that it really does belong to that day of the creation of the fowl and fish. I remembered teaching the children of the "birds and bees and butterflies." In God's inscrutable wisdom He provided the insect world to be the food for His fish and fowl.

Somehow I cannot keep my mind off that butterfly. Then a light came on in my soul. The butterfly (which is only a worm with wings) must be a peculiar picture story of some human characteristic and future experience. Then I mused that it tells of the metamorphosis of our mortal bodies into one of great splendor and beauty. Then, no longer hampered by our butterfly-worm-like bodies, we will be freed from all restrictions to be "free as the bird of the air" (another picture word). Then I thought "How I wish I could see and read more of those nature picture stories which so graphically speak of my ultimate deliverance from sin and death!"

Oh God, how great Thou art!

Dear Miss Roole,

QUESTION:

"Realizing this comes at a late date, I hope you will consider this correspondence for your rubric in the summer issue.

"Let me begin by these remarks:

"1. 'Dear Miss Koole' is a welcome and necessary addition to the magazine.

"2. We now have our own authoritative 'Ann Landers' in the field of educational expertise. The winter issue of 1988, introducing the new rubric in the Perspectives, relates your vast experience and knowledgeable teaching background. That indicates two things: a. You have dealt with many, many children and numerous parents, boards, etc. b. You are a senior citizen—

plus some years. This should also prove valuable in answering, or at least shedding light on, this perplexing problem which has vexed me for a long, long time — since school days.

"A little background would be helpful, methinks. I had two older sisters who excelled in all levels of study and book learning. They were recognized by achievements and awards. The problem was that I was the slow learner and achiever. Still today I carry a complex of inferiority and an attitude of being unsuccessful in this area of life.

"I often thought, while living as a common laborer all my life, that if only I too had been smarter, what a different workworld would have been my lot! How nice it would be if I were not the flunky!

"Am I wrong in being envious of my two brighter sisters? How must I shed this yoke of guilt?

"Let me say this in closing: all is not despair. I do feel successful and content with my God-given lot in other areas of life. Maybe, just maybe, I've answered my own question. What do you think?

Sincerely yours, I.M. Sane''

ANSWER:

Your concerns echo those of many of God's children. feeling of inferiority is much more prevalent than you or I can imagine. I really believe that every living person has this feeling in some measure. What matters is how we respond to it. Some will cope by withdrawing; others will display aggressive or disruptive behavior; most adolescents will conform; and thousands will make the best choice by compensating for their inadequacy. I'm sure you experience as I do that, as one grows older, the things that were so desirable in our youth - such as beauty, physical strength and agility, or peer approval - have lost their importance. Slowly one is led to a clearer understanding and acceptance of what you call your "God-given lot" in ALL areas of life. We are able to see and to confess with gratitude

that "e'er our days began, our life in all its perfect plan" was ordered by our Father in heaven.

This contentment usually does not come easily nor early in life. Some of the agony of feeling inferior or being rejected in our earlier years can still be felt in our old age. Why should one of God's precious children need to experience rejection by parents, or teachers, or their peers? J. Dobson in his book Hide or Seek (which I would recommend for everyone's reading) condemns vigorously the unjust and unbiblical value system measures a person's worth in terms of beauty or intelligence. It's my opinion that, after childhood, athletic prowess and wealth might well top the list of today's criteria.

I do not want to discuss in detail Dobson's book, but I do feel it is urgent that each Godfearing parent and teacher understand the devastating effect of undermining the self-esteem of one of God's children. Children are cruel to children. You've heard that saying, and it is true. A child must be taught from babyhood on to be kind. Many kindergartners learn part "...Be ye Ephesians 4:31: kind one to another. . . "; but this admonition needs constant reinforcement. Parents and teachers should insist that kindness characterize all relationships their children have with others; and the children must see this same loving kindness permeating all actions of the adults.

It is very difficult to rebuild a self-esteem that to some extent has been damaged by unthinking, careless, impatient, or even cruel remarks or treatment. Dobson offers some comprehensive strategies through which parents and teachers can cultivate or build self-esteem in every child. Some of these are:

- 1. Examining the values and the emotional climate in your own home to insure they are in harmony with God's Word.
- 2. Helping your child to compensate for weaknesses by providing avenues for recognition and development of strengths.
- 3. Disciplining without damaging self-esteem.
 - 4. Preparing for adolescence.
- 5. A message for discouraged adults.

While following these suggestions, godly parents remain conscious of the sinful nature both of themselves and of their children. The fundamental sin of pride, which caused Satan to fall and which Adam and Eve passed on to the human race, must not be

minimized or ignored. Every one of us wants to be number 1. If we succeed in being the top one, we are sure to boast of our achievements. If we are unsuccessful, we view the achiever with a jealous eye and are inclined to complain of our position in life. Both attitudes are sinful. We and our children must constantly be reminded that it is our Heavenly Father who gives to each of His children the abilities necessary to live and work to the honor and glory of the Giver. Boasting or complaining demeans God's gifts to us. A genuine faith in God and trust in His great love for us give hope and encouragement to us even though we are most unworthy. Our value to our Father in heaven is so great that He sent to earth His only begotten Son who willingly gave His life to redeem us.

This is the Christ who tells us that "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." How lovingly and kindly we would treat one another if that admonition of our Savior lived in our consciousness each moment of each day.

PARENTS' CORNER

Mr. Ophoff, in the article that follows, identifies himself as a tuition-paying parent and a former school board member. He