



# Christian Educators Journal

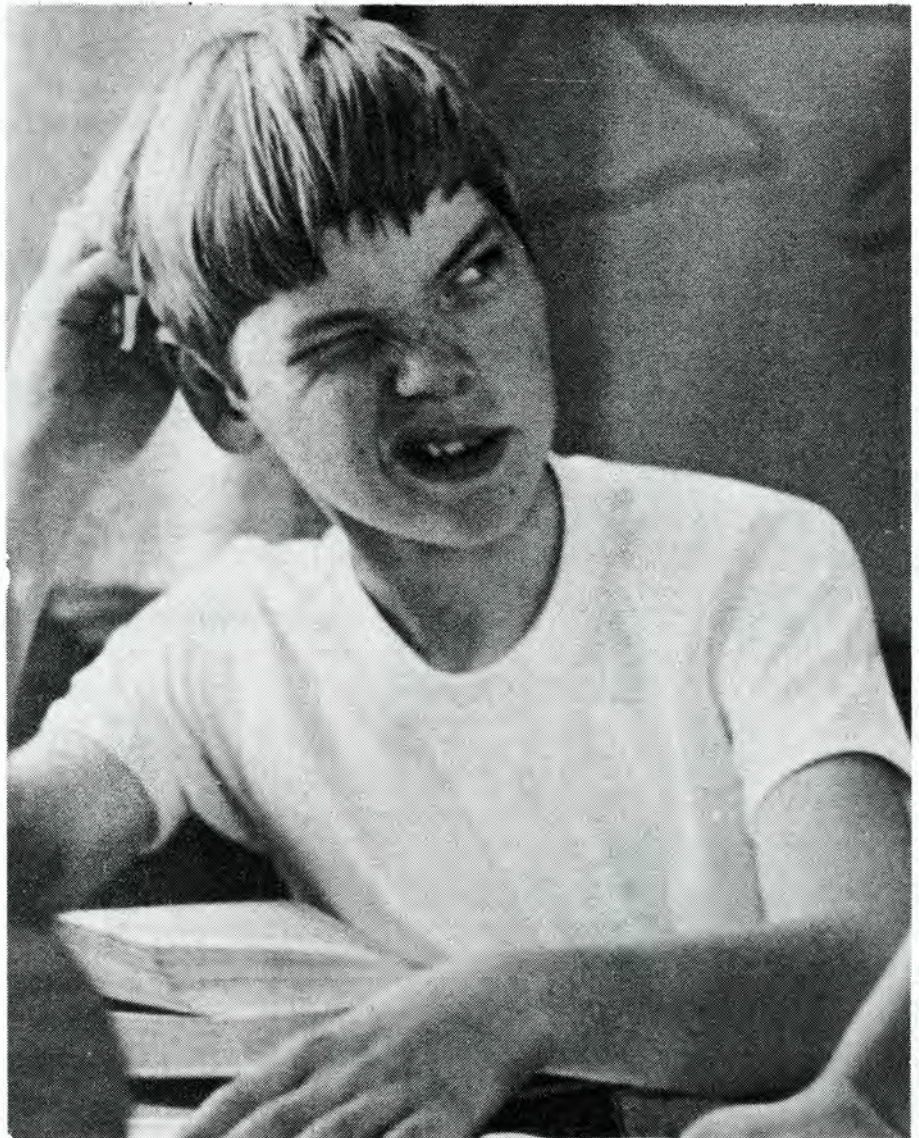
Volume 22, Number 3

February-March, 1983

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*An equation? What's that?*  
Photo by David Hoekema. Used with permission.

***A Christian Mathematics Education?***  
***Don Van Der Klok***



# Christian Textbooks

I was wrong.

Because the error was printed on the pages of *Christian Educators Journal* (April, 1972) ten years ago, it seems best to correct the error here. Yet I wish I could still maintain the position I took then.

Christian textbooks—do we need them? Yes, said Donald Oppewal, professor of education at Calvin College. No, said I, then a teacher of seventh and eighth graders in a Christian classroom.

Today I agree with Dr. Oppewal's insistence on Christian textbooks although not necessarily for all of the same reasons he gave then. Today my answer is yes, Christian teachers should use textbooks that are both soundly Christian and educationally excellent.

## 1972 - THEN

Perhaps one of the greatest dangers of Christian education, I wrote then, is that quality which is often considered one of its advantages, namely, that students are isolated from the world about them. I worried about textbooks, specifically Christian textbooks, that would be one-sided, "distorted" from the world in which our students would one day live as adults. They would have to face the *real* world once the shelter of school walls was no longer theirs. "Distorted" did not mean misstated or deformed so much as it meant modified or very limited. Such textbooks, with their Christian views, would not prepare students for a world marred and broken by sin. Even today college students return to tell me that "the way things are" is far different from their college world.

A Christian viewpoint only, I argued then, is unrealistic too because Christians are seldom unanimous in their interpretation of the Bible and of Christ's demands on our lives. Problems of economics, justice, politics, government, mental health: will there ever be single Christian point of view?

The Christian viewpoint expressed in the text might not coincide with the teacher's. Does that mean that her point of view is less valid than that of the Christian textbook-writer? What would the teacher do with this difference?

And this is where my earlier argument broke down, primarily because it was too ideal. The teacher, unique, created by God, and formed by family, school, church, commitment, and circumstances would be harnessed by a prescriptive Christian textbook, I thought. She could never allow her creativity or conscience to be stifled. She would never permit a textbook, be it Christian, or otherwise, to decide what and how she would teach. She would master and mold the textbook.

## 1982 - NOW

I was wrong. Teachers do depend heavily on textbooks. Much, much more than I had thought. Conversations I have had and observations I have made during the last ten years have convinced me to recognize the textbook as a substantial teacher-tool, their most important tool, in fact. My idealism was replaced with reality.

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## Teachers do depend heavily on textbooks.

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A sixth grade teacher, whose success cannot be questioned, said, "Why should I make my own lesson plans every day when the big companies have used hundreds of thousands of dollars to hire the best educators, specialists, writers, and artists to do the work for me? I cannot do better than they can." She uses her textbooks and teacher guides religiously. One teacher confessed, "I never read the introductions or prefaces; they're all alike anyway."

The most common reason teachers give for textbook dependency is: "I don't have time." Who would argue with that? Elementary teachers especially don't have time. It seems extremely unfair to me that elementary teachers get little or no preparation time. They have too many daily preparations and they work with students who have the shortest attention spans, so their time and energy are concentrated on students all day. No wonder these teachers appreciate and use a well-planned teachers' guide.

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## "I don't have time."

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Preparing lessons consumes much time. (Canada at least has a resource bank where teachers can deposit their successful units for others to share.)

Another reason has grown from a kernel of uneasiness to a nut of deep concern: the reasons teachers give for choosing certain textbooks. Analyzing and comparing textbooks are either non-existent skills or are functions based on unsupported criteria or superficial likes and dislikes.

Few students who graduate from the colleges which provide the majority of teachers for Christian schools in Canada and the United States have learned how to evaluate a textbook. Yet many are asked during the first years of their teaching to decide on books which 25 to 150 students will use during the five years following. So how will they decide?

Evaluating a textbook cannot be done quickly and may not be done superficially. Using the Fog index (or even a computer, so my reading-specialist friend tells me) to check readability is neither enough nor reliable. Yes, the book does have gorgeous four-color art and splendid photographs. Yes, it does have excellent student helps. Yes, it has a step-by-step, sometimes sentence-by-sentence process for teachers to follow. And the language and questions are not offensive. So?

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### **Evaluating a textbook cannot be done quickly and may not be done superficially.**

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These aspects are important but not fundamental. The basic questions are: How well does this book help us to teach Christianly? Is this book based on a sound view of the child and excellent education? Christian Schools International (CSI) is trying to help principals, teachers, and school boards to evaluate textbooks with relevant criteria. During the summer of 1982 twenty teachers and two consultants, under the leadership of Henry Triezenberg, CSI curriculum director, met for ten days. They evaluated basal readers, literature anthologies, and science textbooks. With the thoroughness of a doctor giving a complete physical examination to a patient, the teachers examined the series of books assigned to them.

As a team member I became convinced that if teachers lean as heavily on textbooks as I now believe many do, they must understand *exactly* why a commercial text is *not* Christian. A book, to be useful to a Christian teacher who relies heavily on it, must be Christianly directed and educationally excellent.

But how does a teacher know that? Many schools have asked CSI to help. Dr. Triezenberg said that this new service of CSI is designed to answer the question. The initial form devised by CSI for use by evaluators was detailed and demanding, even cumber-

some in part. Some changes were recommended by the conference members and were effected; as the service becomes known and used, more refinements may be helpful. Only when principal and faculty see the weaknesses and failures of commercial texts as the prime teachers' assistant will they see their need for Christian textbooks.

In a television program beamed from Ann Arbor, Michigan, recently, many Christian textbooks were harshly criticized. Only one organization merited special comment of the reporter: CSI. Their textbooks, manuals, and workbooks were praised for educational excellence and superiority.

Christian textbook publishers have sprung up everywhere. Some of their publications are deceptively attractive, but many of them are superficial in content and foundation at best or poverty-stricken at worst. In most Christian textbooks, some of which were evaluated by the CSI workshop, either the understanding of education was extremely limited, or a world-and-life view Christianity was emaciated. Participants shuddered at some of the materials that are peddled under the name "Christian."

Perhaps this editorial sounds like a CSI commercial. I agree. But when more than fifty percent of an organization's customers are educators who do not subscribe precisely to the philosophical and religious underpinnings explicitly and emphatically carried out in its publications, that organization deserves our praise and appreciation. Perhaps CSI materials do not match the color and splash allowed by commercial budgets. But don't underrate CSI materials on that basis; it never has been too wise to judge a book by its cover. Christian educators need much deeper criteria for evaluating books because teachers depend on them so heavily.

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### **Christian educators need much deeper criteria for evaluating books because teachers depend on them so heavily.**

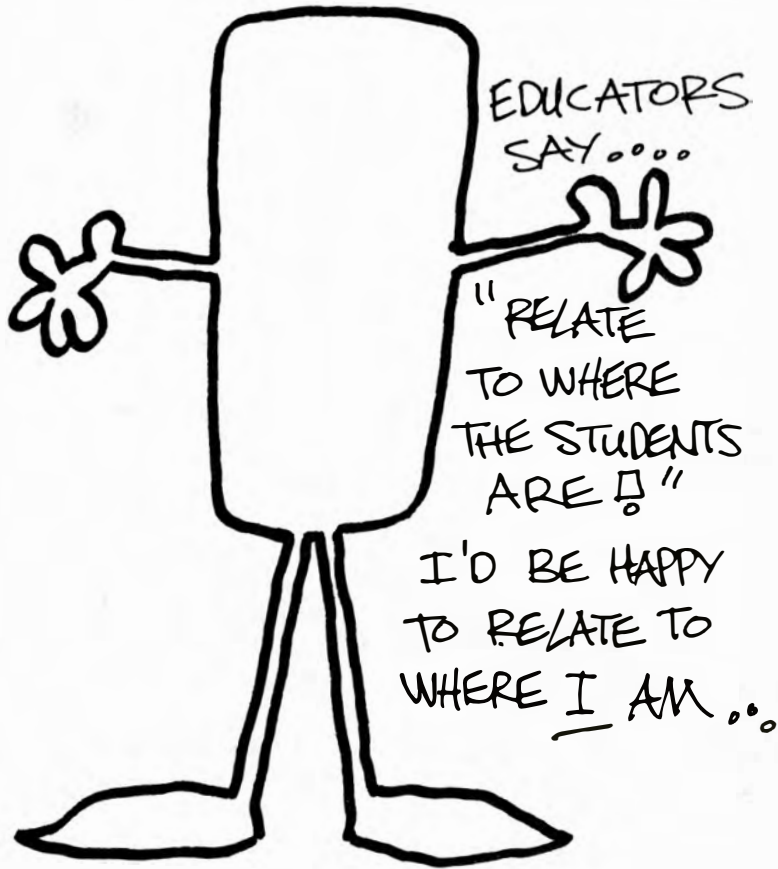
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The argument for Christian textbooks is compelling to the extent teachers depend on textbooks. Bland, valueless textbooks, which strive to be so neutral they are nauseous, are poverty-stricken in purpose (except to make money for the companies). Textbook publication and purchase are both expensive. Teaching Christianly is not easy. To the extent teachers depend on textbooks, these books must be Christian.

