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**CHRISTIAN EDUCATION:  
FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS**



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## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The *Christian Educators Journal Association*, composed of several members or sponsoring organizations, publishes the Journal as a channel of communication for all educators committed to the idea of evangelical Christian schools, whether at the elementary, secondary, or college level. The general purpose of the Journal is to foster the continuing improvement of educational theory and practice in Christian schools. Therefore, its pages are an open forum for significant articles and studies by Christian educators on Christian teaching. Editorial policy encourages those contributions that evaluate as well as describe existing trends and practices in North American education. All articles and editorials appearing in it are to be regarded as the expression of the viewpoint of the writers and not as the official position of the *Christian Educators Journal Association* or its member organizations.



# EDITORIAL

## Christian Education: For Such a Time As This

What makes education Christian? The question seeks a new answer periodically because answers are given in context, the context of time and circumstances within which the question is asked.

The question today too seeks an answer as reformed Christians, because of declining enrollment, need additional financial help for their schools. Ironically, at the same time non-reformed Christian parents are becoming increasingly sensitive to their need for Christian schools as their disenchantment with public education grows. In some schools associated with *Christian Schools International* (CSI), the student body now includes more non-reformed Christian students than reformed Christian students. This causes some parents to fear that our Calvinistic Christian schools are selling out to non-covenantal principles and are weakening the conventual basis of reformed Christian education when parents with a more fundamentalistic approach to Christian education join parental societies and send their children to covenant Christian schools.

Is it reasonable to fear that ever increasing costs will shake the sacrificial commitment required of parents who must pay ever increasing tuition? Is it reasonable to fear that these increasing costs will dilute the quality of Christian education *more* than would the opening of the classroom to children of non-reformed, fundamentalist Christians?

If reformed Christians and fundamentalist Christians are brothers and sisters in one Lord, members of one body so vividly described in I Corinthians 12, could we possibly learn to appreciate each other more? If covenantal Christian education is so rich (and it is), are we too selfish with it? Should we not share what we have? Doors are being opened to us in ways that we might not have chosen. Perhaps if fundamentalists and Calvinists understood one another better. . . . Perhaps if we walked for a bit in one another's moccasins. . . .

Fundamentalists, Calvinists say, do not have the rich, powerful, view of God's covenant with humankind. Fundamentalists, Calvinists point out, have a dualistic concept of curriculum. Fundamentalists do not seem to

require that God be or become the vital breath of every discipline in the curriculum, although they do require a Christian, Spirit-filled teacher.

### A Fundamentalist Christian High School

As a teacher who has taught in a fundamentalist Christian high school, and as a parent who has had three children graduate from that same high school, I found some differences indeed.

I did not identify the differences immediately. Yes, it is true that a teacher must sign a pledge. I had to pledge that I would not drink, dance, smoke, swear, play cards, or go to movies. (No restrictions were placed on television viewing.) Yes, I noticed there was something different about the teachers: females wore skirts longer than were then fashionable and they wore very little makeup. Slacks were not permitted. Males without exception wore very short hair and clothing cut with yesterday's scissors.

Those external rules did not trouble me much. Life was so busy with other matters (you know how it goes with teachers), I could easily live within the limitations, although I did state in writing my objections to these restrictions on my private life.

In spite of the rigidity, I began to formulate a picture, and it was beautiful. Something in that school was Christlike. There was a caring concern, a kindly compassion that permeated the atmosphere.

And then I identified the reason.

It was the principal, and with him, the faculty. They made that school Christian, distinctive. Here was the body of Christ in community. Students noted that distinctiveness too. To return to that school each year, students had to be invited, in writing; each year students waited a bit anxiously perhaps, for that invitation, while students on a long waiting list wondered if enrollment would be closed before their names came to the top of the list.

The principal knew intimately the Christ in whom he believed, and the principal knew too why he was at this high school. He made very sure that his faculty and students knew why he and they were there. Monday mornings (very early, too early I thought) meant faculty prayer meeting, which set the tone for the week. The faculty concentrated totally on communion with God through Bible reading and prayer. Only reasons for giving thanks to God and making requests of God were shared. Teachers spoke of personal problems and joys as well as concerns for students. Mutual trust was not doubted; confidentiality was assumed. "If we don't put the Spirit above and in all," the principal told us frequently, "then we have no business being here."

This modeling overshadowed curriculum. Poorly-paid teachers accepted their second-class citizenship, a non-participatory management system, unreal demands on their time, and an imposed life style with minimum murmuring. As God's called servants they did not ask a



share of earthly wealth equivalent to their often very wealthy students.

Student life too was regulated closely. The student body sported mixed fashions, although the length of skirts was acceptable at that time (during mini-skirt days) only if the lower hem touched the floor when the girl knelt on her knees. Short-haired boys wore tucked-in shirts and proper pants (no jeans). But clothing could not camouflage the real kids underneath; genuine teenagers created images of fashion plates and fuddy-duddies, lotharios and loners, introverts and extroverts, jocks and artists, and a few rebels.

Rebels didn't last long, however. Discipline, administered in love and, surprisingly, usually accepted as such, was strict but consistent. Most discipline problems were handled by early suspension, even dismissal, giving the student little hope of being invited to return. A student found smoking, for example, on or off campus, during or after school hours, was in deep trouble. Naturally, discipline problems were minimal; students requiring discipline were too easily dismissed. This style of discipline to me was painful. Students, at an age when Christian closeness and support are sorely needed, too easily found themselves looking for education elsewhere.

The administration fostered faculty spiritual development but benignly ignored academic development. The idea that Christian education per se could give the student more with which to be Christian, to enjoy God, to hone his talents for use in Christian service, received far less emphasis than his coming forward to accept Christ as his Savior, his considering the ministry or mission field, his witnessing, and his leading a pious devotional life. A rich integrated view of Creator and creation and man's relationship to his Creator and creation together was diminished by an emphasis on individual piety and recognizably-religious service to the heavenly King.

Yes, fundamentalist Christian schools are different, and it is reasonable to assume that Christian parents of fundamentalist bent seek similar type Christian education for their children.

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### Within the Christian School

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The dichotomy so apparent between fundamentalist Christian schools and Calvinistic-covental Christian schools can also be seen within our schools. Need we fear a greater measure of pietism, if that is what we call it, within covental schools? I think not.

There are teachers in both types of schools who yearn for what is the strength in the other. For example, in fundamentalist Christian schools some teachers earnestly seek a philosophic foundation as an integral part of rather than apart from the school's reason for being. In some reformed Christian schools many teachers yearn for a deeper corporate prayer life, a mutual trust and burden bearing and sharing, and a combined intensified concern for the spiritual being within each child.

Many parents too want to see more Christian modeling by the teachers employed to help parents bring up their children in the fear of the Lord.

Perhaps it is that kind of leaven we would feel in our schools if parents and children of more fundamentalistic Christian backgrounds are welcomed by us.

On the other hand, the beauty and strength of reformed Christian education are its integrated totality. We need not fear dilution of these principles by inviting non-reformed students. In fact, we need not fear! Decisions based on fear undermine our ability to do all things in Him.

The covenant we *teach* transcends the covenant we too often *practice*. The covenant is not biological, thank God; we are the gentiles, we are the ones "afar off" (Acts 2:39). Whatever makes us think other Christian gentiles of non-Dutch or non-reformed heritage are non-covenantal? Our fundamentalist fellow-Christians will be enriched when they *understand* the richness and fullness of the covenant to which they belong.

And we in turn need to experience more fully and completely the closeness of mutual trust, the deep joy and comfort of praying openly, as little children in a faculty lounge, kneeling before one Lord. We need to realize more fully that students need a very personal as well as a covenantal relationship with God.

The very comprehensiveness of Christian education as we believe and as we express it *ideally* asks to be shared with all interested Christians so that the savor of that salt may permeate creation and creatures of God Almighty.

Who knows as we look ahead into a decade of increasing financial difficulty (which, we confess, God is permitting), but that God is directing community Christian students to us for such a time as this?

It could be too that God wants us to show other of his children the beauty of covenantal Christian education. Have we come to the Kingdom for such a time as this?

## NOTICE

### MANAGING EDITOR POSITION

After serving 5 years in that capacity, the present managing editor has asked to be replaced so that she can devote more time to other pleasant tasks. The CEJ board invites inquiries from persons interested in the position of managing editor.

Anyone with a flexible time schedule, interested in writing about Christian education and ability to provide leadership in making CEJ an increasingly effective medium for promoting Christian Education in North America is urged to correspond with the secretary of the Board of Trustees,

Dan Diephouse  
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# EDUCATION— A Smashing Success?

**Duane Nieuwsma**

Education can be a dangerous thing; its results are sometimes unexpected and even frightening. It places problems within our grasp, problems that can be superficially solved, run from, or wrestled with, but never ignored.

Education, of course, is a life-long process; we are continually educating and being educated. In that sense, to be alive means, at least in part, to become educated. In a more familiar sense however, education is an intensification of the life-long process. Education "happens" in school and church. It prepares children and young adults to meet the challenges of independent adulthood in ways that are acceptable to those running the educational system. In our case that means the Christian community and, more particularly, the parents. In the public system that means the taxpayers, who, however, are sufficiently removed from the control of the school so that their power has effectively been forfeited to local and regional educational bureaucracies.

In either case we expect the impossible from education. We want our students to gain tools to become better equipped to solve problems that have stumped us. Meanwhile we, for the most part, want students to adhere to our values and methods in the problem solving process, values and methods which have often proved unsatisfactory.

The dilemma we face as students, teachers, and parents can perhaps be clarified with specific questions. How should students be taught about the environmental and societal problems surrounding us? These prob-

lems are increasingly evident: cancer increases, pollution worsens, energy shortages menace, divorce rates climb, the pace of change threatens to make automatons of men, and environmental disruption takes its toll.

All too often these problems have been effectively pushed aside by our concern to teach the basics of English, mathematics, history, and other subjects, with the idea that we are equipping students with the tools to attack the problems at some later and more opportune date. Or, in more enlightened schools, we have devoted sections of courses or entire courses to detailing contemporary societal and environmental concerns in order to give students an understanding of the problems and perhaps even some historical awareness of the origins of these problems.

However, in trying to establish what is important to learn, we seem to have ignored the fundamental question: How does learning take place? To answer that, we must know how to determine if learning has taken place. Perhaps we can agree that a concept is not learned if it has not been put into practice or made use of in some ongoing way. We know from educational theorists and from common sense that any new information which comes to us must be related to what we already know or else the new information will be forgotten or discarded. If, on the other hand, we can tie it to our experience it will become part of us; it will be learned. That is faith which is backed up by works, by lifestyle. Learning, like faith, is not true unless it is put to work.

How does such learning take place? Unlike cognitive assimilation of information, such learning happens pri-

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marily as a result of following role models. As Dr. Nick Wolterstorff recently pointed out in a meeting of Ontario Christian School principals, children are living testimonies to the role models, real or imaginary, that they respect. If a child sees his model love, he will love; if he sees his model speak one way and act another, he will follow the action and speak the opposite way as his model does. We know this is true. As teachers we often observe that a child talks like or walks like his parents or siblings. Parents, on the other hand, notice that their children emulate the peers or teachers whom they admire or respect. Children treat others with the respect with which they themselves have been treated from their earliest years. That is why, tragically, children of child abusers grow up to be abusers of children.

What does this mean for the curriculum? That cognitive learning is not important? On the contrary, it is essential. But it must be accompanied by appropriate role models. If we want to produce students who will take up their many-sided tasks in the kingdom, we must ourselves first take up those tasks. It makes no sense to complain of or teach about pollution in an attempt to get students to care about the environment if we do not oppose pollution in our habits and lifestyles.

Jonathan Kozol in *The Night is Dark and I am Far From Home* points out that the American—I might say North American—educational system has not been the failure so many have claimed. Indeed, it has been a smashing success. It has accomplished the goals of its society, molding students to take their places as members thereof, members who unquestioningly pay their share to maintain the status quo, members are unwilling and unable, like their models, to make any radical critique of the society of which they are part. Kozol calls it education for powerlessness; its goal is to remove power from the individual and concentrate it in the various departments of government.

When this educational goal is achieved, it results in apathetic citizens. Apathy is not always the immediate symptom; real concern for the problems of society is often the first step to apathy when that concern cannot be worked out in a way which helps to eradicate the basis for the concern. The feelings of inadequacy and lack of power that result from repeated “failures” lead to apathy or sometimes to the sort of practiced indifference reminiscent of the middle class Victorians of whom Charles Dickens wrote. Insofar as we are hobbled by apathy or powerlessness we cannot be good disciples, and insofar as we are not disciples we cannot educate our students to discipleship.

What do we as Christian teachers want our students to be? Powerless Christians or Christ-empowered disciples? If we choose the latter we can expect no easy educational process. What our students are taught they should and do expect to see put into action by the Christian community. But, if we leaders do not live what we

teach, we give the lie with our deeds to that which we speak. And as Jesus taught, the deed is more instructive than the speech. If we do not live honestly, responsibly, lovingly, and wisely, we teach deceit, apathy, hate, and foolishness. That is the negative side of the second commandment. If we live in God-denying ways we pass that on to our children, and the reverberations of the fathers’ sins are felt many generations after.

