

# Perspectives

## in Covenant Education

### **Reasons to Celebrate**

*Dedication of a new building in Chicago area*

*New high school in northwest Iowa*

*Exciting updates from various schools*

Volume 34/Number 1/Fall 2008

*"The entrance of thy word giveth light" Psalm 119:130*

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## Statement of Purpose

*Perspectives in Covenant Education* is a journal regulated and published quarterly, in November, February, May, and August by the Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute. The purpose of this magazine, in most general terms, is to advance the cause of distinctively Christian education as it is conceived in the Protestant Reformed community. More specifically, the magazine is intended to serve as an encouragement and an inducement toward individual scholarship, and a medium for the development of distinctive principles and methods of teaching. The journal is meant to be a vehicle of communication, not only within the profession, but within the Protestant Reformed community and within the Christian community in general.

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Thy matchless goodness and Thy grace  
Thy people shall commemorate  
And all Thy truth and righteousness  
My joyful song shall celebrate.  
—Psalter #397, stanza 4 (from Psalm 145)

# Celebrate the Psalter

by Tom  
Bergman

With all the ado surrounding the opening of a new school in Iowa and a new school building in Indiana this fall, we certainly have reason to celebrate what God has provided for us. There is nothing in ourselves worthy of boasting, but rather we celebrate the fact that God has given us Holy Scripture and that God governs the nations so that we are still permitted to teach our children every subject in the light of Scripture.

Many distinctive elements of our schools are worth celebrating. Because we believe and can show that the Protestant Reformed view of the covenant is thoroughly biblical, we hold it dear and cherish its comfort. This view makes us different than most other Christian schools, but it has a positive effect on how we perceive the parents' role, how we train their children, and what we teach about this creation. Our schools try to make a distinctive emphasis about living an antithetical life, an emphasis that also sets us apart. The amillennial aspect of our worldview is distinct from the Dooyeweerdian bent of many other Christian schools which train students to redeem the world and its culture for Christ. Even our doctrine of Scripture is, sadly, distinctive these days; plus, we are among

the minority who use the Authorized Version because of its unparalleled excellence.

But don't forget the Psalter. Not too many schools commonly use its versifications of the psalms as the songbook of choice. If this also makes us distinctive, so be it.

We adults know well how wonderfully appropriate certain stanzas of certain Psalter numbers can be to myriad circumstances in life. What trouble or what joy is not expressed in one of these songs? What lesson or what truth is not conveyed by these beautiful poems? All areas of life are covered, including the subjects related to the training of our children. The Psalter is ideal for the schools.

Beyond that, it is also an extraordinarily beautiful songbook. I'm sure that it would take more than a lifetime to fully appreciate the richness of these versifications. So many times we see that these English poems carefully and accurately preserve the meaning of the Hebrew psalms. This fairness is closely matched by outstanding rhyme and meter. The cadence of the poetry is remarkable in that it reveals a brilliant mastery of the English language, something which could well be studied in our schools in its own right. Perhaps the work of the Psalter poet-versifiers

could be studied alongside the works Tennyson, Browning, Frost, and Longfellow.

It is to be conceded that some tunes are more easily sung than others. Notes too high or notes too low can hamper the sound a little. Some Psalter numbers have tunes that are more appropriate to the words than are others. But such impediments are not significant obstacles for enthusiastic singing in our schools. Besides, those who have been given musical talents can transpose a few songs for us.

Without a doubt, it is a tremendous blessing from our covenant Jehovah that our children—God’s children—are taught to sing these songs when

they are young. Their young minds soak up untold verses and tunes that remain in their hearts for a lifetime.

I can only believe that Psalter numbers were sung after the dedicatory speech at the new school building in Indiana (which speech is printed below). I can well imagine, provided children weren’t too restless and bodies weren’t too weary from sitting through a speech after a day of work, that the covenant community gathered there that night would have loved to go long into the night singing psalm after psalm after psalm. Let one generation pass on its love for the Psalter to the next generation—in our schools, as we do in our homes. **P**

## Feature

**T**

*This is the text of the speech given at the dedication of the new building of Heritage Christian High School and Protestant Reformed Christian School in St. John, Indiana on March 15, 2008. Professor Engelsma has kindly edited the speech for publication. The editing includes adding footnotes confirming, illustrating, or expanding on statements made in the speech. He has deliberately retained for us both the full content and the style of the speech.*

# Bring Them Up in the “Aforesaid Doctrine”

by Prof. David J.  
Engelsma

## Introduction

Praise God—the God and Father of Jesus Christ, the covenant God—for

this splendid Christian school building!

Praise God for the faithful, important work of Protestant Reformed

Christian education that goes on in this building, and will go on in this building for years to come, God being gracious!

Hallelujah! Praise Jah!

God has moved many to work in all kinds of ways for this building, and has blessed their efforts. He has inclined many to give their money, their abilities—mental and physical—their labor, and their time, and has made their giving fruitful in this grand edifice.

God has answered the prayers of many—the churches in this area, parents and grandparents, and all the members of the covenant community, here and elsewhere, who have the covenant of God with the children of the church on their hearts.

By our praise of God on this occasion, and by our frank acknowledgement of God’s mighty, gracious work by means of the work of you who have built this building, we dedicate the building—every classroom, every book, beaker, and computer, and all the instruction and learning that the building provides for—to God.

Here it is. It is Thine—for Thy name and Thy glory.

We dedicate the building to God specifically by the use of it for the Reformed, Christian education of covenant children and young people.

This is the worth of the building, this is the worth of all your work, your money, and your prayers. The building represents, and will actually be used for, the rearing of covenant children in what Article 21 of the venerable Reformed Church Order of

Dordt calls “good Christian schools,” in obedience—*willing* obedience—to what the same article of the Church Order calls “the demands of the covenant.”

## An Honorable Tradition

Your schools using this building continue a long, honorable tradition.

I think of the zeal for good Christian schools of the members of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church that resulted in the Protestant Reformed Christian grade school in the early 1960s.

I think of the zeal for good Christian schools on the part of the members of the Protestant Reformed Churches from the very beginning of the existence of these Churches.

I think of the zeal for good, Christian schools on the part of the members of the Christian Reformed Church, whence many of us have come, going back to the days in the middle of the nineteenth century when these Reformed Christians emigrated to the United States.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> At the very first meeting of the classis of the few Secession ministers and elders who had emigrated from the Netherlands and were now huddled in the woods of what is now Holland, Michigan—the Classis of Holland—within two years of their coming to North America—April 23, 1848—Rev. A. C. Van Raalte entered into the minutes that he “wishes the school districts to be discussed.” At the next meeting, on September 27, 1848, “Rev. Ypma proposes that the interests of the schools shall be discussed. The discussion takes place, and the judgment is: the schools must be promoted and

I think of the zeal for good Christian schools on the part of our ancestors in the Netherlands, going all the way back to the Synod of Dordt in 1618-1619. Included in the Church Order adopted by that Synod was an article—Article 21—expressing zeal for good, Christian schools: “Everywhere Consistories shall see to it, that there are good schoolmasters who shall not only instruct the children in reading, writing, languages, and the liberal arts, but likewise in godliness and in the Catechism.”<sup>2</sup> Later, the language was changed somewhat, to speak of “good Christian schools,” but the spirit was the same: zeal for good Christian schools.

## Rooted in Scripture

This long, honorable tradition is rooted in Scripture. What you have done in building this building and what you are doing in the educating of your children in this building, you have done, and are doing, in obedience to the command of God in Holy Scripture. All that labor, all

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cared for by the churches, as being an important part of the Christian calling of God’s church on earth. *All lukewarmness and coldness toward that cause must be condemned and rebuked*” (Classis Holland Minutes 1848-1858, Grand Rapids, MI: Grand Rapids Printing Co., 1943), 19, 26—emphasis added. This is the Spirit—the Spirit of Christ on behalf of Christ’s covenant—that built the once flourishing system of schools of the members of the Christian Reformed Church.

<sup>2</sup> Idzerd Van Dellen and Martin Monsma, *The Church Order Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1941), 92, 93.

that money, and all those prayers are not merely a whim of your own. It is the will of God. It is the will of God in and on behalf of his covenant with you and your children. It is the will of God in Scripture. This is why Dordt included in its Church Order the mandate to consistories to see to it that there were good school teachers to teach the children the liberal arts—the subjects learned in a school—but in harmony with, and permeated by, godliness and the Catechism.

We have this same mandate, in Article 21 of our Church Order, in a somewhat modernized version: “The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.”<sup>3</sup>

This demand of the covenant, which is not burdensome to us covenant friends of God, but the light and easy yoke of Christ, comes to us in Ephesians 6:4b: “bring them [the children of godly parents and of the church] up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Reformed, Christian parents vow to obey this demand of the covenant at the baptism of their children when they answer “yes” to this question: “Whether you promise and intend to see these children...instructed and brought up in the afore-said doctrine, or help or cause them

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<sup>3</sup> Art. 21, “Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches,” in *The Confessions and the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches* (Grandville, MI: Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 2005), 387.

to be instructed therein to the utmost of your power?”<sup>4</sup> Obviously, the Baptism form takes the words “see these children...brought up” from Ephesians 6:4, while further explaining the words “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” also in Ephesians 6:4, as “the aforesaid doctrine.”

As obedience in the covenant to a demand of the covenant and as a carrying on of the long, honorable tradition of Christian education in Christian schools, this building and the instruction that takes place in it are of great worth.