Have you evaluated any textbooks recently?

LVG



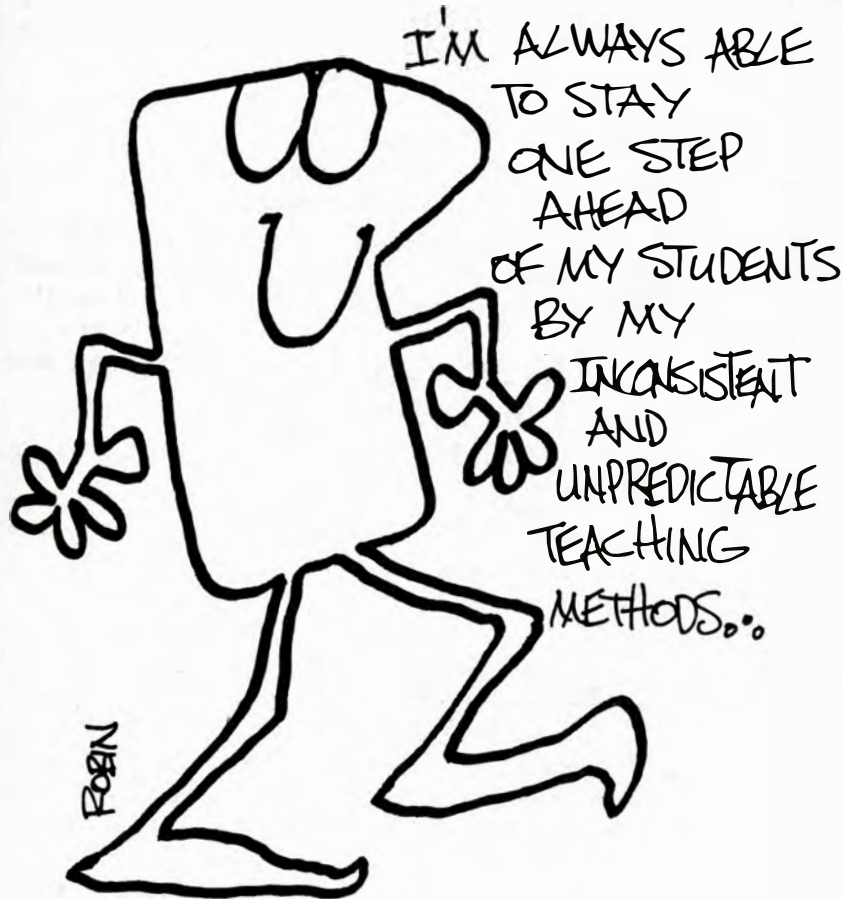


EDUCATORS SAY...

"RELATE TO WHERE THE STUDENTS ARE ☐"

I'D BE HAPPY TO RELATE TO WHERE I AM ..

AT LEAST I'M CONSISTENT IN MY INCONSISTENCY ☐  
o



I'M ALWAYS ABLE TO STAY ONE STEP AHEAD OF MY STUDENTS BY MY INCONSISTENT AND UNPREDICTABLE TEACHING METHODS..



EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY HAS ALWAYS CONFUSED ME ..

ROBIN



## “Den Denker in the Dumps”

H. K. Zoeklicht

Bob Den Denker, teacher of history, sat alone at a table in the faculty room of Omni Christian High School. It was ten o'clock on a Friday morning. In front of him on the table was a stack of tests, one of which he was scrutinizing. Occasionally he groaned. He wrote a few marginal comments. Then a terminal comment. Then he put a grade on the paper. He reached for another paper, but instead of reading it he seized the entire stack and threw them into his open briefcase on the floor beside him. He mumbled, “What’s the use?” and like a man desperately seeking liquid relief for his misery, Den Denker strode purposefully to the coffee urn and drew a cup of strong, black coffee. He then turned to look out of the window which gazed southward over Omni’s large parking lot. He saw a hundred gleaming cars, all of them brighter and newer than his own ’69 Valiant. He went back to his chair, coffee cup forgotten in his hand, sat down, and looked off into space.

Lucy Bright entered the room, deposited a large pile of themes on the table next to the coffee urn, put a package of Cremora in a styrofoam cup, and filled the cup with coffee. She looked at Bob. “What-sa matter, Bobbie, a bit down in the mouth today?” Den Denker sighed audibly and walked back to the window, and with his back turned to Lucy he asked, “You know how many boys in my senior government class own their own cars?”

“No. Why?”

“Lucy, do you know how many girls want to get married before they’re even twenty-one?”

“Hey, what is this—a quiz?” came from Lucy.

Taking no notice, Den Denker persisted. “You know how many of my students study less than one hour a day?”

“Well, maybe you should step up the homework, Bobby boy,” grinned Lucy.

Den Denker turned around then and faced her.

“Lucy, you listen to some of these. Then you’ll know what’s the matter.” And Den Denker reached down into his brief case and pulled out the set of tests he had been grading.

“Now listen, Lucy,” he said, “Here’s a question I asked: ‘From a biblical perspective, discuss the issue of whether government should pass laws that legalize abortion on demand.’ You got the question? O.K., listen to some answers.” Den Denker began riffling through the papers and quoting answers which his students had written. “I’m anti-abortion.” “The government should leave it up to the parents.” “Only God can create, the government should not uncreate.” “The Bible says you shall not kill. A government that says it is ok should be killed.” Den Denker added, “Mind you, Lucy, I asked them to *discuss!* These kids can’t discuss—they can’t even think, they don’t want to know anything, they can’t write.” His voice trailed off into despondency.

He looked at Lucy. “Am I getting too old to teach? Am I out of touch? Or is there really something wrong with these kids? I don’t think I taught anybody anything.” He stuffed the papers back into the briefcase and sat down.

Lucy pulled up her chair close to his and patted him playfully on the knee. “It’s both,” she said. “It’s you *and* the kids.” She smiled gently at him and continued. “You’re an idealist, Bob, at least you have ideals. You have a vision of what Christian education ought to do to students—make them care and think and be curious about life, especially about the wrongs in life. That’s what always makes you such a good teacher. But sometimes you get a whole class of students who are puncture proof, or at least it seems that way, and then you fall into a funk.”

“Nah, it’s more than that, Lucy,” said Bob. “I’m tired. Maybe I’ve lost my effectiveness. Maybe I should paint houses. At least they look good when you’re finished. Maybe I shouldn’t even try to teach anymore.”

“C’mon, Bob. Buck up. I’ve never seen you so down on yourself.”

“No, I mean it, Lucy. I’m unhappy with the whole business. What earthly or heavenly good does it do to pull out the best that is in you day after day when all the kids live by is some gut reactions, some popular slogans, and plenty of spending money for cars and clothes?”

Lucy blinked a few times and patted him on the knee again. “I’ll tell you what good it does. It is people like you, Bob Den Denker, who keep me trying

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*H. K. Zoeklicht is a responsible Christian educator who hopes the lounge will buzz with discussion about matter which concerns many Christian teachers.*



to pull the best out of myself, and out of my students too. It's a teacher like you who makes one of my students, who is also one of your government students, say to me last Tuesday, 'I think I'd like to run for state senator someday.' When I asked why, she said 'Because Christians need to try to make a difference.' And I have a suspicion that she was repeating something she heard in somebody's class."

Den Denker smiled wanly. "That really wasn't a very profound though she was repeating—but it is a lot better than the stuff I read you from those tests." He stood up, put his hand very lightly on Lucy's shoulder and said, "Thanks, Lucy. You're one of the best, you know." He picked up his briefcase and started moving towards the door. Lucy called after him, "Bob, you need a break. Got any plans

for tonight? Never mind those papers. Let them go for awhile."

With teasing in his voice, Den Denker responded, "Have something in mind?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact. I am inviting you, Robert Den Denker, to my place for a 7:00 p.m. dinner, in return for which you may take me to a good movie of my choice later."

Bob bowed slightly in exaggerated courtesy. "It's a date, my dear. I'll see you at seven." He turned quickly and strode through the door into the noisy hallway. Lucy Bright walked over to the window and gazed thoughtfully at the hundred gleaming cars in the Omni parking lot. ☐

To Be Continued

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# A Christian Mathematics Education?

Don Van Der Klok

Among the studies offered in schools, mathematical subjects are stressed as necessary and important. Arithmetic is taught for nine straight years, kindergarten through grade eight. In high school, mathematics, mainly algebra and geometry, is offered each year in grades nine to twelve. In most schools at least two years of mathematics are required of every student, perhaps even more for college entrance.

Mathematics also comprises a major portion of "basic skill testing." It is emphasized in intelligence (IQ) tests. Students who go on to university must take tests such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) which rely on mathematics a great deal.

Thus mathematics is emphasized in Christian schools. Students who do not go on to university study mathematics *eleven years!* Those who do go on must study it even longer!

During thirteen years of study, mathematics occupies a place all its own. One aspect of its peculiar nature is its language. The word "rational," for instance, does not really mean "reasonable" in grade six; it refers to fractions composed of integers. Its language also includes many peculiar symbols, as  $[(x,y) / x^2 + y^2 = 16, x, y \in \mathbb{R}]$  illustrates. Another graded to non-sequitur application exercises. To esthetics. Beauty, for instance, refers to an economy of symbols and to logical conciseness. Mathematics also has its own internal applications. In a unit on algebraic terms, for example, a textbook gives this application: "The length of a rectangle is 10 ft. and its width is 4 ft. What is the perimeter of the rectangle?"

Most students study mathematics because "I have to; it's required." Some say they need it to get into university. These reasons are internal to the process of schooling. They have no relation to the lives of people outside of school, except as pre-requisites for a diploma that one might need to get a particular job. A few students say that studying mathematics is important because "It relates to everything." But when questioned further and asked about the relation of algebra or quadratic equations or hyperbolas to anything else, they fall silent. Why is this a question for them which can only be answered by the

mysterious "because of life" which requires teachers to teach the topics of mathematics and students to study them. All this turns out to be a circular argument about requirements!

## RATIONALE FOR MATHEMATICS

Reasons beyond these requirements are also used. One is the principle that mathematics teaches logic, which is the the main reason that mathematics ought to be taught through elementary and secondary school. It underscores the logical basis of mathematics, saying that mathematics and logic are closely connected. This position also points out that learning logic in mathematics is valuable training which transfers into a student's other studies, enhancing his learning in every area of knowledge.

A second reason is that mathematics is one of the major accomplishments of Western culture. Everyone growing up in this culture should thus not only know something of the greatness of mathematics but also help carry it on to the next generation.

A third prominent explanation for including mathematics is that it is practical. This argument holds that the study of mathematics is useful in particular activities of everyday life. Its focus is on applications in specific contexts.

No part of this threefold rationale lacks appeal. All of them contain elements of quality that connect with mathematics as we know it. Mathematics is logical. The various properties, postulates, axioms, and theorems fit together into a whole that underlies every mathematical topic we teach. Mathematics is an important cultural accomplishment. A look at its long involved history portrays its far-reaching influence on the development of many other fields of knowledge, such as the physical sciences, art, economics, and music. And mathematics *does* intimately relate to our everyday activities. A brief look through our newspapers illustrates the fact that knowing mathematics is essential.

## WHITHER THE RATIONALE?

But why is the rationale so rarely affirmed by elementary and high school students? Why is it usually the claim only of teachers and university professors? Why do students talk mainly of "requirements" when asked why mathematics is an important school subject?

Don Van Der Klok teaches mathematics in a Toronto, Canada, high school.



One reason why the rationale that connects mathematics with logic is not asserted by students is that its presentation in the classroom lacks logic. Textbooks seldom include a logical explanation of a topic which gives reasons for each step of an argument or proof. They do not emphasize such basic aspects as the transitive, reflexive, symmetric, commutative, distributive, and associative properties of the real numbers. Instead, texts rely frequently upon rules that simply require students to memorize rather than to reason. And teachers rarely have the energy or time to correct such failings of the textbooks.

