

CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS *Journal*

April/May 1990



Too Busy to Reflect?

So Much a Martha



Dr. Anspach's waiting room overflowed with bodies encased in plaster casts every time I hobbled in on my crutches that notorious spring twenty years ago. Yet the

doctor always seemed unhurried.

The full-leg cast obviously slowed my pace, but as I experienced the doctor's ability to show concern for each individual, I began to want that kind of compassion almost as much as I wanted the ability to walk.

I wish I could say that when I emerged from the cast I possessed the grace of a butterfly, gently moving and accomplishing God's purposes for my life without seeming rushed. I wish I could claim the wisdom of Mary, who sat and listened to Jesus while Martha allowed work to distract her. To tell the truth, I am a Martha by nature, and it takes more than a cast to transform character. I have difficulty appearing relaxed unless things get done according to my schedule.

Certainly, schedules are essential for teachers. In fact, most of us accomplish more when we operate on schedules, simply because we know what comes next and thus spend less time between tasks. You've probably heard the old saying: "If you want to get something done, ask a busy person."

Some people have a tremendous store of energy, and they delight in being busy. Positive outcomes from one activity provide them the momentum for the next task. That's fine, unless they assume that busyness is next to godliness. When work becomes an obsession, people take on tasks they need not and should not accept, often



because these people need to be needed. One symptom of such insecurity is the workaholic's attempt to get sympathy for overwork, something like the anorexic's obsessive talk about food. Though such people know the dangers of their condition, a deep insecurity prevents their acceptance of the solution.

I refer above to people who overload their schedules by choice, but those who experience unplanned demands on their time must also respond in wisdom. Jesus himself experienced the crush of responsibility when the crowds pressed him to heal their sick, to answer their questions, to bless their babies. Yet he supported Mary in her choice to prepare her heart rather than Martha in her choice to prepare her home to receive him.

That is not to say Martha should not clean her desk or check her papers or prepare her lessons. Jesus surely must have appreciated Martha's intention to care for his needs, but had Martha been a teacher, I suspect her

bulletin boards always would have been perfect, her desks always aligned, her students always on task, her lesson plans determined in September for the entire year. Fire drills would upset her schedule.

I don't think I would want to be in Martha's class. I think she'd squelch the originality right out of me. I think she'd fail to notice my red eyes when I had a cold. I think she'd send a note home to my parents the first time I chewed gum in class. I think she'd make me edgy.

We need Marthas, however—on our staffs, in our support groups, on our school boards. Transformed Marthas, that is. Marthas who submit their schedules to Christ, Marthas who firmly and gently learn to say no to tasks for which they are unsuited, who open their doors to hear and help their students, who recognize the limits of earthly time, and, most of all, Marthas who know the timeless God who releases the tension from their time-bound lives.

LVG

Now, About Professional Growth . . .

How can there even be a question concerning professional growth for the Christian teacher? It has long been my personal assessment that without continuous growth there comes a shrinkage of commitment, a narrowing of focus, and a stagnation of the intellect. There is no such thing as maintaining the status quo.

SHRINKAGE OF COMMITMENT

Without growth we eventually lose our fervent commitment to Christian education. Our *calling* becomes merely a job. I emphasize the word *calling* because our work in this field must be more than a mere desire to have three months off in the summer. That alone should not lure anyone into Christian education at any level.

The reflected glow of enthusiasm from the administration and colleagues will last only so long. Our own flames of enthusiasm must be rekindled by professional growth to revive the excitement of our work. Teaching involves long hours of preparation, planning, a mountain of paperwork—what some would call a "daily grind." Rubbing shoulders with other Christian educators in a continuing education class or a workshop, sharing with others how Christ is working in his or her school, gives a teacher a renewed sense of the seeding one is doing for eternal harvest. Henry Adams wrote in 1907, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." A tired, half-burnt-out teacher may continue to be an influence, but perhaps in a far different direction than he or she thinks!

Teaching is more than a duty; it is a vital commitment to Christ and the

work to which he has called us. Renewal through professional growth is essential.

NARROWING OF FOCUS

When a teacher remains in his or her own classroom, bound by its four walls and confined to the textbooks at hand, that teacher begins to compress attention to an ever-narrowing focus. Continuing education, whether in a formal way or via media of one sort or another, opens new doors and windows to the teacher first and then to the students.

Elijah thought he was the only person in Israel who had not bowed his knee to Baal. The Lord widened his vision by revealing that seven thousand others had not. We sometimes get into the rut of thinking we are the only ones who run into certain problems of classroom management or the frustrations of teaching critical thinking skills. Professional growth can broaden our horizons by showing us we are not alone. Even better, we can learn to adopt or adapt others' proven classroom techniques to our own situation. Why spend precious time re-inventing the wheel when we can learn from others' mistakes and successes? Cooperative learning, literature-based reading, and thinking skills are major areas that have had considerable research. We should tap into these resources instead of going it alone.

STAGNATION OF THE INTELLECT

Most of us who have been in the profession for several years realize that intellectual growth is a lifelong pursuit. A good, challenging workshop or a thought-provoking journal article can

force us to give serious consideration to areas we have not explored before. We may come to different conclusions than our mentors or colleagues do, and we may be uncomfortable for a time as we work through a knotty problem posed in a class; but through it we gain confidence to tackle new problems.

There is a tendency among many Christian teachers to attend only Christian in-service classes or join only Christian professional groups. Going out of our tight little enclaves is good for us now and then, although we may much prefer being with "our own kind." We can benefit from discussion with educators whose school settings or viewpoints vary from ours. Besides, non-Christians need to see us and learn from us and find that we are not the red-eyed right wingers they may think us to be. We can often witness or minister to them in unexpected ways. We can also be an encouragement to Christian teachers in public schools by our presence in a professional association.

Through growth in commitment to Christian education, widening horizons, and mental workouts, we become more attuned to our subject areas, to our students, and to Christ. We pass along our enthusiasm and increased proficiencies to our students in a newly found win-win situation. None of us must ever become so smug—or so complacent—as to even ask *whether* we need professional growth! It comes with the territory when we commit ourselves to being professionals in Christian education. **CEJ**

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Setting the



Horace Whittell, a dockworker in Gillingham, England, absolutely hated his alarm clock. Every workday for forty-seven years the bell of the clock had jarred him awake. For forty-seven years he had longed to ignore it. For forty-seven years he had felt the pressure of time. Then he got his revenge. On the day he retired, Whittell took his alarm clock to work and flattened it under an eighty-ton hydraulic press. His comment: "It was a lovely feeling."

Who of us hasn't longed, with Mr. Whittel, to be liberated from the clock? The pressure of meeting deadlines and honoring appointments takes the joy out of our work and leaves us emotionally exhausted. If only we had more time, we say to ourselves. But, as R. Alec Mackenzie, author of *The Time Trap*, is quick to remind us, "There *isn't* any more of it. Each of us already has all the time there is. Thus we discover the paradox of time: few people have enough; yet everyone has all there is."

LORD OF TIME

We obviously can't stop the clock. The opening phrase of the Bible, "In the beginning," immediately places us in the framework of time. But as creatures of time, we must guard against the danger of letting the clock dictate how we live. The clock can become just as much of a god as possessions or pleasure, and, like any other false god, it becomes an oppressive enemy from which we need to be freed through the grace of Jesus

Christ. While we often use phrases such as "time will tell" and "time will heal," as though time had some form of inherent power, we must always recognize that God made time and therefore is its Lord.

This is strongly underscored by God's devoting one of the Ten Commandments to time: "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy." And the reason given is "for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day." God's creative work did not reach its climax on the sixth day with the creation of man and woman, but it culminated on the seventh day—seven being the perfect number—when our heavenly Father rested, proving his mastery over time and lending a holiness to it.

GIFT OF TIME

Are we, however, convinced that God is indeed Lord of time and that he offered time as one of his gifts to us when he made the world and pronounced it "very good"? The language we use often betrays how we *really* feel. When we stand on the threshold of a new year, we lament how time flies. We curse the scoreboard clock when our team is behind and time runs out; a couple minutes more and we could have pulled out the game. If a science project has to get done but the due date is quickly approaching, we are engaged in a race against time.

A few years ago a little neighbor girl died from an acute form of meningitis. Her father sadly mumbled, "If only we could have bought a few more hours of time, the antibiotics would have taken hold and her life could have been spared."

In all of these instances we are left with the feeling that time is our enemy and not our ally, our competitor and not our friend.

But time is *not* our enemy. We *make* it our enemy! When we become so time conscious that we are lost without our watches and cannot do without clocks in our rooms, when we are constantly complaining that we just can't get all of our work done, when we become upset because people interrupt our busy schedules, we had better ask ourselves whom we are worshipping.

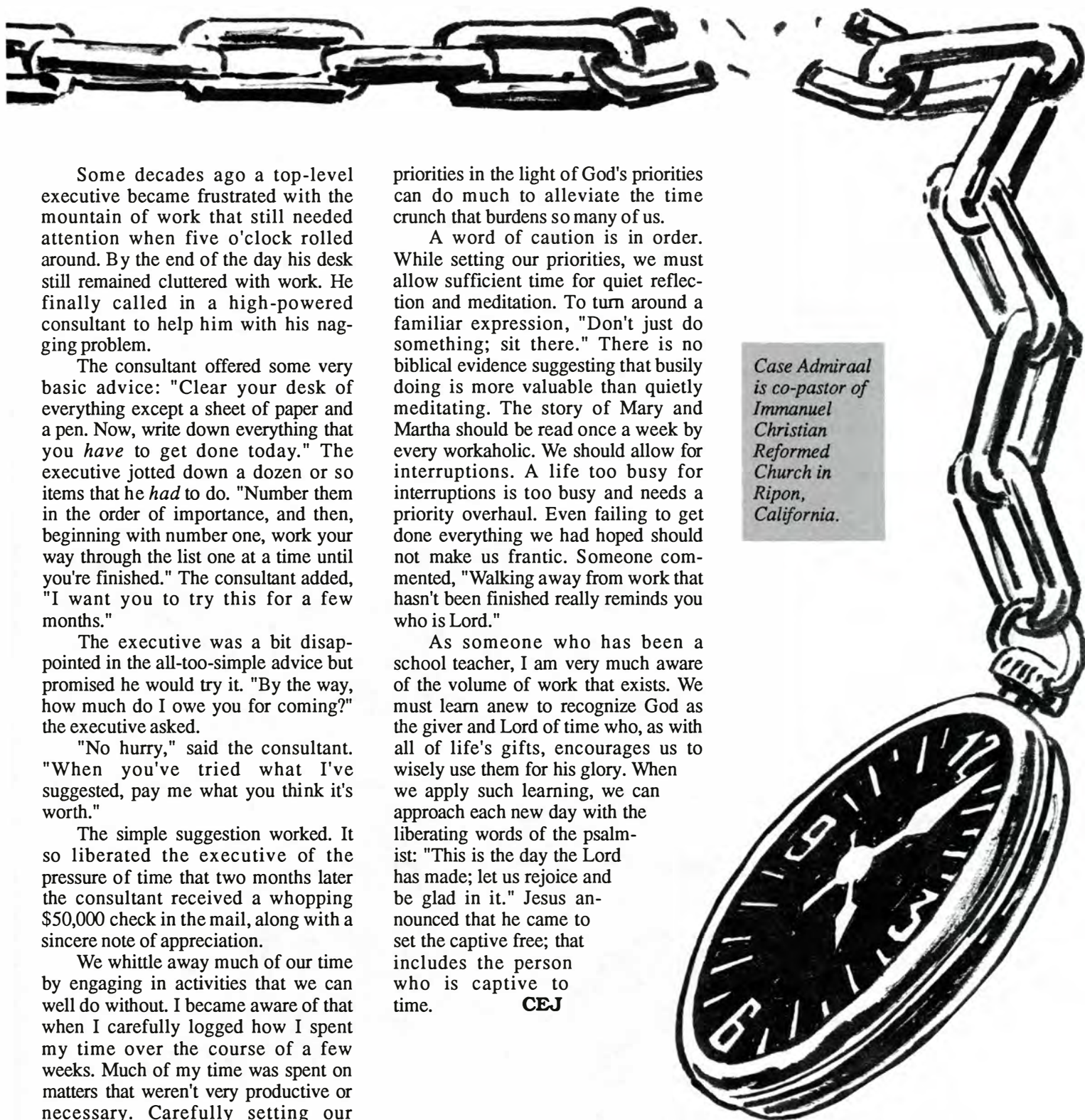
Time is God's gift. A gift is to be enjoyed; and, to be enjoyed, a gift must be wisely used.

