

# Perspectives

IN COVENANT EDUCATION

Devotions

# Perspectives

## IN COVENANT EDUCATION

### **Perspectives Staff**

Tom Bergman  
Connie DeVries  
Susann Grasman  
James Haveman  
Susan Van Koevering

### **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.

### **Editorial Office**

Tom Bergman  
7391 Magnolia Drive  
Jenison, MI 49428  
thomas.bergman@att.net

### **Business Office**

Protestant Ref. Teachers' Institute  
1401 Ferndale Avenue, SW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49534

### **Business Manager**

Heidi Haveman  
1743 Westwood Court  
Jenison, MI 49428

### **Editorial Policy**

*Perspectives in Covenant Education* exists for the purpose of furthering the cause of Protestant Reformed Christian education. This principle therefore regulates the entire contents of the journal.

*Perspectives in Covenant Education* will publish any article written by a teacher, parent, or friend of Protestant Reformed education, provided the article is in harmony with the stated purpose of the magazine. The journal will publish articles whether theoretical or practical. All manuscripts must be signed and all authors are solely responsible for the contents of their articles.

### **Subscription Policy**

Subscription price: \$7.00 per year (\$8.00 US foreign). Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the business office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your former address and zip code.

### **Reprint Policy**

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided that a) such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) proper acknowledgment is made; c) a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.



# Contents

## **Editorial**

Thrashing or Threshing **4**

*by Tom Bergman*

## **Feature**

The Reformed Teacher's  
Devotional Diligence **6**

*by Jason Holstege*

## **Contributions**

Philosophical View of Self  
and Other **10**

*by Eric Pols*

#391 **17**

*by Jim Regnerus*

Finding the Missing Family  
in the Covenant **18**

*by Bruce Koole*

## **Book Reviews**

Books for Children and Youth **25**

*reviewed by Brenda Dykstra*

# Thrashing or Threshing

Tom Bergman

In this issue, you will find an article entitled “Philosophical View of Self and Other” The author, Mr. Pols, does a careful job of addressing ideas espoused by Emmanuel Levinas and Parker Palmer. Be sure to notice where the author finishes his piece. He concludes it by bringing Scripture to bear on his topic. What Pols has is a good start—a small beginning—of what we teachers must be ready to do every day. Shed the light of Scripture not only on the subjects we teach, but also on the educational ideas and trends that surround us.

Pols has the right idea. He calls our attention to the ideas of Levinas insofar as they find some counterpart in the Bible. He even interprets Levinas’ basic tenets from the perspective of Philippians 2 and Romans 12. Rather than a whole-hearted embrace of the man and his views, Pols navigates through Levinas’ philosophy with the Bible as the final word.

What would a teacher find if he were to delve more deeply into Levinas’ work and influences? According to his obituary in the *New York Times*, Dr. Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) was a philosopher and Talmud scholar who was influenced by men like the existentialist Martin Heidegger. In philosophy, the name of Marxist/existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre often arise in conjunction with Levinas’ thought. What do we know of these thinkers? What stock do we put in what they stood for?

Existentialism is a slippery thing to define, but two of its common ideas are the fact that the meaning of life comes from the individual and his experiences and the fact that there is no absolute, true set of beliefs. Look up Søren Kierkegaard and company for more on the rise and popularity of existentialism.

Do we teachers smell the stale odor of these centuries-old notions in the educational philosophy of our own day? Individualism and moral relativism find some of their greatest proponents and allies in today's public schools. Such doctrines are alive and well.

Parker Palmer is another educational thinker that Pols keeps in check, and rightly so. In some ways, Palmer's brand of constructivism is not far removed from John Dewey's. Constructivism is the idea that knowledge is not something that is passed down (taught) by a teaching authority; rather, knowledge is constructed from the learner's own experiences and helped along by a facilitator. That is supposedly how things get their meaning. Constructivism looms large in all secular colleges today, where teachers-in-training are taught that process is more important than content. The absolute authority and meaningful truths of the Bible have—at best—a tenuous place in a constructivist classroom.

Teachers, do you remember hearing about constructivism in your college days? What about other educational thinkers such as Piaget or Skinner, Kohn or Noddings? Never cease to analyze educational trends before putting them to use. Never take educational advice without considering the source.

We don't intend to criticize everything merely for the sake of criticizing. We do not need to thrash these men in print because we enjoy controversy. But I don't want to swallow hook, line, and sinker any educational philosophies that may have their roots in Charles Darwin or Immanuel Kant, nor do I want to be responsible for contaminating our schools with them. Do Palmer and Levinas have some valid comments regarding esteem for others? Yes. Do Piaget and Skinner have some useful advice about cognitive development and immediate feedback? Yes. There are some things that can be gleaned from these sources. But don't partake of the harvest without threshing it first. The fact of the matter is that very little of the educational philosophy taught in college is of any use to us except to prompt us to elucidate and defend our Reformed principles.

What we have is precious. Plus, we of the PRTI have this journal specifically for the purpose of examining principles and methods of teaching in the light of Scripture. Be on guard every day.

# The Reformed Teacher's Devotional Diligence

Jason Holstege

Devotional time is a vital part of the day for the child of God. By “devotional time” I am referring to those parts of the day, usually at set points, when we set aside the earthly labors which occupy our time and pay especially close attention to giving glory to God in the careful reading, singing, and praying of His Word. It is an act of worship, so that we, as the covenant friend-servants of our God, might know and bless and thank Him for His efficacious saving work in Christ Jesus, as well as for His continual presence with us and with His church through the ages.

Understanding that the purpose and elements of devotions (worshiping God by careful reading, singing, and praying of His Word) are similar for all situations, whether as an individual in his “closet” (Matt. 6:6), or as the head of the household leading his family (Job 1:5), we would do well to consider the place of devotions in our schools. As we call to mind the Reformed conceptions of a father as the spiritual leader of his home,<sup>1</sup> and of the school as an extension of the home where the teacher stands in the place of the parents,<sup>2</sup> we will see that the thoughts and suggestions outlined below regarding devotions in the school can easily apply to devotional life in the home. It is my prayer that the schools are actually mirroring the home in these areas, as God gives parents the command to teach their children about His Word in family worship (i.e., devotions) in several passages of Scripture, most notably in Deuteronomy 6:7, 11:19, and Psalm 78:5.<sup>3</sup>

---

1 See Rev. Kenneth Koole's article, “The Reformation and Family Worship” in the *Standard Bearer*, 71 (Dec. 15, 1994 and Jan. 15, 1995 issues).