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### Why do students talk mainly of “requirements” when asked why mathematics is an important school subject?

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Another reason why the rationale of logic fails is that, for most students, logical reasoning by itself is boring, rootless, and without meaning. Connected with a mathematics which has a place of its own, whose relationship to anything in the curriculum is rare (let alone anything in one’s life), whose characteristics focus primarily on topics internal to itself, such mathematics is not interesting to most students. Seeking a focus, a direction, a context outside the discipline, they find none. Logic for the sake of logic and mathematics for the sake of mathematics lack meaning.

The rationale that views mathematics as important for its influences on Western civilization is not affirmed by students because it too does not receive emphasis. The relation of mathematical topics to the history of mathematics is only addressed in some textbooks, usually in the form of a brief survey or biography. And the connection of mathematics to the development of other fields of knowledge is also brief, relegated to one or two applications in the exercises. Indeed, the influences of mathematics on Western culture seem minor in the eyes of students. To them, mathematics may very well have had much to do with the shaping of our culture, but this statement does not relate to the topics they study; it is empty of meaning for them.

Similarly, the rationale that focuses on the practicality of mathematics does not come across to students. Exercises in each section usually follow a series of abstract, purely mathematical problems. Since textbooks are organized according to topics important to the discipline of mathematics, the outspoken intent of the applications is to provide exercises in particular concepts and skills of the section being studied. And because the abstract concepts and skills are the main focus, the application

problems jump from one context to another. In one assignment, a student must find the age of someone’s sister in one application, compute the cost of feeding a family of six in the next, and then calculate the amount of time it takes for water to boil in an electric kettle. Such a disparity of situations does not really present the student with a serious concern for practicality. The applications remain abstract, just some more exercises.

If the total rationale does not operate in our mathematics classes, what is going on? To be sure, mathematics *is being taught*. And students *are learning* it. That sounds acceptable. But this is superficially appropriate. The question *why* mathematics *should* be taught in our schools and why students *should* learn it does not have a clearly articulated answer.

Why bother? Why not simply accept as sufficient what mathematics textbooks offer? Or, just say we *are* teaching mathematics and leave it at that? I do not think this is good enough. It leaves the current state of affairs in mathematics education unquestioned, and the fact that mathematics is emphasized throughout one’s education deserves an explanation. Another reason to call one another to reflect on this matter is that if we teachers don’t bother, choices are made elsewhere. Presently Canadian governmental education guidelines determine the text, the content, and the approach of the courses they teach. And I believe our Christian beliefs do have something to contribute towards a rationale for mathematics education.

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### . . . the rationale that focuses on the practicality of mathematics does not come across to the students.

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A rationale functions as a “beginning place.” It is a guide, an explanation of underlying principles, from which everything flows. It is more basic than aims and objectives, because a rationale answers why, directing the where and what of aims and objectives. A rationale provides a basis for the content of the topics we teach and the approaches we use. From it an overarching evaluation may be chosen and formed. A rationale is a unifying thread of quality.

To build a rationale for mathematics education, we must consider the place in which we teach—our Christian schools. These have been built in order to proclaim our place in God’s creation. These schools are concerned with training children and young people as disciples, calling them to love and glorify God with all their beings. The teachers describe to students a total way of life. The subjects



# Literary Appreciation

Why do we keep saying all those nice erroneous things about literature?

Clarence Walhout

The more I think about my chosen field of specialization—the study of literature—the more I think that a lot of notions that are taken to be obvious truths are really just nonsense. So in this essay I'm going to let loose a bit—get angry and belligerent, step on some toes.

Take, for example, the notion that literary works show us what life is *really* like, that in them we encounter experience as it *really* is. Test it for yourself. If you wanted to find out what life in the Chicago slums was *really* like, would you go there and look around or go home and read a novel? If you wanted to see what the Grand Canyon was *really* like, would you go visit it or read a poem about it? If you wanted to know what it felt like to catch your limit on lake trout, would you go fishing or read a book about it?

Now a novel or story certainly gives us something which has to do with life. But it doesn't give the *reality* of it. To say that a novel gives us an experience as it really is seems to imply that by actually doing something we are not able to get the experience of life as it *really* is—it takes literature to do that.

What is involved here, obviously, is an equivocation on the words *real* and *reality*. We have to keep clear the distinction between an order of reality which is immediately experienced and an imaginary treatment of reality. No novel can give us the reality of the world which we experience directly; it can give us only an imagined treatment of that which we have experienced or might experience. So why say that literature presents us with experience as it really is? Say that literature gives an interpretation of reality or an imaginative response to reality, but not that it gives us reality itself or that it gives us life or the world as it really is. If in literature we get experience as it really is, what do all those people get who don't read novels and poems? Literature is, of course, in some way related to the reality of our actual experience, but then we ought to say exactly what we mean instead of sounding forth ponderous clichés which are supposed to enhance the status of literature but which merely promote our stuffy belief that we have superior insight if we are avid readers of literature.

*Clarence Walhout is a professor of English at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

FEBRUARY, 1983

## LITERATURE EMBODIES UNIVERSAL HUMAN EXPERIENCES

Then think about this cliché: "Literature embodies universal human experiences." Presumably *Oedipus Rex* is one such literary work. But how many people have you known who have killed their fathers, married their mothers, and gouged out their own eyes? How many people have you known who, like Macbeth, have committed murder to gain a kingship and have been killed in a desperate attempt to preserve their power? How many people have you known who, like Coleridge's ancient mariner, have killed an albatross and have wandered around the world telling about it? Literature gives us universal human experiences? Hah! In *Lear* and *Macbeth* and the ancient mariner we certainly do get something—and something very impressive and worthwhile—but what we get is not "universal human experience."

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**... how many people have you known who have killed their fathers, married their mothers, and gouged out their own eyes?**

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Again we have here an obvious equivocation. What we mean by "universal human experience" is not, it will be said, the actual deeds of literary characters. But what, then, is meant by the term? Answers to this question usually end up with some broad and general statement about certain qualities of life which we all experience or encounter as human beings, such things as the reality of evil in the world, or the depravity of men, or such like. But such generalities are innocuous and obvious; one would hardly be inclined to reduce the vitality and power of literature to such banalities. The perversity of such clichés as "literature gives us human experience" is that the real value of literature is obscured by comfortable platitudes. There is something universal about the appeal of literature, but it is hardly the experiences of the characters that are universal.

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## LITERATURE IS CONCRETE AND EXPERIENTIAL WHEREAS SCIENCE IS ABSTRACT AND ANALYTICAL

Or take this characteristically 20th-century cliché: "Literature is concrete and experiential whereas science is abstract and analytical." Do you mean to say that a biologist or a physicist does not deal with concrete things and that the evidence they report in their books and essays is not concrete? Does a sociologist not deal with concrete things and with human experiences? Do theologians and philosophers carry on their work without a reference to and use of concrete human situations and experiences? And are their writings devoid of concrete references? Or on the other side of the coin, do you find no abstract language and no analytical thoughts in a novel or a poem? Try reading Eliot's "Four Quartets" and judge for yourself whether the poems are concrete instead of abstract. Is nothing in the language or "content" abstract? And would you say that there is no analytical thinking in those poems? Or, for that matter, is there no analysis in Milton or Shakespeare or Dante?

Isn't it the case that these critical commonplaces simply do not hold up? One can understand where they came from and why they have become our inherited critical concepts—there is a complex history to that—but it certainly seems obvious now that the concrete and the abstract, the experiential and the analytic, are found in both literature and science and that they are simply qualities of language wherever it is found. If one feels the need to distinguish between literature and science, he'd better find other ways to do it.

## LITERATURE TEACHES US BY SETTING BEFORE US IMAGES OF GOOD AND EVIL

Another common cliché: "Literature teaches us by setting before us images of good and evil." Now certainly we learn something through the reading of literature, but do we have to have *Macbeth* to tell us that excessive ambition and murder are wrong? Do we have to be taught by Hawthorne that confession is good for the soul or by Fitzgerald that greed can produce anxiety? Would we not know the evils of deception without *Othello* or the virtues of endurance without reading Faulkner?

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## **Would we not know the evils of deception without *Othello* or the virtues of endurance without reading Faulkner?**

No would want to deny, surely, that in literature we find images of virtue and vice and that we are led to reflect on these matters, but it is simplistic

to think that literature is designed to give us models which we then can emulate or shun. There are ex-

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## **We don't learn virtue through reading novels . . .**

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ceptions, of course; some literature is didactic by intention. But in most instances the aims of literature are not those of a moral or intellectual teacher. We don't *learn* virtue through reading novels, though I grant that our understanding of virtuous or vicious behavior may be deepened by such reading. If we haven't *learned* virtue before we can even read most literary works, we are in sad shape as persons.

## LITERATURE PRESENTS US WITH THE TRUTH ABOUT OURSELVES

Similarly this cliché: "Literature presents us with the truth about ourselves." Do we really look to literature for truth at all? Truth about what? About nature? Wouldn't the natural scientists be a more likely source? About human behavior? Wouldn't the social scientists be able to tell us more? If not, why do we send our mental patients to psychiatrists rather than to novelists? Why do our legislators consult sociologists and economists rather than poets?

Certainly we learn something from literature, and from it we may even learn something about ourselves, but isn't it an oversimplification to say that since we learn from literature, it is literature that gives us the truth about things? If such were the case, how could we reconcile such diverse views of life as can be found in Donne, Wordsworth, Yeats, and Williams? If they all give us truth, then either truth isn't what we thought it was or our capacity for reconciling opposites is truly amazing.

## LITERATURE, AS ONE OF THE ARTS, SATISFIES OUR NEED FOR AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

Finally, look at this notion: "Literature, as one of the arts, satisfies our need for aesthetic experience, for beauty." Here is an idea which I think none of us would reject *per se*. Unfortunately, however, this notion is often taken to single out the *unique* property of the fine arts and of literature. But is this really the case? Is there no artistry in a mathematical system and no aesthetic delight in working with it or contemplating it? Is there no beauty in its sym-

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## **Is there no beauty in the scientific constructs of Newton or Levi-Strauss or Northrop Frye?**

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Continued on page 27

FEBRUARY, 1983



# Every Teacher Must Teach Writing? That's Write

A recent *English Journal* advertised no less than thirteen best-selling, lively, most-wanted, fastest-growing composition programs available for grades 7-12. They ran the gamut from back-to-basics all the way to computerized self-checking approaches that make "learning writing fun and exciting" and "teaching writing easy!" Humbug!

You and I know that teaching writing is *hard work*—which is precisely why some teachers do not teach writing. Oh, they have clever justifications for this little inadequacy: "I might contradict what the English teachers are doing," or "I'm not creative," or "I know I wouldn't have time to read the papers anyway, so I figure it's better not to assign them." I believe, however, that our lack of a unified, total-faculty effort to teach writing is a deficiency that will, in time, return to haunt us.

How real is the need to write in today's classrooms? Shouldn't we spend our precious hours of instruction on that which is pertinent to electronic communication? Won't our students be functioning in a computer age that makes tedious longhand practically obsolete?

"Indeed not," say both experienced classroom teachers and educational experts, and for two reasons. Writing involves not only the pen, but also the brain.

For quite some time we have been reading and hearing about the perils of television, both for the trivia it often presents and the time it often consumes. We have heard about media mentality, the detriment to left brain development, and the viewer's desire to be entertained at the expense of thinking.

To some extent we educators have alerted our students' parents of the need to control the use of television—but what have we offered as an alternative? Traditionally we have said, "Get your kids to read."

I say that too, but that is not as easy to carry out as it is to say. Many "Sesame Street" products don't *want* to read. There aren't any interesting books, they tell us. They are used to having the materials come to them, which makes book selection more difficult. Any book which does not grab them within two pages is quickly written off as "boring."

In my earlier days of teaching, a library period was a cherished class, with only a handful of disinterested readers. Now I spend the major part of a class period trying to encourage at least a fourth of the seventh-grade class members to "stick with the book" and to complete at least ten pages within the forty-minute period.

