Christian Educators Journal

VOLUME 17 NUMBER 4

MARCH-APRIL 1978

SPECIAL ISSUE
BACK TO THE BASIC(S)

BETWEEN THESE COVERS . .

What is BASIC Christian education? This issue of CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS JOURNAL speaks about theory and practice. **ART BUCHWALD,** in his usual succinct humor, expresses the man-on-the-street's concern about basic education in *"Laura Can Learn it — In College."* Christian parents, however, expect more; they expect Christian education to extend and deepen the homes' Christian values and principles, beginning in kindergarten. This viewpoint is expressed by **PATRICIA V. NEDERVELD** in *"Basic Christian Education — a Parent's Perspective."*

No truly *Christian* education can continue to exist unless each generation of believers is convinced that the foundation rests on biblical truth. Interpretation of scriptural expectations and demands vary somewhat with outlook, often cultural in origin. In *"Return to the Basics: Temptation and Challenge,"* **ARNOLD H. DE GRAAFF** expresses a Canadian point of view. **NICHOLAS WOLTERSTORFF,** in *"Return to Basic Christian Education,"* articulates a viewpoint representative of the United States' Christian educators' basic philosophy. Each Christian teacher can and must make his own decision.

Practically speaking, **SHARON SCHUTTER** concentrates on mathematics in *"Mathematics — Always Basic,"* and **KAREN PRICE** looks at the basic reading process in *"Reading Instruction Is B.A.S.I.C."*

Purist grammarians will appreciate **MIKE VANDEN BOSCH'S** pointed question in *"Why Back to Basics?"* Teachers who are curiously interested in the recent research on the metamorphic mind will be inspired by **HENRY J. BARON'S** *"The Education Of the Imagination Is Basic Too."*

Appropriately, a recent book, *SHAPING SCHOOL CURRICULUM — A BIBLICAL APPROACH,* has been reviewed by CEJ Board member, Ary DeMoor. The book belongs on the shelves of all Christian teachers, and it could be profitably and methodically discussed at in-service or faculty meetings.

Space has not permitted the inclusion of all manuscripts submitted; the response of CEJ readers to the call for manuscripts on "Back to the Basic(s)" has been very encouraging. We encourage you to read and react, not only in your classroom, but also on the pages of CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS JOURNAL so that Christian teachers in Canada and the United States may profit from dialogue.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS JOURNAL: A medium of expression for the Protestant Christian School movement in the United States and Canada.

MANAGING EDITOR:
Lillian V. Grissen,
2300 S. Birch Street,
Denver, Colorado 80222

ARTIST:
Delores Logterman

MANUSCRIPT EDITOR:
Jeanne Hoek

BUSINESS MANAGER
Donald J. Hunderman
1500 Cornell Drive, S.E.
Grand, Rapids, Michigan 49506

REGIONAL EDITORS
Gerald Baron
Trinity Western College
Box 789
Langley, British Columbia V3A 4R9
Allan R. Bishop
Ripon Christian High School
435 North Maple Avenue
Ripon, California 95366
Bette Bosma
Calvin College
Education Department
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506
Lillian Eiten
Eastern Christian High School
50 Oakwood Avenue
North Haledon, New Jersey 07508
Harriet M. Eldersveld
Roseland Christian School
314 West 108th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60628
Bruce Hekman
Covenant College
Lookout Mountain, Tennessee 37350
Harlan Kredit
Lynden Christian High School
515 Drayton Street
Lynden, Washington 98264
Barbara G. Peters
Philadelphia Montgomery Christian Academy
1701 Jarrettown Road
Dresher, Pa., 19025
Gary Regnerus
Unity Christian High School
216 Michigan Avenue, SW
Orange City, Iowa 51041

BOOK REVIEW EDITOR
Mike Vanden Bosch
Dordt College, Education Department
Sioux Center, Iowa 51250

MEDIA REVIEW EDITOR
Frederick Nohl
Special Assignments Editor
LCA Division for Parish Services
2900 Queen Lane
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19129

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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 offical position of the Christian Educators Journal Association or its member organizations.

Indexed in Christian Periodicals Index

MANUSCRIPTS AND BUSINESS MATTERS

Business correspondence concerning Subscriptions or membership in the Association should be sent to the business manager. Subscription price is $3.00 per year if a majority of the members of a supporting organization subscribes and if a single check and mailing list is forwarded to the business manager. Subscription price is $3.50 per year for individual subscriptions for all members of a school faculty, if a single check and mailing list are submitted, $4.00 per year for individual subscriptions, and $10 for three years. Checks should be made payable to the Christian Educators Journal Association. Issues are published in the months of November, January, March and May.

Manuscripts and corresondence concerning articles should be sent to the Managing Editor or Regional Editor. Book reviews should be sent to the Book Review Editor.

The Christian Educators Journal is published quarterly by the Christian Educators Journal Association, 1500 Cornell Drive, S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506. Second class postage paid at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS JOURNAL

CONTENTS

VOLUME 17 MARCH-APRIL NUMBER 4

Art Buchwald

Laura Can Learn It — In College

WASHINGTON — The Timkens sent their child Laura off to college with a check for $7,000 in tuition and thought that was the end of it. But soon after they received a letter from the dean of studies.

"We are happy to announce that we have instituted a remedial-reading class for college freshmen and strongly advise that your daughter Laura participate in it. If she doesn't, it is our opinion that Laura will not be able to keep up with her studies. The cost will be $250."

Timken read the letter. "I thought Laura could read," he said to his wife.

"So did I. I think the problem is she can read, but she has no comprehension of what she reads."

"WHAT DID THEY teach her in public school and high school?"

"I have no idea, but if the college says she needs remedial reading we better see that she gets it or $7,000 will go down the drain."

A few days later they got another letter from the dean.

"The English department has brought to our attention the fact that your daughter Laura cannot write. They have recommended that she enroll in the remedial writing class which we started two years ago when we discovered this was a common problem for most college students. If you agree that Laura should get this special help, please send a check for $250.

Timkin was now very angry.

"HOW DID SHE get in college if she can't write?"

Mrs. Timken was much more sanguine about it. "Laura can write. She just can't write complete sentences."

"She went to school for 12 years and she can't write a sentence?"

"Don't you remember? They were much more interested in Laura's thoughts than they were in howshe put them down. The teacher's concern was with expanding her consciousness."

"That's hogwash," Timken said, "They made an illiterate out of my daughter."

" I BELIEVE THAT'S a bit strong, Laura graduated with honors in analytical consciousness-raising."

"But she can't write."

"I'm sure the college can help her learn to write. After all, it is an institution of higher learning."

"So now we have to pay $250 for something they should have taught her in grammar school?"

"Don't you remember when we went to the PTA meeting years ago, and the principal said it was the school's responsibility to make good citizens out of the students, and the parents' responsibility to teach the children how to read and write? Carlton, we're the ones who failed."

TIMKEN SENT IN the check and wasn't surprised to find another letter waiting for him a week later.

It read: "It has come to our attention that no one in the freshman class can add, multiply, subtract or divide simple sums. We feel it is urgent that this deficiency be corrected early in a student's college career. Therefore, we are setting up a special remedial arithmetic course. The fee will be $250. If you do not want your daughter to take this course we cannot guarantee she will graduate."

Once again Timken went through the ceiling, "I thought Laura got A's in math in high school."

Mrs. Timken said, "That was conceptional math. Her courses had to do with the advanced integration of numbers. She never could add or subtract them. Don't you recall when you complained once about it and Laura's teacher told you, 'She can always learn to add and subtract when she gets to college?"

Basic Christian Education–

A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Patricia V. Nederveld

"The goal in education is not to increase the amount of knowledge, but to create the possibilities for a child to invent and discover . . . Teaching means creating situations where structures can be discovered; it does not mean transmitting structures which may be assimilated at nothing other than a verbal level."

-Jean Piaget (Ripple and Rockcastle, eds., *Piaget Rediscovered.*)

"Some of the most pervasively influential content which is learned in school is the content implicit and explicit in the educational process."

-Marion Snapper ("The Content of Process," *CEJ*, Jan., 1975.)

Three years ago, as our first busy preschooler neared school age, I began to ponder hurriedly the issue of Christian vs. public school education for him. Faced with the luxury of a choice, I found myself quickly discarding as inadequate the "shoulds" and "oughts" that were a residue of my own seventeen years of learning in Christian schools. As I continued to search for an adequate, sound basis for a decision, I reflected upon my own experiences as a learner. I tried to integrate my memories with the knowledge and experiences that I have gained both as an educator and as a parent. As the issue of Christian education confronted my husband and me in a newly real and personal way, I found added meaning and increased significance in statements such as those quoted above, statements which I had long since accepted as valid in my own teaching and parenting.

My goal for the basic education of our children IS NOT that a rich collection of knowledge and new facts be effectively transmitted to their open little minds in an organized and categorized way. Although accepted by many as a legitimate goal for the educational process, one must view this objective as increasingly unrealistic, inadequate and irrelevent in the light of today's ever exploding and swelling pool of available information. While I respect and value the place of teaching basic skills to children as well as the importance of developing in students the ability to identify and use available resources and methods in a quest for knowledge, these can not stand alone as primary objectives of the educational process. If I were to accept such a premise, our children today would be attending the public school down the street; and, from a parent's perspective, I would probably be quite satisfied that they were being "educated."

Stated another way, my concern for the education of our children is related not so much to the content that gets absorbed along the way as it is to the *process* which facilitates and insures that learning. My goal for the education of our children IS that the atmosphere in which they learn and the experiences from which they learn be as compatible as possible with the process which was begun in our home at the moment of their births. The best possible education our children can receive is that which will extend and broaden and build upon the learning which they have already experienced in their preschool years. A significant amount of research has been done on those early years of childhood and their importance for later personality development as well as cognitive development. As a parent, I have interpreted such information as a personal mandate. And, facing the prospect of giving up a great deal of my time, teaching, and influence to an institution, as our children grow older, has prompted some sober reflection on my part.

Since entry into elementary school is a second step—not a beginning—in the education of our children, it is important to me that the transition for them be as smooth and as uncomplicated by inconsistencies as possible. Piaget describes learning in the young child as a continuing process of assimilating new information as a result of very direct experiences or physical encounters with the real world around him. However, in order for a child to accommodate new experiences of information and incorporate them

continued on page 26

RETURN TO BASIC CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Nicholas Wolterstorff

What's the point of having an alternative school which is a *Christian* school? Why not be content with the system provided free to all in our society, namely, the public school system?

I think there is no better way to get at what is basic to the Christian school system than to ask and answer this question. For of course the *reasons* for establishing an alternative school which is a Christian school are interlocked with the *goals* of such a school—the goals determine the reasons and the reasons determine the goals. In turn, the goals of such a school determine what goes on within it. And whether Christian schools are worth the enormous amounts of time, energy, and money which they require is determined ultimately by what goes on *within* them. It is not determined by all our talk *about* them.