Ideally, of course, teachers and all members of the Christian community must have a unified “Christian mind” on issues that they face. However, we know we are not entirely of one mind on some issues. When agreement is absent, students become upset, so upset they retreat in silence or they vociferously rebel against one model or the other. That is one reason why education has often been limited to cognitive input for rationalistic processing. But this “safe” alternative, which not only produces no disturbing rejections but rather, somnolent boredom, cannot be brooked if education for discipleship is our goal.

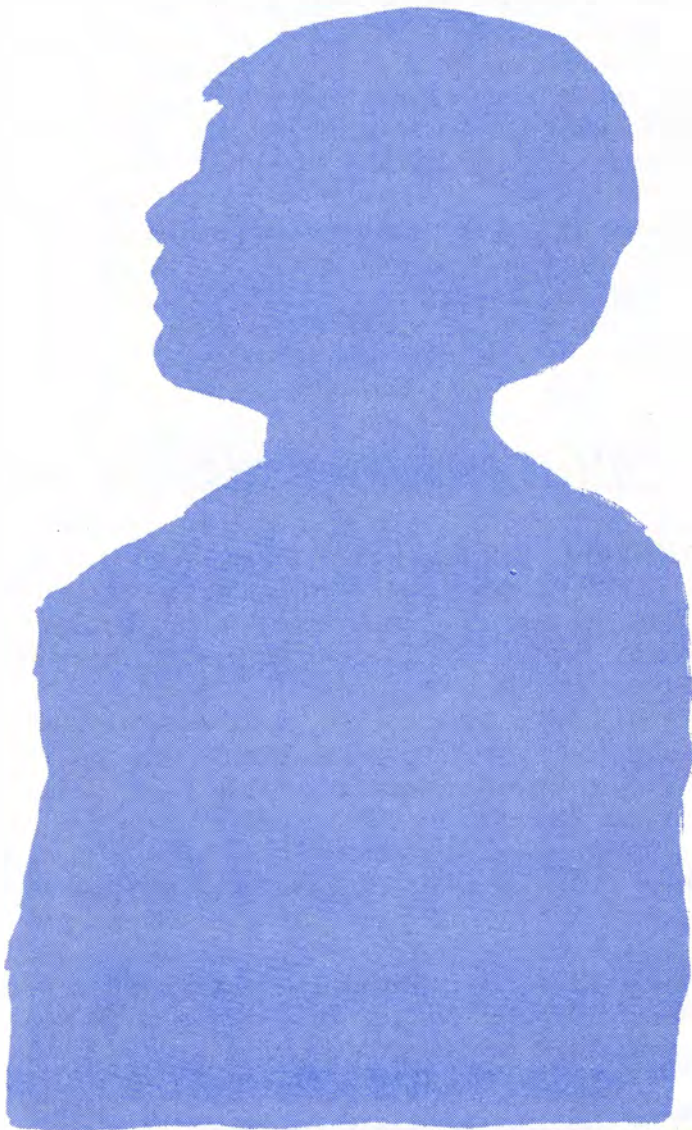
We must strive for unity and understanding and remember that in dealing with these sometimes-disturbing issues, there are bound to be reverberations in the home as well as in the school. Let us acknowledge these reactions as signs of growing and active discipleship and not as threats to the community of Christ-believers. We should try to raise world-shakers, not that anarchy or chaos may reign, but that faulty foundations may be replaced with structures and ways of life rooted in the Word of God. True stewards recognize wherein all authority lies and do not confuse their duty to obey duly constituted authority with their duty to be responsible for the care of creation.

We ourselves are too good at abdicating our responsibilities to “those in charge.” How often do we insulate ourselves in our customary and comfortable traditions from the injustices and oppression happening all around us? How often have you said or heard, “It’s no use; you can’t do anything about it anyway.”? or “Be realistic,” meaning “give up.” That habit we and our children have of taking “no” for an answer is hard to break. If we stand on good ground we should not and need not give up. Hopelessness is widespread and it should not be! God gives us strength and blesses our work if we truly work together in his Name.

We Christian teachers must be world-shakers, Biblically rooted, stewardly, world-shakers. That path will not often be convenient or easy but it is always fruitful as Jesus himself promised. It results in blessing to our children and our children’s children (that’s the positive side of the second commandment) for they not only benefit from the fruit of our labor to erase injustice, oppression, hunger, poverty, and hurt from God’s world; but also they themselves learn to be world-shakers who continue in fruitful obedience to the law of the Kingdom. That is education for discipleship.



# CHRISTIAN TEACHERS AS COUNSELORS



Jerry Bergman

All teachers, skilled and willing or not, are forced to act as counselors at one time or another. Students inevitably will at some time ask their teachers for advice about academic matters, and quite often they will ask about personal problems. Thus, the teacher is cast in the role of a helper—and counseling skills are necessary.

Actually, except for parents, Christian teachers are probably in a better position to counsel students than almost any other person. The parents may be handicapped, though, in that they are often too close to the situation to evaluate accurately their child's behavior. Parents are not able to judge normative behavior as they often have only their own children or the children of their neighbors and friends with whom to compare their own children. A teacher works each term with from twenty to one hundred students of about the same age. Thus, any child who is slightly different stands out. Often conditions such as mild retardation or even many types of behavioral problems are not recognized by the family, but they are noticed by the child's teacher.

A teacher is often the only professional person with whom a young person spends much time. Students are in almost daily contact with their teachers, so teachers are able to know many of their students quite well and thus are able to help them. In addition, teachers have much experience with the problems of young people. The students know this and often go to teachers for help. Thus, whether a teacher likes it or not, he is forced into the role of a counselor, and the fact is that if a student is to receive help, the teacher is the person who will most likely help him. The vast majority of persons with emotional problems, even serious emotional problems, do not and will not seek professional help.

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An important point to realize is that people do not develop emotional problems or go insane in a void. Mental problems are often a result of problems in interpersonal relationships. Some researchers support the theory that biochemical factors contribute to mental illness, but almost all researchers hold too that environmental conditions are extremely important. In essence, no one goes insane by himself; to some degree persons around him drive him insane. Learning how to help other people and learning how to show kindness and concern will go a long way towards reducing emotional problems. Emotional and personal problems are the number one reason students have difficulty in school.

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Many teachers hesitate to help students with emotional problems, partly because of a misunderstanding of mental illness. Psychiatric training or training in psychology does not always give one an advantage in helping an emotionally troubled person. The eminent psychologist, Dr. Jerome Frank (Ph.D. in psychology, M.D. in psychiatry, Harvard) believes that psychiatric training is not necessary to aid many of the mentally ill. "A person with no training at all can be just as successful a clinician as a psychiatrist." Frank concluded that "the therapist's personal qualities may have more to do with his success than with his training in a particular method." David Viscott (*The Making of a Psychiatrist*, 1972) notes that psychiatric board certifications have "overlooked many of the most important qualities which make a good therapist, such as his life interests, honesty, curiosity, openness, humanness, and willingness to help. Most of these were things they didn't teach in school."

Research verifies the above. It is to some degree a fad to visit psychologists and psychiatrists for help with mental health problems. For example, in New York City there are almost a thousand psychoanalysts for its nine million inhabitants, whereas in Tokyo with eleven million people, there are only three psychoanalysts. Yet, the mental health of the people in Tokyo, according to a number of indicators, is slightly better than that of those living in New York City.

Even some psychiatrists feel that psychiatrists actually do more harm than good. Empirical research indicates that often the main function psychiatrists serve is that of a "paid friend."

Dr. H. J. Eysenck of the Institute of Psychiatry in London said, in the *Medical Tribune* (April 4, 1973), that the result "claimed for different methods of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis was almost exactly that found for spontaneous remission." In other words, according to the research of Eysenck and many others, persons receiving psychiatric help had about the *same recovery rate as those receiving no professional psychiatric treatment at all*.

This does not mean that psychiatric help does not aid the person to improve, but that psychiatric help is not necessarily superior to help from teachers, friends, or family. Of course, in cases of brain damage, and where drugs are needed or helpful, psychiatric help can be very important. Most of the cases these studies dealt with, though, included primarily "problems of living emotional disorders."

Dr. Robert Harper, in his book *Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy: 36 Symptoms*, reported that the most important qualities were not those of a specific system but rather the specific qualities of the therapist. Alfred Benjamin, in his famous book *The Helping Interview*, elaborated on this claim noting that skill in dealing with people is by far the most important quality in helping someone. Many of these skills are not learned in psychology books but seem to be learned from life experi-

ences, Christian training, identification with others, and other ways. One does not learn from a *book* how to love one's fellow man—and some people who have never set foot in a college classroom have this quality and are well able to help people.

Extensive reading, however, can also help. Helping people requires learning about people, and one way to learn is to read about them.

Christian teachers are in an excellent position to help students. The word "Christian" is in popular usage synonymous with the words love, concern and compassion. The second greatest commandment is that one is to love his fellow humans. Christ said, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. . . . These things I commanded you, that ye love one another" (John 15:12).

The scriptures command that we "speak consolingly to the depressed soul" and stress that we should have compassion for one another, carefully listening to and "doing unto others as we would like to have done unto ourselves." If Christians develop these qualities, they can serve as excellent counselors and helpers to students.

#### DIRECTIVE VS. NONDIRECTIVE APPROACHES

Understanding the various methods of counseling is extremely important for Christian teachers. Probably the two most important counseling methods are *directive* and the *nondirective* approaches.

A *directive* approach, most commonly linked to the name of Albert Ellis, is that in which the teacher openly tells the students "like it is." For example, the counselor might say,

"What are you going to do when you quit school—work in a gas station? How long will that last? Do you know what kind of hours you will have to work? What about the wages—minimum wage, if that? What about the working conditions? You're crazy if you elect that kind of work. The only sensible thing to do is stay in school and finish your degree."

A *nondirective* approach, most commonly identified with the name of Carl Rogers, is that in which the teacher avoids openly confronting the student with insight or information, but tactfully draws him out, trying to find out what are the student's goals, needs, and desires. Then, at the most, the counselor reflects those ideas back to the student with words such as "I hear you saying that you really don't like school and would like to work full-time."

Most teachers use an eclectic approach to counseling, *i.e.*, they use elements of *both* the *directive* and *nondirective* techniques as well as other techniques.

One observer stated that the only difference between Rogers' and Ellis' approach to counseling is that Rogers feels *you* have the answer to your problem, where Ellis believes *he* has the answer. Behind both Rogers' and

TEACHERS AS COUNSELORS, *continued on page 10.*



TEACHERS AS COUNSELORS, *continued from page 9.*  
Ellis' theories lies a complex theoretical body of knowledge. Nevertheless, this generalization is basically true.

The teacher's task is to help the student learn to differentiate and discriminate the sources of his feelings and perceptions of both himself and the outside world. The teacher must point out the incongruity between the student's feelings and experiences and his self-concept. Rogers feels that the individual has an "inborn self", but that this inborn self is highly flexible and can be changed according to one's experience and environment.

As reorganization of the self-structure continues, the student's concept of himself will become increasingly congruent with his experiences, and therefore the necessity for defensiveness will decrease. The student becomes more accepting of experience and of himself and will not feel threatened when exposed to reality. If the student is able to live up to his own expectations, he will be less frustrated, experience less failure, and increase his self-regard.

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This in turn makes him more confident, and more self-directing. He will then be able to perceive others more realistically and accurately. Ultimately, the student's behavior will be perceived by others as more socialized and more mature. The student will "fit in," and be seen as "one of the guys." He may even be more creative, more adaptive, and more fully expressive of his own innate goals and values. The teacher's role is chiefly to aid the student in starting this positive "snowball" effect.

While Ellis would agree with many of these ends, he advocates obtaining them by other means. Ellis points out that man is both rational and yet, at times, very irrational. When he thinks and behaves rationally, he is effective, happy, and competent, but when he thinks and behaves irrationally, he evidences neurotic behavior. To help a student, the teacher must replace the irrational thinking with rational thinking. As thinking usually occurs via symbols or language, and these symbols express emotion and emotional disturbances, irrational thinking will persist if irrational expression, as interpreted by what one says, persists. The individual thus perpetuates his disturbance through maintaining illogical behavior by internal verbalization of irrational ideas and thoughts. Thus, "we are what we think," or "we become what we think." Ellis identifies eleven ideas of values which are either irrational, superstitious, or senseless (all of which he believes cause neurosis). Briefly, these false ideas are:

1. *It is essential that one be loved and approved by*

*everyone.* Most people, no matter how good, great, kind, smart, or perfect they are, have people who dislike them. Actually, if we have one or two good friends, we are lucky.