STEWARD OF TIME

Often our difficulty is knowing how to use this gift wisely. Jesus urges us not to worry about our daily needs, but to "seek first [God's] kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." It is also true that if we seek first the kingdom of God, we will be given time for whatever must get done.

Stewardship of time begins by acknowledging the lordship of Christ. When we give him priority, then the way we use our time falls into proper perspective, too. Time management is actually priority management.

Time-Captive FREE



Some decades ago a top-level executive became frustrated with the mountain of work that still needed attention when five o'clock rolled around. By the end of the day his desk still remained cluttered with work. He finally called in a high-powered consultant to help him with his nagging problem.

The consultant offered some very basic advice: "Clear your desk of everything except a sheet of paper and a pen. Now, write down everything that you *have* to get done today." The executive jotted down a dozen or so items that he *had* to do. "Number them in the order of importance, and then, beginning with number one, work your way through the list one at a time until you're finished." The consultant added, "I want you to try this for a few months."

The executive was a bit disappointed in the all-too-simple advice but promised he would try it. "By the way, how much do I owe you for coming?" the executive asked.

"No hurry," said the consultant. "When you've tried what I've suggested, pay me what you think it's worth."

The simple suggestion worked. It so liberated the executive of the pressure of time that two months later the consultant received a whopping \$50,000 check in the mail, along with a sincere note of appreciation.

We whittle away much of our time by engaging in activities that we can well do without. I became aware of that when I carefully logged how I spent my time over the course of a few weeks. Much of my time was spent on matters that weren't very productive or necessary. Carefully setting our

priorities in the light of God's priorities can do much to alleviate the time crunch that burdens so many of us.

A word of caution is in order. While setting our priorities, we must allow sufficient time for quiet reflection and meditation. To turn around a familiar expression, "Don't just do something; sit there." There is no biblical evidence suggesting that busily doing is more valuable than quietly meditating. The story of Mary and Martha should be read once a week by every workaholic. We should allow for interruptions. A life too busy for interruptions is too busy and needs a priority overhaul. Even failing to get done everything we had hoped should not make us frantic. Someone commented, "Walking away from work that hasn't been finished really reminds you who is Lord."

As someone who has been a school teacher, I am very much aware of the volume of work that exists. We must learn anew to recognize God as the giver and Lord of time who, as with all of life's gifts, encourages us to wisely use them for his glory. When we apply such learning, we can approach each new day with the liberating words of the psalmist: "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." Jesus announced that he came to set the captive free; that includes the person who is captive to time. **CEJ**

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REALIZE LIFE:

In Thornton Wilder's play *Our Town*, Emily, a young woman, dies in childbirth. But she is granted a unique experience. The Stage Manager allows her to return from death and live one day of her life with her family. Emily has high hopes for that one day, but the actuality of it leaves her deeply disappointed. Just before she returns to her place in the cemetery, she reveals her frustration to the Stage Manager. She breaks down sobbing and says to him, "We don't have time to look at one another. I didn't realize. So all that was going on and we never noticed. . . . Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it, every, every minute?"

That is the dilemma dedicated teachers face. The weeks, days, hours, and minutes of a teaching year are so full and race by at such speed that they often defy teachers to "realize life while they live it." As Christians, especially, we are aware of how precious the time is that we have here on earth. We, more than other people, know with certainty that we may not squander our time, for we are accountable for what we do with our time.

The dilemma is that too often in the midst of making what we think is such wise and dedicated use of our time as Christian teachers, we are in reality on such a fast-moving treadmill that we have neither the time nor the energy to appreciate all that is going on around us and inside us. We are not in touch with other people or with ourselves, and sometimes not even with our Lord.

The sad part is that when we attempt to change the situation, a feeling of guilt takes over. How many of us can take for ourselves one or more evenings per week during which

we do things that are in no way related to our job and not feel some twinges of guilt over marking that isn't finished, units that still need revising, report cards that soon must be prepared, a meeting that we really should be attending? From personal experience I know that only during summer vacation do I finally feel a total freedom from that guilt; only then can I completely let go of my work and feel those pressures leaving me.

Whether we are in our first year of teaching or in our twentieth, we are faced with not only a set number of hours of actual teaching per day, but also lesson planning, marking, staff (faculty) meetings, extra-curricular

activities, curriculum preparation, upkeep on the latest education developments, committee meetings, parent-teacher conferences, after-school tutoring, church activities, community involvement, family needs, homes, and yards.

Step number one toward solving the time dilemma is to be honest with yourself, to know yourself, and to be willing to let others see that self. Determine very early in your career how much *you* are able to accomplish in a set number of hours and aim for that. Then do not try to be that other person who in your eyes accomplishes more or less than you do. You must set limits.



During one scene from *Our Town*, Emily regretfully realizes how fleeting life is.

TAKE TIME TO REFLECT

For example, if you are someone who needs eight hours of sleep in order to function well the next day, then you cannot involve yourself in all sorts of evening activities that keep you up late night after night.

If you truly know yourself and are honest with yourself, then you will learn to say no, whether that be to social engagements or to the many other tasks that a Christian school

It is not selfish, but rather essential, that we use some of our non-teaching time strictly for ourselves.

community so easily thinks their Christian school teachers are qualified (sometimes even obligated) to do.

I'm not at all advocating a policy of total noninvolvement. What I'm advocating is that each of us must make honest choices for the hours not taken up by our actual teaching, choices that are right for us. Honest choices will not leave us feeling guilty, nor will they make us frustrated because we feel that we have been coerced into doing something we truly don't have time for. Believe me, our Christian society will continue to function even if Christian teachers are not involved in every aspect of it. Yes, we all have specific talents that we must use, but not at the cost of "realizing life while we live it."

Another reason we in the teaching profession can find ourselves caught in a maelstrom of frenetic activity is that we are so ready to get on whatever educational bandwagon is currently popular. We appear to have so little

faith in our own abilities and methods that we think whatever is new or seemingly innovative is better than what we are and have been doing. Endless hours are then spent on revising and remodeling our strategies only to have the latest and newest fade away and be replaced by something even later and newer, and we start all over again.

When I started teaching, "the way" to educational success was said to be the open area classroom. That trend worried me, for I felt I would not be happy teaching in such a setting. Fortunately, Christian schools had no money to remove

walls from classrooms—a good thing, too, for in a few years those model schools of progressive education were spending more money to put the walls back in. About ten to fifteen years ago in our area, public school teachers spent hours upon hours, including Sundays, preparing a curriculum called OBE (Objective-Based Education). Those teachers had no time for a personal, private life. Today if you ask educators what OBE is, you'll get only a blank look.

In the last number of years we have heard about integration, theme education, articulation, program continuity, cooperative learning, and whole language. Now, all of those educational methodologies have merit. But teachers who have faith in their own abilities and methods know that their methods have been successful because all along they have been using aspects of all of these so-called new ways.

Why, then, do we so readily feel

inadequate and think that we must change our whole strategy? Is it because we think that something new will enable us to be all things to all of our students? Again, be honest and realistic. None of us on this earth can achieve that ideal. At best we can be something to most students. That does not mean mediocrity. It means being the *best* we can be for those students. Most of us are much better teachers than we perceive ourselves to be. If we could recognize that, then we'd be less frantic and frenzied in how we use our time, for we would realize that we are making good use of our time and that not every waking minute needs to be dedicated to our teaching career.

It is not selfish, but rather essential, that we use some of our non-teaching time strictly for ourselves. We need that time to be alone with ourselves and with God, to reflect on our relationships with others and with God, to reflect on our strengths, our weaknesses, our needs. We need that time to strengthen our faith in God, but also our faith in ourselves and our own abilities.

We need to regard that time as moments of rest and reflection as we see where we have come from and how we will go on from there—fortunately, as Christians, never alone. Then we will not have to look back and see our lives as Emily did. We will not be faced with the question, "Where is the living which I lost in frenetic activity, in a life in which I had no time to reflect?"

CEJ

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Few people would savor spending the whole night on a dark beach sleeping between two sandy tarps, with misty rain and a cold wind blowing in their faces. Few may know the worth of patrolling a beach to discover female leatherback turtles coming ashore to lay their eggs. But a few have paid money to take almost two weeks of their valuable time to do just this.

WILDERNESS

A Place and Time to Meet God

As a college faculty sponsor, I feel gratified each time a student indicates a desire to participate in a group research trip to study endangered sea turtles. This experience somehow touches participants' lives in the deepest recesses, in ways that teachers rarely experience with students.

AN EXPERIENCE OF CREATION

Part of the attraction and the outcome of the research trip has been the opportunity to see a grand spectacle of God's creation. Imagine a beautiful 800- to 1200-pound sea turtle who has journeyed more than two thousand miles from her feeding grounds to find this remote beach on a small island, probably the beach on which she hatched many years before. Every three years after she becomes mature she makes this journey to mate, and then maybe seven to ten times over a three-month period she emerges from the water at night to make a very difficult journey up the beach to lay her eggs.

As we hear her gasps for air, we recognize the difficulty of moving her mass up the beach when her body is

designed for swimming, with her legs extending laterally, not beneath her body for support. The care with which she digs a deep chamber and the marvel of her leathery eggs as she deposits them touches the deepest part of our hearts. Her feeble attempts to disguise the nest site from predators as she heads back into the ocean tears at our hearts as we remember that we are among the few privileged to see this wonder and that we may be among the last, a memory which our children may never experience.

The turtles are dying and endangered now. People dig up the eggs and slaughter sea turtles for no apparent reason. We pollute their water environment, especially with plastic bags, which they mistake for jellyfish. The turtles eat this plastic, which coats their intestines, and then they slowly starve to death because their intestines cannot absorb the nutrients of other food they may eat. We Christians should care about these wonderful animals that the Lord declared to be good.



AWAY FROM DISTRACTIONS

The sea turtle trips also touch every participant in another way. We experience time when we are alone, and we meet God—a wilderness experience. The small island we are on feels isolated from the world, lying half way between Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Our isolation from television, radio, newspapers, and other distractions provides a backdrop against which we can meet God.

But at night we wander into our wilderness, down trails in the dark, across the beach without any light. We sit on the tarp in the middle of the beach with only starlight to illuminate us, and even that is often hidden behind the constant tropical clouds. Only the lights from an occasional cruise ship or airplane overhead remind us of so-called civilization. Otherwise we are alone, very alone, unwilling to use our flashlights or talk normally because we might scare the turtles who emerge slowly and retreat rapidly if they see people.

And then the patrols. Two team members leave our encampment in the middle and head alone to opposite ends of the sandy beach. When they arrive, a single flash from each is their only communication. Then they wait alone for thirty to forty minutes before patrolling the beach on the way back. Alone, with only the roaring surf, not able to see the main group less than a mile back down the beach. No lights, no radios, no stereos. Only waves, one's own thoughts and fears, and God.

For almost everyone, especially

An adult female (about 900 lbs.) re-enters the ocean after laying her eggs on Brava Beach, Culebra Island, Puerto Rico. Photos can only be taken after the turtle approaches the water. Light confuses or frightens them, and they will not lay eggs.

Taken May 1989.

the students, this is the first time in their lives that music, television, school, family, or friends do not fill nearly every waking moment. Yet fears subside, meditation overwhelms us, and God speaks in that still small voice and in the crashing surf. God finds each one of us because we have the time, because we are alone. We are in the wilderness meeting our Lord. (On one trip a young lady found Christ on that beach, dedicated her life, and went home to make this known by joining her church.)