2 See Prof. David Engelsma's book, *Reformed Education*, pp. 62ff.

3 See Chapter 13 of *The Family: Foundations are Shaking* concerning “Family Worship” by Rev. Barry Gritters.

Teachers who understand these Reformed ideals will ever so carefully prepare for devotions with two great concerns, namely, that they are prepared to *teach* in devotions and that the class is prepared to *hear* the devotions. These concerns are really nothing new to teachers, but we do need to be reminded of them from time to time. Considering first the work of *teaching* through devotions, a teacher must take the responsibility to lead in the worship of God in the classroom as seriously as a father takes that responsibility in family worship. Just as it is unacceptable for a father to merely open the Bible, read a few verses, pray a quick prayer, and be done, so also is this unacceptable for the teachers who stand in the place of these fathers when the children are at school. Therefore teachers themselves must be diligent students of God's Word, earnest in prayer, living with a song in their hearts, knowing their covenant-Friend intimately. Only in such preparation can one be equipped to lead others, whether the members of a family or a classroom full of students.

In addition to this personal preparation, the teacher also must prepare to explain (teach!) the Word. This means that the teacher should be ready to explain difficult words, concepts, or points of grammar from the Bible passage that is read. Also, the teacher should both ask questions to and encourage questions from the students, and, as much as possible, foresee where questions might arise so that a "ready answer" (1 Pet. 3:15) is available. Proper application of the scripture should be made in the children's lives, especially if the class has a particular sin or trial that is evident in its life or in the life of one of its members. Through all of this, the children need to see, wherever they turn, whether in church, the home, or the school, that reading God's Word takes real effort, but yields very profitable results in that we come to know and enjoy God more perfectly and are thus able to live a life furnished with good works (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

Prayer is also an area in which the teacher must be prepared to teach. While some feel that this is an area of concern for the home (and most certainly it is!), the fact is, as a perceptive pastor once told us at a teachers' meeting, students will learn how to pray from their teachers too, whether the teachers are trying to teach this or not. They will learn of the reverence one must have for God in the way in which the teacher addresses God in the prayer. They will learn of the confident yet humble attitude with which the petitions ought to be uttered as they listen to the voice of the teacher. And they will learn what the contents of their prayers should consist of by hearing the petitions which the teacher asks of the Lord, modeled on the way in which our Lord taught us to pray (Matt. 6).

Additionally, students at school learn through prayer that the hands of the school and home are joined together in the great work of instructing them to walk in Christ, for in each place we can pray for the mutual strengthening of the other. Also, they learn that they ought to pray to our heavenly Father for specific needs, such as for the aforementioned sins or trials that are peculiar to a class. And one other benefit of prayer at school for students is that they are taught in a very real way that there is diversity of members in the body of Christ, even within their own age group, and that they should all have the same care one for another (1 Cor. 12).

Lastly, there is a work of the teacher in teaching the children to sing. Psalm 47:7 calls us to sing praises “with understanding.” Because of the enthusiasm with which young children sing, it is easy to assume that they are comprehending the words they are singing, but this is not always the case, even with very familiar songs. Therefore teaching students to sing praises to our God involves not only training in the tune itself, but also in the text. The teacher should be prepared with age-appropriate comments about the vocabulary, grammar (phrasing), and concepts expressed in the songs. Also songs that are appropriate for various subjects being taught are a great reinforcement as eminently practical application.

The other great concern of the teacher is that the class *hears* the devotions. To be sure, it is all of God’s good pleasure and in His good time that He sovereignly softens hard hearts and graciously gives His elect people the “ears to hear” as Jesus puts it in his parable of the sower (Luke 8:8). A mere man, eloquent teacher though he may be, cannot alter that fact. However, with good reason our Lord commanded in that same parable, “Take heed therefore how you hear” (Luke 8:18), and that certainly implies there must be instruction to learn *how* to listen. The Christian teacher ought to understand how the “art of hearing” must be emphasized to the students, especially in our technological age where he is tempted to embrace the visual and eschew the aural. Vitally important is hearing to our very souls, as it is written, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17)!

The reading of God’s Word obviously gives many opportunities for teaching students to listen. Carefully selected passages which have a special emphasis on the knowledge of God and on the life and needs of the students are a great tool to furthering their hearing. The students, being viewed as those who have a “small beginning of the new obedience,” will be interested when the scriptures are brought to bear on their lives as the passage is explained to them in a manner

appropriate for their age level. Comprehension and application questions asked by the teacher are especially effective at getting students involved in listening attentively. For this purpose, it may even be helpful to solicit topics for devotions from the suggestions of the students, if they would want a particular doctrine or passage explained to them.

A great concern of the teacher is that the students listen to the prayer, as this is a time of especially close communion with God. Again, the teacher cannot ensure that the prayer is actually being heard and prayed by the student, but there are steps that can be taken to assist the students in their listening. One is that the students know that a reverent attitude is best for listening. Even a statement about that fact made at the opening of the prayer is a powerful reminder to the students that their act of listening to the prayer makes the prayer their own. Reverence is also indicated outwardly by posture, as inward attitudes of the heart always have an outward expression (Prov. 4:23, Matt. 7:17).

There is a tendency to forget that we listen to one another as we sing (Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16), but this is also a time for teaching the children to listen. What a wonderful lifelong skill the children develop when they learn to listen to their mutual building up of each other through the godly songs of Zion! Thus it is necessary that the teacher ensures that the children sing reverently, that is, under control, with the appropriate volume, and with the correct words to best glorify God. This was humorously brought out to me as the father of three little girls who loved to sing the “condescend song” (see stanza 3 of Psalter #306), as they referred to it in our family devotions. Another opportunity for teaching was afforded when I later figured out that their young ears understood it to be the “candy-send” song.

The few moments of time spent in devotions in the school day almost seem disproportionate to the special care and effort that is required from the teachers who lead them so that they are prepared to teach and see to it that their students are listening. Teachers will do well to remember that devotions are an act of worship in which the students come to know and praise our great and glorious God. May God bless our efforts of teaching children to worship Him, whether in the home or in the school.