2. *One must be perfectly competent, adequate and achieving or one is not worthwhile, good, or able.* We often do not tolerate shortcomings in ourselves.
3. *Some people are bad, wicked, or villainous, and therefore they should be punished or at least blamed.* Actually we all fall short of perfection. In many ways a professional murderer is similar to a priest. Their faults and strengths just lie in different areas. A murderer may often be a very kind person, but at times may lose his temper. The priest may have perfect control of his temper, but lack tact in dealing with people.
4. *It is a terrible catastrophe when things are not exactly as one would like them to be.* The reality is, most always things will not go perfectly. If something can go wrong, it seems that it will. No couple is perfectly matched, no trip turns out perfectly. Things go wrong no matter who we are and how much money, education, power or wealth we have. Tragedy occurs to both the worst and best of us.
5. *Unhappiness is caused by circumstances outside of the individual's control.* This may be partly true, but knowing it often doesn't help us. Working on ourselves is the first step toward improvement.
6. *Threatening things are causes for deep and prolonged concern.* If we think about it, is anything really that important? And too, worry in many cases does more harm than good.
7. *It is easier to avoid certain difficulties than to face them.* We obviously need to face problems, for this is the only way to grow and become strong.
8. *One should have someone stronger than oneself upon which to rely.* This would be nice, but rarely occurs for most of us for very long.
9. *Past experiences determine present behavior.* They may be important, but they do not determine present behavior.
10. *One should be quite upset over other people's problems.* This is fine if it helps us help them, but often getting upset will only do more harm.
11. *There is a right answer to every problem.* Actually there are many "right" answers, but some are more right than others.

A student's problems are the result of one or more of these fallacious types of thinking. The function of therapy would be to remove the above "false" ideas from the student's mind. This can be done by reasoning with the student to help him realize that he is thinking illogically, and hence must change his thinking and abandon his irrational ideas. The end result is a student who acquires a workable philosophy of life. He is able to



rationally determine and evaluate events as they happen, including his own behavior.

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**Teachers sometimes overemphasize the directive approach to counseling, feeling that in order to help someone they are obligated to dictatorially give commands or requirements.**

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It should be stressed that teachers sometimes overemphasize the directive approach to counseling, feeling that in order to help someone they are obligated to dictatorially give commands or requirements. Although for some students this technique is helpful, for many individuals, especially younger persons who do not have much control over their home situation and environment, a kind listening ear will do far more good than the commands which teachers are all too often prone to spew forth.

### **OTHER BASIC CONCEPTS USED TO HELP PEOPLE**

#### *Conditions of Worth*

"Conditions of worth" refers to the various factors in one's external environment which determine or influence one's liking oneself. A supportive environment is one that values the traits that the person manifests. Of course, a Christian should try to create an environment that is supportive of *all kinds of people*. Outside conditions are extremely important in determining a person's opinion of himself, and a student's perceptions of his condition of worth are important in determining his psychological health. Altering one's value system and changing one's conception of one's own conditions of worth, a person can be enabled to bring his internal perception more in harmony with external reality. Further, by changing *society's value system*, we could make external reality more harmonious with the reality of human nature.

#### *Construct Permeability*

"Construct permeability" refers to the idea that the individual's structure, or set of ideas, should not be so rigidly set that he is unable to alter them to accept new ideas or interpretations.

According to one's own interpretation, the individual erects a structure within a defined framework from which the idea and thought take shape or accept a meaning. The idea itself does not produce the structure, the person does. In other words, beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. One who has an extremely rigid construct system is neurotic, or not able to incorporate changing reality within his unchanging system.

#### *Unconditional Acceptance*

"Unconditional acceptance" occurs when the teacher develops an atmosphere of *full acceptance* to help the student to work on the problems involved in his psychological maladjustment.

The concept of unconditional acceptance is useful and

useable in both the area of counseling, parenting and teaching. This means that in order to help a person, one must unconditionally accept the person—*regardless of what he or she has done in the past*. The teacher should endeavor to separate the behavior from the person, *i.e.*, I like you as a person, although *I may not like what you did*. The illustration of the prodigal son is an excellent Biblical example of this concept (Luke 15:11-32).

If the teacher does not like the person with whom he is counseling, and this is communicated to the student (which most likely will be, even if only through nonverbal clues), it will be very difficult to achieve the necessary rapport. If the student does not respect or like the teacher, it is not likely that he will listen, and it is doubtful whether the teacher will help the student change his behavior. Establishing rapport may be difficult for some teachers, but it is not impossible, even with a very poorly behaved, normally disliked student.

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**If the student does not respect or like the teacher, it is not likely that he will listen, and it is doubtful whether the teacher will help the student change his behavior.**

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A wide variety of experience in working with people would be helpful to teachers. Although it would be difficult to obtain, the experience of working with juvenile delinquents, prisoners, or patients in mental hospitals would be ideal. This will help teachers to realize that *we are all human beings*. We have all sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. There is often little difference between a murderer and a hero: the hero kills socially unapproved persons (the so-called "enemy"), whereas the murderer kills socially approved people (usually family members or friends).

#### *Catastrophizing*

Catastrophizing is, in short, making a mountain out of a molehill. It is extremely common among mental patients and students alike. If a student does not do well on an exam, loses a girl friend, or has a flat tire, he often tends to blow this happening all out of proportion. These events happen to all of us, and this being the case it is best that we try to accept them and prevent their recurrence.

One way to deal with catastrophizing is to try to humor the student. Our society seems to exhibit much more concern about everyday events than is necessary. A high level of concern is appropriate only if it helps us avoid mistakes in the future.

The scriptures constantly caution us to avoid catastrophizing.

#### *The Difficulties of Counseling*

Often, if a student does not seem to be helped by the teacher's efforts, the teacher may tend to blame himself. For example, Frank has concluded that "patients who show the greatest improvement, regardless of their

TEACHERS AS COUNSELORS, *continued on page 12.*



**TEACHERS AS COUNSELORS**, *continued from page 11.* problem or form of therapy, share certain characteristics (among themselves). They possess good ego strength; their complaints appear to be linked to identifiable environmental stresses. They can readily express their feelings and problems; they relate well to others; and they are strongly motivated to undergo help."

It is often helpful to define the rather ambiguous and frightening term "mental illness." People who have emotional problems and seek some type of therapy or counseling are often suffering from simple depression, or anxiety, or an inability to cope with life, or they are experiencing a general unhappiness. As one therapist put it, "the person is receiving too many cold pricklies, and not enough warm fuzzies."

In the past some therapists have emphasized the importance of experiences of early childhood, but research has found that often these experiences are not that important. Even early, extremely traumatic experiences do not necessarily influence the person's present life. Most problems which cause people to seek psychotherapy are rational and understandable. A person who has good health, loving and supporting friends and family, and a variety of rewarding daily activities, usually will *not* suffer from emotional problems. Keep in mind, emotional problems result from daily troubles and problems, troubles which most of us face. Helping students with

emotional problems means assisting them in dealing with and solving these problems.

### SUMMARY

In summary we can see that teachers, especially Christian teachers, *can* help their students with their students' normal "problems of living" as well as some of their more severe emotional problems. Of course, if a teacher is in doubt about a problem, he should consult professional help, even though it may be difficult to find *capable* professional help. Certification does not guarantee effectiveness, and sometimes friends, relatives, family, and teachers are able to do at least as much as a professional. In addition, most students, even those who are severely neurotic, will not seek or obtain professional help.

Thus, if a student is to be helped, this assistance must often come from the teacher. Counseling students is both a challenge and a task for the Christian teacher. Compassion learned from the compassionate Christ is essential. The skill of helping, in addition to demonstrating the love of Christ, is the ability to show concern, understanding, and empathy, and to offer cogent suggestions. Experience with people is important but so is learning about people through interaction with them, reading about various types of people, and reading the research on counseling and various helping techniques. This experience will go far in assisting students.

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# The Effects of Sickness and Disease on Children

**Marianne D. Van Elburg**

Through the divine will of God each one of us was created in a special way. We are unique, each of us is equipped with certain gifts and abilities but also with varied needs. In his wisdom, the Lord has charted in detail the course of each life. That path may not always be easy; however, our heavenly Father has promised that He will provide the strength necessary to carry out his will for our lives.

The gift of good health is a blessing for which most people can and should be thankful. Although the majority of people proceed from childhood to adulthood in a relatively good state of health, some of us are called upon to bear the burden of sickness and disease. It is assumed that sickness will be borne by older people; however, God in his mysterious ways also frequently calls upon children to carry this load. Unfortunately, in the hustle and bustle of everyday life we often overlook and misunderstand the sickness and disease-afflicted school children. The effects of illness on school children are real; teachers should recognize and deal with these problems sensitively. True, the needs of exceptional children (mentally and physically handicapped) are being understood and met in special schools. The needs of the sick children within the regular classroom—the children with asthma, cancer, bowel, kidney, or liver diseases, diabetes, etc.—are still too often overlooked.

Sickness, hospitalization, and surgery greatly affect children, and although children are versatile and can adapt quickly, hospital experience(s) can be very upsetting and can very much affect a child mentally. It is very common for children to believe that their naughtiness has brought on their disease. As a result, they often suffer an overwhelming feeling of guilt. These children feel responsible for their predicament and are quick to warn other children that if they don't behave they will also get sick. Many children feel guilty for being both a physical and financial burden on their families. They so much want to be healthy and make their parents happy, but instead they are sick and cause their parents and families much heartache. Many adults are not aware that children as young as eight years old can have these kinds of feelings, so teachers frequently do not discuss

problems of this nature with the sick child.

Because children have only limited ability to understand what is happening to them, they often shoulder a great deal of fear. Sick children are afraid of a number of things. They are afraid of the pain associated with their diseases. They are afraid of being in a hospital. Separation from people they love causes much fear and anxiety. In the hospital they are afraid of the staff, of the equipment, of the idea of surgery and a whole host of other things. It is also very common for these children to be afraid of dying. Even when a child's disease has been cured or is under control, he still fears that is he is naughty he will become sick again. He fears being once again separated from his family and friends.

How these fears are handled varies from child to child. Some children are bitter; they are angry at the medical teams who work with them. They are angry with their parents for not being with them all day, for making them have to go into a hospital, and for allowing them to have surgery. They are angry with themselves for being naughty, and they are angry with their healthy peers who are also naughty at times. These feelings of anger cause some children to be rebellious and difficult to handle. In order to get rid of their mounting frustrations, these children can become rather emotional. Because their emotional balance is distorted due to their lack of ability to cope with their situation, these children often will physically act out their anger and frustrations. They may, for example, bully other children, throw things, break rules deliberately, or throw temper tantrums. This may be their way of trying to "get back" at someone or something for being sick.

On the other hand, some children appear to accept their predicament unemotionally. On the surface they seem very happy and cheerful. They submit themselves passively to the medical teams. Their disease or sickness does not seem to impress them. In general they seem to be brave little patients. These types of children must be treated with care. Some children have an uncanny ability to suppress their feelings. Inside they may be drowning in fear, but they do not permit these feelings to surface. They may, however, express their feelings in creative writing or in art where other characters take on the

*Marianne D. Van Elburg was graduated from Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa. Hers was a tremendous accomplishment considering the years of illness and various surgeries through which she suffered.*

EFFECTS OF SICKNESS, continued on page 14.



qualities they are trying to repress. Children fitting this description probably take longer to work through the traumatic effects of their sickness than children who openly express anger and frustration. When feelings are repressed, the scars of such experiences take longer to fade.

If fairly minor procedures (hernia, appendix, tonsils) can have a traumatic effect on children, how much more traumatic must be the effects of chronic diseases on children! Many of the effects are manifested in different ways by different children. Some children appear to successfully deny their fears but they suffer from severe nightmares in which these fears come to the forefront. Some children express denial by fantasy. They may, for example, draw very unrealistic yet desirable pictures of themselves in order to better accept their frustrating situation. Other children become very withdrawn and lose interest in everything except their illness. Still others regress; they change from active independent little people to inactive and dependent patients. They may become very clingy to certain people. They may pretend to be too sick to do something they are very capable of doing. They may begin to feel so comfortable with their role as a patient that some may be content to stay that way. After all, they know what to expect and they're sure getting a lot of attention!

Not only must these adaptation techniques be dealt with by medical people, but also they must be dealt with by parents and teachers since these effects can be somewhat longterm. With the help of the parents (who hopefully have been counselled by doctors concerning the needs of their sick child), the teacher can understand the reasons for regression, withdrawal, or dependence and can help the child considerably by being sensitive to his style of adapting to his situation. The child needs to be understood although he must be treated as normally as possible.

As children get a bit older and are better able to understand their feelings, the implications of sickness and disease change. The influences of peer groups become much more important. Because of very different life style and experiences, these children easily sense a feeling of estrangement from their peers. Because certain diseases cause them to be hospitalized frequently and thus prevent them from doing the "in thing," these children often feel "out of it." They are away so often that they seem to function on a different wavelength than their peers. Their illness isolates them. Because they are a bit different due to some possible change that had to be made in their bodies, they may feel inferior to the healthy children. This "oddball" feeling can cause feelings of frustration since the norm for older children is conformity and likeness.

