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Open Forum

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CEJ

Have You Done

"NO TV TILL YOUR homework is done!" The words echo back and forth across the continent in tedious repetition. Somewhere a child sighs, pulls out the books, riffles the pages, and pouts. Thus begins another round in the now-familiar game that pits teachers against students, students against parents.

I once heard a family counselor say that homework is the chief cause of conflict in the homes of school-aged children. From my unscientific observation and my twenty years of experience teaching junior high students, I dare say he is correct.

Perhaps the teacher is the player most able to change the nature of this often unproductive game, for the teacher is the one who declares how to win or lose. And if the game is so controversial that it adversely affects a majority of its players, then it is time to examine the rules to see if they are reasonable.

Why assign homework? When I began teaching twenty years ago, I assumed that the purpose of homework was to save class time. My role as teacher, I thought, was to present the ground rules in class, the students would practice the concepts on their own time, and back in class I would test their performance. We responded to each others' moves back and forth across the board.

I soon realized, however, that such a plan was deeply flawed. I was giving the impression that the actual learning of concepts occurs outside of class—class was merely a time to pick up the assignments and to report results. In order to teach students to make good use of class time, I would have to design the in-school session as a model of the learning that I wanted the students to continue beyond the schoolroom.

Christian teachers are responsible for encouraging students to be good stewards of time. What we do in class settings really should be an extension of the training of the homes, particularly the Christian homes, from which the students come. Therefore, the views we teach at school must correlate with parental views, lest we confuse the students.

Thus it seems reasonable that students have homework assignments which extend well to the home setting, such as review of memorized passages of Scripture or poetry, provided the teacher has modeled in class how to memorize. Beyond simply assigning, the teacher is responsible for integrating the passage into the entire unit of study, thus giving purpose to the assignment. Teachers who merely assign memory work without modeling or integrating it into the whole plan are not being fair either to students or to parents.

Another reason to assign homework is to involve parents in activities that will strengthen the purpose of education. If, for example, students are learning how to responsibly analyze news items or media advertising, parents can greatly support the purpose by providing time, materials, and encouragement while letting the student actually perform the assignment in his or her own style. Likewise, parents can supply background information for historical or autobiographical reports, or they can enable students to get to libraries or other sources of information.

How much homework? Recent curriculum standards adopted by national, provincial, or state education experts imply that the more material we cover, the better educated we will be. Not only have such standards increased the requirements for existing students, but they also have increased the pressure to require children to begin school at an earlier age. We get caught up in the old maxim: more is better. Teachers who get through the textbooks are typically more respected than those who don't, regardless of the quality or long-range value of study. Consequently, teachers rush through more material than students can really grasp in class and then rely on those undefined homework hours to accomplish their curriculum goals. Meanwhile, the students have not necessarily gained anything but pressure.

Although individual styles of learning will cause great variance in study time, I personally believe teachers should assign very little sit-down-at-the-desk type of homework for students younger than seventh grade. Even junior high students should be able to accomplish formal homework assignments within an hour's time on most days, provided school time has been used efficiently. Furthermore, I believe students below that age level should rarely have specific weekend assignments, aside from ongoing supplementary reading or special projects such as those for a science fair. Saturdays and Sundays should be free for family needs. Even people who do not take

Your Homework?

seriously God's injunction to observe the Sabbath as holy have found that setting aside a day from labor to serve others can renew the spirit. School personnel must be careful not to usurp family time and worship time.

Teachers must be very sensitive to individuals as they consider how much pressure to place on students to do homework. They must realize how students respond to the pressure of homework assignments and consider how effective the assignments are for each student. This means that teachers should be constantly judging whether or not students are managing their time wisely according to individual ability. This may mean that teachers must give special assistance in teaching students how to select and organize important ideas and how to apply such ideas to everyday life. No assignment should be given merely to fill time or to cover the book. I suspect schools could greatly reduce their workbook and copy machine budgets if teachers could step out from under the pressure to assign grades on the basis of tangible homework assignments.

Realistically, I know that the homework conflict will exist as long as the current views on education continue. However, I believe teachers can help reduce the tension that seems to grow inversely in proportion to the level of report card grades.

How can teachers help? First, teachers can communicate frequently with parents. Particularly in elementary grades, parents respond positively to teachers who send weekly bulletins with clear indications of their expectations for the week.

Second, teachers must be tactful and sensitive to parents' feelings. A very caring parent once told me, "Please remember that I feel personally very hurt when my son fails to complete his assignments week after week. I do want you to tell me, but tell me gently. I have invested my love in that boy, and when he fails, I feel so much pain." Many times we teachers cannot know what troubles have existed at home that affect our students' responses in school; therefore, we must approach parents with sensitivity and a non-judgemental attitude.

Third, teachers can give parents some practical guidelines for helping students with homework. Explain that you want the student to learn how to study—not how to get right answers on the page. (I would hesitate to grade any purely objective homework assignments because of their unreliable evidence of the students' mastery of the material.) Encourage the parent to walk the student through the process, but to allow the student to discover meaning for himself or herself. Otherwise the parent will destroy the child's joy of learning and the desire to learn independently, both of which are important for life. Suggest that parents ask their child to propose a reasonable, regular homework schedule that fits into the family's schedule. Then encourage parents to help the child set reasonable goals for what can be accomplished within twenty- or thirty-minute segments of time, with breaks scheduled after concentrated periods of study. They should also make sure that the child has a setting conducive to concentrated study. Parents may need to be encouraged to show more interest in certain children's assignments; others may need reminders to avoid taking on the child's responsibility, even if that means the child's grades will drop. Teachers must help parents understand which method will help accomplish the long-range goal of enabling students to become responsible, independent learners.

Perhaps the most helpful thing teachers can encourage parents to do is to help their children realize that we are here to serve others. Too often we promote the idea that we are here to compete against and surpass others. We have assumed that academic strengths come from our own efforts and may thus be used to gain personal success and honor by the world's standards. While it is true that we are accountable to God for proper use of academic strengths, we may never forget that God asks us not to be brilliant, but to be faithful. Oswald Chambers, in his classic daily devotional entitled *My Utmost for His Highest*, says in his June 16 entry: "Jesus does not ask me to die for him, but to lay down my life for him (John 15:13) . . . . We are not made for brilliant moments, but we have to walk in the light of them in ordinary ways."

Academic strengths are gifts from God, gifts he gives to be used for his kingdom. We who teach have a tremendous responsibility to develop assignments that by their very purpose and design enable our students to use those gifts to glorify and serve the King. Only then will the homework game cease to be merely a simulation of real life service.

Becoming "Born Again"—The Marxist Way

BY HARRO VAN BRUMMELEN

NEO-MARXISTS strive for the liberated "New Man." They recognize that the Russian and Chinese revolutions have not brought about this "New Man." This is blamed on the shortcomings of the implementation of Marx's ideas and ideals, not on Marxism itself. The neo-Marxists have returned to Marx's theme that the "New Man" is the prerequisite of true individual and collective freedom. Their main aim is the emancipation of humanity—the liberation of each person from selfishness into true humanity and brotherhood.

Education as a moral enterprise

It is the aim that makes moral education in the schools so important for neo-Marxists. Giroux and Purpel's 1983 book, *The Hidden Curriculum and Moral Education*, for instance, says that all of education is a moral enterprise. One chapter, "It Comes with the Territory: the Inevitability of Moral Education in the Schools," first explores the "morally laden curriculum." For example, "The Little Engine that Could" proves that stubbornness and willfulness can overcome humility and modesty, and "Three Little Pigs" points up the value of careful planning and industry (269-70).

But, neo-Marxists continue, schools teach far more about justice and authority and what is right and wrong by the way learning is structured and implemented than in the curriculum *per se*. There are moral implications in situations where an entire class is punished because two students have misbehaved, where a teacher taunts a child for not being nearly as productive as an older sibling, where students get gold stars for doing all their math problems correctly, or where a teacher punishes tardiness or sloppy work. The point here is that *everything* that happens in schools has a moral dimension. That point, I believe, is one that we neglect only at our peril. Neo-Marxists often have more insight here, regrettably, than many Christians.

Conversion and the schools

For neo-Marxists, "to be liberated means not only being savvy and aware but also being in touch with poten-tial . . . The development of a critical consciousness and the imagination are of crucial importance" (278). This leads to the conclusion that "any quest for liberating persons from arbitrary domination by others calls for a basic change in attitudes, values, morals, and perspectives, as well as for change in social and economic structures" (307). A complete conversion is needed, per-

sonal *and* communal! Conversion of everyone in society may not happen in our lifetime, but neo-Marxists "continue to work for what we believe is right" (307). Without doubt, neo-Marxism is a religion.

In the neo-Marxist religion, teachers become the prophets, agents who change consciousness towards liberating activity. Specifically, teachers must change many of the common practices in schools. Why should work be more important than play? Why should teachers be the final authority? Why should students be on time or not skip school? Why evaluate in such a tyrannical way? Present practices, neo-Marxists believe, are functions of social conditioning for the work force, unnecessary for stimulating and developing human potential. Instead, students should be taught "to think and act in ways that speak to different societal possibilities and ways of living" (351), and "they must learn about the structural and ideological forces that influence and restrict their lives" (353).

Note the steps in the neo-Marxist argument: (1) we must work towards the liberated "New Man"; (2) to become a "New Man" requires total emancipation, with a crucial moral change; (3) education is an important tool in this emancipation; and (4) therefore, we must ensure that its structure and content, both moral in scope, lead to a consciousness that liberates from the shackles of society that now enslaves.

The challenge for Christians

The argument closely parallels the Christian one. We also celebrate "being born again as new persons." We also believe that this requires total liberation and conversion. We agree that such liberation changes our moral direction. Further, we also object to and want to be set free from the evils of society around us. I believe it is because of this on-the-surface affinity that Catholics like Freire and McLaren have been attracted to neo-Marxism. The interests of neo-Marxists and Christians seem to intersect, and that makes neo-Marxism attractive to those whose faith is not solidly grounded in the Christ of Scripture.

However, these interseeting roads have different origins and different destinations. Our starting point for the "New Man" is not man's insight and ability, but the saving grace of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. Our goals diametrically oppose those of the neo-Marxist. Ultimately, our aim is to glorify God; the neo-Marxist's, to glorify man. For us, true freedom is possible only within the scope of God's law and his directives. We reject the neo-Marxist's naively utopian belief that man can liberate himself through the development of his own critical consciousness, and that then no external norms are needed.

Nevertheless, the neo-Marxists challenge Christians in education. Neo-Marxists, more clearly than almost anyone else today, see the immense import of education on children and on society. We cannot deny that they are right—that in many ways our schools, also Christian ones, indoctrinate children into a materialistic, secular way of life. Neo-Marxists are intent on using education to further their own radical goals, and are setting out an agenda for schooling.

Can we as Christians implement our own agenda? Can we be truly radical in our educational endeavors, i.e., rooted totally in Christ? Can our approaches become comprehensive efforts at Christian renewal, where we integrate methods, subject matter, evaluation, procedures, and the total environment so that children experience and see the benefits of a Christian way of life? Can we use our schools to raise signposts to the coming of Christ's Kingdom in today's culture? Have we developed the implications of the cultural mandate in Genesis and the Great Commission in Matthew for today's education? Have we "enabled" our graduates in the way John Van Dyk has used the term in his description of Christian teaching? Or is John Van Dyk right that most of our classrooms "just teach," i.e., except for devotions and biblical studies, we follow secular approaches?

We live in a sinful world, and we ourselves are sinful. Therefore, our efforts will be imperfect. Yet I believe God requires us to continue to develop and implement a Christian agenda for education. If we don't, non-Christian agendas like the neo-Marxist one will win out by default. **CEJ**

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National History in the

We have no right to gloss over our failings in the areas of stewardship of natural resources, racial justice, and domestic violence.

EVERY HIGH SCHOOL IN THE United States requires that its students complete a course in the history of this country. In fact, during the thirteen years that students attend school in the United States, they are taught our national history two or three times. In many states, a school, if it is to be accredited, must offer American history to its students.

This emphasis on national history can be attributed to several causes. First, beginning around the turn of the century, United States history classes were seen as a means by which the government could inculcate the immigrants with national "virtues" and heritage. Theodore Roosevelt's famous dictum that there was no room for "hyphenization" in America led to schools being mandated to omit references to foreign origins and to introduce patriotic exercises and a glossy version of U.S. history. History classes thus became vehicles for propaganda which taught the recent arrivals that the United States was good, true, and noble in all of its undertakings from Jamestown to the present. Either by inference, or by direct statement, all things non-American were suspect. This merely reflected the fear and hatred of strangers which generally greeted the foreigners upon arrival.