Thinking it through anew

For many generations, by now, Christian parents have had reasons for establishing alternative schools which are Christian schools. We could simply look back at some of the old formulations. Yet it is worthwhile for each generation anew to think through and to formulate for itself its reasons for supporting these schools. If it does not do so, then increasingly parents and teachers alike will fall into unreflective routines and submission to fads—sending their children because that's the thing to do, teaching their students in the way students in Christian schools always have been taught, or worse, teaching them in the way everybody else is teaching students today.

There is another reason for each generation thinking through and formulating for itself its reasons for supporting alternative Christian schools. There will of course be deep continuities from generation to generation in such reasons. Yet each generation differs in its self-understanding of its Christian identity, and each generation differs in the social circumstances in which it finds itself. It is of benefit, then, for each generation to formulate its reasons so that they fit *its* self-understanding and *its* situation. Otherwise its reasons for supporting Christian schools become abstract, loose from concrete experience and life, and unpersuasive.

The Task of the *People of God*

We must begin with the reality and task of the church in the world—meaning by *the church,* not that ecclesiastical institution which we call "the church," but rather *the people of God.* Fifteen years ago, perhaps even ten years ago, I myself would not have started there. I would have started with what it means for an individual to have *faith*; and then I would have argued for the comprehensive character of Christian faith. Today it seems to me that such an approach, though correct in stressing the comprehensive character of Christian faith, still reflects an individualism foreign to the biblical vision of life and reality. The fundamental fact confronting us all is that God has called out and chosen a people—the church.

Of course he called out a people before he called out the church. He called out Old Israel. But the significance of Pentecost was that Israel is no longer God's called and chosen people. Neither is any other natural grouping of human beings. God's people is now the company of those who believe in his Son, Jesus Christ. God's called and chosen people is now the band of those who are his Son's followers and disciples.

This band of Christ's followers constitutes what is called, in the first letter of Peter, a chosen *race,* a dedicated *nation,* a *people* claimed by God for his own, the *people* of God. Thus at Pentecost a new people was given birth. This people transcends all natural nations. It is trans-national. Yet by now it is found within each. Alien to all, yet resident within each. Elect from every nation, yet one o'er all the earth.

This people of God, the church, the band of Christ's followers, constitutes the fundamental identity of the Christian. The Christian remains

continued on page 18

RETURN TO BASICS: TEMPTATION AND CHALLENGE

Arnold H. DeGraaff

"Back to the basics" has become the new slogan for this decade's educational crusaders. Those who get headline coverage are the advocates of return to classroom drill in basic skills, to required courses with standardized tests and "objective" grading systems, and to uniform university entrance requirements. We should be sympathetic to the deep anxiety about our culture and the future of education which lies behind the slogan. At the same time, we should understand "back to the basics" as a superficial, reactionary and dishonest response to fundamental educational problems.

The challenge of the sixties

The fundamental problems were raised by an impressive number of critics during the 1960's. The critics confronted educators with:

—the repressive character of the school as a social unit.
—the lack of creative opportunity and challenge for students.
—the breeding of passive students with a deep sense of powerlessness.
—the fragmentation of learning into a collection of unrelated "subjects."
—the lack of a unifying perspective in education.
—the educational establishment's commitment to non-commitment.
—the breakdown of any sense of order in the schools.
—the role of the "hidden curriculum," indoctrinating in the values of an economic growth ideology.

Suggested alternatives came from all camps. Conservatives called for policing of the schools and the enforcement of learning through discipline. Liberal reformers wanted scientific management of education and a "soft" kind of behavior control. Radicals blamed the schools for socializing young people into taking a place in the capitalistic economy with its oppression of workers and the poor and its production of personal alienation. Their proposed alternatives ranged from the radical open classroom to deschooling to equalizing education through an egalitarian democratizing of the economy. Billions of dollars were spent on pilot programs, open plan school buildings, educational hardware and curriculum innovations. Alternative schools sprang up in the nooks and crannies of homes, churches and community center basements.

On the surface it seems that, after a decade of upheaval, things are returning to normal. No one starts alternative schools anymore. The free school movement is declining or has been absorbed by boards of education. Student protests have all but disappeared. The educational critics are still writing, and their views have deepened; but no one seems to take notice.

The problems remain unresolved. But, instead of concern and protest, a spirit of defeatism and cynicism has taken over. Morale among teachers is low. Teacher strikes threaten the functioning of the system. Politicians are making the most of cries for budget cuts. Economic problems, "scarcity" of resources, unemployment, inflation and the rising cost of living keep us preoccupied. Uncertainty, aimlessness, anxiety about the future and stop-gap measures characterize the 1970's.

After a period of educational upheaval, and in the face of new uncertainties, a return to the basics looks like the only sane thing to do. If students know (and their parents are assured of) what skills they need to acquire, what subjects they need to take, what facts they need to learn, and just how they will be graded, then all will know exactly where they stand. But, this attitude is so much whistling in the dark. While we may romanticize the 1950's, the three R's, discipline and corporal punishment, and the teaching of basic democratic values, the facts speak otherwise. The so-called "revisionist" historians of education have been

continued on page 23

S.A.T. and A.C.T. scores are usually considered indicative of the "health" of education throughout the land. Letters of inquiry concerning the present status of S.A.T. and A.C.T. scores were sent by the CEJ editor to the presidents of the Christian colleges associated with the National Union of Christian Schools, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Replies from Calvin College (Grand Rapids, Michigan) and Dordt College, (Sioux Center, Iowa) are reprinted here. LVG

Calvin College

1876-1976

Dear Mrs. Grissen:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond briefly to your several questions about "basics" in Christian education.

Calvin has not experienced a decline in S.A.T. or A.C.T. scores of entering students in the last decade. The average verbal score ten years ago is comparable to the present average score, slightly under 500. The average mathematical score has remained around 530 throughout the same period.

This stability in average scores is quite different than the decline in national scores. The advisory panel (for College Board and Educational Testing Service) that studied the national score decline felt that part of the decline was due to the changing composition of the population of test takers in the past decade. During that period a much wider range of economic, ethnic, and social backgrounds was represented among the test takers than ever before. This drastic change of composition in test takers did not occur to the same degree at Calvin.

The national advisory panel also identified a number of developments in education and society which they conjecture contributed to the decline. These developments require close scrutiny by educators: 1) a significant dispersal of learning activities and emphasis in the schools, adding many elective courses, reducing requirements 2) diminished seriousness of purpose and attention to mastery of skills and knowledge 3) impact of television 4) role of the family 5) disruption of life in the country in the last decade and 6) marked diminution in young people's learning motivation.

If these six developments can be judged as having such dramatic negative impact on the educative process, it gives us opportunity as educators to again review and reemphasize the basics necessary for learning to take place. We must, indeed give importance to the matters of critical reading and careful writing. We must, too, look beyond the classroom at the responsibilities in the home and in society.

As Christian educators, we also have the particular challenge of articulating and implementing the "basics" of Christian education. In addition to the basics we share in common with all others engaged in the educative process, we must also reassess and reemphasize the basics of our own Christian convictions concerning the nature of reality and the purpose of human existence. The "basics" of God's continuing revelation, of our faith in Jesus Christ, and of our servanthood in all of life have an equally dramatic impact upon the essential outcomes of the Christain educative process.

Of course, more can and must be said on this topic. I hope your Journal does that not only in this feature issue, but also in the months and years ahead. It is a never-ending task in the pursuit of Christian excellence.

Sincerely,

Anthony J. Diekema
President

SIOUX CENTER IOWA 51250

DORDT COLLEGE

AREA CODE 712 – 722-3771

Dear Mrs. Grissen:

Enclosed is a *Table* which lists the average standard scores on ACT tests over the past several years. We have noted the trends but we have attempted no validly designed statistical analysis of the data. We have not been overly concerned about the national trends, since our students have continued to perform at the same level in freshman and upper-class courses.

We have not officially attempted to "guess" what have been the causes of national trends. The literature has presented a number of articles suggesting causes and effects. Many explanations seem to have "a grain of truth" on a common-sense level, but provide little help in generalizing on a valid research level.

Sincerely,

Douglas Ribbens
Vice President for
Academic Affairs

This table shows the trends in scores for men and women over the past 8 years. National scores have been relatively stable since 1970. Dordt's scores have declined substantially during that period, although the trend seems to be slowed and reversed in the 1976 and 1977 classes. Dordt women score higher than men in English, while men score higher than women in all other areas. The differences are about the same as differences between men and women at the national and Iowa levels.

DORDT COLLEGE ACT SCORES BY YEARS

	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977
English	20.6	21.0	20.6	20.1	20.2	19.5	18.9	19.6
Mathematics	22.0	23.0	22.3	22.3	21.9	20.9	19.2	19.3
Social Science	22.0	22.1	21.2	21.1	20.9	19.9	18.3	18.9
Natural Science	22.6	23.2	22.9	23.1	23.4	22.9	22.0	22.8
Composite	21.9	22.5	21.8	21.8	21.7	21.0	19.8	20.3

Note: Nationally, the ACT scores have decreased as indicated in the data below. This fact may be helpful in considering the information above.

	1970-73	1973-74	1974-75	1975-76	1976-77
English	17.7	17.9	17.7	17.5	17.7
Mathematics	18.7	18.3	17.6	17.5	17.4
Social Science	18.3	18.1	17.4	17.0	17.3
Natural Science	20.4	20.8	21.1	20.8	20.9
Composite	18.9	18.9	18.6	18.3	18.4

HOW BASIC CAN YOU GET?

MATHEMATICS— ALWAYS BASIC

Sharon Schutter

Today's elementary school teacher is asked to master an almost overwhelming amount of subject matter, to be a specialist in reading, mathematics, social studies, science, and above all, to be an effective teacher of children. It is necessary to provide material to help the teacher keep abreast of current thinking in each subject area. The general contemporary thinking is "back to the basics," much to the relief and satisfaction of many teachers and parents.

"New math" or "modern math" made its debut in the early 1960's. *Modern mathematics* is an unfortunate choice of term because of its connotations. It is a misnomer. "Modern math" is not a recent invention, nor does it replace arithmetic, algebra, or geometry. There was no single reason for the change; some of the important reasons given were a shortage of skilled mathematicians during and following World War II and the Russians' launching of Sputnik I. With funding suddenly available, many groups began working on a revision of the mathematics curriculum. This produced a number of textbooks which emphasized the *structure* of mathematics and the *discovery theory* of learning. Studies showed that *modern mathematics* programs were as effective as the traditional program in developing math skills and that the materials were appropriate for a wide range of student ability.

