; they are one and the same thing. This suggests, then, that the right understanding of what it means to be professional can best be gained by a study of what Lieberman and other sociologists have to say about the nature of professions as they exist in particular cultural manifestations.

The second meaning of essence is more elusive. As it is used by philosophers, it generally refers to some transcendental, universal quality which is assumed to exist. Essence, in this case, simply *is*; it is a spiritual (non-material) entity, the "true" nature or constitution of something. Essence cannot be physically discerned; it exists as an abstraction. In this sense, one may say that the essence of a tree is beauty, the essence of a social service profession like medicine is altruism or, to bring this back to the topic somewhat, the essence of professionalism is? In this use of the word essence, one's definition of what the essence of something is proceeds from his own set of beliefs and values. This suggests, then, that the right understanding of what it means to be professional can best be gained by both a study of what philosophers have to say about the nature of reality, and an introspective analysis of the content and locus of authority of one's own beliefs. Given the totally subjective nature of such an enterprise, definitions of the essence of something are inevitably subject to logical debate.

A great deal of the confusion that surrounds the word "profession" as it applies to education can be

understood as confusion about what is meant by the "essence" of teaching as a profession. On the sociological side, those who would accept as definitive a list such as Lieberman's argue about such things as whether or not education provides a "unique, definite and essential social service," whether or not teachers "individually or collectively enjoy broad autonomy," or "accept broad responsibility for judgments made and acts performed," or practice comprehensive self-governance, or have an agreed upon code of ethics. The underlying assumption of such debates is that if and when teachers measure up to the yardstick for a profession which the list provides, only then may they be called professional.

On the philosophical side, teachers and others argue about what they believe to be the true nature or conditions of teachers and teaching. In such debates "professional" teachers are defined as those who have certain attitudes toward students, who practice particular teaching styles, who have certain beliefs about the value of human beings, who have particular views about the proper relationship between persons and institutions, or who have particular traits of personality; in other words, people who believe and practice the "right" kinds of things according to someone's philosophical system of beliefs and values. In this vein, a list of characteristics could also be developed, and some of its items may closely parallel the items on a list of salient features. Such a correspondence would indeed be gratifying to the developer of the instituted list, because it would indicate to him that "what is" and "what ought to be" are one and the same.

Essence, in differentiation from characteristic, can mean one of two things. Sometimes it can refer to the most salient features of something, those features which may differ in specific manifestations from instance to instance, but in a generic way are consistent in all instances.

As with the concept "essence", one must be careful also to distinguish between the two kinds of listings of characteristics. It would be a mistake to leap to the conclusion that since one can arrive at a delineation of characteristics via either of the routes provided in the meanings of "essence", it must not be important to be aware of and to understand the difference. Definitions of "what is" and "what ought to be" are determined differently, the first through sensate observation, the second through philosophical assumption. If consensus of any sort is to be reached in a discussion of what we mean when we claim for teachers and teaching the mantle of "professional", not only must the standards, or yardstick, be understood, but the locus of its generation must also be made clear. The point is not that the first order of business for those who would discuss the problem of "what does it mean to be professional?" as it relates to education should be to decide whether to use a sociological or philosophical yardstick. It is not an

continued on page 25



Professional excellence is more a process than a product. No graduate can insure it, nor can a state or provincial education department certify it because it is a quality always in the making.

This is not to suggest that teachers who search for excellence are impossible to identify. True professionals, after all, often evidence common characteristics. Combined in the right way, these characteristics work to separate the leaders from the followers and the innovators from those enamored of routine.

One such characteristic is restlessness. Professional teachers are never really content; they always know that they are less than what they might be. As a result they are constantly on the hunt for better methods, better ways of relating to students, and better equipment with which to do their job.

Interestingly, such teachers are often media-minded. They hunger for new tools and have been known to find them in the strangest places. Even more, they have a facility for taking a tool designed for one purpose (e.g., selling soap on television) and making it serve a completely different purpose (e.g., as a basis for a lesson in Christian ethics).

Nor are these teachers afraid to try media on themselves including some of the media mentioned below. Each in its own way carries the power to stimulate, to foster new insights, and to contribute to that process called professional excellence.