THE WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

The wilderness motif is very prevalent in the Bible. Moses, David, John the Baptist, and even our Lord Jesus Christ sought out the wilderness (often synonymous with *desert*) as a place to seek refuge and to find God. David in Psalm 55 said, "My heart is in anguish within me. . . . Oh that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. I would flee far away and stay in the wilderness."

The wilderness is a place of refuge and a place to come face to face with God. It is a place where we can find the mountain of God, a place where the covenant was revealed, a place of safety, a place of hope and promise.

The wilderness is often feared, such as "the vast and dreadful desert" experienced by the Israelites. But it then also becomes a place where we can learn to lean on God and accept his power rather than depend on our own strength. In the modern world we have learned to depend on our technology, our power, our ability to control so much of life. But this has led us to sinful disregard of depending on God or studying his world by living in coexistence with it. So we now fear the wilderness because it strips away our walls of egotistical strength; it exposes our lack of knowledge about God's world; it exposes the very vulnerability of our hearts that we try to harden against the world.

TAKE TIME FOR SOLITUDE

Many people have recently raised their voices to declare that need for solitude. Escape for a while, close the door, find a little solitude in the rat race of daily life. While short escapes are good and necessary, sincere solitude is God's desire for us. He wants more than a stolen moment here and there. We must go out to meet God in his world, not just in our artificial habitations.

I am sad that as our cities grow and the insanity of the rush and crush of humanity increases, we have forgotten the importance of wilderness. More than ever we need undeveloped wild areas where Christians and all humanity can escape to allow God's beautiful creation to instill in them a peace and rejuvenation. We must slow down and take the time to truly meet God face to face in the beauty of wilderness.

Our lives need direction, and this direction comes from hearing the quiet spirit and voice of the Lord in the solitude of wilderness. We must save wilderness and care for the Lord's creation so we and our children may have the opportunity to hear our God and smell, taste, feel, and study his creation. The health of God's church depends on it! **CEJ**

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Shared Praxis: Interchange of Words

How should a teacher undertake the activity of educating students? What role ought the student to play in his or her own education? What should the relationship be between teachers and students in the process of education? The answers to these questions help determine the nature of the educational enterprise.

One educator who has addressed these questions is the South American reformer Paulo Freire. Freire has given novel and stimulating answers to these questions. In his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Freire presents what he calls the "dialogical" model of education and contrasts it with the traditional model of education.

Freire calls the traditional way of educating "banking education." The activity of banking involves the depositing, storing, and retrieving of money from a bank vault. The vault is a passive repository of the money put in by the banker. Freire applies this model to education. In the traditional way of educating, according to Freire, "Education thus becomes the act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher the depositor." The teacher, instead of communicating, issues material that the students patiently have to receive, memorize, and repeat. The students are receptacles or containers waiting to be filled by the teacher. The students are the vault and the teacher the banker.

The role of the teacher, the role of the student, and the relationship between the two are all quite clear in this model. In Freire's words, "The teacher teaches and the students are taught; the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing; the teacher thinks and the students are thought about; the teacher talks and the

students listen—meekly; the teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it." Freire colorfully and forcefully states here that the teacher's role is an active and domineering one while the students' roles are passive and submissive ones. Freire opposes this education.

Freire, in opposing banking education, proposes an alternative he calls "dialogical education." Dialogue is an interchange of words between two people. The term *word* has special significance for Freire in that it is both reflection and action. The true interchange of words is thus actually what Freire calls *praxis*.

Praxis refers to the cycle of reflecting about something, acting on that reflection, again reflecting on the action, again acting on the reflection, and so forth. Thus for two people to really dialogue is for them to be reflectively active in the world. Naming the world is changing it, using power to actively transform it. The world is not seen as a static and immovable structure, but is encountered as a changeable situation. Through dialogue the world is transformed.

Dialogue has several characteristics. First, the foundation of dialogue is love. Second, dialogue requires humility; both parties must be equal and believe each other to be equal to establish trust. Third, dialogue requires a faith in man and a steadfast hope in his future. Without these qualities there would be no action in the world, for a pessimistic outlook on the future would paralyze any possibility of action. Thus, to summarize, dialogue needs a foundation of love, an attitude of humility, a commitment of faith, and a vision of hope in order to successfully transform the world.

Dialogical education leads to a co-responsibility for education between teacher and student. This implies to Freire that what should occur in the classroom is problem solving. By seeing the world around them as a series of problems to be solved, the students will truly and reflectively transform their world. Problems are not barriers to activity but motivators to action. Presenting reality as a series of problems breaks it into manageable chunks of transformable reality. Problem-solving education is thus education oriented to transformation.

The problems, however, are not to be decided upon by the teacher. Instead, the problems must come from the students—the teacher acts as facilitator. The starting point for the generation of problems must be the concrete situation of the students themselves; education starts from the students' concerns and agendas. When the problems come from the students and are solved in a truly cooperative way, true dialogical education is taking place.

Freire has much to teach North American educators with respect to the relationship between teacher and students. His dialogical method does have merit here. The idea of education as problem posing is a significant improvement over the practice of education as merely teaching content. Posing problems helps the students appreciate the complexity of the world they live in and helps them realize that the world is changeable by means of the solutions to those problems. This approach avoids the feeling of hopelessness and helplessness that often accompanies education. Furthermore, allowing students to generate the problems is a positive thing, although it seems that a caution is



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needed here. Students (in North America at least) do not always know or care about the problems facing them.

Solving problems together unifies teacher and students. If both work at understanding and solving real-life problems, the hierarchical and sometimes antagonistic relationship between teacher and student will be minimized.

Another one of Freire's emphases is his concern for social, economic, and political issues. North American teachers—with their academic, commercial, or skills emphases (especially at the high school level)—too frequently neglect current social issues that the students and teachers face. Freire's methodology encourages students and teachers to face these together and as fellow humans to take a stand on local, regional, national, and global issues. North American education can spend much more time working through significant socio-economic and political issues.

Working through issues, according to Freire, leads to the idea of praxis, and praxis has its place in North American education. Although the term is often linked to revolutionary

and liberating action and reflection, it need not have these Marxist overtones. If it is taken more literally as referring to the unity of reflection and action, then it can be of use in North American education.

It would be good to acknowledge and stress the unity of reflection and action. At present, schools are isolated from social action. Again, praxis suggests that teacher and students together reflect and act. Teachers cannot act for students, and students cannot act for teachers. They *share* this process. Shared praxis is a useful addition to North American education.

North Americans can also learn from Freire's emphasis on the emotional aspects of dialogue. Although it would be unfair to suggest that these emotions do not exist in student-teacher relationships, it would be fair to say that the theorizing about this relationship usually leaves out the emotions. Freire's emphases that love be the foundation of dialogue, that humility on the part of the teacher is necessary, that mutual trust needs to be established, and that commitment to each other is a main ingredient of successful dialogue delineate emotional dimensions of the educational process that are worth stressing. These

aspects should be incorporated into the theory and practice—praxis—of teacher-student relationships. Without these, no problem solving, no dialogue, no praxis, no taking stands on issues will be successful. A positive emotional relationship between students and teachers is a necessary ingredient for North American schools as well.

Freire has many worthwhile ideas to contribute to the discussion of the nature of student-teacher relationships. Although his social, economic, and political setting is different (his thought is deeply rooted and situated in the South American setting), his ideas are universal enough to ring true for North America as well. And although his ideas spring from his grounding in liberation theology (i.e. his Marxist and Roman Catholic roots), which North American evangelical or Reformed Christians may not accept, the force of his critique of banking education and its student-teacher relations, as well as the description of the role of teachers and students in dialogical education, transcends the underpinnings from which they spring.

In short, Freire has some positive and engaging ideas that North American teachers and students could do well to accept and apply. **CEJ**

AFFECTIVE EDUCATION: ANSWERING THE CRITICS

Unless the metropolitan Grand Rapids area is an exception, Christian schools are meeting with some resistance when they initiate certain kinds of curriculum change. The following is offered as aid and comfort if your school is under criticism, and as a word of caution if it is not.

Current "values education" or "affective education" programs, whether labeled Quest, Project Charlie, Magic Circle, or more generically, values clarification, produce in parents and in some teachers a mixture of puzzlement and protest.

The puzzlement exists over what content these terms identify, and protest comes when the origins of these materials are identified.

These curriculum materials have in common the goal of changing student attitudes and self-concepts by instructional discussion of peer relationships and the handling of feelings. When pursued rigorously, the curriculum may include the deeper subjects of sex, drugs, and attitudes toward authority.

What most of the critics forget is that Reformed educational thought for two decades now has explicitly fostered moral or affective education as one of its major goals. While various educators and documents have stated this goal differently, they all have dramatized the importance of life outcomes. This consideration, they say, deserves concern equal with the more commonly accepted intellectual goals that foster mastery of academic content. Such understanding is necessary if both those who teach and those who object are to help Christian schools meet their mandate.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In the late sixties Christian Schools International (CSI) commissioned Dr. Henry Beversluis, an experienced administrator and teacher in Christian schools, to write what was eventually published in 1970 as *Christian Philosophy of Education*. In

it he identified three major learning goals: intellectual, moral, and creative (Chapter 4). In the middle of these he proposed that the easily neglected moral dimension of Christian schooling be more deliberately fostered.

Because the Christian life is one of cultural obedience and faith, not just adherence to a body of doctrine, goals beyond the intellectual become as important as intellectual goals. As he put it, "Teachers should ensure that, wherever possible, whole learning takes place—intellectual, moral, and creative, and not just one of these" (44).

Specifically, he held that a Christian curriculum "must induct students into the complexity and variety of moral obligations, choices, ambiguities, tensions, allegiances, and behaviors that human life presents to all observant persons" (55).

This focus is re-emphasized in the CSI Task Force document "In Their Father's House":

In a Christian school, moral education addresses the capacity in image bearers for "choosing this day whom they will serve." Such education helps students learn that

because all of life entails *responsibility* to God, all significant choices, in whatever domain, are *moral* choices. To help them grow in moral sensitivity, young persons must be required to probe the complexities that abound in their own experience and in the school's subject matter. (21)

It matters less what the subject is called than that it gets students to make informed decisions about themselves, their friends, the government, sex, or drugs.

What these principled quotes add up to is that the Christian school is called to give direct curricular attention to the life problems and experiences of the students. It matters less what the subject is called than that it gets students to make informed decisions about themselves, their friends, the government, sex, or drugs. Since many life experiences do not arise naturally in such courses as math or history, special efforts will need to be made to confront some of the tough dilemmas that are or soon will touch students' lives. Whether the opportunities arise in literature class, Bible class, or some other class is less important than that such matters receive attention.

RESPONSE TO CRITICS

What follows is an attempt to meet each of the major criticisms, to help teachers, parents, and administrators understand more clearly both the

pitfalls and the promises of Quest and other values-saturated materials.

Criticism 1: These materials promote secular humanism or moral relativism.

This criticism is the most frequently voiced and the most heatedly affirmed. If true, it would surely undermine Christian goals of education, something no Christian educator would intentionally do.

In pursuing evidence for this criticism the objectors typically move away from the materials themselves and scan the writings of these educators until they discover their ideological loyalties. They then conclude that the materials must be infected with this alien ideology.

When the critics turn to the teaching materials, they discover a certain similarity in use of terms and other clues as to the bias of the materials. Some of this sleuthing is not very skillful, such as when the materials suggest that students be encouraged to say, "I can do anything I want to do." The context clearly shows that this technique is used to encourage students to achieve their best. The critics translate this self-encouragement as an ethical statement purporting that there are no standards, and thus they conclude that the materials "teach" rejection of authority. Similarly, the materials use the term *self* to refer to the learners' own perceptions of themselves and to encourage the enhancement of self-concept or worth. The critics call it *self-ish* or *self-centered*, again charging that the materials teach selfishness, an ethical attitude that they claim is secular and humanistic.