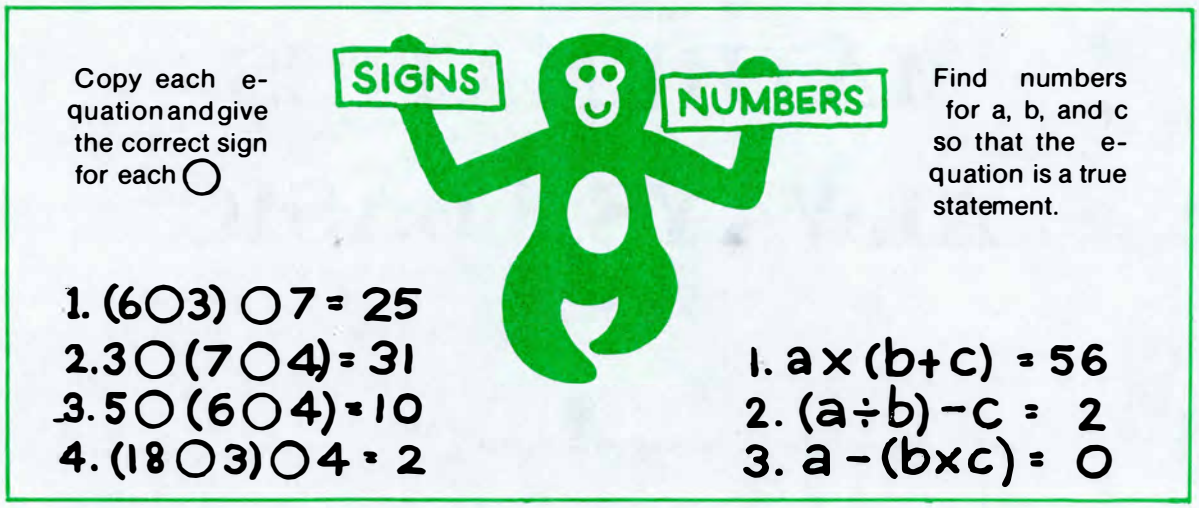
Modern math differs from traditional math in that modern math claims:

1) Mathematics should be viewed as a unified subject;
2) Set theory is a unifying concept of all math;
3) Study of structure gives meaning to manipulation of symbols (e.g. the commutative property, the associative property, the distributive property, special properties of one and zero, inverse properties, and the properties of opposites);
4) The discovery method of learning is an approach to problem solving. Modern math places increased emphasis on abstract ideas, attention to logical rigor, insistence on precise language, and use of contemporary terminology.

Objections to modern math came from both teachers and parents. They claimed it discouraged the student, decreased computational skills, failed to provide a tool for life, divided the home and school, parent and child, lacked relevance to other sciences, zeroed-in on only a small portion of the student body—the future mathematician, and claimed to be the only approach which would lead to comprehension and understanding. The conclusion of many was that set theory, the foundation of modern math, was not to be taught in the elementary and high school, but should be

Think.

A pen cost a dollar more than an eraser. Together they cost one dollar and ten cents. How much was the eraser?



reserved for math majors in college. Some college professors cited modern math as a dangerous experiment that could lead to a generation of mathematical illiterates who would not be able to balance their checkbooks. Dangers in modern math arose due to excessive and unskilled emphasis on some of the branches of mathematics at the expense of fundamentals.

The new curriculum was introduced without proper attention to essential pedagogical principles. Teachers were not given special instruction to prepare for the new program. As a result teachers became afraid to teach and parents could not help at home. Modern math texts also overemphasized certain distinctions between words such as number and numeral. The following conversation would be quite common in school if teachers really took seriously this kind of distinction:

Teacher: Who are you?

Little Boy: I am Jason Jones

Teacher: Oh dear, you must never say you are Jason Jones. You must say that you are a boy whose name is Jason Jones. After all, you are not made up of letters.

Inasmuch as the term "modern math" is a misnomer, the phrase *back to the basics* may also be. The basics in math in "the good old days" were rote memorization. Is this what we mean by *back to the basics*? I certainly hope not. But to condemn the reform being urged and to acknowledge at the same time that the teaching of mathematics has been unsuccessful for the past ten years raises the question, "What is wrong and what should be done about it?"

My purpose in writing about this problem is not to say that our curriculum is outmoded, but to say that we have done a poor job of presenting the material in our teaching. Total *modern math* abstracted at the expense of *fundamentals,* true, but *basic math* can only be taught at the expense of *mathematics.*

Mathematics is a living, vital, and highly significant subject, but this is not often communicated to the student. As a consequence, he acquires no feeling for the subject. Too often what the student is learning, so far as his understanding is concerned, could very well be the *basics* for the Chinese language. Learning by rote and by memorization, and the deadly drill, drill, drill, are important and essential.

The key basics in the elementary school are computation and place values; but, let us not forget to paint once we have learned how to mix the colors. Christian teachers especially must have a good idea of *why* mathematics is important, *why* certain topics are taught, and *what values* mathematics offers to our civilization and culture.

Sharon Schutter, sixth grade teacher, Ontario Christian School, Ontario, California

READING INSTRUCTION IS B.A.S.I.C.

Karen Price

As a classroom teacher involved in the teaching of reading, you have probably considered one or more of these questions:

How can I challenge my average and above-average reading groups?
They don't need most of the skill lessons or sight-word review my basal manual suggests.

How can I integrate reading instruction into my content area subjects?
Some of my students aren't remembering or comprehending what they're reading in their textbooks.

How can I efficiently diagnose and help individual children in my class improve their reading skills?
My time is limited with whole-class concerns.

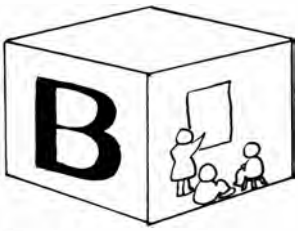
How can I get my students to read for their own enjoyment?
Many of them don't seem interested in recreational reading.

How in teaching reading can I capitalize on my students' interests?
Their enthusiasm in informal sharing of daily experiences is rarely matched in class discussions or assignments.

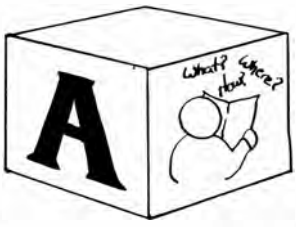
Questions such as these are basic to sound reading instruction. Intermediate and upper grade teachers know too that continued growth in reading skills is basic to content area learning that demands the comprehension of written material. Clearly, reading instruction is a basic ingredient in classroom teaching.

I have found it helpful to follow a general *master plan* of my classroom reading program for several reasons. First, my plan helps me to be effective, for I am using a combination of approaches that will more readily insure that each child in my class will learn required reading skills by an approach or approaches that best suit his unique needs. Second, my plan helps me to be organized, both in structuring layout of reading activities and materials in my classroom as well as structuring classroom time devoted to reading. Third, the variety and flexibility in my plan makes me, not a manual, the decision-maker in planning reading instruction for my students. It is this dimension of teaching—that of personalizing learning through teacher-made choices regarding instruction—that makes for exciting and challenging teaching.

My plan views reading instruction as B.A.S.I.C. Five approaches to teaching reading spell it out: the **b**asal approach, the **a**pplication to content approach, the **s**kills approach, the **i**nterest approach, and the **c**hild's language and experience approach. What I do, then, is use (more or less) all of these specialist-developed approaches in my reading program. This is how it ideally works:



Basal approach. Each child in my class is placed into one of four reading groups loosely based on reading proficiency. My least-skilled reading group does the full basal lesson which includes silent and oral reading, new sight words, comprehension questions, and specific context and phonetic skill study. My other reading groups read the story silently with less frequent teacher-directed questioning, oral reading, and skill lessons. Working individually or in groups of two or three, these better readers practice oral reading or make up questions or riddles from the story for their classmates to answer or solve.



Application to content approach. For students who read content area textbooks, the SQ3R approach developed by Francis Robinson is helpful for remembering and comprehending information:

Survey: The student quickly reads the usually darkened headings in the lesson to determine the main ideas.

Question: The student then turns each of these headings into who, what, where, why, when, and how questions to give him a purpose for reading.

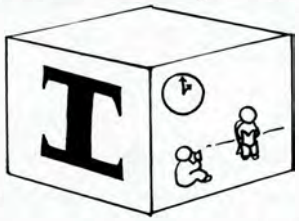
Read: The student reads to find the answers to his questions.

Recite: The student now recites the answer in his own words, not going on to the next heading until he can clearly do so.

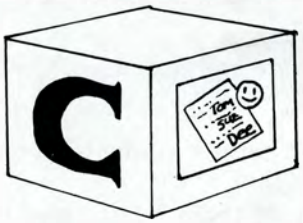
Review: The student reviews the lesson by quickly reciting once more what he has learned.

The key to this approach is to set purposes for reading and to actively fulfill them.

Skills approach. Using an informal reading inventory, I determine the skill level of the children in sight word knowledge, phonetic analysis, and comprehension. A checklist helps me keep track of the skill needs of individual children. I then teach these skills as necessary to large or small groups, using workbook pages from a phonics series for phonetic skill practice as well as the workbooks from our basal series. I also use reading games and devices and activities which are placed in special boxes labeled according to skill (e.g., one such activity labeled *ABC order* requires a child to lay down pieces of tagboard with various pictures and associated words pasted on them in alphabetical order). For sight word study I use a so-called "homework" system in which a child learns a list of high-frequency words or phrases in his free time or at home and then reads the list to me at "homework time." Children enjoy this special, successful time alone with their teacher.



Interest approach. Each day my class has a sustained quiet reading time, called SQUIRT. The children choose books they would like to read, and then the entire class reads for a set time which is slowly built up over the course of the year. I supplement our classroom books and school library books with twenty-five books from the local public library every two weeks. Regular reading from self-selected books helps even reluctant readers find enjoyment in recreational reading.



Child's language and experience approach. Because the children's experiences are meaningful and intrinsically interesting to them, I like to capitalize on this interest by occasionally writing down their comments at show-and-tell time, prayer time, or at a discussion time. Later, I print them on a titled chart, placing each child's name behind his contribution. The children, too, can write sentences or stories using their own language and experiences. These short stories can be put into class books (the title of one smile-shaped book in our classroom is *It Makes Me Smile When . . .*). The children enjoy reading our class books especially during SQUIRT time. Displaying snapshots of classroom activities at school and having the class write captions to these pictures is another way to tap experiences for reading.

These five approaches constitute the framework of my master plan for reading instruction. Within each approach I have given several suggestions that help to begin answering the five basic questions posed at the beginning of this article. Reading instruction *is* BASIC!

Karen Price, elementary teacher, Ada Christian School, Ada, Michigan.

WAY BACK TO THE BASICS?

Mike Vanden Bosch

The "Back to the Basics" cry led me back to that influential document, *Research in Written Composition* by Richard Braddock, Richard Lloyd-Jones, and Lowell Schoer, published in 1963 by the National Council of Teachers of English. The book gives a thorough survey of research done up to that time on the teaching of composition. But two statements in it shocked me. The first statement was this: "Study after study based on objective testing rather than actual writing confirms that instruction in formal grammar has little or no effect on the quality of student composition." Based on "objective testing"? I began to wonder just how much a study "based on objective testing rather than on actual writing" could prove or confirm anything about the teaching of composition unless the researchers were testing for usage errors instead of for "quality of student composition."