It is interesting to note the effectiveness of this program on the generations which learned these lessons in the schools. One need only be reminded of the rosy view of our moral integrity which buoyed the spirits of the doughboys of 1917 as they landed in France to save Europe from itself through a transfusion of Yankee virtue. Even the outcome of World War I, the tawdry political developments of the 1920s, and the Great Depression could not shake this conviction that the United States was the greatest nation on Earth. When things did not go well at home or abroad, the blame was placed on either the faithless outsiders or their fifth column sypathizers within our own borders. The most frightening examples of this phenomenon were the Red Scare of 1919, the Nye Committee hearings of the 1930s, and the witch-hunts of the House Un-American Activities Committee and Senator Joseph McCarthy during the early days of the cold war.

While the period of introspection which followed the Vietnam War served to alleviate some of the worst abuses of historical truth in United States classrooms, the residue of jingoism is still quite evident. While the mythology which once surrounded the "Founding Fathers"—George Washington and Abraham Lincoln—is no longer seriously taught, the United States is still not placed in the same category as every other nation that has existed (i.e, a transient political phenomenon with its fair share of shortcomings and faults).

A second reason for the current state of U.S. history is a practical matter. Historians have always been confronted with the problem of reducing their field of study to a manageable scope. When this problem of the craft is compounded by having to teach students at a less thorough level, the field of vision is further reduced. How can a history teacher give the students something meaningful and comprehensible? How can the teacher introduce the students to the study of the past without overwhelming them with data? How can the teacher help the students understand the past while simultaneously allowing them to relate to events and people in a way they can comprehend? These are hard questions to answer.

Faced with these problems, teachers have resorted to the device of emphasizing national history to the exclusion of world events, unless they have had a direct bearing on our own development. As a result the average student leaves his or her U.S. history class with a limited view of our country, since little has been done to teach the student how these events fit into the pattern of general history. The impression is left that somehow whatever happened to the world that did not directly influence our country is irrelevant. As this notion continues to mature throughout adult years, the average person assumes that it is always true. Even more frightening is the prospect of students who leave the class with a large dose of flag-waving coupled with their notion of global irrelevancy, facing a life of ignorance as to what is happening on the other side of the world and assuming that their view of things is *the* correct one. This mind set is unconscionable for the graduates of the Christian school.

A final reason for the current state of U.S. history is tradition. We teachers, while preaching independence of thought, often practice the herd mental-

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BY ROBERT SCHOONE-JONGEN

ity we decry. Since we were taught national history in isolation from the rest of the world, and the available textbooks follow in this same path, and we have taught history in this manner for years, we have the natural tendency to continue doing what we know from our past. We do not wish to horn in on a colleague's academic dominion and thus disturb the neat parcels of learning that make up the traditional curriculum in social studies. Thus U.S. history is isolated from world history—if the latter is offered at all. Furthermore, since most history teachers are comfortable with the current situation, there is no market for books which seek to fully integrate our national history into the broader context of world history. Hence such books are not available.

The Christian school history teacher is faced with a situation which needs changing. In the process of confronting this state of affairs, what can the teacher do? One can either try to Christianize the study of national history as it is presently constituted or redefine the study of history so as to remove the problems outlined above.

The most common approach would be the former one, but then several new dangers arise. The first trap is to Christianize the American messianic tradition by saying that our country is the reincarnation of the chosen nation of Israel. This attitude has been current from our colonial beginnings. The Puritans, for instance, believed themselves to be a unique people chosen by God to establish a model society which would redeem the world. While this idea was secularized during the eighteenth century, it has, nevertheless, survived in our popular thought. The tendency toward international isolation stems largely from this idea. We, the chosen people, must maintain our purity by remaining aloof from the horrors of the evil and degenerate world. This self-proclaimed purity is our birthright from God. When the powers of Europe sought to devour each other in World Wars I and II, leaders such as Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt saw the opportunity to give the benefits of our purity to the rest of the world by first using our military might to end the fighting and then imposing our national morality through international peacekeeping organizations. Even in the post-1945 situation our political and religious leaders still cling to the idea that we are the greatest hope on Earth, having received a special measure of virtue from on high, as manifested in our economic and military power.

This exalted opinion of ourselves has no place in the Christian school. While the achievements of our nation should not be minimized, we have no business asserting that the source of these achievements is the result of God-given uprightness. We have no right to gloss over our failings in the areas of stewardship of natural resources, racial justice, and domestic violence. While we have been singularly blessed materially, that does not mean we know the will of God for all men. The new Israel syndrome in U.S. history is nothing more than the working out of our national pride and self-confidence. To glorify this idea is an act unworthy of the Christian teacher.

A near cousin of this new Israel idea is the habit of using the United States history class as a setting to justify the status quo in the world. In this line of thinking we are called upon to defend ourselves so as to preserve our "God-given" blessings. International injustices (especially economic ones) which can be corrected only by sacrifice on our part thus become a threat to the privileged status enjoyed by God's favorite nation. How could it then be that God's chosen nation could actually be called upon to diminish itself to benefit those living in another nation?

When one closely examines this line of thought one sees a thoroughly secular notion lurking just below the surface. The belief in national sovereignty is a very popular one since our entire international structure is based on this axiom. We believe one country is not immediately accountable to another for its actions. While this system has produced a global system, it certainly has not produced order and justice. Rather, we see a planet in which the worship of the autonomous individual inherited from the Enlightenment has been extended to the autonomous nation-state. This sort of world cannot be justified by a fig leaf of Christian cant. A Christian teacher cannot honestly hold up his or her country of residence as the final arbiter of what is right or wrong. One's country is by nature the product of fallible human actions, its view of the globe also being fallible. Since national sovereignty is but an extension of individual pride, a nation's standards will also reflect more unenlightened self-interest than we are likely to admit.

This view gives rise to another danger—that national history tends to foster a myopic view of the world. This again brings up the point that our perspective on the world is limited. We tend to see things and events as important only when they are close to home. Those things which are more remote in time and space are discarded as unnecessary and/or irrelevant. We lose a sense of the more general patterns of history. This loss of universality is especially dangerous for the Christian. If the gospel is universally applicable, if history is the working out of God's plan for the world, and if we are called to be God's agents in furthering this plan, how can we allow ourselves to be content with teaching about only a small part of history? Additionally, if we restrict our studies to only our nation, how can we expect to relate to the people of all nations to whom we are sent by Christ's great commission? A common criticism of Christian evangelism has been its close identification with western civilization. However, if the gospel is universal and we only teach our students about a small part of history, how can our Christianity help but reflect the American branch of western history? Even a non-Christian

historian like Arnold Toynbee could recognize that history was not confined to single nations. How then can we excuse ourselves for teaching merely national history when the basis for our schools' curricula is the universal gospel of Jesus Christ?

In this attempt to mold a different approach to history there are two final pitfalls which must be noted. While we may place some distance between ourselves and our society, we may not allow ourselves the luxury of self-righteously judging the actions of non-Christians. It is too easy to look at what the world has been—and is—and piously assert that we Christians could have done better. While a truly Christian society, if it could be constructed this side of the Apocalypse, would be more just and humane than the shambles we sit amidst today, it would not be the Garden of Eden. While our motives might in some way be closer to Christian standards, our actions would suffer the same infection of sin. One need only examine the history of Massachusetts Bay Colony to see Christians can also create a mess, if given the opportunity.

Thus, we must also avoid the temptation to turn history into a morality play. While the Lone Ranger and Tonto may have provided good entertainment, they must not be the prototypes for historical analysis. History is never as simple as the good guys fighting the bad guys. Rather, history students are confronted with the maddening prospect of discerning shades of gray. This principle applies not only to the acts of individuals; neither are nations and civilizations found in pristine forms of good and evil. Our legal system owes Rome a great debt, morally horrible as it was. As noble as the motives of John Winthrop may have been, few, if any of us, would wish to re-establish the clerical dictatorship his ideas created. While the Declaration of Independence may have voiced many noble ideas on the nature of a just society, the society which arose from it often mocked those ideas.

What, then, should be the status of national history in our Christian schools? Considering the philosophical problems already discussed, we should begin working toward the elimination of national history as a separate entity in our curriculum. On the other hand, we may not totally ignore our national history. Rather, its proper status should be as a significant part of an integrated course in global history. Taught correctly (assisted by academically justifiable, pedagogically sound, biblically based resource materials), such a course would extricate our students from the quagmire of a nationalistic view of the world. This is obviously a long-term project, requiring years of diligent effort to achieve. It demands a fundamental overhaul of our thinking. Our constituents will also need to be reoriented in their thinking. The costs in time, money, and effort will be great. The obstacles are, to say the least, monumental. But we must assume this responsibility if we are to be true to the catholic faith.

Meanwhile, what can be done to salvage the current situation? First, as with all areas of Christian life, there can be no substitute for serious, systematic study of and adherence to Scripture's teachings about man and society. The teacher must avoid the unbiblical pitfalls outlined above.

But this is not enough. We must develop positive alternatives to both the nationalistic approach which has been current for so long and the more recent trends toward cynicism. The acceptable path lies somewhere between George Washington's cherry tree episode and his padded expense account. A good starting point is to base our history classes on a balanced, biblical view of man as both image-bearer and rebel. Starting with that, we must then demonstrate how the acts of man reflect both sides of this nature.

Second, our history classes must emphasize that our nation is not an autonomous entity isolated from the rest of the world. Careful examination of our national history requires exploring the ways in which events and ideas were influenced by developments beyond our borders. Since the Christian professes a universal faith, the scope of his or her studies cannot be confined to the immediate geographical and historical surroundings. Since God deals with all people everywhere, the Christian is not given the luxury of viewing God's work only in the context of one nation.

Third, the teacher's own perspective of history must be broadened to include the histories of other nations. The teacher must be aware of the global trends in history and integrate those trends into the material dealt with in class. It is most beneficial to know how others see us. While these perceptions are not always correct, they can often serve to place us in a more accurate context and force us into a more valid appraisal of ourselves.

In an interdependent world no one can afford to believe oneself to be the only important person on earth. No nation may do that either. The Christian, with the God-given mandate to love one's neighbor and bring all of life under the guidance of God's truth, has a vast responsibility to understand the world. A universal faith must include a universal understanding of history. In our schools our primary responsibility is to equip students for citizenship in God's kingdom. That kingdom is without national boundaries. Our history classes should be a reflection of this fact. **CEJ**

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A Rationale for Teaching History in the Christian College

BY J. MICHAEL BALYO

FOR SEVERAL YEARS I HAVE faced a variety of wide-eyed students, mostly freshmen, who have been forced, threatened, cajoled, or otherwise manipulated into taking my survey courses of Western Civilization and American History. Somehow, I tell myself, I must awaken in their impressionable minds a life-long love of history, or at the very least, provide a decent rationale for my continued employment as a history professor. Sometimes I am aware of success, but much of the time I can only guess at what my students are thinking and hope that someday, if not today, they will begin to appreciate the significance of all this learning.

So why teach history when most people seem to get along well enough without it? The question itself is obviously a loaded one, and not even the right question to be asking. The right question is this: Do people really get along well enough without studying history?

Regardless of the answer, one point remains clear—the failure to communicate a rationale for the teaching and consequent study of history seriously impairs the student's inclination to broaden his or her understanding of life and to acquire an appreciation for learning. Such an impairment constitutes an interference in the student's ability to function to full potential in society.

I note at least two reasons for making such a sweeping statement, and they are concerned with two of the common characteristics of the mindset unaffected by history.

The first of these two characteristics is smugness. Smugness gives a person the tendency to look down one's nose at what seems disagreeable. The smug Christian already knows everything he or she wishes to know. The smug Christian has no use for new ideas, new insights, or new challenges. The smug Christian would rather not "rock the boat." The smug Christian has no use for new ideas, new insights, or new challenges. The smug Christian would rather ridicule than understand, would rather argue than communicate, would rather show disdain than compassion.

The second of these two characteristics is narrow-mindedness. The criticism against narrow-mindedness does not necessarily imply a preference for open-mindedness about everything. It is not narrow-minded, for example, to believe in gravity. Nor is it narrow-minded to have convictions or to believe that certain things are true. It is narrow-minded, however, to assume that one's own culture, one's own way of life, or one's own world view is the only possible or the best possible one available.

The narrow-minded Christian has little appreciation for the ideas or insights of people with whom he disagrees. The narrow-minded Christian is always spreading truth but seldom receiving any. He or she confuses biblical absolutes with societal standards. The narrow-minded Christian appreciates only one culture, one flag, one race, one denomination. Basically, such a person simply knows too much. Humility becomes a trait expected of others but not of self.

So what does any of this have to do with the teaching of history? Quite simply, everything. History, I contend, is a form of cross-cultural communication. It is more than this, but it is at least this. History should, in essence, provide an antidote for overdoses of smugness and narrow-mindedness.

C.S. Lewis, in "Learning in Wartime" (*The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses*, 1965), touched upon this truth when he wrote:

> Most of all, we need intimate knowledge of the past. Not that the past has any magic about it, but because we cannot study the future, and yet need something to set against the present, to remind us that the basic assumptions have been quite different in different periods and that much which seems certain to the uneducated is merely temporary fashion. A man who has lived in many places is not likely to be deceived by the local errors of his native village; the scholar who has lived in many times is therefore in some degree immune from the great cataract of nonsense that pours from the press and the microphone of his own age (50-51.)