Not all the critics so seriously misread the materials. Some infer that many of the activities in values education have what might be called open-endedness: a minimum of closure with few clearcut conclusions. Instead each student, through the activity, clarifies his or her own feelings, attitudes, and behaviors about the topic, whether it be pets, parents, or peers. The teacher is urged to encourage clarification both of where the feelings come from and of what students can do about them. Missing from this process is any explicit

evaluation of which attitudes or feelings are acceptable or condemned. That's why the teacher materials refer to these procedures as values *clarification* (to distinguish them from values *inculcation*) methods.

The critics infer from the terminology and the process that this approach exhibits the secular humanist belief in the absence of any ethical standards.

Both types of critics, those who misread and those who extensively infer, forget that the process or methods are not necessarily forever wedded to the philosophy of the formulators. A better marriage takes place between those methods and the goals of Christian education. Quest and Project Charlie materials relate affirmatively to what Christian Schools International literature calls *decisional* learning goals. What is dramatized is the act of choosing from options, choosing the better or best over the alternatives.

It is precisely here that classroom teachers in Christian schools have their own resources, which the methods themselves do not provide. They can refer to biblical principles and Christian values that assist the student in choosing.

Critics fail to understand two things:

■ **Reformed education is committed to educating the whole learner—intellect, emotions, and will.**

■ **The classroom teacher places his or her Christian stamp upon any materials, irrespective of what the authors have as their own bias.**

Those critics who affirm that affective goals are hostile to Christian values are looking at the wrong evidence and asking the wrong questions. They fail to understand two things: 1) Reformed education is committed to educating the whole learner—intellect, emotions, and will; and 2) the classroom teacher places his or her Christian stamp upon any materials, irrespective of what the authors or founders have as their own secularist or humanist bias.

Criticism 2: Such materials interfere with the sphere of home training.

This criticism stems from a belief that family matters and academic matters belong in separate spheres. Math is for school and morals are for home and church. Academic matters such as history and science belong in the school; life matters belong in the home. Such critics note correctly that the topics treated and the methods pursued in values clarification acknowledge no such separation. The materials, in their focus on life and its perplexities, do bring out student responses about not only their classmates, but also their siblings and parents, as well as their hobbies, their entertainment, and their attitudes toward sex, drugs, rock music, and Nintendo games.

Critics fear that the school will send messages on these matters that are different from what parents want. More extreme objectors see in the very treatment of these topics an illegitimate extension of the school's role into the sphere of the family. They believe anything that involves the psychological makeup of the student is the sole responsibility of the parent and is off limits to educators.

Objectors need to be reminded of two principles of Christian schooling that help us all see both the problem and the potential in such materials. The first principle is that commitment to intellectual, decisional, and creative goals is a commitment to educating the whole child. This commit-

ment resists the separation of the intellectual, emotional, and physical aspects of the learner. All are equally appropriate areas for deliberate instruction.

The second principle of Reformed schooling the objectors forget is that Christian schools are parental schools, agents and extensions of the family. Unlike public schools as agents of the civil government, or parochial schools as agents of the institutionalized church, covenantal Christian schools

Unlike public schools as agents of the civil government, or parochial schools as agents of the institutionalized church, covenantal Christian schools have forged a special cooperative relationship with the family.

have forged a special cooperative relationship with the family. This principle prevents making a sharp dividing line between school concerns and family concerns.

Quest materials and other values education curriculum materials, when used in Christian schools, build on this assumption of cooperation and shared concern rather than on some principle of a division of labor.

Criticism 3: Such materials involve a form of psychological testing.

Critics who focus on this term and related ones (*psychotherapy, self-disclosure*) are concerned about the possibility that when feelings are explored, classroom teaching turns into psychological counseling or group therapy. Critics note that teachers are not trained as psychotherapists and worry that teachers will mismanage the student responses.

Teaching the skills of decision making has only a faint resemblance to what psychologists do when clients have problems they cannot handle alone. The wise teacher of affective materials encourages good attitudes and feelings while accepting negative ones, all the while pressing the class to achieve understanding of them. This exploration of principles that are rooted in Christian community values is unique to Christian schools and not possible in public schools. This activity makes no attempt to substitute for what psychological counseling or therapy tries to achieve.

A seemingly separate worry is that teachers are engaged in psychological testing, that is, measuring on some kind of instrument the state of the student's psyche or personality. When a school engages in testing on life problems, often in the form of personal essays, it

is not measuring the health or mental illness of a learner. It is only measuring the degree to which a student can give an organized and clear expression of present understanding of some issue, whether it be sibling rivalry or peer pressure. When the result is graded,

and many are not, the grade is given for students' ability to express themselves, rather than for traits of psychological testing. To confuse the two is to misunderstand both.

This third criticism misunderstands the difference between classroom instruction and client therapy. Perhaps the confusion arises because of the similarity of concerns about life issues, but the difference in instructional techniques keeps each from being a substitute for the other. Christian teachers are as ready as Christian parents to refer various individual maladjustments to experts.

TOO EARLY FOR "RESULTS"

A number of other concerns are difficult to pin down and thus difficult to address. For example, for some it is the conflicting testimony, even among the experts, about whether or not such subject matter actually produces its claimed results. Some extravagant claims have been made that students who get regular instruction in affective education have fewer pregnancies, less drug experimentation, less trouble with the law, and better relations with parents and peers. Valid data is lacking to prove these assertions. Christian schools do not engage in affective education to stem the rising tide of self-destructive behavior on the part of young people. They do so out of concern for guiding students responsibly as they face all of the life decisions above, and more. The mandate for moral education is clear, and only long-range research will tell what methods most positively affect students' lives. Teachers often work by faith, patiently watering, while affirming with St. Paul that God gives the

increase or results.

The use of values education materials cannot be postponed because of lack of definitive proof of results any more than the new math can be discontinued or the language experience approach to reading can be put on hold. The profession can be trusted to maximize the potential for good outcomes in any of these areas and to continually evaluate effectiveness as efficiently as possible.

This treatment of the need for continuing to improve affective education in Christian schools would not be complete without our noting the resemblance between these techniques and those that Jesus used. In the parables of Jesus and elsewhere he reveals that he was a master teacher and worthy of imitation. He used the ordinary things of life like house-keeping, gardening, coins, illness, and weddings to open up spiritual truths. He used the perplexities of all of these to lead his listeners to reflect upon themselves and their lives, rarely giving single or unequivocal answers.

While the examples used in the teaching method of Jesus are clearly outdated, the contours of the method are not, and it is this style of teaching that values materials resemble and Christian teachers model. In a Christian school setting Christian teachers will never abandon the biblical norms but will, like Jesus, insert them into each lesson.

The quest for improving the quality of affective education in Christian schools must go on. The more that professional educators discover both the pitfalls and the promises of the materials, the more successful they will become and the more they will enjoy the support of the parent community. **CEJ**

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—by H. K. ZOEKLICHT

"Veggies and Cranberry Juice"

It was 10:07 on this clear and balmy Thursday morning in late May. Nature seemed at rest in the greening countryside. But a storm was stirring in the faculty room of Omni Christian High School. Bible teacher John Vroom, who had been hiding in the men's room with the current issue of the *Christian Educators Journal* throughout most of the chapel period, stealthily entered the faculty room intending to get first dibs on the morning treats.

While he had been resting, John had been contemplating the glorious array of jelly doughnuts, cherry Danish, or cream puffs from Jaarsma's that would surely be awaiting him. He had been tasting in advance the cup of fresh coffee with real cream that would perfectly complement the rich pastry. John Vroom loved being at Omni. It was a good place to work.

As he approached the somewhat worse-for-the-wear table that supported the large aluminum coffee urn, the smaller urn with water for tea, a stack of disposable cups for the wastrels who refused to buy ceramic mugs, and the usual tray of treats, John Vroom halted slightly, squinted through his bifocals, and frowned.

"What's this?" he sniffed indignantly, for no one in particular to hear. "Now what's going on? Is this somebody's idea of a joke?" he then asked as his Omni colleagues began streaming into the faculty room after chapel.

"When is that chapel committee going to stop getting all these retired preachers in here to lead chapel?"

asked business teacher Bill Silver as he moved toward the coffee table, his green corduroy trousers whistling rhythmically as he walked. "All we get from them is warmed-over sermons. That doesn't work with these kids.

Then Bill spied the truant Bible teacher, who was still muttering over the tray of snacks. "Hey, John," he joshed, "I'd rather have you lead chapel than that guy." Hardly pausing, he continued, "John, how is it that you always get in here first after chapel?" Half seriously he added, "And what are you so glum about this morning?"

Vroom gave Silver a dark, baleful look and pointed a thick forefinger at the treat tray. "About this, that's what," he snapped. "Who is responsible for this? Who is in charge of the eats for today?"

The crowd of teachers surrounded the table and stared down at a large, round tray on which, arranged in a striking geometrical pattern, was a colorful array of cut vegetables and fruits. There were neatly sliced oranges and apples and small bunches of cool grapes, both light green and deep red. There were stalks of fresh, crisp yellow-green celery stuffed with peanut butter as well as moist-orange carrot sticks all in a row. And there was a large pitcher of a red fluid that looked suspiciously like cranberry juice.

For a moment the teachers, who had not yet fully recovered from the chapel speech on "The Sin of Sloth" and from singing "I Was a Wandering Sheep," looked at the tray of delectables and then at each other. Some

looked very grim; others smiled, although wanly; and a few, including home economics teacher Ginny Traansma, grinned broadly.

Ginny broke the silence, "Help! There's a health nut among us! We need our sugar kick this morning." She took a small paper saucer and began to make a judicious selection of fruits and vegetables for her snack.

"Wait a minute," growled the grim Bible teacher, shaking his capacious head. "I don't think this is very funny. Not at all. It's all right with me if some dunderhead wants to go on one of these crazy diets at home, but he doesn't have to force us to do it, too." He glared around at his colleagues. "Who did this, anyway?" he demanded. He scrutinized each face briefly, hoping for a blush, an averted glance, a tell-tale sign of guilt.

"Oh, cut it out, John," came from Rick Cole. "Can't you be a sport for once? Just try this stuff. Maybe you'll like it." The English teacher surveyed the table in hopes of finding something that would satisfy his own mid-morning cravings. "The fruits and veggies I can take," he said, "but not that red juice." He took his ceramic coffee mug and tried to draw a cup of coffee. He got nothing.

"Hey," protested Cole, "this is going too far. I'll eat some of this rabbit food, to be a good sport, but I'm not going without my coffee. What neurotic scofflaw is responsible for this betrayal?"

"Calm down, Rick," purred Susan Katje. "We'll get to the bottom of this in a minute. I'll look on the sign-up list." She padded smoothly across the room toward the bulletin board on which the snack roster was posted.

"No need for any detective work, Suse," came the hesitant voice of young Jack Ezel, first-year American history teacher. "Mea culpa. I did it," he said softly. Then he added, "I just thought it would be a good idea to have those good things for snacks instead of all that junk and sugar and stuff—and the caffeine."



"Good for you, Jack." This came from Lucy Bright Den Denker. "I'm with you on this, Jack. Somewhere in this school we're supposed to be teaching about health and nutrition and good eating habits, and then we turn around and go for a sugar high every chance we get with jelly rolls, brownies, and coffee. Most of you middle-aged guys are too thick around the middle anyway." She glanced at John Vroom as she spoke.

"Will you get off it, Lucy?" grumbled the very frustrated basketball coach, Ren (Rabbit) Abbot, as he disgruntledly scrutinized his peanut-buttered celery. "A little of that pastry and stuff isn't going to hurt anybody. Let's not get fanatic around here." He bit grimly into the celery and crunched away at it, doing his best to make the sound echo throughout the room.

"That's right, Ren," chimed in the still indignant Vroom. "This is a betrayal of trust. It's a sneaky stab, that's what it is. It's—it's—it's like Gideon stabbing Eglon in the belly, that's what it is."