If normal older children need support from their peers, how much more do sick children need this support! Unfortunately, however, it is easy for these children to lose this support. For example, they may not

be able to participate in physical activities, so they do not get the so much desired praise from coaches or peers; they may be required to shower with the rest of the kids where everyone can see their "unusual" appliance; they may not be able to attract the opposite sex! Without the support of their peers, these children may find it difficult to succeed in school.

There is no doubt that hospitalization interferes with school since absenteeism puts the sick persons behind their classmates. The implications of absenteeism are greater than many teachers realize. A frightening and somewhat degrading experience for children who do average or above average work is to drop several grades on their report cards. Likewise, it is frustrating for brighter children to be put into the "slow kids" reading group because absenteeism has put them so far behind.

It is not surprising that children with chronic diseases can grow to dislike school. School can become a place where they feel rejected, lonely, and unsuccessful. As a result these children may develop negative self-concepts. They may even experience an identity crisis. They don't feel comfortable in school; they know they shouldn't feel at home in the hospital, and they don't feel comfortable being in the house all day. The questions, "Who am I?" and "What does my future hold?" can cause strong feelings of anxiety for sick children since their futures are so dependent on their state of health. These questions and feelings are real and they are difficult to suppress since these children cannot help but remember what has happened and worry about what may happen to them.

In many cases, children who shoulder these kinds of burdens mature very quickly for their age. This is because they have to struggle through problems that even adults find difficult to handle. They have to accept and cope with the physical and psychological aspects of their illness. They also have to deal with their handicap along with the problems of growing up. This is quite a tall order for little people to handle, and these children need special care to help them through this very difficult crisis.

An interesting quality in many children with sickness and disease is their ability to empathize with others. In dealing with each other, sick children often display great sensitivity. They can relate to each others' needs and they can help each other through certain problems dealing with acceptance and coping with their illness. Their disease or handicap becomes a common ground which provides a sense of security. This type of peer group seems to be very supportive for these children since the support gained from the peer groups at school diminishes and becomes unstable.

The various situations and needs of children with sickness or disease imply certain actions on the part of the school teachers who deal with these children. Unfortunately there is no exact set of directions to follow which would effectively handle the needs of these children. Each child is unique with special needs which are



particular to him. All the children must cope with and work through their fears and frustrations differently.

It is important for teachers to be aware of and sensitive to a number of different factors when dealing with these children. Teachers must be aware that once these children come back to school they are away from the hospital support system. They are back with their peers who cannot imagine what sick children have been through; peers who cannot understand the implications of the disease; peers who often unknowingly exclude them from various activities. This is a very big adjustment! Teachers must be aware that the sick children can and often do feel isolated, frustrated, and afraid. Getting back into the swing of school again can be physically and mentally exhausting. Just because the children are back at school does not mean they are completely free of the effects of their illness. It is not going to be the same! Too many traumatic experiences have occurred which have definitely left marks on these children. Knowing this, teachers must be careful that school does not become an academically and socially negative experience for these children. Like other children, they *need* to succeed! Success cannot come to children with a poor self-concept, and a poor self-concept can come easily through a lack of sensitivity to their needs.

Some children handle their predicament emotionally and others do a very good job of repressing their inner feelings. Some children have been so disturbed by being nursed in a hospital that they try to be over-indepen-

dent. Others have gradually grown to dependence and as a result they crave attention. Some children have really matured because of their experiences while others have regressed. The important thing is for teachers and peers to be aware of and sensitive to certain behaviors of these children. Do not ignore these behaviors or try to cover them up—deal with them in subtle ways, or if that is not possible, report the behavior to the parents. Sometimes the problems can be easily solved if they are only brought to the attention of capable people. Even discussing certain problems with the children themselves in an understanding way can help. These children should not be pampered or treated like pieces of fragile china. They must be understood—not pitied! Life must continue as normally as possible for them. They need support and extra help but not always extra attention.

Teachers should work closely with the parents if school is to be a meaningful, enjoyable experience for sick children. Christian teachers especially should realize that these children have been called by God to shoulder these burdens. It is teachers' responsibility to try to meet, with God's help, the needs of all their students. Questioning why God permits children to get seriously ill does not help alleviate their problems; it is part of God's mysterious plans for some of our lives.

And, people who enjoy good health should be thankful. But everyone must remember that God has said we must bear each others' burdens, trusting that He will never make the load too heavy for any of us to carry.

## WOMEN IN THE SEVENTIES

Taken from statistics reported by Michael Briley in the *NRTA Journal*, May-June, 1981.

- Women in operations and systems research-analysis went from 10 to 22 percent; women professional economists, from 11 to 23 percent.

- Almost half the nation's 47 million wives had outside jobs.

- Women filled 2 million of 3 million newly created jobs.

- By decade's end, only 7 percent of all American households consisted of a working husband, a wife at home and school-aged children.

- The proportion of households with husband and wife present fell from 71 to 62 percent.

- In 1970, the typical woman head-of-household was a widow. By 1980, she was more likely to be divorced, single or separated.

- The proportion of women over age 25 who were not yet married had risen from 14 to 25 percent.

- The proportion of the nation's lawyers who were women went from 5 to 10 percent.

- Women bank officers and financial managers increased from 18 to 30 percent.

- Women in operations and systems research-analyst went from 10 to 22 percent; women professional economists, from 11 to 23 percent.

- Women's enrollment in colleges during the '70's grew by 57 percent.

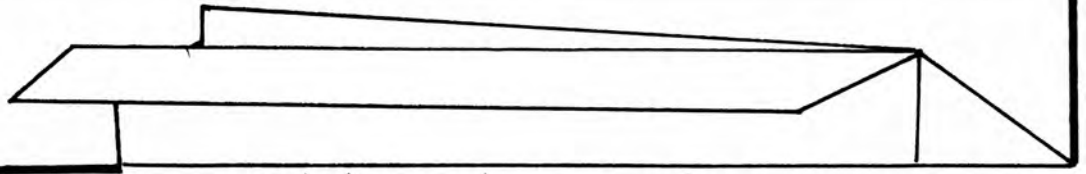
- By decade's end, women were receiving 26 percent of all law degrees, 22 percent of all medical degrees.

Yet marked disparities remained. Taken together, the wages earned by working married women came to 60 percent of those earned by men. But the earnings of working women, all told, added only 25 percent to their families' incomes.

"The real change," notes one observer, "was psychological. Women began to see themselves in a larger light, with new realms of activity and heightened aspirations."



# ACCELERATED CHRISTIAN EDUCATION— A Philosophical Analysis



Ronald Chadwick

With the rapid growth of Christian schools, the demand for curriculum materials and packaged lesson plans has increased. Small schools with limited budgets have been hit especially hard and so they have looked for legitimate alternatives. The heavy demand for new Christian schools, most of which will be small (fewer than 50 students to begin with), has also forced parents, pastors, and Christian-school leaders to seek approaches that are financially feasible with limited faculty and existing facilities. The Pensacola (Florida) Christian School (A-Beka Books) and the Accelerated Christian Education program (A.C.E.) are two groups that have appeared on the scene to provide the needed materials. It is specifically the Accelerated Christian Education program which needs close examination.

At first glance, the problems and limiting factors associated with the traditional school seem to be eliminated with the A.C.E. program. There is no question in my mind that the A.C.E. type of materials, including Alpha and Omega materials, can make a valuable contribution as supplementary materials, especially for the student who is highly motivated or who somehow needs special individualized attention. It is the A.C.E. philosophy, however, not just the materials, that needs examination.

*Ronald Chadwick is a professor at the Grand Rapids (Michigan) Baptist Seminary.*

## A.C.E. PHILOSOPHY

1. *Every pastor is capable, with one week of training, yearly attendance at workshops, telephone consultations, and field representative assistance, of handling the responsibilities of being a Christian School administrator.*

Administration is a singular science; few if any pastors have been trained or in any way adequately prepared to be an administrator of a local church let alone an educational administrator in a Christian school.

The most effective Christian school administrator must be trained in the three disciplines of Bible, education, and administration. The tragedy is that most pastors today are not only inadequately trained in education, but also the entire area of administration is conspicuously absent from the training programs of most Bible Colleges as well as seminaries.

2. *A.C.E. materials "do away with the need for the teacher in the classroom."*

Though there may not be precise educational research to support the conclusion, it has been generally agreed that *what* is being taught is less important than *who* is teaching. The most powerful influence upon the student comes from the personal model the teacher projects in the classroom. Some have concluded that the impact of the curriculum is only 10% while the impact



of the teacher is approximately 90% in the life of the student.

The teaching-learning process is a cooperative effort that involves not only the leading-guiding ministry of the Holy Spirit as seen in John 16:13, but also the leading-guiding ministry of the human instrumentality as seen in Acts 8:26-40 (especially verses 30 and 31).

3. *The students in the A.C.E. program working at individual carrels are equally, highly self-motivated.*

This implies that all students are potentially self-starters, and when handling only written curriculum materials the student brings to each session all of the built-in motivation necessary to make him an effective learner.

Usually interest and excitement for learning come from the enthusiasm and excitement of the teacher and as a result of the teacher's ability to meaningfully involve the students in the learning process. As Dr. Howard Hendricks often reminded his students, "If you want your students to learn how to bleed, then you will have to learn how to hemorrhage." Or, if you want your students to get excited about learning then as a teacher you are going to have to get really excited.

4. *Integration (relating Truth with truth and Truth with life) is capable of being accomplished through the use of the printed A.C.E. curriculum materials without the use of teacher to student and student to student interaction.*

At best, the printed materials are probably capable of producing only correlation by laying one truth along side another truth, but the ability to weave these concepts together into one piece of cloth, one concept, probably is the task of each teacher working with his students.

5. *Students enrolled in the A.C.E. program work best at a study carrel interacting almost exclusively with a written or taped curriculum.*

Obviously the impact of the personality of the teacher is completely eliminated in the A.C.E. program. However, in order to be effective as a teacher one must use a variety of approaches, for there is no singular method or approach. Even though the truth to be taught is singular and the principles are cross-cultural, the technique, methodology, or organizational structure must be varied.

6. *Students enrolled in the A.C.E. program work best in a one-room school house environment (heterogeneous multi-age or grade group).*

If we have learned one thing in education over the past years it is that there is no one approach that is effective for every student in every situation. There is a need for homogeneous as well as heterogeneous groupings, and large groups as well as small group situations.

7. *The responsibility for meeting the social and emotional needs of the child through group involvement and interaction is not primarily the responsibility of the school.*

Group involvement and interaction on the part of the

student are necessary in order to help prepare that student socially and emotionally to be a functioning member not only of society but also of the Body of Christ.

8. *Any certified teacher, regardless of his grade level or discipline specialization, is qualified to teach all grade levels and subjects. It is required that the teacher be born again, but it is only recommended that he be certified.*

Certainly all teachers in the Christian school must be born again but in addition they must be certified and qualified, capable of articulating and implementing their philosophy of Christian education from a totally Bible perspective.

9. *Parents are capable of supervising a child's learning experience, even without the experience of actually working through the subject materials at each grade level.*

These individuals are not functioning as teacher aides handling the administrative aspect of teaching but rather are involving themselves in the teaching-learning process with the students.

10. *All churches are adequately equipped with state-approved educational facilities and minimal audio-visual hardware for operating a school.*

All facilities must meet the reasonable fire safety, health, and educational standards as required by state and federal governments. When it can be shown that the requirements are not really adding to the safety, health, and educational standards, these items are frequently negotiable with the fire marshal or the state inspector. However, as long as the Scripture says to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" we must obey unless the standards violate the clear commands or principles from the Word of God. To operate a school knowingly in violation in these areas is to knowingly violate Scripture.

11. *A single pre-packaged plan without any local adaptation of specified learning objectives or approaches is best for meeting the educational needs of all students throughout the United States.*

We are not talking here about adapting a curriculum guide but we are talking about adapting a specific program developed in detail. Local adaptation may be assumed, but it is not recommended and certainly not encouraged in the A.C.E. program.

12. *Any discrepancy between the A.C.E. curriculum and the state-required or locally designed curriculum guide simply shows the inadequacies of state and local educators to provide a program as high in quality as those of A.C.E. schools. (This is not a stated position of A.C.E., but it is a frequent attitude of A.C.E. schools.)*

13. *A.C.E. is not teacher-centered but learner-centered because "children love to learn but they dislike being taught."*

This type of statement indicates an obviously total misunderstanding of the teaching-learning process.

ACCELERATED EDUCATION, continued on page 18.



14. *A.C.E. eliminates failure and boredom by eliminating unfair competition and lock-step learning restraints.*

Lessons learned from education and lessons learned from Scripture show that all education has some failure. This cannot be eliminated and though we do not want to major on the failures, we certainly need to prepare children to face the realities of life.

15. *Though A.C.E. is not programmed for individualized instruction, it is capable of providing an accelerated program of individualized instruction for each child.*

At best, the A.C.E. materials are an advanced correspondence program. Because individual objectives are not written for the students and immediate reinforcement is not provided with each lesson, it is unfair to claim that materials are individualized instruction.