How surprised some of my students are to learn that the urbanization of society is a rather recent phenomenon, or that nationalistic racism was common in Western countries prior to the Second World War, or that many evangelical Christians opposed the election of John F. Kennedy to the U.S. presidency in 1960 because of his membership in the Roman Catholic Church.

The mind immersed in history should be a more Christian mind, that is, less smug, less narrow than before. A Christian mind is thus a mind that functions "well enough," and unless we wish to assume otherwise, the pretense of a truly Christian education apart from history might as well be discarded.

Is the teaching of history worth the effort? No person can answer this question for someone else, but for me at least, to assist in the development of Christian minds is a worthy, honorable, and highly valuable vocation. **CEJ**

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" Time for

THE OPEN WINDOWS OF THE faculty room at Omni Christian High School drew in the sounds and smells of a late May morning. Across 86th Street, on the municipal tennis courts, four girls of high school age lobbed a ball awkwardly back and forth across the net. Now and then they glanced nervously across the street towards the high school.

Within the faculty room Matt De Wit, veteran science teacher, fondled his styrofoam cup gently and smiled knowingly as he watched the truants. He was enjoying the view as he inhaled the hint of early roses, which lined the cement sidewalk in front of the school. Turning to his colleague Rick Cole, he said, "I wonder how long it will be before Carpie sends someone over there to corral those kids." And then he looked at Rick and added, "And you, Rick, aren't you supposed to be teaching at this hour? I thought you had a comp class." Matt glanced at his Pulsar as he spoke.

Cole smiled broadly and said, "I do, Matt, I do. That's one of the advantages of having a student teacher. It leaves me free to stand here and gaze out of the window with you, and to envy those scofflaws over there playing tennis."

"Know what you mean," chuckled De Wit. "This sure beats teaching, doesn't it? And we're getting paid for it, too." He paused and then asked, "How is your boy doing?"

"Well," responded Cole very slowly, "Kevin is not exactly a superstar in the classroom, if you get my point. He knows his lit, and all that, but he sure hasn't got the foggiest idea what to do with it in the classroom. Lots of the time he just stands there and reads to them. It drives the kids nuts. No matter how much I hint, advise, complain, or beg, this guy just doesn't seem to have it. I really feel sorry for him."

"Yeah, I know what you mean," said the science teacher. "I had one like that from Servant College last spring. Makes you wonder, doesn't it. They must be learning how to teach from Peter Rip." Then Cole added, "But I have a good one this year, from State. Karen is really sharp. She's one of those take-charge types, you know. I tell you, Rick, all I have to do is get out of the way. Which is why I'm here in the faculty room instead of my classroom. She can handle that class as well as I can."

"I know what you mean," said Cole. "I sure hope I get a good one next year. Trouble is, though, this pushy principal of ours thinks we have too many student teachers around here. Says that parents pay to have real teachers teach their kids. We may have to do our own teaching next year, Matt."

At that moment Jenny Snip, the school secretary, entered the asylum and placed a bundle of journals on the low table in front of the faded blue couch. It was the latest issue of the *Christian Educators Journal*, the last of the school year, and better known in the trade as *CEJ*.

"Hey," said Matt, "the *CEJ* at last. I thought they had gone out of business. It's been months since the last one, hasn't it?" He picked up a copy, riffled through it, and addressed Snip, who was already sipping her morning decaf. "Jenny," he asked, "who do you suppose that Zoeklicht fellow is, the one who writes that 'Asylum' column? Any idea?"

"No," said Jenny, "but why do you think it's a man?"

"I don't know," grinned Matt, "but I just always thought so. Do you think it could be a woman? Now that you mention it, it is kinda corny at times."

"Oh no," snapped Snip, "it's a little too stereotyped to be a woman." Then she smiled and said, "Bob DenDenker always thought it was someone in the Education Department at Servant College."

Rick Cole demurred. "I don't think so, Jenny. Whoever writes that thing knows too much about the West Coast. Remember all those references to the ocean and stuff? And to orange trees? That's got to be out there someplace, probably southern California. As a matter of fact . . . ."

At that moment Cole was interrupted by a gaggle of teachers entering the faculty room for their morning break. They gathered around the table which held the coffee urns and the morning goodies, mostly day-old leftovers contributed by Dutch Mothers Bakeries in town. Bible teacher John Vroom, who led the pack, being drawn by the lure of food and drink, drew a cup of coffee and selected a jelly doughnut and a cream puff. Plainly he needed some quick nourishment. His face was drawn tightly, and his fat lips were pressed in a thin line.

"Hey, John," shouted Cole jovially, "you look a little peaked this morning. Anything we ought to know about?"

Vroom said nothing; instead he walked sullenly to his brown, vinyl-covered armchair against the west wall, coffee in one hand, doughnut and cream puff in the other.

"Hey, John," shouted economics teacher Bill Silver, "heard that you got a birthday present from your first-hour class today. Tell us about it."

Vroom stared straight ahead, chewing his jelly doughnut very deliberately.

Silver then turned to the others, grinning wisely, and began telling the story. "This morning when John got to his desk, he found a nicely wrapped package there with a red ribbon on it, and there was a nice card wishing him a happy birthday from his class." He looked impishly around at his attentive colleagues, and then turned to Vroom. "Come on, John, let's have it. What was in the box?"

Vroom was plainly nettled, and he glared at his tormentor. But Silver was relentless. "It wasn't a new sweater," he grinned, "and it wasn't a birthday cake." Pausing for suspense, Silver then made the announcement: "It was a big, juicy cow-flop."

At first there was some raucous laughter, but that diminished as Vroom's colleagues saw that he had

Vacation"

H.K. ZOEKLICHT

plainly been hurt. Susan Katje walked over to Vroom, patted him gently on the shoulder, and purred: "Come on, John, it was all in fun. Those kids like you. At least they remembered your birthday."

Vroom stopped chewing momentarily and looked directly at her. "They are sons of their father the devil," he said. "You will find that in John 8:44."

It was time to change the subject. Coach Ren "Rabbit" Abbot, always eager and ready to talk sports, and especially basketball, said to Silver, "Did you hear that Coach Spindles from State U. was here yesterday to look over Phil Vogelmerd? If Phil has another good year for us, he's gonna get a full ride from State—as well as offers from half a dozen other good basketball schools. No doubt about it; he has the gift. Isn't that great?" Abbot looked expectantly around for confirmation.

"What's so great about it?" came from Principal Esther Carpenter, who had just joined the group for her morning fruit juice break. "I thought we had an idea about covenant education, a kind of philosophy of education, going around here, one that implies commitment to Christian schools? Does that end with the 12th grade? How about it, Ren? Shouldn't you be encouraging our athletes to attend Christian colleges, such as Servant?"

The coach was non-plussed, and defensive. "Of course," he said, "other things being equal I would encourage Phil to attend a Christian college, especially if, uh, they were talented in history or science or something like that. But you've got to remember that a guy like Phil has got real gifts from God in sports, and now he's gonna have a chance to witness in one of the big universities. Isn't that what it's all about? Witnessing? Isn't that where it's at?" He paused for breath and then announced, "You've got to remember that athletic talent is a gift of God."

"So is safe-cracking," came from librarian Susan Katje. "But what does it have to do with good education, with Christian education?"

"Well," said the steamed-up coach, pointing his finger at Katje, "I think you overlook the potential of athletes—Christian athletes who graduate from our fine Christian schools— to witness in those public colleges on those sports teams. They can be a real witness, a, uh, a salting salt. I think that's what it's all about anyway. Haven't you ever heard of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes? Isn't that what it's really all about?"

"No, I don't think so," responded the principal. I thought our philosophy of Christian education had more to it than that. I frankly resent it that the best athletes in our Christian schools are now seduced by the big scholarship offers, the newspaper and television publicity, and the promises of glory to ignore substantial Christian colleges in favor of prestigious public sports factories. And I surely hope that Omni Christian will do absolutely nothing to promote that trend." Then she added, "But I really do appreciate, Ren, your interest in the welfare of our students who happen to be athletes." She looked directly at the coach.

He stared right back at her. "I'm afraid, Dr. Carpenter, that you don't really understand the complexities of athletics in education. Maybe we can talk about it sometime."

"Of course," said the principal. "Maybe we should. Perhaps we could discuss that in faculty meeting sometime." Then, to change the subject, she inquired, "By the way, Ren, what will you be doing during the summer months?"

"I'm on the paint crew with Rick, Matt, and Bill," he answered. "We've already got five houses lined up. It should be a good summer."

"I had hoped," said Carpenter archly, "that you'd be able to complete your specialist's degree at Denver this summer. Wasn't that your original plan?"

"Yes, it was," said the coach, while looking her straight in the eye, "but I'm postponing that. Painting pays more, and I need the money. I need to earn enough to send my kids to the Christian school."

"I'll tell that to the board," said Carpenter smoothly. And then she added, "You don't need a fifth painter on that crew, do you?" She smiled broadly.

"If we do, I'll let you know," said the coach, smiling back.

At that moment there was a loud commotion in the hall, just across from the faculty room door. But when they got to the door, they found no one in the halls. They were strangely deserted. But it was not quiet. A loud, thumping sound emerged from within the restroom marked "Teachers Only," just across from the faculty room door. In front of the restroom door someone had placed a large piano, rolled in, doubtless, from the nearby music room. The thumping continued. When the mystified teachers pushed the piano away and opened the door, they saw a remarkable sight. There was John Vroom, sitting red-faced and grim, on the stool. He stood up and stalked out of the restroom without saying thank you. As he walked down the hall, he shouted over his shoulder, "That's it! I've had it! I'm through! They are sons of their father the devil."

Dr. Carpenter winced and then smiled patiently. "I'll go retrieve him," she said to the startled colleagues. And on the way back I'll capture those four tennis truants across the street." Then she added, "Whew! It's time for vacation." **CEJ**

Sexist Language: Why Should

ABOUT EIGHT YEARS AGO when I first began to teach writing, I thought the entire issue of sexist language was silly. Strident feminists were pointing to a problem that did not actually exist, I reasoned. After all, everyone knows that the word *he* can be understood to refer to both males and females; as Sheridan Baker says in the 1976 edition of his classic textbook *The Complete Stylist*, "*His* stands for both sexes, if you can stand it."

However, my attitude about sexist language has changed during the past several years, and I now make a point of teaching all my writing classes how to avoid such language. Practical concerns, logic, and my Christian principles have all contributed to my new attitude.

Defining Sexist Language. Simply put, sexist language employs words that in some way ignore or trivialize women. It is not necessarily language that identifies the sex of an individual. To say "Sally Ride was America's first woman astronaut" is not sexist, for it does not ignore or trivialize Ms. Ride.

However, labelling certain occupations or professions as exclusively male or female is sexist; for example, assuming that a doctor must be a man or a nurse must be a women. At several times during my academic career I have encountered students who have been very surprised to discover that Professor Gallagher was a woman; their assumption that "professor" implied male was sexist. Other ways to use language to subtly put women down include using such inequitable labels as "men and girls."

The primary manifestation of sexist language that I want to discuss, however, involves using words that usually refer to the male sex in order to refer to individuals or groups of unknown gender. Thus, the word *man* often signifies a male, but it can also designate human beings in general. Similarly, we use the pronoun *he* to refer to a specific male (such as Bill), but we also might use *he* to refer to a person of unknown sex (such as "the student").

Traditional grammar teaches that masculine words such as *he* or *man* are "grammatically neutral," including women and men. So what is wrong with using these words in situations in which the gender of the individual is unknown?

The Practical Approach. One reason we should teach our students to avoid this kind of sexist language is the practical advantage of possessing gender-inclusive writing skills. In today's intellectual and political climate, some readers may be offended by the use of sexist language. Many magazines, journals, and publishing houses now require authors to craft their prose in such a way as to avoid sexist pronouns and nouns.

As our students enter the worlds of business, education, politics, social service, or church work, they need to know how to express themselves in such a way as to avoid offending others. A job application with a cover letter addressed "Dear Sir" that reaches a feminist woman vice-president of personnel might destroy the applicant's chance of obtaining an interview. Knowing how to write gender-inclusive prose is a necessary skill to survive in today's writing realm.

Our Inefficient Language. Beyond the practical advantages, another reason to avoid sexist language comes from logic: the English language is sometimes imprecise and inefficient. Having two different meanings for the word *man* is often misleading, inaccurate, and confusing. It makes more sense to have two different words to refer to males and to human beings.

Other languages do not have the gender problems of English. Many languages have three distinct words for humankind, women, and men. For example, Latin designates *homo, femina,* or *mulier*, and *mas* or *vir*; Hebrew uses *'adham, 'ishshah,* and *'ish*; Greek distinguishes between *anthropos, gyne,* and *aner*. Such distinctions eliminate potential confusion.

