

Christian Educators Journal

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Listening

Teaching Appreciation

A School For The Exceptional

"Oh, What Peace We Often Forfeit . . . "

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1963-1964

By THE EDITOR

What is in store for 1963 - 1964?

No, this is not a prediction of things to come. It is merely an attempt to acquaint our readers with some of the changes that are being introduced in the Christian Educators Journal.

The cover, with its Vol. 3, No. 1, reminds us that this is the first issue in the third year of publication. During those first two years liberal contributions from teachers, friends, organizations, and institutions made possible the distribution of this journal without cost. This policy of free distribution will now be discontinued.

The Midwest Christian Teachers Association has agreed to set aside two dollars of the dues of each member for a subscription to the Christian Educators Journal. Other teachers associations have given assurance of cooperation in soliciting and encouraging subscriptions. With such loyal support it is obviously unfair to continue to send copies to those who do not pay.

A subscription blank is enclosed with this issue. Those who have not made arrangements for subscriptions are urged to fill in the blank and return it with two dollars to the Business Manager. An appeal for support need not be made here. Christian teachers are well aware of their professional responsibilities.

During the past year each of the issues was devoted to a particular area of education. Reactions of teachers indicated that a variety of topics in each issue is more desirable. So, until the readers request a change, each issue will carry articles on various subjects of interest to teachers.

Two departments will also be added. The first is a department of Book Reviews. Reviews of books have appeared in the journal but not as a regular feature. An attempt will be made to have in each issue at least one review of a book of special interest to Christian teachers.

A department called News and Views will also be added. It will be devoted to correspondence from our readers and to news of interest to the Christian teaching profession, with the former receiving preference. The success of this department in particular and of the journal in general will be dependent upon the contributions of the reader. Are you ready to support The Christian Educators Journal?

The *Christian Educators Journal* is published by the Christian Educators Association, whose members teach in, or are committed to the idea of, Christian day schools, whether at the elementary, secondary, or college level.

The general purpose of this journal is to foster the continuing improvement of educational theory and practice in Christian schools. Therefore, its pages are an open forum for the publication of significant articles and studies by Christian educators on Christian teaching. All articles and editorials appearing in it are to be regarded as the expression of the viewpoint of the writers and not as the official position of the Christian Educators Association.

Business correspondence concerning subscriptions to the journal or membership in the Association should be sent to the Business Manager. Correspondence concerning articles or book reviews should be addressed to the Editor. Subscription price is \$2.00 per year. Association members receive the journal free.

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LISTENING

By LUCILLE JOHNSON*

People were able to converse with each other long before they learned to communicate through figure drawings or printed symbols. Many centuries before language was in written form, talking and listening were the only media of enlightenment. It seems reasonable to believe that ancient men were extraordinary listeners. At times, their lives must have depended upon the warning cry or signal from a friend. From necessity, the ability to hear the sounds made by beasts and birds, and to understand the meaning of each sound correctly, was essential to obtain food for livelihood.

How thankful we are for those saints who listened! God spoke to Adam (Genesis 1:28) and he listened; God spoke to Isaiah (Isaiah 1:2) and he listened; Jesus spoke to Peter and Andrew (Matthew 4:19) and they listened. Eternal life depends upon one's ability and will to listen to the voice of God.

Listening Is Important.

In this jet age, listening is more important than ever. It is much faster than reading. In a national crisis, President Kennedy quickly utilizes the microphones, and it is probable that nearly every person in the United States might listen to him as he speaks. Telephones often replace the slower procedures of correspondence. Some of the world's most important affairs, such as the recent Nuclear-test-ban Treaty, are negotiated around conference tables. How important that Mr. Harriman should listen! When we choose to travel by airplane,

our very lives often depend on the listening ability of the pilot.

Advertisers have learned that their messages become most powerful when picked up and passed along by word of mouth. The most persuasive salesmen do not depend upon writing; they talk. The late Franklin Roosevelt had the American people "eating from his hand", not by what he wrote, but through his oratorical ability to command ardent listening from his audiences.

Listening isn't audible — nor is it read; however, it is a communication activity that is at least as important as reading, writing, speaking and observing. It is a major medium of learning. We spend more time listening than in any of the other learning activities. It has been stated that we retain about fifty per cent of what we hear. This indicates that we are poor listeners.

In the past, we have failed to recognize the great extent to which learning depends upon effective listening. It was believed that children naturally developed satisfactory listening habits. Many educators assumed that listening was largely a matter of intelligence. Since the child's achievement was for the most part controlled by his intelligence, it was unnecessary that a teacher attempt to help him. Another widespread opinion was that the things we hear are unimportant and have little, if any, influence upon us. Instead, significant things are found in books.

Harry Goldstein of Columbia University published a weighty re-

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search paper on listening in 1940. His general conclusion, which follows, attracted the attention of many educators in our country: "In our society, reading and listening constitute the basic tools of learning as well as the prime media of social intercourse. In the fulfillment of these roles, the importance of reading has never been questioned. More recently, the significance of listening is receiving increased attention." This cogitative comment stimulated many teachers to wonder if this important medium of learning might not have been neglected.