### A.C.E. REACTION

A.C.E., reacting to the fifteen points mentioned in this essay, has responded as follows:

I. Statements foreign to the A.C.E. program are: 3, 10, 11, 12.

II. Statements which distort basic A.C.E. philosophy are: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9.

III. Statements which reflect A.C.E. philosophy but are legitimate areas of disagreement are: 7, 13, 14, 15.

Although it may be true that all fifteen of the statements are not a part of the written A.C.E. philosophy as packaged and sold specifically from Garland, Texas, these statements generally do reflect the approach to A.C.E.'s schools in terms of the actual field implementation. Whether all of these false assumptions were intended or not, they seem to be inherent problems that are built into the A.C.E. approach and they often quickly surface once the program is put to work.

### CONCLUSION

Let me emphasize again that I have not said that Accelerated Christian Education school cannot work. I am saying that the group starting an A.C.E. school will have to really work in order to prevent the potential problems from surfacing. It would seem that if a school were planning to start with the A.C.E. program, using these fifteen points as a checklist would be a good way to prevent the school from stumbling into pitfalls that could keep that school from ever achieving a quality program of Christian education.

# SPECIAL ISSUE TOPICS FOR 1983

**Do you have  
suggestions?**

**Send your  
suggestions to:**

**Lillian V. Grissen, Managing Editor  
Christian Educators Journal  
Dordt College English Department  
Sioux Center, Iowa 51250**





## Idea Bank

# What a Long Time to Wait

The format of this page is structured in a way that we hope will invite you to "Clip and File" the ideas suggested. We also invite you to send in your best ideas in order that they may be shared with others.

*Wm. Hendricks, Editor Idea Bank*

### BULLETIN BOARDS

**Goal:** To provide opportunity for pupils to understand and practice patience.

**Materials:** A calendar with all of the months of the year on it showing holidays and other special occasions that are important to the children in your class. Drawing materials.

**Procedure:** Ask pupils to name their favorite holidays. As they respond, encircle the date on the calendar: e.g. If a child says, "Christmas," encircle December 25. Then ask pupils to name their favorite sport. Try to determine with your class when a seasonal sport ends: e.g. baseball ends with the World Series in October, sledding ends when the snow melts in the spring.

Next, move to the discussion of the idea of waiting and of patience. Use the following questions as discussion starters:

How do you feel the day after Christmas when you realize that the next Christmas is a whole year away?

How do you feel when you put your ice skates away knowing that the ice has melted for another year?

Ask your pupils to think of ways in which adults must "wait." Some suggestions might include a farmer who is planting an orchard or sowing his crops; a driver waiting for a flagman at a road construction site. After discussing several examples, have pupils draw a situation that requires patience. Have the pupils share and tell about their pictures and place them on the bulletin board. Use Luke 8:15 or Romans 8:25 or I Corinthians 14:4 as the basis for the lesson.

*William Hendricks is a professor of education at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan*

## John H. Timmerman

He entered my office that first time like a huge bear, shuffling, head back, *ursus arctos* in jeans and flannel shirt.

"I'll get right to the point," he said.

"Okay by me."

"I want to write a novel."

"So do I," I said. "So do a lot of people. Some people even write them."

"Well, maybe I should correct myself," he said. He scratched his belly while he talked. A pile of books—physics, a grammar text, a couple of tattered paperbacks—jiggled on one knee. I waited for them to fall.

"What I meant to say was this. I am writing a novel. What I want to do is this. I figure if I can take creative writing I can get enough of the novel done by June to send it off to a publisher. That way I can get it published by August and it'll pay the rest of my way through college."

I had no smart remark for that. Instead, I used my safety valve for such times. I lit my pipe. Four matches while I gathered my thoughts in a cloud of smoke.

"So," I finally said. "What are you going to write your novel about."

He replied without hesitation, "About myself."

I was tempted to ask him why he thought he was worth writing about, but before I could he told me.

"I have eight children."

"No! You're what? Twenty-one? Twenty-two?"

"They're foster kids. Delinquent girls. Wards of the court. You wouldn't believe the stories . . ."

He was right. I wouldn't believe them and I couldn't image a respectable publisher believing them either. Not that fourteen delinquent young women aren't fair ground for a novel; indeed, the very idea in a well-rounded potboiler would make some editors chortle. Rather, it was that a young man of twenty-one, beside being a poor choice for foster parent (I keep reminding myself to write a note to the court one of these days), simply doesn't know enough about his principal character, himself.

I don't know if he has yet written his novel, but he did take creative writing and he did write one very good little drama about a bridge party.

My interest in creative writing began in 1970. Fresh out of the Army, not so fresh out of Vietnam, trying to knit into whole cloth the ravelled sleeve of graduate school I had left behind two years before, I was convinced there was life in language. There had to be life in everything. There were too many foolish deaths around us to let language sink into the grave. And so while some sang the requiem, I undertook a personal crusade to resurrect it—at least in my assigned rhetoric course as a teaching assistant.

# WHY TEACH CREATIVE WRITING:

## AND SOME THOUGHTS ON METHOD



*John H. Timmerman teaches English at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*



Twenty students sat there the first day, morose as gravediggers while I praised the King's English. They laughed at appropriate places (politely), they scowled at initial exercises (fiercely), and they were relieved when the bell rang (tremendously). By the end of the hour they were ready to resurrect Rhetoric and bury me.

I fought back. Somehow in the next few weeks, they even came to enjoy exercises in imagery, patterns, style. Either that or they were shameless fakers. The problem, which I had missed, was that they didn't know grammar. My fault. I put the poem before the participle, so to speak. But something of the language reared up inside them and took hold. Language became not just a communication of needs, but also of ideas and emotions.

And so it happened that an eighteen year old daughter of West Virginia's brutal coal-mining country one day turned in her theme, a painfully honest discourse that ended: "I am lonely!"

As with so many others, writing became a safety valve with her. It was a channel, and a new one. The channel was narrow, constricted. Yet it was beginning to pulse. She began to find images to shape her inner being. In the next paper she was no longer "lonely!" but instead "felt like a cloud in an empty sky," "a small flower on a mountain path," "a torn shingle on a roof that the wind blew against." A long way to go? Perhaps. But a long way covered also. And the way that had been covered was a kind of inward-outward journey.

I continually tell myself not to play psychologist in writing classes. I can mend a fractured line but not a broken heart. I have little skill in that. But I can teach someone to construct images and patterns in which the writer can objectify his grief and perhaps thereby deal with it.

In a creative writing class a few years back I had a young mother whose eight year old son was killed by an auto in front of her house while she watched terrified from the porch. I had a brilliant physics student, headed for medical school, who had long felt a certain part of his human nature had been locked in a formula for which he could not find the combination. He was a sensitive man who wrote poems of great beauty with an intuitively careful and well-crafted skill. I have had a now well-heeled lawyer who at the time dragged around in beat-up tennis shoes and who waged illegal warfare against the English language in a number of tormented stories. I had an alcoholic who wrote beery-eyed poems and whose wife worshipped the ground he groveled on. I recall the immigrant who would pontifically pilot class discussions with all the ringing resonance of a Frisian bull, unfortunately with none of the bull's creative energy.

I can't remember a single student who has published a novel, who has published any more than a few poems in little magazines, or who has staged an original drama. Although I have hopes for a few.

But the road to my teaching creative writing has not

been tortured with dead ends. Quite the opposite. There was the non-credit seminar (no creative writing course on the books—the college where I was then teaching was heavily endowed by fat-pocketed businessmen who generally frowned on that kind of thing) that met for ten weeks in the autumn of 1974. We, the nine of us, made a pledge to each other that we would write, we would critique, we would learn; and that if we wound up eastern millionaires (none has yet, but I have hopes for a few there too) we would endow a chair for creative writing at the college.

We were young idealists, starry-eyed poem gazers, wrapped up in the eclipse of our mutual genius. Also a few wrote pretty well. Well enough to take down four prizes in the prestigious Atlantic Monthly College Creative Writing Competition (now defunct, unfortunately). It was all rather heady for a time.

But that isn't the purpose of a creative writing course as I see it. It's kind of a benediction upon the real thing that goes on in those obscure and often-ornery things called human spirits. I no longer even encourage my students to submit to competitions. For one thing, there is always the temptation to see myself as partly responsible for their success should they win. Anyone who is serious about writing can do without that self-obsequiousness. Occasionally a few students do submit to competitions, and I can be genuinely surprised and pleased when I hear of a success.

The typical creative writing class I assume to be around ten students—occasionally it is larger and everyone suffers. The instructor has to endure some ungentle ribbing about class size, but not often. Most academics don't care enough or understand enough about it to bother. Typically the course tries to do too much—drama, short story, poetry. Typically the instructor knows too little about any of them, or a lot about one and nothing of the others. The best instructor probably knows nothing about all three and therefore can teach himself and probably others about all three in an objective, academic fashion. Most instructors echo John Kenneth Galbraith in a recent *Atlantic* essay when he said that given a choice between reading someone else's stuff and writing his own, he'll opt for the latter any day. But yet these frenzied little knots of intense spirits continue to meet, to engage the masochistic torture of laying one's most secret heart out on a table, to endure the unravelling of one's privacy torn apart and examined like so much confetti. Why? Why go through this? Does it serve any purpose? Particularly in an academic age in which business and engineering courses are the avatars to whom administrators bend the knee. Or, does it belong in the academic setting at all? If only the basement of the Ivory Tower, despite the irony that almost always creative writing courses are given the highest catalog numbers?

Well, I think there are answers. Some are even valid academically.

CREATIVE WRITING, *continued on page 22.*



Foundational to these answers, however, is the academic presupposition that the creative writing course is for teaching something. It is not a subliminal therapy session in words. It is a structured pedagogical context which is at once theoretical, analytic, and practical. That is to say, it examines theories of writing methods, analyzes writings in different forms, and practices the writing of those forms. Typically, the pedagogically sound creative writing course will spend at least as much time on the first two as on the third.

But even so some academicians are inclined to cast aspersions upon that third point.

My presupposition, then, is an academic one. That is, creative writing as a theoretical, analytic, and practical course has academic value.

Secondly, the course, intrinsic to its nature, provides a process of self-evaluation for the student. A liberal arts curriculum, in which curriculum creative writing finds its parental home, is a curriculum designed to educate persons into insights about themselves and the spiritual and social world in which they find themselves. In a creative writing course one is not learning sets of quantifiable data; one is studying oneself. Too often, like "three-adjectives-a-penny" Dylan Thomas, as he once introduced himself, the students arms are around the griefs of the ages. And as Thomas cried in "In my craft or sullen art," we are not apt to pay praise nor wages to their most secret heart. Wallace Stevens aside, a well written poem will not get you a seat on Wall Street or an executive position with an insurance agency. But, considering Wallace Stevens, I think that we can have more humane insurance agents, and the understanding of a liberal arts curriculum provides may insure this.

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### **In a creative writing course one is not learning sets of quantifiable data; one is studying oneself.**

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But I submit that that is a daring task for a college student—to stare at their spiritual selves stripped naked in the mirror of their making. A constant process of self-evaluation boils like a cauldron in even the most confident in such a course. The student who dares stare a professor eyeball to eyeball and declare that the professor has a lot to learn to match his level, hardly dares that before the assembled glare of his peers.

Thirdly, creative writing can in fact provide useful tools for dealing with the often agonizing searching involved in this self-evaluative process. I think, for example, of a young lady who several years before was brutally raped while her assailant held a gun to her head. Something like that leaves a wound on the spirit that is hard to heal and dangerous to tamper with. The scar tissue is fragile. Yet it was something she had to come to grips with—in her writing. Each time it came in first person, and the first person suffered terribly in the process. To the discerning eye of an experienced creative

writing teacher the solution seems simple. That is, yes, she had to write about it—but in third person. There had to be the objectifying distance that a third person character provides, a vicarious scapegoat to carry one's burden. Aristotle had something to teach us there. (As general rule, I go further than Aristotle and argue that no one under 30 be permitted to write fiction in first person).

I argue, then, that the creative writing course belongs in the academic curriculum for clear pedagogical reasons, that is, it is an exploration of genres and provides absolutely the best learning approach to those genres—practical exercises in them—and also for the reasons which are personal to the student, those reasons which are a necessary part of the maturing process during a college education.

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### **No more would I ask a student to create a masterful poem on the first crack at it, than I would ask him to play a masterful piano sonata without first having learned the notes.**

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I should like to emphasize once again, however, that I do not advocate a group therapy writing class, but a highly structured course which provides organized room for evaluative processes. A middle-aged woman once stopped by to inquire about a creative writing course I had scheduled. She laughed off my comments with the remark; "But how do you teach a flower to grow?" A common misconception about creative writing. I believe that if you turn the creative nature loose to the malevolent muses of "inspiration," you'll wind up with a garden of weeds. You teach a flower to grow by uprooting weeds and providing nourishment. No more would I ask a student to create a masterful poem on the first crack at it, than I would ask him to play a masterful piano sonata without first having learned the notes.

Let me conclude, then, with some general principles. First, good writing grows from good reading as good flowers grow from good soil. Whether the class work be in drama, poetry, or short story, it had better be preceded by an arduous scrutiny of the best in these genres to determine what makes them the best. And this too can be structured to reveal variety of technique.