Then I came across this statement: "Uncommon, however, is carefully conducted research which studies the effect of formal grammar on actual composition over an extended period of time." So, I thought, it had not been proven after all that instruction in formal grammar had no effect on actual composition. But, astonishingly, one paragraph later I found the statement that I had seen quoted dozens of times in articles and in arguments. Here it is:

> In view of the widespread agreement of research studies based upon many types of students and teachers, the conclusion can be stated in strong and unqualified terms: the teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing (p. 38).

Yes, I thought, it "*can* be stated in strong and unqualified terms," but in the light of the previous statement, it *ought not* be so stated by anyone with the least concern for advancing our knowledge about the teaching of writing.

It is not my intent in this paper to evaluate all the research done since 1963 to see if we have had "carefully conducted research which studies the effect of formal grammar on actual composition over an extended period of time" since that time. But since I found the unsupported conclusion of Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer, I have begun to rethink the whole issue. And I have some questions for those teachers who have thrown away their grammar books.

I recently listened to a speaker who talked about a "teaching strategy area." In his typed handout he wrote of the objectives of "field experience education" and of serving a "community need." I wanted to tell him that labeling on-the-job training as "field experience education" is confusing. What is "experience education"? Learning from experience? I assume so. And what does "field" modify, or mean, for that matter?

It is and should be a noun. But the context forces me to understand it as a modifier of either "experience" or "education" or both. Such fuzzy labeling results from using three successive nouns to identify something so clearly described by the old but descriptive term, "On-the-Job Training." If society has overlooked the educational significance of on-the-job training, let the speaker say so. But why confuse me with a noun-heavy label.

Or if a community needs a service, let the speaker talk about a community's need, using a possessive adjective, not a noun to modify "need." It's a simple but significant change.

Now if I told this friendly lecturer my complaints, I doubt if he'd understand me. Words are probably just words to him, not nouns or adjectives or verbs. Why else would he indiscriminately throw a pile of nouns at me, supremely satisfied that he has spoken English? It is possible, of course, that this man was taught his grammar lessons, that he dutifully circled nouns and underlined verbs for one, two, or three years. It is possible that he did this, never dreaming such exercises were really finger exercises for mastering this elaborate and endlessly variable instrument, the English language. If that is true, his

tragedy is even more poignant, for then he is like a person who, though he has memorized thousands of facts about history, has never understood how one fact is related to any other fact. But this doesn't prove he should not have bothered to learn the facts.

At any rate, I don't know the cause or causes for the way this man used and misused the English language. But I do know that unless I can first teach this man the difference between nouns and adjectives, I can never cure him of using nouns indiscriminately. If he already knows the difference, then perhaps all he needs is a reminder that using nouns to modify other nouns creates prose that is difficult to understand.

Unfortunately the man I heard is not alone in his misuse of the English language. I'm not referring now to the many who make errors in usage—using "he don't" for "he doesn't," for instance. I'm referring to people whose problems with language cannot be solved without talking about certain grammatical principles. Let me give you some examples.

A student of mine wrote this sentence in one of his papers:

> Hunters purchase guns, ammunition and clothing such as boots and jackets, and much revenue is taken in by the transportation industry, motels, and restaurants in catering to those going on hunting trips.

I wanted to tell him (or get him to discover) that he should not have switched subjects, or, to put it in another way, should not have switched from the active voice to the passive voice. He might have chosen to write, "Hunters purchase guns . . ., and pay much revenue . . . ." Or he might have used the passive voice in both clauses. But he should not have switched from the active to the passive in that sentence. I assume most readers would agree with my conclusion on this point.

But my point is this: how can I get this student to comprehend what I am saying unless he understands the difference between the active and the passive voice? It will do no good to give this student some abstract advice such as "write more clearly," or "use stronger verbs"; nor will sentence-combining exercises help him unless he first learns the difference between the active and the passive voice, and second, understands why this change in voice within the sentence is confusing. Once he understands this grammatical principle, he will understand a principle that will govern at least some of his writing on nearly every paper he will write in the future. If he makes the correction but does not understand the principle he violated, he will likely make the same error again.

Another student wrote this sentence: "Manley Pointer enters the story now, and will eventually evolve a change in Hulga's thinking." The problem here is that *evolve,* though it can be used as a transitive verb, cannot be used as a transitive verb with the meaning the student intends in this sentence. If I scribble, "not a transitive verb" in the margin, my comment will be meaningless unless the student understands that a verb used transitively requires a direct object, and a verb used intransitively cannot take a direct object. Such an understanding will not likely come by my merely telling him this. Some exercises in grammar may be needed before the student senses the difference.

Another student wrote this sentence: "One might just as well take serious the fortune on bubble gum wrappers." I can, of course, tell him he should have used "seriously" instead of "serious." And if he asks why, I could put him off with "just because I say so." But if this student is ever to gain independence as a writer, he must come to understand that *serious,* as an adjective, ought not to be used to modify the infinitive *to take* because adverbs modify verbs and infinitives retain their verb qualities. Again, if I throw all this at the poor unfortunate student who has had five years of creative writing and no formal grammar, I will get the exasperated look of someone confronted for the first time with a foreign language. But I know of no other way of bringing this student to the point where he can be his own good critic.

For that matter, how can this student, if he has no conception of the difference between an adjective and an adverb, appreciate the judicious use of the adjective where we expect an adverb in Dylan Thomas's famous poem, "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night"? But understanding the difference, he can immediately sense that Thomas uses "gentle," the adjective, because he wants the reader to apply it to the understood subject of the sentence. A culturally deprived student who has no understanding of the differences between adverbs and adjectives would probably think the sentence sounds a little different, and let it go at that.

I know that exercises in which students have to tell what word an adjective or adverb modifies may seem useless at times. But such exercises may make students more aware of how words are related to each other. Look at this sentence from another student: "Opportunities of getting something published are getting more difficult." What's wrong with that sentence? Ask yourself, what does *difficult* modify? It modifies "getting

continued on page 31

FUNDAMENTAL BASIC

Editor:

With all the talk about "back to the basics," I was reminded this week of the most *fundamental basic* there is. Sure, Christian schools ought to teach the basics (subject matter), but I am concerned in this letter about something that ought to go hand in hand with subject matter. A young student in a local Christian high school came up to me and said, "Ya know, Mr. Kool, I like this Christian school. People seem to care more about each other at this school than at the public school I transferred from. Around there everyone would watch out for himself only. Not here!" Something clicked inside my head. That *something* is the most fundamental of all basics are the elements of love, charity, and, as my young friend said, care.

I believe this young man is learning more than the subject matter taught him throughout the year. Much of what is learned in school is incidental. Now, what better "incidental learning" can take place than learning love, patience, and concern? We at Christian schools ought not to return to the basics (in this case I mean disciplined curricula) as an end in themselves. Public schools can do this; Christian schools should not. The basic disciplines, if we choose to go back to them, ought to be encompassed by an atmosphere of love for students as human beings. We may teach them "the material" and they may learn it; but there must also be manifestations of Christianity.

If Christian Education is for the *Civitas Dei,* let's make it just that! The Kingdom of God is characterized by the gifts of the Spirit. So too, our schools ought to be characterized by the gifts of the Spirit, for if love is practiced in the schools, there is a much greater chance that love will also be practiced outside the school.

Why not teach the *fundamental basic* too?

Robert Kool,
Calvin College,
Grand Rapids, Michigan

continued from page 6
an American, or a Dutchman, or a Kikuyu, and that is by no means an unimportant fact about him. Yet more fundamental than such national identity is his identity as a member of the transnational people of God. For us Christians who are Americans, when American bombs fell on the Catholic cathedral in Hanoi and the Lutheran church in Dresden, the fundamental reality was not that *our* (American) people were attacking *those* Vietnamese and German foreigners. The fundamental reality was that American bombs were falling on *our* people, on *your* people and *my* people, on fellow members of Christ's body.

To understand the roots of why it is that the church is an *alien* presence in all nations we must go on from here to talk about God's *purpose* for the church in the world.

Characteristically our vision of the role of the church in the world has been terribly and tragically reduced. Characteristically we think of the church simply as those people who have faith, who live morally and devoutly, who are charged to conduct evangelism, and who one day will be rewarded with bliss in heaven. And that, to say it again, is a terrible and tragic reduction of God's purpose for the church in the world.

God's good creation fell. It fell by virtue of mankind in its freedom revolting against God and refusing to live in trustful obedience, preferring instead to act as if it were autonomous. Thereby a dark cloud fell over the entire creation, so that the whole of it "groans" for deliverance. The incredible fact is that God resolved not to leave his creation in the grip of its misery, resolved instead to act for its renewal—to act so that his Kingdom would be established, to act so that man could live in *shalom,* in peace, in joyful fulfillment with himself, his neighbor, nature, and God. Central to God's manner of working for renewal is his calling and choosing of a people to act as his agent—first Israel, then the church, and between the two at the axis of history, his own Son. Thus the church is in the world for the sake of the coming of God's Kingdom. The church is in the world for the sake of the coming of *shalom.*

The church is *in fact* God's called and chosen agent of renewal. Someday when the book of history is read whole we will see that not America, not Holland, not Canada, not the Communist party, but rather the church played the decisive role in the coming of God's Kingdom—in spite of all the terrible bloody blotches on her garment. But the church is also *called* to be God's agent of renewal. For always and again she falls short of being an agent of renewal. By no means is she inevitably that on every occasion.

Three Dimensions in the calling of the *People Of God*

It seems to me that we can distinguish three dimensions in the church's calling to be God's agent in the world, for the coming of God's *shalom.*

The church, in the first place, is called to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom. She is called to speak to all men everywhere of God's action in history, calling on all men everywhere to repent and believe.

Secondly, the church is called to act in loving service to all men everywhere. She is called to work for *shalom*—to seek to bring it about that men live in joyful harmony with themselves, with each other, with nature, and with God. And in order that *shalom* may be established, the church is called to work for liberation from all that oppresses and depresses.

But thirdly, the church is called to give evidence, in her own style of life, of the new life to be found in Jesus Christ. She is called, in her own life-style, to give evidence of *shalom.* She is called to be an exemplary, a paradigmatic, community. In her own life we are to see the first fruits of the full harvest, we are to see signposts of the Kingdom. She is not merely with grim patience to wait for the new age, when the Spirit will fully renew all existence. She is already, here and now, to manifest signs of that renewing Spirit.

Something like that, all too briefly expressed, is the biblical vision of the church. The church is the band of Christ's followers. Thereby she is an alien presence within every nation. For she is called and committed to be God's agent for the coming of his Kingdom and for the institution of *shalom.* The church is, and is called to be, the revolutionary vanguard in society, serving the cause of ushering in a new order, consequently finding herself continually in tension with those who want to hang on to the present order. It is in this new community that the Christian finds his fundamental identity.