There's a lot more to teaching the Bible than most people (including Christian-school teachers) realize. How much more becomes clear in Robert L. Browning and Charles R. Foster's WAYS THE BIBLE COMES ALIVE IN COMMUNICATING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, a cassette-tape course issued by Abingdon Audio-Graphics, 201 Eighth Ave. So., Nashville, TN 37202.

Designed for individual or group study especially by Christian educators, the course supplies audio and print resources for eight 1½-hour sessions. Topics covered include three ways of interpreting the Bible (the personal way, the historical way, and the theological way) and methods of helping the Bible come alive for various age groups (younger children, elementary children, youth, adults).

This is an excellent pre- and inservice learning tool, one that teaches itself yet allows plenty of room for learner movement and growth. \$29.95 will get you this exciting package, which includes four 60-minute tapes, a self-instruction guide, and a resource book. Additional self-instruction guides, of which you will need one per person for group study, are \$.95.

Meditation is a lost art for many Christians, especially those trapped in the go-go pace of modern life. Fortunately meditation can be taught, and it can be learned. One aid that seeks to do just that is MEDITATIONS WITH MUSIC, a stereo cassette-tape series developed by Louis Savary, director of the Institute for Consciousness and Music.

Four tapes currently make up the series. Two are based on Biblical selections and two on body- and life-awareness topics. Each tape side offers a 20-minute experience that includes a spoken narration and classical music selections that foster reflection, contemplation, and prayer.

Specific subjects are: *Biblical Meditations—One*, Pearl Merchant and Widow of Nain; *Biblical Meditations—Two*, Psalm 150 and Mary's Visit to Elizabeth; *Self-Actualization—One*, "My Body, My Breath," and "My Movements"; *Self-Actualization—Two*, "The People in My Life" and "My Gifts." Each tape includes a study sheet, lists at \$7.95, and is issued by NCR Cassettes, P.O. Box 281, Kansas City, MO 64141. Usable by individuals or groups from middle grades to adults.

continued.

This column welcomes competition, especially when it comes in a helpful form such as **RELIGIOUS MEDIA TODAY**. Published by the Christian Interfaith Media Evaluation Center, RMT is a new quarterly magazine that seeks to offer "objective, informed, and competent judgments on the quality and variety of resources in the area of religion such as books, films, filmstrips, audio and video-cassettes, records, and other communications media." Besides reviews of new releases, each issue reports news of recent media developments and includes general articles on media usage.

Reading through an issue of RMT proves again that the real problem facing Christian teachers today is not a dearth of usable resources, but superabundance. To help you choose, I'd suggest you subscribe today to this "critical review of communications resources for religious educators." Prices: \$8 for 1 year, \$15 for 2, \$21 for 3. Address: 432 Park Ave. So., New York, NY 10016.

A most practical how-to-do-it manual is Roy A. Frye's **GRAPHIC TOOLS FOR TEACHERS**. Its practicality is partly due to having gone through four revisions in fifteen years. Edition IV contains chapters detailing tools and techniques of lettering, mounting, layout, and overhead projection, with additional materials on photography and television.

The book's emphasis on skills rather than content of materials produced makes it useful for teachers of any subject and at any grade level. If you've been looking for help in (among other things) poster making, drymounting, or arranging attractive classroom displays, this 108-page illustrated paperback may be just the answer.

Single copies sell for \$6 plus \$.50 postage from Graphic Tools for Teachers, Mapleville, RI 02839. Leaders planning inservice seminars should note that a ten percent discount is allowed and postage is paid on orders of ten or more.

Perhaps you've already seen it at your local movie house. If not, do spend 104 minutes plus the price of a ticket to experience **SMALL CHANGE**, director Francois Truffaut's delightful study of childhood in action.

You'll laugh, you'll agonize, and you may even cry as you watch several score small-town children interact with each other and with their parents, teachers, and adult acquaintances. Incisive but never heavy-handed, this English-subtitled French import explores a dozen different dimensions of growing up. First loves, how to survive a mother's brutal batterings, the risks of playing at ninth-floor windows—these are just a few of the subjects treated.

In short, this 1976 release makes for solid entertainment. At the same time it can serve as a provocative discussion-starter for faculty or parent-teacher meetings. Of special interest to Christian adults will be the almost total absence of religious influence in the children's lives, a situation by no means unique to French youth.