They are of great worth because of who your children are—the children who are brought up in the aforesaid doctrine in this building.

## Children in the Covenant

This calling, to bring them up in the aforesaid doctrine, involving so much careful, costly labor and warranting this large, expensive building, implies that the children who are educated here are special, indeed precious.

They are special simply by virtue of the fact that they are our *children* and *grandchildren*. What is more precious to parents and grandparents than their children and grandchildren? *Natural* love wants the best for them, and this includes a good education in a pleasant, safe environment under the instruction and care of capable, trusted teachers. The *natural* bond insists that the children receive an education that will hand over to the

children the *parents'* values, the *parents'* beliefs, the *parents'* way of life, the *parents'* worldview. It is, therefore, simply incredible that professing, Christian parents, indeed Reformed parents, hand their children over to the tender mercies of the godless state schools, in which none of these things is found, when good Christian schools are available.

True as it is that our children are, and ought to be, precious to us by virtue of the natural bond, it is not who the children are naturally that makes them special.

The children are special because God in grace includes them with their parents and grandparents in his covenant and church.

The passage in Ephesians 6 in which the command, “Bring them up,” is found is one of the clearest, most powerful proofs in all of Scripture that the children of godly parents are members with their parents of the church and covenant of God. The apostle is addressing various kinds of members of the church. Having exhorted wives and husbands at the end of chapter five, in the opening verses of chapter six he addresses the children: “Children!” As members of the church with their parents, they too are commanded to behave in a Christian way: “Obey your parents in the Lord.” By quoting the fifth commandment of the law of God and applying the fifth commandment to the children of New Testament Christians, the apostle shows that children belong to the new covenant, just as they belonged to the old covenant (vv.

<sup>4</sup> “[Reformed] Form for the Administration of Baptism,” in *Confessions and Church Order*, 260.

2, 3).

Our children are members of God's church and covenant, *as children*, as *little* children, already in their infancy, so that as soon as they are old enough to understand, they are called by God to honor their father and mother for God's sake, who has brought them too out of bondage.

## Living (Real) Membership in the Covenant

This membership of the children of believing parents in the covenant is a living membership. As a rule, God regenerates them, unites them to Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit, and saves them *in infancy*. Verse 1 of Ephesians 6 says of these children that they are "in the Lord," that is, in the Lord Jesus Christ. The words "in the Lord," or "in Christ," are the apostle Paul's expression of the covenant union of Christ and his people by the Holy Spirit. Obedience to parents takes place, and can only take place, in living covenant communion with Christ. Only as spiritually alive are children able to obey and honor their parents. Only if the children are spiritually alive can parents and teachers "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

If the children are spiritually dead, they cannot keep the fifth commandment of the law of God. If they are spiritually dead, the incentive, "for this is right" (Eph. 6:1), cannot move them in the slightest. If they are spiritually dead, parents cannot do a thing with them regarding Christian rearing to maturity.

The Reformed Baptism form teaches that the infants of believing parents are spiritually alive by virtue of covenant union with Jesus Christ. Just as they are, "without their knowledge, partakers of the condemnation in Adam, so are they again [without their knowledge] received unto grace in Christ." They are "heirs of the kingdom of God." Already before their baptism as infants, they are "sanctified in Christ and...members of his church."<sup>5</sup>

As living members of the covenant, these children have been redeemed by the blood of Christ and elected in God's eternal love. They are destined with us for everlasting life in the new world.

Our children are special! They are precious! They are God's children!

They must, therefore, have special rearing: "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Who the children are, in the covenant goodness of God, is basic to this building and the instruction given in it.

In spite of the clear teaching of Ephesians 6:1-4, in spite of the decisive doctrine of the Reformed Baptism form, indeed, in spite of the reality of infant baptism, the Protestant Reformed Churches stand virtually alone among the Reformed and Presbyterian churches in their view of the children as spiritually alive, as living members of the covenant.

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<sup>5</sup> "[Reformed] Form for the Administration of Baptism," in *Confessions and Church Order*, 259, 260.

Of course, all Reformed and Presbyterian churches baptize infants. But most of them are determined to view the children as spiritually dead, as unregenerated and unconverted. Infant baptism means nothing more than that the children have an outward, formal “standing” in the church and covenant. Only when the children grow up and become young men and young women, or even old men and old women, are a few of them viewed as saved, if they “fulfill the conditions of the covenant,” if they confess their faith, if they make a decision for Christ, or if they have some “conversion experience.”<sup>6</sup>

According to these churches, Christ saves the children of believers alright—when *they are no longer children*.

Of course, these churches—*Reformed and Presbyterian* churches—teach the children and young people to regard themselves as spiritually dead. One imagines this dreadful, depressing teaching.

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<sup>6</sup> This radically un-Reformed, un-Presbyterian, and unbiblical—but prevailing—doctrine of baptized covenant children is given full, bold expression in *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, ed. Gregg Strawbridge (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003). I titled my review of the book, “A Presbyterian Case for the Baptist Rejection of Infant Baptism.” For this critical review, see Appendix 2 in my *The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers: Sovereign Grace in the Covenant* (Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2005).

**Little child:** “What does that sprinkling of the babies with water mean?”

**Church:** “It is a sign and seal of the precious blood of Jesus that forgives the sins of his people and of the Holy Spirit who unites Jesus’ people to Jesus for salvation.”

**Little child:** “Was I baptized when I was a baby?”

**Church:** “Yes.”

**Little child:** “O, then, are we little children also the people of Jesus? Are our sins also forgiven by the blood of Jesus, and does the Spirit of Jesus live in us too, uniting us to the Savior?”

**Church:** “No. Your sins are not forgiven, and you are not united to Jesus Christ. Those infants who were just baptized and all you little baptized children in the church are dead in sin, outside the covenant and church of Christ and under the damning wrath of God—this, and only this, with regard to your present spiritual state and condition—and you will remain in this awful state and condition for years to come.”

**Little child:** “Will Jesus ever save us?”

**Church:** “Yes, perhaps when you grow up and fulfill certain conditions first.”

**Little child:** “Why then does the church baptize infants?”

**Church:** (silence).

In keeping with this view of the children, the Christian schools that may be promoted by some of these churches (many of these churches are

content that the children be reared in the godless schools of the state) consider it to be their mission that they “evangelize” the children, that is, bring the little heathens to salvation.

Necessarily, the churches, parents, and schools tolerate ungodly, immoral behavior on the part of the children. The attitude is: “What else can you expect? They are not saved anyway.”

My question to churches, parents, and schools with this view of their children is: “Why give such heathens a Christian education?”

Adding to the seriousness of the error is that the popular doctrine about the children of believers teaches that the salvation of the children depends on a condition that the children must perform. It is as if the apostle had written in Ephesians 6:1, “Children, obey your parents and God, and then you will get into the Lord Jesus.” In fact, the apostle teaches, “Children, you are in the Lord Jesus; you are in the Lord Jesus in the same way your parents are in him, namely, by the free, almighty, unconditional grace of God. Now, because you are in the Lord, obey your parents for God’s sake, in thankful love.” “Children, obey your parents *in the Lord [Jesus Christ].*”

Our distinctive view of the children and of their inclusion in the covenant by grace requires Protestant Reformed Christian schools as much as possible. Bringing up the children in the “aforesaid doctrine,” as we vow at Baptism, certainly includes the right doctrine of the covenant. *Especially* does it include the right doctrine of

the covenant.

To this distinctive covenant doctrine (which is, in fact, the traditional, confessional, biblical doctrine of the Reformed churches<sup>7</sup>) belongs that

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<sup>7</sup> “The overwhelming majority of [Reformed] dogmaticians teach...[that] ‘the seed or root of faith cannot be denied them [elect infants], i.e., the beginnings of regeneration and holy inclinations which are begotten in them by the H. Spirit from a tender age in a manner for us indescribable and in their own time issue in action, with the addition of the human institution without and the greater effectuality of the H. Spirit within...To children belongs the kingdom of heaven, Mt. 19:14 (for of such, etc.); therefore so also does regeneration, without which there is no entry into it (the kingdom)’” (H. Heppel, *Reformed Dogmatics*, tr. G. T. Thomson, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1950; 540, 541). One of this “overwhelming majority of [Reformed] dogmaticians” was Peter Van Mastricht (1630-1706): “The general opinion of the Reformed is that the grace of regeneration is in the highest sense particular to all the elect; and they suppose also that even infants are sometimes the subjects of it...Yea, the Scriptures extend regeneration particularly to infants (Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:15; 2 Timothy 3:15)...Baptism is...a most efficacious sealing of the covenant of grace and of regeneration to those who receive it agreeably to its institution, and also to the elect infants of believers...The common opinion of the Reformed is that the baptism of infants (at least of the elect) presupposes regeneration as already effected because that which is not cannot be sealed by baptism. And this opinion appears to me most agreeable to truth” (Peter Van Mastricht, *A Treatise on Regeneration*; Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria

not all our children are necessarily in Christ, in the covenant, and elect. God is sovereign in salvation in our families, as on the mission field.

But all alike must receive the same sacrament and the same Christian upbringing.

I say “upbringing” because the children, although members of the covenant, are *childish* members. They need upbringing, or rearing.