The Psychological Mandate. The most important reason I teach nonsexist writing, however, is not just practical and efficient but philosophical. As a Christian, I am concerned that not only my actions but also my language glorify God and express my love for other people. Therefore, I

Prose that is decorous, clear, coherent, and nonprejudiced can be crafted if writers are willing to spend a little more time examining alternatives.

Christians Be Concerned?

SUSAN VANZANTEN GALLAGHER

need to consider how my language may emotionally or psychologically affect those around me.

Language has the power to influence thought and instill attitudes. George Orwell depicts this power in his novel *1984*, in which the government controls what people will think by rigidly governing the words that they have to express those thoughts. Doublespeak does not provide a vocabulary for rebellion or disagreement and so eliminates these ideas from the minds of the people.

The power wielded by the words *man* and *he* for the most part is male power; most people think first of males when they hear these words. Such words may be grammatically neutral, but psychologically they are masculine. Children especially are unable to understand the difference between the word *man* as applied to their father and as applied to their entire church. When they hear sermons about "men," most children will think their minister refers only to males.

Numerous studies over the past 20 years demonstrate this phenomenon. For example, in 1974, Western Michigan University professor Linda Harrison asked 500 junior high students to draw pictures of primitive people performing various human activities. Students who were told to depict the use of tools by "early man" or pottery making by "primitive man" drew pictures of males. Alternatively, those told to show the use of tools by "early people" or pottery making by "primitive humans" depicted both men and women engaged in these tasks.

As children grow older, they gradually learn to decipher the confusing meanings of the words *man* and *he* (although several studies demonstrate that even college students frequently view these words primarily as male words). But while children are developing their self-images and concepts of others, they frequently see the world as dominated by males. Consequently, boys may become egotistical and domineering, while girls may feel inadequate and insecure.

Professor Harrison's research and several other studies convince me of the damaging psychological effects of constantly talking about "the student" or "the writer" as "he." Most frequently, my students tell me that this kind of language doesn't bother them. But current research suggests that these emotional responses are more unconscious than conscious. In always hearing the student discussed as "he," the women in my class might begin to feel inferior and unable to achieve some of the same academic goals as my male students.

Often these unconscious effects emerge, as for example, when I see a class unwittingly reveal their assumptions that writers are male. Recently, after reading an essay clearly written by a woman (named Gloria), one fourth of my college freshmen class referred to the author as "he" in their written responses. The greater insecurity, unwillingness to speak out, and feeling of academic incompetence often displayed by my female students may in part be created by sexist language.

Given even that possibility, I feel a responsibility to my students to value both males and females equally. Galatians 3:28 tells us that in Christ distinctions between male and female are not important; similarly, the language that I use and that I teach needs to show my students that women are academically and intellectually equal to men.

If we wish to teach our students that both females and males are equal in God's sight, can achieve academically, and are valuable to us as individuals, we need to consider our language carefully. Christian school teachers, both in the grammar they teach and in the kind of language they use in the classroom, should think seriously about the impact that sexist language can have on their students.

How to Avoid Sexist Language. In learning to avoid sexist language, we need to decide on acceptable alternatives. A variety of techniques have been proposed over the past several years, some better than others. In considering the emotional well-being of our students, however, we do not have to sacrifice style and clarity.

Some proposals are clearly

Avoid Using Sexist Language

Option	Example
1. Change the noun to plural	"Students should be careful to read attentively, underlining important points in the books as they read."
2. Use "he or she" or "she or he"	"Every citizen of the United States earning a certain amount of money must pay his or her income tax by April 15."
3. Revise the sentence to a avoid using a pronoun	Revise, "A runner must discipline his or her body by daily training before he or she can win a marathon" to "In order to win a marathon, a runner must be disciplined enough to train daily."

impractical. Casey Miller and Kate Swift in an article in *The New York Times* several years ago proposed using "gen" instead of "man"; few writers have taken up that option. Others have proposed using "tey" as an indefinite pronoun. But introducing new terms into the English language does not follow the pattern of how language tends to evolve and consequently has not been very successful.

Instead, if you listen to speech patterns, which is typically how languages change, you will discover that increasingly the word *they* is used to refer to a singular indefinite antecedent. The grade school teacher might announce: "Everyone should be sure to take their lunches to the special assembly today." Such a sentence is technically ungrammatical, but I suspect this kind of pattern will soon be acceptable in writing, as it is increasingly used in speech. (Recently, grammarian Martha Kolln has made a compelling case for the grammatical soundness of such a construction.)

Ugly or Confusing Alternative. Until the English language completely develops gender-inclusive patterns, we have several other possible ways to avoid sexist language. One alternative is to use words composed of slashes, such as *he/she* or *s/he*. But words should be used both to be effective and to show beauty; the slash violates my sense of beauty and decorum. In using a slash, I think I sound like a computer.

Another alternative that I dislike involves switching back and forth between male and female pronouns. For example, "The student should be careful to read attentively, underlining important points in his book as he reads. Upon concluding the chapter, she should try to write a brief summary of the material." This kind of gender-inclusive language is confusing for the reader.

Some writers choose to solve the problem of nonsexist language by using female pronouns for indefinite references. In such a practice, my sample passage would read: "The student should be careful to read attentively, underlining important points in her book as she reads." Those who choose this option argue that for hundreds of years the male pronoun has been used for indefinite references, and now we should use the female pronoun. While making a strong political statement and shocking the reader into acknowledging that the student could indeed be a female, this practice seems to address the evil merely by erring on the other side.

Coherent Gender-Inclusive Language. Many other ways exist to avoid using *he* in a confusing or prejudiced manner. In my own writing, I employ one of the following three options: I change the noun to plural, I use the phrase "he or she" or "she or he," or I revise the sentence to avoid using a pronoun.

Employing plural nouns is often the best solution to the sexist language problem. It is the solution that I have used the most frequently throughout this essay. The sample passage is easily revised to read: "Students should be careful to read attentively, underlining important points in their books as they read." The majority of sexist language difficulties can be resolved by simply going to the plural.

The second alternative is less satisfactory. Occasionally the context of a sentence demands that you use a singular noun. In such a case, you can employ "he or she" or "she or he." For example, "Every citizen of the United States earning a certain amount of money must pay his or her income tax by April 15." Used in limited amounts, such a construction still allows the sentence to flow, but repeated "he or she" constructions can get bulky and awkward.

Given such a bulk, the best option is to revise a sentence to eliminate some of the pronouns. The repeated pronouns in the following sentence very quickly become awkward: "A runner must discipline his or her body by daily training before he or she can win a marathon." A better sentence can be constructed with some revision: "In order to win a marathon, a runner must be disciplined enough to train daily."

For further guidelines on how to write nonsexist prose, consult Casey Miller and Kate Swift, *The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing* (1981). They discuss the options given in this essay as well as a number of other alternatives.

Prose that is decorous, clear, coherent, and nonprejudiced can be crafted if writers are willing to spend a little more time examining alternatives. If we care about our students' mental well-being, if we want to clarify the ambiguities of our language, and if we want to give Christian students a necessary skill in today's writing world, we should teach them how to avoid sexist language both by our instruction and by our example. **CEJ**

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Is there a difference in the abilities of boys and girls with respect to mathematics?

Sex Differences in Mathematics Achievement

Are these differences inherent, or has our society caused girls to be less interested in math and science?

BY ROBERT J. KELLY

The apparent difference in the achievement levels of boys and girls in mathematics has made this one of the most controversial topics in math education and in education of the gifted. Results of research in this area quite consistently have shown that boys generally get higher scores on tests of mathematical reasoning and achievement. The reasons for this difference, however, remain a question. No current explanation meets with widespread agreement. Christians have a special stake in this topic as we wish to encourage our young men and women to make the most of their God-given talents. Recent news reports and magazine articles have sparked interest in this topic both among parents and students. Recent research publications related to this topic demonstrate that the questions still outnumber answers.

Hanna (1986), for example, used data from the Second International Mathematics Study (SIMS), a major research project designed to compare students in eighth and twelfth grades from countries all over the world, to determine if there were differences in the results of eighth grade boys and girls in the sample of students from Ontario. The instrument used in this study was a multiple choice test created by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement. Each student answered seventy-five questions that fell into one of five categories: arithmetic, algebra, geometry, probability and statistics, and measurement. The sample for this study was quite large—3,523—all of whom took a pretest and a posttest. The terms "pretest" and "posttest" imply that a treatment of some sort was given. The author does not specifically state what this treatment was, but the article implies that the treatment was given in the eighth grade.

The three major results of this study are the following: 1) The mean number of correct responses for boys is slightly but significantly higher than for girls for the questions on geometry and measurement, but not in the other areas. 2) Girls omitted more answers than boys did at a rate of 3:2. 3) The gains shown over eighth grade were the same for boys and girls. Hanna theorizes that these differences may be the result of training through out-of-class activities not normally pursued by girls, such as building models and reading charts and graphs.

While the number of contaminating variables in this study is very large, the sample is also very large, which, if properly sampled, would do much to eliminate differences in socioeconomic status, parent education, and a variety of other variables. We cannot put much confidence in the result about eighth grade gains since the treatments were so varied and contamination so uncontrolled, but we can notice the differences that were reported. Something seems to encourage boys to guess more than girls, and something gives boys a slight edge in spatial areas like geometry and measurement. Hanna's suggestions, however, don't seem to sufficiently account for the difference.

Ferrini-Mundy (1987) is also concerned with the spatial aspect of the differences reported between males and females. This study concerns the differences in calculus achievement among college students. The author prepared a tape and slide unit designed to give calculus students additional spatial training. The subjects were given a number of tests that measured calculus achievement, tendency to sketch rotation of solid problems, and spatial ability. The researcher used a sophisticated modified Solomon four-group design to control for contaminating variables.

Conclusions of this study are the following: 1) The act of taking the Differential Aptitude Test (DAT) in Space Relations improves the score on a subsequent use of the same test. 2) Training in spatial visualization may enhance women's ability to visualize solids and improve achievement in calculus.

The indication concerning the benefit of the DAT may be the most significant of this project, even though it is not the major focus. Simply put, people who take this section of the DAT once should do better the second time. This could be important information for the school counselors since this test is often used for guidance recommendations.

The result with regard to using training to enhance women's calculus achievement, however, is contaminated

Left-handedness, seems to have some correlation with extreme giftedness in math.

by the nature of the men and women in the sample. Half of the men in this sample were enrolled in engineering or physical science programs, whereas only about one-third of the women fell in this category. This difference may be more powerful than either the sex difference or the treatment—the spatial training given to these students. The results of this study, therefore, are suspect—any differences that were reported may have been caused by things other than what the researcher intended. A replication of this study with an attempt to control for concurrent course experience would be more helpful.

Mura (1987) examined the expectations of men and women in college mathematics courses by administering a questionaire to a number of students at many different levels in the college math curriculum at the beginning of a term, before they could get any feedback on their progress. The questions dealt with their expectations for success in the current course as well as future studies in math. These surveys were later compared to the grades that the students actually received.

The results of this study are 1) Men tend to overestimate their grades more than women. 2) No difference between men and women was found in the level of confidence with regard to finishing the bachelor's degree in which the students were enrolled, but a marked difference was found in their confidence in personal ability to obtain a Ph.D. if one was desired.

This study has been carefully performed and has some insightful and notable results. There is a slight difficulty with regard to validity of the instruments and the problems always faced with one-shot surveys—such as the potential changeability of the confidence levels measured. Generally, though, this research project seems to have good internal validity and, since it was conducted at five different Canadian universities, would seem to carry substantial external validity—that is, it would seem to generalize well to a larger population.

These results are substantial if we are to understand one of the potential reasons for the disparate measurements between men and women in mathematics achievement. We are still faced with the problem of causality: Which of these factors is the cause and which is the consequence? Do men perform better than women because they are encouraged to play games that train them in geometry and measurement, as Hanna suggests, or are men really more capable at math because of some innate quality?

Benbow (1986) has published a number of papers on this topic and has summarized her work up to this point in a recent report. In this paper, Benbow again reports the data from the Johns Hopkins Talent Search program. In the Talent Search program, now held in all fifty states, students in seventh and eighth grade who score in the top three to five percentile on a standardized test (like the Iowa Test of Basic Skills) are invited to take the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). The researchers at Johns Hopkins have tracked the participants who score above 700 on the math portion of SAT before age 13. Even though equal numbers of boys and girls take this test, for every girl who met the criteria for this group there were twelve boys. This difference is far too great to be considered a mere fluke in the data.

Benbow discusses a number of possible reasons for this discrepancy, such as boys taking different courses than girls; parents, teachers, and others encouraging girls less than boys in

mathematics; and sex-typing math as a masculine discipline. She dismisses each of these arguments, and a few others, as not being sufficiently persuasive. She then looks at possible physiological correlates. This is where her work becomes controversial. Left-handedness seems to have some correlation with extreme giftedness in math. Left-handedness, she reports, may be related to hemisphericity of the brain (right brain/left brain theory). An enhanced right hemisphere may be responsible for superior mathematical reasoning. One possible cause for this enhanced right hemisphere in boys may be pre-natal testosterone levels.