Perhaps the key to more interested, better readers lies in a greater emphasis on writing. Writing forces a person to formulate thoughts and then also to communicate those thoughts on paper. In response, either the writer himself or someone else reads those thoughts, and the writer is accountable for them.

Writing may be a more flexible tool to clear thinking than is reading because the writer puts so much of himself into the effort. The writer first has to determine the purpose for communicating, then the ideas to present, next the organization or plan, the style, and even the details of specific word choice and punctuation. The reader, on the other hand, can "take it or leave it," so to speak. Even if reading material is assigned, the reader can avoid whole-hearted thinking by merely seeing and/or saying words without fully participating in the message.

Both reading and writing ought to be encouraged, of course. In today's—and the next generations's—world, both skills are essential. Not everybody can rely on the computer; somebody has to design the programs.

Furthermore, no one can yet convince this writer that computer, tape recorder, or telephone will really totally replace that personal, recorded, handwritten letter such as the one my father wrote to me the day his father died. (I don't suppose any computer could ever duplicate it—he first wrote on alternate lines and then, needing more space and not being one to waste, turned the paper upside down and filled the alternate lines.)

Most of us can accept the idea that writing benefits original thinking, but have you considered the value of the *act* of writing? Dr. R.J. Elin, director of The Learning and Counseling Center in Stockton, California, and former teacher of elementary, secondary, and learning-handicapped students, contends that with the de-emphasis on penmanship's circles and

ovals has come an obvious increase in learning disorders. While Pac-Man is supposedly developing eye-hand coordination for the fee of mere quarters, Pen-man is at rest, though not without its toll. The latter fee is paid in growing illiteracy (See *U.S. News & World Report*, May 17, 1982.) and more frequent learning disabilities.

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### **While Pac-Man is supposedly developing eye-hand coordination for the fee of mere quarters, Pen-man is at rest, though not without its toll.**

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We must also remember that some students learn best by the kinesthetic method discussed in a previous column (CEJ, April/May, 1982). These students need the tactile experience to develop mental ability. Specialists go to great lengths to provide even adolescent learning-disabled students the experience of tracing letters and words so these students can learn to organize and retain thoughts. Possibly we teachers can reinforce kinesthetic learning for all of our students by encouraging the physical act of writing.

If we agree that writing is a high priority in education, the next question is obvious; who should teach writing?

Certainly those who have specialized in the language arts are expected to engage their classes in writing at least basic sentence and paragraph patterns. Hopefully they will inspire their students to delve into creative prose and poetry, journal and letter writing, reporting and editorials, and organized expository pieces.

However, English teachers should not and cannot be expected to shoulder this overwhelming task alone. Most of what is assigned ought to be read and responded to by the teacher, and that takes a great deal of time and energy.

Suppose I have 100 students, each receiving one writing assignment per week. If I average ten minutes per paper—a conservative estimate—I will spend almost 17 hours per week on writing assignments alone, leaving precious little time for lesson preparation and checking of other assignments, not to mention one's personal life. Even though I may enjoy the challenge, I am forced to take shortcuts either on the checking or the assigning of written work.

I support, on the basis of these simple calculations, even the most misunderstanding math teacher is ready to jump to my aid—or at least to remind me that math deals with formulas and figures. But dear mathematical colleague, do you not realize that my literary brain more readily understands a formula

when I write out its meaning in words? Perhaps the same is true of some of your more youthful "mathematical problems."

What about the social studies and science and Bible departments? How can students truly *explain* without writing complete sentence answers? How can we justify exclusively objective tests unless our goal is to make mere parrots of our students? If writing develops skill in thinking clearly and reading comprehensively, surely teachers in every department, including physical education, will want to use the tool of writing.

Furthermore, essay-type assignments enable the teacher to allow for students' individual differences. Evaluation can be made on the basis of student ability, thus avoiding other members of the class comparing grades and making detrimental judgments. Of course, the teacher is required to be more discerning, and grading can less likely be turned over to assistants, but the teacher does become more aware of each student's growth and needs. Also, the teacher can enjoy a more personal understanding of the student by seeing what each thinks and how that person arrives at those thoughts.

Perhaps most significant, if we are teaching from a Reformed perspective, we ought to be encouraging students to respond to all aspects of God's creation. We ought to be fulfilling the mandate to develop our gifts of thinking and responding as accurately and skillfully as possible.

Finally, if student writing is to improve, the teachers must show themselves competent as well. While I do not expect all teachers to realize the difference between "bring" and "take," I do believe all of them should know how to punctuate sentences. (How often the lowly period gets replaced by a comma, resulting once more in run-on sentences.) I wish all teachers would say, "You did really well" instead of "You did real good." I wish all teachers who outline would use correct outline form. I wish all teachers would avoid using capital letters where lowercase ones belong. I wish all teachers would provide models of well-organized writing.

Most of all, I wish all teachers who cannot do the above would make it their business to learn. Almost any English teacher would be honored to donate at least ten minutes a week—a conservative estimate—to help a colleague who wants to become a more competent writer.

Your school's writing program need not be the best selling or the fastest growing or the most animated one available. It may not even make teaching writing easy. If it does, I hope you will sit down immediately, write down your methods, and submit them for publication in the next issue of this magazine. ■



## Wants Sports Dialogue Continued

Editor:

I commend Brian Robinson for his ideas expressed in "Sports From A Christian Perspective" (CEJ, V. 22:1, Oct/Nov, 1982), and I commend him even more if he is able to put those ideas into practice. I, too, believe that sports can be used to accomplish Christian goals. I would like to suggest, however, that trying to change motivation, attitudes and behavior in athletes without changing the structure of sports is doomed to failure.

As Christians, we have a responsibility to evaluate social structures as

well as individual behaviors. There is a tendency for us to work on the individual changes with the assumption that structural changes will follow. I fear that the flow of influence is more often in the opposite direction. The structure of the activity is more likely to influence our behavior, and, therefore, it is important to be aware of the structure and change it when it leads to unacceptable behavior.

I suggest that the structure of sports as it now exists leads to unacceptable behavior, and changing the structure of sports will be more effective than trying to change behavior that will be exercised within the existing structure. All of the rewards for sports are geared towards win-

ning. Fans heap prestige on winners; post season play is allowed for winners; trophies and banners are awarded to winners. Given this type of structure, it is expecting a great deal of a youngster to participate in competitive sports and not place emphasis on winning.

I would like to see a continuing dialogue on sports from a Christian perspective in the CEJ, and suggest that we take a hard look at the social structure of sports in our society (and in our schools) with a view towards making it more Christian.

*Gordon DeBlaey,  
Professor of Sociology  
Calvin College  
Grand Rapids, Michigan*

## Locating Words

Paul Ramsey

As lay reader, reading to the congregation,  
This morning I read the Epistle,  
the words of Paul,  
Words inscribed, translated, quarreled over, theorized  
Through the intervening centuries in their weightless place.  
Wherever that may be, it is not entirely silence,  
Since I could and did read the words of Paul,  
Addressed to the Romans, concerning the weight of sin,  
Of doing what one does not want to do, yet knowing, knowing  
The burden must be reckoned with, the Spirit present.

These words are also an inscription, and are glad.

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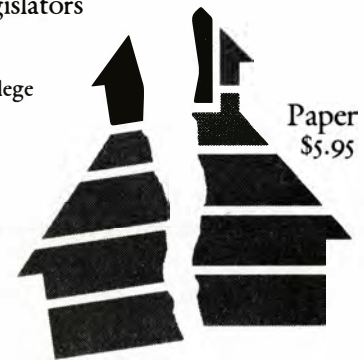
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# Redeeming the Computer World

Edward Jager

Our society is rapidly changing from an industrial to an informational society in which computers will have an important role to play. The extent to which computers affect our society will be determined by the people and their culture. Many questions arise: How much can computers do? How will they change our lives?

These questions are being asked in the area of Christian education: What part will computers play in Christian education? How will they affect our teaching and learning? Our teaching and learning environment? Our interpersonal relationships? These questions are not to be taken lightly, for what is done today concerning computers will have ramifications for the future. A Christian perspective within a distinctive Christian culture presupposes the effective and correct use of computers in Christian education.

## What part will computers play in Christian education?

Much research has been done regarding computers in education and the jobs in which they have been found useful. Donald H. Sanders (*Computers in Society*) explains that the computer can be used in the area of organizational tasks right down to individual instruction.

### AREAS OF COMPUTER USAGE

Research has made no outstanding progress in curriculum planning. A teacher with the aid of the computer can, through the use of aptitude, interest, and achievement tests, develop a curriculum that not only caters to the educational requirements but also to the students' special needs and interests. This curriculum can be planned for groups as well as for individuals.

The problem that Sanders mentions is that students' interests are bound to change, and this would require a revision of the curriculum. But this problem is common no matter how one plans curriculum. One point must be kept in mind: Even though students' interests are important, some form of structure in the curriculum must be kept in order that constructive and well-balanced learning take place. This is especially true in elementary, junior high, and senior high schools, where there is a

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building-up of knowledge from concrete to abstract, and from simple to complex.

Along with curriculum planning, the teacher can use the computer in controlling class and individual progress. Tests and quizzes can be given out periodically and immediate results can be known. The teacher does not have to spend time grading and controlling grades because this can be done by the computer.

Two more areas of the computer's organizational value are class scheduling and athletic program planning. The former is a tremendous time-saver for administrators. The computer also is good for game scheduling and strategy planning.

### COMPUTERS AND METHODS

There are two methods in which computers can be used for instruction. The first is computer-assisted instruction (CAI), which has been commonly thought of as the computer programming the child, and secondly, there is the Logo learning environment where the child programs the computer. CAI (discussed by Sanders) is a method where there is interaction between the student and the computer. The basic interaction can be described as follows:

1. The computer presents instructions or questions.
2. The student reads and answers the questions and maybe asks a question of his own.
3. The computer analyzes and pumps out feedback.

Using this type of interaction pattern, the CAI method has three different approaches:

1. The drill and practice program which will aid teachers' instruction by alleviating the time normally spent on memory work. This highly structured approach asks factual questions and gives immediate answers to students' responses. The drill and practice approach has been found successful in mathematics, statistics, languages, reading, and spelling.
2. The tutorial CAI program which is also highly structured. This program was developed to instruct students who require extra help. The program anticipates the students' responses to prescribed information given.
3. The dialogue program which is not yet completely developed due to some formidable problems. The goal of this program is a two-way dialogue between student and computer.



After the student's level of ability has been established, new material will be given, according to the subject matter, to which the student may freely ask questions or request more data.

Sanders discusses some advantages and disadvantages of CAI: Individual help is probably CAI's biggest advantage. Students, gifted or slow, can move at their own pace. The student can also receive immediate feedback, which in turn can speed up the learning process. Another advantage is that, when dealing with children, the computer is impartial, objective, and patient and the teacher is relieved from routine drills, providing her with more time for personal contact with each student.

Some disadvantages Sanders mentions are the cost of hardware, technical difficulties and breakdowns, lack of incentive and proper personnel to develop programs, and finally, people's resistance to change. Although these disadvantages are not insurmountable, the unknown are the long-term effects on man.

The second method of computer instruction as presented by Seymour Papert in *Mindstorms* is the Logo learning environment, which is based on Logo computer language and Piagetian learning theory. The roots of the Logo environment are not found in Piaget's step-by-step child development observations, but rather in his view that the learning process cannot be separated from that which is being learned. Piaget said that the child develops intellectual structures that interact with the outside world. It is the interaction of these coherent intellectual structures with the outside world that makes comprehensive learning possible. Papert and his colleagues were concerned with this aspect of Piagetian thought, and they believe that through the Logo environment this interaction can be made easily. The Logo environment helps make this interaction between reality and the child's thinking by using a transitional object called the "turtle." The "turtle" enables the child to make this interaction with reality (and its many aspects) by allowing the child to instruct it to perform many operations. Thus the child thinks about what he wishes the "turtle" to do which in turn stimulates the child to think about his thinking. In doing all of this, the child not only discovers reality but also discovers language. The Logo assignments do not deal with a particular subject but rather are integrated so as to blur the boundaries of the subjects. Papert says that Piagetian learning is not dissociated so why should we teach dissociatedly and further that computers will "help people form new relationships with knowledge that cuts across the traditional lines separating humanities from science and knowledge of self from the both of these."