### Rearing in the “Aforesaid Doctrine”

God calls and privileges us to rear the children to maturity. “Bring them up” in Ephesians 6:4b, as in the vow of the Reformed Baptism form, means “train and develop immature members of the covenant and childish citizens of the kingdom of Christ to become mature men and women of the covenant and adult citizens of the kingdom.”

“Bring them up” is not the same as “convince them that they are unregenerated, dead sinners outside of Christ and his kingdom.” Neither is it the same as “evangelize the little vipers and get them saved.”

Rather, the demand of the covenant is: “Rear little, living friends and servants of God into grown-up friends and servants of God.”<sup>8</sup>

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Publications, 2002; 50-53).

<sup>8</sup> “We beseech Thee...always to govern this baptized person by Thy Holy Spirit, that he may lead a Christian and godly life, and increase and grow up in the Lord Jesus Christ, that he [the infant who has just been baptized] may acknowledge Thy fatherly goodness and mercy, which Thou hast shown to him and to us” (prayer after

Oh, what a worthy work is Christian education! What a worthy, responsible task is yours as teachers and administrators in the Protestant Reformed Christian School and in Heritage Christian High School!

The upbringing God requires is a total rearing of the entire child for a complete life in the world, using all his or her gifts. God wills that these children grow up to live responsible, capable, productive lives in the world in all spheres of earthly life. This demands good, thorough, wide-ranging education in all branches of knowledge, at least through high school. The children must be taught all the subjects needed for life and work in the United States at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It is not enough that they know how to read the Bible and that they learn Reformed doctrine. The upbringing of Ephesians 6:4b includes a solid academic training. Those parents who deprive their children of this solid, comprehensive instruction cripple their children for life. Some of the children are brighter than others and get better grades (which by no means indicates that they are dearer to God, to the teachers, or to the parents than those who are less capable), but all need this instruction.

Almost five hundred years ago, our spiritual fathers at Dordt demanded good Christian schoolmasters, who

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Baptism in the “[Reformed] Form for the Administration of Baptism,” in *Confessions and Church Order*, 263; emphasis added.

could teach all the children “reading, writing, languages, and the liberal arts.”

To this upbringing of the covenant children belong also training in music, physical exercise, good fellowship with each other, and discipline.

Such upbringing requires the Christian school. “The Christian school is an association of believing parents [and other lovers of the covenant of grace] carrying out a significant part of this calling of God to rear the children through a like-minded believer who is both called of God to this vital task and capable of the instruction that specifically pertains to the school.”<sup>9</sup>

Fathers are responsible for all the instruction of their children, as Ephesians 6:4b indicates. But fathers need not, and cannot, give all the instruction themselves, not even with the help of their wife. They were not able to do this at the time of the Synod of Dordt. Much less are they able today, when the knowledge their children must have has increased tremendously. Parents do not have the time to educate their children in all the subjects of the curriculum of the good Christian school. The father has a full-time job. Even if he had the ability, he lacks the time to prepare lessons in reading, mathematics, history, physics, and many other subjects, and then to teach these subjects,

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<sup>9</sup> David J. Engelsma, *Reformed Education: The Christian School as Demand of the Covenant*, rev. ed. (Grandville, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2000), 6.

and to teach them well. Teaching them well includes conveying the Reformed perspective on every subject, so that the children come to have the Reformed worldview.

The mother likewise has a full-time job in managing her household. To load her besides with the duty of seeing to the complete instruction of her children in “reading, writing, languages, and the liberal arts” is to crush the poor woman.

In addition, it is the extremely rare couple who will claim the ability to teach all the subjects of several different grades or age levels to a number of children.

Parents have always realized that they are unable to give this instruction and, therefore, have called on a group of called, trained, and capable teachers, each one gifted and knowledgeable in his or her own field, to do the work on behalf of parents.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the Christian school is a demand of the covenant. God demands

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<sup>10</sup> “Parents lack the time and ability to give their children a complete education according to the requirements and demands of modern life. And they lack the means to employ private teachers. Hence, they band together, organize societies, in order that together and with united efforts they may accomplish what individually they are not able to do. And these societies establish schools, determine the character of the education their children shall receive, and employ the teachers that shall furnish such education as the parents determine that their children shall have” (Herman Hoeksema, “As to Our Moral Obligation,” *Standard Bearer* 20, no. 18 [June 15, 1944]: 392).

this thorough upbringing. Since we parents cannot ourselves give all the upbringing that is necessary, we band together to build buildings and hire well-trained teachers to do in our place, and for us, what we cannot do.

The Baptism form recognizes that parents must carry out the calling of the rearing of their children by means of others. It speaks, not only of the instruction that the parents themselves give, but also of the parents' helping or causing their children to be instructed.<sup>11</sup>

And what a glorious expression of covenant cooperation the Christian school is! All unite to provide the education for all the children that most parents, if not all, are not able to give themselves. By working together to maintain the good Christian schools today, all exert themselves to ensure that there will be good Christian schools in the future—schools in which their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the other members of the church, may be instructed.

The attitude “I will see to the education of my own children; let others see to the education of their children as best they can” and the attitude “All that concerns us is the education of our children today; that there may be no schools for our grandchildren and great-grandchildren is no concern

of ours” are not the mind of the covenant. They are the mentality of individualistic fundamentalism.

## The “Aforesaid Doctrine”

God does not leave up to us Christian parents and teachers what the basis of the instruction of the schools, the standard according to which all the rearing by the schools takes place, and the truth that permeates all the education shall be. God determines the basis, the standard, and the truth of the instruction in the schools. In Ephesians 6:4b, the truth that controls and permeates all the upbringing is “the nurture [literally, “education”] and admonition of the Lord.” The nurture and admonition of the Lord is God’s truth about Jesus Christ revealed in the inspired Scripture, and God’s truth about Jesus Christ extends to all of human life on earth under the absolute lordship of Jesus Christ.

Our Reformed Baptism form, alluding to Ephesians 6:4b, renders the words “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” as “in the aforesaid doctrine”: “Whether you promise and intend to see these children...instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine?”

The “aforesaid doctrine,” in the vow of the Baptism form, is “the doctrine...taught *here in this* Christian church.” At the baptism of their children, parents acknowledged this doctrine to be “the true and perfect doctrine of salvation.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> “...or help or cause them to be instructed therein...” (“[Reformed] Form for the Administration of Baptism,” in *Confessions and Church Order*, 260).

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<sup>12</sup> “[Reformed] Form for the Administra-

The doctrine that controls the education in the Christian school is the same as that confessed by the church of which the parents and children are members and the same, therefore, as that believed and taught in the home. There is consistency in the upbringing and instruction of the children. There is the three-fold cord of church, home, and school that is not easily broken.

Where this consistency is lacking, and especially where parents are perfectly happy with this inconsistency, there is the real danger that, in the warning of Ephesians 6:4, fathers provoke their children. They irritate and trouble them spiritually. The children are taught one thing at home and in the church, but quite another thing at school. At church and at home, they are taught the Lordship of Jesus Christ—in creation, providence, salvation, and conduct. At school, they learn the lordship of “nature” and man. At church and home, they learn the truth; at school, they learn lies.

For us Protestant Reformed Christians, the “aforesaid doctrine,” in which we promise to have our children taught, also at school, is the doctrine taught by the Protestant Reformed Churches.

I fear that I detect among some of us a certain hesitancy, almost embarrassment, regarding asserting this and insisting on this. This hesitancy, or embarrassment, as the case may be, likes to suppose, and have all

suppose, that the “aforesaid doctrine” of the Baptism form refers only to a very general and all-embracing Christianity, or at best a kind of generic, twenty-first century Reformed consensus. There is reluctance to refer the “aforesaid doctrine” to the specific, definite, and well-defined doctrine that is believed confessed, preached, and taught by the Protestant Reformed Churches.

What the reason for the hesitancy and embarrassment might be is hard to say. Is it the spirit of tolerance, masquerading as “love,” that slowly but surely is suffocating the uncompromising, intolerant truth of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the churches today? Is it the paralyzing fear of being thought, and judged, “narrow”? Is it, perhaps, a lack of appreciation for the maintenance and even development of the truth of the sovereignty of the grace of God in Jesus Christ and for the corresponding uncompromising promotion of the antithetical Christian life in the Protestant Reformed Churches?

Or, as we may hope, is the reason only misunderstanding?

If the reason is misunderstanding, the misunderstanding is easily cleared up. The simple, incontestable fact is that Protestant Reformed parents promise to bring up their children to the utmost of their power in the doctrine taught in “*this* Christian church.” “This Christian church” is a Protestant Reformed Church. *This* doctrine—not a general, vague Christianity, or a generic, watered-down Reformed consensus, shot through

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tion of Baptism,” in *Confessions and Church Order*, 260.

with teachings that contradict the very essence of genuine, confessional, Reformed Christianity—must control all the upbringing of our children, including the education at school, to the utmost of our power.<sup>13</sup>

Concerning this doctrine, there is not the least reason for any hesitancy, or embarrassment, that it be the doctrine in which the children are instructed at school. For the doctrine taught by the Protestant Reformed Churches is the genuine, unadulterated Reformed faith of the Reformation and of the creeds. It is pure Christianity. It is the “nurture and admonition of the Lord” of Ephesians 6:4. It is “the true and perfect doctrine of salvation,” as every Protestant Reformed parent freely acknowledges at the baptism of his or her child.

If I did not believe this with all my heart, I would not be a member of the

Protestant Reformed Churches. If I did not believe this, not only would my children not have been educated in Protestant Reformed Christian schools, but they also would not have been educated in the catechism classes of these churches.