This view, as previously stated, is very controversial and not widely accepted. Nonetheless, the research stated is compelling, and more research along these lines is needed. Benbow is careful to point out that these physiological differences may be responsible, in part, for the differences noted in achievement and certainly does not recommend that women should not pursue mathematics or that individual women are not capable of doing higher level math.

The four articles summarized here demonstrate that this problem has different aspects. Mura points out that, under apparently equal conditions, women need to feel more confidence than men in order to achieve equal success in mathematics. Hanna poses the consideration that even by eighth grade there are differences in achievement in certain areas of mathematics. Ferrini-Mundy takes the next step, that of designing remediation techniques to try to even out initial differences, while Benbow attempts to find the actual cause of these differences. Only with continued sound research in this area will we come closer to an understanding of these differences and begin to learn how to deal more appropriately with them.

This volatile and controversial topic is one on which we need to keep current in order to bring sense to the misunderstanding that the popular press can foster. As Christian educators we need to be able to give informed leadership when parents and students ask about these issues. The following recommendations may be helpful:

1) Encourage girls to be willing to guess on answers even when not sure. The SIMS result that showed girls more likely to omit an answer is disturbing. We must be careful not to make our boys "figure it out" while subtly giving girls the answers so that they don't "get frustrated."

2) Make a concerted effort to have both men and women come to school as special guests in the areas of math and science. By having predominantly men as role models we may be setting up a lack of confidence in women to achieve higher degrees in mathematics.

3) The difference between mean scores and individual performance cannot be overlooked. Research seems to indicate that there may be more boys at the top end of the curve than girls. There are still, however, many girls in the top percentile of the achievement scale. These girls need to be challenged and encouraged.

4) Don't be willing to let parents or other teachers hide behind the idea that girls do not do as well as boys in math once they reach middle school. Such stereotyping would be enough to possibly cause the differences in the first place!

5) Be skeptical of articles in magazines or reports on television that oversimplify the situation or that report "the real reasons" why differences exist. The state of research is not even close to being able to give a definitive answer. If more information on a particular result is needed, search out the original research article and read it critically—many published research projects have severely flawed experimental designs, which render their results completely useless.

The Lord has created us, male and female, with many gifts and abilities. Teachers have the awesome responsibility to help all young people, regardless of gender, to develop their gifts to the fullest of their potential. **CEJ**

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Riding on Steel:

Biblical Guidelines for Discussing

THE DISCUSSION WAS HOT. One student argued that Christians should shun rock and roll. The insistent beat and other elements can stir emotions out of control, he said. He quoted a book by a former teen gang leader, now converted to Christianity. The gang veteran claimed that he and his friends used to listen to rock and roll to work themselves up for vandalistic rampages. Another student jumped to rock and roll's defense. Classical music too, he pointed out, could arouse strong emotions (the Nazis' use of Wagner lurked in the background here). The question, said the defender, was what sort of emotion was aroused and for what reason.

So went one exchange during the most animated discussion of the semester in my Introduction to Mass Communication class.

Such rare discussions are gratifying. But I'm often left wondering whether anything was learned, and if so whether what was learned was good. The problem is guiding students—whether in class or informally out of class—so that even if they don't come up with complete answers, they leave with biblical direction. How can students sort through the available opinions to come to an approximation of a Christian view of things, especially of popular culture?

In the form of rock music or the soaps or the movies, pop culture must have spiritually slaughtered its ten thousands of Christian young people. For concerned teachers, let me suggest what may be a helpful guide to saving some of those lives.

The guide is a framework of basic biblical themes, and the best short guide I know of to this framework is a book by Redeemer College Theology professor Al Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Eerdmans, 1985). The book discusses three biblical themes that should distinctively shape a Christian worldview: creation, fall, and redemption.

Wolters applies these themes in four specific areas to suggest how viewing things in this framework launches us on a biblical understanding of our modern world. Two of these areas, for example, are sexuality and dance.

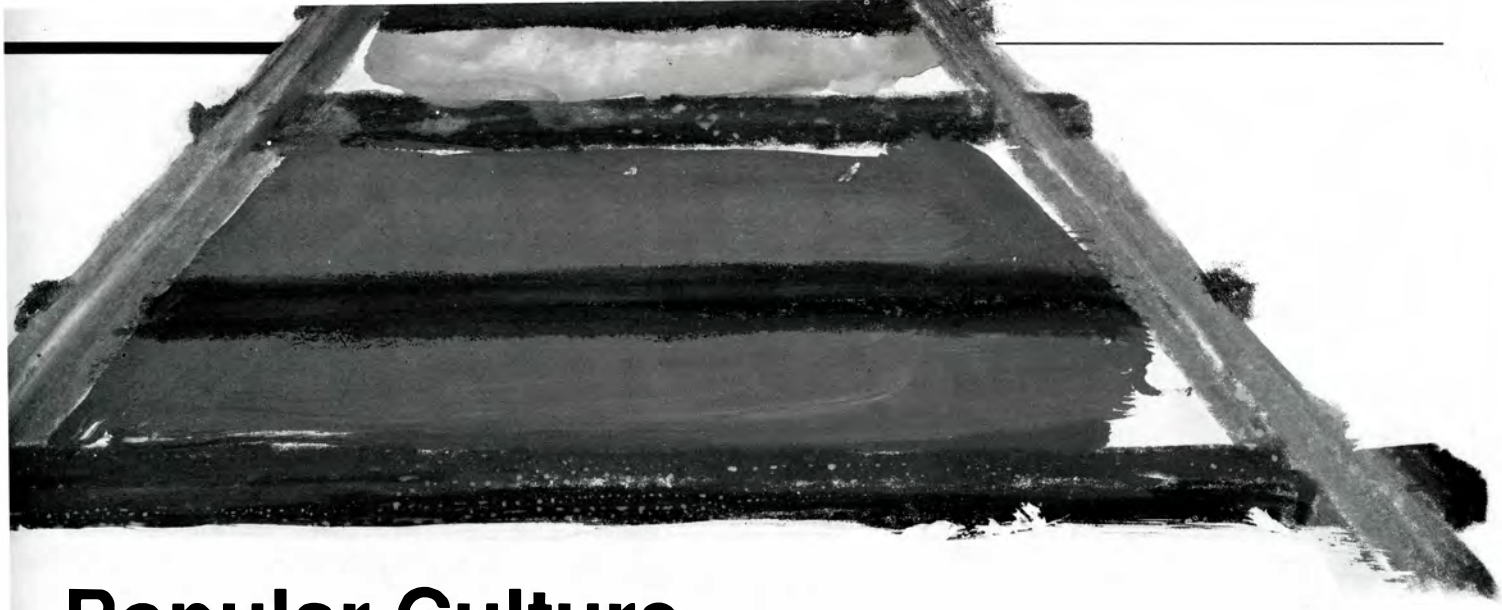
For his discussion, Wolters shortens the three themes to two: "structure" and "direction." *Structure* refers to the fact that everything is God-created, and thereby has a particular nature or structure, "after its own kind." As Wolters puts it, "*Structure* denotes the 'essence' of a creaturely thing, the kind of creation it is by virtue of God's creational law" (72-73). *Direction* refers to the reality that creation is misdirected because of the fall to serve idols, or redirected to serve God through the redemption of God's people in Christ. In Wolters' words, direction refers to "a sinful deviation from (the) structural ordinance (of creation) and renewed conformity to it in Christ" (73).

Wolters stresses that the two terms are closely connected. In fact, the conflict between the two possible directions "rages *for the sake* of the created structure" (73). To put it differently, the whole point of redemption is to restore the creation to obedience to God's law.

We can think of these two emphases then, as the two rails of the single track of a biblical view of things. One rail is the truth that all things are created by God and as such are good in essence. The other rail is the truth that these essentially good created things are either misdirected against God, or redirected to serve him. In other words, we must approach any topic sensitive to what the created norms are for the situation (structure), *and* be ready to discern the active spirits (direction).

Having our wheels solidly on both rails can be especially helpful when discussing pop culture with young people, I believe, because it is so easy to condemn or justify on the basis of personal preferences or group loyalties. I'll detail two common problems in discussions of popular music and show how the themes of *structure* and *direction* can extricate us.

One common problem I've observed is a startingly comfortable attitude toward some of the most anti-Christian rock and roll, exhibited by some sincere Christian young people. For example, a student writes a review for a Christian college newspaper of his top ten rock albums of the year. Number one on the list is *The Joshua Tree* by the group U2. This is not surprising; three of this band's four members are Christians, and their music, concerts,



Popular Culture

BY DAVE CAMPBELL

and personal lives have a reputation for integrity. As his number four album, though, the student recommends one by Prince, a rocker whose reputation is built on songs idolizing sex. He often describes sex in pornographic terms. In the review there is no word of caution, no hint that there is anything incongruous about recommending such music in a Christian newspaper. The album, says the review, is "filled with tremendously varied, but never disappointing music."

Here is a student who appreciates rock and roll because he is sensitive to its structure. His previous reviews brim with knowledgeable comments about the instruments, the harmonies, and the freshness of various rock albums. Neither is he always insensitive to the spiritual direction of music. Part of his delight in the music of U2, I know from an earlier review, is that the group is clearly Christian. My impression of this student and others like him is that they are so taken with an appreciation of musical structure that they overlook a twisting of that structure into the service of evil.

The job of a Christian teacher in this instance is, it seems to me, neither to let the review pass unprotested, nor simply to condemn it. Instead, the answer is to confront the student with the right questions and try to help him sort out what it is that he appreciates in Prince—presumably some elements of the music—from its evil direction. If a teacher ignores the structure, the student may leave the encounter thinking the teacher just doesn't understand the music.

It would also be important to discern that Prince's music is not just immoral, but like all idolatries, it promotes a religion that competes directly with Christianity for human hearts. It is an affront to our faith, in which the moments of creational goodness are made grotesque by their false framework. This "goodness" is potentially an enticement, so that ultimately Prince's music must be resolutely shunned. But this radical conclusion will be less fully understood, and less likely to be accepted by a musically sensitive young person, if his perception of real shreds of goodness in the music is not accounted for.

An opposite problem among Christian students is the tendency to shy away from secular rock and roll, but to be uncritical fans of Christian pop music. Here, the problem is the opposite of the one just discussed. These students may analyze music in exclusively directional terms. They condemn secular music, especially when it has Satanist images or glaring references to promiscuous sex. But they are easy on any song full of evangelical language that focuses a personal relationship with God. Such a song may be considered beyond criticism, even if it is shallow and fraught with cliches.

The track of structure and direction supports our struggle out of this bog, too. It reminds us that to honor God we must honor his structure for music as well as discern its direction. Students' feelings that Christian music should not be criticized according to musical standards may come partly from the modern attitude that music is a matter only of taste, and that each person is entitled to be left undisturbed—earphones on if necessary—with her or his own preferences.

Taking the doctrine of creation seriously, though, suggests that we urge young people to submit to the musical leadership of those who have both spiritual wisdom and the sensitivity to know good music. The students themselves, of course, have a measure of personal responsibility to decide who their leaders are, so saying this is not to insist that they follow the teacher or church choir director in *their* tastes.

These two examples are intended only to suggest ways in which riding on the track of structure and direction can help us stay out of the bogs. To understand Wolters better, of course, you should read him. As he stresses several times in his book, the structure and direction scheme is not a simplistic answer to difficult questions. Important questions require wrestling our way out of tough dilemmas. Some may require considerable prayer and fasting. But structure and direction can help us ask the right questions, giving us biblical steel to ride on. **CEJ**

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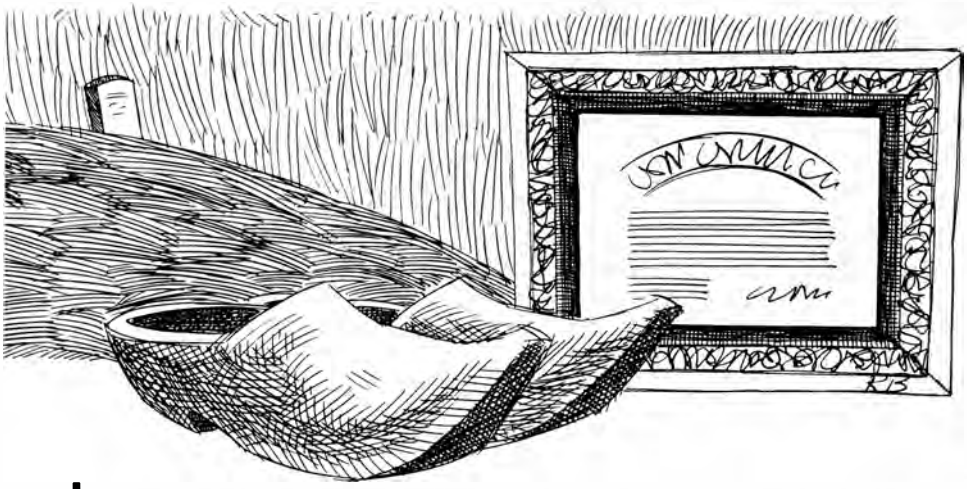
Testimony



JAMES CALVIN SCHAAP

LAST WEEK AT AN AUCTION on our block, Ralph, my neighbor, nearly eighty, told me he was going to buy an old high school diploma of a man named John De Motts, dated 1908, a man Ralph claims was once his brothers' dearly beloved teacher at an old country school.