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### **Good writing grows from good reading as good flowers grow from good soil.**

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Good writing, the slogan goes, grows from good reading. The only trouble with this slogan is its truth, and it governs the creative writing class. For example, let me suggest some readings I use to introduce poetry (after a consideration of prosody itself, of course). One may use more works, but here are some basic ones according to two categories, variety of technique and meaning of the genre.



I) *Variety of Technique:*

- A) Traditional Forms: "Holy Sonnet 14" by Donne provides one of the richest sources for complexity of rhyme, meter, paradox, and so forth. A careful explication of the poem will show how idea is shaped by form, how each of the quatrains relates to the others but shapes its own image. This poem may be followed by a study of John Crowe Ransom's "Piazza Piece" or E.A. Robinson's "Credo" as examples of the Italian Sonnet.
- B) Innovative Technique in Form: Particularly effective here are Yeats's little poem "Quarrel in Old Age" with its marvelous tensions between slant and perfect rhyme, and selections from T.S. Eliot's "Ash Wednesday" for sound patterns. I will always conclude with a simple poetic structure, such as James Wright's ballad "Mutterings over the Crib of a Deaf Child."
- C) Free Verse: Best to avoid here, for the time being, the free verse that typifies much of the little magazine fare, and work at a poem which uses free verse with some very specific rhyming or irregular line patterns. I think, for example, of Archibald MacLeish's "Wildwest."

II) *Meaning of the Genre or Poems about Poetry.* Every new poet wants to write poems about writing poetry. Beat them to the punch with some of the best such poems: Frost's "Mowing," MacLeish's "Ars Poetica," X.J. Kennedy's "Ars Poetica," Wallace Stevens' "Poetry," Marianne Moore's "On Modern Poetry."

Variety, I suppose, is the lesson I'm after here. Most college students who read poetry at all think free verse is the only recognizable form and Robert Bly is the only poet who has written anything since Eliot died. While Bly is a very fine poet, and free verse a thoroughly useful contemporary mode, students in this course will write several poems in formal structures; sonnets, blank verse, villanelles. The sonnets may be awful, but they will make the free verse much better.

So, good writing is predicted upon knowing your tools. This holds for drama, short fiction, children's literature, as well as poetry. (By the way, more creative

writing courses have got to recognize the worth, validity, and special techniques of Children's Lit.)

But another general principle strikes me as equally important, and this has to do with pedagogical structure. First and foremost, the teacher has to be the authority in the classroom. This task is not relaxed in creative writing, although it is exercised uniquely. For example, it is an absurdly awkward task to assign a final grade. The teacher who can spot a C paper a mile off or smell out a plagiarism before it ever crosses his desk because the criteria for those matters are so thoroughly engrained in him may be rendered helpless in creative writing. I would recommend a final consultation with the student to determine a final grade. Whatever pattern the teacher finally adopts, it will only be successful if the course syllabus clearly establishes patterns which predicate the kind of constant self-evaluation this course is after. I specify three unequivocal criteria (and remind the students of these before the final consultation for a grade): 1) attendance, which should be without blemish; 2) promptness of assignments, which should be turned in on the syllabus due date; 3) contribution to class discussion, and therefore to the self-evaluative process of others. Contribution to class discussion, in this case, follows the well tested procedure of dittoing all class assignments for in-class discussion and requiring the students to make written comments on the works for return to the author.

To encourage the students to explore for themselves what criteria constitute "good" writing, I often have them write a take-home midterm examination precisely on that topic. Certain casebooks such as *Modern Poetics* are placed on reserve in the library for their consideration. This midterm, by the way, is carefully assigned a letter grade as any other midterm. It is the only specific letter grade they receive, since it is the only traditionally academic testing procedure in the course.

I believe strongly in the procedure of the final consultation for a grade. By this time the students have a huge stake in the course. It has become their course. The teacher is at the end a consultant. For the creative writing teacher that demotion is the surest sign of success.



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Mail to: Donald J. Hunderman 1500 Cornell Dr. S.E. Grand Rapids, MI 49506





## WHEN DO WE GET TO WRITE AGAIN?

Lorna Van Gilst

I truly didn't believe my ears! Were those *my eighth* graders asking to write a composition?

Perhaps you have been to a church or a conference grounds where you heard such a convicting message that you wanted to literally take it with you. You were pleased to discover that you were able to secure a tape of that message through the organization's tape ministry. Well, I, too, have a "tape ministry" which I believe is responsible for my students' welcome question.

I have always believed that written composition is a vital part of formal education, whether it be for English, for social studies, for Bible instruction, or any other area where it is possible to develop thinking ability through the process of writing. However, I struggled with the impracticalities of requiring frequent written assignments for anywhere from 85-130 junior high students. (No wonder few but English teachers feel compelled to continue this overwhelming procedure.)

Yet, I tried. I planned compositions. I assigned compositions. I wrote sample compositions. I read compositions. I red-penned compositions. I returned compositions. But I doubt I *taught* composition.

Somehow, I felt cheated. I had invested a tremendous amount of energy, time, and red ink in a futile cause. I knew I had not been lazy. I had read every one of those papers my students had labored to write — and some they had *not* labored to write. I had tried to be positive. I had written personal responses on their papers, but I think more of those were read by mothers than by students. I had even asked students to rework their papers in order to repair the most glaring of errors. Usually, however, those errors were simply repeated the next time. I knew I could not continue to deceive myself and call this process effective teaching of composition.

Fortunately, I had not yet silenced my conscience when I read about a teacher who used the tape recorder to enhance her writing program. That idea, I decided, was one that I could employ. After a trial period with one tape recorder and one tape of successive messages to

the various students, I enlisted the help of our school's very supportive women's service club. Before long, I had four tape recorders, a generous supply of ear plugs, fifty short-term cassette tapes, a small drawer cabinet from the discount store's automotive department, a bottle of alcohol, and a bag of cotton balls. My "tape ministry" was launched.

Organization was essential. I labeled the file drawers by classes and sections, listing students' names in alphabetical order. With two students per tape, I penciled a name on each side and filed the tapes in the corresponding drawers. I had already supplied a labeled manila folder for each student to file the semester's writings in the composite composition file. Earlier I had ordered an ink stamp to stamp on each paper a brief evaluation form for content, mechanics, and interest level of the paper. In addition, I prepared individual writing score sheets to record in greater depth my evaluation of each composition assigned.

I was eager to assign the next composition. Carefully I planned the prewriting activities and the assignment. The students wrote, revised, and prepared their final drafts. I went home with a sheaf of stamped student papers, score sheets, and a tape recorder with a taping microphone.

Although the idea I had read was intended to shorten checking time, I found I actually spent more time evaluating papers, but I didn't really mind. I discovered that I wanted to take more time to go over each paper because checking had more purpose now. As I addressed each student, I was able to imagine he was sitting there with me, uninterrupted, going over his special piece of writing. I could use not only my words to teach, but also my voice. Since no one else could tune in, I was able to be specific and personal. With only a few key symbols and written remarks on the paper itself, I could explain how effectively a particular line was written or where commas could contribute to correct understanding. I was reasonably sure that my students would review their writing more carefully this time and would in turn benefit more from my endeavors.

The next day I was not disappointed. I had planned a class period involving individual work so students could circulate back to the tape table as space became available. They eagerly accepted their returned compositions and score sheets. Before the class period ended, I was able, by tape, to talk individually with every student in the room. Those who were required to re-write had the opportunity to ask me any questions they had. Otherwise, the compositions and score sheets were collected and filed in the class composition file. My students and I decided to continue beyond the "maiden voyage" stage of cassette tape composition.

On succeeding tape talks, I have found opportunities to add bits of encouragement regarding friendship conflicts, study habits, or personal appearance, with the suggestion that we talk more at length during noon

*Lorna Van Gilst teaches in the Ripon (California) Christian School.*



break. Sometimes these remarks are prompted by ideas expressed within the assignment, although it is not always the case. Occasionally I remind students of overdue books or school newspaper assignments that seem to be neglected. By voice inflection I can be kindly firm and personal via the private earplug, even among a roomful of students.

Perhaps more of you would enjoy a "tape ministry" in your various teaching areas. If so, I have several suggestions to increase effectiveness.

First, always have one tape recorder available in another room for students who dislike using earplugs or who have ear infections or hearing problems. In addition, supply alcohol and cotton balls for cleaning earplugs between usage. (Sometimes junior high students collect wax!)

Another suggestion pertains to the tapes. I have the tapes of fifteen minutes' duration per side, to eliminate time wasted on rewinding. For expediency, I tape the new message at the beginning of the tape each time. Some students have requested to supply their own longer tapes so I can add succeeding messages without erasing prior ones. However, this does become time consuming.

After most students are writing quite competently, usually the final semester of eighth grade, I ask each one to select a pen name to use for all formal composition. Students label their file folders with their pen names and sections, and they decorate their files. Files are alphabetized by pen name in the class file. Since I never assign letter grades to individual compositions, I have the entire semester to determine the writer's true identity, and after semester composition grades are assigned, I guess the real names until all files are identified. (The best and the worst writing can usually be identified by then!) Students enjoy "deceiving" me by concealing their handwriting, either by typing or by copying each other's final drafts. They are still held responsible for final proofreading of their own papers. Questions are handled by writing me notes or communicating via a friend. (I do not recommend pen names for grade levels where more personal communication is still necessary.) Student tapes are labeled by pen names. My students seem to appreciate this effort to be objective in evaluating such subjective assignments.

One more reminder is worth mentioning. Never tape when you are too tired to be enthusiastic. I recall one warm late night when, after numerous interruptions by phone calls, highway traffic, and too many trains nearby, I found myself nodding over the tape recorder. Not trusting what I had recorded, I played back the entire message. I was startled back to alertness as I heard myself remark at the end that I should buy lettuce while it was still on special! Obviously, I had to retape that message. One student even claims I said good-night on his tape—but then, who believes everything out of the mouth of an eighth grader?



## Christian Educators Journal

### STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

The Christian Educators Journal Association endorses the following position statements describing its philosophy and function:

1. That Christian education, on all levels, not only seek to acknowledge, practice, and promote the Lordship of Jesus Christ, but also to stimulate and prepare students and teachers to exercise that Lordship through their service and witness as Christians in every area of life.
2. That Christian education seek to educate the student about the world that was, that is, and that ought to be; and that this education must be informed by competent scholarship and scripturally-directed thought.
3. That Christian education must depend on the entire Christian community for leadership, support, and involvement.
4. That Christian education nurture the student's growth as a physical, social, creative, intellectual, moral, and spiritual person.
5. That *The Christian Educators Journal* promote this vision of Christian education through both theoretical and practical editorials and articles.
6. That *The Christian Educators Journal* serve primarily those in Canada and the United States who are professionally interested in the continuing development of philosophical and pedagogical perspectives in Christian education.
7. That *The Christian Educators Journal* welcome contributions that will help define and refine our thinking and practice as Christian educators.

Approved June 3, 1978



# Strange but True



## Frank DeVries

We live in strange and turbulent times.

Just consider: Green apples you don't eat anymore. For green apples are being processed into shampoo with which to launder your hair! Doughnuts are sold from open boxes on the counter in the corner drugstore. Yet cement, nails, and assorted hooks and screws come securely and hygienically wrapped in plastic bubbles!

I know of customers in stores who faithfully tell their children about the Eighth Commandment: Thou shalt not steal. Yet ten minutes later these customers go shopping with their kiddies and help themselves and their children to generous portions of candies or grapes, or even a handful of plastic produce bags "for the kids' lunches!"

Lemon drinks today are made of artificial flavor crystals. The real lemon you'll find back in your furniture polish!

It used to be that when kids asked "Please" and Mom or Dad said "No," that was it. Today you may well hear Mom or Dad ask "Please" and the kids say "No!" Santa Claus was originally imported from Europe. Yet in Europe Santa was nothing whatever to do with Christmas, and presents are exchanged on December 5!

At Easter time we witness an even stranger wonder when bunny rabbits, scientifically classified as mammals, reputedly lay scores of fancifully-colored eggs all over the backyard!