The doctrine taught by the Protestant Reformed Churches is important for, indeed fundamental to, the instruction of the Christian school. The doctrine confessed by these Churches forms the right, Reformed worldview.<sup>14</sup>

It is the doctrine of the glorious Lordship of the risen Jesus Christ with regard to all of history, all of human life, all of knowledge. He is first in the counsel of God and the goal—the *one* goal—of creation and history (Col. 1:13ff).

It is the doctrine that the purpose of God in history is not the “Christianizing” of the world by a spurious com-

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<sup>13</sup> “When in a Protestant Reformed church a child is baptized, the whole congregation confesses, and the parents of the children that are presented for baptism expressly state, that they believe the doctrine of the Protestant Reformed Churches to be the true and perfect doctrine of salvation. And it is in that connection that the second of these two questions must be read: the parents, in answering this question affirmatively, promise that they will bring up their children in the ‘afore-said,’ that is, in the Protestant Reformed, doctrine, and that they will help or cause them to be instructed in that doctrine to the utmost of their power! This, then, is our primary and most sacred moral obligation with respect to the education of our children” (Herman Hoeksema, “Our Moral Obligation,” 370).

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<sup>14</sup> For the Reformed worldview derived from Scripture and the Reformed confessions, rather than from Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck’s theory of common grace, see my article, “The Reformed Worldview on Behalf of a Godly Culture,” *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* 38, no. 2 (April 2005): 2-46. “By worldview, or world-and-life-view, is meant a comprehensive, unified view of all creation and history in light either of the knowledge of the triune, one, true, and living God revealed in Jesus Christ, or in light of the unbelieving rejection of this God. This view of all things determines how one lives the whole of his or her earthly life in the world. The power of worldview is that it frames one’s entire life” (“Reformed Worldview,” 7).

mon grace, but the redemption of the elect church by a very real particular grace.

It is the doctrine that the truth of origins is creation by the God and Father of Jesus Christ in six, real, historical days, limited by one evening and one morning, just as God reveals in Genesis 1 and 2.

It is the doctrine that the Bible was breathed out by God as his inspired Word and is therefore, the infallible rule of all belief and all behavior.

It is the doctrine of God's eternal predestination, election and reprobation, making separation and warfare between two kinds of people, not black and white, or male and female, or rich and poor, but holy believer and ungodly unbeliever.

It is the doctrine that God's law—the ten words of the covenant—is the rule of the thankful life of the believer and of the child of the believer, requiring right worship of God in a true church; Sabbath observance; submission to all authority; protecting the life of the neighbor, including the neighbor as yet unborn; sexual purity; and respect for the neighbor's property, as well as the help of him with my property if he is needy.

It is the sound doctrine of the last things—*especially* a sound eschatology—keeping the young people from the fantasy that this world will improve until it becomes the carnal kingdom of Christ in a “golden age” and warning them that the kingdom of Antichrist is now abuilding.

What is there about this doctrine to be ashamed of?

Of the corruption or compromise of this doctrine by Reformed churches, which is destructive of the good Christian school and subversive of the Reformed, Christian worldview, there may be no tolerance.

Or, shall we now, in these last days, tolerate the arrogant criticism of Genesis 1 and 2—*Holy Scripture*—as mistaken concerning the origin of the universe, and, thus, the denial of the inspiration of all Scripture? Shall we tolerate the cowardly, fatal surrender to Darwin by the theory of theistic evolution? Shall we tolerate the rejection of the biblical flood, “whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished” (II Pet. 3:6), in favor of a local puddle in Mesopotamia? Shall we tolerate the doctrine of a grace of God for all humans without exception that does away with the antithesis and enables believers and unbelievers to cooperate in creating a kingdom of God in the world—*apart from Jesus Christ*? Shall we tolerate the violent attack on the basic institution of church and society—the home and family—by the egalitarian rage against the authoritative headship of the husband and father and by the world-conforming approval of unbiblical divorce and of remarriage after divorce? Shall we tolerate the sinking, not alone of the ungodly world, but also of that which is called church and Christian school into the abyss by the recognition of homosexuality as an unobjectionable condition and by the acceptance of homosexual relations as an approved lifestyle?

And shall we tolerate all this, and more, as the instruction of our children and grandchildren seven hours a day, five days a week, nine months a year, thirteen of the most formative years of their lives?

And shall we one day defend this toleration to Christ as our obedience to his demand of us in the covenant, “bring them up in the aforesaid doctrine”?

## Authoritative Teaching

So far from being squeamish about the “aforesaid doctrine,” we are to bring the children up in it in such a way that this doctrine is bound upon them. This is the idea of “admonition” in Ephesians 6:4. “Admonition” requires authoritative teaching of the doctrine.

The good Christian school, like the good Christian home, does not merely present the children with various alternatives and allow the children to decide for themselves which of the alternatives they prefer: creation or (theistic) evolution; a trustworthy Bible or a Bible full of the errors and confusion of the culture of its day; a sovereign God over the catastrophes of history or a helpless god who stands by the Twin Towers weeping with us mortals; a worldview of conformity to the ungodly world by the power of common grace that has nothing to do with Jesus Christ or a worldview of being in the world but not of the world, indeed *against* the world, by the power of particular grace that has everything to do with Jesus Christ.

Rather, the good Christian school, like the good Christian home, presents the great issues, gives the argument for the error fully and fairly, and then demolishes the error, and contends for the truth of the Lord Christ.<sup>15</sup>

What a heavy responsibility and grand privilege are yours as teachers, board members, and members of the covenant community!

## Divine Blessing on This Rearing

I had intended to close this dedicatory address with words of encouragement. It is evident to me now that you need no encouragement. Rather, your zeal on behalf of Protestant Reformed Christian education, that is, on behalf of God’s covenant with your children and grandchildren, apparent in this great building and on this occasion, is an encouragement to the rest of us.

Let me then encourage the rest of us, and if the covenant community that maintains South Holland Protestant Reformed Christian School and Heritage Christian High School is also a little heartened by these words, so much the better.

God blesses the rearing of the good

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<sup>15</sup> “Like the good Christian home,” to be sure, but my parents, who maintained a good Christian home, never troubled themselves overmuch to give the argument for error “fully and fairly.” Their interest rather lay in demolishing the errors they saw in their children’s thinking and behavior as quickly and effectively as they could. I thank God for this interest of theirs.

Christian schools—not apart from the rearing that goes on in the home, certainly not in conflict with the home, but as the extension and expansion of the godly training of the home.

There is power in education, great power.

There is great power in the world's education of their children in the state schools. It is the power to bring children to maturity in godlessness. The finished products are godless in worship, godless in business, godless in labor, godless in politics, godless in sexual morality, godless in marriage and the family, godless in recreation.

In the good Christian school, the power is the Spirit of Jesus Christ bringing the children of the covenant to maturity in Christ, so that they become men and women of God, “thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (II Tim. 3:17).

God's blessing of the rearing of the good Christian school is simply our own children and grandchildren—the children of the church—developed to a pleasing maturity, or “perfection,” as the apostle describes this maturity in II Timothy 3:17. Grown-up physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially, and spiritually, they are capable of living a healthy, responsible, honorable, God-glorifying earthly life in twenty-first century America.

What price tag will we put on this?

There is a blessing upon the instruction of our Protestant Reformed Christian schools also for the churches. The schools have been, and are today, of incalculable worth to the churches. They make up much

of our churches' growth. When other churches, whose zeal for missions blinds them to the necessity of the rearing of their own children in good Christian schools, are losing both members and their own young people, our churches are keeping the young people and steadily growing in membership.

Our enemies may ridicule.

But the God of the covenant wills this growth of his church from the children of believers. The as yet unbaptized infants of believing parents “are included in the covenant and church of God” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 74).

We may continue to expect this growth of the churches from our children as we gladly acknowledge and enthusiastically do justice to the truth that the “aforesaid doctrine” of the vow of the Baptism form is the Reformed faith as confessed by the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Where there is hesitancy and embarrassment about the “aforesaid doctrine,” whether this doctrine is the Reformed faith confessed distinctively by the Protestant Reformed Churches, the result will be the loss of the young people, in numbers. Some will join churches which, although Reformed in name, deny the fundamentals of the Reformed faith: total depravity, by their doctrine of common grace; predestination and sovereign, particular grace, by their doctrines of the “well-meant offer” and a conditional covenant; and all the “Five Points of Calvinism” by their tolerance, if not official approval, of the heresy of the

Federal (Covenant) Vision.

Others will join the ecclesiastical circuses known today as the “mega churches,” and thus abandon the Reformed faith and life altogether.

Some may even turn their backs on church completely.

But all will be lost to the pure worship of God and the sound confession of his name in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

The schools are a blessing for the churches also in that the young people take their place in the churches as sound, faithful, devoted members. They are not forever questioning everything the Protestant Reformed Churches stand for. They do not busy themselves, as on a sacred mission from God, to undermine the “afore-said doctrine” and the Christian life that adorns it.

## Seek the Blessing

Let us preachers preach our Protestant Reformed schools, and let our consistories see to it that the parents have their children instructed in these schools. This is simply our duty according to Article 21 of the Church Order, as applied by the third question of Article 41 of the Church Order and the eighteenth question of the “Questions for Church Visitation.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> To every church at every meeting of classis, the question is put: “Are...the

Let the teachers teach—with might and main—all the subjects of the curriculum in light of the credal Reformed faith as confessed by the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Let the students learn—study, listen, think, read, and do the homework—with the Lord Jesus Christ in mind.