Suddenly his eyes brightened at a new thought, and he trudged purposefully to the shelf where he kept his lunch bag, reached inside, and triumphantly drew out a thick brownie, neatly tucked in a baggie.

"Minnie knows what's good for me," he said reassuringly as he jammed the rich confection into his mouth and glared at the villain Ezel.

Steve Vander Prikkel, who was

standing next to Matt De Wit while they both sipped the cranberry juice, said quietly to his colleague, "These young guys get idealistic ideas at first—jogging, health food, crazy diets, you know. But Jack'll get over this fad in a few years. You'll see. They all settle down after a while."

De Wit just sipped, smiled, and nodded agreement. Then he leaned toward his colleague and asked quietly, "Steve, did you know that we're probably going to lose Rick Cole next year? I understand he's accepting that job with the Mission Board."

"No!" came the startled response. "But now that you say it, I remember that Rick has been talking about leaving teaching. Some of the glow is off teaching for him, I guess. And besides, he'll probably get a big raise over at the Mission Board, don't you think?" Steve sipped his juice and continued, "Where did you hear it, Matt? Rick hasn't said anything."

"Erma said something about it already last week at Adult Church School," answered Matt. "It's not a secret or anything. Our school board is already scrambling for a quick replacement."

"Any good bites?"

"Oh, sure," answered Matt. "In fact, I think the decision has already been made," he said as he munched on a carrot stick. "They're going to hire Reverend Broekhoest to replace Rick."

"Get off it," Steve retorted, his eyes widening. "That guy's not even a

certified teacher. What do you mean? How can they hire him?"

"Nothing to it, apparently," responded Matt. "They'll have him teach a couple of sections of Bible to help Vroom out, and then he's going to teach three sections of English, two for freshmen, and one lit."

Steve shook his head incredulously. "Who in the Sam Hill is letting that happen, I'd like to know. What does Broekhoest know about English, anyway?"

"Well," smiled Matt, "he speaks it, sort of. And as for who is behind all of this, you're looking at her." He glanced surreptitiously across the room to where Dr. Esther Carpenter, principal of Omni Christian High, was munching on apple slices.

"Broekhoest is a good friend of our principal, you know," Matt added. "I'm pretty sure that she's the one who is making it all happen, and the board is following her advice."

Steve Vander Prikkel looked troubled. "That may be Esther Carpenter's first big mistake," he said ominously, "her first big mistake." He sipped his juice and shook his head. "I can't believe she would do that."

"Well," mused the science teacher, "you know what they say: 'Friendship runs thicker than credentials,' or something like that. This wouldn't be the first time Christian schools acted unprofessional in staffing matters. Can you believe it? We, the faculty, have not even been consulted?"

Glancing quickly at the clock, Matt De Wit headed toward the door. As he walked past the treat table, he snatched up one more celery stick and popped it into his mouth. "You know," he said, "it's not half bad."

"It's very bad," said John Vroom, raising his voice for all to hear, "and we've got to do something to teach some respect to these young teachers. They've got all these wild ideas about teaching, they grade too high, and now they're trying to poison us!"

With that fine prospect echoing in their ears, the faculty of Omni Christian High School returned to their duties.

CEJ

—by CINDY REDDINGTON

As God Said

In the beginning God created a being. Now the being was formless and empty; darkness surrounded it, and the Spirit of God was hovering over it. And God said, "Let there be life," and there was life. The small being's heart began to pump, and breath began to fill the being's lungs. The being was no longer formless and empty. God saw what he had made and it was good.

And God said, "Let there be love," and there was love. The being born into the world had developed into a baby who would be nurtured and molded by those who surrounded it. It grew according to what it had been told and developed into a child with a passion for words. Words that dripped from others' lips and spilled onto pages were pored over and devoured by the child. And there was evening and there was morning—the second day.

And God said, "Let there be an understanding of rights and wrongs," and there was an understanding of rights and wrongs. The child perceived all that was happening around her and learned from it. The rights and wrongs of the world the child was living in were felt by her as she gasped for breath at the wonders of her home and stood with eyes peering at the injustices. With all she understood, she was no longer a child, but not yet a woman. And there was evening and there was morning—the third day.

And God said, "Let there be strength and independence," and there was strength and independence. The young lady looked at the rights and wrongs of the world she had seen and her thirst for knowledge, and she had a yearning for independence. There was a reason for her existence that she had to discover, and with the once unreachable strength she had attained, there was no holding back. And there was evening and there was morning—the fourth day.

And God said, "Let there be compassion," and there was compassion. She was now a young woman, but with all she had learned and touched and grasped, her heart ached for more. She understood those around her and they tore her heart. She learned compassion. And there was evening and there was morning—the fifth day.

And God said, "Let this woman walk along a Christian path," and the woman walked a Christian path. The woman realized all she had done was accomplished through an understanding Father, and she saw the hand that had guided her. She had walked on the path of the Christian and was led by a faithful hand. And there was evening and there was morning—the sixth day.

When the woman had taught all those she could reach, she was fulfilled, and then God said, "Let there be rest," and there was rest.

Cindy Reddington is an education major at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa.

—by STEFAN ULSTEIN

A REPRIEVE FOR THE BABYLONIAN MESSENGER

Educators attempting to teach mass communications as an academic discipline have been as welcome as the ancient bearer of bad news. While no teachers have actually had their tongues cut out, many have been accused of complicity with various diabolical plots. For folks who view the three R's as second only to the Ten Commandments, taking valuable school time to study television, advertising, movies, and popular music—time that could be spent diagramming sentences and conjugating verbs—smacks of godless modernism.

Historically, education has hidden behind the garden wall, laboring to prepare students for the past as the future whizzes by.

Historically, education has hidden behind the garden wall, laboring to prepare students for the past as the future whizzes by. George Orwell wrote of the ridicule science teachers faced in his school, where Latin and Greek occupied the pedagogical throne. I remember learning to write with an ink pen and blotter long after the widespread adoption of the ball point. What a fool's errand that was.

But things are changing. Parents, administrators, and legislators have

begun to notice the obvious: today's students are much more influenced by the mass media than by books. The *image*, not the printed word, is the primary vehicle for communication.

Many educators, myself included, view this development askance. However, it will not change, no matter how hard we wish. Children stare at television, rent video cassettes, and absorb massive amounts of advertising. Despite this onslaught of images, schools have done little to teach discernment or critical response. What is needed is a serious attempt by Christian educators to teach media literacy. Only when students understand the mass media can they begin to realize its control over them.

That's a perplexing thought because few teachers have any academic training in mass media. Majors in English, history, or psychology touch on the big issues in the mass media, but teachers lack the specialized training needed to build a solid curriculum.

A new resource guide from the Ontario Ministry of Education addresses this problem head on. *Media Literacy: Intermediate and Senior Division, 1989* is a comprehensive guide for teachers who want to take the plunge. It comes out of a 1987 English curriculum guide mandating media literacy as a component of grades seven through twelve curricula in the province.

The 230-page document devotes chapters to television, film, radio,

popular music and rock video, photography, print (newspapers, magazines, mass-market paperbacks), and cross-media studies. The eclectic range of sub-chapters covers everything from sexuality and violence in the media to history and economics.

Only when students understand the mass media can they begin to realize its control over them.

It's an impressive job. The Ministry wisely sought experts from the media industry to assist educators in researching and writing the guide. This effort shows in the easy-to-read prose and the head-on approach to touchy subjects.

Media Literacy is not a curriculum, it is a curriculum guide. In this respect it is very useful to Christian educators. Each chapter includes a section on introducing the topic area (television, movies, etc.) into the classroom, and several pages of suggested activities and projects. Many of these activities can be used as they appear, but they could be easily modified and enhanced to meet the special needs of a Christian school classroom.

When we began teaching mass communications twelve years ago at

Bellevue Christian School, we had few resources. Over the years we sought to construct a class based on topics covered in a college communications major. According to alumni reports, we have accomplished this goal. One graduate, who now works as a television news reporter, said that his first two communications classes in the university dealt with the same material he had learned in our high school mass communications class.

I mention this because *Media Literacy* provides an introduction to the same groundwork that we teach in that class. Teachers who take the time to read *Media Literacy* will not be chasing after someone's eccentric agenda. It's a good, solid primer for teachers who want a foundation for teaching mass communications.

But it's only a starter. The biggest challenge in teaching mass communications is that of staying current. It is important to know what is hot in the current television season, what movies are setting trends, and who the influential music groups are. Students

won't believe that a teacher knows anything if his or her idea of a current movie is *The Man from Snowy River*.

To keep current and develop a sense of media literacy, begin with newspapers. Read a community paper, a good metropolitan daily, and a national paper like *The Globe and Mail* or *The New York Times*. The same goes for magazines. Find out what is hot, what is shaping ideas, and read. Poll students and ask them what they watch on television, what movies have impressed them, and what music they listen to. Then watch those shows and listen to the music. This can be a formidable task, especially when you realize that a year or two from now you'll be as out of date as "Charlie's Angels."

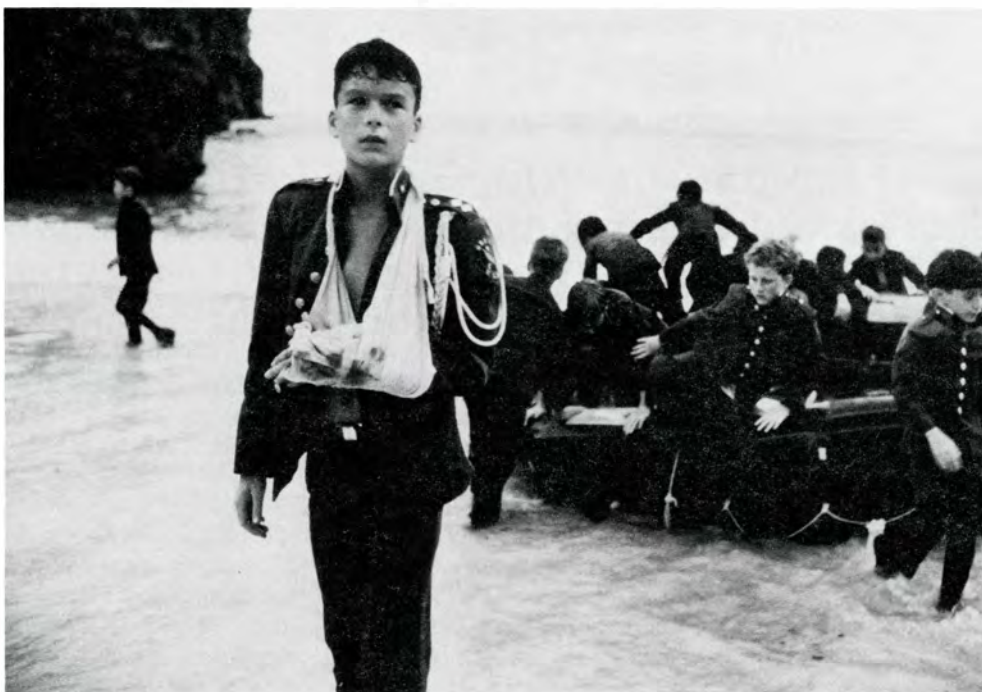
Winning the confidence of students is one thing. Winning the confidence of conservative school boards is quite another. To avoid the fate of the Babylonian messenger, mass communications teachers need to demonstrate that their classes are not just a time to "kick back and watch

vids." Teachers must know the subject and teach it in a responsible, biblically-based fashion. They need to develop a curriculum based on a strong personal understanding of the subject area. A reading of *Media Literacy: Intermediate and Senior Division, 1989* is a great place to begin. **CEJ**

Stefan Ulstein teaches at Bellevue Christian Junior and Senior High in Bellevue, Washington.

Media Literacy may be purchased for \$7.00 (Canadian). Ask for *Media Literacy—Resource Guide, Intermediate and Senior Division, 1989*, produced by the Ministry of Education.