De Motts is long gone. It was his sister's auction. But if he was the teacher I expect he was, he'd love to know that the memory of his respect prompted an old man to want to bid on an aged diploma out of a sense of loyalty that was second-hand, at best, a feeling he'd picked up from his brothers over the supper table sixty years ago.

But it was an antique auction, and the yard was crawling with dealers, serious-looking strangers who pulled out drawers, fingernailed the veneer on the commodes, then scribbled notes on little scratchpads. I didn't think Ralph had a chance because the diploma was in an old, ornate frame.

I had been thinking lately about a kid whose memory comes back to me now, a dozen years later, out of a bundle of high school annuals full of nearly indistinguishable student faces. Ralph's mission reminded me of that kid again. Oddly enough, I can't forget that boy, even though he didn't sit for a day in one of my classes. His face, long and pallid, almost emaciated, and his hair, a dry clump of erratic, colorless brush that was always too long, will never slip from my memory, even though I never poured over his essays, as I did so many other high school kids' work that year.

His name was Kevin Tilstra. Out of two thousand high school students at Greenway High School in Phoenix, Arizona, he was, to my knowledge, the only kid blessed with a recognizable Dutch surname.

That I knew him at all was merely an accident of educational theory. Greenway High School had been constructed just three years before from a blueprint drawn up by adherents of what was then called "flexible spacing," a slightly more conservative variant of the open classroom. The English Department had its own building, eight full classroom areas separated only (if desired) by curtains, a design meant to encourage team teaching, small group discussions, individualized learning, and whatever other innovative teaching strategies would be appearing on the horizon of educational theory.

Via class list, Kevin Tilstra belonged to Helene, my colleague, a native New Yorker, a Jewish woman with a glittering, urbane charm. But during his English class, his desk was placed at the far edge of her class, adjacent to my room. Somewhere during the course of the first semester, I stumbled across his name on Helene's rolls.

"He's Frisian," I told her, pointing to the name. "The kid is Frisian."

She looked at me as if I were certainly slurring him.

"I mean, he's Dutch—like me," I told her. "What kind of student is he?"

She waved her flattened hand. "Marginal—maybe."

I didn't care how smart the kid was. Somehow, for me it was a thrill to see that name. So the next day when I saw him stretch out in his desk, I walked over to him and nudged him.

"Tilstra," I said. "Where you from?" In Arizona, that's not an unusal question.

"Minnesota," he said.

I loved it—I figured it had to be Edgerton, Pease, or Prinsburg. "What town?" I said, because I knew it would be just a matter of time before I could locate an uncle or a cousin on his family tree.

"St. Paul," he said, but it was the strange look he gave me that surprised me. I half expected him to be thrilled with my investigation of his pedigree, but the strange kind of drawn eyes he gave me explained clearly that he hadn't the slightest idea why this Mr. Schaap would take the time of day to walk over to his desk and talk about Minnesota.

"I'm Dutch," I told him, trying to make an impression. *"Schaap*—it's Dutch. You know?—Hollander?"

From the look on his face, I knew I could have been speaking another language.

"You're Dutch too," I told him. "You know that?"

He shook his head, almost defensively, I think, somewhat ashamed, perhaps, to have to admit that he really didn't understand what on earth I thought could be so charming.

"You're Dutch—I'm Dutch," I told him. "We're the only Hollanders around here. We got to stick together, see?—a couple of wooden shoes."

That's when the bell rang.

I never knew any more about Kevin Tilstra. All I knew was that he occupied a seat on the row closest to my room, that he looked just like any other Greenway kid, and that he had no idea what kind of whole world of meaning Mr. Schaap saw in that Dutch name of

his. Occasionally, I'd bump into him, nudge him like I had that first day, call him a "Hollander." And he'd smile, laugh, respond in a way that I understood to mean he liked the attention. He was Helene's student, but if nothing else he knew that Mr. Schaap was identifying him for some kind of special attention, even if he didn't really understand why.

I remember him for his name, of course; but I'll never forget his slight build, his long legs, and the way his bell bottoms fell over his boots like so many other kids'. He was tall too, or maybe it was his thinness that made him seem such a lanky kid, sprawling out in that desk every third period. And he never looked healthy, his skin pale gray, the wan color of concrete in the Arizona sun, his eyes usually drawn, humorless. He seemed to have few friends.

He had a brother, I guess, a freshman I never knew or saw. But the boy must not have resembled Kevin. I say that because some teachers claimed that when Kevin's younger brother killed himself that year, he did so because kids teased him for being overweight. Maybe that kind of excuse is what one would expect to circulate in a teacher's lounge. But whatever the case, it happened.

Helene told me one morning. "Kevin, you know?—*your* Kevin? Did you hear about his brother?"

"No, I didn't," I told her.

"He hung himself." She told me the teachers' lounge story.

"You're kidding," I said.

"Miller told me this morning," she said, referring to a counselor. "Kevin's not going to be back here for awhile—maybe a week."

"That's terrible," I said.

"What's going on in those kids' heads is what you sometimes wonder," she said, sliding her roll sheet into the top drawer of her desk.

Suicide is always shocking, no matter how often it happens. But that day I wasn't haunted by the boy's death. I didn't know him. It had been the brother of the boy Helene called "your Kevin," and it had been suicide, a thirteen-year-old boy. But there was Thoreau to cover that morning, perhaps—and besides, Kevin really wasn't my student.

A week later Kevin came back to school. He didn't wait until third period English to walk through the side door of the building. He came in to our building before school, at the time of day when you're still trying to lay the whole five hours straight out before you in your mind. That long, gangly kid came walking in through the door on my side, and he headed straight for my desk.

We hadn't seen him for a week.

I was standing there, as I remember, shuffling papers maybe, struck with an emotion I can most easily recognize as discomfort, knowing that Kevin Tilstra was coming to me for wisdom or comfort, something which he evidently felt I could give him. He didn't go to Helene. He didn't go to Miller. He came to me. He stood there at my desk, his eyes as drawn and slow as they always were, simply stood there, and waited in silence.

I had no idea what to say to him. We stood there together, our eyes at a level.

But he never said a word. He just stood there and waited for some kind of understanding from the man who'd told him a half dozen times that the Greenway Hollanders had to stick together.

I don't remember at all what I said, finally. All I do remember is that he came in silence, and even after I said something, he only nodded.

Twelve years ago that happened.

The story haunts me now with more clarity than most of the memories I have of that year. It fits somehow with this eighty-year-old diploma my neighbor says he ought to have.

Because when I think of how a few gentle nudges and little more than a dime's worth of attention somehow prompted that boy to seek me out for comfort in his pain, then I can't help but marvel at how fragile so many of us are, and how deeply our students, and ourselves, stand in need of love and dignity in a world where people have begun increasingly to introduce themselves by first name only. And then I remember once again that teaching, as Mr. De Motts probably knew, is a people profession.

So anyway, the auction started up just on time, the stuttering auctioneer filling the air with chatter while the hay wagon out front of the house slowly emptied itself of the woman's personal belongings—old corsets, dusty dishes and books, and a half-rusted helmet from World War I.

I watched Ralph position himself up front when the diploma came up, and I wished I could tell Mr. De Motts about the kid brother of two boys he once taught in a country school. Who knows what De Motts might have said to Ralph's brothers? Who really knows why they liked him?

When the auctioneer held up the diploma, I wanted to tell Ralph that I'd give up ten dollars myself to keep it away from the antique dealers. But I watched him bid, all the way up to twenty bucks, his hand going up every other dollar. Finally, he got it. He wouldn't have it any other way.

People said there were bigger sales there, once the wardrobe and the kitchen sets came up. But I'd seen enough.

Sometimes we lose sight of the nobility of what we do. Amid the attendance lists, the inky hands, the storm of papers, the after-hours chaperoning, the lust for publication, the ditto masters, and the broken zippers, the whole profession sometimes forgets that what it is doing, from moment to moment in the classroom, is great work.

It is. **CEJ**

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Celebrating Puritan Reforms

BY LOIS ALEXANDER

DURING THE 1987-88 SCHOOL year Americans celebrate 150 years of music as a separate subject in the school curriculum, an idea presented to the Boston Public School authorities in 1837 by Lowell Mason. The story of music education in the United States began in the church with the singing school movement. Singing schools were launched around 1720 by Puritan ministers seeking to reform decadent congregational singing; their efforts shaped the course of music education in America for over a century.

The history of this movement is of particular significance to Christian school educators for three reasons. First, it underscores the role Christian educators played in developing a means by which music could be understood, performed, and enjoyed by the common citizen. Second, the methodology used provided impetus for the singing schools' success—the techniques were based upon educational principles applicable to all subject areas. Third, the result and effects became evident in both educational and spiritual advancement—the goals of Christian education.

Decadent Psalm-Singing. Anticipating freedom of worship, the early colonists brought psalters with them on the voyage to the New World. Each religious sect used its respective psalter; thus, several varieties were present in the colonies by the mid-1600s.

In 1640 the *Bay Psalm Book* was printed in the colonies and became the favorite psalter of Massachusetts. It enjoyed immense success because it contained the best-known psalms of the colonists sung to only five or six melodies. No music was printed in this collection; it seemed unnecessary, for everyone knew the melodies, and very few colonists could read music.

As time passed, the well-known melodies of the early settlers began to be forgotten by second- and third-generation church congregations. It then became necessary to "line out" the tune, a practice common in rural England. Lining out was instituted as a means of teaching the congregation the words and tunes of the psalms. In lining out a psalm, the church clerk read one or two lines and the precentor (a deacon) set the pitch and sang the lines previously read by the clerk. The precentor then invited the congregation to sing what he had just sung.

Several problems surfaced as a result of lining out. A deacon who lined out a psalm may have claimed to know it well, but he frequently was just as unfamiliar with it as the congregation. Lining out resulted in the slow tempi in comparison to the lively, joyful singing of the early settlers. Further, if a precentor was given to sudden surges of inspirational creativity, he sang flourishes that added to the congregation's confusion.

As a result of unfamiliarity of psalm tunes, the inability to read music, the unavailability of the printed music, and the practice of lining out (called the "common" or "usual way"), psalm-singing in churches reached a deplorable state. One Puritan clergyman summarized it as follows:

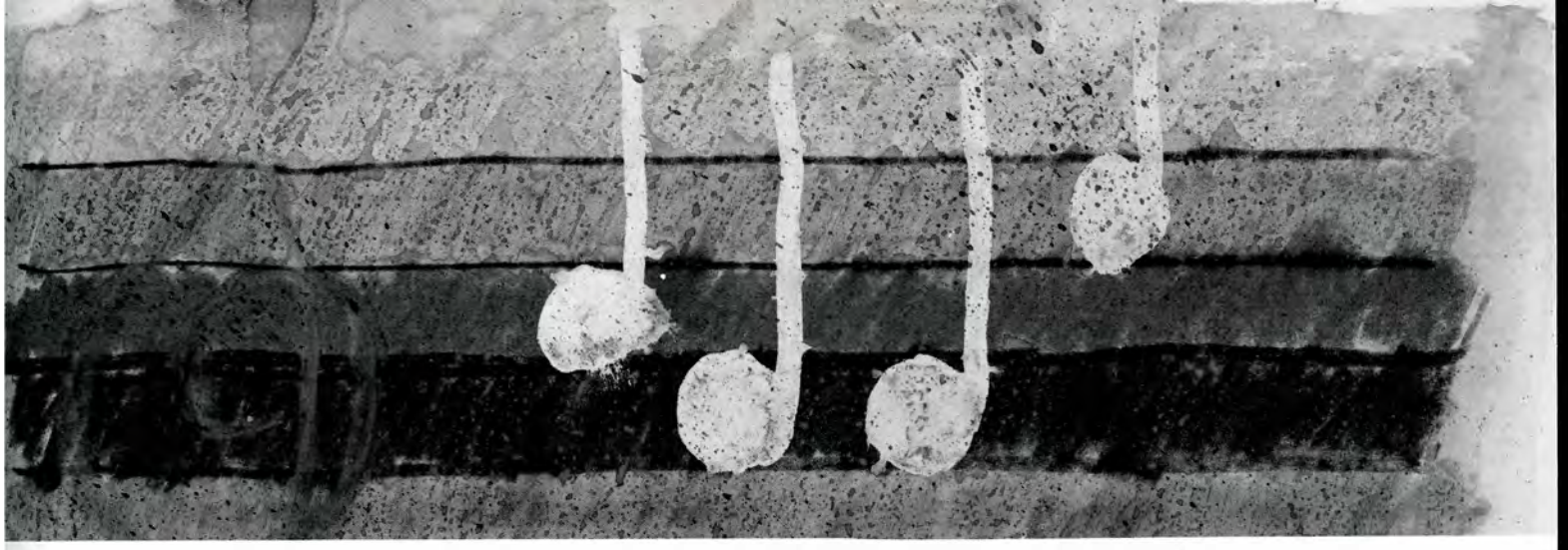
> Our tunes are left to the Mercy of every unskilled Throat to chop and alter (Stegall 5.)