Let the parents and all the members of the covenant community pray, give, and in every way support these schools, especially, of course, by sending your children to them.

Thus, the dedication of a building is proved to be the worthier dedication of ourselves.

And thus we *seek* the blessing of God upon our children, ourselves, and our churches, and not in vain. **P**

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Christian schools cared for?” (Art. 41 of the “Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches,” in *Confessions and Church Order*, 393). At least once a year, the church visitors, representatives of the denomination of churches, put this question to the full consistory of every Protestant Reformed congregation: “Does the consistory see to it that the parents send their children to the Christian school?” (Q. 18 of the “Questions for Church Visitation,” in *The Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches*, n.p., rev. and repr. 2002; 112).

## Feature

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*The next few articles describe the process involved in starting, building, or moving a school. However, this is not intended to be a mere newsletter. If we let the words of Prof. Engelsma's "Bring Them Up in the "Aforesaid Doctrine"" be a guide to us, then all the news and updates become just so much more reason to celebrate God's gracious hand in dealing with us and our children. Consider the brand-new Trinity Christian High School in Hull, Iowa.*

# Trinity Christian High School Opens Its Doors

by Jim  
Regnerus

On August 25, 2008, a tree was established by the rivers of water.

The seed of Protestant Reformed secondary education in northwest Iowa was planted long ago. Over the years, preachers exhorted parents to instruct their children in the truths we hold dear to the utmost of their ability. Particularly, around 1991 the then Rev. Dykstra preached a sermon in Doon Protestant Reformed Church in which he implored the congregation to at least begin exploring the possibility of a Protestant Reformed high school. Some members of the grade school board made efforts to get something going, but the movement didn't gain a lot of visible traction. Yet, the seed was watered with more preaching in the area and the prayers of many zealous saints.

The seed sprouted in 1995. The Hull Protestant Reformed Church consistory passed a resolution asking

for volunteers to promote Protestant Reformed secondary education in northwest Iowa. Members from Doon and Edgerton were asked to join the effort. A promotion committee comprised of members from the three area churches was formed. This promotion committee labored by means of newsletters, speeches, and informational meetings. By 1996 the committee determined that there was enough interest to begin a secondary education society and a constitution was framed. The constitution was overwhelmingly adopted, men attached their signatures to become members of a society that would call itself the Midwest Society for Protestant Reformed Secondary Education, and a board was soon elected. Optimism was high.

However, the Society was to experience that between forming a society and actually opening a high school



there was a lot of work that had to be completed. Building, education, finance, promotion, technology, and other committees had to carry out their labors. Countless hours of work by many willing hands were poured into the effort.

Sometimes the seedling didn't show much visible growth. There were times when financial drives came up short, finding an agreeable building location proved thorny, and our own weak faith battled discouragement when the school didn't happen easily. A decade passed.

God, however, was upholding the effort. Not visible to the human eye, the seedling's roots were being developed—roots of commitment and conviction that were necessary for the long-time survival of the school and the unity of the Society, roots that anchored the seedling to God's Word in the hearts of believers and ensured

its steady future against the winds of false doctrine and our own sinfulness. God was at work.

In one of our early promotional speeches, Rev. Haak had warned us to not expect growth until the darkest hour. Indeed, his words rang true. Just when the Society's zeal was probably at its lowest, God gave us increase. While earlier plans to start the school had stagnated, in 2005 the Society adopted a new plan that by 2006 was showing visible and rapid growth. With the strong roots of support funneling strength to the seedling, by the end of 2007 the Society had sprinted to a financial benchmark that allowed for construction to commence the following spring. In February of 2008 the Society adopted the name Trinity Christian High School for the school. An informational meeting was held with parents of eighth graders in March, and on April 22, 2008,

the Society voted to begin offering ninth-grade instruction in the fall of the same year. The seedling was now a sapling.

Two full-time teachers were hired, Mr. B.J. Mowery and Mr. Jim Regnerus, with Mr. Regnerus also to serve as administrator. Mrs. Laura Kuiper was hired to teach band, choir, and music appreciation part-time. As the new building would not be ready for occupancy for this first school year, the Society rented an office building on Main Street in Hull. The rented building very adequately suits Trinity's needs, complete with the community gymnasium across the street available for the school's use. The Lord willing, Trinity will move into its own completed building in the fall of 2009 and continue to add

grades as the Lord prospers her with growth.

August 25, 2008 was the long-awaited day. Fourteen ninth-grade students enjoyed the first day of covenant instruction at Trinity Christian High School. That evening Rev. Key spoke to a large audience at the first convocation. The sapling became a tree. Protestant Reformed secondary education was established in north-west Iowa.

Pray for Trinity Christian High School. Pray that she grow in strength and stature as God uses her to bring forth the fruits of beautiful sons and daughters in Zion living obedient lives to his glory. Pray that she prosper as the tree of Psalm 1.



# How It Came to Be: The PRCS/HCHS Building Dedication

by Steve Van Drunen, committee chairman

The concept of building a new school building as a joint venture of both the Protestant Reformed Christian School (PRCS) and Heritage Christian High School (HCHS) started with the formation of a Combined Long Term Planning Committee of both schools in March 2004. The original mandate of this committee was to consider land acquisition and a possible merger of the two associations. This committee consisted of six initial members with board representation from both schools.

At this time HCHS was in its fourth year operating in a facility leased from Calvary Reformed Church in South Holland. The high school association owned land in Lansing, Illinois adjacent to Peace PRC and had initial plans to build a school building on this land. The PRCS operated out of its own facility in South Holland on a complex that included the South Holland PRC.

The consideration for relocating the grade school was prompted by the actions of the South Holland PRC who a few years earlier had made the long range decision to relocate and purchase land 15 miles south in Crete, Illinois. The church and schools were responding to the general movement

of its members south and into north-west Indiana.

After initial investigation and discussions, the mandate to combine the two school associations was abandoned. The committee and boards recognized the difficulty of undertaking these two significant initiatives at the same time. Also, as a committee we did not overlook the possibility that these two initiatives could be considered controversial by the association members and to undertake both at the same time could inhibit the development of a consensus that was needed to go forward.

At a special combined meeting of both school associations on November 17, 2004, approval was given to purchase 29 acres near Cornerstone PRC in unincorporated Hanover Township (Dyer, IN mailing) at a total cost of \$570,000 with each association sharing in the cost on a 50/50 basis. It was noted in the minutes of the grade school meeting that the approval was unanimous! The committee recognized that there still were differing motives behind this unanimous vote.

In January of 2005 this committee became the Project Development Committee (PDC) with the mandate

shifting from land acquisition to developing and building a school building on the new site. Additional members were added to the committee with the required skills for this calling. The thought process of the committee at this time was to approach building on the site in three phases, putting up a building or wing for the high school along with the main middle section as soon as possible with a third phase or addition to take place some time in the future when the grade school needed to move.

The closing on the purchase of the property occurred on July 13, 2005. The high school had sufficient cash on hand to fund its portion while the grade school borrowed \$175,000 of the \$285,000 from its Endowment Fund.

The minutes from the August 17, 2005 PDC meeting notes that inquiries indicate that it does not appear to be financially feasible to bring water and sewer to our site in the foreseeable future so we will proceed with well and septic to service the new building. This is noteworthy in that it was delays in obtaining water and sewer utilities that delayed completion of the project. With ongoing development in the area surrounding our property, these utilities were subsequently brought closer and the decision was made to connect and forgo the cost of a well and septic system.

On September 22, 2005 a second special combined association meeting was held to approve the construction of a 49,000 sq. ft. facility to house

both the PRCs and HCHS. The committee had made the decision to seek approval for building out the full project in one phase due to cost efficiencies and the desire to complete the relocation of the grade school sooner. The total estimated cost of this building project was \$4.4 million with work commencing only after an additional \$1.5 million was collected. \$1.0 million of this amount was to be allocated to the grade school and \$500,000 to the high school. An exhibit that was presented at this meeting showed that the high school association had \$1.1 million available in cash and expected proceeds from the sale of the Lansing property, and the grade school association reported \$110,000 available. This did not consider anything from the possible sale of the South Holland property as no sale was eminent. It is interesting to note that approval was given at this meeting to borrow \$2.26 million to round out the funding of the project which was to be split \$885,000 to the high school association and \$1,375,000 to the grade school association.

In October of 2005 the Hamstra Group, a design/build contractor, was engaged to develop full plans for building the new school building. It was determined that this would allow the project to keep moving while the fundraising was underway.

A review of the February 6, 2006 minutes of our committee indicates that \$850,000 of the \$1.5 million had been collected and approval was sought from the boards to engage

civil engineers to begin the site planning process and pursue the special use permit from Lake County, Indiana. The total collected during the 2005-06 drive amounted to just under \$1.0 million.

At the regular meetings on June 26, 2006, approval was granted by both associations to move forward with building all proposed phases of the project even though the full \$1.5 million in additional donations was not collected. At this time there was a sense of urgency that we needed our own high school facility; cost would keep rising and it also was noted that it would be more efficient and economical to build the grade school wing at the same time instead of doing an addition at some future time. Another drive would be conducted at the end of the year to collect more funds. A second combined building fund drive was conducted in the fall of 2006 with approximately \$700,000 collected.