Frederick Nohl, editor of this column, is the Special Assignments Editor of the Division for Parish Services of the Lutheran Church of America



either-or question. Both legitimately come into play whenever people discuss the issue, and not to recognize one or the other as such when it is wielded in discussion is to guarantee confusion sufficient to prohibit any resolution of the issue.

It seems clear to me that the two are interrelated. Items in the list of salient features, such as the requirement that a profession must provide "a unique, definite and essential social service," that it emphasize service rather than economic gain, and that practice be governed by a code of ethics, whatever the specifics of that code may be, do not have an arbitrary genesis, but rather proceed from certain philosophical assumptions about the nature of man, the nature of society, and the responsibilities pertaining to both. Furthermore, if and when these items are ever changed, the revision will not be the result of some arbitrary decree, but will proceed instead from a change in the beliefs and values of both the practitioners and the society which affirms their right to professional existence.

The essence of a profession cannot be found in a surface reading of its list of salient features, but rather in an understanding of the philosophical assumptions which underlie and give meaning to those features.

The assertion implicit in the preceding paragraph, that a philosophical stance precedes and calls into being specific standards for specific professions, is intentional, and serves to indicate an avenue upon which to approach closure of the education/profession issue. It would be a mistake, I believe, to try to bring professional status to education by organizing it so as to produce surface manifestations which appear to be parallel to those occupations currently acknowledged as professions, and having done so, to claim profes-

sional status for education. Perhaps it would fool some of the people, some of the time, but not for very long. A good current example of this can be taken from the automotive industry: to those in the know about automotive engineering and performance, the Ford Granada simply is not in essence similar to a Mercedes Benz, no matter how hard Ford's promotional material seeks to convince people that it is because of surface similarities.

Much more important than attention to external characteristics is an attempt to identify and understand those philosophical antecedents upon which the characteristics are predicated. Such an endeavor is necessary if we would know what the "true" essence of a profession is. Furthermore, we must attempt to define for ourselves what the essence of education is. If we should find that in essence professions and education are similar, then we can shift our attention to the salient features of professions, and determine the extent to which the features of a collective organization of educators can and/or should parallel the features of professions as currently exhibited.

In summary, to allege blithely as either self-evident or redundant the opening statement that "Teaching is a profession; teachers receive professional training; teachers are professional." is unwarranted.

The resolution of the question "What does it mean to be a professional?" as it applies to education cannot be achieved until one has determined what the essence of a profession is, what the essence of education is, and to what extent the two are compatible. Until such time, the statement is at best an ambiguous assertion generating manifold misunderstanding and confusion.

Robert L. Mulder, is teacher of English and Psychology, Grand Rapids Christian High School, and part-time instructor in the Education Department of Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan



MASTER OF ARTS in TEACHING at Calvin College SUMMER COURSES

The summer programs at Calvin are planned for teachers—those wanting fresh ideas, those wishing master's degrees, and those seeking new competencies. Others may need to complete the requirements for teacher certification in Canada or elsewhere. All four of these goals may be combined in Calvin's Master of Arts in Teaching programs—programs that can be completed entirely during the summer.

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(Plus 43 other courses, many of which may be applied to the MAT Programs.)

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½ cu, H. Baron

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(Students may take one course a session.)

Educ 513, Psychology and the Teaching of Reading,
G. Besselsen

Educ 531, Teaching Children with Learning Problems,
C. Kass

Educ 534, School Administration, Staff

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Biol 510, Basic Ideas in Contemporary Biology, Staff

CPSC 511, Computing and Computer Science for
Teachers, L. Nyhoff

Educ 540, Reading Problems in the Elementary
Classroom, K. Blok

Hist 212, England, H. Ippel

Math 512, Philosophy and Foundations of Mathematics,
P. Zwier

Tuition is \$205 a course (\$190 for members of the Christian Reformed Church from Michigan and \$165 for those from elsewhere.) Graduate workshops are \$105. Registration by mail or in person: Registrar, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506; (616) 949-4000.