# Philosophical View of Self and Other

Eric Pols

Educators have a responsibility to instruct the students who flood our schools every morning. Much research, thought, and discussion is performed by teachers and administrators to educate these students in the fear and understanding of the Lord. Often times this work focuses on the “what” and “how” we teach; which leads to the neglect of students. Emmanuel Levinas gives educators a perspective on each student as a “who” which shifts the focus from the previously mentioned concerns to that of the student as an individual.<sup>1</sup>

## The Responsibility to the Other

The final bell has rung ending a long, stressful week of teaching when one of your students approaches your desk. Emotion is evident from the expressions on this student’s face and all of your tasks and plans take a back seat to the needs of this student. It was the face of this student that reminded you that “here is a person with physical and emotional needs, towards whom I have a responsibility.”<sup>2</sup> This simple example shows the responsibility that teachers and administrators (as Self) have toward each individual student (as Other).<sup>3</sup>

The Other comes before us and is “irreplaceably worthy of the teacher’s attention.”<sup>4</sup> Love is what makes this student as Other irreplaceable both with

---

1 Joldersma, C. (2006). Not only What or How, by Who? Subjectivity, Obligation, and the Call to Teach. *Journal of Education and Christian Belief*, 10(1), p. 61.

2 Sharp, A. (2006). The Face of the Other. *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children*, 18(2), p. 47.

3 Note: Self and Other will be capitalized as a way of presenting their individual humanity (not for grammar purposes).

4 Joldersma, C. (2008). Beyond Rational Autonomy: Levinas and the Incomparable Worth of the Student as Singular Other. *Interchange*, 39(1), p. 40.

regards to time and the student himself. Self cannot “merely substitute another individual for the beloved in a relationship marked by love—the beloved Other is a singularity that cannot be replaced.”<sup>5</sup> By showing love to the Other, Self recognizes the important relationship to which he or she will devote much time and energy.

Parker Palmer writes of ideas similar to that of Self and Other with language of the knower and the known. Parker Palmer believes education should give students “truth.” “With this word one person enters a covenant with another, a pledge to engage in a mutually accountable transforming relationship, a relationship forged of trust and faith in the face of unknowable risks.”<sup>6</sup> A relationship is established through this covenant which Self and Other enter: a relationship in which each is responsible for the Other. These two beings are not to be merged into one, but rather have their own “integrity and otherness.” One being “cannot be collapsed into the other.”<sup>7</sup> But the knower and the known must acknowledge that they are “implicated in each other’s lives.”<sup>8</sup>

When the relationship with the Other is realized, Self must realize the Other is one which is “beyond our prejudices, anticipations, assumptions and expectations.”<sup>9</sup> Self can not make judgments or assumptions about the Other. Self must understand that the Other is different and qualities can not be ascribed to this individual without truly knowing and understanding the individual. But what Self does comprehend when the Other is perceived is the “beauty, the vulnerability, the misery and mystery of the Other.”<sup>10</sup>

What comes from the beauty, vulnerability, misery, and mystery of the Other is the “obligation to respond ethically, to treat that person as an embodied individual who has the capacity to think, feel, and suffer and express herself in a myriad of unpredictable ways.”<sup>11</sup>

The Other can never be captured in a descriptive way because the Other is

---

5 Joldersma, C. (2008) p. 35.

6 Palmer, P. (1983). *To know as we are known: A Spirituality of Education*, New York: Harper San Francisco, p. 8.

7 Palmer, P. (1983) p. 9.

8 Palmer, P. (1983) p. 9.

9 Joldersma, C. (2006) p 64.

10 Sharp, A. (2006) p. 47.

11 Sharp, A. (2006) p. 47.

“constantly experiencing, reflecting, self-correcting, [and] self-creating.”<sup>12</sup> The descriptions that would be made of the Other would not be correct because of what Levinas calls infinity. Anne Sharp describes the infinity of Levinas as follows:

Even if I get accustomed to your face, even if I begin to understand your facial expressions, even if I eat with you, study with you, create with you, live with you...I will never totally know you. I will continue to be in the presence of a consciousness that looks at me out of eyes I can never totally see through; with thoughts I can never fully know, predict nor control, someone whose life is ultimately not mine.<sup>13</sup>

Each individual Other that comes before Self is extremely complex and not able to be described with language. Injustice becomes present when Self sees Other as knowable and comprehensible thus reduces Other to sameness.<sup>14</sup>

The student as Other is also weak and vulnerable: teacher as Self is able to overwhelm the Other with power and violence. The relationship with the susceptible Other is a relationship with someone “completely fragile, completely exposed, [and] naked.”<sup>15</sup> It is specifically this vulnerability by which the Other commands responsibility from Self.<sup>16</sup>

This student (as Other) stands before teacher or administrator (as Self) delivering a complex call of responsibility to the teacher or administrator to which he or she must respond. This call is not one which can be effortlessly or swiftly answered, but rather, this call is disruptive. “It leaves the self within an ethically grounded universe of obligation that is unending in its demands and asymmetrical in character.”<sup>17</sup> It interrupts the freedom which Self had, it keeps the Self from sleep at night, and it keeps Self from living easily in his or her own little world.<sup>18</sup> Life would be easier without this call that is shouted out by the Other; Self could focus on self, making sure his or her desires and wants are fulfilled to the fullest

---

12 Sharp, A. (2006) p. 45-46.

13 Sharp, A. (2006). p. 45 (Portion of quote deleted due to inappropriate content for topic. Deletion does not affect meaning.)

14 Jackson, M. (2005). Pedagogical Responsibility and the Third: Levinasian Considerations for Social Justice Pedagogies. *Philosophy of Education Yearbook*, p. 239.

15 Sharp, A. (2006) p. 43.

16 Joldersma, C. (2008) p. 42.

17 Bindeman, S. (2001). *Levinas: The Face of the Otherness and the Ethics of Therapy*, p. 8.

18 Joldersma, C. (2006) p. 66.

extent. “Freedom is for the Other, not for oneself.”<sup>19</sup> This call remains in effect whether or not the Other realizes the call he or she has sent to the Other.<sup>20</sup> If the Other does not respond to the call of Self, Self must continue the ethical obligation he or she has towards the Other.

The call that Self received from Other is not to be thought of in an intellectual or cognitive act, but it is a call which should be *felt*. “We *feel* the presence of the other through the experience of the face-to-face, and this felt experience has real meaning for us.”<sup>21</sup> This call takes “hold of our flesh, affecting our gestures, and our listening, looking and seeing as well.”<sup>22</sup> This call transcends the intellectual and cognitive spheres and forces Self to feel the true meaning and responsibility of this call in Self’s teaching.

Regarding this call that is sent to Self (as teacher), Barbara Stengel asks the following question and gives a clear answer:

What does it mean then to teach “as if we were called”? Is it the unflinching recognition that human action and pedagogical action always occurs as a response to a call or prompt; it is interaction, always conditioned in ways that we often do not consciously recognize and that are never fully under our control. This recognition is a humbling one, calling us back to the root of responsibility, the recognition of the Other.<sup>23</sup>

When Self hears the call, all his or her labors call Self back to the responsibility of the Other. The Other stands before us as an irreplaceable, infinite student to whom we must answer that call.