The Logo environment can be compared to a Bra-

zilian Samba school. Every year, says Papert, Samba schools from all over Brazil come to perform their dance routines in Rio de Janeiro. These schools are much like country clubs, where young and old, and amateur and professional dancers come together during nights and weekends. The atmosphere is very informal, and everyone helps each other learn his or her routines. Even though there is no one leader and no scheduled classes, the Samba school practices its dance routines very diligently. These schools are a part of the Brazilian culture, which makes their activities related to reality.

The Logo environment, like the Samba schools, presents learning as a real activity, that is, related to reality. The Logo environment also resembles the Samba schools in the quality of the human relationships that it encourages. This is encouraged by the interaction stimulated between participants because of the excitement of learning. Another similarity between the Logo environment and the Samba school is the free flow of ideas and advice between the students and the teacher.

Despite their resemblance, there are a few differences. Unlike the Samba schools, the Logo environment does have a leader, who is the teacher. Another difference is that in the Samba school the members are not transitory as are the students in the Logo environment, who move from one class to the next and from one teacher to another.

The Logo environment connects reality with knowledge and develops the student's or child's thinking. The child in a Logo environment will learn in a natural way how to transfer his thoughts into language because of his interaction with the computer and fellow students.

The Logo environment presents a view radically different than the traditional view. Traditionally, we have "taught" fundamental skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic, after which is taught subject matter according to their disciplines. The Logo environment, on the other hand, "allows" the child to explore reality through assignments given, which then result in the knowledge of subject matter. Cultural resistance to change will, therefore, determine when or if the Logo environment will become a reality. Not only will cultural resistance to change determine when or if the Logo environment will become reality, but it will determine when or if computers on the whole will become a reality in the field of education. "Powerful new social forms must have their roots in the culture," said Papert.

## CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

If the use of computers depends so heavily on the people who use them, then the Christian teacher

must take a serious look at his responsibility to be a guiding influence towards an obedient use of the computer. Papert asks:

Which people will be attracted to the world of computers, what talents will they bring, and what tastes and ideologies will they impose on the growing computer culture?

Which people will be attracted to the world of computers? Too often it is the non-Christian sector of society that makes the advances and sets the standards for use of new inventions. Non-Christians have long been in the forefront of science, technology, economics, politics, and even education. Nations' values and morals in every area of life have been molded by the non-Christian sector of society. God forgive the Christian community if it does not take up the challenge of redeeming the area of computer technology!

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### **Redeeming creation is a special task requiring a special people, holy and set apart for God's glory.**

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When dealing with "redeeming creation," the Christian community must remember that the work is the Lord's and the church is the channel through which it is done. Redeeming creation is a special task requiring a special people, holy and set apart for God's glory. This means that the Christian community should also be holy and set apart in its cultural activities: a community in which the areas of trades, business, farming, science, technology, law, education, community life, and even home life are purged with the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. The key to redeeming every area of creation is being a distinctive Christian community with a God-centered culture.

Along with the need for a God-centered culture, the Christian community has a need for a Christian perspective of computer technology and education. What makes one's perspective Christian is the fact that man and his cultural activities are seen in relationship to God. This then is the starting point for a Christian perspective in both the area of computer technology and education.

The biggest question that has been asked down through the ages is, "Who is man?" Man is a person, male or female, created by God in His image. This *image* is central to meaningful existence. This image explains man's ability to have relationships. This ability to have relationships is ontological and religious. A person through Jesus Christ can display the image of God by being faithful, righteous, loving, kind, and merciful in all his relationships. A regenerated person can have a relationship with

God, fellowman, and creation.

Man's being created God's image establishes three factors concerning Christian education. First, Christian education must direct a person to a faithful relationship with God. Second, Christian education must enable a person to have a faithful relationship with his or her fellow person. Thirdly, Christian education must enable a person to faithfully fulfill the cultural mandate, which concerns creation.

It can now not only be seen that man is created in the image of God, but also that man has been given an office in which he is responsible to God.

Within this office, man is called to function in three aspects: as prophet, priest, and king . . . 'You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called out of darkness into his marvelous light' (1 Peter 2:9). The office of prophet, priest, and king is a single one, and the person functioning in that office is one, a whole person. (Geraldine Steensma, *Those Who Teach*.)

By functioning in these three aspects, a teacher can fulfill the three factors concerning Christian education.

An educator is called to a ministry. Functioning in the aspects of that unique office will enable him to fulfill that ministry. As a prophet, the teacher must possess a true knowledge of self so that he may be a model to his students. The teacher must also have a proper knowledge of the world in order to interpret properly. To be able to interpret assumes an understanding of the matter. The educator functioning prophetically will promote a meaningful cultural response.

The educator as a priest is one who promotes harmonious relationships. This part of the educator's ministry has generally been reserved for the healing of broken relationships with God and fellowman, but it can also apply to promoting harmony in the student's relationship with creation. The teacher can emphasize proper health and proper care of God's creation.

All ministry is a service; it requires men and women, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, to function as kings. Educators as kings in Jesus Christ will serve students. Teachers must provide a meaningful environment and use educational methods that will promote meaningful thinking. An educator who takes his ministry seriously will continually find new ways in which to enhance the students' relationship to God, fellow man, and creation.

With this in mind, are computers a viable tool for Christian education? It must be remembered that computer technology, no matter where it is used, is a human activity and therefore, it must have stringent rules and regulations applied to it. Any



human activity can be done in disobedience. For example, Sanders gives some negative effects which computers have had on society and which can also be applied to education. He says:

Although some administrators and employees have benefited by the use of computers on the job, others have not been so fortunate. Some have lost their jobs or have suffered a loss of status and prestige when computer systems were installed, and others have suffered anxiety at being forced to give up familiar surroundings and procedures and to learn new techniques.

Christians must be sensitive to their fellowmen when times of change come. Faithfulness to people must come before change. Because the computer has tremendous storage ability and fast retrieval, it poses the possibility of doing great harm to individuals and groups alike. If security control is not tight enough and information is stolen, people can and will get hurt. This too relates to education in that a lot of personal information of students could be used for destructive purposes if the utmost security care is not taken. All of this may dampen the enthusiasm for the use of computers and understandably so. Computers, being a human-made machine (nothing more), and computer technology being a human activity (enabling its misuses), emphasize the need for a God-centered culture: a culture where computers are used for the glory of God and for the building up of relationships.

The computer can be a tool for the Christian educator. As prophet, priest, and king, the Christian educator can use the computer to promote a more meaningful understanding of reality. With a proper understanding of reality, the educator can direct the student to his Creator. In order to develop understanding, one's thinking must be enhanced. The use of the computer can also help in enhancing the student's thinking. Because of the time-saving ability of the computer, the educator can use the time saved to develop personal relationships with the students and for instruction in Christian perspective (although this should, of course, also be given during the whole education process). Extra time can be spent on social skill-oriented activities and meaningful devotions. The educator must be aware of cultural activities and their changes in order to promote a proper response in the student. This in turn means that Christian education must be involved with computers in some degree, so that the student can make a meaningful cultural response in obedience to God.

Although an attempt has been made to present a Christian perspective on education and the use of computers, there is need for perspective that only comes from using computers. That is not to say that the Christian community is to jump into using com-

puters in education, but the Christian community should set up research projects. These research projects would then be able to provide more precise information on the effects of computer technology in learning, classroom environment, and relationships. The research should be designed to seek information which can help answer questions as to how much computer involvement there should be in education, what type of system is most feasible, and what program would best suit the needs of Christian education. Present programs may pose a problem because of their basic non-Christian assumptions. This then would create the need for Christian software, which would emphasize the Christian perspective. There is only one way that all of this can be done and that is through active involvement.

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**... Christian education must be involved with computers in some degree, so that the student can make a meaningful cultural response in obedience to God.**

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The final outcome of the effects of computers on Christian education will largely depend upon the source of the standards for use we accept. Will these standards come from a Christian perspective, or will they come from a non-Christian perspective? The opportunity . . . no . . . the *responsibility* is ours.



## The Churches

Paul Ramsey

**The spires. Neat and white churches in New England. Dark Saxon stone.**

**An abandoned church by a Georgia roadside, The boards weathered, the sermons unlistened,**

**The congregation departed heavenward, lostward,**

**Elsewhere.**

**The text: a church is persons, not buildings, And Jesus Christ Himself the chief cornerstone.**

**We nonetheless and therefore think on the buildings**

**Standing in rain's gloom, in sunlight, Bearing and enduring or failing. The centuries Cry from the stones.**



# Conversations on Reading

Gloria Goris Stronks

An elderly woman in Nashville, without intending to, once gave me a gift which I have treasured all my life. The gift Julia intended to give was three hours a week in which she would care for my new baby while I did anything I wanted. She suggested that I might choose to shop or to have lunch with my husband and I thought I saw a slight disapproving frown when I said I would spend those hours in the library. For fear of causing further distress I refrained from explaining that I shopped only from necessity and that dinner with my graduate-student husband was more enjoyable for both of us when he had lunched with fellow students who were more enthusiastic about Germanic languages than I could be.

Each time I returned from the library she paged through the books I had brought home and asked me very thoughtful questions about my reading while we had tea together. Since by choice and by necessity I was spending much of the rest of the days alone with my baby, I came to value those hours of conversation. The gift Julia gave me without intending to, was the understanding that people need to talk about their reading if reading is to reveal its fullest benefit and greatest pleasure.

Over the past four years I have talked with many people who have been readers for most of their sixty-five years. Although these conversations included the content of their reading, we talked mostly about how they felt about the act of reading, what part reading played in their lives, and what it was that reading did for them. One man who reads a great deal, said:

It is interesting to me that I seem to need to pretend to read, even when I have my mind on something which interferes with my concentration. I find that I sit for a long time without turning the pages because my mind isn't on it, but I still don't put the book down. It seems comforting to me, like having an empty pipe in my mouth.

Concerning the need to read, a woman who is an avid reader said:

It rarely happens that I am not able to read for a period of time, but when I am very busy, such as when the family is home for Christmas vacation or there is a wedding in the family, that can happen. And suddenly I feel angry and resentful and then I realize that a week has gone by when I haven't been able to take the time to sit and read.

*Gloria Goris Stronks is an assistant professor of education at Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa.*

When that happens, I try to go into my room, lock the door, and read for a couple of hours to remove the anger. But people don't usually understand that I *need* to do that.

A male who is a moderate reader spoke of the use of reading for filling up the spaces of one's life.

I mostly use reading to fill up the empty gaps in my day. Like when I go to the doctor's office I always make sure I take along something to read and I take something along for my wife to read, too. That way the reading keeps us from being so annoyed that he hasn't managed his time better. And when there is a snowstorm, the reading makes me hope the storm will continue instead of hating the inconvenience of it.

When asked what it is that reading does for her, a woman who is a moderate reader said:

I suppose mostly it helps me through the dark places. Like when I go to church and the sermon didn't have much depth in it, then I come home and read to compensate for that. Or the same thing after an evening of conversation which was meaningless for me. I don't read very much fiction anymore, but I find that when I do, the mood of the characters doesn't stay with me the way it used to. I am too busy with my own life and too much my own person to get so involved with the life of someone in a book now. During earlier years the opposite was true.

Concerning periods of life when more reading occurred than at present, a typical response from those who read little was:

I used to read anything I could get my hands on because there was so little else to do. Especially during the winter when it darkened early and the only light was the lamp on the kitchen table. But when we got electricity and then radio and television, my reading really slackened off. And for my wife, if there were 36 hours in a day, she'd be busy every one of them. For her, work comes before anything else and there is always more work.

Concerning periods of life when less reading occurred than at present, one woman who reads a great deal now said:

Well, when my children were small I was very busy. Books were not available to me then and if they had been I would have been too busy or too tired to read. And then a friend sent me a King's College Book Club membership for a gift. It was the most worthwhile gift I have ever been given because it changed my life. It started me back into reading and I have never left it. I will be grateful to her all the rest of my life.