*Frank DeVries is principal of the Vancouver (B.C.) Christian School. The article was taken from the Christmas issue of the school's newsletter.*

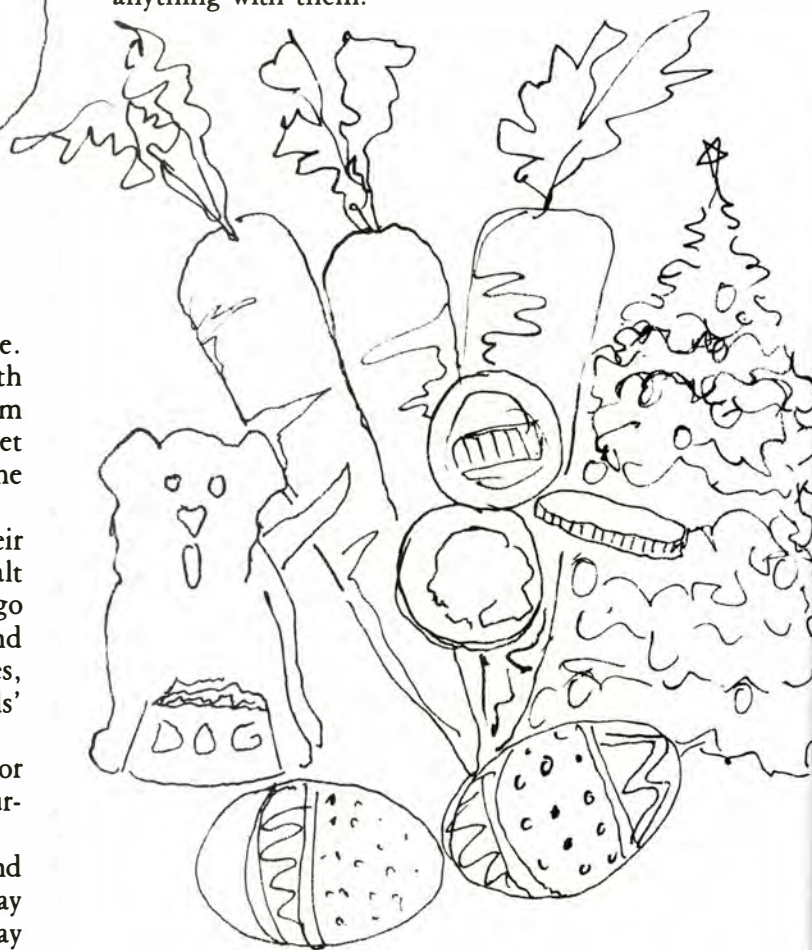
Dog owners are regarded as animal lovers. But instead of feeding Rover the scraps off the table, they will go to a store to buy dog food prepared from ground-up whales!

Kids and adults alike are doing a lot of running around to keep trim and lose weight, but when they have to go to the store for an errand, they take the bike or car!

You would think that when an item is advertised as sugarless or saltless you would pay less than if you would buy the item in which either or both were included. Try again. You get less, but pay more!

You'll never see carrots advertised on television, but you will see an advertisement for butterscotch-flavored vitamin pills!

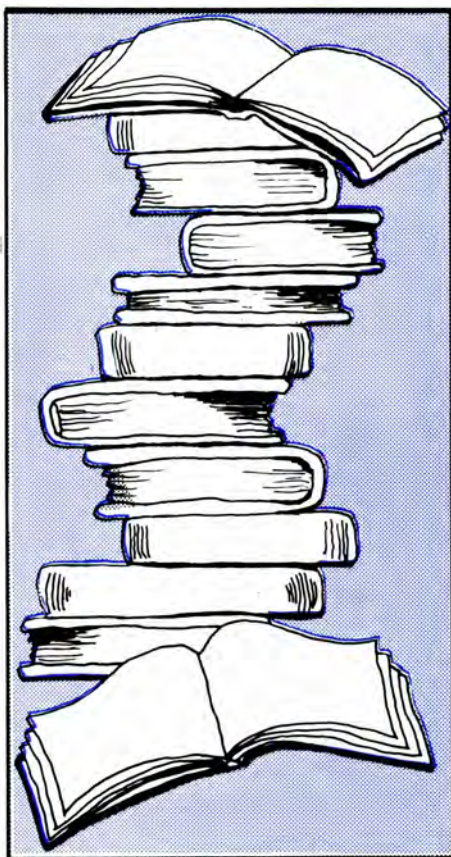
Pocket money is anywhere but in pockets and banks sell lottery tickets! Toys are not playable anymore. Either they break immediately, or you can not do anything with them!



Finally, on your way to the shopping mall to buy a forty-dollar silver Christmas tree, you'll hear yourself entertained again this Christmas by "Frosty the Snowman" emanating from a pushbutton organ, four times as expensive and ten times as large as a record player which does exactly the same thing but with only one button.

Sometime soon, I know, all this nonsense will come out in the wash. The Big Wash.





## BOOKS IN REVIEW

### **CULTS IN NORTH AMERICA**

(trial edition)

by Earl Schipper

CSI Publications

Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1980.

88 pp., \$3.50

Reviewed by James A. De Jong  
Dordt College  
Sioux Center, Iowa

CSI's "Biblical Perspectives Series," in which this book is the eighth title, helps high school students grapple with current issues. Schipper's book is a solid, helpful introduction to the phenomenon of cults in North America. He defines a cult as "a religious group which claims a new or restored revelation from God which teaches an unbiblical basis for salvation and rejects the deity of Christ." Next he surveys and evaluates—more from a theological than a biblical perspective—five of

the most significant cults: Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Christian Scientists, the First Unification Church, and The Way International.

The author begins each chapter with an attempt to bring the particular cult into the realm of the student's experience. He next sketches the history of the group, often with helpful anecdotes which concretize his material, and evaluates the major doctrinal positions. The chapters conclude with a list of questions, which in several instances might better be called "Subjects for Further Research"—eg. the questions asking students to compare Christian Science with Gnosticism and Lord's Day Six, Heidelberg Catechism. (p. 60) Especially useful are his annotated lists of additional resources, including A.V. materials.

The topic is both timely and intriguing for high school students. The material is well researched and accurate on the five cults chosen. It is presented plainly and interestingly. Most importantly, the author succeeds in clearly contrasting cults with historic Christianity. Students will see the lines between the Christian faith and these five cults drawn sharply on basic doctrines.

Undoubtedly the weakest spot in the book is the point where the experts, particularly sociologists of religion, disagree: the definition of a cult. Many would argue that the first three groups have evolved beyond the stage of a cult. But I applaud, because I agree with, Schipper's more doctrinal definition of a cult. It would have been stronger, however, if in it he had paid explicit attention to the role of the leader's person and to cults as Judeo-Christian aberrations. But these technicalities will not measurably affect the usefulness of this important addition to a fine CSI series.

### **SOCIETY, STATE, AND SCHOOLS: A CASE FOR STRUCTURAL AND CONFESSIONAL PLURALISM**

by R. Mc Carthy, D. Oppewal,  
W. Peterson, and G. Spykman.

Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans,  
1981, 225 pp.

Reviewed by Norman De Jong,  
Professor of Education,  
Trinity Christian College,  
Palos Heights, Illinois

If scholarly books are supposed to have long, descriptive titles, this one fits the mold. The product of the Fellows of

the Calvin Center for the Christian Scholarship, *Society, State, and Schools* is obviously written for a scholarly audience. The serious student of social philosophies and societal paradigms will want to jump right in with Chapter 1, to make certain that the authors have properly included a survey of the literature and have not skipped any authorities of repute. Practitioners (including administrators, teachers, political activists, and lawyers) will probably find it more comfortable and more suited to their purpose to begin reading Chapter 3 and then concentrate their efforts on Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 7. Not much will have been lost in developing their case for "Public Justice and Educational Equity" if the other chapters are glossed over, for they add little clarity and considerable confusion to the overall argument.

*Society, State, and Schools* ought to be studied by anyone who is seriously concerned with matters of justice and equity in the funding of schools in the United States. Chapter 3, "The Rights of Associations" and Chapter 4, "The Political and Constitutional Struggle Over School Funding" are clear and powerful analyses of the public school mentality and the secular-religious dichotomies which have controlled our educational practices during the last century and have determined the outcomes of Supreme Court decisions since 1947. Unless these mind-sets are adequately understood and challenged, anyone who tries to change the system will be frustrated and doomed to failure. These chapters give as cogent and keen an interpretation of that mentality as one can expect to find.

Chapter 5, "Confessional Pluralism and School Funding" builds effectively on the above analysis and goes on to expose most powerfully the myth of public school neutrality and the presence of the religion of secular humanism in the public schools. After reading the chapter, one cannot help but conclude that America's public schools, by dictionary definition and by legal precedent, are constantly teaching religion "and should be declared by the Court to be in violation of the establishment clause" (p. 115).

Chapter 7, "Strategies for Constructive Change" lays down not only an exciting challenge for those who have caught the weight of the arguments advanced earlier, but also a carefully

BOOKS IN REVIEW, continued on page 28.



BOOKS IN REVIEW, continued from page 27. thought out plan for action. The prescription for change demonstrates a keen sensitivity to the political realities involved in the judicial process and then maps out the types of legislative, judicial, and constitutional efforts which would do most to promote justice and restore equity in the funding process. Particularly in this chapter the authors wisely appeal to the broader Christian community and point out that confessional and structural pluralism can be advanced on the basis of many different social and political theories (see, e.g. pp. 175-7).

The most pronounced weakness in the book is its frequent and excessively narrow parochial insistence that the sphere sovereignty paradigm, as enunciated by Abraham Kuyper in 1880, is the foundational philosophy on which the argument ought to rest. Such argumentation, which appears primarily in Chapters 2 and 6, militates strongly against the ideas of schools as extensions of the home and *in loco parentis*, especially when they assign the locus of education authority to the school itself and the "responsibility for curricular programs and appropriate school policy" to "the educational leaders within this academic sphere" (p. 20; see also p. 167).

At times the reader gets the impression that the book is being used as an excuse to advance an ideology, with little concern for its impact on non-Christian Reformed leaders and with even less concern for its contribution to the argument. By forcing the reader to try to understand American history through the eyes of Abraham Kuyper, it forces a parochialism onto the theme of the book and runs the risk of turning off non-Kuyperian readers.

As a case for *confessional* pluralism, the book is notably weak on the question it purports to raise. Apart from insisting that every religious group, including atheists and secularists, ought to have their own government-funded schools, the book does not answer the question as to whether it be good in the sight of God to continue and to promote the multiplicity of confessions as now enunciated by Lutherans, Methodists, Baptists, Catholics, Seventh Day Adventists, Calvinists, etc. In connection with the implied endorsement of atheists and secularists, the book also fails to consider the implications of the Great Commission and the demand

that all Christians need to be involved in disciplining those who do not know the Truth.

A third deficiency of the book is that inadequate attention has been given to American constitutional history and educational practice. In looking at the early national period, an inordinate emphasis was placed on the ideas of Jefferson and the Enlightenment. In looking at the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780, for example, attention was given only to its 'democratic' terminology, while ignoring the strong guarantees for both structural and confessional pluralism which that document contains. By reference to this and other prominent documents, the book could have built a strong constitutional case for pluralism and thus also have appealed to the wide spectrum of strict constructionists in our nation.

In summary, the book does make a significant contribution to the whole search for justice and equity. All those who are involved in these issues ought to read it.

#### THE ASSERTIVE CHRISTIAN

by Michael Emmons  
& David Richardson  
Winston Press, Minneapolis  
1981, 170 pp., \$5.95, paper.

Reviewed by Wayne Joesse,  
Professor of Psychology  
Calvin College

In 1970, a small, perhaps even self-published, book called *Your Perfect Right* started the "assertion training" movement. Most fads spin off numerous publications as people, with only a slightly different application of essentially the same material, try to get extra mileage from a bandwagon. Christian authors and publishers are not above such hustling. Given the twenty or more books on assertion in recent years, I expected this one to be more-of-the-same with a thin veneer of religiosity.

This book is an exception of those tendencies. Emmons, a psychologist and co-author of *Your Perfect Right*, and Richardson, a United Methodist minister, offer us a thoughtful discussion of whether being Christian and assertive are compatible. They say they are.

Three basic distinctions in the assertion movement are these: *Non-assertive* behavior is when we hold our feelings about some matter inside but don't feel good about so doing. *Aggressive*

#### "An excellent book..."

correctly identifies the issue of tax funds for private education in terms of parents' rights of free exercise of religion, their right of association in a pluralistic society, and their right to equal protection of the laws."

—Rev. Virgil C. Blum, S.J.  
President, Catholic League  
for Religious and Civil Rights

"Though this line of argument has now become commonplace, it has rarely been presented with such intellectual sophistication."

—New York Times Book Review

## Society, State, & Schools

A Case for Structural and  
Confessional Pluralism

By GORDON SPYKMAN and OTHERS  
Paper, \$9.95

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behavior is when we express such feelings but in a way that hurts others or ourselves. In contrast, the *assertive* person is able to express himself in a firm but non-aggressive way. To use the classic example, when a restaurant-ordered steak is not properly done, the assertive person does not churn with suppressed anger or berate the waitress. Rather he asserts, "This steak is not as I ordered; please have the chef prepare one as I had requested." (Assertion involves more than just the proper words, i.e. eye contact, voice quality, facial expression.)

The authors do not cover basic material easily found in other books. The strength of this book is that it deals almost exclusively with Christian concerns about being assertive. Is there a conflict? Was Jesus assertive? What about meekness, self-denial, and counting "others better than yourself"? Can we justify being assertive in the Christian family and church? What about Sunday School's JOY formula: "Jesus first, others second, and yourself last"? The authors ask the right questions.

The quality of their answers is more difficult to assess, primarily because of what often seemed to me to be fuzzy terminology and argumentation. Key theological terms are sometimes defined in the lowest-common-denominator, e.g., God is "what is ultimate," what others have called "Brahman, Being, Allah." Moreover, they seem to expand "assertion" beyond its limited meaning so that it seems equivalent to psychological health, spiritual authenticity, indeed, almost all that is good. They ask the tough questions and end up with pro-assertion answers, but in-between there seemed to be some sleight-of-hand movements.