During the week of September 17, 2006 actual construction of the new facility started with excavation of the site. Construction continued unabated late into the fall and early winter of 2006 with both the high school and grade school wings enclosed before the severe cold hit. This allowed construction to continue through the winter months with work taking place inside each wing. The middle section of the building, which housed some of the classrooms, gym, kitchen, library, computer lab and offices, was started early in 2007 when the weather allowed. At this time it looked like

we would have no problem completing the project by the start of the 2007-2008 school year.

On August 30, 2006 the grade school board gave approval to enter into negotiations for the sales of the school property along with the South Holland church and parsonage. On December 19, 2006 a contingent contract was entered into with Power & Light Evangelistic Church to sell the existing South Holland school and church property for a total amount of \$2.1 million. This contract was subject to receiving the proper approvals from the grade school association and the South Holland church, which was granted on January 16, 2007 during a special combined meeting. After some delays, the closing of this sale took place on June 13, 2007 with \$1.0 million of the proceeds going to the grade school association.

By the end of August 2007 work was essentially complete on the building although there were a lot of small items that still needed to be finished. Because of delays experienced with bringing water and sewer utilities to our site the progress slowed. Certain items could not be completed without water. The delays resulted from difficulties in obtaining the necessary easements to run these utility lines, requiring us to reroute the water and sewer lines to a different connection point. Both schools negotiated extensions on their leases accordingly with the expectation that the water and sewer work would be completed by year end 2007. Year end came and went and still no water. Month-

to-month extensions of the existing leases were granted by Calvary and Power & Light. The installation of the water and sewer lines began in late December 2007 with this work being completed during the second week of February 2008.

On Thursday, February 21, 2008 at approximately 11:00 AM word was received that the Certificate of Occupancy had been granted—four years after the start of our project! The move of both schools was quickly scheduled for the following afternoon with a call for all volunteers to help. About 100 people responded and both schools were dismissed at noon on Friday. By 5:00 PM that evening everything was moved to the new building with work continuing on the following Saturday to get everything in place for the start of classes on Monday. That Friday night we hosted our first basketball game in the new gym, with victories by both our Heritage girls and boys teams.

A final accounting of this project shows a total building cost of approximately \$4.8 million and a total

overall cost including land of \$5.4 million. With ongoing donations during construction, borrowings totaled \$1,025,000 although we do hold a \$100,000 recapture agreement with a local developer for water and sewer extensions that we hope to realize on sometime in the future. That leaves \$925,000 for us to repay which breaks down to \$375,000 for the high school association and \$550,000 for the grade school association.

By many measures this project went extremely well even with a 6 month delay. God was pleased to use the means of those who provided money, building materials, labor, or just encouragement to make this building project a success. We gratefully acknowledge his blessings and covenant faithfulness shown to us in providing this new school facility for the training of our children. It was amazing to see how God brought us together for this worthy cause and the unity that was displayed in making this project a success. To him be all the honor and glory. **P**



# Moving Day

by Ryan  
Van Overloop

**D** Protestant Reformed Christian School of South Holland, Illinois and Heritage Christian High School of South Holland, Illinois have moved to Indiana. These schools now share a new facility in Dyer, Indiana. Construction of the new school building began in September, 2006 and concluded in February, 2008.

Originally, we had hoped to be in our new school building at the beginning of last academic year (2007/2008). However, we had difficulties with the sewer and water hookup. These difficulties delayed our efforts and we had to remain in our existing school buildings. This meant that Heritage had to continue to rent the educational wing of Calvary Reformed Church and the grade school had to rent their old school building from its new owner (Power and Light Evangelistic Church). The question was, “How long?” During the construction process, due to the sewer and water issue, we were never able to put a definite date on when the project would be completed. Therefore, it was a flurry of excitement when the move actually happened. The narration that follows explains the events that happened at the grade school just before and during the move.

On Thursday, February 21, I received the very long awaited phone call. The week had started like many before. Is this the week? Are we going to be able to move into our new school building? These thoughts permeated many a mind during the beginning weeks of 2008.

Each Monday I was able to give my teachers and staff a little more information about the progress/regress of the water/sewer issue of our new school. When will we be able to move was always the big question. The tough part of the question was the answer. “I don’t know. I wish I did, but I just don’t know.” Uncertainties always abounded. If questions on moving were chocolate covered donuts, I’d have busted my belt long ago.

The phone call came to school at 12:25 PM. I remember it well. The lower grade students were just coming in from noon recess. I was in the teacher workroom when the secretary came in. “The phone’s for you; it’s Frank Van Baren.” My anxieties gave way to a feeling of exuberance. Is this actually the phone call? I picked up the phone. “We have the occupancy permit! The school’s moving tomorrow!”

Tingles went through my body.

Maybe you've experienced that at some point in your life, at a very happy time when your emotions are physically evident through actual mini body tremors. I never knew this move meant so much to me. I always sincerely desired it; but it seemed as if my body was shaking with excitement at that moment. I guess I had been privileged to witness first hand the huge amount of work many people had put into this building project. I knew the blood, sweat and tears that went into its planning and construction. Many hands came together in many ways for a common goal. And the goal was not just a building of block and steel. The goal was focused on what's best for our children, our covenant children. I knew this was the goal. It was commonly voiced again and again at meetings. This

goal was covenant education.

My next thought was how I was going to relay this great news to the teachers and student body. I don't like to use it much; but I decided to broadcast it over the public address system. I waited several minutes until the lower grade students were just getting settled into their classrooms for their afternoon sessions. When I announced it, shrills and screams lifted the roof. The students were ecstatic. This is the first time I actually enjoyed hearing students yelling and shouting in their classrooms. I, as well as the other teachers, relished the moment. Their screams were soothing and dispelled our anxieties. It was finally time!

You might say the children screamed because they would have a half day of school on Friday. But



Elementary (PRCS) Hallway



Library/Media Center

I beg to differ. I've never heard this many children scream with this much volume, delight and excitement over a measly half day off. Their voices got the best of them just as the tingling of my body got a hold of me. They screamed out of sheer joy and excitement at the prospect of the move.

The MOVE, oh the move! That was huge. How? In half a day? The whole school? Who are you kidding? True, I was skeptical. This would take a tremendous unified effort. After all,

classroom walls were fully decorated. Bookshelves were stocked. Classrooms were laden with school paraphernalia. And all moving boxes lay empty in the attic.

But what a move it was! What a



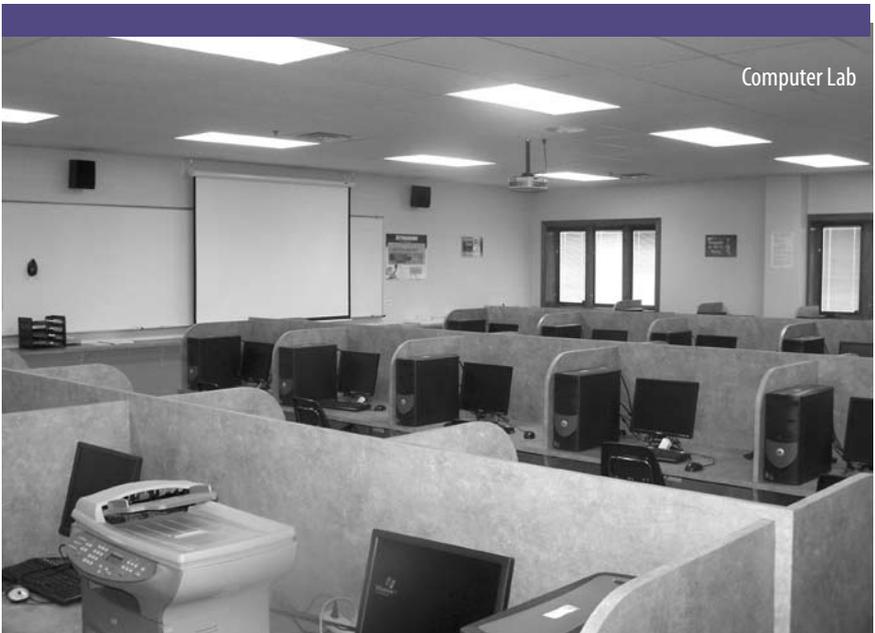
Kitchen

wonderful display of support we were privileged to witness! It was moving. Not moving in the sense of that's what we were doing. No, it was emotionally moving, awe inspiring. What a tremendous event this was for our school! I'm not chiefly referring to the new school. The tremendous awe inspiring event was the total display of support for this wonderful institution God has given to us. This applies to the high school as well as the grade school. People from our church community helped us through the move in tremendous ways.