Publications Ontario
880 Bay Street
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NEW RELEASE: Ralph (Paul Balthazar Getty) is a military student who clings to civilized conduct in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, a powerful story of adventure and survival involving a group of American cadets stranded on a remote tropical island.

If you would like a press kit for Golding's Lord of the Flies, drop me a line and I'll mail it to you. Please enclose \$2.00 to help pay for postage.
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—by MARLENE DORHOUT

A recent survey indicated that students today are severely lacking in knowledge of basic historical facts. Schools and teachers get blamed. But Christian schools seem to be more traditional in their curriculum. Since there is so much more to teach today, do you see this as a problem attacking our schools too?

A lack of clear perspective seems to be more of a problem than a lack of historical facts. Many defensive teachers unfairly share in this vague, undefined guilt. Life today is an overload of facts and figures, so any inadequacy of historical knowledge is more obvious. This age of information is extremely complex. Ignorance causes confusion, insecurity, and criticism.

Teachers and students can suffer from *Information Anxiety*, the title of Richard Saul Wurman's book. This author claims there is also a gap between what we know and what we understand. Thicker history books, CNN, videotex services, Fax machines, and VCR's create an onslaught of excessive knowledge, too much to amalgamate and synthesize. With such a glut of information, perhaps no authority can say what should or should not be taught for students to attain a clear understanding of the past to function in the future.

Shifting blame from one educational level to another or from traditional to non-traditional schools is not the answer. Grant Wiggins, educational consultant, responds to survey results in an article, "The Futility of Trying to Teach Everything of Importance," in the November 1989 issue of *Educational Leadership*. He reiterates an educational truth,

the need to develop in students a love of discovery: ". . . The aim of curriculum is to awaken, not 'stock' or 'train' the mind." We teachers need to establish clear priorities concerning inquiry and learning.

In 1968 Sister Marie McIntyre claimed in the book *Unify, Unify* that the teen today "is composed of pressure, influences, and inventions which were not here to form or deform our teentime years." The teenager "absorbs new knowledge all at once in visual form and shape, overlays, impressions, put-togethers that make his learning an ever-present thing." She adds that "we face the trying time of change discouraged by the inadequate in self, in institution, in technique for decades past." Her concluding thoughts address us: "Our task as Christian teachers is both old and new. We teach by who we are and we are not afraid to face our task because it's His, and He in us can do all things."

We must teach our students to integrate this world's information and God's mighty revelation to reveal the truth. Particularly, as Christian educators we should recognize our inability to master all of the recently spawned knowledge and accept the challenge of the unfamiliar future, for our God is changeless. ■

I teach junior high and find that some kids panic or refuse when asked to pray aloud in the classroom; others volunteer so readily. Should I discontinue asking students to participate or not?

I believe that students should be asked but not forced at this age. The teacher, however, has the responsibility first to set the example and climate to make prayer a natural, comfortable, and respectful everyday activity.

Some students, even from Christian homes, do not have good role models; parents either seldom pray aloud or pray so piously that the kids feel incompetent in this area. In addition, junior high or middle school students are excessively concerned about peer perceptions; the risk is too great.

Awkwardness regarding their bodies, voices, and word choice creates fear of embarrassment.

Communication skills are important for adolescents to learn so they can say or write what they think. They do think a lot about themselves, their friends, their parents, and their God. Spiritual development parallels mental development in the process from concrete to abstract. Thus, doubts arise concerning all of the previously mentioned areas, including God. Sometimes students just don't feel they can or should

pray. They need reminding that even the disciples requested help; Jesus gave them a model. So also we should enable students with opportunities and examples that remove the obstacles of language, topics, peer ridicule, and inadequacy.

I find that designating certain homeroom days for prayer requests increases students' participation and trust. When the requests become excessive, I ask for student volunteers to assist. Those ever-present, overly zealous types now contribute positively as a buffer between teacher- and student-

oriented prayers. Tactfully, new students are encouraged and selected, allowing the entire class to become more and more involved.

Prayer is just one of the really exciting concepts junior high students learn to develop sincerely, but a very important one. As they see firm evidence that God is there, he does hear, and he does care, the adolescents experience reassurance of their own value and worth. Prayer is a vital part of their spiritual growth and Christian education. ■

Working mothers and fast-paced society are often cited as culprits depriving our children of enough attention. I find, though, that some of my students who get lots of attention at home expect it at school, too, at the expense of others. Don't you think pampered, overindulged students are causing problems for our schools today? What can we do about it?

This question challenges the assumption that classroom disruptions generally result from a lack of attention and suggests that sometimes misbehavior indicates too much attention.

John Rosemond's Six Point Plan for Happy, Healthy Children concludes that because parents today often fail to set limits on the amount of attention their children receive, we have children who can't get enough attention. A child put constantly in the spotlight believes he or she is the most important person in the family, and naturally in the classroom as well. The book concurs that disruptive behaviors, such as interrupting adults, talking incessantly and loudly, and acting silly, are common characteristics of this problem. These children view "all of life as performance." The author predicts that the child who develops an addiction to attention stands "a better-than-average likelihood of someday transferring that dependency to drugs, alcohol, or self-destructive behavior."

At first, such information sounds contradictory to the strong emphasis today on giving kids enough time and attention in order to build self-esteem and avoid the pitfalls previously mentioned. A closer look finds the two concepts quite complementary. A necessary component of building a healthy self-concept is responsibility. If parents short-circuit that responsibility, especially if they're overprotective, the child can't develop a personal sense of worth. Consequently, we see children performing for amusement instead of self-satisfaction.

Allowing a child to experience the natural consequence of behavior should be encouraged at home and strengthened

at school. Parents often rescue children by running to school with forgotten lunches, homework assignments, or gym clothes. Teachers, too, feed students' demanding nature by giving "one more chance," extending a due date, or allowing them to dominate discussions. Repeatedly these students manage to consume more than their share of parents' and teachers' attention and expose their dependency and self-centeredness. We need to clearly identify limits for these students, preventing them from depriving and manipulating both adults and peers.

Christian homes and schools working together can offer our students some consistency. Then, regardless whether the cause is too much or too little attention, the problems will lessen with mutual respect as our children learn to act responsibly for themselves, and eventually for society in general. **CEJ**

You are encouraged to send questions on any topic related to the Christian teacher's role and response, regardless of grade level. The editor will solicit responses from additional sources when appropriate.

**Address questions to: Marlene Dorhout
CEJ Query Editor
2135 S. Pearl
Denver, CO 80210**

CONFIDENTIALITY IS ASSURED.

—by MINS REINSMa

Dennis Roosendaal: Living God's Choices

He has an athletic build, clear blue eyes, strong facial features, and a somewhat stern expression. He moves quickly as though he needs to complete yet one more project for the day. His name is Dennis Roosendaal.

"Denny" has been the math teacher at Watson Groen Christian School in Seattle, Washington, since 1961. God has used him and his family in a special

way in their school and church. That God directs all our comings and goings is particularly evident in Denny's life.

Dennis and his wife, Vonnie, grew up in Lynden, Washington. Both attended Calvin College and in 1960 moved to Seattle, Dennis to become an engineering student at the University of Washington, Vonnie to teach second and third grade at Watson Groen Christian School. When Vonnie expected

their first child and her pregnancy became too obvious (this was before the "show and tell" days), Denny took over the class. The fact that he did a marvelous job with those young children speaks of his adaptability and talents.

When Dennis decided to heed God's call from engineering to Christian education, Watson Groen gained a man with great talent and a true love for his work. As an engineer he could have built a bridge, which could have been destroyed by a Libyan freighter—especially in Seattle. Instead, for the past twenty-five years he has been building bridges between teachers, students, and parents.

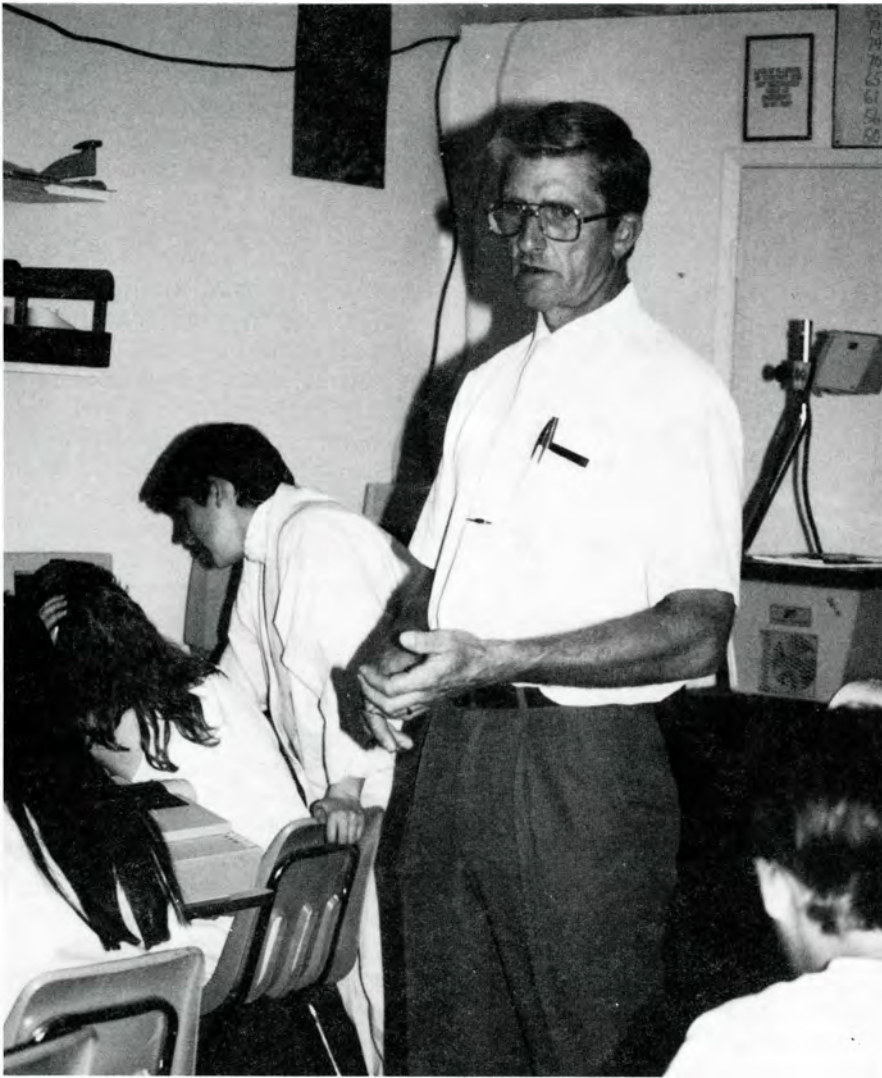
What a blessing it has been for many parents to have their children taught by Mr. Roosendaal! It is difficult to calculate the number of students Denny has taught, but it has been well over one thousand, mostly in high school classes. His subjects have ranged from algebra, geometry, and general math to accounting and drafting.

Since 1964 Dennis has been very active in the school's athletic program as well, coaching and driving the player bus. His energy shows when, after a long day of teaching, he drives a bus loaded with the soccer, volleyball, basketball, or track team to a faraway place for a meet or game.

God has blessed Dennis with exceptional health and energy. He has inspired many others to be more energetically active as well. He has been a consistent inspiration in many ways not only to his students, but also to his colleagues, board members, and the local Christian Education Society as a whole.



"It is with great joy that I look back on my involvement in shaping the lives of young people, . . . teaching them that God is the very center of our work and play."



Even in recreation and hobbies Dennis and his family have always been involved with church and school. His wife and four children—masters of the organ, piano, violin, oboe, and voice—are of real importance to the school music program. Dennis and Vonnie also enjoy hiking in the beautiful state of Washington. He has taken many Cadet groups into the mountains for two or three days; and, since he hikes with the same enthusiasm as he works, many Cadets remember the Roosendaal hikes as fun but exhausting. During the summer months, one can often find Dennis atop, in, or under a house—generally the house of a church member—doing repairs or remodeling. His results often surpass the quality of the professionals. In fact, in his spare time he has built his own house from the foundation up in less than two years. Now it is one of

the finest houses on the block.