Numerous studies have been made since the Goldstein report concerning the validity of past assumptions and beliefs about listening. None of them proved to be totally well-grounded. Today, scholars inform us that effective listening is a complex skill. Most people do not naturally develop a complex skill. Several comparative studies of listening ability and intelligence have been made. It was noted that there is some relationship between listening ability and intelligence, but that it was too low to permit the assumption that intelligence is the dominant factor in listening performance. Instead of the belief that what we hear is trivial; it is feared by most students of psychology that we are too much influenced by what we hear—that many of us are facile victims to professional inductors.

As the three above mentioned assumptions gave way to study and controlled experiments, more educators began to initiate listening instructions. Some branches of the military service, management personnel in industry and business, in many agencies of government followed the example set by the schools. Today, several leading uni-

versities across the continent are teaching listening and are continuing research in listening comprehension that more may be learned about its component skills. The National Council of Teachers of English has provided leadership and encouragement to all schools to institute listening training at every grade level. If this course is pursued, it would appear that in the future more and more pupils will be taught to be good listeners as well as to be good readers, speakers and writers.

Listening Is A Skill.

Listening is a skill. It can be improved through training and practice, just as reading and writing can.

In your class discussion, suddenly interrupt and say, "Time out." Immediately ask these two questions: What was I talking about just before I called time out? What were you thinking about? In grade four and above we suggest that you ask your pupils to write the answers to your questions. When you read these papers, you'll become enlightened concerning the listening habits of your children or the lack of them.

Following the reading of a story to your class, ask detailed questions, general questions and inferred ones about the selection. Help your pupils realize their need to become prudent listeners to enhance their appreciation of literature as well as to gather information. Make them aware of the benefits and pleasures that come to them through the eargate.

Try the direct approach. In grades four, five and six, use five or ten minutes of class time to explain the need to improve listening. Perhaps a set of corrected test papers may be effectively used as

concrete evidence. Such factors as comprehension, getting the main idea, paying attention to the topic rather than to various objects, noises, and people in the room, developing critical ability and taking notes to aid in remembering will be discussed. Give some practice exercises; grade them; return to the pupils that they may see their progress in this area.

In a primary grade, ask the children to close their eyes for one minute. Then ask them to name the various sounds they heard during that time. Keep a record of the number of sounds. Later, have a discussion of the many sounds that are immediate in the classroom most of the time. Try having them close their eyes again; upon opening them write the list of sounds on the board. The children will be quick to observe that the list has grown. Perhaps, you'll find it helpful to follow through the previous two listening lessons with a third one by having the class make up a set of rules for good listening. Pay attention, be wide awake, look at the speaker, don't listen to noises, listen so you can learn, may be among those mentioned. Put them on a poster and display them in a location easily seen by each boy and girl.

In arithmetic, the child called on to answer a problem may tap the desk the required number of times; the other pupils must listen carefully to check the answer.

A discussion period following Show and Tell, a radio program, the oral reading of an original composition provides opportunity for keen listening.

Before reading a certain selection to your class, suggest several possible titles for it. Explain that the purpose for reading the selection is for them to choose the most

appropriate title mentioned or to submit another one.

It may stimulate thought and excite some alert listening to conduct a few lessons on sounds made by people, sounds heard during a storm, animal sounds, sounds at the dinner table, sounds on the playground, sounds on Christmas morning at our house, sounds on a picnic, etc.

On a rainy day, listening games will be fun once in a while. (Beast, Bird or Fish; Whispering Game)

Listening Should Be Taught.

There are many regular day-by-day situations in which good listening techniques can be developed if teachers are sensitive to the need.

The following list of ideas to aid in teaching listening are some of those used in the school systems of Nashville, Phoenix, Cincinnati and Minneapolis. It is the hope of these systems that their sharing of some useful methods will prime a flow of ideas among teachers leading to better methods of teaching the listening skill.

1. Inventory your own listening and talking. If you talk more than you listen to the pupils, try to bring the situation into closer balance. Children imitate listening as well as anything else they observe.
2. Read test instructions aloud; also the questions. Give the pupils time to write each answer.
3. Try sending messages from classroom to classroom, or from classroom to home on an oral basis.
4. Ask the children to list all the sounds they hear in a given period of time; for instance, a bird singing outside the window, the noise of an airplane passing overhead, the teacher's voice, etc. Discuss what sounds the children like or dislike and why. Also discuss what sounds are most important and why.
5. Speak the last syllable of a word to the class (*ick for example*). Ask the pupils to speak aloud as

many words as possible ending in the same sound (tick, sick, pick, trick, etc.) without repeating any words.

6. Read the description of a physical scene to the class. Encourage the youngsters to draw pictures from what they heard.
7. Read aloud a poem which is likely to evoke emotion, and then encourage the pupils to discuss their feelings.
8. After hearing a song, ask the children to describe the story behind the song's words.
9. Whisper a short message to a child at one side of the classroom. Ask him to relay the material, in a whisper, to the child nearest him. Continue this procedure until the message has been passed to every child around the room. Ask the last child to repeat aloud what he heard and then compare it with the original message whispered to the first child. Try this game frequently in an effort to make the relayed message match the original as closely as possible.
10. In all class activities, make a policy of not repeating instructions. If repetition is necessary, call on the pupils to repeat what was started. Establish the same policy in regard to the school public-address system, that announcements will be made only once and repetitions will have to come from classmates.
11. When children are absent from class, give those present the assignment of summarizing and

passing on orally the instructions missed by the absentees.