By noon on Friday, several trucks had pulled into the old school parking lot, ready to be loaded. More trucks came later. It's interesting to note that the total moving expense incurred by

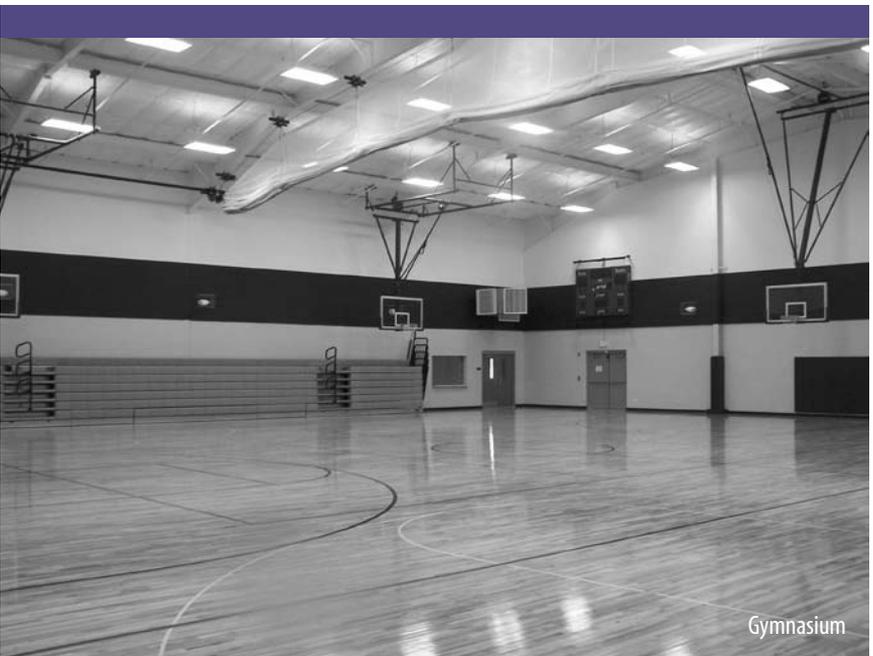
both schools for relocating was \$0.00. And that was accomplished in less than six hours. Many people went to the new school to unload the trucks. Other people helped the teachers begin to put everything into their new spot. Boxes, desks and equipment were unloaded off the trucks and brought into the classrooms. Many hands made the move of both schools a success.

That was February, 2008. We are now beginning our first full year in our new school building. We are thankful God has given us a school to be used by both our high school and grade school.



Computer Lab

Main Office



Gymnasium

## Genesis Christian School (Lacombe, Alberta) by Rick Span

**I**t is a great blessing that everyone involved with Genesis Protestant Reformed School of Lacombe, Alberta, can say that we have started our second year of classroom instruction with a total of 28 students. The first year flew by and five students graduated from ninth grade. I know that the two grade 9 students for the 2008/2009 school year are already thinking about and making some plans for their graduation. May the Lord grant all of us health and strength so that we will be able to reach this goal.

For our second year of operation, we are still renting a church building that is owned by the Free Reformed Church. It had been empty for some time, so we were able to make permanent classrooms in what was once the sanctuary and the basement fellowship room. Our desire, though, is to build our own school building. Since we first began, our board has been dealing with each obstacle raised by our municipal government, architects, and engineers. From our perspective, they seem to be delaying our plans to make our own school building a reality. Whether it's getting the church land subdivided, getting the building

permit, obtaining approval for the design, or satisfying the engineers, all the various committees have been kept very busy. Even though we have experienced our share of bureaucratic delays, we have also experienced the mercies of the Lord in that he has provided us with the use of the church building for a second year.

We hope to further develop a classical approach to the educating of our covenant children. The students in grades 1-3 are at the Grammar stage, which means that various strategies are used to help them memorize many facts across the curriculum. From fourth grade to ninth grade, we will be teaching Latin as our foreign language. Last year we spent time looking at the influence of Latin on our English language. We will also be adding a class on introductory Logic once a week for grades seven to nine. As they develop a knowledge in Logic, the students will hopefully recognize some of the flaws in arguments made for or against various topics. This should keep all of us busy, including me, since I'll be busy making certain my logic is flawless!

This article would be incomplete if we did not mention something about our volunteers. A number of parents have again volunteered to help out at the school in various ways. Some will help in the classrooms, others will

supervise the children during recess and noon break. Those who are gifted musically help out with playing the organ at chapels. Parents with larger vehicles help by volunteering either their time or their vehicles for our field trips. The mothers of our grade nine students will also help out with our planned monthly hot lunches.

Whether it was for these hot lunches or not, last year we had visitors come from distant regions to enjoy a time of fellowship at our school. We enjoyed the visitors who came from

various congregations throughout the past year. These included members from our Edmonton, Hull, Loveland, and Lynden congregations. We look forward to more visitors during this new school year as they are a great source of encouragement.

We covet your prayers as we labour together to instruct our children in the way of the Lord. Our hope is that we learn to acknowledge him in all our ways and have the assurance that he will direct our paths. **P**

## Faith Christian School Randolph, Wisconsin



L-R: Dylan Vroom, Anna Van Dyke, Ryan Buitter

## Faith Christian School (Randolph, Wisconsin) by John Huizenga

**W**e give thanks to God for a steady increase in enrollment which has increased over the last fourteen years from 24 students to 46 students. We continue to have four teachers: Mrs.

Tamminga in kindergarten, a team-teach arrangement of Mrs. Amy Regnerus, Pastor Kuiper, and Mrs. Rena Soodsma for the 1st and 2nd grade room, Mr. Mike VanderVeen in grades 3-5, and Mr. John Huizenga in grades 6-8. We have completed a curriculum update which now includes material from the Core Knowledge Foundation

(www.coreknowledge.org). The result of this work is a curriculum that gives structure from grade to grade and allows for flexibility in using a variety of resources and textbooks. Teachers and students alike are now beginning to reap some of the benefits of this update.

We don't have a gymnasium, but we now have a piece of ground that has been graded for use as an ice rink this winter. With the construction of a new church auditorium, we were able to employ a bulldozer and surplus dirt for this project. Having a good piece of ice makes those cold winter recess periods much more enjoyable. Watching the new church building go up just across the school yard has also been interesting to watch. **P**

## Covenant Christian High School (Walker, Michigan)

**T**he summer of 2008 brought construction crews to Covenant Chris-



tian High School. The project was a library/media center expansion. An anonymous donor family offered to fund the project which was approved at the annual society meeting in April. The expansion includes more

floorspace and work areas, more bookshelves, raised ceiling and ample lighting, more student computers, media lab with interactive board, workroom, and a computer server room. **P**



*Twelve Extraordinary Women* by John MacArthur. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005.

**T**A friend loaned me this book after giving it high praise, and I must admit that I received it with more than a little skepticism. It was described as “thoroughly Reformed,” to which was added, “I couldn’t find anything wrong with it.” The latter, of course, is a measure of how sensitive we are to all things Arminian. That is not a bad thing, but when you choose a book that is to be edifying, you look for more than what it is not.

I did indeed find the book edifying, rich in insights about the twelve women portrayed in it. These women are Eve, Sarah, Rahab, Ruth, Hannah, Mary the mother of Jesus, Anna, the Samaritan woman, Martha and Mary, Mary Magdalene, and Lydia.

MacArthur in no way minimizes the biblical role distinction between men and women, but rather he emphasizes the special honor that Scripture gives to godly women. He cites examples of the way Scripture speaks of women. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved his church—sacrificially. The virtuous woman of Proverbs is valued far above rubies. We could multiply examples.

Women in Israel were not looked at as in some pagan cultures. They were

not inferior members of the family, but shared the teaching of the children with their husbands. They could be landowners. They could administer many offices in their own households.

All of these roles are carefully distinguished from usurping authority over the man, however, as MacArthur is quick to point out. He states that the feminist movement has devalued femininity and disparaged the unique and beautiful role of motherhood. Scripture honors women as women and stresses their faithfulness and love for God. This stands out clearly in MacArthur’s writing about these twelve extraordinary women.

He makes them come to life. He does not inject his own imagination into their histories but catches and enlarges upon what Scripture says about them with true insight.

The chapter on Sarah tells how God repeatedly assured her that he was faithful and would do as he had promised. The episode of God’s coming to Abraham in a vision, passing alone between the divided animals, is described as showing that the covenant was completely unconditional. God’s covenant was unilateral, a promise to Abraham about what he would do. You don’t often read that correct explanation.

The author saw striking similarities between the song of Hannah and that

of Mary, called the Magnificat. I had not read that before.

The chapter on Lydia is beautiful. It exalts the work of salvation as God's work of grace from beginning to end. As the author states, "Don't imagine for a moment that there is any violent work of force or coercion when God draws a person to Christ. Grace... draws them willingly, by first opening their hearts."

I know little about this author; the blurb on the jacket is not entirely up

to date, according to information on the internet. Otherwise you might wonder how this man could wear so many hats and still have time for his family. He certainly sounds like a strong Calvinist and has even been accused of being a hyper-Calvinist. I would like to know his stance on other issues. As for this book, I can highly recommend it. Read it, enjoy it, and be edified. **P**

## Book Reviews

by Brenda Dykstra

### Caldecott Awards

**M***ei Lei*, 1937 Caldecott Award winner; written and illustrated by Thomas Handford (ages 10-12)

This older Caldecott is a Chinese tale of a young girl named Mei Lei who makes her way into town with her older brother San Yu to see what life is like in the city. But Mei Lei is a female, who shouldn't be leaving home for such adventures. She and San Yu, along with their accompanying adult uncle, must be home by midnight to enter into their walled city to be blessed by their special Kitchen God that evening. Will they return in time or will all prosperity and blessings be lost?

#### Response

The illustrations are black and white illustrations actually repro-

duced by copper plates, easily dating this piece of literature, and yet deem it worthy of illustration accolades and the 1937 Caldecott award. But I find the story itself saturated with Chinese values of Hindu religion—incense and prayers to varying gods, image worship, painted faces and dances, and much more. The plot line is catching, but as an astute parent or teacher, I'd question this book's story line for any younger readers. It may be easier to explain and be of valid interest to perhaps 10-12-year-olds at minimum.