Basic Christian Education

And now we can move on to education. The church, like any other community with a cause and a life-style of its own, finds it necessary to *educate.* It finds it necessary to educate its new recruits. Equally it finds it necessary to educate its longtime members. Thus education by and for the community comes into existence. And that, at its most basic, is Christian education: Christian education is education *by* the Christian community *for* the Christian community.

To say that Christian education is education *for* the Christian community makes such education sound inward-looking. And so, in a certain way, it is. But what we have seen above is that the church does not exist for its own sake. It exists for the sake of God's cause in the world. And that cause is the liberation of all men from oppression and depression so as to live in God's shalom. In being education for the Christian community, Christian education is education for the sake of all men.

But here we come to a crux which has divided Christians down through the ages. Do the children of believers, children who have not yet reached the state of full commitment, also belong to the Christian community, to God's people? Do they belong to the church? Or are they to be counted as outside the community until such time as they make a full commitment? The educational implications of one's answer are of course enormous. Some who hold that the children of believers are outside the church, hold that such children, like all children, should receive an education in which all life options are simply presented to them impartially, for their choice. Others who hold that the children of believers are outside the church hold that such children, like all children, should be treated as fledgling subjects for evangelism. In neither case will children be treated as members of the Christian community and educated with the goal of equipping them so that they can make their own unique contribution to the life and work of the community.

As all my readers know, the issues here are deep and complex; in this article I cannot even enter them. Let it simply be said that the Calvinistic tradition, within which I am writing, has always held that God's promise to the church, to remain ever faithful to her and to grant her members a share in the *shalom* of his Kingdom, includes the children of believers. "The promise is to us and to our children." Accordingly, when it is said that Christian education is education *by* and *for* the church, the children of believers are to be understood as belonging to that community which is the church. They are not merely to be lumped together with all children and impartially presented a smorgasbord of life options. Neither are they to be lumped together with all children and treated as fledgling subjects of evangelism. Rather they are to be grouped with all the other members of the church, and equipped to make their own unique contribution to the work of God's people on earth.

That, as I see it today, is the fundamental case for Christian education. And as everyone will surely recognize, the case is rich with implications for the goals, and thus the character, of that education.

Christian Day Schools

What must be clearly recognized, though, is that so far I have said nothing directly about the institutions within which such education should be carried on. And so I have said nothing directly about that institution which is the Christian day school. I have talked about Christian education. I have said that it is a project *by* and *for* the Christian community. And I have said that young children of believers are to be counted as members of the community. But the arrangements and institutions required by and appropriate for conducting such education will surely differ from one historical and social circumstance to another. They will be different in first century Corinth from what they are in twentieth century Pella, Iowa. And they will be different in twentieth century Netherlands from what they are in twentieth century Ceylon. It is with the concrete situation in mind of twentieth century North America that we must ask whether Christian education requires, or is best carried out in, alternative Christian day schools.

For us, of course, that question takes the form of whether the American and Canadian public school systems, supplemented with a bit of church-school education, are adequate for providing a basic Christian education for our children—adequate for equipping our children to make their unique contribution to the cause of God's people in the world. The answer depends, of course, on the goals and character of education in the public schools.

The traditional vision of public school education, at least in the United States, was that it should and could be neutral with respect to all the religions in American society, while yet that it should be religiously oriented education, indeed, *Christianly* oriented education. For it was held that public school education was to be conducted on the basis of what all Americans held in common. And it was thought that we all held in common certain religious, even certain Christian, beliefs, to which we then added on whatever "sectarian" peculiarities we wished.

Obviously that traditional vision has collapsed in our century. It has collapsed partly under the pressure of the increasing diversity of American society with respect to religion and irreligion, coupled with the Supreme Court's insistence that the public schools be neutral with respect to *all* religions and irreligions to be found in our society. But more fundamentally, it has collapsed because the intellectual and cultural elite in our society, an elite which ultimately determines what goes on within our schools, has become increasingly secularist and anti-religious in its orientation. The

continued on page 20

continued from page 19
result is that today nobody can any longer seriously believe that there is harmony between the goals and character of education in the American public schools, and the goals and character of authentically Christian education.

The person who holds to the vision of the church sketched out above will, of course, find nothing surprising in this situation. For he sees the church as an alien presence in American society, as it is in any other society. If then the public school system bases its education on the dominant shared beliefs of the American people, he will expect to find conflict between the goals and character of such education and that of Christian education. What tended to conceal this conflict from American Christians in the past is that they did not see the church as an alien presence in American society. On the contrary, they thought and spoke of America as a Christian nation. They even made so bold as to speak of America as the *New Israel,* thereby appropriating to America the place in God's plan reserved to the church. However, the increasingly secular, sensate, and indulgent character of the American people is making clear to more and more Christians that this understanding of how the church is related to American society is untenable. America is not committed to serving the cause of God's new order.

But the presence of substantial conflict between the goals and character of public school education and the goals and character of Christian education does not, by itself, yield the conclusion that Christian education should be conducted in alternative Christian day schools. Sometimes it is suggested instead, by those who perceive the conflict, that the goals of Christian education are best served by parents sending their children to the public school and then supplementing and correcting the education there received in the home. In some places perhaps this is what must or should be done. But in general this strikes me as a wildly idealistic suggestion. For one thing, the suggestion is almost always made by intellectuals, who are perhaps capable of bringing it off. But in our complex society, with the results of scholarship and theorizing deeply interwoven into the whole fabric of the society, it is simply impossible for most Christian parents by themselves adequately to supplement and correct the education of their children. They lack the ability and/or the training. Secondly, when I observe those intellectuals who do have the ability and training to carry out such a project, I find them all much too busy with their own occupations to have the time required. If supplementing and correcting public education is the best strategy, there is no realistic alternative in our society but for Christian parents to hire *teachers* to conduct such training.

But is that really the best strategy, simply to supplement and correct public school education? In some circumstances, perhaps it is. But in general it seems to me definitely not. For what is deficient in secular education is not that here and there it neglects saying what should be said, nor that here and there it makes some error. What is deficient is rather the *perspective* within which the education is structured, and the *perspective* within which the disciplines taught have been constructed. What is deficient is what, in my book *Reason within the Bounds of Religion,* I call the "control beliefs" which have governed the construction of the theories taught. The aim of Christian education must be to conduct education and scholarship within Christian *perspective.* But to construct literary or political theory in accord with the control beliefs of the Christian, and to teach students about literature and about political institutions within Christian perspective, is not merely to supplement and correct the work of others. It is to construct *alternative* theories on the same subject matter, and to teach the same subject matter within an *alternative* perspective. For that to be accomplished, one needs day schools.

The conclusion seems to me irresistible: The Christian community will seek to establish Christian *schools* in which to conduct its program of Christian *education.* Sometimes indeed it will have to settle for something less than that ideal. But even when it does so, its goal remains the same: to equip its children to make their own unique contribution to the cause of God's people in the world.

Challenges Facing the Christian School Today

Let me close with what I see as three of the great challenges facing the Christian day school system today. There are others. But these are fundamental.

First, the Christian community is called to be a paradigmatic, exemplary community—giving evidence in its own life-style of that new life to which God calls his children. An implication of this is that the Christian school must serve as a paradigmatic, exemplary community of teachers and learners. It must show, in its style of conducting teaching and learning, what education should be like. Need I stress how far the Christian school often comes from meeting that goal. All too often one finds aesthetic grimness in place of beauty and delight; authoritarianism in place of an authority which serves; rigidity in

continued on page 30

ASYLUM

H. K. Zoeklicht

"BASICS FOR TEACHERS"

"I can't believe this!" stormed an indignant Matt DeWit at Principal Peter Rip of Omni Christian High School. "Do you mean to say that my request to attend an ecology conference has been denied? What is going on around here?" The redfaced science teacher abruptly turned his back on the astonished principal and poured a cup of strong black coffee just brewed in the new Mr. Coffee.

"Matt, Matt," soothed Peter Rip. "You just don't understand. If the board lets you go to a science conference during school time, why, that could set a very dangerous precedence." Lucy Bright caught the slip and shot a quizzical glance at Bob DenDenker. Rip continued the rationale. "You see, then others would get the idea, and who knows where it would stop?" The principal sipped his coffee. "We already allow way too much money for your teachers convention in Chicago every year. We might have to cut back on that, too. The board wants to have a little money left over for your salaries, you know."

Peter Rip smiled expansively around the faculty room, certain that nothing could be more reasonable. Bob DenDenker had been listening intently. "Dr. Rip," he said quietly but with a touch of sarcasm, "all Matt is asking for is one day off. He doesn't want to go fishing. He wants to go to a professional conference. He is asking for no expenses at all. He's going to carry a brown paper bag full of peanut butter sandwiches for his lunch. He's going to drive his own car. He's going to buy his own gas. All Omni needs to do is to supply a substitute teacher. Is that too much to ask? We hear you talking about 'back to the basics.' Well, isn't this . . . ."

He was interrupted by an addled Rip. "Back to the basics," Rip snorted. "How about back to the basics in economics? Let's see if you can add. What if John Vroom wanted to go to a Bible conference, and Susan Katje to a librarian's conference, and Ginny Traansma to a music conference, and so on . . . do you know what that would do to our budget?"

"But consider what you're getting for the money," retorted Bob. "You're getting better teaching by people who've been stimulated. We need professional meetings if we're to stay sharp in our fields, and if we're going to continue to grow as teachers."

"You're so right, Bob," chirped in Lucy Bright, and turning to Rip. "You know, we're expected to do a lot of things around here that have little to do with our professional job as teachers. We patrol the latrines and the halls; we supervise detention halls and study halls. We take tickets at basketball games, and we save the school a good deal of money doing all those things. What goes on the classrooms, as long as they're quiet, seems to be less important than saving the school money."

Peter Rip's face flushed with anger. He had had a bad day. Mrs. Rip called to say that their new Volare station wagon had stalled in the parking lot of the health spa; Jenny Snip, the secretary and functional boss of the school, had gone home with a bad case of postnasal drip. Just a few minutes earlier, he had endured a long tirade over the phone from Mrs. Hopping because her daughter couldn't wear anthing she pleased to school but had to abide by regulations banning printed words on T-shirts. Now he got it from his teachers, and it proved to be too much. Rip crunched his styrofoam cup in his hand and pointed his prop at DenDenker and Lucy.

"You talk about professionalism. Now let me tell you something. Does professionalism mean coming to school thirty seconds before first hour class? Does it mean leaving school thirty seconds after the final bell? Does it mean spending evenings and Saturdays filling out income tax forms for fat fees? Does it mean sitting here lounging in the faculty room when you could be

grading papers? Does it mean neglecting putting coffee money in this cup so that every week we're short of funds? Does it mean dreaming up more ways to spend money when tuition is already beyond the means of many people? Is that what professionalism means to you?"