SPECIAL SESSION (continued)

Phys 120, Introductory Physics, Staff

Pols 201, American Politics, C. Strikwerda

Spee 214, Speech for the Elementary Teacher,
M. Vande Guchte, J. Korf

WORKSHOPS, August 15 - 19

IDIS 570, Individualization in Foreign Language
Instruction, H. Altman

IDIS 571, Peer Tutoring and Counseling for Teachers,
½ cu, M. Walters

WORKSHOPS, August 22 - 26

Educ 570, Personalized Learning in Elementary Science,
½ cu, H. Triezenberg

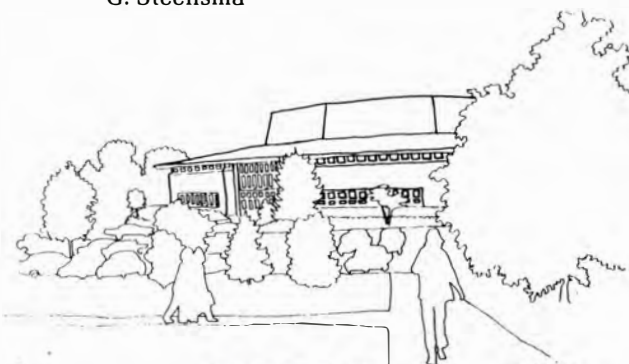
Educ 571, Revelation-Response Bible, 1-9, ½ cu,
A. Snoeyink

P E 570, Physical Education Institute, K-6, ½ cu,
M. Zuidema

SESSION IN HAMILTON, ONTARIO, July 4 - 22

Educ 304, Philosophy of Education, H. Beversluis

Educ 580, Curriculum Theory and Development,
G. Steensma



CALVIN COLLEGE

Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506





In the Name of Language,
edited by Joseph Gold. 209 pages. Toronto:
Macmillan of Canada, Maclean-Hunter Press, 1975

*Reviewed by Stanley Wiersma,
English Professor, Calvin College.*

Urgency about language makes this anthology of essays by Canadian professors of English a tonic for English teachers. Even the zealous grow half-hearted. Our inveighing against the comma splice and the fragment sentence having gone unheeded, we still put ourselves through the motions of being urgent, but we lack sincerity.

The thesis of this book is that anarchy begins with a breakdown of language; no economic growth is that anarchy begins with a breakdown of language; no economic growth will compensate for the stunting of rationality. Each of us must find a place to stand with conviction on every major issue, and our convictions must become articulate. Articulated convictions are all that will save us, say the writers, from political-social anarchy. The vital organ in a democracy is language; language is still used, but not exercised sufficiently. Unless English teachers and students are clear about their purpose, the English language will atrophy—and with it the political-social structure.

The signs of atrophy, say the authors, are all around us. "I have seen university graduate students," says one author, "unable to read aloud a passage of prose without faltering after every few sentences." "Fruitful exchange," says another, has replaced "confrontation," both in and out of schools, to the detriment of democracy. Behaviorism and technology, says another, have given us "skills" and "techniques" for writing, "tools of research" and "methods of criticism" for reading, and "learning experiences" instead of books. The result: students are not skillful writers, not critical readers, and not learned citizens.

The drift of this book is contrary to Marshal McLuhan, who predicts the imminent demise of the written word. It would be a poor movie indeed, one essayist suggests, in which the actors had no script and in which all direction was given in sign language. Even

the visual arts depend on the word more than McLuhan realizes. Oral language grows more articulate as we are able to analyze written language; analyzing oral language, we are always analyzing what we think we heard or think we said. Teaching writing is not enough; teaching speech is necessary, but teaching speech instead of writing misses both.

The attitude of this book is conservative, but not reactionary. The writers appreciate the advances of contemporary linguists in providing a complete grammar for English, in bringing machine translation closer to a working reality, and in shifting theories of usage from prescriptive to descriptive principle. At the same time, all that a native speaker of English requires in order to improve his/her style is roughly what is covered in traditional grammar, fragmentary as that system may be for foreign speakers of English or for translation machines. The authors favor a complete mastery of traditional grammar, supplemented by contemporary grammars, rather than a smattering of several "complete" systems of grammar, not one of them sufficiently mastered to provide the student with a technical ability in prose style. In the confusion between structural, transformational, and traditional linguists, grammar and writing have simply not been taught—or learned, as the declining language scores in standardized college-entrance examinations show.