12. When a guest speaker is coming to the school, have a discussion with the children concerning what the person might talk about. After the speech have another discussion concerning what the speaker did talk about. Try to direct the second discussion toward determining the speaker's main point.
13. Develop a class discussion on listening manners.
14. Explain to the class that what we hear is often affected by senses other than hearing. For each of these senses discuss how it might affect listening. For example, with the sense of touch, the discussion might develop around how the feeling of a handshake affects what we hear.
15. Select written material that contains words familiar to the students and list the words on the blackboard. Read the material aloud after asking the students to seek out the words' meanings from the context of what is heard.
16. Compose a short, argumentative talk on a subject that is of concern to the students. Among the ideas that strengthen the argument, include a few ideas that have little to do with the subject. Ask the students, as they hear the talk, to try separating the essential and non-essential ideas. Discuss the project afterward.

Sources drawn upon in writing this article, plus suggested reading on the subject of listening:

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TEACHING APPRECIATION

By G. DALE TOPP*

Appreciation is a fuzzy educational concept. Its aesthetic implication is generally agreed upon, but methods of teaching it are often vague and ineffective. Appreciation often seems to be an educational deity whose name is invoked as endorsement of classroom activities which might have little meaning otherwise. Also, many possibilities for teaching appreciation are underrated or ignored. Our Christian schools need a better organized approach to this important educational goal. But before we discuss how this goal can be reached more effectively, let us consider the 'what' and 'why' of appreciation, for these will greatly influence our methods.

What Is Appreciation?

Appreciation can be simply defined as the process of sharing the thoughts, feelings and purposes of a creative artist. The artist has a message to convey with each work of art that he creates. When we understand this message, we appreciate this work of art. For most educational purposes then, we can substitute the word 'understanding' for 'appreciation'. This immediately gives us a more specific goal.

Why Should Appreciation Be Taught?

A specific goal does not necessarily equal a worthwhile goal, however. Why should appreciation be a goal of Christian school instruction? Because our students then have the opportunity to praise their Creator in a unique and spiritually rewarding way. As His image-bearers, these students have

the capacity to perceive and enjoy beauty in their environment. Contemplation of God's beauty in nature is one type of appreciation. But a special blessing is received as these students learn to appreciate man-made beauty. Although man's beauty is but a puny imitation of God's beauty, it has a special significance in God's sight, for it praises God, and man was created for this purpose. Man-made beauty is an attempt to obey the cultural mandate, and God is praised by good art regardless of the beliefs of the artist. Man praised God perfectly in Eden; he will be able to do so again in heaven. Meanwhile, God leaves us art as a reminder and foretaste of this perfect capacity for praise.

Books could be written about the 'what' and 'why' of appreciation, but let us get on with the main point, how can it be done? Four factors are important in the methods of teaching appreciation: curriculum, materials, classroom instruction and cultural environment.

How Should Appreciation Be Taught?

To make possible a logical, concerted effort in the teaching of appreciation, the school curriculum should be organized around a philosophy such as this:

Underlying Philosophy—

All students can and should learn the simplest form of appreciation, that of receptive enjoyment. That is, everyone should learn to perceive beauty by reading, listening and looking. Development of

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these perception skills will often involve simple re-creative activities (writing tunes and stories, painting pictures, performing songs and plays).

Some students can and should learn a higher level of appreciation, that of active re-creation. More value is gained from performing a play, overture or cantata than from reading or listening to it. To be valuable, however, this performance must be faithful to the artist's intentions. This generally requires select grouping, although extra-curricular consideration should be given to all interested performers.

Performance groups must stick to their task, however, that of teaching appreciation. This goal should never be dominated by other secondary goals, even though they may have some merit by themselves. Among these secondary 'tails' that sometimes wag the dog are: audience enjoyment, technical accuracy, improved community public relations, development of good habits and attitudes in students. All are valuable side effects to the teaching of appreciation when they do not detract from the central goal.

Few students can learn valuable artistic creation, but those who can create worthwhile art have the potential for the deepest type of appreciation. The number of qualified students will usually be too small for separate curricular consideration in our Christian schools, but their creative abilities should be found, encouraged and aided by all teachers. Their creations should be performed, published or shown whenever possible.

Basic Materials —

A curriculum organized around such a philosophy will achieve little without worthwhile art to be used for appreciation materials. The cri-

terion for selecting these materials is not the teacher's personal taste. A united effort in teaching appreciation would then be impossible. Materials must be selected according to aesthetic value. For the normal teacher, this is a ridiculously impossible task. So the teacher must turn to the recommendations of others. Expert opinion is always best, and those who have spent much time familiarizing themselves with a certain branch of art and the wealth of critical writings related to it probably best deserve this term 'expert'. Expert opinion is available in most communities, often within the school itself. It should be requested and followed more often.