When asked whether he ever had second thoughts about his abrupt change from engineering to Christian education, Denny's answer was direct and without any hesitation: "No, never. I immediately started to take education courses, culminating with a master's degree in mathematics from Western Washington University. Teaching is a satisfying profession, particularly Christian education. It is with great joy that I look back on my involvement in shaping the lives of young people, helping them to become useful members of society, teaching them that God is the very center of our work and play."

Dennis has a keen devotion to the Christian Education Society of Seattle and its unique opportunity to educate parents regarding the need for God-centered education.

"It often happens," he says, "that parents are more interested in a superior academic program than in a God-centered, holistic approach to education. We need to encourage those parents not merely to be interested in but also committed to our schools. Some do not see the integral connection between home, school, and church. Others do not understand the Reformed view that our whole world belongs to God."

Do students from different backgrounds cause problems? "No, not really," he replies. "At times it results in interesting learning situations for everyone. In general, it has been good for the student body and for the faculty."

Dennis continues, "I see the purpose of Christian education as twofold: first, to graduate students who are academically well-rounded and who see our Creator as the center of their life, their very being and purpose; second, to educate young people in such a way that they will be able to find useful and satisfying employment.

"As educators, we cannot do this alone," he stresses. "We need God's care and guidance, and we need committed parents who value Christian education more than a better house, a summer cabin, or a boat."

Although important, money alone cannot build a school like Watson Groen. Denny says, "Such a school is built only by dedicated staff members, a lively student body, and committed parents. Throughout history this combination has proven victorious to those who know that our world belongs to God." **CEJ**

Mins Reinsma is the father of former students of Dennis Roosendaal and an active supporter of Watson Groen Christian School in Seattle, Washington.

—by CAROL M. REGTS

What Does Your Label Say?

Bravely we have all chanted, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." Yet inside we cringe with pain when we hear the names others hurl at us either deliberately or unthinkingly. We hurt to hear the negative judgments of our peers. We know that words *do* hurt; they scar our self-image, and such wounds often take a much longer time to heal than broken bones. Too often, however, we do not learn from our hurtful experiences. Instead, we turn around and treat others as nastily as we have been treated.

We know that words *do* hurt; they scar our self-image, and such wounds often take a much longer time to heal than broken bones.

One of the most difficult things for us to do is to look objectively at how we treat others, what we think about ourselves, and how we communicate those opinions or judgments. Teens especially need to learn this skill as they become more adultlike in their self-centered and often deliberately hurtful use of words.

Since we are called by James to control our tongues, we need to help

our teens develop an understanding of how their words can inflict pain and communicate judgments about other people. Here is one activity I have tried with teenagers that involves them in thinking about the way they often focus on the "speck of dust" in their brothers' eyes while they ignore the "log" in their own. My goal is to prompt them to picture those judgments as labels they brand onto their own or other people's foreheads.

First, in small groups or as a class, we brainstorm and record on the board how and why labels in general are used, who uses labels, and where and when they're used. I then encourage the students to compare that information to the ways we might use labels with people. For example, they can compare the quality they expect from designer labels to the predictable ways they are treated because of their family "label," particularly by teachers who have taught the students' older brothers or sisters. Or they connect information about a product's contents to how nicknames or even the labels of boy/girl and hunk/nerd refer to a person's desires or personality. Finally, I direct the discussion toward making the same kind of comparisons to the label of "Christian" and lead them into understanding the one label we all have in common: child of God.

Earlier, using one quarter of an index card, I prepare enough "labels" so that each student can have one. These labels include both a statement

of a character trait and a way to communicate that message to the person wearing that label. Here are examples of labels I have used in a language arts class: "I am the boss—obey me"; "I am God's gift to man(woman)kind—adore me"; "I am a liar—don't believe anything I say"; "I am always right—agree with me"; "I am hard of hearing—speak up"; "No one likes me—just ignore me."

I try to create labels that I have seen students or their parents use on themselves or attach to others. Teachers of particular subject areas can bring alive the feelings and attitudes of labels within their field; e.g., a social studies teacher can choose labels of a specific time period.

The next step is to explain that I will tape a label onto each person without his or her knowing what that label says. I explain that I want them to experience firsthand how powerfully we communicate our attitudes about people and how that communication affects the way we feel about ourselves and the way we interact with others. I then emphasize the following ground rules and make everyone promise, on "pain of death," to keep them:

1. You may NOT take off your label until I tell you to do so.
2. You may NOT tell anyone what his or her label is.
3. You must interact with everyone in the class—be creative, yet be careful to follow the rules.
4. You must stay in your seat until everyone has received a label.
5. I assign labels randomly, so don't think that this is the way I label you.

After reviewing these expectations, I call each student to my desk and tape a label to his or her forehead without allowing the wearer to see what it says. Generally I do this randomly, but I am careful in choosing which students get the ones about lying or being ignored so there aren't hurt feelings if the truth hits too close to



home. Once all the students are labeled, I let them mingle to discover each other's labels and to begin the task of communicating labels to one another. This is a noisy albeit tentative few minutes.

Periodically I remind them to read *everyone's* label, to mingle, to follow the other rules. Depending on the amount of time available, I let them roam about the room while I place a few hints in their ears about how to communicate certain labels. Another option I sometimes use is to place them into groups where they have to play a game or accomplish some minor task—all the while treating each other according to the label. I have found that fifteen minutes is the minimum for the students to shape some idea about what is written on their foreheads. (I have always wanted to extend this activity past my class period into a

whole morning or even an entire school day.)

After this time of interaction, I have the students return to their seats or sit in a circle, and I ask them, individually, to guess their own labels. Usually, I also ask them to explain briefly the specific ways the others communicated that label, how they felt about that kind of treatment, and what it might be like to wear that label for a week, a month, or a year. I allow each student to remove the label and to read it aloud to the group before I move to the next person. I would say that at least ninety percent of the students can either specifically or generally state what their label says. They are usually surprised at how close their guesses come, and we begin talking about how easy, and how devastating, it is to communicate judgments or fasten labels to other people.

I next ask students to read aloud Bible passages about judging and about treating each other in love (Matthew 7:1-5, I Corinthians 12:12-27, John 7:24, and II Corinthians 3:3). These verses can effectively be paraphrased using the label concept. I especially like "Judge not, for you will be judged according to the label you use on others."

Finally, I have them write a short essay exploring in more depth how they felt during the activity, what it might be like to be forced by their peers to "wear" that label for a year, as well as how they label themselves and others.

They also construct two goals: one goal explaining how they will work to change the way they communicate negative labels to others and one goal describing how they will try to re-label themselves. These are far too personal to share in class or even to grade. I usually have students sign their names to their goals and put them in envelopes that I store for a month or more before returning so that they can check their progress.

I have found that it's a rare student who does not arrive at some insight after this exercise of actively thinking about themselves and about others in new terms. And, without sermonizing or lecturing or judging, I have also established a way to talk to them about how we should treat each other in love, by proudly attaching to all those we see and by proudly wearing the label: I am a child of the King. **CEJ**

Carol Regis teaches seventh and eighth grade language arts at Eastern Christian Middle School in Wyckoff, New Jersey.

POCKET CHARTS

A sturdy, flexible pocket chart, long enough to display sentences, can be made for about a third of the price of a purchased one.

Use a heavy woven material, such as denim, for the background. Acetate for clear pockets can be bought in strips or sheets from a supplier of industrial plastics. A good gauge is .010, which is firm enough not to sag while hanging and thin enough to sew on a sewing machine. Fabric loops or plastic rings may be sewn to the top for hanging the chart. Once everything has been measured and cut, the actual sewing time is about one hour.

A walk through the primary classrooms at Abbotsford Christian Elementary School shows pocket charts being used for a wide variety of purposes:

1. Bible memory. The Bible passage to be memorized is printed on strips in meaningful phrases. Some of the phrases can be turned over to the blank side while students try to recall what they have learned and then turned back to confirm or correct their responses. This may be a whole-class, small-group, or individual activity.

2. Word identification. Beginning readers enjoy assembling the words and picture clues that will re-create a poem the class is learning. Lay the pocket chart on the floor in one of your activity centers so several students can work on this together and can reach all of the pockets.

3. Brainstorming. Words that students generate in response to questions about a theme can be printed on cards and stored by categories in the pocket chart for use in writing.

4. Sentence development. Pattern sentences can be printed on strips, with appropriate space for students to insert their own ideas, while learning to write various types of sentences.

5. Beginning reading. Robert and Marlene McCracken suggest a six-step procedure in using a pocket chart for one kind of beginning reading activity (*Stories, Songs & Poetry to Teach Reading & Writing* 1986, 35-44):

Step One: The children memorize the story.

Step Two: The teacher introduces print.

Step Three: Children match word to word.

Step Four: Children match words to pictures.

Step Five: Children match pictures to words.

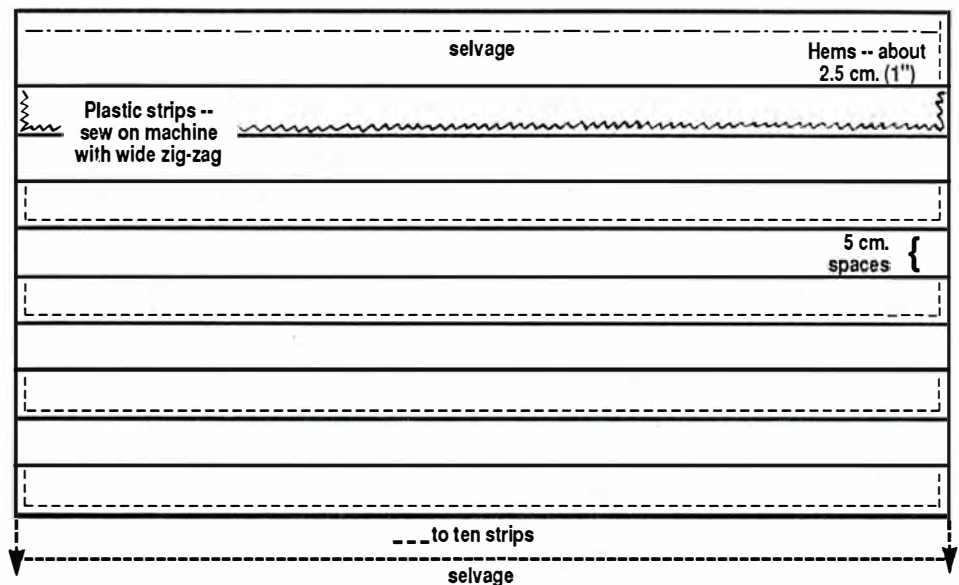
Step Six: Children rebuild the entire story.

6. Learning center rotation. Names or symbols for learning centers and a name card for each child make it a simple matter to designate where everyone will be during learning center time.

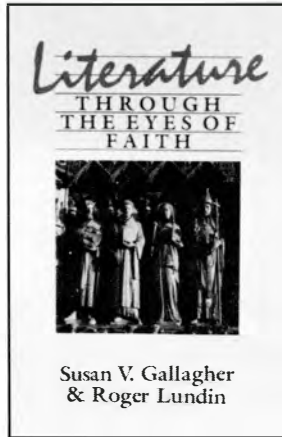
7. Math activities. Number cards and pictures of objects can turn the pocket chart into a learning station during math activity time. **CEJ**

Eleanor Mills is a learning assistance teacher in Abbotsford, British Columbia.

MATERIALS: Backing -- sturdy fabric such as denim, about 1.4 m. (1 1/2 yds.) of 115 cm. (48 ") wide.
Strips -- heavy-gauge clear plastic, about 5 cm. (3 1/4 ") x 132 cm. (1 1/2 yds.) wide.