John Vroom, the Bible teacher, had been enjoying the tempest, and especially Rip's rare, emotional outburst. He was adding to his pleasure by eating a large pastry filled with raspberry jelly. He practiced his favorite ritual: he gave the pastry a little squeeze, and out came the jelly. Then he licked the jelly off, and gave the pastry another squeeze, and so on. The important question lingered in the tense air of the asylum, and John Vroom, who had spent a whole year in the seminary, felt moved to answer.

"In a Christian school," he pontificated, "professionalism is nothing more and nothing less than placing all on the altar of sacrifice, and to the glory of God."

Bill Silver, unimpressed, responded: "Now there's wisdom for you, straight from Sinai. Look, I put in my assigned hours here, and that's what I get paid for. Nothing in my contract calls for any more than that. Nothing in it prohibits an income tax business on the side either. This school gets from me what it bargained for. I have some other obligations, you know."

"We know, Bill, we know," said Matt DeWit.

Matt's tone made Bill angry. "Wait a cotton pickin' minute, Matt. You pious characters are always complaining about my side interests. What about that Christian Masterpainters outfit you and VanderPrikkel run in the summer time; and you, John (Vroom stopped squeezing for a moment), you're in on that, too—what's so pure and professional about that? I thought you were supposed to be reading books and attending conferences and summer school and all that rot. You've got a business on the side, too, and don't you forget it. At least mine is directly related to my teaching of business subjects. That's more than you can say for yourself." Bill Silver kept glaring and searching around the room. He spotted Ginny Traansma. "What about you, Ginny, how much do you make every Sunday playing the organ at First Church? You people make me sick; you're all as phony as a three-dollar bill." Bill Silver stalked out of the room.

By now Peter Rip had his emotions back under control, but he was clearly sympathetic with Bill Silver's final evaluation. He walked to the door, turned to the faculty members remaining in the Asylum, and said, "You people have to begin to realize how serious this business is. We are faced with declining enrollments and income, and you want to go to conferences. Perhaps you should know that in the budget which I'm proposing to the board, I am suggesting money-saving cutbacks on art, music, and some other nice things we can no longer afford."

Coach VanderPrikkel had been holding his breath, but Rip said no more, and together they left the faculty room for a meeting with a board committee in charge of planning the new gymnasium. Already it was almost 3:30. Other teachers began to leave; finally, only Bob DenDenker and Lucy Bright were left.

Bob looked gratefully at Lucy. "I appreciate your support a few minutes ago, Lucy; I needed that."

Lucy brushed her long, honey-blond hair from her eyes, sighed, and lamented: "Oh, Bob, I get so frustrated at times. Are we really the helpless pawns of school boards and principals? They force us back to dreary workbooks in grammar and spelling and vocabulary. They criticize when we try something new, when we think we're being creative. Now they tell us we can't go to professional conferences—what does it mean to be a professional teacher anyway?"

Lucy's brown eyes appealed to DenDenker for some reassurance.

Bob looked back at her and found himself suddenly feeling tender. Something stirred inside that confused him. He stood up, turned away from Lucy, and said somewhat uncertainly, "Well, don't take it too hard. You're a fine teacher, you know. Nobody's going to keep *you* from being a professional." He found himself speaking with more than sincere admiration. He turned toward her as Lucy got up. "You know, Lucy, we've got to try to get straight around here what the basics are all about, not only for students, but for teachers, too."

They walked to the door together. Lucy sensed something new in Bob. Impulsively she touched his sleeve. "Can we talk about it soon, Bob?"

Unfamiliar feelings surged through him again. He blushed. "Soon," he promised.

H.K. Zoeklicht, with tongue in cheek, anonymously touches on foibles familiar to all who spend time in a teachers' lounge.

Finally, brethren,
whatever is true,
whatever is just,
whatever is pure,
whatever is lovely,
whatever is gracious, . . .
think about these things.
Philippians 4:8 (RSV)

continued from page 7
trying to tell us for more than a decade that the current dilemmas in education have a history that has been with us for over a century—and were actually intensified by the rapid rise of corporate capitalism during the 1950's. There were no "good old days."

The response during the 1970's

Meanwhile, a new intellectualism, a new moralism and a more deeply entrenched behaviorism have won the day. The new intellectualism (*neo-rationalism*) calls for the basic concepts, logical structures and scientific methods of the various disciplines to structure the school program. A new *moralism* pretends that values can be taught with commitment neither to any particular values nor to their normative basis (in revelation). The emphasis is primarily on developing an awareness of value issues and an ability to logically clarify and communicate one's values, whatever they may be. With the resurgence of *behaviorism,* humanizing the classroom is out and human engineering is in, along with scientific management—either the impersonal bureaucratic or the soft "human relations" variety. This neo-rationalistic, moralistic, behavioristic approach to education has developed under the influence of Piaget, Bruner, Phenix, Raths, Simon, Kohlberg, Beck, Sullivan, and others, together with Bloom's emphasis on setting behavioral objectives and Mager's popularizations of Bloom's taxonomies.

Taken together, these trends in education mean that schooling serves to maintain the North-American way of life more than ever. In the face of social upheaval and massive criticism public education has responded with a reaffirmation of its trust in science, technology, and efficiency. Young people are indoctrinated in the belief that the good life consists of the production and consumption of more and more material goods, and that the road to greater economic progress is charted by science and technology in the service of business and industry. The schools support a hedonistic materialistic way of life that fosters injustice, global poverty, inequality and a deep sense of alienation.

Such is the response of the educational enterprise of the 1970's to the crisis in the classroom which became dramatically visible in the 1960's. "Return to the basics" effectively hides the problems and dilemmas of education in a society committed to civil religion and corporate capitalism.

What will the Christian school movement's response be to this simplistic slogan and the problems from which it seeks to distract us?

A Christian vision of life

During the past decade there has been a genuine attempt by Christian teachers in Canada to develop a radical alternative to the neo-rationalism that holds sway in education. This concern for an alternative came to expression first in the call for a unified curriculum integrated by a biblically based, distinctly Christian view of life. Many teachers developed trial curriculum units and programs for their classrooms. Each summer, groups of teachers in British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario communally struggled to structure a more integrated curriculum framework.

In all of these efforts, teachers were guided by the biblical view of revelation and knowledge. Believing that God has ordered all of life and that we can see some of this order or regularity in light of the Scriptures, they were convinced that a total integrated curriculum could be developed around a Christian vision of life.

Some of these efforts resulted in the publication of *Joy in Learning* in 1973 and experimental versions of a "Man in Society" course (to be edited by Canadian teachers and published by the National Union of Christian Schools), and a large number of other experimental units and courses. The rationale for this distinct Christian approach to education was initially set forth in the book *To Prod the Slumbering Giant.* This approach has been clarified and elaborated upon recently in *Shaping School Curriculum: A Biblical View.* (see p. 29 for review) Within the context of such an integrated, meaningful and personally involving program of learning, the teaching and learning of basic skills could find a natural place.

The child as office bearer

From the beginning of the school movement in Canada, during the 1950's, Christian teachers have strongly opposed any form of behaviorism. The spirit of behaviorism— with its mechanistic view of man— was alien to the European mind. Europeans, whether of a Christian, existentialist, or other persuasion, had an ethical view of man: man as free and responsible. During the fifties, the Christian school movement in the USA was beginning to react to a dead orthodoxy, an intellectualistic view of knowledge, and a formalistic approach to learning unrelated to the child's experience and development. In combating the ineffectiveness of an older formal, rationalistic Christian education, many saw some aid in the precision and effectiveness of the behavioristic approach. Canadian teachers, however, steered away from behaviorism, and relied more upon the motivational force of a Christian vision of life for effective education.

continued on page 24

continued from page 23

That vision is alive and inspiring. It has been expressed during recent decades in Christian action and reflection movements in different spheres of life: CLAC, Salem, *Calvinist Contact*, AACS-ICS, Christian Farmers Federation, *Vanguard*, Wedge Publishing Foundation, Patmos Gallery, CJL Foundation, Curriculum Development Centre and others. In view of this vision and these developments, it is not surprising that the Canadian districts of the NUCS are seeking a more independent status and that a tug-of-war is emerging between Canadian and American interests.

Canadian teachers seem unified in their reaction to behaviorism, moralism and the reduction of biblical norm to subjective values. But, a distinct alternative has been *intuited* rather than carefully articulated. In the background, the educational psychology of A. Janse and J. Waterink still plays a role. I suggest that this intuition can best be understood by attempting to see the child as *office bearer* in the particular office of learner: an office which carries its own kind of freedom and responsibility before God.

. . . we should understand "back to the basics" as a superficial, reactionary and dishonest response to fundamental educational problems.

This notion of *office* expresses the general conviction that all of life is religious service to God and that each person is called to hear and respond to God's Word as it orders and renews life in Jesus Christ by the power of his Spirit. Seeing the child as a religious creature in his learning, as a person created with response-ability, made to image God, allows us to do justice to the developmental stages and individual differences between children— as Janse and Waterink demonstrated long ago. From this viewpoint, we must allow the child room, freedom, to respond to God's Word for life according to his or her stage of development and individual gifts. God desires a free and willing response from the heart.

It is the Canadian teachers' challenge to flesh this viewpoint out in a detailed account of the learning process. The forthcoming publications of the Curriculum Development Centre represent one attempt to do so. Their curriculum guides and workbooks bring together a Christian view of life, of the child personally involved and responding within a learning community, and of commitment to radical discipleship in the midst of life within a learning program.

It is my conviction that such an approach to the child in the office of learner can foster a radical alternative to the deep sense of passivity, powerlessness, fragmentation, and meaninglessness that are legacy of our dominant social values and are reinforced by public education.

At the same time, American Christian school teachers are challenged to work out their deepest convictions along the route of a different heritage and by means of the insights and vocabulary of behaviorism. Awareness of our differences and appreciation of our deepest intentions will make for understanding and mutual enrichment.

Education for radical discipleship

A Christian response and alternative to the crisis in education must struggle intensely with the religious spirit and direction of our culture: the economism, technicism and scientism of contemporary humanistic faith. It is becoming plain that a Christian vision and way of life stands in radical opposition to that of North American humanism. From the neo-Marxist critics we can learn how schooling serves the interests of corporate capitalism while disguised by the language of a hollowed-out civil religion, advocating democracy, justice, freedom and equality for all. From recent Christian authors we can learn what it means to be a witness and servant in the midst of a culture dedicated to the values of economic progress.

Putting it bluntly, "back to the basics" ultimately means repenting of our secularism and . . . teaching our young - by example - the meaning of discipleship.

R. Sider and J. Westerhoff, to mention just two Christian authors, urge us to make a more total break with the dominant spirit of our culture. They call us to form small support groups to help us persevere in discipleship in a society alien to a biblical lifestyle. What these two have to say about Christian supportive communities needs to be applied specifically to the school. How can Christian schools help children to develop a radically alternative lifestyle in the midst of our society?