The teacher must not blindly follow this advice, however. He can develop his own powers of evaluation through reading and through increased familiarity with good materials.

Some cite lack of student interest as an excuse for poorer materials. It is true that student interest is important but it cannot weaken the content of an appreciation course anymore than it can do so in history or mathematics.

Well Planned Curriculum —

Properly planned curriculum and carefully selected materials make the teaching of appreciation possible. Through presentation and analysis the teacher can now make it inevitable. Several specific types of activity can be listed for effective classroom teaching of appreciation.

The first activity is proper exposure. The original presentation must be carefully planned so that negative student attitudes are avoided. If the work is totally strange, introduction should be gradual. For example, a difficult

piece of music can be played on a record as background for a painting or handicraft class or it can be presented in short sections on repeated days, closely followed by more easily understood music. Either way, a feeling of familiarity must be developed in the students or further appreciation will be difficult to achieve.

As has been implied, this feeling of familiarity is not a final goal, but only a stepping-stone to appreciation. Too many appreciation classes have been taught on the strength of the exposure theory alone. Students generally fail to see the beauty that the teacher seems to see, and they therefore develop a feeling of being aesthetically handicapped.

Three activities can follow the original presentation. Their sequence may vary, but all are important.

First of all, the form of the entire work must be pointed out. In music and literature especially, students are too often limited to an ant-on-a-rope view of art. Note follows note, word follows word, and never is the proverbial forest encountered. Graphic illustration of skeletal form is readily understood by students. Performance groups, also, should be given a glimpse of the total work before beginning to practice smaller sections.

The students must also be familiarized with the devices used by the creative artist. How does the composer select notes for the harmony of the song? How does the painter give a feeling of depth? How does the poet use meter? Understanding these devices will usually involve student attempts at

putting these devices into practice.

The third type of understanding necessary for appreciation is that of style. How does the artist put these devices to use? How does Beethoven differ from Bartok, Shakespeare from O'Neill, Monet from Rembrandt? Student attempts at answering these questions result in deeper understanding and appreciation.

The final activity in classroom teaching of appreciation is a repeat of the first. Expose students to the same work of art again, and also to other works of art. The three types of analysis that followed the original presentation of each work have given the students new eyes and ears which need regular exercise.

The three devices for teaching appreciation which we have discussed, curriculum, materials and classroom teaching, do the major portion of appreciation work. But their effect can be hampered by the school's informal cultural environment. It is imperative that all potentials be fulfilled with good materials. If the hymnbooks for devotions, paintings on the walls, special musical numbers, senior plays and other parts of the students' environment use bad materials, the effect of appreciation gained in the classroom will readily be weakened. The informal cultural environment must support the classroom teaching of appreciation.

Appreciation is specific, worthwhile and teachable. All students can learn to perceive and appreciate man-made beauty. Man-made beauty praises God. Therefore, it is particularly appropriate and important that our Christian schools unite in this important task.

ELIM CHRISTIAN SCHOOL — A SCHOOL FOR THE EXCEPTIONAL

BY HARRY MULDER*

"And they came to Elim where were twelve wells of water."

What a haven of rest this oasis in the midst of the desert to the worn and weary Israelites. Here they could be refreshed and renew their strength.

Elim Christian School for Exceptional Children is just such a haven for many distressed parents who are seeking a placement for their handicapped children. But, as an oasis in the desert, it is often unknown and difficult to find. So it seems there are many who do not know the place Elim is striving to fulfill as an integral part of our Christian Educational System. If our children of "normal ability" need a Christian education, should not the exceptional? In this article we would like to present an overall picture of just who these "exceptional children" are who come to Elim and the program which is offered to those who come to the "twelve wells of water."

Elim is unique among special education facilities in the United States in that it has under one roof all types of exceptional children: aphasic, blind, deaf, and crippled. Through its dormitory it serves as a complement to all our Christian schools throughout North America by providing a Christian education for those who are physically handicapped. Day school students are transported by means of station wagons.

Elim does provide for a limited number of retarded children who

live in the Chicagoland area and attend on a day school basis. However, those who need a dormitory facility are referred to the Children's Retreat in Grand Rapids. Elim specializes in providing an education for those who are diagnosed as exceptional due to a physical handicap. It is hoped that a brief description of the services available at Elim will help you to recognize and properly refer those children who are exceptional and focus our attention on the needs of every child as an individual.

The Aphasic Child

Elim provides the aphasic child with the very specialized training necessary to meet his needs. Aphasia is a speech difficulty which is caused by a defect in the Central Nervous System. There are two main classifications; they are motor, or expressive aphasia, and sensory, or receptive aphasia. A motor aphasic child hears and understands all speech and language up to the expectancy of his age. However, he cannot make his own speech muscles function in a normal way; thus, he either babbles, or remains silent, because he knows and is aware of the fact that he is not understood.

A sensory aphasic child very likely hears, but in him, the understanding of speech has not developed. To him, speech and language sound somewhat like a tape recording played backwards would sound to

a normal hearing person. Thus, not understanding speech, he does not speak himself, or, he may use one or two words repeatedly. Often times this child may seem to show an unawareness of speech and language, and even of noises around him; this in turn has resulted in the observation "this child is deaf," which may very well not be true. The "Association Method of Teaching the Aphasic Child" is used in teaching the aphasic child to talk, read, write and understand in one integrated process.