—by STEVE J. VANDERWEELE



Literature Through the Eyes of Faith

by Susan V. Gallagher and Roger Lundin

Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1989, 192 pp., \$9.95 pb.

Reviewed by Mark Boer, Christian Schools International, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Why should we read literature? What happens when we do? How should we select and evaluate what we read? These are the basic questions at the heart of *Literature Through the Eyes of Faith*. This helpful book is one in a series of books co-sponsored by the Christian College Coalition. Each book in the series will focus on the relationship between the Christian faith and a specific subject area. (As of this writing, several other books in the series have been published on biology, history, and psychology.)

In keeping with the overall philosophy of the series, Susan Gallagher and Roger Lundin emphasize that reading literature is a form of human action:

Poems and stories can bring things to your attention in such a way that you might begin to think differently about something and then go on to

act on these thoughts in a very concrete way. (xxv)

In the foreword to the book, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Series Advisory Board member, observes, "This is one of the very first attempts to provide a Christian perspective on literature which is non-Romantic in character." The romantics made great claims for the human imagination. In one of his letters the poet John Keats wrote, "The imagination may be compared to Adam's dream [for a companion]—he awoke and found it truth." The authors of this book stand squarely in the middle of two extremes, between those who overvalue the power of literature and those who undervalue it. Gallagher (Calvin College) and Lundin (Wheaton College) acknowledge the power of language, demonstrating that stories and metaphors are important components in intellectual discovery, but they also recognize that language and imagination have their limitations:

[Literature] is neither an escape from reality nor a saving transformation of it. Instead, it enables us to respond to the order, beauty, and grace of God and his world and to the disorder that our sin has brought into the world. (xxiv)

The authors rightly contend that we cannot read literature objectively; we always read with a certain attitude of mind, with *a priori* assumptions. As Roger Lundin phrases it, "The person who reads with a completely open mind reads with an empty mind" (85). We need to evaluate (and perhaps modify) our assumptions as we read, not dispense with them before we begin. Just how to make those assessments is the knotty problem, one that the authors might have spent even more time discussing.

The book touches briefly on several critical approaches and fictional techniques (archetypal, New Criticism, metafiction) but not in any systematic

way. That is not unexpected in an introductory overview such as this, but sometimes one wishes for more extended analysis.

The authors write clearly and persuasively, bolstering their arguments with vivid examples. For instance, in the chapter that explores how to deal with widely divergent interpretations of a text, Gallagher writes: "Just as we would not criticize an oboist for playing a different part from a trombonist, so too should we be careful not to dismiss immediately those whose interpretations differ from our own" (98). Similarly, we learn of an English historian who argues against the use of figurative language—but is blind to his own use of such language to make his point.

This book acknowledges that contemporary teachers of literature must be knowledgeable about literary theory. They can no longer avoid skirmishes of theorists as they prepare lessons on literature (the authors analyze especially Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, poems by Emily Dickinson, and Shakespeare's plays). As the authors state, "A Christian understanding of literature needs to be built upon doctrines that have been derived from the Scriptures and developed through the course of Christian history." The book is designed to help students understand the tools of literary study and to introduce them to the rich history of Christian opinion on literature, language, and the reading experience. Literature can contribute to wholeness, wisdom, and, of course, right action.

Christian teachers will be challenged to evaluate their own approach to teaching literature. But I can also envision a capable high school student here and there reading the book with profit, perhaps even beating the teacher to the book. This work represents a fine effort to probe the interaction of literature and the Christian faith. ■



The Myth of the Common School

by Charles Glenn, Jr.

University of Massachusetts Press
1988, 369 pp., \$13.95 pb.

Reviewed by Don Oppewal, Education
Department, Calvin College, Grand
Rapids, Michigan.

This book has an ambiguous title. Some might think that the myth of the common school refers to some fabrication or story not grounded in social and political realities, and expect an attack on the validity and power of the common, public school. Such is not the case. The book uses the term *myth* to describe a quasi-religious vision that has the power to be decisive in determining all educational policy. Whether describing legislative means or judicial review, Glenn thoroughly documents the relentless march of the common school ideology, both in Europe and America.

According to the preface, Glenn is an evangelical Christian and credits the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship book *Society, State, and Schools: A Case for Structural and Confessional Pluralism* (1981) for opening his eyes "to reasoned and principled objections to our present system," by which he means the common school.

With considerable detail and massive documentation (over seventy pages of end notes and bibliography), Glenn notes major and minor themes and movements within the common

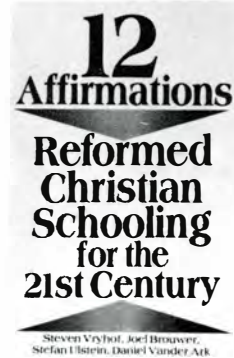
school proponents. He also details the efforts and temporary victories of those who resisted or opposed the public policy manifestations of the common school: the Calvinists in The Netherlands and the Catholics in North America, for example. He notes, however, that in The Netherlands recent developments have caused a reassessment of the policy of allowing "confessional schools" to receive subsidy, a practice of long standing there.

He identifies "Alternatives to the Common School" in America (chapter 8). The Catholics get considerable treatment, the Protestants less, and "a system of schools in the Reformed Theological Tradition" he mentions only in passing.

The sum total of the views he treats reveals that the majoritarian view—that the common school serves a national purpose—overwhelms the evidence given for parents' rights and pluralism. The protesters and resisters to the common school ideology are given short shrift. While this seems not to be the intent of the author, it appears to be its effect.

The book is therefore depressing for anyone who still has hopes that the rights of parents to determine their children's education will be honored by subsidized public policy. Those in the Reformed tradition who hold to the belief that Christian schools have a right to a share of the educational tax dollar will have to look elsewhere to find scholarly support for their cause.

Although this is a thoughtful and well-documented study of the common school movement, when push comes to shove it shows that the myth has not been punctured as much as perpetuated. As Glenn notes (284), polls show that while 87 percent of American students attend public school, 49 percent of their parents in 1986 said they would prefer to send their children to a private or church-related school. There is little hope that the 13 percent who already have made the choice and the 49 percent who would like to will gain any support for their rights from this book. ■



12 Affirmations: Reformed Christian Schooling for the 21st Century

Steven Vryhof, Joel Brouwer,
Stefan Ulstein, Daniel Vander Ark,
editors.

Published privately by Baker Book
House, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49516,
1989, 94 pp, \$3.95.

Reviewed by Steve J. VanDerWeele,
Professor Emeritus of English, Calvin
College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Something has been stirring since 1986 among Christian school teachers and administrators—a movement to take a hard look at the premises that underlie the way we carry on education as we try to anticipate the world of the new century. And it is good, therefore, that the guiding spirits of this movement have published the conclusions that have emanated from three Chicago Conferences from 1986 to 1988. The *Affirmations*, as the editors call them, will also constitute the agenda for the 1990 Chicago Conference (see announcement on page 34).

The book is less a theoretical framework for Christian education—important though such studies are—than a pithy, direct probing into what needs to be done in Christian schools and among boards and parents. The editors sense a crisis, and the tone of the book is one of compelling urgency. It is, in fact, a call to action.

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Book*

12 Affirmations

Although the affirmations are of various kinds, they all respond in some way to perceived gaps between what is and what should be: (1) the gap between solidly Reformed educational theory and actual practice in the schools; (2) the gap between research and meaningful results; (3) the gap between the demands of the twenty-first century on education and our slowness of pace in adapting our traditional methods to the new situation.

Thus, several affirmations are concerned with curriculum. Others deal with the nature of the learning community in which students are educated: "Because grace transcends the balance-sheet approach to life, cooperation comes before competition, service before self-interest" (27). Still others remind us of the uniqueness of each student and the blend of each teacher's strength and artistry. These affirmations advocate strategies by which the teacher's gifts can be used to respond to the needs of the student in the context of a biblically defined community. And several affirmations fashion bridges between the world of the school and the world "out there"—a world that needs skills, attitudes, perspectives, and knowledge not always imparted under current practice.

The editors intend that this book be purchased in quantity and hope it will engage the attention of school boards, parent-teacher associations, and, of course, all teachers and administrators. Their work has already been influential in the formulation of the topic to be studied by the Calvin Center for Christian Studies next year. The editors (and others) have served the educational community well by taking this initiative.

The best way to acknowledge their work, obviously, is to reflect long and hard on the propositions they formulate with great care and on the elaboration of each proposition in the several pages that follow each one.

For copies and information, write to

GLPSA
P. O. Box A-3220
Chicago, IL 60690-3220

1. Give it to the faculty, have them dog-ear, underline, highlight, and label with question marks. Then have the faculty meet, with each teacher in turn celebrating a highlight or raising a question. This approach can work chapter by chapter (affirmation by affirmation) or in a one-time perusal of the book.

2. Before the meeting, have each faculty member rank the affirmations in importance to the whole school, i.e., which affirmation best expresses the main or primary goal of your school, which affirmation ranks as the second most important, and on through all twelve. Record each person's rankings and discuss the differences and the agreements.

3. Before the meeting, have each faculty member rank the affirmations in the order that he or she thinks the school actually *carries out* each affirmation. Does your school best carry out Affirmation #3? Which does it carry out least well? Meet together to record and discuss. You may choose to use this approach in conjunction with the previous suggestion.

4. Ask the faculty to rank the affirmations according to interest in pursuing what the affirmation may mean in the day-to-day life of the school. Choose the top-ranked one and ask teachers to offer suggestions on how your school might carry out that affirmation in specific, concrete ways.

5. Ask the faculty to read a particular affirmation (or all of them) and have each person write a specific practice in your school that ought to be *changed* if one were to subscribe to that affirmation; what would the school put in its place? Why?

6. Have the teachers each write a *thirteenth* affirmation, something that is *missing*, not identified or highlighted in this book, that every Christian school should have or should do.

7. As principal, take one affirmation and raise a host of questions that affirmation raises. Show the questions to the faculty, divide them into groups for finding answers, and call them back together for suggesting possible answers to your questions.

8. Choose a few favorite affirmations and bring in a speaker who has spoken clearly on those issues in Christian arenas. Have the speaker present a thesis, illustrate or defend it, and answer questions from the faculty about his or her thesis. Designate most of the time for reaction and discussion.

9. For a PTA meeting, ask two parents and two teachers to illustrate what a chosen affirmation might mean in your school, or have a teacher/parent team defend the affirmation and another teacher/parent team oppose the affirmation or restrict it or change it.

10. Take the book to each board meeting, read an affirmation (assuming board members have read the book or have read the exposition of one affirmation), and raise questions for them to answer about their goals for Christian schools, especially your Christian school.

11. Take the "big" word out of an affirmation (*shalom, diversity, discernment, real products, change, etc.*) and ask faculty members to write a definition for it and give one specific illustration of how he or she might meet that goal at your school.

12. Have each teacher come to a meeting with at least one *but* and at least one *of course* for a particular affirmation. Thus, "*Of course* I agree with that in this sense: _____, *but* I can't go along with this: _____."

13. Take the mission statement and the goals of your school and contrast them with the affirmations; have the faculty or board or parents find differences and discuss them, changing what needs to be changed.

*With gratitude to Wallace Stevens for "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird."

Dan Vander Ark is principal of Holland Christian Senior High School in Holland, Michigan.

*to a teacher: tony marco
on graduation day
(based on hebrews 12:1, 2)*

*oh man of God,
you of the battered briefcase
and coach of the tedious pace . . .
who strained the sinews of your soul
in prayer
for the runners of this marathon race;
oh you of the free-flowing tears
that dripped like sweat
in our grueling run,
and you that stretched the muscles
of our minds
under the rays of the scorching sun . . .
our finish line is here.*

*oh, yes, there will be other races,
better times,
different places,
but none so sweet as this, oh coach,
no victory quite so sweet . . .
the crowd roars.
the tape breaks.
we raise our hands in triumph . . .
well done, we cry
well done!
well done, oh man of God!*

—JOY ROULIER SAWYER



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