Stengel gives an illustration of the results of answering and not answering the call of the Other by using the example of Kate. She describes Kate in two different years at two different schools. Kate’s experience in her first teaching position was tragic: Stengel concludes “she responded to the principal and attended to the advice of her mentor, but she never heard the call of her students.”<sup>24</sup> But at Kate’s second teaching position “the call in this context was one she recognized.”<sup>25</sup> It

---

19 Bindeman, S. (2001) p. 7.

20 Bindeman, S. (2001) p. 8.

21 Bindeman, S (2001) p. 7.

22 Bindeman, S (2001) p. 7.

23 Stengel, B. (2003). “As If We Were Called”: Responding to (Pedagogical) Responsibility. *Philosophy of Education Yearbook*, p. 202.

24 Stengel, B. (2003) p. 200.

25 Stengel, B. (2003) p. 201.

was not the “what” and “how” that Kate had changed, she began to think of the “who.”

## Responsibility to the Third

The relation of Self and Other works in situations where there are only two beings, but teaching and many other aspects of life include situations with multiple Others. “For whom and for what am I responsible? We are responsible for all. The questions that vex us are: To whom do we attend first and at what cost?”<sup>26</sup>

Levinas describes social justice as “the way in which I respond to the fact that I am not alone in the world with the Other.”<sup>27</sup> Social justice is then seeing how Self responds in relation to the Other and the Third: Self and Other could work out justice on their own, but the Third also demands justice. Self can never approach the Other as if they were the only two beings present: “what makes responsibility ‘risky’ are the questions of justice and judgment brought by the Third.”<sup>28</sup>

Self’s responsibility to the Other is therefore limited because of the justice that is due to the Third. Self can not compare the Other and the Third because of their infinity: Self can not compare incomparables.<sup>29</sup> Justice requires attention of both the Other and the Third limiting the totality of the responsibility outlined in “The Responsibility to the Other.”

### Self’s Duty to Self

Awareness of the “who” and the Other are imperative, but Self must also be investigated. Self is also a place of infinity: a being which no Other can use language to describe. Self is the only one who possesses the key to access his or her own body.<sup>30</sup> Parker Palmer addresses this issue when he states, “who a teacher is as an individual—intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually—plays a significant role in the choices he or she makes regarding curriculum, classroom management, relationships to colleagues and parents, and so forth.”<sup>31</sup> Palmer claims that “good teaching depends more on our capacity for connectedness and that ... cul-

---

26 Jackson, M. (2005) p. 245. Jackson criticizes Joldersma for omitting the Third of which Levinas talks.

27 Jackson, M. (2005) p. 240.

28 Jackson, M. (2005) p. 241.

29 Jackson, M. (2005) p. 244-245.

30 Sharp, A. (2006) p. 46.

31 Gordon, M. (2008). Between Constructivism and Connectedness. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59(4), p. 327.

tivating a strong sense of personal identity is critical.”<sup>32</sup> When a teacher does not investigate himself or herself as an individual (asking the “who” question of Self), Self may “fall into the trap of blaming their students or the system when things do not go smoothly.”<sup>33</sup>

Investigating the “who” question of Self is the all important first question in the process of taking off the mask. The Other comes to us as vulnerable, but we too must express our vulnerability in order to have the ability to answer the Other’s call. Our ego is the mask that hides our true identity: the mask is our “socialized, artificially constructed identity, which gave us our name and protected us from disorientation and loss of self.”<sup>34</sup> Only when our artificial identity is torn off can we be our true moral Self and attend to the call of the Other.

## The Biblical Call of God to the Other

God calls his people to respond to the call from the Other. This is often referred to and thought of in Scripture as humility. Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:24 states, “Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth.” Paul is reminding the Corinthians of their responsibility toward the Other: they are called not only to not hurt the Other, but the calling also requires doing good to this Other, whether friend or stranger. Christians must be interested in the concerns of the Other with love and sympathy as required by Philippians 2:3, 4. We are called not only to respect the Other, but humble ourselves and exalt and prefer the Other with brotherly love (Romans 12:10). Much could be written on the command of God to respond to the call of the Other with humility. What follows are three examples of the Self responding to the call of the Other.

The Lord had sent Elijah to the home of a widow in Zarephath. Elijah called out to her and said, “Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink... Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand” (1 Kings 17:10, 11). The widow responded to the call of Elijah as Other and gave to Elijah as he had requested even in the midst of a famine. The widow had very little (“a handful of meal and a little oil”) but yet she gathered sticks so she could bake what she believed to be the last meal before she and her son starved to death. In all of her lowliness, she humbled herself even a little more to bake this meal for Elijah at his request.

---

32 Gordon, M. (2008) p. 323.

33 Gordon, M. (2008) p. 331.

34 Bindeman, S. (2001) p. 8.

The apostle Paul dedicated his life, not only to the call given to him by God, but also the call he heard from those who were living in sin and those who desired the preaching of Scripture. Paul could have chosen a lifestyle of a minister of a single congregation, but by God's call in his heart and the call of the Others he underwent persecution, imprisonment, and even death for the sake of preaching to those who called him to responsibility.

The final example of responding to the call with humility is that of Christ. John 13 records the example of Christ washing the feet of his apostles. Christ, as the Savior, humbled himself to wash the feet of his vulnerable and weak disciples, showing to his disciples what it meant to serve the Other. Christ states, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). But the ultimate answer to the call comes from the death of Christ on the cross. Christ's people were in need of deliverance from bondage and Christ's death was the way in which God answered. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16).

God has called Self in His Word, as shown through these three examples, to respond to the call sent out by the Other. The response of Self must be one of humility, knowing that we are indebted to the Other. Psalm 82:3 orders "justice to the afflicted and needy," and Romans 15:1 commands the strong to care for the infirmities of the weak. God instructs us, as Christian educators, to do justice to all the oppressed and afflicted. As Christian educators, we must feel the call which God has placed before us as an "obligation to the student, as my ethical responsibility to the student as Other."<sup>35</sup>

---

35 Joldersma, C. (2006) p. 69.

## #391

Jim Regnerus

Last school year we received a periodic bulletin of the Iowa High School Athletic Association. It had lots of interesting facts about Iowa high school sports, and it also included a ranking of all the Iowa high schools according to size. The students and I scanned the list and sure enough, right near the bottom, there was school number 391, Trinity Christian High School. The students accepted with good humor that there were only a total of 392 schools on the list, with Trinity's 14 surpassing the four students of the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School to avoid being totally at the bottom. That's where we stand in the state's athletic rankings—one small step ahead of the school for the blind.