The Blind Child

The blind and partially sighted are also provided the tools necessary to achieve academic success. For the blind the learning of Braille is the key which opens the door to all the wonders of the world about him. Elim has acquired the WORLD BOOK ENCYCLOPEDIA in Braille which has greatly increased the availability of a wide range of information arranged in a systematic manner. This encyclopedia contains 145 volumes necessitating storage shelves across one complete wall. The importance of this large amount of information is appreciated more when one realizes the dearth of Braille materials and its relative inaccessibility. The blind person has many limitations placed upon him because of his lack of vision, both in his learning and his life in a seeing society, but with understanding and an opportunity to learn many can become useful citizens in the Christian community.

The Crippled Child

The education of the crippled child is another important part of Elim. In a regular class, the crippled child is constantly noticed; he becomes self-conscious. At Elim he is one among many who are sim-

ilarly handicapped and enjoys good times with them. He is shown no particular sympathy and is, therefore, less inclined to feel sorry for himself. The classroom is provided with all the special equipment necessary to meet the needs of each individual child. Stand-up tables, electric typewriters, wheelchairs, and walkers give evidence of the varied needs of the children. A full time physical therapist gives aid in the maximum development of the child's body so as to enable him to make the best possible use of the knowledge acquired in the classroom.

The Deaf Child

The training of the deaf is carried on in four classrooms. The deaf child lives in a world of silence. He does not speak or learn to speak naturally because he hasn't had the opportunity to imitate speech. No child with a single handicap presents, perhaps, so serious a problem for instruction. These children enter school with no language, and the attainment of a language must be gained by other senses than of hearing. Elim in its method of instruction is dedicated to the oral method which bases communication upon ability to read speech from the lips of others and the ability to speak and write. It does not allow the manual method which makes use of signs and finger spelling to communicate. Training is begun at as early an age as possible, assisted by group and individual hearing aids, in-order-to overcome the deaf person's greatest learning barrier, the lack of language.

The education of all the children at Elim is done primarily on an individual basis; accepting the child on his own level and taking him as far as he can go at his own rate.

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Each exceptional child is first accepted as a child, and secondly as possessing a physical handicap. As one works with these children he comes to appreciate the fact that the handicapped child has the same basic needs, desires, and emotions as the normal child; they are just as good or bad, generous or selfish, kind or mean.

The FORTY-NINTH YEAR-BOOK concludes that "one might conservatively estimate that from 10 to 12 per cent of children of elementary- and secondary- school age would be considered 'exceptional' and in need of special educational services."¹ It would seem very strange that our Christian school population should be so selective that our percentage of exceptional children would not approximate this figure. However, judging from the enrollment and demand for placement in Elim it comes nowhere near this figure. It would make an interesting study to investigate why there is not a greater demand for special education facilities in our Christian School communities while one observes the tremendous growth in such facilities throughout the public schools. Are we as teachers and administrators adequately provid-

ing for the needs of *all* our children?

Elim Christian School for the Exceptional child is striving to provide a Christian Education for God's special children and will continue to grow as each new challenge is set before her. Elim's experienced staff is always available to our Christian School community as consultant on any problem concerning an exceptional child that presents an unusual challenge. This also includes speech problems as Elim now has on its staff a well qualified, full-time speech correctionist. The Elim staff through past experience recognizes the importance of an early diagnosis with the proper guidance in dealing with the exceptional child and so is eager to provide help to any who may have difficulty with a child due to a physical limitation, which often may not be evident on the surface. The happiness and optimism of Elim's children testifies that where the exceptional child is loved and understood, and provided with a program within his capabilities, he will respond and eagerly strive toward the goal of becoming a useful citizen in the community and God's Kingdom.

¹"The Education of Exceptional Children," *Forty-Ninth Yearbook*, National Society for the Study of Education, Part II, pp 6-7, 1950.

"OH, WHAT PEACE WE OFTEN FORFEIT . . ."

BY WILLIAM HENDRICKS*

A few short months ago we began a new school year. Smiles were everywhere as pupils greeted one another after a summer vacation. Teachers began with high ideals of doing their best to help each child, — to give special help to those who find learning difficult, to show personal interest in those who have special talents, to show special consideration to those who are disruptive or shy, who especially need to feel wanted and loved.

Unity Generally Marks Beginning

The board eagerly welcomed new teachers in an effort to make them feel at home in the community. The new administrator worked to gain the confidence of the school board and teaching staff. Faculty members, refreshed after a summer's vacation, greeted each other happily in the halls. The school year began with a common bond, a mutual dedication, a unity of spirit and purpose that centered on the ideals and goals of Christian education.

In spite of the busyness of preparations, there was the feeling of friendliness toward all — of happiness in a task renewed, of serenity and peace that seemed to flow from the common goal and purpose of the teaching staff, the administrator, the board, the parents, and the pupils.