When asked whether the ability to concentrate on reading has changed, a man who is an avid reader said:

I can't tell you how much I hate to take medication. It slows down my comprehension and I feel like an old man. Other than that, my concentration on reading keeps improving because I have lived a long while and I have had so many experiences to relate my reading to. But my concentration is really better when my wife isn't at home or when she is sleeping. She tends to watch television and when she reads she talks to me about it. But other than that there are fewer pressures now and so I can really concentrate more easily.

To what extent did reading done in earlier years influence the reading being done now? A woman who presently reads very little stated:

I wish so much that I had learned to enjoy reading when I was younger because then I would read more now. I'm sure I would. I think it's very important to be encouraged to read but I never was. You need the knowledge but I've missed it. I feel like I've lost a part of my life. Don't they say what you do when you're young, you'll do when you're old?

A man in the same category said:

I really wish very much I had learned to enjoy reading when I was young. I used to run off and play snooker. But I would be so much better off now if I had learned to enjoy reading. Now that I am older I have the time. If I had learned to understand what I read, I would read more now. But I had a great deal of trouble understanding. And I still have that trouble.

Although reading is a solitary activity, the need to share one's reading with another appears to be strong. One woman who was unable to share her

reading with others spoke of the loneliness.

In my circle of friends I read much more than anyone else. My husband doesn't read and there is no one who really cares about reading. I can't tell you the loneliness of coming home from being with your closest friends and knowing that one of the most important parts of your life cannot be shared with them. That doesn't mean that I don't love those people and enjoy being with them. It just means that I am lonely. Do you know that you are the first person who has ever asked me questions about my reading and then really listened to the answer?

When avid readers were asked whether other children in their families read as much as they did, the response was usually positive, as in this man's reply:

I recall that my father always read Westerns and he usually read them out loud while my mother darned socks. She didn't read because she was always so busy with dishes and mending in the evenings. My older sister read all the while she prepared breakfast and we hated it because when she made breakfast you were lucky if you got a piece of toast. My little sister read all the while she practiced her scales on the piano. Yes, I guess you could say we all read.

Asked whether they would read more if they had more free time, most avid readers reported they have enough time to read because they make time. However, one woman who reads very little said:

Well, that would be a lie. I have plenty of time but the truth is I am just not motivated to read. If someone can get me to start a book, I will enjoy it. But I just can't do it for myself.

From those who could look back on a lifetime of reading enjoyment came the plea that others be helped to learn to enjoy reading. Those who had never read a great deal expressed concern for the reading education of their grandchildren. They constantly stressed the importance of learning to develop a love for reading during the early years. One male moderate reader expressed his view this way:

I am a retired person with a limited area of interest. I must read to expand that interest. But my reading would take on more significance if I would plan it more and I need help with that. I need more of a balanced reading diet. People should prepare for retirement by expanding their interests and maybe reading on photography or gardening. There should be journals for retirement. I want to be able to be better at doing the things I'm interested in and I want to be interested in doing more things. Reading would help with that.

Julia is no longer living, but for her unintended gift, like the woman with the book club membership, I will be grateful the rest of my life. ■

## Two Teachers

Dorothea Kewley

The light of nature  
through delicate ferns  
and tall trees  
is a smiling teacher.

The light of human nature  
through the city smog  
is a sometimes distraught  
but yet a thorough teacher.



# Teaching Choral Speaking

Evelyn Witter

Have you ever tried choral speaking for variety? You will find it is an interesting way to teach your children some Bible passages, particularly the Psalms.

Maybe you wanted to use choral speaking but did not know exactly how. Here are some basically simple instructions.

Start your group off with a well-known nursery rhyme, marking the tempo with your hand, keeping the voices together. "Little Jack Horner" is good for tempo practice.

After the group has said the rhyme once, ask individuals to give some different inflection to the last line ("What a good boy am I"). The class will see how inflection changes the meaning from a cutup to a silly clown.

Divide the group into two parts. Let one group ask questions and the other group answer them.

With the pupils still divided into two groups, let one group say the first line, the second group the next line, and the whole group the final line all together.

Now arrange your speaking choir by voice. Arrange them by high voices, medium voices, and low voices.

Since rhythm is important in choral speaking, it is necessary to realize the difference between "beat" and "rhythm." Rhythm can be achieved if the pupils see the complete, flowing thought in a piece rather than reading it line by line. Interpretation of meaning helps to build the correct rhythm.

Tone, volume, and breathing are produced by good posture, careful enunciation, and tones which come from deep within the diaphragm.

The Psalms are a good choice for choral readings, particularly Psalms 24, 46, and 136.

There are many songs and poems in both the Old Testament and the New Testament which a choral group can give effectively. The Palm Sunday story with its "Hosannahs," the Christmas story with its angels' voices, Mary's song and Simeon's prayer, and the writings of Paul (as in I Corinthians 13) are a few New Testament passages the group can make live.

Here is a sample arrangement. It is fun and easy to make your own arrangements.

## Psalm 24

**ALL:** The earth is the LORD'S and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

**HIGH VOICES:** For he hath founded it upon the seas;

**LOW VOICES:** And established it upon the floods.

**SOLOIST 1:** Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?

**SOLOIST 2:** Or who shall stand in his holy place?

**SMALL GROUP:** He that hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

**SMALL GROUP 1:** He shall receive the blessing from the LORD.

**SMALL GROUP 2:** And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

**ALL:** This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob.

**HIGH VOICES:** Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors;

**LOW VOICES:** And the King of glory shall come in.

**SOLOIST 1:** Who is this King of glory?

**ALL:** The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.

**HIGH VOICES:** Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors;

**LOW VOICES:** And the King of glory shall come in.

**SOLOIST 1:** Who is this King of glory?

**ALL:** The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory!



## Song Paul Ramsey

**Who sings a pine needle?  
Turns it? glistens?**

**What is given,  
what is hurried,  
as it reckons.**

**Homeward.**

**Quickens.**



# Letter to a Former Student



## Delaware County Christian School

MALIN ROAD

NEWTOWN SQUARE - PENNSYLVANIA - 19073

Headmaster's Office 353-6522

Business Office 353-3511

*The fear of the Lord is  
the beginning of knowledge.*  
Proverbs 1:7

Dear John,

Late last school year, you and I took nearly an hour to discuss some concerns you had about my teaching of English. The challenges you gave provided me the opportunity to re-evaluate (and not for the first time) what I am doing in Christian education, why I teach English in a Christian school, and whether my teaching of literature (and writing and speaking) conforms to God's call to holiness and integrity as revealed in the Bible. As you recall, I did not challenge many of your statements. I took careful notes, and I promised to reply. My search and consideration of Scripture and of the ideas of other Christian educators has taken longer than I expected, but I do not regret not replying quickly with empty platitudes or with shallow rebuttals. Your well-planned questions, many backed with scripture verses and obvious thought, deserved my devotion, care, and scholarship. I won't be surprised if you answer this reply with more questions and challenges. It will be good for both of us to continue this process of thinking through such important matters.

Your major concern, I gather, was that this Christian school doesn't seem to hold the Bible as the most important element in education. As evidence you cited a literature program in which Hardy and Shakespeare and others are studied by students who, as Christians, should not be conformed to the world. You seemed to feel that non-conformity should be defined as not reading the same books as a secular English student would read. You cited Acts 17:6 where Paul and Silas are identified as the men who "have turned the world upside down," and you suggested that this "earth-shaking" ministry was a result of the disciples' non-conformity with the world.

Surely, believers in the Resurrection are different. We do have different goals, different loves, even different minds than non-believers. But later in Acts 17, Paul answers the arguments of contemporary philosophers by demonstrating a knowledge of their religion (v. 22,23), by quoting Greek poets and writers (28: probably Homer and possibly Plato), and by using a speaking style used and understood by the men he was preaching to. For Paul, being separate from the world did not mean being unplugged from man's thought, literature, and communication methods. As Paul explains in Romans 12:1,2, we are to have renewed minds so that we can test and prove God's will. John Milton, as I hope you recall from our study of him, explained that "the end of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him . . ." (*Of Education*). A more recent Christian thinker, Harry Blamires, describes the Christian mind as a "mind trained, informed, equipped to handle the data of secular controversy within a framework of reference which is constructed of Christian presuppositions" (*The Christian Mind*, 43).

Perhaps these ideas put into perspective some other scripture you cited: II Timothy 4:10 (Demas being cast out because of his love for the world's value system), James 1:27 (the importance of keeping unspotted from the world), James 4:4 (friendship with the world is enmity with God), and I John 2:15-17 ("love not the world"). In each of these cases, the same chapter shows a responsibility of the Christian which requires intellectual accomplishment. In II Timothy 4:1-5, Timothy, in contrast to Demas' surrender to secular materialism, needs preparation to instruct people in ways they don't want to be instructed. In James 1:27, a Christian is defined as one who is not only unspotted from the world but who also serves others. Serving people requires knowledge of their needs and of ways to meet them. As other good writers sometimes do, James cites adultery as a symbol of man's unfaithfulness to God when he sells out to the world. Later

in the chapter he shows that the remedy is careful submission to God, and a disciplining of one's mind, will, and actions. And in I John 1:12-14 the writer urges the believer not to love the world, but does this after having commended children, fathers, and young men for having known God.

In another verse you quoted, Romans 16:19, Paul urges his listeners to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. This plea, however, as seen from his sermon in Athens and many other actions in his life, is not for a blind ignorance of people and society, but for a wise discernment of the way they should go.

Before Peter uses a quotation of God's call to holiness (I Peter 1:15,16) he has called on believers to "gird up your minds; be self-controlled" (13). Here, the call to intelligent action precedes the appeal for holiness.

Yes, the Bible is the most important book in Christian education. Because of God's call to wisdom, discernment, thoughtful action, and intelligent faithfulness, and because of Biblical characters' examples of wisdom in the service of God (Moses, David, Daniel, and Paul, to name only a few), the Christian teacher encourages mind-stretching experiences for the Christian student.

But what bearing do these Bible-based ideas of Christian scholarship have on my teaching of English in a Christian school? As you asked, why should Christians, wanting to be wise in what is good, spend time on a novel written by a non-Christian, illustrating few positive moral principles? Certainly a reader's system can take that kind of thing only in reasonable doses. But a well taught, careful consideration of a well-chosen work of literature can lead to the Christian reader attaining a clearer understanding of the human experience, and of the values and viewpoints that others live by. As Leland Ryken, professor of English at Wheaton College, explains, "even when a work of literature fails to provide Christian answers to the problems of human experience, it clarifies the human issues to which the Christian faith speaks" (*Triumphs of the Imagination: Literature in a Christian Perspective*, 28).

Reading literature will provide the Christian reader with exposes of falsehood and evil, and with exposure to the best thoughts and words of human literary artists. This familiarity with a culture's landmarks and a knowledge of what swamps to avoid make the Christian capable of intelligent communication with others in this world, and can enlarge him as a human being. The Christian is thus better equipped to knowledgeably introduce lost men to faith in Christ. Henry Zylstra's statement about Hardy can apply to other authors as well: "There is more of you, after reading Hardy, to be Christian with than there was before you read him, and there is also more conviction that you want to be" (*Testament of Vision*, 57). A responsibly guided selection, reading, and discussion of even some thoroughly secular works in a Christian classroom can be extremely important preparation for personal encounters with such philosophies out "in the world." For this reason your training in English here included works by Thoreau, Hardy, Dickinson, Frost, Poe, Twain, Hawthorne, Steinbeck, and Faulkner. Ryken explains that "for the Christian reader the world views of literary works constitute the material upon which the Christian mind, operating from the perspective of a Christian or Biblical world view, can expand its understanding of the Christian world view and apply principles to the situations of life" (Ryken, 109).

James's call to be untainted by the world and to serve others can be answered best by Christians who read. Literature can "open the eyes of Christians to the needs of people whose physical and moral experience they might otherwise comfortably avoid" (Ryken, 179). Another Christian educator, Virginia Mollenkott, seems to be describing Paul's sermon on Mars Hill when she asserts: "If we truly want to communicate with our contemporaries we must understand them; and there is no more readily available way of understanding them than by reading what they have written for us and for each other" (*Adamant and Stone Chips*, 94).