In brief, though this book does not address the unique concerns of educators (it does discuss "burn out" as a symptom of non-assertion), I judge that most *CEJ* readers would find it interesting and helpful; many of us Christians should be more assertive. In particular, it deserves reading by Christians already familiar with some of the assertion literature but troubled by some nuances and implications. The book clarifies the issues and challenges even if its answers are at times equivocal and questionable.

#### NO ICING ON THE CAKE

Jack Mechelsen (ed.)  
Brookes-Hall Publishing Foundation  
Melbourne, Australia, 1980. 196 pp.

Reviewed by Peter DeBoer,  
Professor of Education,  
Calvin College

For years we in Reformed Christian education have tended to look for ideas and inspiration chiefly to Amsterdam or Grand Rapids, and more recently to Toronto and Sioux Center. Hence this collection of essays coming from "down under" and representing the thought of persons speaking to and for an Australasian Christian school audience is a refreshing delight.

As the title suggests, the authors reject an approach to Christian education which merely adds "religious icing" to a "secular educational cake." Instead these essays lift up the vision of a Christian option in education where learning and teaching are based on the Word of God.

The book is divided into four sections: "Foundations," "Knowledge," "Schools," and "Curriculum."

The Foundations section includes five essays by Stuart Fowler, an ordained

minister of the Baptist Reformed Church and Victorian state director of the National Union of Parent-Controlled Christian Schools. Fowler traces the religious roots of contemporary educational thought and practice, rejecting along the way a synthesis approach (Thomas Aquinas), a peaceful coexistence approach (William of Ockham), and varieties of humanistic religious responses which reflect faith in science and human reason. He also rejects "traditional" and "progressive" trends in education, or any balance between the two since they too are shaped by modern humanistic religion.

Instead of all this, and taking his cue from what he claims was the central biblical dynamic of the 16th century Reformers, Fowler urges the "way of religious antithesis." He means that we must recognize no religious neutrality; all human thought and action are directed by one of two hostile, opposing, and irreconcilable religious principles.

Choosing the Christian way, Fowler traces the familiar themes of creation, the fall into sin, and redemption, noting that redemption in Christ is not deliverance from creation, but reconciliation to the whole creation. Christian education is to help students understand the basic religious order of our world. The key to understanding that religious order is not science, or rational concepts, useful though they may be, but "faith that responds with a believing yes to God's Word that alone orders and unifies creation" (p. 25). God's Word, revealed in Christ, in the Scriptures, and in all creation, posits not rules and regulations on how we ought to live, but "right principles" (p. 27). Students must be led to work freely and responsibly with this creation, shaping, fashioning, and caring for it, all the while equipping themselves for creative service for God.

Under the rubric "Knowledge," Doug Blomberg contributes an essay on a Christian theory of knowledge. The author, coordinator of the Institute for Christian Education, a teacher training program supplemental to degree work that Christian teachers can do at secular schools, reminds us that the biblical view of knowledge necessarily involves responsible action. "Knowing God means knowing how to obey His commandments in the concrete dimensions of daily life . . ." (p. 42). He structures his discussion about these concepts: the

knower, the act of knowing, and the knowable.

Knowledge, for Blomberg (with acknowledged debt to Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven via Arnold DeGraaf at Toronto) has three dimensions: (1) religious roots or religious directionality, that initial submission that only in the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; (2) concrete experience of God's created diversely ordered environment of person, plants, animals, and institutions which we are called to "know" in their law-ordered wholeness; and (3) "distantial knowing."

This last, an intriguing idea, expresses centrally the notion that through multiple avenues (theoretical, techno-cultural, lingual, social, economic, aesthetic, jural, ethical, confessional) of knowing, we ought to "distance" ourselves from what is, in order to understand and bring about what ought to be. For example, our concrete everyday knowledge of the value of automobiles might suggest a certain price range for a new car. But a questioning attitude, our economic "distancing" in the light of the Word, should challenge us to ponder whether the presumed value is the true value. Such distantial knowing, when shared and assimilated by others, becomes embedded within the concrete experience of the saints. Thus new dimensions of creation will be "opened up" and transformed under the demands of faith (p. 54). In fact, Blomberg sees the learning that characterizes the school, like life, to be a rhythm of the concrete experience of accepting what is given with the distantial knowing or asking about what might be.

In the section on "Schools" there are six essays, addressing the theme of what Christian schools are and why we need them. The first, by editor Jack Mechelsen, on "A Community for Learning," defines a Christian school as one in which parents and other supportive members, teachers, and students form a community united by an educational creed. Whereas students are called to learn, and teachers to devise and implement curricula, parents and others are called to ensure that the learning and teaching are in accord with the Word. In the final section on "Curriculum" there are seven essays. Two of these are of a general nature. The five that follow deal with the teaching of Bible, En-

BOOKS IN REVIEW, continued on page 30.



glish, reading, and art. The last two essays, both by Duncan Roper, on "A Christian Look at Art" and the "Consequences for Curriculum" of art in education are particularly insightful and applicable to the classroom.

Broad as the treatment may be, this collection of essays is just that, without the effort to speak comprehensively or systematically to more of the issues in Christian education. It is tempting to suggest what else might have been included, but unfair to criticize what was left unsaid.

The essays, in several ways, do raise what I think is a pedagogical and curricular problem. Blomberg points to it

this way: "The school is not primarily concerned with analytical knowing, but with opening up the child's knowing in all dimensions of life . . ." (p. 118). And this: "meaning is not singularly rational, it is also aesthetic and economic, physical and biotic, ethical and confessional . . ." (p. 113). And from Fowler this: "We will ensure that [the student] experiences the creation in as many ways as possible . . . We will not treat any one way . . . more valuable educationally than any other" (p. 28).

I could quote other statements. My question is this: in what sense can we as educators talk about pedagogy and curriculum in relation to the various stages

of child development? Or, is there not a task for the elementary school which *differs from* the task of the secondary school? Or, does learning ever become *more* analytical, *more* strictly academic? If so, when? And how is this change, over time, to be reflected in changing pedagogy and a changed curricular emphasis? Neither Fowler nor Blomberg seem sensitive to this issue, though some of the other writers (see 89, 101, and 180) do speak to the problem, though incidentally.

This is a good book, worthy of being read by all Christian teachers. I commend our Christian colleagues "down under" for their efforts.

## Media Review



### Frederick Nohl

**True, it's only December.** But Ash Wednesday's due February 24 and Easter is April 11. So it's not too early to begin plotting your Lenten/Holy Week/Easter curriculum course.

Anyway, if you need some good audio to help lift those all-important lessons above the ordinary, do consider *The Love Of God Will Rise Before The Sun*. The dozen cuts on this stereo album provide a musical journey that leads from Palm Sunday to Easter morning. And each cut is ready-made, not only for rewarding private listening, but also for helping children and adults find new meaning in the dramatic Passion/Resurrection events.

Given the many composers represented, the album's musical styles range widely. Some selections echo camp-meeting get-togethers, others folk-rock assemblies or nights at the symphony. There are songs to meditate

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by, to dance with, to get enthusiastic about.

As suggested, the album's applications are many. When you teach the Palm Sunday story, "Hosanna to the Son of David" will bring to life Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. The title song is perfect for any worship gathering you may plan. And for a song to inspire praise, try the psalm-flavored "Jesus Is Life".

The album is a 1980 release from North American Liturgy Resources, 10802 N. 23rd Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85029. It is available in record or cassette-tape form, \$7.98 and \$7.95 respectively.



**Death is never easy** to deal with, especially not the death of a child. So to ready yourself for the possibility, spend 23 minutes with *When A Child Dies*, a film that focuses on the plight of bereaved parents. Produced by *Parents' Magazine*, it's currently available on a free-loan basis as a public education program.

The award-winning film presents candid interviews with three bereaved couples and their children. It provides a rare glimpse into the aftermath of a blow that causes anger, panic, confusion, depression, loneliness, and sadness. As the parents speak, their sense of pained abandonment becomes clear.

Of special interest to Christian groups is the pain's depth and duration. Fortunately, the parents themselves offers suggestions telling how friends and others can help. And after seeing the film, you will want to join other viewers in identifying additional helpful suggestions.

To borrow the film, contact either the National Funeral Directors' Association, 135 W. Wells, Milwaukee, WI 53203 or a local NFDA member.



**Predicting the future** is always risky. Still, given the current developments in television technology, I feel safe in saying that the 1980s will see major changes in viewer habits—and in the content and method of TV programming.



The impact this will have on a Christian teacher's work remains to be seen. Certainly, tomorrow's students will be different from today's, because they'll be viewing different programs in different ways. At the same time, the use of TV as a means of Gospel ministry will have to change, in ways yet to be determined.

In any event, I'd encourage you to stay alert to what's happening in TV-land. And for examples of what to look for, consider the following.

**Cable TV.** Maybe you're already a subscriber to Home Box Office or other pay-cable systems. If not, you may soon succumb and join the rapidly growing list of customers.

One estimate suggests that already "14.2 million U.S. households are receiving some form of cable signal. Within 5 years this should escalate to 35 million households, giving a 45 percent penetration of the market compared to the present 18 percent. Even more impressive are cable TV advertising revenues, which are expected to go from \$9 million in 1980 to nearly \$3 billion in 1985."

By the way, regular TV now reaches 75.8 million, or 99 percent, of American homes.

**Videodiscs.** Videotapes (or videocassettes) have been available for over a decade. But for reasons of cost, content, and industry infighting, the TV public has never really taken up the medium. And yet the idea of choosing (and even producing) one's own programs, then viewing them via a player attached to one's TV set, simply won't go away.

Enter the videodisc. Shaped like a phonograph record, the disc is beginning to battle videotapes. (Unfortunately, disc manufacturers are also battling one another, thereby delaying the eventual supremacy of their product.)

The current videodisc scene, according to **Photomethods**, an AV-industry journal, looks like this:

"The European combine of British Decca and Germany's Telefunken in the mid-1970s brought out the Teldec system, which never achieved any significant commercial success.

"Netherlands' N.V. Philips and the American entertainment giant MCA teamed up with a laser system called Discovision, introduced in December 1978. Not yet in national distribution, manufacturing complexities with equipment (by Philips' U.S. subsidiary

Magnavox) coupled with MCA's software production problems are at the root of current delays.

"Early 1981 saw introduction of RCA's videodisc using mechanical technology similar to that of the audio phonograph record. While the equipment costs much less than that of the Philips unit (\$500 vs. \$770), it's not versatile. Example: It doesn't have a freeze-frame feature, highly desirable for educational and training applications. Zenith plans to use RCA's system.

"On the horizon is a fourth technology that Japanese electronic firms are adopting. Developer is JVC, a Matsushita subsidiary, one of the leaders of videocassette equipment sales. Matsushita (Panasonic) recently abandoned another disc system in favor of the JVC version. Other Japanese firms such as Trio (Kenwood), Sansui, and Yamaha appear to be lining up behind the JVC disc. Some observers expect Sony to join them in providing a united front to the rest of the world. The JVS system plays a grooveless record allowing freeze-frame and random access, all at a lower cost of a mechanical pickup system. Expected price — under \$400.

"Other companies are working on videodisc systems — France's C.F. Thompson and Eastman Kodak in the U.S. among them."



**As We Grow.** At least one U.S. publisher of educational products, Scholastic Inc., has placed its bets on RCA's SelectaVision VideoDisc system. In late 1980, Scholastic announced production of **As We Grow**, a 70-minute early childhood education videodisc. A news release accompanying the announcement provided these details:

"**As We Grow**" is one of the first examples of programs created for national distribution to a specific population segment. It was produced by Scholastic's staff of early childhood experts for a preschool learning level. RCA and Scholastic plan to develop additional videodisc programs for preschoolers and other age-specific audiences in the emerging video marketplace.

"The twelve episodes of **As We Grow**, running from 4½ to 7 minutes each, explore subjects such as growth, self-awareness, and family history in stories, narration, and pictures. Scholastic is preparing a study guide to be used with the videodisc. The guide cre-



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ates the opportunity for parent-child activity, changing the usually passive television viewing experience into a participative learning adventure.

"According to RCA SelectaVision vice-president Seth Willenson, '**As We Grow** exemplifies one of the advantages videodiscs have over broadcasting. It's the kind of programming that couldn't have existed before advent of the technology. We no longer have to be limited by mass audience needs. The RCA videodisc player is easy to use, affordable, attaches to any TV set, and plays RCA's 1-hour-per-side discs.'

"Echoing Willenson's comments is Scholastic executive director Martin Kelts, who adds, 'Finally television's potential to educate and enlighten our children is a reality. The new technology that will bring a videodisc player into many American homes in this decade is only as valuable as the programming that's available for viewing. For children, we can now develop age-specific programming that recognizes the emotional and intellectual differences between a 4-year-old and a 10-year-old—they are worlds apart.'"