**O***wl Moon*, 1988 Caldecott Award winner by Jane Yolen; illustrated by John Schoenherr (ages 5-9)

What does it mean to go "owling?" This first-person account of a young child and his father shares the adventure of owling, going deep into the

dark woods in the coldest of snow simply to come face to face with the exciting owl. The author's story is poignant because the illustrations develop the emotion as well as the story of the young child; the paintings of Schoenherr share the winter's beauty as well as the fierceness and sheer fright of a large owl's eyes and flight.

### Response

Clearly this book may be recommended. The illustrations are detailed paintings vivid with emotion. Additionally, this book is quality literature not only for its illustrations but also for its written quality. The illustrations are detailed paintings saturated with emotion. This text simply gives fantastic opportunity to share the power of the creature, the owl, designed by our all-powerful Maker. Join Yolen and Schoenherr as they together share a boy's story as well as the might and grandeur of the owl in its unique call and message, its powerful wings and design, and its distinctive element and role in creation. The author also uses several simple literary devices such as similes in her tale. This book would also give opportunity to design special activities parents and children may do together in the creation of our King.

**S***So You Want to Be President?* 2001 Caldecott Award winner by Judith St. George; illustrated by David Small (ages 10+)

President of the United States. What a job title to consider! During presidential elections, both adults and

children closely follow the candidates and that job description. But Judith St. George takes a different angle to observing that vocation in this selection. In describing the varying traits of presidents—big or small, actors or musicians, young or old, neat or messy, and many more traits—St. George candidly and humorously pens biographical candor. But what makes this biographical text truly amusing is the political character-cartoon Presidential faces of David Small. The illustrations are penned, exaggerated sketches and portraits of forty-two presidents of the United States.

### Response

As the president-elect takes office as the next president of the U.S. come January 2009, this book's descriptions of the human personality traits of presidents will include him. Recently published, it offers opportunity to consider the pros as well as the cons of the previous presidents. As it is really a biography, it certainly may be a worthwhile addition to any historian's shelf. The hilarious illustrations of Michigan native David Small are undoubtedly worth a look. Upon the conclusion of this text, the author shares simple one-sentence facts on each of the presidents, which are an additional plus to the historian.

A couple of issues are worth considering in viewing this book through eyeglasses of discernment. The first is the insinuated near-disrespect for Presidents. We are taught to honor our government officials certainly

as Scriptures commands; this book, however, implies sarcasm and even “funning” to the Presidential job. St. George shares a great deal of neat biographical history in this text, and with Small’s hilarious illustrations, it does make an exciting text. But younger children ought have guidance in viewing this text, and even the middle school or high school student ought to be aware that this text shares some intense sarcasm demanding a Christ-centered response.

## Newbery Award Winners

**G***ood Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a Medieval Village*, 2008 Newbery Award winner by Laura Amy Schlitz; illustrated by Robert Byrd; 81 pages (ages 10-14)

Upon first glance, this thinner book may look a bit boring. But being the most recent of the Newbery winners, is it worth a look? Laura Schlitz, a school librarian, put together these nineteen monologues and two dialogues—read-aloud “plays”—for middle-school history classes as they study the era of thirteenth-century medieval times. These monologues may be read in any order. Yes, take a look at this book!

The characters are quite memorable—meet a miller, a peasant, a Jew, even a passionate eel digger. Furthermore, this book will facilitate any student in understanding the medieval era just because author Schlitz inserted several bright two-page spreads explaining details of the

time period. To help even further to understand the era, she even included short yet detailed footnotes in her “stories,” too. I personally learned about falconry, eel digging, peasant life, crusades, and more.

### Response

This would be a nice addition to a history classroom in the middle grades. It’s easy to read, and the illustrations help “sell” it to kids, too. They will not be able to read without gaining much essential information about these times in Europe.

Aside from being well-designed and put together, I was impressed with the author’s ability to remain “neutral” in the faith arena. She explains the facts for the most part, though the characters remained colorful. Instead of judging the crusades as futile, ridiculous attempts to retake land from the Muslims, she states the facts. Of course, it’s up to the parent or teacher to talk to students about Christianity during this time period? Overall, I would give this book a thumbs-up as the most recent Newbery winner. Considering our modern times, it certainly could have exhibited endless areas of concern to the godly reader.

**S***moky the Cowhorse*, 1927 Newbery Award winner by Will James (ages 10-14)

This down-home country tale is undoubtedly penned by a horse-lover about a horse-lover. The wild mustang named Smoky is met by

quite a patient cowboy named Clint who attempts to train him. Will Clint succeed in making him an excellent cow horse and tame his broken spirit? From the get-go, Smoky is a foal then colt who bucks humans—without care or concern. The Wild West spirit shines! Ride on, cowboy!

### Response

This tale will be very enjoyable to the child reader who enjoys cowboy or horse tales; it certainly goes farther than that as it exhibits Newbery qualities as well. The writing, though simplistic, does a good job sharing a nice plot line. The characters of Smoky exhibit near-human qualities—he’s proud, stubborn, independent—easy for readers to relate to! His story will connect with any reader.

Some draw-backs can be seen with this tale, though. The author uses many references to “luck”—an issue that may need to be discussed prior to reading the text. In addition, I wasn’t too impressed with the use of unending slang and references to “Nature,” which may be in character with the type of novel, but nonetheless, its use of such is greatly over-used. These issues undoubtedly raise caution flags and ought to be addressed. Additionally, the grammar usage was shoddy on many occasions, though, I concede, maybe this was typical of the “Old West.” Overall, this story was enjoyable and light reading, but even an older award-winner of the Newbery contains varying issues.

**T** *The Foolish Tortoise* by Richard Barkley; illustrated by Eric Carle (ages 3-6)

Do I need my shell? This is the question facing a tortoise who desperately desires speed more than anything else! But the little turtle faces dangers—a fast-flying hornet, a hungry bird, a scary fish, the jaws of a snake, and much more. Can he move faster or even be able to survive without his shell?

### Response

This pre-school to early school age book is written in poetic prose with bright, exciting illustrations by the renowned Eric Carle. The rhyme scheme allows children to hear the beauty of language and even fill in ending phrases while following the tiny turtle’s troublous tale. No questionable issues are present in this tale; not only that, but this story gives an excellent opportunity to discuss with little ones the special features that God equips each animal with for survival. (Sample questions: Why did God give turtles shells? What makes him different from a monkey, a rabbit, an elephant, etc.? These kinds of open-ended questions stimulate such cognitive processing growth, not to mention passionate contemplation of the wonder of God’s creation!) This is a great story!

**P**

# Book Review

by Tom  
Bergman

**T***The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* by Michael Pollan. Penguin Press, 2006, 411 p.

This book could be titled *A Tale for Two Garys* with respect to Gary Lanning and Gary VanDer Schaaf. It is all about where our food comes from, something which would interest a science teacher such as Gary Lanning. It also mentions one particular meal that “comes as close to a free lunch as we can hope to get,” a concept that would pique Gary VanDer Schaaf’s curiosity (199).

*The Omnivore's Dilemma* is a highly captivating look at food. Author Michael Pollan divides his study into four sections. The first part concentrates on the agribusiness of corn and corn-based food products. He ends part one with an analysis of his fast food meal. In the second part he considers large-scale organic farming, its origins, and its current definitions. In the end of it, he prepares a meal with food grown and raised on large organic farms. For the third part, he takes the “organic” label to the extreme and spends a week helping out at the fascinating farm of Joel Salatin. When the week is done, his meal consists of products from Salatin’s uniquely instructive farm. For the fourth part of the book, the author goes into hunter-gatherer mode and fixes a meal made from items that

he either hunted or picked himself.

Such brief synopses hardly do justice to the book. Each section was engaging and enlightening, but I was especially fascinated by the first part about corn. It certainly broadened my understanding of our current system of agriculture and food supply. Pollan does not restrict himself to the biology of corn, the principles of economics, or the history of agriculture. Instead, he masterfully blends all of these into a survey of their complicated interrelatedness.

Pollan often comments quite explicitly about the interwoven relationships of things in this creation. However, since he is an open evolutionist and none too fond of Christians and their “bible,” he speaks as a sort of Caiaphas, sometimes speaking the Reformed truth in spite of himself. Some of his comments could be used to explain the nature of the creation to students in Protestant Reformed schools. He says, “It’s misleading to speak about any grass plant in isolation” (197) and “Obviously there is much more to be learned about the relationship of soil to plant, animals, and health (181). But one of his subjects, the Christian farmer Joel Salatin, expresses the idea even more clearly. “In an ecological system like this everything’s connected to everything else so you can’t change one thing without changing ten

other things” (213). The Omnivore’s Dilemma is indeed fascinating and worthwhile.

The book does have its flaws. Although it was free and clear of profanity and vulgarity throughout much of the book, the author does slip in one foul, unnecessary word toward the end. It caught me by surprise. Polan also makes a twistedly accurate comment about “rights” (if I remember correctly, it was in his discussion

about ethics of hunting). He borrows two terms related to eternal reprobation, fully intending them as expletives, but which are strangely suited to his idea of rights (311).

I do so appreciate how God’s providence is underscored when ostensibly unbelieving men try so hard to suppress the knowledge of God and only end up adding luster to the radiant beams of God’s glory. What fun! Almost as good as a free lunch! 

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