Although your concerns were mainly with literature, speech and writing are also parts of our English program here. They can be justified too. You recall our study of Francis Bacon's essay "Of Studies," and can probably still quote his statement "reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man." Since these three elements are closely related, some of the arguments for literature apply to the others as well. Writing and speaking are the ways we can present our thoughts and viewpoints to others. Scripture has much to say about the care a man should use when he speaks, and writing, being far more permanent and also taking more preparation, practice and revision to perfect, needs to be carefully taught so that Christian students can be exact and artistic in their writing.

John, I hope that I have interested you in continuing to ask questions about the Christian's relationship to education, culture, and literature, and that you have also seen that we both need to keep thinking, reading, and discussing. If you want to do some more reading on this, I recommend that you start with Ryken's book.

I trust that college has begun well for you. Please write, even just a note. Perhaps you can visit me during your vacation and we can talk some more.

Sincerely,

  
English Department,  
Chairman



# What Should You Learn At A Christian School?

Wendy Katherine Cruikshank

Look down the rows and whom do you see? There is Barb who always hands in perfect work. Beside her is Sonya, the kid that everybody else picks on. Over in the corner is Mark, a boy with a quick wit and tremendously active imagination. Very near the teacher's desk sits Jamie whose home life has been so disrupted in the past few years that the only way he knows how to cope is trying to disrupt everything else, especially his class. What is so important that such a variety of students need to learn it? Is there really *anything* that *all* these students and hundreds more at Christian schools should know?

Is there a common learning experience that each of these students should have? Do they *all* need to know that a God of order and design has created a universe so complex and marvelous that it cannot help but point to his majesty? Do they *all* need to understand the intricacies of the English language so that they can better express themselves and better perceive the thoughts of others? Do they *all* need to understand history as being in the control of a just God? Do they *all* need to know how to multiply and divide? Do they *all* need to know how to spell this week's spelling words?

There is nothing wrong with the Christian school's desire to accomplish any of these tasks. All are valuable. But what is the all encompassing goal of the school? What is the single most important thing that each individual student needs to know?

Surely, a Christian school can give only one answer. The student needs to know that the living, unchangeable, eternal God loves him with an unbounded and unfailing love. Students at a Christian school do know that Jesus Christ died for them and us, but do they realize that He did this because of his great love which they and we can still experience.

If to have the students experience the love of God is the goal of a Christian school, how can it be accomplished? Students can experience God's love only through their teachers and other staff members at school. It will not be by teachers telling the students that God loves them, but rather by teachers showing them. It will be through the love and compassion the staff has to offer. The Bible tells us over and over again to love one another but how do we, as Christian educators, show love?

## TO LOVE DEMANDS TEACHER'S INTEREST

One of the major ways we can begin to show God's love is to take an interest in each student. Of course, within the classroom, but also outside the classroom! We need to build relationships with students on an individual basis. It isn't hard to take a little time to go to the practices or games of kids who are active, but what about the others? How much do we really know about each student? How much care and concern have we invested? Have we really earned the right to be heard by them? The amount that we actually know about an individual student is a good reflection of how much we have cared.

Do the students really understand that we teach at Christian schools because we have a Savior and Lord in Jesus Christ. When a student does make a decision to commit his life to Christ does he have a strong urge to come and rejoice with his teachers? Does he really see any connection between his new found faith and what he is learning in school?

The atmosphere of many Christian schools needs to be more obviously Christian. A Christian atmosphere should be characterized by love. This atmosphere must develop through our actions as staff members towards each other and towards each student without exception.

This year I have been involved in a para-church organization that works in a high school. Some parents have asked me why we don't introduce the group to the Christian school. The group's goal is to meet students on an individual basis, meet some of their needs, build honest relationships with them, thus showing our faith. Then we have earned the privilege of being able to tell them about our new life in Christ.

In a Christian school we should not need an organization to introduce these goals; they should be implicit. What is needed is a re-evaluation of how we spend our time and a re-evaluation of our attitude toward each student. Where we find ourselves lacking, we should respond by turning to God for the power that He is waiting to give us.

In any school that dares to call itself *Christian* the motivation of each teacher should be, "I care enough about you as an individual that my heart's desire is that you come to know and love this Lord Jesus that I know and love." ■

Wendy K. Cruikshank is a fourth grade teacher at Calgary Christian School, Alberta, Canada.



# Are You the Right Teacher for the Christian School?

Brian Willett

Although many factors go into the make up of a successful Christian school, the staff is most often the key. How does an administrator discern from one interview the potential of a prospective teacher? How can a prospective teacher anticipate the types of questions the administrator may ask? An understanding of this can make an interview a success or failure. The interview should cover areas not included specifically in the application form. Because the Christian school strives to be distinctive, even the interview should be so.

Certain standards must be maintained for the school to be effective. The administrator will carefully consider these standards in the questioning. Not merely are there certain standards which must apply, but these standards must apply to the various aspects of teaching.

The first standard, which is most important in the Christian school, is the spiritual qualifications of the applicant. A real concern is the prospective teacher's relationship to the Lord. An applicant for a position should be expected to give his own personal testimony.

The interviewer will look for signs of spiritual maturity. Has the applicant thought through the distinctiveness of the Christian school? How will the applicant be able to apply a Christian world and life view to his teaching? How will the applicant be able to develop and utilize the gifts of the students? How would he discipline and evaluate the students in light of the Scriptures?

The applicant, in like manner, should also have thought through his philosophy regarding relationships to parents, peers, and the community. His personal way of life will constantly be on display. He should be concerned about his role in the community. He should have a desire to be an integral part of the staff.

The applicant also will be judged by his academic background. A good interview will question an ap-

plicant regarding his performance in college. A straight-A student may not necessarily make the best teacher; however, a desire for scholarship should be in evidence. Most Christian schools want certified teachers because of the benefits the teacher will have received from completing that type of program.

The applicant should share information regarding past teaching experience and student teaching. The interviewer should be very interested in specific interests and preferences of an applicant. Those teachers with the widest range of interests and professional training are of most benefit in the small Christian school environment. The applicant should be conscious of what gifts the Lord has given him to utilize in the Christian school environment.

Although the Christian school strives to avoid some of the standards used by the world, the standard of personal poise and appearance are very important. Does the applicant exhibit a self-assuredness which reflects a deep awareness of Christ in his life? Does the individual present a neat, well-groomed appearance, without being flashy? In this area more of an impression can be given by what is conveyed than what is actually said. Confidence and humility come from the Lord; a good Christian teacher will possess these qualities.

A final standard that can be used in evaluating a prospective teacher is in the area of professional dedication. Because the teacher is held in such high regard in the Bible, the applicant should be committed to teaching as a calling by the Lord. Is the applicant committed to Christian education and its philosophy? The applicant should be willing to grow professionally through further work in the field of education, with an emphasis on Christian education if possible. He should have a vision for the Christian school. The applicant should have a well-formed perception of his relationship with not only students, parents, and peers, but also the administration. The applicant must be willing to submit to authority.

A discerning administrator and a perceptive applicant will bring forth a great deal of information when these standards are applied through questions regarding the applicant's relationship to the Lord, to fellow teachers, students, the community at large, as well as his instructional effectiveness. An applicant who is qualified in the areas outlined by the standards has thought through a personal philosophy of teaching consistent with the Scriptures. This kind of applicant should be a blessing in any Christian school.

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*Brian Willett is the headmaster for the Trinity Presbyterian School in Montgomery, Alabama.*



taught in Christian schools are different expressions of that way of life; they are responses to God's call to explore and form the creation, a call each individual experiences and to which every person responds.

Thus in terms of Christian education mathematics is one avenue of exploring and forming the creation. Mathematics education *does have a context*, a focus outside the discipline of mathematics. It is called to open up the creation.

The creation context is itself made up of happenings, situations, and developments, among which is the development of Western civilization. The present-day use of mathematics is another. And the logical aspects of mathematics are another. The creation context is the whole that encompasses these. That this is God's creation gives meaning to these particular contexts.

The discipline of mathematics furnishes the basic, sequential topics to be covered in our courses. The concept of number, the meaning of the computation operations, the types of numbers, computation, graphing, differentiation, integration, simplifying rational expressions, and so on, are concepts and skills important for an understanding of mathematics. These topics have their own significance, because, after all, we are teaching mathematics.

*However, each topic must give voice to, explain, and direct its concepts and skills in terms of context.* The over-arching message of our mathematics courses should proclaim that mathematics is all about exploring and forming God's creation. How each topic has been used by people, how it is used today, when it was used, and why it was and is used thus, become important questions. Answers to these questions help organize how a topic is to be presented. They are too important to be simply relegated to non-sequitur application exercises. To effectively learn that these topics are contextual, an

exploration of God's creation, students need to pursue a particular context in connection with a mathematical topic. It is not enough to just tell them that this is why mathematics is important. That only amounts to so many words. Their own involvement will translate those words into their own experience, so that they will really come to *know* that message.

Providing mathematical topics with situation in the context of the meaning of God's creation leads to the evaluation of particular applications. Numbers that describe the profits of businesses, when to drop a bomb from an airplane, and the sort of garbage thrown out each day at school provoke discussions concerning capitalism, war, and ecology. Shapes that illustrate the rooms of a home, a housing development zoning, and the surface area of differently shaped tin cans elicit class interaction about appropriate architecture, the geography of cities, and packaging efficiency and appeal. The values integral to each context are illuminated by the light of their situation within God's creation.

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### **Providing mathematical topics with situation in the context of the meaning of God's creation leads to the evaluation of particular applications.**

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This is not just "teaching mathematics." It is teaching mathematics in the Christian school context; this provides us a focus for choosing mathematical topics, a challenge to explain their situation in God's creation, and a call to proclaim to students that this is really what their mathematics learning is all about. It explains, in terms students can understand, why mathematics is a very important subject!

And it sheds light on the rich diversity of God's creation that is so incredibly interesting and wonderful! ■

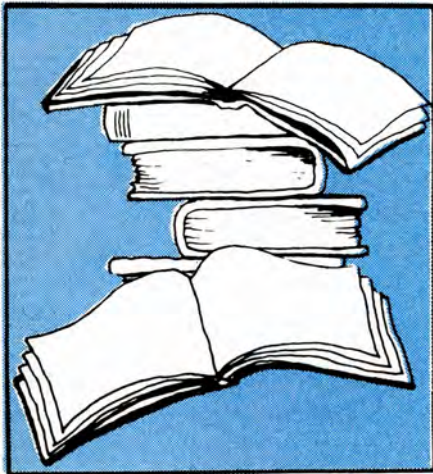
metry and order and coherence? Does one take no aesthetic pleasure in seeing the systematic thinking of Plato or Aristotle or Aquinas or Calvin or Edwards? Is there no beauty in the scientific constructs of Newton or Levi-Strauss or Northrop Frye? Surely it won't do to limit aesthetic pleasure and beauty to the arts. The effort to do so can once again only be seen as an effort to claim something unique for the arts and literature and to do so by means of a high-sounding dictum which makes critical nonsense of the way in which we talk about literature.

### **NOW WHAT?**

But where does this leave us? If we have to abandon so many of our comfortable platitudes, how do we rescue the value of reading novels and poems? How do we make our pitch to the sceptic? How do we assure ourselves as readers and critics that what we are doing is significant?

Well, there aren't any *easy* answers. But on the other hand, we're put in a better situation than the one in which we were confusing nonsense with profundity. At least we know we need to rethink things a bit. And perhaps if we do, we can even rescue some of the things we wanted to say but which we buried in the conventional commonplaces. ■

# BOOKS IN REVIEW



## MAN IN SOCIETY: A STUDY IN HOPE

Ary De Moor and others

Christian Schools International,  
Grand Rapids, Michigan,  
1980, 542 pp., \$20.00  
(Ringbound, looseleaf).