The attitude of the book is conservative, but sprightly. That these urgent English teachers enjoy their field and their students is evident in three quotations:

No, neither television, nor film, nor the atomic bomb may be blamed for a declining literacy. What is certain is that we, the teachers, are contributing to it by a loss of faith, a lack of moral conviction, a failure or rigour, by the too-ready awarding of degrees at all levels, especially in Arts and Social Sciences, and by the underlying decadence that wants quick, cheap results from as little effort as possible. We seem to be in the grip of rationalized expediency. I am convinced that our system will be judged in time by the degree of literacy it produces. ***Will it come to be said that when we forsook our language we also surrendered our freedom, yielded to boredom, and were content with mindless passivity?

Joseph Gold

Is this study of Shakespeare and the grade (D-) to be part of the formal education (remembered as English 200H) and yet to be what Yeats called "a preparation for something that never happens?" If the study of literature is to have any meaning, and if universities are to be for the living, then it is imperative that whatever is striven for by students be actuated in *their* language; that the possibilities of "realizing" their worth in language be rescued from the impoverishment and unconsciousness which, like infections, are displayed in many, many essays which are dutifully presented each year.

Maurice S. Elliot

The method to be used depends on the teacher; nothing is more absurd than the search for methods that will enable those who lack a talent for teaching or a love of literature to do well in the classroom. My own method, for what it is worth, is to try to bring listening, reading, speaking, and writing, into the closest possible connection. ***What we most need at present, however, is emphatically not more discussion of methods, but a clarifying and confirming of our aims. If we ensure that those who teach the young understand the importance of language, and can use it competently themselves, each will find his own way to teach others his skill.

Geoffrey Durrant

Those are stout words, but they and the rest of the book can arouse again the determination of teachers of English.

The one limitation of the book is its somewhat naive assumption that, if only we save the language, we will save civilization. Whether or not we save civilization, teaching language with vigor and sprightliness will save the classroom where it happens from pointlessness, and who shall say how much besides?

Children's Literature, An Issues Approach,
by Masha Kabakow Rudman.
D.C. Heath and Company, Lexington, Mass.
433 pp, paperback, 1976.

*Reviewed by James J. Veltkamp, Chairman
Education Department
CHRISTIAN HERITAGE COLLEGE,
San Diego, California.*

This recently published book is addressed primarily to the teacher of children's literature. The author recognizes the significance of literature in molding the thinking of children. It is intended as a reference and guide to critical evaluation of the issues in children's

books. The issues dealt with are divorce, death and old age, war, sex, the black, the native American and the female. Each chapter discusses the issue, how it should be handled in children's literature, and activities. It also contains an annotated reference list of sources and an annotated bibliography of children's books pertaining to the topic. All Christian school teachers should read this book, to become aware of the subtle influence of a thoroughly humanistic and an existentialistic view of life promoted in the more recently published children's books. Examples of the thrust of the book are "books should indicate that there are many attitudes and sets of values toward sex and should not impart feelings of guilt if the readers disagree with the message of the book," also "there are no right answers to questions on abortion, suicide, euthanasia, death, the hereafter," and "there is almost no topic that is unmentionable in a child's book today . . ."

A Unit of Christian Lit

"How long yet on poetry?"
My freshmen ask hopefully.
"Only two weeks—or three,"
I say, with forced alacrity.

"I've always hated poetry,"
A girl observes quite candidly.
I smile and know not to dispute;
She's evidently honest—and also cute.

I think of Donne, Crashaw, and Herbert,
Milton, Hopkins, Francis Thompson—
Not everybody's dish of sherbert,
But good enough to take your comps on.

Gifted servants of our Savior,
Melodious singers to the King,
Each unique in his behavior,
Background, forms, and structuring.

How can it be that they can't hear it?
The song that celebrates their Lord,
That world-defying, deathless spirit
Extolling Christ, the Living Word!

Perhaps their teacher just lacks vision
To trust the God those poets love;
It may be to some life decision
That lyrics in His praise will move.