14 students. Ranked 391st out of 392. Barely on the state's radar.

As Protestant Reformed believers, however, number 391 in the state athletic ranking doesn't rattle us. Aside from the fact that it is a ranking based only on the number of students and says nothing about quality of education, and aside from the fact that the small schools of Iowa have a long athletic history of slaying the urban Goliaths anyway, and aside from the fact that Trinity's student body has every reasonable expectation to grow quickly from miniscule to acceptably small, we are not about size. What we are about is covenantal, Protestant Reformed education. As testimony that our homes are like-minded, the fourteen students kept everything in perspective and shrugged off the state's rankings with a chuckle.

Conversely, there's a #391 that's far more worthy of our attention. I refer to Psalter 391. They're all good stanzas, but stanza three is fitting here. "Thou art my God, to Thee I pray, Teach me Thy will to heed; And in the right and perfect way may Thy good Spirit lead." As we study every subject in light of God's Word as we have it in our homes and churches, and as we submit to God's will in our lives, understanding that His leadership is the perfect way for us and that Jesus Christ

alone is the way of salvation, then Trinity will soar off the charts of man's puny ambitions to the heights of glorifying God! Can anything be higher than that?

I pray for growth for Trinity. I pray for more students. I hope you do, too. But most of all, let's pray in thanksgiving for what we have. Pray that we continue to enjoy the Lord's blessing and that His name will be glorified in all that we do, even if we are #391.

## Contribution

# Finding the Missing Family in the Covenant

Bruce Koole

The word “family” or “families” is missing in the New Testament. This might sound the death bell for the related doctrines of infant baptism, covenant, and Reformed education. However, the doctrine of the covenant of grace unites all the separate elements of the family into one cohesive unit. This functioning “nuclear family” is the heart of our schools.

It is beneficial at this time to relook at the family in our schools. In the recent controversy the synods of the past few years decided that home schools are not the “good Christian schools” for office-bearers (outside of extenuating circumstances) when “good Christian schools” exist nearby. The contribution of the family to school could go missing inasmuch as it was not the focus of the synod. By no means did the synod squeeze down the family with its thumb, so as to lift

up the school at the expense of home, but rather their decisions emphasized the need for the office-bearers and their children to be a healthy part of the functioning school. The question is then asked, what is the role of these families and every other family? How do they form the heart of our school, especially when there is no New Testament word for family?

Search the King James Version for “family” or ‘families’ and 297 separate occurrences of the word show up in the Old and New Testaments. Only one, single, solitary instance occurs in the New Testament. Ephesians 3:15 states, “Of whom the whole *family* in heaven and earth is named.” Here the word “family” refers to the last name, or ancestry, of an individual, not the normal usage of “family.” Our ancestry, or last name, is “Christ” because we are the adopted sons and daughters of God the Father. The Greek word for “family” in this passage can be transliterated into English as “paternal” or “paternity” and it occurs two other times in Scripture.

The same Greek word shows up in the well-known Christmas verse Luke 2:4: “And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and *lineage* of David).” Joseph’s paternal ancestry could be traced back up his genealogical line to David. Joseph’s family relationship with Mary or with his father and mother was not emphasized.

The other verse with the same Greek word is Acts 3:25 where Peter preaches to the Sanhedrin and quotes God’s word to Abraham in Genesis 22:18. Abraham had obeyed God’s voice to sacrifice Isaac and Peter quotes the LORD as saying “And in thy seed shall all the *kindreds* of the earth be blessed.” Genesis 22:18 substitutes the word “nations” for “kindreds” since the ideas are the same. Each nation is a family having common ancestors, just as each of the twelve tribes had a common ancestor from the sons of Jacob (and Joseph).

Thus, from a family-tree viewpoint, being a Moore, Griess, Poortinga, Schwarz, Campbell, Ezinga, Brands, or Koole in Loveland, Colorado is a badge of honor, or at least it should be. Michigan has its Engelsmas, Kooles, Kamps, DeVrieses, and many more. Kalsbeeks even have a book laying out their family tree with its roots going four hundred years back to the Netherlands, but neither these last names nor the Kalsbeek’s book refers to the “inter-workings” of what present-day society calls the “nuclear family.”

The nuclear family is a complex unit where each family member has different roles that knit the individuals together, and keep everybody working for the

same goal—the betterment and development of the whole—so that all enjoy each other’s company and unique contributions. The three main members are father/husband, wife/mother, and child/sibling.

Indeed are a childless husband and wife a complete family, even contributing to schools in many important ways that child-bearing families do not, as well as impacting their nieces, nephews, and friends’ children in their everyday lives, yet the focus here is what happens in the home between parents and their children.

One sees immediately the impossibility of “bettering” self and “developing” outside of grace. It cannot be done. Thus the covenant of grace must change us and needed to change ancient Greek society in order for the nuclear family to be healthy.

The chief reason why the word “family” does not occur in the New Testament is that, basically, the family was not part of ancient Greek society.

By the time of Christ’s birth, the Greek tongue had been the universal language for over three centuries, going back to the time of Alexander the Great’s conquest of Persia. There is a great development of “family” in the Old Testament in the nation of Israel, an idea to which we hope to return later, but by the writing of New Testament scriptures the Jews had nearly lost their precious heritage. They were quite assimilated into Greek culture.

Very few could read or speak Hebrew. Greek was the language of daily life for the Jews. The Old Testament Scriptures were so foreign they had to be translated into Greek, which we know as the Septuagint. This is a Greek word for “seventy” referring to seventy leaders translating the Scriptures in seventy sessions. Having also been cut off from their spiritual moorings since the last revelation given to Malachi, the Jews were taken over by the Greek concept of family. That idea was pagan and wicked to its core. In a word, the Greek idea of family was selfishness.

The Greek word for family is “household” and is the same root word for the inanimate object “house.” Thus, a Greek family linked the people in a building, father, mother, children, and slaves with a bunch of possessions. The more stuff one had, the greater the family. Lots of children, many slaves, and large brick and clay structures with plenty of olive trees implied that the owner and family were great. Personal relationships were secondary, unimportant, and corrupted. One can see this in the rampant homosexuality—and much worse—of Greek culture. Romans 1:24 clearly identifies this problem, “Wherefore, God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves.” The next verses identify the uncleanness of

Greek fornication as “vile affections” (26), female-female relationships as “against nature” (26) and male-male relationships as “unseemly” (27).