This sad condition demanded reform. The calls for change came from Puritan clergymen such as Cotton Mather (1663-1728), Thomas Symmes (1677-1725), John Cotton (1689-1752), Nathaniel Chauncey (1681-1756), John Tufts (1689-1750), and Thomas Walter (1696-1725). These ministers preached sermons and published tracts advocating singing in the "regular way" and encouraged the formation of singing schools whereby the congregation could be taught to "sing by the notes."

The First Instruction Books. The publication of two instructional books, in 1721, for the purpose of teaching singing "for people even of the meanest capacities, and for children" (Marrocco and Gleason 43) marked the beginning of formal music education in the United States. John Tufts, a Harvard graduate and pastor of a Congregational church in Newbury, Massachusetts, authored *An Introduction to the Singing of Psalm Tunes, in a plain and easy Method*; and Thomas Walter, also a Harvard graduate, wrote *The Grounds and Rules of Musick Explained, or an Introduction to the Art of Singing by Note*, also published in 1721.

Immediate Opposition. When tradition is threatened, conflict ensues. The proponents of the regular way of singing met opposition from those who held to the usual way. The instructional texts of Tufts and Walter recommended "singing by rule." In the *New England Chronicle* a writer voiced his opinion in 1723: "Truly I have a great jealousy that if we once begin to sing by rule, the next thing will be to pray by rule, and preach by rule" (Sablosky 11). To counter the tide of resistance to change, Thomas Symmes published a humorous dialogue in which he opposed the ten most prevalent arguments against regular singing. These ten arguments are not without humor themselves!

1. It is a new way.
2. It is not so melodious as the usual way.
3. There are so many tunes we shall never have done learning them.
4. The practice creates disturbances and causes people to behave indecently and disorderly.
5. It is Quakerish and Popish and introductive of instrumental music.
6. The names given to the notes are bawdy, yea blasphemous. (Author's note: the names of the notes were *fa, sol, la, mi.*)
7. It is a needless way since our fathers got to heaven without it.
8. It is a contrivance to get money.
9. People spend too much time learning it.



10. They are a company of young upstarts that fall in with this way, and some of them are lewd and loose persons.
(Ellinwood 20)

Amid this controversy there arose many who became interested in establishing singing schools if for no other reason than to see what results it would produce.

Singing School Procedures. Between 1721-1770 singing schools thrived in New England. With the support of powerful preachers and with instructional texts available, the movement grew unhindered.

A community organized a singing school when the singing in a given church became intolerable. Singing schools were usually funded by tuition fees, but sometimes subscribers were secured. In the first singing schools ministers with some musical skill taught the singing classes. Eventually singing school "graduates," deemed competent in music, taught. Potential students auditioned for the acceptance into singing schools. After passing auditions they were placed on one of the four voice parts: treble (soprano), counter (alto), tenor (the melody), or bass.

Investigation into the methodology used by the "swinging masters" reveals educational techniques readily espoused by many Christian educators today. Indeed, singing school methodology applied to contemporary education enjoys success. Singing schools followed a philosophy of theory first, practical application second, with the value of repetition emphasized. Instruction in music rudiments occupied the first half of lessons; the second half was devoted to learning tunes using the newly acquired information.

Some aspects of education are fixed regardless of historical setting and/or subject. One such aspect is the necessity of teachers' resourcefulness and innovativeness. The singing school teachers found a need for more interesting tunes than those in the collections of Tuft and Walter, so they wrote their own tunes and tunebooks. Between 1720 and 1800 more than 375 tunebooks were published. Eventually, later editions of tunebooks became texts for music courses taught in public schools and also sources of music for present-day hymnals. "Rock of Ages," "My Faith Looks Up to Thee," "Angels from the Realms of Glory," "From Greenlands Icy Mountains," and many other songs appeared first in singing school tunebooks. One must keep in mind the purpose behind this entire movement was that of bringing praise to God through the orderly singing of music.

Singing school graduates sat in a special place of the meetinghouse or church; thus the church choir in America was born. Graduates who could sing by the notes led the congregational singing; the need for lining out disappeared.

Results. The singing school of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries set the stage for introducing music into the public school curriculum by Lowell Mason (his tunes are in your church's hymnal). These schools demonstrated that groups of people could become musically literate through a series of classes in music.

From Puritan ministers' concern for good congregational singing there arose singing schools, church choirs, several hundred hymns, and music in the school curriculum—a wonderful set of reforms giving good reason for celebration. **CEJ**

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Awesome

EARLY ON, CHILDREN ARE introduced to numerous celebrity "heroes" via TV, radio, and movies. If an elementary student were asked the question "If you could be like anyone in the world, who would you like to be?", he might reply "Walter Payton" or "Michael J. Fox." Names of authors such as Steven Kellog or Maurice Sendak probably would not be high on his list of renowned individuals. Let kids know there are more than athletes and movie stars in the world by bringing the idea of authorship alive in your classroom.

Gifted authors and their stories can be introduced and promoted in a variety of ways. This article focuses on an ongoing plan of author studies which shares with students the quality literature of a particular author and illustrator and then extends the enjoyment of his books by using them as a starting point for related interdisciplinary activities. To aid the description of this plan, the author Ezra Jack Keats will be used as an example.

Feature one author per month—or every two to three weeks, depending upon your schedule. Use the bulletin board above the reading corner as a motivational-informational board for the "awesome author" and his or her "super-sensational" books. On the board include the author's picture, facts about the author's life and work, summaries of books, book jackets, and any other pertinent items. You and your students can gather information about a particular author from various library resources, films (Weston Woods has a number of films on authors), book jackets, and the publishers of the author's books. Sometimes publishers will send you the press sheets or books before publication, if you ask for them. Most authors can be written to in care of their publishers, and some authors can be written directly. (Note end of article for several addresses.)

Think of a unique way to begin the study of the featured author. For example, spark interest in Keats' books by arriving at story-time dressed as the little boy from *Whistle for Willie* who is trying his hardest to whistle. Explain to the children how you wish you could whistle and ask if they have any suggestions for you. At the close of the conversation ask the children if they think you will ever learn how to whistle and then explain that they can find out because their teacher has a book all about it. Come back as yourself and read the story. After reading the story tell the students that the man who wrote the story has written and illustrated many wonderful books, and introduce them to Ezra Jack Keats, using the various resources.

Read several of the author's books aloud per week, displaying each in the reading corner after it is read and inviting the students to read it too. Make tapes of the stories available for students who are frustrated by the vocabulary. Also develop several lessons about the author, using the resources and information you've gathered.

While you are studying a particular author, use that author's books to create interdisciplinary centers for students to work at during their free time. These activity centers allow students another opportunity to enjoy the author's books while providing practice on skills being taught in class. Following are two examples using Keats' books:

A Letter to Amy (Creative Writing/ Review Letter Format)

Physical Arrangement:

- A table and chairs with a tagboard cut-out of Peter in his raincoat hang ing from the ceiling and holding a letter in his hand that says "Amy."

Materials:

- A mailbox that holds paper, pencils, envelopes, and crayons.
- A poster that includes a list of steps to follow when writing a letter.

Learning Activities:

- The children are to pretend they are Peter and they must write a letter to Amy, trying to imagine what he wrote and using correct letter format. Then they can design their own stamp and put the letter in the teacher's mailbox.
- Write a letter to Ezra Jack Keats.

Authors

BY LAURA NIEBOER

At the end of the year, plan an Author's Day when students come to school dressed as their favorite author. Publicize and stage the event in the school library and send groups of students to the library throughout the day to speak to students from other classes about the author they are portraying. Each "author" should also be given an opportunity to share one of his character's books. Hopefully, the literary excitement will be contagious! **CEJ**

Over in the Meadow (Science/Math)

Physical Arrangement:

- A bulletin board above a table with the title *Over in the Meadow*. On one half of the board are construction paper groupings of all the animals from the story, plus a sun with the numbers one through ten spaced evenly around the outside. The other side of the board is blank except for the subtitle "Animal Homes."

Materials:

- A pocket on the animal grouping side filled with math story problem cards based on the animals. These cards are shaped as a sun and have a hole punched out to match the numbers on the bulletin board sun for self-checking purposes.
- Paper, crayons, pencils, colored chalk, tempera paints, and pipe cleaners placed in a tree trunk made from an oatmeal container.
- Egg cartons
- Actual pictures of animals, *Scholastic News* articles on the animals, classroom science texts, encyclopedias, picture books of animals and their homes.

Science Activities:

- The children are to find out about the animal homes of the particular meadow animals from the information sources available. Then they may draw and label the animal home and post it on the bulletin board.
- The children find out facts about one of the animals by using the information sources and then design a small poster including a picture they've drawn and some interesting facts they've learned. These are compiled in a classroom book.
- The children may design one of the animals from egg cartons using paints, pipecleaners, paper, etc.

Math Activities:

- The children must pick a story problem from the pocket, tell the answer to their partner, and check it. If the answer is correct they may keep the card, and whoever accumulates the most is the winner.

Look for opportunities to use the books in unit plans as well. The books of Ezra Jack Keats would be a valuable tool in initiating a social studies unit on urban life and the various ethnic groups found in a large metropolitan area.

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Let Them

LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL IS a part of life for thousands of American boys and girls. Community recreation programs provide opportunities for elementary school children to participate in almost every sport imaginable. Our schools are busy in the athletic arenas, too. Youth sports are almost required activities for children in our society. There is no doubt that these sports are influential in the lives of children. When a child spends two to three hours each day practicing or participating in a sport, that time will have a significant effect on his or her life.

Youth coaches today face a growing controversy. On one side are those who emphasize equal participation for all athletes. Opposing them are coaches who want their players to win at all costs. Because of the strong influence athletics hold in a child's life, it is important to find a solution to this matter. By examining what youth sports experts recommend about competition, we can evaluate these two conflicting opinions to find that young athletes are healthiest and happiest when coaches put the children first and winning second.

The "play everyone" philosophy was explained by Merle Alons in the April-May 1985 issue of CEJ: "We don't train and develop only our best math, English, or music students; neither should we work only with our best athletes" (31). If coaches base their decisions about participation on a child's interest rather than on his or her skill level, the child will develop a greater sense of self-worth and the group will avoid the jealousies that break down team unity when a coach plays only the best athletes. Coaches who claim this approach believe that children are not emotionally mature enough to deal with situations where there is a high level of pressure to perform well and to win. If children are trained to think that losing is the worst thing that can happen, they develop a fear of losing that outweighs the joy they experience from playing sports. This imbalance destroys their enthusiasm and motivation, and they are more likely to drop out of sports altogether. These coaches also recognize that, especially during the junior high years, being a successful athlete is often perceived as being a success in all of life. Youth of this age group who don't excel in sports often see themselves as total failures and they withdraw from taking any more risks.

While this approach sounds as if it would be fair to all young people, it still contains some major problems. First of all, it is not feasible to expect that every child will receive equal playing time. In sports like volleyball and baseball, where the length of each game varies, a coach can never insure equal participation. Even in a timed sport like basketball, some players will receive more opportunities to score, play defense, and dribble the ball than other. Second, if a school or organization has rules that require coaches to work for equal participation, the team members who play only because they must be out on the court for a certain time realize this; often this realization can be even more detrimental to their self-esteem than not playing at all.

The other attitude toward sports is far more common than the first. The object of any game is to win. Vince Lombardi's quote about winning being the only thing that counts is often twisted slightly. The great coach actually said, "Winning isn't everything, but striving to win is." Coaches who live by Lombardi's motto believe that without the definite goal of working toward a victory, children tend to accept less than their best effort. Dr. James Timmer, professor of physical education at Calvin College says, "The essential part of the athletic contest is to see which team or which person performs best on the contest date. It is in our preparation to win that we bring glory to God and to those we are playing against."

This attitude is not the perfect solution either, especially when one is coaching very young athletes. Because children mature at different ages, it is hard to identify potential at a young age. Also, some children who have learned skills from their parents and older siblings may appear to be better athletes when they are young, but actually they may have less potential than a child who must yet learn all the skills of the game.