As you read the daily news you find that many schools throughout our nation have a variety of problems: dissention on the question of prayer (you are happy that you teach in a Christian School where in the quietness of your classroom you may lead your children in prayer and may also teach them to

pray), strife in the settlement of problems of integration (how happy you are that police are not guarding the doors of your school nor patrolling your halls). By contrast you appreciate more than before the blessing your Christian School received as its beginning was marked with quietness, cooperation and good will.

Reason for Concern

It has been estimated that during the average school year about one Christian School in five experiences some type of unpleasant conflict between members of the teaching staff, between the administrator and teachers, or between the board and the administrator. Further, nearly every year one or two member schools or the National Union experience such extremely unhappy staff relations that the conflict constitutes what could be considered a major crisis in the school society involved. These crises have on occasion grown to such a level of intensity that the very continued existence of the school was placed in jeopardy. Those who have experienced such unhappy situations know only too well that peace of mind is forfeited and replaced by sleepless hours. Often deep and painful wounds are inflicted in the hearts of those involved. The situation may pass, the wounds may heal, but the scars remain.

Have you ever wondered if the same unity of purpose and spirit of cooperation that was evident in your school as it began would continue, whether it will mark the end of the school term as well as its beginning?

Negative Effects of Conflict

If conflicts do arise, the heartache and lack of peace on the part of those involved is only part of its effect. When quarrels occur between teachers on the same staff, they are most harmful to the spiritual climate in which the pupils live. School personnel may try ever so hard to "cover up" their disagreements before the student body but somehow students sense that all is not well. Love for Christ on the part of our children grows best in an atmosphere of love for one another.

In a recent public school district crisis feeling was running high. Communist agitators soon appeared on the scene to encourage the hard feelings between groups within the community. When members of a Christian school society are quarrelling we may not find professional human agitators present, but we may be sure that Satan in his demoniac influence is filled with glee.

Besides the effect of a Christian School crisis on the student body, we cannot overlook the effect that such quarrels have on the status of Christian education in the community at large. When public school proponents hear of quarrels in the Christian School many of them smile and say, "They want a school of their own but all they do is fight," or "Isn't that supposed to be a Christian School?" People who are on the fringe of interest and consider sending their children may draw away instead. The cause of Christian education is thus hindered and the Name of Christ dishonored.

Does this mean that we must avoid conflict at all cost? Dare we allow evil to go unchallenged? May we not expect that disagree-

ments will arise? Surely differences of opinion are bound to occur in such developmental areas as curriculum study and teaching method.

Conflict Has Constructive Use

All conflict as such should not be considered bad. In fact it has great potential for constructive use. It is this *constructive use of conflict* that we overlook. Also we often lack the insight and desire to use conflict constructively and consider it only as a negative factor. For example, if someone challenges my method of teaching geography I may react in several ways.

I may become angry — Why doesn't he mind his own business?

I may retaliate by criticizing his work — What makes him think his methods are better than mine?

I could, however, use this situation as a reason for re-evaluating my methods and rethinking my goals.

When I have been challenged to prove to critics that the method I am using is good, likely I will do my very best work as a teacher. I must also be honest and flexible enough to change if the results show that other methods would be better for the students. Conflict in this way can bring improvement for it has a way of bringing out either the worst or the best qualities of a person's character.

Many school conflicts center around value standards. They occur generally when students, parents, faculty, administrators or boards differ on the standards of such things as dress, extra-curricular activities or behavior. When such differences of standard occur, we tend to confuse moral truth with tradition and social code. We generally tend to think of our side as the one that is based on revealed

truth while the opposition is considered to be entirely wrong. Perhaps this tendency to categorize a viewpoint as either right or wrong, black or white, true or false is related to our theology of election and reprobation. Whatever the reason, we often lack the willingness to see the good in another's viewpoint. Instead we assume that our position is the only correct one and proceed to crucify the opposition in the name of righteousness. We must challenge evil wherever it is found but in doing so let us distinguish carefully, for the small core of revealed truth in a conflicting question is generally surrounded by great circles of tradition and social custom.

In conflicts that center about value standards, there can also be constructive results in clearer understanding of principles underlying the standard provided the issue is studied openly and honestly by those concerned. Arguments that contain more heat than light need to be replaced by discussions that face the problems rather than the personalities involved. We must learn to disagree without being disagreeable.

Conditions That Promote The Growth of Conflict

To avoid the development of conflict situations within our schools, let us consider a few of the circumstances under which they seem to grow.

1st — Lack of a clear set of school policies that are written down and well-known for all teachers to observe consistently. Parents and school boards should be aware of these policies and changes made in them. Happily more schools have drawn up such manuals of school policy. Those that have not already done so should waste no time in beginning.

2nd — Wide differences between the background of the teachers or administrator and the school served. Theological differences, cultural differences, even urban to rural differences can be points of agitation. This does not mean that hiring faculty members with widely differing backgrounds need be avoided in all cases to prevent conflict, it only means that we should recognize the existence of these differences and respect rather than condemn others for them.

3rd — Overload of a teacher's or administrator's schedule or the obvious unequal distribution of load whether classroom or extra-curricular. Happy conditions of employment do much to enable a teacher to do a better job. This provides a better learning environment and removes points of stress and tension that could develop into conflict.