There were very few normal relationships in ancient Greece. It’s understood that Alexander the Great’s mother was responsible in some way for assassinating Philip, her husband. Forty-year old men were married to sixteen-year-old girls. Athens probably justifiably condemned Socrates to death for all his excessive perversions with his students. That was part of Greek culture. Even today in Greece, women wear veils and whole-body robes, talk very little in public, and sometimes must follow their husbands a few feet behind. Is it any wonder neither Paul nor Peter ever baptized a “family,” only households?

Roman society was no better. The Latin word for family is *familia* (household). The chief Roman idea of family was power. Father was law, and anybody who disobeyed him would be appropriately punished, but not out of love. Father was despot and all disobedient could be killed or sold into slavery. The heads of homes would command the rest of the family to do or not do this or that, and all would have to obey like servants.

Roman men spent lots of time conniving to be powerful as senators, tribunes, or consuls, rather than nurture a family. Men like Julius Caesar and Nero were so concerned about power that they were childless. It is accepted history that Nero assassinated his mother. A representative fact of Roman history is that for the last 250 years of its Republic, not one Roman consul (or triumvir) died a natural death until Caesar Augustus began the Empire in 27 B.C. How the men in power treated each other was how they treated their families.

It is also generally known that among the Roman soldiers, Julius Caesar not excepted, there were hordes of “vile affections” and “unseemly” behaviors. Thus does Scripture go out of its way to emphasize the centurion’s salvation at the cross in addition to Cornelius the centurion being the first Gentile family convert of the New Testament. Where grace enters a life of sin, it is irresistible in the changes it brings. Outside of grace, there was not much difference between the lives of Roman or Greek. Is it any wonder there were no “families” baptized in Rome, only members and their houses?

The power of the heads of homes is one reason why the genealogies run through the fathers. Father was the family, though that was by grace. This can be seen in Acts 10:2 which calls Cornelius “a devout man, and one that feared God with all his *house*.” Cornelius did worship God, though with his house, as opposed to family.

Despite the fact that “family” is not found in the New Testament, all the separate elements of a family were present in ancient Greek society and also present throughout all Scripture. The word “mother” and its variants shows up 328 times, the word “father” and its variants some 1700 times, and the word “child” and its variants over 2000 times.

The New Testament is full of references to family life, especially in Ephesians 5 and 6. Fathers are told not to provoke their children to wrath and to love their wives as Christ loved his church. Wives are told to submit. Children are told to obey their parents in the Lord. In Matthew 1, four mothers crop up in the genealogy of Christ. Paul instructs Timothy on the proper behaviors for old men, old women, young men, and young women as wives (Titus 2).

Once the gospel came and the covenant of grace descended upon a Greek family, all the relationships previously corrupted were now regenerated. Fathers loved their wives, refused to provoke their children to wrath; wives submitted themselves to their husbands; and, children obeyed their parents in the Lord. Lydia, a mother most likely, was baptized with her house. Relationships were changed completely, because under the covenant, if adults were saved, so were the children. God is a friend of believers and their seed. Parents must love their children as God loves them.

This love is first shown when parents have their child baptized. The lack of a word in Greek for “family” is one reason why children never clearly appear when baptism is mentioned. They were part of a household, just as much as a slave, the brick walls, and olive trees. They were not yet regarded, then, as fully important as they should be, equal heirs of salvation on account of their parents. Notice that the apostle Paul baptized the Philippian jailer and his *household*, but not the Philippian jailer and his *family* (Acts 16:31-34).

The New Testament is conclusive, but the Old Testament itself would be sufficient. The Old Testament develops the doctrine of the covenant by linking blood and offspring—circumcision and covenant—and the New Testament replaces circumcision with baptism, and Christ’s blood atonement seals the Covenant. Christ Jesus also rebukes his disciples for keeping away the little children, and for lacking a child-like faith. There need not be any children baptized in the New Testament to prove the truth of the doctrine of infant baptism. The Old Testament is enough. The Old Testament is infallible.

As the children age, these families with all their bonds of love and unity form the heart of our school. Parents send their little beloveds off to the school, so that

their little ones get instructed in the fear of the Lord, and they learn to love their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

Without the family, and the mothers especially, there would not be a school. If the church's preaching and government belong to the men, then the school belongs to the women. Jehovah God brought about our schools, so that the gifts of mothers could be used.

Mothers know what happens to their children emotionally, why the wee little ones are upbeat or downcast, and how to fix the problem. They often make sure, more so than the fathers, that the homework is finished, the tests are reviewed for, the lunches are packed, the forgotten items are brought in, the children are in bed on time, and that volunteers are available at school for aiding, bus-driving, and tutoring those who need assistance.

Fathers hear about the school from their wives, and act accordingly in the situation. They bring down the long arm of the law, with its rod, to make sure that children are behaving toward their classmates, teachers, and especially their mothers. "Your mother has told you seven times to do your homework, and you did not listen. Now it's my turn to help you listen. Since your teacher didn't teach you in science class that your ears are located on your backside, let me fix that problem." Fear of those in authority starts with fearing father and his rod of reproof. Should there be a problem larger than that caused by a child, a father speaks with the appropriate personnel within the scholastic edifice, so that said problem can be addressed and remedied.

Children learn to love knowledge first from their parents, and generally they take the same approach to learning as their parents. Where parents emphasize music and piano lessons, there is a greater mastery of the musical singing and instrumentals, thereby reinforcing the school's choirs and bands. Where parents emphasize good books, the classics, and the bookshelves, children by and large do better in histories, grammars, and writings. Children learn to obey authority by being obedient to their parents. They learn how to interact in an edifying manner with others by the conversations and games they play with their siblings. They learn how to encourage others, be merciful to others, forgive others, and repent when having sinned.

There is a word of warning, too. Where the computer, television, and radio go unsupervised, corruption gains hold, and lives of the world-loving Demas take root. When the bookshelf is replaced by the DVD shelf (or DVD *library!*), we foster little Lots.

Most importantly parents teach their children how to love Jehovah God. If parents shirk this duty, then they will have harmed their child's soul, maybe permanently.

Where mother asks the littlest ones questions at lunchtime devotions while the older brothers and sisters are at school, where Father assigns his children Bible reading at supper to be followed by a brief question and answer session, where parents read the bed-time Bible story and say the prayers, and where psalms are sung, there is love for their Saviour evidenced and taught. If Holy Scripture is not emphasized, we would be no different from the corrupt Greeks and wicked Romans. And, God gave us the word "family" and the doctrine of the covenant of grace.