Reviewed by  
Bruce A. Van Sledright,  
Sociology Instructor,  
Grand Rapids Christian High School,  
Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Do you remember MACOS (*Man: A Course Of Study*)? That massive, controversial, curriculum package was developed for the public schools in the 70's. In some respects *Man In Society* seems to be the Christian school response to MACOS. This isn't to say that the design and purpose of *Man In Society* was a specific response to MACOS but that *Man In Society* (MIS) is also a massive, possibly full-year course. It outlines from a distinctly Christian perspective, man's purpose and place in this world (something MACOS attempted from a secular, often implied evolutionary perspective).

Beyond size and scope similarities, MACOS and MIS have really very little in common, for the authors of

MIS are trying to do more than MACOS ever intended. They add a dimension, born out of a Christian world view, of hope to man's seemingly hopeless existence. As they point out, after seeing all the evils in the world, one may get discouraged, but a Christian must maintain his faith and hope that because Christ has created a *new life* for us, we must work for Him to bring about his Kingdom. This suggests definite cultural and social responsibilities for human beings and this is what MIS is designed to teach.

MIS, as a curriculum package (in distinction from a book) will need to be reviewed from a slightly different point of view. I would like to accomplish this by looking at various facets of MIS by using different categories of analysis.

### DESCRIPTIVE CHARACTERISTICS

*Man In Society* is designed primarily to be used at high school level in Canadian Christian schools. The focus of the course is on a person's responsibility as a creature of God to do what he can to transform his environment and culture in order to make it more in keeping with God's will. The course is broken into eight units: Perspectives, Community, The Self, Troth, Government and Justice, Education and the Schools, Work and the Job, and Communication. The looseleaf, ringbound form makes it adaptable to additions or deletions at the teacher's discretion. The cost of MIS is a relatively substantial \$20.00 per copy.

### RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVE

The course has two strong interrelated and overlapping dimensions; sociological and religious (not necessarily in that order). Although the authors have not described specific objectives their general objective is to provide the learner with an awareness of the Christian's New Testament mandate (2 Corinthians 5:17-21, NIV): to shape, alter, and transform secular society into a more adequately defined Christian model. This model is described by the au-

thors in the first unit. It has nine aspects that encompass almost the full range of a person's earthly experiences. They include the political, economic, ritual (spiritual), intellectual, and ethical levels of life. One level *not* specifically mentioned, or for that matter, specifically dealt with throughout the entire course is the emotional or affective dimension of a Christian's experience. This may be unfortunate, for in this area Christians seem to be peculiarly lacking in skill and awareness of responsibility.

### TEACHING/LEARNING CONDITIONS

MIS could be used by itself certainly as a year-long course, or perhaps as a supplement to other courses. Alone, MIS could be taught as a course in religion or as a course in sociology. As a supplement in a Christian high school setting, it has many possible uses through a broad range of established curricula. Individual units might lend themselves well to English, history, and economics courses. The reading levels found in MIS vary somewhat but will be adequate to meet most high school students' needs. Additionally the course format would be easily understood by students and teachers. The authors strongly suggest that planning by staff, with student input, before implementation of the course may be critical to the overall success of the teaching/learning outcome. The rationale behind this suggestion is that the course format is of such a general nature that some adaptation to individual school settings might be required.

### CONTENT AND STRATEGY

The course values highly the Christian model of "man in society" as mandated in the New Testament. This is the major theme throughout the course. Cognitive style readings enhance this theme in an effort to increase awareness. Application activities in each unit allow for the possibility that concrete action toward the hope of a better society can begin on the part of the students. Each unit consists of several explanations by



the authors on the nature of Canadian society: its flaws and shortcomings, and where Christians might seek to improve things. The units are followed by readings to be used in conjunction with the explanations and discourses of the authors. These activities range from reading, to inviting a guest speaker, to venturing out into the community to engage in a concrete task. All the activities are subject to teacher suggestion and implementation. Student evaluation through discussion, testing, quizzing, writing, and researching is recommended by the authors; however, no clear approach is offered and no testing materials are included in the package. Apparently this is to be left to teacher discretion also. The style of each unit is rather uniform, implying that it could be taught very uniformly. The danger in this is that the course could easily become tiresome, mundane, and even boring to students. Teachers will need to be creative in their endeavor to replace this uniformity with variety of strategy.

#### ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Christian educators in the United States reading this review may be enticed by the possibility of adding *Man In Society* to their curriculum. However, MIS is focused almost solely on Canadian society, its institutions and organizations. Its applicability to the United States is limited. Granted, in many respects Canadian and American societies are similar, but the similarities here are overshadowed by the differences. Much revision would be needed to make MIS more useful in Christian high schools in the states. Perhaps Christian Schools International might consider this sort of revision should the success of the course prove it to be worthwhile.

I am not aware of any specific performance data on the use of MIS in Canada. I hope it is being used successfully, for its purpose is indeed noble and its scope is something sorely needed in societies dominated by secular trends and philosophies. *Man in Society* offers what MACOS never could: a mandate to transform our lives and our environments into a distinctly Christian Kingdom. It also succeeds in clarifying the directions needed to satisfy this mandate.

#### CONSIDER THE LILIES, T.E.

Henry J. Triezenberg,  
George Faber, and  
Dorothy Vander Pol

#### FRAMES OF REFERENCE, T.E.

Triezenberg, Bosch, and  
Vander Pol.

Christian Schools International,  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Reviewed by  
Don Holwerda,  
Wyckoff (NJ) Christian School

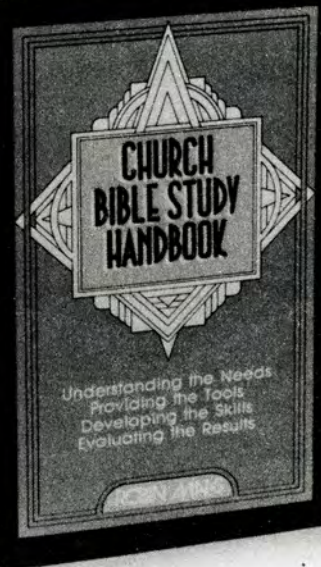
*Consider the Lilies and Frames of Reference* are two units in a set of 25 science units in the *Reading God's Word Science Series* prepared by the curriculum department of Christian Schools International. Considerable flexibility in selecting units for the students in your school is available. The authors recommend that each faculty member evaluate the materials and develop the science curriculum best suited for their students. The series was written by CSI teachers and science specialists and was field tested.

An advantage pointed out by the authors is a teacher's edition designed to help teachers *personalize* each unit to their personal teaching styles. Teachers may select their own combination of (1) laboratory and field activities, (2) lecture-demonstrations, (3) library readings, (4) discussions, and (5) personalization for students. The term *personalized methods* means "individual growth within the classroom community."

The primary goal of the series is to nurture the growth of a child's faith in God and his confidence in the orderliness of creation and Providence, with three learning dimensions woven through the materials: intellectual, decisional, and creative.

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Of considerable help to the teacher is the concept statement and background information for each lesson. Equipment management suggestions and teaching strategies are presented in detail together with suggestions for subjective evaluation, objective tests, and recommend teacher resource and student library materials.

## The Wall and the Windows

Elva McAllaster

Yes. One might say  
Stupidity and sins have built  
A thick high wall  
Between us and  
The Other Kingdom, in a  
Strange, dreadful masonry of  
minds.

But mortared in the wall  
Among the horrid boulders  
and the bricks  
Are windows.  
Some of them have names  
We know.

There's Luther:  
Gothic-pointed, huge  
Clear window that he is.

Here's Wesley.  
Look what a long vista  
Of translucent cubes and  
prisms you can see  
Through him.

This bar of rainbow-scented  
glass we recognize  
As C. S. Lewis.

Some, we note,  
Are very murky glass  
And partially bricked up  
From what they used to be.

Any obedience, any witness  
word  
May help  
To put a window through  
That massive wall.

Among the topics included in the *Consider the Lilies* module are: how seeds are designed to be carried; structure and function of a flowering plant; seed germination, root and stem functions, leaf identification, and more. In the introduction the authors state, "The book is your tool. You are the gardener." This principle is reinforced throughout the materials. These "tools" are indispensable for the Christian school teacher who attempts to show that the whole earth is the Lord's.

### RECORDER TIME

Ruth Van Baak, Harmen Boersma,  
and Joseph Van Beek.

### RECORDER TIME TEACHER GUIDE

Van Baak, Boersma, Van Beek.

Christian Schools International,  
Grand Rapids, Michigan.

1980, 129 pp., \$5.00.

1980, 63 ppg., \$12.50.

Reviewed by

Charles Bouwsma, music teacher,  
Oakdale Christian School, Grand  
Rapids, Michigan.

An obsolete meaning of 'record': "To sing or repeat a tune—said now of birds only" suggests some of the loveliness of the recorder and perhaps the origin of its name. The recorder has a long and interesting history. It was one of the principal musical instruments of the Middle Ages, Renaissance and Baroque. It went into dormancy during the 19th century. Webster's Unabridged Dictionary (1920) calls it "an obsolete kind of flageolet having a mouthpiece and a long tube pierced with eight vent holes." Fortunately the recorder has had its own renaissance and gradually since the 1930's has become recognized as a valuable solo and chamber instrument. Today the recorder is commonly heard and seen in six different sizes. It claims a large body of literature (Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, and Contemporary). Because of the simplicity of construction, the soprano recorder can be produced inexpensively, and it has taken its place as a basic tool of music

education. Because of its superior sound and historical connections, it has almost completely replaced the inferior Tonette and song flute.

*Recorder Time* is an enlargement and revision of a soprano recorder guide for the elementary classroom first published in 1971. This new edition is now the equal of any published elementary methods materials. I have been using it in my 4th grade recorder classes for the last two years and have found it to be an inspiration to my students and myself. It is a happy combination of exercises, folk songs, hymn tunes, Genevan Psalter melodies, and composed songs.

Ruth Van Baak, the primary revisionist, has included authentic recorder music from the Middle Ages, Renaissance and Baroque periods. Included too are several fine compositions written especially for this book by Philip Schreur who also wrote the music manuscript. By her selection of music and illustrations, Ruth Van Baak has transmitted a sense of the historical place of the recorder in our musical heritage. The last part of the book includes a fine selection of ensemble music for two, three, or four recorders.

The thoughtful planning evident in *Recorder Time* is also present in *Recorder Time Teacher Guide*. Designed to be useful to classroom teachers as well as music teachers, the *Teacher Guide* offers many practical suggestions about classroom management, musical theory, posture, tuning, tonguing, care of the instrument, and the history of the recorder. Especially attractive is the correlation made between Psalter Hymnal tunes and student progress. For example the *Teacher Guide* lists six Psalter melodies which have a 7-note range (E-D'). These can be played after completion of exercise #33 in Section 2.

Perhaps my copy is an early printing which has since been corrected, but numbers 41 and 73 should have F-sharp in the key signature and the minuet, number 168, should have no repeat signs.

If there are still schools which do not have recorder instruction as part of the curriculum they ought to invest in these materials.



## . . . and finally . . .

What is *news*? Unfortunately, news too often is what the media say it is. Whatever appears on your television screen or on the pages of your newspaper is news. Problems only *apparently* rise and wane according to media gatekeepers.

According to current media, public school problems of austerity budgets and increasing demands for higher salaries midst declining enrollments have somewhat replaced problems of physical harm to teachers and students, vandalism, illiteracy, and dropouts. Don't be fooled. These problems, which to a lesser degree affect us as well, are still around.

Problems exist whether the media broadcast them or not. The public school system is an important, necessary, and integral part of democracy. It has contributed much to the strength of both Canada and the United States. As professionals we have much in common with public school teachers and professors.

Yet there is a difference, a big one, and the differences bear greater importance than the similarities. One not mentioned by the media but continuing to widen is the chasm between public schools and Christian schools, between secular humanistic education and Christian education. Topics which arouse argument and emotion are vouchers, free textbooks, shared time, creationism, exclusion of prayer, and exclusion of Christian symbols, songs, and holidays. To the extent these differences are emphasized the National Educators Association becomes more protective of the public school system. We can understand this.

But Christian teachers need to be vigilant, to be aware, to be able to defend that constitutional freedom of education which is guaranteed—but never permanently. We need to recognize the difference between legitimate regulation of the state and infringement of our right to religious freedom and its concomitant right, freedom of education.

Awareness and vigilance are not options.

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