4th — Lack of professional efficiency in the teaching assignment. Research tells us that the two main reasons beginning teachers fail in their tasks are: (a) Failure to cooperate with other school personnel — going one's own way in matters that are governed by standard school policy and (b) lack of ability to maintain adequate classroom discipline. These same pitfalls continue to haunt the experienced teacher and often become the core of dissatisfaction or conflict on a staff or in a school society.

5th — Need for living on a high spiritual level. Although we stated that much school conflict arises out of disagreement over what is evil and what is not evil, the best way to avoid such conflicts is to adhere closely to that which is good. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." (Col. 3:16) This leaves no room for petty

jealousy and selfishness. We will find little time for bickering and quarrels if all our talents are in full service to our Savior King.

Methods of Dealing with Conflict

Conflict situations may and often do develop in spite of our efforts to prevent their growth. When a situation arises in which feeling mounts, using a few of the following points of procedure may be helpful.

1. The familiar song states "all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer." To resolve conflicts constructively requires the spiritual strength that He alone can give. To "do the right as God gives us to see the right" requires that much time be spent in the study of His Word, in communion with Him. Only as we seek the blessed presence of His Spirit can we have clear insight and true perspective with the special measure of love and patience that conflict situations often demand.

2. Try to face the cause of the conflict openly as soon as possible. The reason for disagreement should not be allowed to grow secretly or among small groups on the teaching staff to the point where teachers refuse to speak to one another in the halls. Conflicts that drag on and on without solution grow to a size entirely out of proportion to their original importance. Constructive use of any conflict demands that the resolution of it stand above and in contrast to the conditions that contributed to its development.

3. Isolate the basic points of conflict so that parties involved know exactly what the disagreement is about. Often so many fringe items are attached that a clear settlement is impossible. When a certain act or conviction of a teacher is challenged someone

will usually remember incidents that happened many years before or "What can you expect from a member of that family?" is added. To arrive at a clear and wholesome solution, I would challenge you to begin with a clearly defined problem.

4. In any area of conflict, look for areas of agreement and emphasize these. Constructive results come from concentrating on the positive. If this is done, the negative has a way of fading in importance.

5. Many school conflicts involving large groups of society members begin as personal disagreements between members of the faculty. On this point teachers should be particularly aware of the responsibility of the office they hold. Surely the admonitions of Matthew 18 are particularly applicable here.

6. Follow proper channels for registering of grievances. Proverbs 17:9 states "he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends." Many conflict situations begin when parents talk together or with a faculty or board member who lends a sympathetic ear without seeing the teacher involved or the administrator. Occasionally the administration acts without the Board's approval or the Board reaches a decision without consulting the administration. Board Policy manuals should clearly stipulate the channels through which grievances are to be handled. These channels may seem to be cumbersome, as they progress from the teacher, through the administrator to a board committee or the board itself, yet I have little patience for the teacher who disregards this arrangement and the measure of order that it guarantees.

I also have real concern for schools that do not have a clear

policy for the handling of conflict situations; particularly for small schools where a teacher can only resort to the grapevine to get past the administrator to the board for a hearing of grievances. Each school should be sure that its channels of communication are clearly marked, well known, and open for travel before the need for them arises. In this way conflicts can be handled promptly, decisively and in an orderly way to constructive ends.

7. The National Union of Christian Schools stands ready to serve any school and has upon invitation on several occasions sent delegates of experienced teachers and administrators to help solve school conflicts. The added perspective of a neutral viewpoint and independent arbitration can often help to bring more constructive results.

In Conclusion

School terms generally begin on a high level of enthusiasm and peace as parents, teachers, administrators and boards work closely together. This unity is based upon a common goal: the Christian education of our children in the fulness of the knowledge of God through His Word and world. As the year progresses, conflicts in various areas are likely to arise. All too often these conflicts become negative, personal. Occasionally they lead to the predicament of the gingham dog and the calico cat. They cause inward pain and outward shame. We cannot avoid all conflict. We do plead instead for its constructive use. In this way a higher level of understanding and service may be built upon the disagreements and failures of the past. Let us remember in our daily prayers the need for God's Holy Spirit so that there may be "peace in Zion."

BOOK REVIEW

William Hendricks, *UNDER GOD*, A Government Textbook for Junior High Schools. Grand Rapids: National Union of Christian Schools, 1962. Reviewed by John H. Sietsema, English instructor, Sylvan Christian School.

Under God is a textbook in government for junior high students. It has been used in several Christian schools throughout our country the past three years, first as a dittoed edition and then as a multi-lith edition. *Under God* has been well received, and many teachers who have used it as a textbook have forwarded their suggestions and criticisms to its author and to the

National Union. They have done so in a kindly spirit, with encouragements to perfect a work well-begun.

A civics textbook committee, appointed by the National Union, met several times in 1960 and it pains-takingly analyzed the book. This committee reported its evaluations to the National Union and also made several recommenda-

tions which they felt would improve the book. This reviewer used it with a small class of seven in a rural school and has seen it used in one of the largest Christian schools, and in both instances students appeared to enjoy it.