This same theme has been sounded by Professor David J. Engelsma in *Reformed Education: The Christian School as Demand of the Covenant*. He writes,

God commands believing parents to rear their children in the education and admonition of the Lord Jesus Christ, to teach "diligently" all the words that bring the children to a fear of the Lord (Eph. 6:4 and Deut. 6:1-9). On the one hand this instruction of their children is one of the outstanding covenant responsibilities of parents, that is, one aspect as God's friend-servants to love, serve, and glorify God. On the other hand, it is the means by which God brings the reborn covenant child to spiritual maturity so that he or she becomes a developed man or woman of God, capable of a life of good works. (p. 6)

From cradle to car, from home to school, a parent shapes his child's character. Most assuredly must this rearing be done diligently. Without question such instruction is the outstanding covenant responsibility of parents. By the time the children are ready to live independently, parents will have readied, or hindered, their children's progress toward spiritual maturity.

May God give us grace, so that we teach our children to love first Him, who is our King, Father, and Friend, and then our neighbors as ourselves. May this start at home with our nuclear family, and continue at school with our heavenly family.

# Children and Youth Literature

Brenda Dykstra

*Together*, by Jane Simmons. Alfred Knopf Publishing, 2006. Recommended ages: 2½ to 6 years.

Have you ever had a special friend? Meet two endearing, very different dogs named Mousse and Nut. They walk, talk, and play together, but then they begin to disagree. Will they ever reunite and become best of friends again?

**Response:** The author of the big-footed duck *Daisy* books, Jane Simmons creates two more characters that will reach children's hearts. In a fun way, it teaches the importance of friendship and also the process of giving and taking to achieve good friendship. The great paintings share the tale well and will reach kids' hearts. This book opens the door for the Christ-centered parent to discuss friendship with toddlers, preschoolers, or even kids a bit older. God makes us all very different, and we can learn to appreciate each other in the body of Christ.

*Ebb & Flo and the Baby Seal*, by Jane Simmons. Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2000. Recommended ages: 4-7 years.

Wah! Wah! What is that loud cry the friendly pup Ebb hears? After investigating and discovering a baby seal, Ebb realizes the poor little guy is missing his mother! Join dog Ebb, his child-friend Flo, and her mother as they row a boat out to sea to look for that missing mother seal. Will they ever find her amid torrential rains—"pitter patter whoosh!"

**Response:** It's easy to see why Simmons is an award-winning children's author. The characters Ebb and Flo are simple and beautifully painted. The presence of a real plot line flows, too, though making it more complex than Simmons' *Together* (above) and her *Daisy* books. The word sounds (or onomatopaeias) like "pitter patter whoosh" make it even more fun. The text leaves no questionable issues for

the Reformed Christian parent. I haven't read her other Ebb and Flo books, but these texts add joy to language development for young children. Enjoy!

*Big Red Barn*, by Margaret Wise Brown; illus. by Felicia Bond. Scholastic, 1956; 1989 reprint. Recommended ages: 1½ to 5 years.

Who are all those animals? What are they doing? Margaret Wise Brown paints a vivid picture of a very active group of farm animals in that big red barn while the farmer is away. Join them as they enjoy playing and spending their day together!

**Response:** The illustrations of Felicia Bond add to this bright, excellent children's book told in super rhythmic patterns. Brown incorporates concepts of big/little and up/down right into her tale, too. Each animal from the cow and her calf to the cat and kittens adds life and excitement. You'll be voicing all the animal sounds to review with your child, too! And best of all, no questionable issues are present—it's a real classic. I'd highly recommend this book and intend to purchase it soon for our own book shelves. Order from your library, and check this one out! (Also available on audio tape and board book)

### Jez Alborough

More than thirty children's picture books are written by this contemporary author/illustrator from London. Many of them are well worth a peek and will continue to ignite excitement in younger readers from ages 3-8. Alborough's rhyming texts with exaggerated drawings are sure to make preschoolers smile and laugh. His "slapstick" humor along with his vibrant illustrations tell his stories, even though some of his plots I did find almost cliché. But kids will enjoy it! Note: Almost all of his books are available in large picture books or in board books.

*Duck in the Truck* (Harper Collins Publishing, 1999); *Fix-It Duck* (Kane Miller Publishing, 2007); and *Super Duck* (Kane Miller, 2005); by Jez Alborough. Recommended ages: 2-7 years (and great read-aloud rhymes for any age).

Introducing the hilarious duck, who is the main character in these stories, and his side-kicks, Sheep, Goat, and Frog! Join him as his antics lead him to "get stuck in the muck in his truck," "get his tools, what can possibly go wrong?" and "be the hero super-duck."

**Response:** These are delightful picture books with great cartoon-like characters and colorful illustrations which will get kids laughing quickly. The literary rhyme is SO addicting that even the non-reader can't help but like silly, crazy Duck. No real issues of discernment are present. I found each book a great open door for questioning children to think about Duck's motives and actions as appropriate or necessary treatment of friends. I'd recommend these for a school's library viewing and reviewing by parents eager to teach a love for reading.

*Hug* (Candlewick Press, 2000); *Tall* (Candlewick, 2005); *Yes* (Candlewick, 2007); by Jez Alborough. Recommended ages: 2-4 years.

Have you ever been blessed by your child sharing love through a hug? Children will relate to this fun chimp Bobo who meets elephants, lions, snakes, lizards, and giraffes, sharing hugs with them. But Bobo simply can't find his mother! Will he ever find her and be able to share a hug with his own kind? The story of *Tall* continues with Bobo and his lizard, lion, and elephant friends as he wonders, "Am I supposed to be tall?" The story of *Yes* brings Bobo to question is it bed-time—Yes or No?

**Response:** *Hug* is a very "sappy" tale about the love of a child and mother. Friends can share hugs, too, but that parent/child bond is hard to replace. These tales of Bobo the monkey come highly recommended by librarians. They are certainly very fun picture books with minimal words, from a very popular children's author. They are also available in a board books so even younger children will enjoy the adventure of chimp Bobo and his jungle friends. One issue I caught at the very end of *Hug* was all the different animals hugging each other, which is likely a message that all must be loved and accepted. Certainly, as God's children, we don't befriend just anyone; but we can certainly share that love of the Savior with others. I don't think this deeper issue will need addressing as it's only on the final one page spread, and very little ones will likely not notice. *Tall* has no discernment issues either, but it certainly is a great opportunity to teach the words "tall" and "small" while pointing out to a little one how the Lord makes us grow and designs us in his plan. *Yes* brings about our little monkey Bobo questioning mother's authority after his bath—should he go to bed or not. By the very end, he's sleeping, so it will leave the child respecting mom's judgment, too. Most kids will really relate to that one as most dislike going to sleep for some reason. With this age, joy occurs just learning and talking about just what a jungle is in

God's creation and discussion of the other fun animals that Alborough beautifully shares. Have fun—these are unique children's book, also available in board books. Check these out for stocking the home or school library or just ordering to read from the library!