A return to the basics within the Christian school movement challenges us to learn anew, along with the children and young people, what it is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ in an age of poverty, hunger, injustice, inequality, and alienating and dehumanizing forces. Putting it bluntly,

"back to the basics" ultimately means repenting of our secularism and, through our changing ways, teaching our young — by example — the meaning of discipleship and living by grace. For our schools it means a program of learning that fosters a deep awareness of the religious direction and root of our culture and that *involves the students* in developing concrete alternative ways of living. As a step in this direction the Curriculum Development Centre has done a first experimental unit in a series on the Canadian way of life.

But the structuring of an alternative learning program is only the beginning of the task. Personal meaningful involvement in shaping alternatives is something that teachers and students cannot accomplish alone. By coming together in small support groups of the kind suggested by Westerhoff and Sider concerned adults can provide a trusting encouraging environment within which teachers and students can work. Nothing less than a total communal effort will do. Will our Christian schools be successful? Will our children have faith? Yes, by God's grace, if we find the faith to change our way of life. A Christian school is only as effective as the way of life shared by adults involved in it.

Conclusion

The further development of an integrated Christian curriculum around a truly biblical vision of life, the restoration of the child to the office of learner, education for radical discipleship: these are the educational challenges faced by a Christian community in a disintegrating secular society. Return to the basics, indeed! Our temptation is to join hands with a reactionary conservatism, prodded by religious anxiety about the future. Our challenge is to build a faithful, courageous, and prophetic Christian community which supports an alternative way of schooling, so that we, and others, may find healing and know the reality of God's salvation while it is still the day of grace.

Arnold H. De Graaff, director, Curriculum Development Centre, Toronto, Ontario.

*A comprehensive set of NOTES accompanied Dr. De Graff's article. They were omitted because of editorial policy and lack of space. A copy will be sent to anyone requesting the same. Send your request to the CEJ editor.

continued from page 5

into the cognitive structures he already has, there must be some degree of relatedness or similarity between the new and the old. If the discrepancy (or "cognitive conflict") is too great, learning won't happen. So, from the standpoint of new or continued learning, that transition for a child from home to school is important. In retrospect, I view the relative ease with which our children have adjusted to their school experiences as a partial indicator of a compatibility that did exist between our home and their kindergarten situations.

Compatibility or consistency in the kinds of experiences and encounters that a young child has with people and things around him is important. Of even greater significance, however, is that a child experience and sense consistency in basic values and beliefs. This consideration brought the issue of Christian education down to the nitty-gritty for me as a Christian parent. I found myself wanting to make sure that Christ remained the pivotal force in my child's daily life as he spent ever-increasing amounts of time away from our home. Unlike an acquaintance of mine who openly expresses her reluctance to exert her influence on her child's spiritual choices or personal values, I feel a responsibility to do exactly that. It seems somewhat shortsighted to take the position that, as parents, we can somehow see our children safely through a value-free vacuum during childhood and expect them to make responsible, individual choices when they reach maturity. From selection of toothpaste brands to choices of reading materials, our children are being influenced by parental choices and values in every area of their little lives. To me, the most important life-choice, committing oneself to Christ, is one which I feel compelled to actively foster and encourage in our children. The fact that this choice is given similar encouragement in the school lives of our children confirms in my mind the validity of our decision.

A child [must] experience and sense consistency in basic values and beliefs. This consideration brought the issue of Christian education down to the nitty-gritty for me as a Christian parent.

In addition to the consistency which is more likely to occur in the transition for a five-year old from home to Christian school, I value the internal consistency from year to year, from classroom to classroom, that our children have experienced in school. In my professional work as a consultant to a variety of school systems, I have become convinced that teacher commitment to a particular program or methodology is a determining factor in the success or failure of any educational endeavor. Over and over I have seen educationally sound, innovative and creative programs fail because the teachers who were asked to use them were neither convinced of their worth nor willing to make them work. Teachers are far more powerful than curricula; a teacher's perspective on life and learning will be a pervasive influence on each child in his or her classroom. And, as a former public school teacher I have also been impressed by the myriad of perspectives and degrees of commitment to teaching represented by my colleagues. A lack of consistency and unity of point of view from one classroom to the next is enough to confuse and boggle the mind of a graduate student let alone a first grader about to become a second grader. I have yet to see a Christian school system that has attained an optimum level of consistency in perspective and methodology from teacher to teacher, from grade level to grade level; however, I believe that it is much more likely to happen within a staff of committed Christian educators. And, when it does, my child is the beneficiary.

I have yet to see a Christian school system that has attained an optimum level of consistency in perspective and methodology from teacher to teacher, from grade level to grade level, . . .

Lest the reader misinterpret my statements as a case for educating Christian children in a separate, sheltered atmosphere, carefully and systematically secluded from experiences and learnings in the real world, let me set the record straight. Indeed, this can be an obvious and disadvantageous result of educating our children in a Christian school system. In a way, that is what happened to me. As a graduate student at a state university, it became increasingly clear to me that the world was not populated exclusively by the Anglo and the affluent. More importantly, I discovered then that the body of Christ was not that limited either. As a parent, I would like my own children to learn such lessons, which are *basically* important, early in their lives. Since I adhere to Piaget's statements about using direct experiences as the vehicle for learning in young children, teaching units on Eskimos, Africa, or

continued on page 31

The Education of the Imagination is BASIC too

Henry J. Baron

Do you remember that last chapter in *The House At Pooh Corner* in which Christopher Robin prepares to leave the fantasy world of the Enchanted Forest? He tells Pooh about that other world beckoning him, the world of "Kings and Queens and something called Factors, and a place called Europe . . . ." It is the world where "they don't let you . . . do Nothing anymore." If you remember the scene at all, you surely remember how ambivalent Christopher Robin's feelings are about leaving. He makes Pooh promise to return occasionally to Galleons Lap, the enchanted place on the very top of the Forest. Pooh asks him, "Will you be here too?" And Robin replies fervently, "Yes, Pooh, I will be, *really*. I *promise* I will be, Pooh."

As readers who with Christopher Robin have reveled in the fantasy world of Pooh and Rabbit and Piglet and Tigger and Eeyore and Owl, we feel sad at Robin's leaving, and we intuit the possibility, as Pooh does not, that Robin may never return to enchanted forests. For once Christopher Robin becomes one of us in a world of real people and objects and events, he may also come to share our common experience that "the world is too much with us." We fear as the education years about Kings and Queens, about Factors and Suction Pumps, about Europe and Brazil pile up, that the Enchanted Forest experiences will become but a dim or a lost memory in the adult years of our life.

And that's my concern.

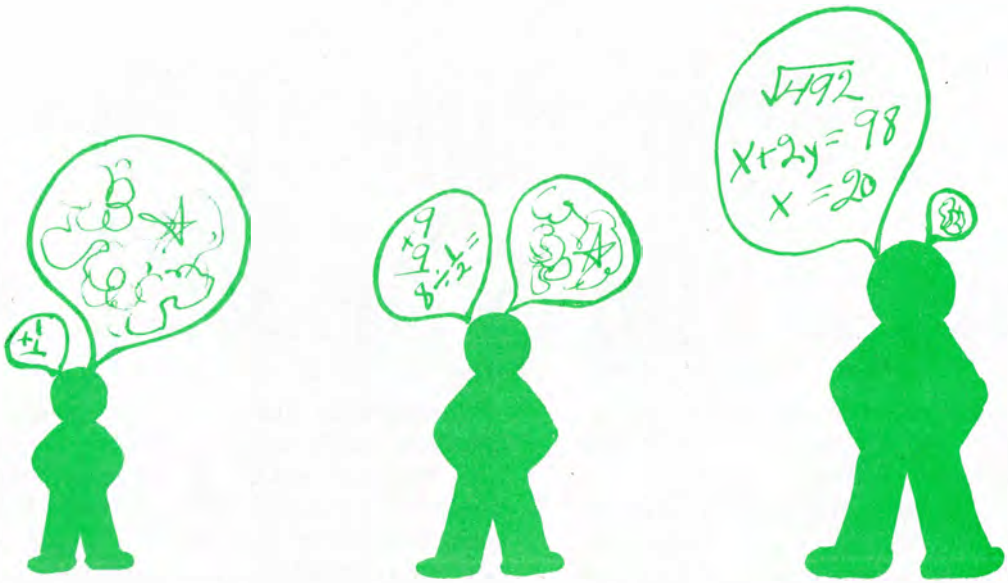
Our Maker endowed us with the capacity for reason and analysis not only, but also with the capacity for fantasy, which according to Dr. Jerome L. Singer, a Yale psychologist, is perhaps our greatest gift. Through fantasy we can create ideal worlds, worlds in some ways more real than the tangible world we see around us, as Northrop Frye tells us in his book *The Educated Imagination*. Pascal asserted that the imagination conceives of and leads to the creation of beauty, justice, and happiness which our everyday world often destroys. The vision of ideal excellence, indeed the vision of the new heaven and the new earth, is mediated through the faculty of the imagination.

Imagination lies at the very core of our being. George MacDonald, the British writer of Christian fantasy, said, "We've been created in the image of the imagination of God." Martin Buber said something similar: ". . . creativity is the confirmation of the image of God in man." To neglect therefore creativity and imagination is to neglect a part of our created selves and to prohibit a part of our created purpose.

Such neglect is all too common. Though most of us begin life as highly creative beings, few of us manage to remain so. We grow up. We experience so much that in time we think we've seen it all and know it all. In the process we're trained, restrained, constrained; and the danger is that we cease to wonder, to imagine, to dream. Our creativity gets stifled and strangled in the pressures to conform. We become afraid of expressing new ideas, of thinking for ourselves. Someone may laugh or ridicule. We grow ashamed of remaining the "perpetual child" who journeys to enchanted forests, who asks endless questions, who relishes the unusual and the unexpected. We are shamed into the mediocrity of mass thought and the conformity of current fads of food, clothes, and books. We pay the price of such shame: the diminution of our stature as image-bearer and the impoverishment of our spirit. For a soul without imagination is in the final analysis as incomplete and absurd as an observatory without a telescope.

In recent days there has been much talk among those involved with creative and aesthetic education about right brain and left brain education. Supposedly our brains are divided into right and left halves. Research suggests that the two halves differ in function. The left half analyzes, reasons, perceives linearly, codifies, and categorizes; it is the scientist part of our self. The right half intuits, imagines, perceives holistically, and synthesizes; it is the poet part of our self. The charge follows that academic institutions have concentrated for the most part on educating only half of our humanity. As educators we have been too left-brain oriented.

I think there's enough truth in the charge to make us feel uncomfortable. As teachers and students we are creatures of both reason and



imagination. Educating one without the other contributes to a dehumanization that is stultifying and degrading. Our challenge and our obligation is to teach our students both how to *think* and how to *imagine,* to equip our students with both the *feet* of learning and the *wings* of imagination. To do that well we need the encouragement of our colleagues and the support of our administrators. We need to nurture our *own* creativity, and we need to stimulate each other's imaginations. We need freedom to try new ideas, to experiment, sometimes to fail, but always to pursue excellence in educating the whole person—the reason *and* the imagination.