Because of the prominence of sports in our society, this issue is one that all educators and parents will eventually face. We must work to make the situations children face in

Photos courtesy of the Southeast Family YMCA, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Have Fun

BY ROBIN PALS

sports to be learning experiences as well as times of fun and relaxation. Setting guidelines for our coaches will help in this endeavor.

Coaches must first keep in mind the different developmental stages of children. Very young children do not have the ability to focus on a goal. They are not mature enough to understand true competition. Under the age of six, everything should be designed for their enjoyment. Children of this age should experience much success, and they should learn to love physical activity. In general, elementary school children view losing as a threat to their self-worth, and so interscholastic competition in the primary grades, as well as its equivalent during the summer months, should be avoided.

The Orange City, Iowa, Summer Youth Program uses an exemplary approach in its T-ball league. Every summer, boys and girls from kindergarten to third grade receive the chance to learn the fundamentals of T-ball without the pressures of competition. The children are divided into teams and they participate in round-robin play for six weeks, but the coaches never keep score. The players all receive equal time at each position, and the games are often stopped to explain a rule or to demonstrate a skill. Parents are encouraged to watch, but the coaches insist that parents refrain from counting runs and from shouting instructions. No all-star teams are chosen, and at the end of the summer, all the participants receive a ribbon to match the color of their team T-shirt. The popularity of the program shows that, at this age, winning and losing is unimportant—learning and just being out on the diamond having fun is a much greater priority to these youngsters.

By the age of nine, children have started to compare themselves with their peers. Coaches must start praising accomplishments as well as effort. As children get older, athletic skill becomes an indication to them that they have worth as a person. It is especially important to emphasize that they are valuable as people, not just as athletes.

One of the toughest jobs a coach faces is selecting his or her team. Inevitably, some children will have to be cut if there is a set number of positions. Cutting is risky at an early age. An early start on sports does not guarantee success later on. Very often, athletic ability can't be recognized until adolescence or later. For example, a varsity starter from my high school class was cut from her sixth grade basketball team in a small rural grade school. Fortunately, she tried out again the next year, made the team, and became a key high school forward.

In addition to the risk, cutting can be emotionally damaging to a student. Young people who are not selected for the team often feel as if they are failures as people. Ideally, coaches should not cut at all until high school, and if they must cut, they should do so in a very kind way. A personal meeting with each athlete is essential. An impersonal list does nothing to help a player learn what his or her strengths and weaknesses are.

Once the team roster is determined, the coach faces new challenges. One of the most important is motivating the athletes. This coaching trait is what separates a mediocre coach from an excellent one. Anyone can learn about the rules of a game and the best methods to teach skills, but the ability to communicate with the team is essential and, to a high degree, unteachable. If coaches can build their athletes' self-images so that they feel good about themselves, together they will have a team of life-long winners, even if they lose every game.

In addition, the empathy that goes along with communication will give the coach the respect of his or her athletes. Respect isn't something one can demand; it must be earned. This respect is further developed when a coach exhibits self-respect and also shows proper respect to his or her athletes, to opposing teams and coaches, to officials, and to parents. Athletes will also respect a coach who offers constructive criticism and praises their efforts instead of praising only their successful results.

Before the first practice, the coach must begin motivating the team members by assisting them in setting goals. According to Mark Kauk, cross-country and track coach at Unity Christian High School in Orange City, Iowa, good goals are MAPS: measurable, attainable, personal, and specific. Good goals are also comprised of small steps that must be met to gradually work for the overall goal. This allows children to see their improvement

toward their end point. The biggest problem that most youths face is setting their goals too high. A coach can prevent the player's frustration by assisting the young athlete in setting goals within his or her reach.

Practice sessions for young athletes should be primarily fun. Using smaller balls and courts, cutting down the length of games that require endurance, and doing less repetitious drills allow more children to participate and experience some success. In general, practice should be mostly scrimmage, with each athlete playing a variety of positions. The action should be stopped often to allow the coach to offer instruction and encouragement, both correcting problems and praising efforts to perform a skill correctly.

The final responsibility a coach has regarding the athletes is to help them develop socially as well as physically. Cooperation, commitment, and hard work are all desirable qualities students can learn through sports. Coaches must be role models who show the proper way to serve God and to function in society. Specifically, letting the players share in the decision-making processes that go on in team sports, such as determining team rules and practice activities, allows them to learn skills that they will use the rest of their lives, both in team sports and in other work or social settings.

In view of these recommendations, it becomes clear that youth sports have the potential to be great learning experiences, as well as the potential to devastate youngsters. The attitude that winning the contest is the most important goal undermines the benefits sports can give young athletes. It is the coach's responsibility then to insure an atmosphere where learning and enjoyment can best take place. Allowing all students to have the chance to experience the joy of athletics is allowing all of them the chance to grow and develop—and to have fun, too. **CEJ**

Robin Pals is a freshman chemistry and biology major at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa. Her athletic experience includes coaching softball and T-ball for the Orange City, Iowa, Summer Youth Program and interscholastic competition on the high school and college levels.

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Through Him and With Him

On Golgotha Christ bore the sins of humankind

and from the depths he cried so we might find

new hope among the ruins of a sinful globe

and grace to bear our crosses with the faith of Job.

Through His Sacrifice and Love we brave

the specter and the fate of shadowed grave.

Through Him we trust in Our Salvation.

SHIRLEY VOGLER MEISTER
Courtesy: *The Criterion*

BOOK REVIEWS

STEVE J. VANDERWEELE

CREATIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION
by William Kreidler
Scott Foresman and Company, Glenview, Illinois, 1984, $10.95
Reviewed by Agnes Struik
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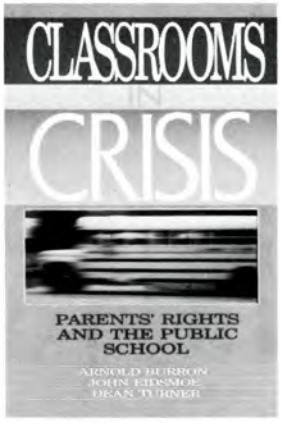
Creative Conflict Resolution is aptly subtitled "More than 200 activities for keeping peace in the classroom." Each activity is organized under Materials, Procedures, and Discussion Questions or Examples. The activities focus on student vs. student conflict; student vs. teacher conflict; the art of peace-making; communication; dealing with anger, frustration, and aggression; and teaching cooperation and tolerance.

In the first chapter, Kreidler presents five characteristics of a peaceful classroom and lists their opposites as reasons for conflict. The final chapter, "Putting It All into Practice," supplies hints and ways for implementing solution activities.

The book has some activities that are foundational to others, but most can be easily integrated into units of study or applied to problems that arise in the classroom or on the playground.

Much of the inspiration for this book comes from Kreidler's work in pioneering peace education with a number of children's programs and schools. If you are looking for a book that speaks of peace in the context of the Christian community and in terms of loving your neighbor as yourself, you won't find it in this book. Kreidler simply presents numerous activities to be used in a variety of situations.

However, don't discard this book too readily, for Kreidler has captured the essence of what is important to the Christian community as well. He has provided teachers with the ways and means to help students become agents of peace, love, and compassion so that they can bring healing in a broken world. Christian school teachers will find this book of tremendous practical help in dealing with discipline problems and in the development of a supportive community in their classroom. If teachers are discerning, and if they clarify their own reasons for doing these activities, this book can be a tremendous asset in creatively resolving conflicts with their students.



CLASSROOMS IN CRISIS: PARENTS' RIGHTS AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
by Arnold Burron, John Eidsmoe, and Dean Turner
Accent Books, Denver, Colorado 1986, 210 pp., $7.95
Reviewed by Robert Rohm, Asst. Pastor
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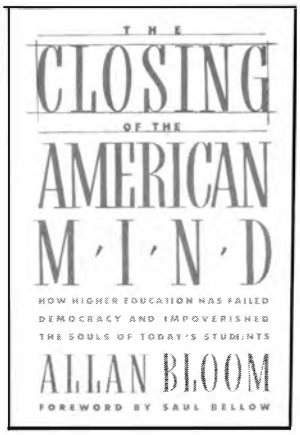
Three attorneys have teamed up to produce a well-documented text to help parents discover their rights regarding public education. Although written from a Christian perspective, the authors do not present a one-sided, degrading view of the public school system. Rather, they have compiled case histories (more than 78 are cited) that reveal precedents that have been set and alert readers to their constitutional rights.

The reader will appreciate the clarity with which the book is presented. Legal terminology has been omitted, and the issues are dealt with in a forthright manner. Topics discussed include values clarification, discipline, ethics, and morality. Step-by-step procedures are outlined to help the parents respond appropriately to a multitude of situations. To the frustrated or inquiring parent concerning what one might do in a difficult situation, this volume will be a thirst-quencher in a dry desert.

A 20-page reference section is offered at the end of the book. A recommendation regarding use of The Hatch Amendment is explained. Sample surveys and letters are illustrated to offer the reader help along the way.

This is an extremely helpful guide for parents dealing with problems in our public school system. As a former school principal, this reviewer found the information practical, accurate, and beneficial. Any parent, teacher, or administrator would benefit by reading this work.



THE CLOSING OF THE AMERICAN MIND
By Allan Bloom
Simon and Schuster, New York 1987, 392 pp. $18.95
Reviewed by Gregory J. Maffet
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Allan Bloom, professor of philosophy and political science at the

University of Chicago, has stormed the United States and Europe with his book *The Closing of the American Mind.* The book has been on the New York Times best-seller list for most of 1987. It has stirred up much discussion. Bloom's critics call his work a "conservative rag" and attack him personally as "a raving sexually paranoid loon." Some see him as "an educational evangelist, espousing a new fundamentalism for us all." I believe that Christian educators should all take a serious look at what he has written.

Mr. Bloom does for conservative secular educators what Francis Schaeffer did for biblical Christians. He has successfully enlightened a large segment of the conservative community to the serious ailments in American higher education and, consequently, our culture, too.

Using an articulate style of writing, Bloom freely ranges over the course of Western civilization to analyze and evaluate modern youth, giving specific emphasis to our universities and liberal arts colleges. In brief, he claims that relativism, openness, toleration, and the breakdown of traditional values are leading to the destruction of higher education and, subsequently, to the fall of the West. To support his assertions, Bloom provides insightful discussions on rock music, self-centeredness, divorce, family, sex, love, and feminism, and he draws heavily upon such classic writers as Socrates, Plato, Locke, Rousseau, Tocqueville, Marx, and Nietzsche.

Here are a few illustrative quotations:

> The dreariness of the family's spiritual landscape passes belief . . . . Educational TV marks the high tide for family intellectual life.

> American souls were, so to speak, constructed without a basement, not haunted by a sense of the groundlessness of their experience. Rock gives children, on a silver platter, . . . everything their parents always used to tell them they had to wait for until they grew up and would understand later . . . . In short, life is made into a nonstop, commercially prepackaged masturbational fantasy . . . it is of historic proportions that a society's best young and their best energies should be so occupied.

> There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative.

> . . . the United States . . . [is] a dumping ground for the refuse from other places, devoted to consuming; in short, no culture.

Mr. Bloom desires a return to the "great books." We are to learn from them what questions to ask and where to get answers. He likens modern educational institutions to a church asking "What about God?" while talking about buildings, parking, and pew arrangements. Educators are preoccupied with affirmative action, women's studies, publishing of large quantities of meaningless manuscripts, and paper-pushing MBAs rather than dealing with the big questions like "What is liberal arts education?" and "How ought we to live?"

The ultimate answers to the big questions are not to be found in the Bible or in a right relationship with God, according to Bloom. Although he is well-versed in biblical thought, he offers answers in good friendships and the great classic works of man.

The book, through useful and highly recommended, needs to be supplemented by a though Christian anthropology. It really does touch the soul, however, and is currently the best book around on these increasing challenges to educators worldwide. **CEJ**

Dear Editor:

The longer I am in B.C., the more sensitive I become to denominational terminology. The Society of Christian Schools in B.C. is made up of schools that arise out of different denominations from Baptist to Christian Reformed to Pentecostal to Alliance. Not only do they arise out of a variety of denominations, but in almost all cases, they have an open enrollment policy and employ teachers from a variety of denominational backgrounds. There are more and more non-Dutch names that appear among our teachers and students. Even though we can't all agree on church doctrine, we can show evidence of the unity of Christ in our educational endeavors.

The Heidelberg Catechism is a fine document and I, personally, feel that I would be poorer if I did not have that document to refer to for insight into the Scriptures. Your editorial in the December 1987/January 1988 issue implies some familiarity with the Heidelberger. That would exclude a number of teachers who would read CEJ. Some of our teachers are very sensitive to Reformed terminology that seems to exclude other Christians or that gives the impression of elitism. Please be careful.

Thanks for your splendid efforts.

Sincerely,

John Vanderhoek
Education Coordinator
Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia

Editor's note: Readers are encouraged to suggest other doctrinal statements which appear to strengthen the interface of Christian theory and practice (theme for the December 1988-January 1989 issue, due August 5).