*My Friend Bear*, by Jez Alborough. Candlewick Press, 1998. Recommended ages: 3-6 years.

Meet little boy Eddie, his cuddly, nice teddy, and a great big real bear and *his* teddy bear. Eddie can't find his teddy, and while looking in the woods, he meets a great big bear. Will Eddie run for his life, and will he ever find his teddy?

**Response:** The rhyming patterns of the tale keep young children wanting to find out if the great big bear is scary as well as if Eddie will ever get his teddy. But friendship is really the theme because both the big bear and Eddie discover a common ground of missing teddies! The rhyming, combined with the cartoon pictures, isn't quite as fun to me as Alborough's *Duck* books or the *Bobo* books. But no questionable issues are present, and children will learn of some of the glories of language in the rhyming fun.

### Matthew Van Fleet

Van Fleet is a middle-aged modern American author who currently resides in New York. He has several popular board books out for little ones. In fact, many of his books are and have been *New York Times* best sellers. Are they worth a look? Read on and discover!

*Dog*, by Matthew Van Fleet; photography by Brian Stanton. Simon and Schuster, 2007. Recommended ages: 1½ to 5 years.

Dogs, dogs everywhere! Real life photography coupled with descriptive rhyming words, peek-a-boo fun, and pull and feel pages make the world of the pooch come alive. So many different kinds—what does your child see and know about the vast variety of the canine species of God's world?

**Response:** Oh, so fun! Kids just LOVE to play with the Van Fleet books because there's a new surprise to pull, push, or feel on every page. What they don't realize is that they are learning so very much about the creature called "dog" because there are fifty different kinds photographed in this 20-page text. One drawback to any Van Fleet book is that it can be easily wrecked by the young child because

there are so many gadgets and pull-apart or feel items. Another item to consider about this specific Van Fleet text was the teaching that all dogs “poo” along with a simple photo of a dog urinating as well. For us, it was a teaching opportunity that some things are not talked about so frivolously. The book is described on its back cover as “doggone fun”—a simple, unnecessary word play which a reading parent doesn’t need to address for a non-reader, but may need to be discussed for the older child who may likely excitedly pick up this large, colorful board book. Also appreciated were the many photographs of various species of dogs. So much learning can occur about God’s might and power in the glory of the dog and types of dogs for the younger reader and such fun!

*Cat*, by Matthew Van Fleet; photography by Brian Stanton. Simon and Schuster, 2006. Recommended ages: 1½ to 5 years.

Again, a feature animal—this time...cats!, with the same peek-a-boo fun and pull/push pages to make the feline world so real to little ones. The interest in kitties comes alive with so many varying types and sizes! Meow, meow... WOW!

**Response:** Again, oh, what joy a little one will discover in this text as they learn so, so much more as they read and re-read! Same draw-back—easily wrecked text without parental/teacher supervision. For any parent of younger children or teacher in a lower elementary classroom, Van Fleet books are definitely worth looking at. So many opportunities right at the fingertips to teach about our glorious King of creation creatures.

*Alphabet*, by Matthew Van Fleet. Simon and Schuster, 2008. Recommended ages: 1½ to 6 years (or more!).

Safari thrill—animals make the alphabet very alive. Each page features exciting new critters—from the scaly alligator to the fuzzy zorilla, each page features touch/feel, pop up/down pages, push/pull, and descriptive, rhyming words EVERYWHERE! This text features over 100 creatures/plants and challenges for the preschool age child (or older!) to look at each page to discover more about his world.

**Response:** Again, what thrills! This text brings so much learning alive, even for the adult reader. I learned so many new things about the beautiful, exciting creatures of creation to share. This most recent Van Fleet book again must be supervised or can be wrecked easily, but it’s hard not to recommend this book so full of oppor-

tunity to learn and discover God's fantastic creation. Whether or not Van Fleet is a Christian, it is hard not to see splendor of God in his texts—in both language and varying creatures! Check this out—a must-view for the parents of preschoolers and kindergartners and for early childhood or elementary educators.

*Tails*, by Matthew Van Fleet. Simon and Schuster, 2003. Recommended ages: 1½ to 5 years.

Tails for all animals—seven textures for kids to touch, a scratch and sniff, pull/push tabs, and interesting new critters teach counting, rhyming and words in this fun board book!

**Response:** Again, a book kids can't help but read and re-read, no matter the age.

The fun, cartoon-like pictures and touch-and-feel surprises draw the child right in with new animals all around! No questionable issues are present. Again, this book ought be monitored because little fingers may accidentally destroy it. I'd highly recommend checking this one out for teaching counting. And it's really fun when reading to the older preschooler to initiate a discussion on who designed so many different kinds of tails and why each animal need its specific type of tail.

*Fuzzy Yellow Ducklings*, by Matthew Van Fleet. Dial Books, 1995. Recommended ages: 1-3 years.

Fold-out fun continues for young toddlers and preschoolers. Van Fleet teaches textures, colors, shapes, and so many different animals as these pages invite and beg the little ones to touch and explore.

**Response:** A must-view for the parent or teacher of one- to three-year-old children! This book also is very fun, and Van Fleet included a challenge at the end to count the animals and a fold-out long spread to continue to review the animals, shapes, and colors. No discretionary issues—this book holds the simple opportunity for parents and teachers to discuss God's creation as he has mightily created all these animals, shapes, and even colors. Warning: This is another book easily ripped, so monitor its use, but still, check this one out for sure!!

*One Yellow Lion*, by Matthew Van Fleet. Dial Books, 1992. Recommended ages: 1½ to 3 years.

Every page includes fold-out fun and surprises as the colorful, cartoon-like animals engage the reader in learning to count to 10.

**Response:** Though this is Van Fleet's earliest book and doesn't include touch-and-feel and pullouts, its fold-out pages and surprise animals easily will engage. The numbers are colorful and large and easily assist in teaching the concept, and the final pages offer further challenges for the adept, counting little child. No issues are present, and it too offers opportunity to ask the smallest child about who was mighty enough to create the alligator, chicken, bear, etc. I highly recommend looking at this fun text.

**Protestant Reformed  
Teachers Institute**

1401 Ferndale Avenue SW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49534

Address Service Requested

Non-Profit Org  
U. S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Jenison, MI  
PERMIT 71