The small creatures that first enter our academic institutions come from a world of play and fantasy, from a world where the real and the imaginary often merge. Too many of these children gradually discover that the region of the Enchanted Forest becomes forbidden territory inside the classrooms. Too many children pore over charted maps of *terra firma,* but rarely hear a reference to another kind of world or an invitation to explore places whose latitude and longitude are established only in the imagination. We have failed those children. They come to us with their left and right brain faculties, and it is our responsibility to honor that poetic part of each one as diligently as we honor the scientific part. We must work as hard and seriously at developing a child's imagination as we do at developing his ability to add, subtract, and multiply. Any cry that calls us back to the basics must include an injunction to educate with and for creativity and imagination, for as teachers and students we must glorify our Creator through that dimension of our humanity, too.

To recognize the need for educating the imagination is, of course, but the necessary first step. The hard work of planning for it and systematically implementing it throughout the grades remains. Though much of that will best be done by individual groups of teachers and principals mutually committed to excellence in Christian education, I hope to make some observations about that work in a future article. Paul Fenimore Cooper (in "On Catching a Child's Fancy," *Three Owls,* edited by A. C. Moore) eloquently summarizes my main concern in this article:

> Fancy is to the child's imagination what the seed is to the tree. Let it lie in barren ground and it will not grow. But nourish it and care for it through the years and it will grow into imagination, (as dear a possession for man as fancy is for the child). He who lacks imagination lives but half a life. He has his experience, he has his facts, he has his learning. But do any of these really live unless touched by the magic of the imagination . . . ? So long as the road is straight he can see down it and follow it. But imagination looks around the turns and gazes far off into the distance on either side. And it is imagination that walks hand in hand with vision.

Henry J. Baron, Department of English, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan

SHAPING SCHOOL CURRICULUM - A BIBLICAL APPROACH

Authors: Geraldine Steensma and Harro Van Brummelen
Terre Haute, IN: Signal Press

Reviewed by
Ary DeMoor, Bible and history teacher,
Chatham Christian High School,
Chatham, Ontario, Canada

"We don't talk about philosophy, we have enough problems." A slip of the tongue? Maybe; but I have come to feel that this sentiment exists and has found a comfortable home in much of Christian education today.

Many of our Christian teachers, schools, and organizations seem to attempt to be a-philosophical (which is impossible). They transmit the idea that life does not hang together and that preparation for life is a stunted, disorganized effort to ready students for success in the job market, service in the local church, and the raising of a Christian family. They hope that their students' children will also go to Christian schools. Any real struggling with what the Scriptures demand of our students in the areas of public justice, economic stewardship, aesthetics, scientific research, cultural formative power, etc., is limited because the curriculum (teacher) lacks a basic philosophy of life and of education from which to operate.

A breath of fresh air in the struggle to develop and articulate a basic philosophy of life and education has come in the form of *Shaping School Curriculum - A Biblical Approach.* The editors have carefully chosen authors from across North America so that the various parts of the book form a unified whole. The authors work out of a common philosophical framework and spell out concretely what this begins to imply for each area of the curriculum.

The book begins with a short introduction dealing with the proper use of the Bible in the school, a Biblical view of knowledge and truth, norms and objectives for Christian education, and a possible curriculum model for elementary and secondary schools. It then describes how these Biblical directives apply to each area of the curriculum. Although each of the articles is written by a different author about a different area of discipline, together they form a unified approach to curriculum because of their common framework.

Basic to this framework are these six levels of agreement:

1. A common world and life view as presented especially in Genesis 1, 2, and 3. Man as the image bearer of God must inevitably respond positively or negatively to God's Word for life. Since man fell into sin, chaos and distortion have entered the world. In Jesus Christ all things have been made new, and all things in life are to be once again brought to obedience to and through Christ.
2. A common philosophy of life led by the Scriptures. It is evident that all the authors share an understanding of life's many aspects and the interrelationships which exist between these aspects.
3. A common view of the purpose of Christian education. Students are to be led to a meaningful understanding of their calling in various aspects of society as well as a desire and ability to be active participants in that society.
4. A common curriculum model, a model for elementary and secondary schools, which begs for a more unified and integrated approach to the selection of core and optional courses and the material dealt with in these courses.

5. A common understanding of the Bible as a confessional norm setter. The authors attempt to articulate specific Biblical norms for each area of the curriculum as well as the broad objectives for Christian education.
6. A common commitment to the working out of curriculum and unit work in cooperation with other schools.

Works such as this book must become the basis for many staff discussions. Although a school may have "enough problems," a basic philosophical framework is something no school or staff or individual teacher can do without. Van Brummelen summarizes the need for such work when he writes:

> Educators planning school programs have often fallen into the trap of adopting the generally accepted content of the individual disciplines without question. Rather than asking basic questions about the choice of content and a meaningful structure for the curriculum, they have concerned themselves with ways of teaching individual subject areas, with the individualization of learning, with redesigning the school architecturally, or with finding alternate methods of evaluation. While all such factors are important and must be given serious consideration, our students will be left drifting and rudderless unless our curriculum is structured to become a guiding beacon, a beacon that helps them to be Kingdom citizens. (p. 36).

Get back to the basics — articulate your framework!

continued from page 20

place of a flexible concern with the child's individuality. Obviously there is here a great challenge confronting us.

Second, I said that the school cannot simply supplement and correct secular perspectives on art, on literature, on physical creation, on social issues. It must communicate *alternative* perspectives, perspectives faithful to the biblical vision on reality and on God's purpose for the church in the world. Yet when one scrutinizes Christian schools, all too often one does not find such alternative perspectives. Rather one finds secular perspectives to which are attached piecemeal supplements and correctives. Here then is a second great challenge confronting the Christian school. Of course, if the Christian school is indeed to communicate alternative perspectives, there must *be* such perspectives. So this challenge is as much a challenge to the scholars as to the educators. There can be no Christian education in the absence of Christian scholarship.

Third, the goal of the Christian school is the formation of an alternative life-style, not just the formation of an alternative set of thoughts. The vision of the church as a trans-national community which is an alien presence in every society remains a wholly abstract vision unless it becomes *concretized* in a way of living. Unless there is such a thing as a Christian life-style which transcends our distinct nations there will be small chance that many of us will see our fundamental identity as Christians. We will see it instead as Americans, as Canadians, etc. So the third great challenge to the Christian school is to make concrete, in our day and place, the Christian gospel—to work toward the formation of a style of life.

The goal of the Christian school is the formation of an alternative life style . . . a Christian life style which transcends nations . . .

But there are limitations on what the school can do here. If the community supporting the school has little sense of "over-againstness," if the concrete texture of its own life hardly differs from that of those around it, if it has little sense of being an alien presence, little sense of serving God's cause in the world, if it has little sense of being God's revolutionary vanguard in society, then the Christian school will have little chance of success. Then almost inevitably it will never advance beyond, or almost inevitably it will slide back into, making piece-meal supplements and piece-meal corrections to secular education. In so far as it does that, the time, money, and effort spent in supporting it will be in vain—a vanity of vanities. The Christian community requires Christian schools for the success of its cause in the world. But equally the Christian school requires a supporting Christian community for the success of its programs.

Nicholas Wolterstorff, Department of Philosophy, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

continued from page 16
something published," not *opportunities* as the structure of the sentence leads you to believe. Once a student senses this, he can sense how to revise: "Getting something published is getting more difficult." Opportunities may become more rare, but they do not become more difficult. I think a student who has been taught to identify predicate adjectives will see this more quickly than one who has not been so taught.

One last example. A student wrote this: "Spring fever spurns romance and excites love in each heart. It is a time to appreciate the harmony too long forgotten." In addition to the obvious error in diction (did he mean spawn instead of spurn?), the student used a pronoun with an indefinite referent. *It* seems to refer to spring ("it is a *time*"), but the previous sentence talks of "spring fever," not spring. Surely I can talk to this student about writing more clearly, but unless this student understands that this pronoun has no specific word to which it can refer, I will not help the student become a better critic of his own writing.

John F. Kennedy's inaugural address is considered forceful prose. One of the reasons it is forceful is that sixty-five percent of its verbs are transitive verbs in the active voice. Should a teacher of writing merely hope his students will naturally discover such a forceful style when the occasion demands it? Or should he teach them how to distinguish the active from the passive voice, the transitive from the intransitive verb, and the adjective from the adverb?

Until I can be shown that you can prepare a man to build his own brick house without teaching him how to lay bricks, I know what I'll have to do.

Mike Vanden Bosch, Department of English, Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa.

continued from page 26
even the Netherlands will not suffice. As a parent, however, I can strive to build learning experiences into the everyday lives of our children. Belonging to a multi-racial church helps; so do efforts to foster family friendships with a variety of people from different cultures and ways of life.

Another clear disadvantage that I have accepted, having opted for the Christian school, is the unavailability of diverse services that a public school system is able to offer its school population. For example, should one of our children struggle with an emotional disturbance or a learning disability of some sort, we shall probably have to look outside of the system itself for remediation that might be readily available to public school children and their families. That, however, seems to me to be a risk worth taking and a price worth paying in return for the richness of a Christian education which permeates the lives and learning of our children.

Then, too, we are having to make occasional adjustments when inconsistencies and variance in values do become apparent between home and school. For example, an exaggerated emphasis on athletic achievement and competition in the school can quite quickly sabotage a reverence and respect for music and the arts that are being encouraged at home.

Since both my professional and parental experiences have been with young children thus far, my perspective and my comments have been limited to the value of basic Christian education in the lives and learning of little ones. Consistency in experiences, in values, in encounters with Christian adults will lend itself to learning. As children grow, however, learning becomes more complex, and the issues of education, especially *basic Christian* education, more complicated. According to Piaget, by the time a child reaches the age of eleven or twelve, he becomes less dependent upon concrete data and real experiences for learning. It is at this point that a child can begin to deal in a rational, logical way with ideas, and, more importantly, with inconsistencies and incongruities.

He becomes capable of reflective thinking, of envisioning alternatives, of suggesting hypotheses. This newly-found cognitive power that our children acquire with age undoubtedly poses new questions and challenges for Christian educators—and for Christian parents. For now, however, this parent's time and energy are being consumed by facilitating and enjoying the exciting phenomenon of learning that is taking place in my own little ones.

Some time ago we were engaged in a family discussion about a friend of ours who was to undergo surgery that might affect her ability to bear children. We prayed for her together. Since the discussion was about some thing very private and personal to our friend, we decided to ask our children to respect it as confidential. We were puzzled by the disappointed look on the face of our first grader, so we questioned him about it. This was his answer: "Well, I really wanted to tell my class about her. That way we could pray for her at school, too."

. . . . . .once again our decision had been validated.

Patricia V. Nederveld, parent, Denver, Colorado, former Field Consultant in early childhood education, High Scope Educational Research Foundation.

Christian Educators Journal Assn.
Donald J. Hunderman, Business Manager
1500 Cornell Drive, S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506
Address correction requested

INDEX TO VOLUME 17