—Merle Meeter
Associate Professor of English
Dordt College



“THE MAKE-UP OF AN EFFECTIVE TEACHER EVALUATION PROGRAM”

By David J. Koetje

One of the most neglected and ineffective responsibilities of the modern school principal has been proper teacher evaluation. Classroom observations, if conducted at all, frequently find the principal feebly sitting in a classroom centering the context of his evaluation around petty teacher irregularities. These irregularities are tabulated strictly for the purpose of giving teachers a rating. These ratings, although most arbitrary, satisfy

board requirements concerning the evaluation of teachers even though these evaluation attempts seldom assist staff members in their professional growth and usually create on the staff, a dislike for the evaluation process. It seems apparent that boards of education will continue to ask principals to rate their teachers even though research continues to shower us with evidence to indicate that different practitioners evaluating the same teacher's performance may very well arrive at drastically different evaluations and ratings of the teacher.

As principals, we must go beyond school requirements and begin to understand the evaluatory process and its goals much more clearly. Limiting the purpose



The main purpose of teacher evaluation should extend beyond the pinpointing and tabulation of teacher strengths and weaknesses; a good program should center its efforts on providing valid information that can be used to assist in both the professional growth of the staff and the academic growth of the students.

of our evaluation to strictly that of rating teachers places us in a situation that few of us can handle effectively. A quality evaluation program involves considerably more than simply watching the teacher perform, rating the teacher, and reporting these ratings to the board of education.

The main purpose of teacher evaluation should extend beyond the pinpointing and tabulation of teacher strengths and weaknesses; a good program should center its efforts on providing valid information that can be used to assist in both the professional growth of the staff and the academic growth of the students.

If we are going to use classroom observation as a tool to instigate growth on our staff, we must remove from the center of our attention the petty irregularities, and become sensitive to the complexities of teacher proficiency. There are many kinds of effectiveness for different kinds of teachers, programs, and situations. We must, therefore, begin by establishing an open, trust collegial relationship between ourselves and our staff. We must do away with our traditional role of conditioner and expert, stop pretending to be all things to all teachers, and establish ourselves, within boundaries, in a position that finds us serving the staff as helpers and facilitators. We should find ourselves asking rather than telling in areas of classroom instruction. It is imperative that we display the notion that our school needs each staff members knowledge and skills in order not to only function properly, but also to share with the group in the decision making process.

Equally important to this collegial relationship on the staff is the elimination of the teacher's fear and anxiety that are normally associated with the evaluation program. The first step towards the elimination of this fear is to make it clear that the teacher is not being observed for the purpose of establishing a case for dismissal. It should be clear to the teacher that she was hired not because she was the only professional available for the job; she was hired because you, the principal, witnessed her particular expertise and decided that it would be of benefit to the school's total program. In fact, if you as principal have the authority to select your own staff, once a contract is issued to a teacher, you automatically share the responsibility with that teacher for successful teaching performance. It is, therefore, the principal's responsibility to assume the task of providing the necessary ingredients to allow the teacher to gain proficiency in those areas in which she is weak.

The classroom visit, therefore, is meaningful to the extent that it is used to gather data for discussion at a subsequent meeting between the principal and the teacher. It is at this most important post-observation conference that the principal and the teacher react to those items on the evaluation design that pinpoint particular strengths and weaknesses.

Success in the observation and evaluation of teachers comes only when *all* persons emerge from this process not only knowing that their skills, talents, resources, and creativity have been utilized to maximum efficiency, but also feeling emotionally enhanced and intellectually richer.

It is at this point that the most challenging aspect of the entire evaluatory process occurs, for it is here that the principal uses his expertise and strives to eliminate the weaknesses of each teacher. This change may be accomplished by recommending a particular author to read, a particular technique to try, or a particular staff member to observe. We may find it necessary to shift certain teacher responsibilities around and, therefore, eliminate various weaknesses by using the strong points of other teachers. In addition, through the recognition of these particular weaknesses we can plan for meaningful in-service training for weaknesses of our staff. All of this takes on meaning when we remember that throughout this entire process, our most important goal is the increase in student learning through the increase in teacher proficiency.

In conclusion, we recognize the difficult challenge principals face when we note that *success in the observation and evaluation of teachers comes only when all persons emerge from this process not only knowing that their skills, talents, resources, and creativity have been utilized to maximum efficiency, but also feeling emotionally enhanced and intellectually richer.* ●

George Groen, superintendent of the Ontario (California) Christian School Association is the editor of this continuing column. This issue's contributor, David J. Koetje, is principal of Des Plaines Christian School, Des Plaines, Iowa



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