Under God is one book that, if carefully redacted, can make a firm argument for the publication of additional Christian school textbooks. In a day when humanism has succeeded to remove many of the meaningful relationships between education and God in public education, *Under God*, with a clear clarion sound, calls us back to the first principles and basic concepts underlying democratic government, such as: all human authority derives its right to rule from God; government, whatever its form, has for its task to restrain evil and to promote good; and all governments are limited in their powers.

The author is convinced that a meaningful knowledge of how our democracy functions can best be gained through a careful study of the American Constitution, since the Constitution has prescribed the ground rules for our democratic way of life. Without apologies, the author calls upon the student to study this great document article by article, and section by section. Since the Federal Government does play a large role in our lives because of our complex, interwoven economy, it may be more needful now than it was ever before to study the document that defines the duties of this Federal Government and also states the scope of its activities.

How thoroughly the Constitution should be studied at the junior high level is a question that needs answering. This reviewer feels that the text, because of this comprehensive treatment of details, may

be equating the understanding of basic concepts with mastery of details. True as it is that understanding must arise out of knowledge it is also as true that facts and details have their diminishing point of return in achieving understanding.

The text goes into detail historically to explain those evolving principles that undergird our Constitution, such as: government by law rather than by men; government by consent of the governed; government as a servant rather than a master. The presentation is complete and logical, but its very thoroughness in presenting historical data poses a problem — that of covering the same material found in history textbooks. However, there may be teachers who feel this repetition is good pedagogically.

Those who prefer civics books which cover everything from local, municipal government up to federal government will see the imbalances in *Under God*; for less than 25 per cent of it is given to the study of state and local governments, though twelve pages are given to the topic of immigrants. Do the problems connected with immigration demand this much treatment in a textbook meant for junior high use? Also, if the problems connected with immigration do have significance, isn't this significance historical in its nature?

The final ten pages given to a series of fourteen preachments of "we must be's" attenuate the otherwise masculine fiber of the text.

Having served on the civics-textbook committee previously mentioned, I was concerned mainly with the literary deficiencies of the original manuscript. The revision, now in the present multilith form,

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News and Views

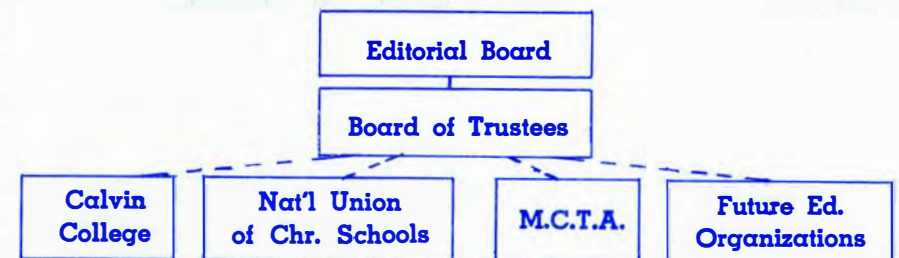
September 30, 1963

Prof. J. Van Bruggen, Editor
Christian Educators' Journal
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Dear Editor:

Each member of the Midwest Christian Teachers' Assoc. will soon have a financial interest in the **Christian Educators Journal**. Two dollars of their annual dues will now go toward a subscription to "The Journal." The question arises, How can the Association and the individual teacher best serve the interests of "The Journal"?

As a beginning to the answering of this question, the Executive Board of the M.C.T.A. proposes the following set-up for the operation of the **Christian Educators Journal**:



1. Board of Trustees to be composed of representatives from supporting organizations such as Calvin College, National Union of Christian Schools, Midwest Christian Teachers Association, and other teachers' organizations as they decide to contribute.
2. Board of Trustees to be appointed by individual supporting bodies.
3. Contact by Editorial Board with the Board of Trustees to be made primarily by correspondence. (Perhaps yearly meetings could coincide with National Union Convention.)
4. Function of Board of Trustees:
 - a. Allocating funds to Editorial Board
 - b. Funneling of copy for The Journal from educators to Editorial Board

In closing, we wish "The Journal" a most successful year.

For the Executive Board

Samuel E. Greydanus
Vice President

Book Review

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gives evidence of more careful editing; but if *Under God* is to become an officially adopted textbook it may be wise to employ a co-author who can give this textbook literary acceptability. In the revised edition certain personal colloquialisms of its author still remain while some punctuation usages are also open to question, e.g., the use of the dash instead of the colon.

As elegance and grace serve seldom as a disadvantage to anyone, even in the meanest of occupations, so would a sensitive literary touch hardly give hurt to this work. Rather, it may serve to extend its use beyond the pale of our own constituents.

Those more learned in political government than this reviewer can detect other problems relevant to the contents. These may stress the need for greater emphases on those practices that circumvent — and in some cases outflank — the framework of the Constitution, such as: lobbying, the Cabinet, legislative committees with their built-in seniority customs which impede necessary legislation, etc.

In conclusion, it is good to know that the Scripture can be related in a relevant, effective manner to subject material. This Mr. Hendricks has done well, and having done thus may he challenge others to do the same in their areas of instruction. To do such may be another means of making our teaching more distinctively Christian.

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